
Integration Strategies of Segregated Areas

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Abstract

Neighborhoods are made of space, architecture and people too. This combination makes possible change. New neighborhoods located in peripheral areas have built in order to a spatial and conceptual sector-based approach: for example natural and built environment are separated, residential and commercial areas are separated. The European policies of recent decades give to the city new expectations and function. However the actual urban spaces do not support mobility or relationships. To restore balance between human community and territory, urban planning should listen to citizens because they are asking for new housing but also for quality of life.

To remedy the risk of social and spatial exclusion, if people can't do it autonomously, actions to support the adaptation to the new context are needed. The best results have been observed where citizens have realized to be part of a community. This work looks at two different situations in new suburban neighborhoods.

In Genoa (Italy) the morphologic features of territory have constrain the urban development on a coastal and hilly areas. New residential neighborhoods grew up from the end of the '60s to early '90s and were built on peripheries of suburbs, just outside the ancient settlements. The buildings' location seems casual or ordered in a unnatural way. At the beginning most of inhabitants expressed a general disquiet; they felt to be marginal. There were no representative places, everything was unknown and without a shared meaning.

The San Biagio district was completed in the 90's. The apartments were only sold to police officers families. This corporative situation and the daily sharing of the same work activities, housework or schooling, has immediately encouraged the relationships among inhabitants of the new residential place. In springtime and summertime adults usually spend their afternoons and evenings talking in communal areas equipped with benches while their children play in courtyards. They spontaneously recreates the community dimension of small countries that is no longer appreciable in city's neighborhoods. In these suburbs, despite the distance from most services, the quality of life is positively assessed by residents.

The apartments in public residential complexes of Prà, Quarto Alto and Begato were assigned to people with a lot of troubles: poverty, criminal records, drug addiction, psychiatric illness. The most representative of them is Quartiere Diamante, completed in 80's. It's located in a small valley and it's geographically isolated. In few years it has became a big container for 2500 families. These weak people were put together at the same time in the most marginal neighborhood in Genoa. It was stigmatized by the city's chroniclers as the most criminogenic place in the city. During the first 15 years, Quartiere Diamante got the ghetto conceptual form. Deviant behaviors were the response to the social disadvantage and

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increases the problems of inhabitants.

At the end of the 90's, a street-based education service was introduced in Quartiere Diamante to meet people every day, listen their problems and look at needs directly where they grow. Along with structural and environmental redevelopment, this social action has made sense of belonging to the place, has redesigned its image, has showed Quartiere Diamante to the city for pleasant events and not for shady chronicles. Meanwhile the population has inevitably renewed. Released accommodation has been allocated to new families especially from North Africa. Social workers proposed intercultural initiatives to promote mutual knowledge among Italians and foreigners. Parties for families, typical dishes swap, italian language courses, fitness, help for parenting, job orientation are successful integration strategies. Social action are for anyone who wants to build the community. Especially foreign mothers enjoy opportunities and services offered because the community dimension is part of their culture. The Maghreb community of Quartiere Diamante is so stable and integrated to convince other North African families to accept the assignment of a popular home in this neighborhood. Ladies from Maghreb in particular can find their culture's welcome and at the same time they can open to European uses.

The new suburban neighborhoods observed were initially places of socio-spatial segregation. Later thanks to social strategies or to same interests and lifestyles, in these districts now is possible to observe precious examples of socio-cultural integration. The sense of territorial belonging has made people feel part of the city and has changed a segregated space into a place of integration.

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