

**CONFERENCE REPORTS**  
**'Decolonial connections. Practices recreating  
conviviality' University of Verona, Italy**  
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We daily experience forms of encounter and conviviality offering resistance to the regime of individualism and engaging differences, without smothering them. A conference was carried out last year to provide a forum for sharing experiences of life trajectories, creative processes and work experiences in this regard. Titled 'Conessioni Decoloniali. Pratiche che ricreano convivenza' (Decolonial connections. Practices that recreate conviviality), the conference was held at the University of Verona on the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> e 21<sup>st</sup> May 2016.

This conference resulted from the desire to generate encounters and dialogues concerning Italian and international realities. These realities emerged from the experiences encountered by the organizers (Maria Liva Alga, Rosanna Cima, Mariateresa Muraca) in their research and political action in different parts of Italy and the world.

The conference work revolved around three thematic discussion circles: *diaries, genealogies, self-ethnographies; care practices; shared participation in knowledge construction; post-exotic artistic practices; communal convivial practices.*

Presenters included Mari Luz Esteban (Universidad del País Vasco) who focused on the self-ethnography of the body and the pedagogy of vulnerability discussed from a feminist standpoint. Chiara Zamboni (*Diotima*, women's philosophical community, University of Verona) and Elena Migliavacca (Casa di Ramia, Verona Municipal Council) underlined the theme of genealogies emerging from relations of trust and old and sacred itineraries.

The trans-cultural artistic collective Ideadestroyingmuros and Cristina Alga (CLAC Sea Ecomuseum, Palermo) proposed actions concerning the recuperation and construction of collective memories.

The theme of care was tackled by Antonietta Potente (Theology), François Fleury (Co-founder of Centre Appartenance Lausanne), Federica de Cordova (University of Verona) and the group Archivio vivo (social assistants e autonomous researchers). They highlighted forms of care that foregrounded the body and emotions. Claudio Falbo (Calabrian Centre for Solidarity), Alessandro Tolomelli (University of Bologna), CreArtEducAcción Comunitaria (Valencia), Paulo Freire Documentation Centre (Padova) e Zenaide Millan, Ivanete Mantelli e Lucimar Roman (Movement of Female Farmers -Brazil) dialogued around participatory practices and shared knowledge construction. Their presentations threw into relief the added value deriving from situated and embodied knowledge.

Presenters problematised eurocentric and economic oriented views of knowledge as they drew on other epistemologies in their search for standpoints from which to understand and contribute to transforming reality. These discussions were marked by a deepening of maieutic methods and processes of conscientisation intended to identify cracks through which efforts geared towards social change can be exerted. Art introduced the concept of the post-exotic. Decolonising colonial scenarios to create new imaginaries was at the heart of presentations by Emilia Guarino (Diaria Palermo), Suranga Katugampala (film director), Edla Eggert (Pontificia Universidade Católica do Rio Grande do Sul - Brazil) and ideadestroyingmuros (transcultural artistic collective). These presentations showed how subaltern material and instruments, deployed in artistic contexts, function as metaphors for diasporic living and shed light on cultural identities predicated on transnational solidarity networks. Art cuts across the postcolonial and processes of decolonization to provide a concrete post-exotic dimension with respect to the use of space, things and words, and developing social relations.

The discussion circle focusing on Communal and Convivial Practices addressed the following issues: How do these communal and convivial practices help deconstruct a naïve and ideologically driven vision of social coviviality? What alternatives

do they embody and offer with respect to an identity driven and exclusionary conception of community?

What participatory process do they promote within the socio-political contexts in which they are situated? How do they render differences generative? This theme was addressed by Abdoul Ndoye, Francesca Coltellacci and Domenico Maffeo (CasaLaboratorio FareComunità - Venice); Sokna Aissa Cisse and Serigne Babacar Mbow ( Ndem NGO, Sénégal) and keurgumak (Valencia). Their discussions extended to address forms of co-living and conviviality grounded in political and mystic principles and plural organisational forms, geared towards the exploration of non individualistic forms of well being. This entailed a valorisation of non monetary forms of exchange and collective decision-making processes.

The May 2016 conference was preceded by two month long workshops involving groups and associations from Verona and its surrounding cities. Verona, in particular, was home to the *gaal*, collectively constructed in a process involving refugees living in the city, University of Verona students and the collective Ideadestroyingmuros. Made out of used women's clothes, together constituting a red and blue ensemble, the artistic installation was set up inside the University. The following excerpt is from the diary kept throughout the conference:

Many enter the dugout barefoot, one at a time. An embarkation brimming with lives recalls those who ride the waves of the Mediterranean losing these lives. Our roots hold us here - our roots in the sea, red signifying blood and blue signifying hope. Dresses of mothers and ancestors keep us together. It is perhaps this that keeps us connected.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The relevant documentation is available at : <http://diarioconessionidecoloniali.tumblr.com/>, The photographic material is available at in: <https://fotoevideoconessionidecoloniali.tumblr.com/>. Photographic and audio documentation credit due to ideadestroyingmuros. Soe of the presentations are available in the 2016 issue of the online journal *Per amore del mondo* and in issue No. 3 2016 of the journal *Interthesis*.