Immigrants in Italy: Mediating integration through public art practices. Government or artist as the mediator? Recommendations on a “third level.”

Abstract

The recent immigration phenomenon in Italy and its importance in the political agenda encourages a new discussion about the use of public art practices to promote the integration of immigrants among the resident population. The role of the government and artists in reaching out to the immigrant community will be analyzed. The discussion will focus on the “progetto Zingonia,” one of the most progressive Italian projects of public art for an immigrant audience. This project will be compared to another one developed in South Africa, serving as a benchmark for the Italian case. As far as methodology, statistical data on immigration in Italy will support the importance of the issue. Then, to shed light on this topic, I will survey the general public art literature and more specifically, the contextual approach. The notions of “third space” and “in-between” will be key in understanding how the public art project in South Africa can provide suggestions for the Italian situation.
Introduction

“Our peripheries are tragic. We have to do something with immigrants in terms of buildings, art and welfare, otherwise we will have many Paris (many situations like Paris) everywhere.” With these words, the Italian politician Romano Prodi -leader of the opposition party L’Unione- describes the situation in Italy after the riots in the Parisien banlieux.1 Discussions about immigration always seem to arise in response to emergencies that threaten social order. The dissatisfaction of the immigrants cannot be mitigated without a long-term approach. This requires understanding that the process of integrating immigrants is through “buildings, art, and welfare” instead of relying entirely on immigrant laws.

The way the term “art” was used by Prodi, among other words, in a list of “to do” things, instilled in me an interest in exploring the issue of immigrant integration in Italy through public art. Moreover, the recent increase of immigration in Italy, a country that has never experienced it before in such a dimension, encourages a discussion about what is the real relationship between public art and immigration.2 Though we lack academic studies or structured discussions on this topic, it is becoming more relevant in today’s political agenda.

Therefore, major questions beg to be explored around public art intended for immigrants.3 The role of the government in this process of commissioning public art needs to be examined. A close investigation of this process reveals the type of message the public administration seeks to convey. The choice of the artistic approach and the relations with the local authority’s power structure will be discussed. Then, public art projects need to be analyzed in relation to the context in which they are created. First, the notion of audience needs to be explored: who is speaking and who is being heard? It will

3 Public art is intended here as public practice and as a tool for communities.
be important to determine who is the interlocutor of the immigrant audience: the artist, public administrator, or the cultural mediator.  

Second, the notion of space, both real and figurative, has to be considered. This debate will help understanding the way the work is perceived by the immigrants.

Since there has been no theoretical dialogue in Italy before, this research will begin a novel exploration on how public art practices can be employed to foster the integration of immigrants. The concrete point of departure for the research has been the progetto Zingonia, the only project thus far with the explicit aim to integrate immigrants in Italy. However, an account limited only to this project and to the Italian experience on public art, would not allow recommendations for further development.

In need of inspiration and insight, I encountered the popular American experience involving art to facilitate immigrant integration. However, I discovered this was not useful to apply to the recent immigration phenomenon in Italy. In the United States, there is a different level of acceptance of the immigrants due to a diverse history and formation of the American society.

Instead, a more extreme case in South Africa appeared to be much more interesting to compare to the Italian situation. In South Africa, art practices developed in the context of social conflicts between different ethnic groups. The burden of a past history made integration more difficult despite the end of apartheid. In particular, the example providing insights for the Italian situation is the work of the Dutch artist René Klarenbeek in Mamelodi, South Africa (1997). The notion of context, in particular referring to audience and space will be relevant to delineate these insights and set the agenda for possible areas of improvements in Italy. The comparison of the two cases

4 Nicholas Lowe articulates the idea of analyzing the role of the interlocutor in Who is Speaking Who is Being Heard? in “Art Education Discourses,” Volume 2. Leaf, Fruit and Seed. (Birmingham, UK: ARTicle Press UCE, 1999).

5 “L’immigrazione che fa paura” (The immigration that scares us). Interview with Ilvo Diamanti, director of laboratory political studies LaPolis of Urbino, the sociologist Franco Ferrarotti and architect Massimiliano Fuksas. http://repubblicaradio.repubblica.it/home_page.php (November 24, 2005).

6 In this regard, it can be argued that it is very difficult to assess the efficacy and importance of the program. This is a very common objection by the public administration. It requires evaluations and objective indicators that show the “usefulness” of the project. In this case it would be more beneficial if the projects could be funded without a specific evidence of the results.
will help question the main characteristics of the Italian case: the role of the artist versus the role of the government in reaching out to the immigrant community.

The importance of the issue

For the first time, immigration is no longer a marginal occurrence in the Western world. Immigrants are now more central to society and society is increasingly defined by immigration. Displacements continue between the “First world” and the “Third world, brought on by increasing forms of globalization, migration, and travel. Immigration and globalization are now embedded in the economic, political, and social conditions of contemporary culture. A structural revolution of metropolitan life is taking place in the flux of migration. This is transforming the peripheries of the industrial cities in Northern Italy, such as the outskirts of Bergamo, Milan and Turin: 20% of the immigrant population in Italy is concentrated in these three Italian cities.

This links the problem of immigration to the development of our cities and society. At present, the legal immigrant population is 4% of the total Italian population, but it is estimated to reach 8% if we include illegal immigrants. During the 1980’s, Italy absorbed the largest flows of immigration in Europe and the period between 1992-2000, witnessed massive influxes of foreigners (700-800,000). Of these, 300-350,000 entered or remained in Italy without permits of residence (permesso di soggiorno). These figures introduce two important aspects of Italian immigration: intense, high-volume influxes and a large number of illegal immigrants. In 1999, Italy had the greatest increase in foreign-born residents and will become the European country with the largest increase of a foreign-born population. According to this estimate, in 2015 Italy will have six million immigrants.

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This means that with the second generations of immigrants, Italians will have to face a more intense integration process. In this respect, this is the context artists face today and in the future when they create socially engaged art in the public domain in Italy related to immigration issues. A more in-depth discussion on the topic, with reference to the actions of the government cannot be delayed, especially since the artists will have to deal with public administration decisions with regard to public art.

1. Immigration and public art in Italy

Everyday, TV channels show the images of the latest boat full of immigrants from North Africa or Albania on the Italian shores. The news frequently moves from describing the event to discussing how public structures are unprepared to deal with such an emergency. Considering the relevance of these numbers, immigration issues in the past have not been central to policy: only three laws have been written, in 1990, 1998, and 2002. However, immigration issues in Italy are rapidly changing the country’s identity. This is similar to what Hou Hanru states about new metropolitan reality: “It consists of both old and new social orders, and the conflicts arising from cultural difference contained within each, help drive social change.”

Accordingly, art and immigration have never had political relevance or received a lot of media coverage. The media did, however, address immigration only when the artist Antonio Riello in 1997 showed “Italiani brava gente”-Italians good people- a videogame in which the objective was to hit and drown as many boats full of immigrants as possible. By displaying this artwork, he meant to criticize the way Italians deal with the problem of immigration.

(September 17, 2005).

9. The Martelli law (1990) reflected the conviction that the proper response to the immigration emergency in Italy would be an annual planning of the migratory flows. The Turco-Napolitano law (1998) created a system based on fighting illegal immigration through bilateral agreements, regulating legal migration through a quota system, and integrating resident foreigners with financial assistance distributed to afflicted regions. The Bossi-Fini law (2002) imposed stricter conditions on the same issues. Some include the requirement to obtain fingerprints from foreigners and facilitating the expulsion process.

The issue whether art, and especially public art, should be means for social criticism and social healing has never been of greater practical and political relevance than it is today. However, this discussion has never questioned the central role of the government. It is then time to pose the question: should the central government be responsible for these projects?

In attempting to answer this question, we must look at the weaknesses of the public administration. The difficulties of public institutions to follow the rapid changes in the lifestyle of immigrants, especially in the younger generations, make integration more challenging. This is particularly true for France and Italy, which emphasize assimilation over multiculturalism. In this regard, this discussion is especially relevant considering the interest of politicians who seek new ways to address the problem and involve public art as a tool for social healing. If anything, it could provide politicians with a short-term remedy and marketing tool to show they are addressing the problem. However, this does not exhaust the central role of the government in dealing with public art devoted to issues of immigration.

It must be recognized that historically the Italian government always maintained a central role in various areas: as welfare, preservation of the arts, and immigration. Although it must be acknowledged that this was done in a highly discontinuous way; as this left room for other protagonists such as the Catholic Church or local associations to promote integration through art. However, in all cases associations eventually have to work with the public administration. The bureaucracy of the public system tends to impede their activities and as a result, discourages cooperation between the government and various entities. As a result, neither the government nor other entities were able to create a powerful and effective project that involved immigrants.

To understand why, we should look at the way the public administration has been dealing with public art. In Italy, the debate around public art is fairly recent. Until now, the practice included interventions in two areas: monuments commissioned by the state and a few half-hearted attempts of temporary public art projects. The government succeeded in defining the message and influencing the results of public art projects. This is understandable given the government’s prerogatives: the allocation of funds and
resources. This tendency, however, is more evident in monuments than in temporary public artwork. The same logic works as well for public artwork directed toward issues of immigration.

The involvement of the government seems consistent in every model dealing with public art like the “Nouveaux commanditaires”\(^\text{11}\) in France or the one used in the US, lucidly described in a recent manual for perfect public art, “Public art by the book.”\(^\text{12}\) If this model is not particularly counter-productive for the commissioning of decorative art, it doesn’t help in creating a good relationship with the immigrant community, since it is seen as a way to manifest the power structure.

Thus far, the most relevant project that dealt with the inter-ethnicities in Italy was founded in 2000. The project, “Arte integrazione multiculture” (Art integration multicultures), involved an artist, public administrator, and a cultural mediator. It began with a study of Zingonia, an area in the periphery of the industrial city of Bergamo (Northern Italy). This area was characterized as an inter-ethnic microcosm.\(^\text{13}\) The objective was to foster integration through the creation of art projects. Professional artists were invited to design their works around issues of migration in a multicultural society. The project also involved the organization of collateral events such as: “seminars with urbanists and intellectuals, focus groups comprising of artists and social parties, with the involvement of the population and the administrations.”\(^\text{14}\)

The national press praised the Zingonia project and the artists have been lauded for their attention to the situation and efforts in finding the best art possible to depict the identity problems of the immigrants. However, the method by which the project was

\(^{11}\) The model of “Nouveaux commanditaires” (“New clients”) was created in France in 1991 by the artist François Hers, who was responsible for the cultural projects of the “Fondation de France.” This model is based on the interrelation and cooperation between artists, cultural mediators, and citizens. http://www.bureaudescompetences.org.


\(^{13}\) A description of the reality of Zingonia is described by the artist Gennaro Castellano: “Zingonia contained all the elements of what could be a diffused reality in the near future, on a national scale: a large suburb created out of nothing in order to concentrate productive activities with living quarters, intended by the project designers to be a utopian city, for the time being a great industrial ghetto. A place…where there are people from various countries and realities, a place that has become a sort of laboratory of multiethnic cohabitation.” www.progettozingonia.it. (November 1, 2005).

\(^{14}\) http://www.teknemedia.net/magazine/arte_pubblica/index.html. (November 1, 2005).
conducted reflects only Italian artists’ interpretation of issues like migration and identity. Why, for example, haven’t African artists of the diaspora been invited to present their work? Perhaps we can shed light on why specific Italian artists were chosen instead of African artists.

It was considered necessary to include a public administrator in order to facilitate and shorten the timing to obtain funds and support from the local administration. The mayor and general director were directly involved in the choice of the artists for the project. If the realization of the project was only possible with the aid of the public administration, it is legitimate to say that the project is indelibly related to the image of the local administration. This could be a reason to limit most of the immigrants’ participation. Only the children, unaware of the politics behind the issues, were the part of the immigrant population that actively participated.

This leads us to a discussion of the type of message public art conveys. The majority of the cases are planned on a need to assist and follow what Goldstein describes as a public art plan, “to structure a process and a product to meet your need.” The first thing to do, is establish the context, assessing what are the desired accomplishments and issues to be addressed. Unfortunately, the needs of the public administration are reflected and not those of the immigrants. The public administration’s common initiative has always been to erect monuments, works that remain for many years and with the intention of evoking memory. The message conveyed by a monument, because of its form, is seen as more admonitory. The meaning of the word itself: “monument,” from the Latin monere, means to admonish, warn, advice.

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15 The necessity to develop a direct rapport with the public administration was due to the need of financial aid. It was easier to obtain it with the promise of acquisition of contemporary works of art offered to the local administrations.

16 “In the first phase of our work we got in touch with people from different countries. Some responded, others did not, some ran away and others only participated halfway. The group that was most mixed, was that of the children. There were Romanian, Senegalese, Italian, and Moroccan children, and in the very beginning an Asian child. This says a lot about the chances for integration in future generations.”

The public administration of Zingonia preferred tangible works of art: in the Mayor’s eyes, the temporary nature of an art project makes it more vague (“fumosa”). This is far from the idea that “public art does not have to last forever; it does not have to cast its message to some unmistakable, but platitudinous theme that absolutely everyone will get.”\textsuperscript{18} Still today, this is how the public administration conceives temporal public art in Italy: as unreadable and impractical.\textsuperscript{19} This still leaves us with this issue of traditional monuments. Public administration rarely asks itself if people care about traditional monuments. According to Coombes, a number of commentators said that the more monumental the scale of public sculpture, the more likely it is to be ignored or forgotten over time.\textsuperscript{20} In Italy, being far from the idea of accepting the concept of counter-monument, it seems like the only path this discussion should take is linking art practice more strictly with the audience.\textsuperscript{21}

2. Context: audience and space

An investigation of the audience in the Zingonia project should determine whether or not the immigrants were consulted as to what type of art they wanted or needed. Media and art critics praised the interesting choice of art works on display, a commendable effort, but is it possible to make a step forward?\textsuperscript{22} René Klarenbeek sought to fill this lacuna by deciding to work on site with the community of Memelodians in South Africa. He tried to render his paintings “functional and effective” to relate to the development of the

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\textsuperscript{19} “When modern works of public art are criticized, they’re often characterized as “unreadable” in contrast to traditional works which were supposedly universally popular.” W. J. Thomas Mitchell, \textit{Art and the Public Sphere} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). 247.
\textsuperscript{22} René Klarenbeek’s work in South Africa consisted in painting each day a different image and text on a billboard set up in a common road in Mamelodi, a township in South Africa that host more than one million black people.
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audience. He accomplished his objectives during a project that saw him traveling in various disadvantaged parts of the world (Colombia, Cuba, South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria). He created “his paintings amongst and together with his audience.” This was “intended both as an act of self-confrontation as well as a final attempt to make himself useful as a painter.”

His work is appealing to understand the dynamic with the audience in a contextual approach. This is particularly relevant in a situation of social conflict since, as Miles suggested, “a contextual approach to arts practice interrogates its theoretical base, in order to be free from the replication of past models which serve the dominant ideology.” If the danger of replicating an existent power structure is embedded in the public administration’s methods in producing public artwork, René’s project shows a way to avoid this. The analysis of public art and context in art by Suzanne Lacy greatly describes how: “works of public art enter a preexisting physical and social organization. How the work relates to, reinforces or contends with forms of expression of that community is a question that contributes to the critical dialogue.” Attempts to create a public debate, or reactions from the audience are central both in South Africa among the black community and in Italy among the immigrant communities.

The analysis of the public artwork in its context requires understanding how the work contributes to the public debate about minorities’ of themselves and about their social agenda. The notion arises of being seen as “different” and how the black or the immigrant population copes with this. In the case of South Africa, Annie Coombes relates a similar question to the pre-existent monuments and history, focusing on “how is it possible for black constituencies to simply accept the coexistence of such an oppressive

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23 According to René Klarenbeek’s personal view and artistic objective, expressed on his website www.painter.nl. (November 8, 2005).
In the Italian case, it would mean relating the way immigrants are perceived by the residents, considering their past history, relation, and stereotypes with their countries of origin. Oppressive racist monuments are physically visible in South Africa and are metaphorical in Italy, occurring in words and structures of the residents.

Due to the many differences, it would seem odd to compare the use of such a contextual artistic practice in South Africa and Italy. Certainly the case of South Africa is very extreme. It involves memory and death, years of frustration and exploitation at the ends of the white elite. However, I believe issues of racism and social conflicts are the same, even if the degree of intensity varies. Moreover, immigrants in Italy share similar problems with the black population of South Africa these days, concerning their difficulties in making their voices heard. Just to give an example, Italian immigrants are not allowed to participate in political life and many of their rights have been blocked.

In this sense, public art can be a powerful tool to create awareness and engage the population in empowerment. One practice used for this purpose is the work of activist artists like muralists. But would this practice work in a similar context? The appellation strategy used by René in his billboard-painting, a medium taken from the advertising world, worked well in engaging the population about issues that were important for their lives as political citizens. The success of René’s project is proven by the presence of the black community’s voice in the paintings and by its active involvement in discussions of political issues.

In the Italian case, participation of the immigrants’ audience has been very limited. The Zingonia project was the very first case in which immigrants were invited to take part, but that did not mean they fully participated. This absence of participation is

26 Coombs, 23.
27 The law Bossi-Fini (2002) was created in response to a fear for illegal immigration and saw a restriction of the rights of the immigrants.
29 Following the organizers’ idea, the project’s objective was not to “communicate at all costs.”
very worrying because it could be used as proof of their disinterest. Previously, the immigrants have only marginally been engaged with art. During discussions with experts on the relationship between immigrants participation in the arts, a majority of people think there is no relationship because immigrants feel they have more basic problems to solve, like finding a house and a job or don’t have an adequate education to appreciate the arts.\(^{30}\) Such beliefs are brought into question in the Progetto Zingonia and in René’s work.

The notion of artists as interlocutors engaging in a dialogue with the audience is vital in both projects.\(^{31}\) But while René succeeded in involving viewers as makers of his work, in the Progetto Zingonia the process was less direct. The notion of audience as also a maker, taking part of the authorship, is central in this regard, from an educational point of view, as discussed by Nicholas Lowe in “Who is speaking? Who is being heard?”\(^{32}\) Can the artist play an efficient role of interlocutor, which Lowe defined as “the artist in a co-receptive speaking and listening position?” According to Coombes, the monuments that spoke for the white elite have been the interlocutors of the black population for a long time in South Africa. The messages conveyed by those monuments no longer reflect the current situation in South Africa. Instead, René’s work, by directly involving the population of the township, gives the community space where voices reflecting the changes in contemporary South Africa can be heard by the local government. As far as the Italian case, the artists seem to interpret and represent the immigrants’ problems from a detached point of view, mediated by public administrators’ decisions. This could be another reason that inhibited many immigrants from participating.

In this discussion, one can easily take for granted that art in both case studies is primarily intended for immigrants in Italy and the black population in South Africa. However, the notion of audience needs to be examined more fully. In particular, the homogeneity of the audience and its degree of participation in the art-making process are difficult issues to understand and define. A set of questions arises from an analysis of

\(^{30}\) Conversation over email with Mario Zamponi and Iolanda Pensa.

\(^{31}\) Lowe, 53-4.

\(^{32}\) Lowe, 46-47. Bakhtin’s interpretation of the novel helps clarifying the involvement of the readers and how they can be participants in the making of meaning in art.
these cases: who are the members of the audience, can we gauge the audience’s reactions, are immigrants their own audience, what is the relationship between different groups within the audience. Moreover, the use of the term “audience” is delicate since it automatically suggests a passive role of the recipients. Finally, to which degree they are involved in the creation the artwork? And even when the artist actively engages them, how much do they participate?

If it is difficult to answer questions about the audience, it is not any easier to agree on who is the real interlocutor. Is it the artist, the public administrator, or the cultural mediator? There is no doubt that the artist is acting as an interlocutor between the artwork and the audience in René’s case. He is sharing with the Mamelodian population ideas about the content of the work, his artistic activity, and his life, by living among the community for the entire duration of the project. In the Italian case, the immigrant community meets various individuals. Immigrants actually have the chance to talk to the artists only once, while they frequently meet the cultural mediator, an employee of the local administration, whose responsibility is to act as a liaison between the immigrant community and the public administration.33 The cultural mediator is another figure that is part of the power structure. He or she keeps the audience away from a discourse about its problems, for example about racism. In the Zingonia project the direct dialogue of the artist with the audience cannot flow freely, but it is interrupted by the presence of the invasive public administrators and cultural mediator. The intervention of these figures is not only metaphorical, but involves also the actual space where the public art project takes place.

The contextualization of the two public art projects involves not only a discussion about the audience but also about the space, both in real and figurative terms.

33 According to a widely accepted definition, “the cultural mediator is a professional figure who fosters communication between immigrants and the public institutions. He or she can intervene when a link between public services (such as schools, hospitals, law courts) and foreign beneficiaries is needed. He or she can enhance diversity through reciprocal integration and understanding.” (My translation).
Looking at the geographic space, René chose to erect his billboard in front of the hospital entrance, on a busy road to begin his “art therapy” project. Moreover, René’s often refers to the political and social situation of the township in his paintings. The specific space where the action takes place is embedded in the idea that “space is political, inseparable from the conflictual and uneven social relations that structure specific societies at specific historical moments.” This applies to the Italian case as well. That is why the objective of integration is unlikely to be reached by hosting the Zingonia project in an unused factory rented by the local administration. The immigrants are supposed to enter another physical space owned by the paternalist Italian government, metaphorically asking for permission.

The space where public art projects about immigration are situated is also a figurative one. René’s art practice takes him to another level of creation: once he gets permission and funding to work in the streets of Mamelodi, in direct contact with the audience, the issue about what can be properly defined as a public place and about the physical space is no longer relevant. Following Homi Bhabha’s notion of “third space,” artwork is then situated on another level, one we could call a third level. This seems to apply perfectly to the work of René Klarenbeek. According to Bhabha, the “third space” is a mode of articulation, a way of describing a productive, and not merely reflective, space that engenders new possibility. This hybrid third space provides also spatial politics of inclusion, rather than exclusion, which initiates new signs of identity and innovative sites of collaboration. This concept is valuable to understand the way in which René used his art in the public domain. He sought to engage the audience in the art-making process with the hope of addressing social issues.

34 In one of his paintings, the project is defined as “art therapy”: see the painting, “The Mamelodi theatre organization presents art therapy.” In response, a passerby asked the painter: “are we sick?”
35 In other paintings, advertisement-like, René Klarenbeek points out the local problems still existing in a township, despite the end of the apartheid. In the painting “the town Mamelodi, the township Pretoria” he describes in symbolic terms the relationship between the township and the white city of power. In “Buy local” he suggests the importance of creating successful local businesses, in “car jack” he explores the increase of violent crimes.
37 Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London; New York: Routledge, 1994). 4
One painting in particular manifests this concept. In one of his billboards, René presents himself to the audience: “Hi, I am the white guy.” His black assistant holds a sign saying “and I am his black assistant.” On the billboard painted the following day, they roles are reversed: René is the white assistant and Kleinbooi the black guy. They both color their face with white and black paint to show that neither of them has really white or black skin and to underline that those terms are connected to rigid definitions of difference and skin color. In this work the artist operates in a sort of “in-between” space, as described by Homi Bhabha. René decides to work in the “third space” of the social and geographical reality of Mamelodi, understanding that his work could only be able to be functional in characteristics of the place described by Edward Soja in his postmodern geography. On this level, distinctions like black and white does not have a meaning anymore. The situation is different in the Zingonia project. While the content of the art situates the discourse on a “third space,” the artists’ efforts are thwarted by the project’s connection with the government. This close relation confuses the public art project with the sovereign national culture.

Conclusion

Taking into consideration the work of René in South Africa and comparing it to the Italian case of Progetto Zingonia, I have been trying to get ideas that could be applicable to the Italian situation of public art relating to immigration. In the attempt of finding recommendations applicable to the Italian situation, I found that the low participation of the immigrants could be the result of a project’s association with the government, in a more or less direct manner.

38 René painted his face white and Kleinbooi painted his black.
39 Bhabha, 4. “In-between” is a liminal space, it is “the designations of identity, [it] becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white.” Bhabha, 4.
41 This notion of national culture, proposed as an “imagined community” rooted in a “homogeneous empty time” of modernity and progress is discussed in Benedict R. O’G Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Rev. and extended ed. (London; New York: Verso, 1991).
In the Italian case, immigrant participation has been made difficult not only in determining the meaning to be conveyed, but even as passive participants. This means that Klenbeerk’s ‘third level’ recommendations are even more ambitious if they are to be applied in Italy.

An active social articulation of difference in the process of public art seems to take place only if two conditions are satisfied. First, the artist must understand his or her potential as an interlocutor for the communities, as opposed to the government or cultural mediator in this way. The artist is in a better position to understand what immigrants need and want. The artist is able to privilege the human dimension of the immigrant over the political one. He or she uses art as a means to recognize and identify the immigrant’s human agency. On the other hand, the public administrator and, to certain extent, the cultural mediator’s activities are inscribed in the Foucauldian apparatus. The intentionality and uni-directionality of the government central power provide local administrators and cultural mediators with the authority to intervene in the immigrants’ communities. This is done according to the idea that they would know better what is best for the immigrants, what type of art and artists they would like to see and in which activities they would like to be involved.

Second, the project must be situated in the “Third Space,” both geographically and metaphorically. Only in this way can public art projects reflect the continuous negotiation of cultural changes that characterizes the process of integration of the immigrants’ communities. Only in this way will art be able to reflect the hybridity in the condition in which immigrants live. A public art project related to immigration can function effectively only in what Homi Bhabha has called Third Space, where the coexistence of different cultures replaces the dominance of the “mainstream,” nationalist culture. This position implies that the identity of immigrants and residents in a territory will keep changing, in a process of confrontation, dialogue negotiation and (re)invention. In this research, the focus has been primarily on the immigrants’ audience and the

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42 Bhabha, 37. “The intervention of the Third Space of enunciation, which makes the structure of meaning and reference an ambivalent process, destroys this mirror of representation in which cultural knowledge is customarily revealed as an integrated, open, expanding code.”
resident population has been left in the background of the analysis. However, since it plays a central role in the integration process, further research should include needs and reactions of the residents, in a dialectical relationship with the immigrants.

“The representation of difference must not be hastily read as a reflection of the pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation.”[^3] A multicultural, integrated society must be based on a continuous negotiation that can be nurtured and represented through public art. However, this process requires time and patience and cannot be rushed by the rhythm of the politic. Rather it takes time to flourish and be effective.

[^3]: Bhabha, 2.
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