

IUL - School of Social Sciences and Humanities  
Department of Social and Organizational Psychology

**“Neighbours but strangers”: social psychological processes predicting public  
place sociability in multicultural regenerated neighbourhoods**

Caterina Fuligni

Dissertation submitted as partial requirement for the conferral of  
Master in Psychology of Intercultural Relations,

Supervisor:

Doutora Rita Guerra, Investigadora Auxiliar,  
ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon

Co-supervisor:

Doutora Paula Castro, Professora Associada,  
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September 2019



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**Abstract**

This study examined whether different types of regeneration strategy—“bottom-up” versus “top-down”—affect differently residents’ perceived community participation, sense of community, place attachment and public place sociability. Specifically, it explored a) how perceived community participation predicts the use of public places for everyday sociability, examining the mediator roles of sense of community and place attachment and b) whether these effects would be moderated by residents’ endorsement of multiculturalism. A questionnaire survey ( $N=119$ ) with native Italian residents from two sub-urban and ethnic diverse neighbourhoods undergoing urban regeneration (“top-down” versus “bottom-up”) indicated that: a) residents in the “bottom-up” neighbourhood reported greater levels of sense of community, place attachment, public place sociability compared to the “top-down” neighbourhood except for perceived community participation; b) the relationship between perceived community participation and public place sociability is mediated by sense of community; and c) this positive indirect effect does not depend on residents’ multicultural ideology. Consequences and practical implications of considering community and place meanings in order to reverse neighborhood decline, lack of social cohesion, and threats of crime are discussed.

*Keywords:* public place sociability; regeneration; perceived community participation; sense of community; place attachment; multicultural ideology

PsycINFO Classification Categories and Codes:

3000 Social Psychology

3020 Group & Interpersonal Processes

4000 Engineering & Environmental Psychology

4070 Environmental Issues & Attitudes

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**Resumo**

O presente estudo analisou os efeitos de diferentes estratégias de regeneração urbana – “bottom-up” versus “top-down”- nas percepções de participação da comunidade, no sentido de comunidade, ligação ao lugar e sociabilidade em espaço público dos respectivos residentes. Especificamente, explorou a) de que forma as percepções de participação da comunidade prevêm a sociabilidade em espaço público, analisando o papel mediador do sentido de comunidade e da ligação ao lugar e b) se estes efeitos são moderados pelo apoio dos residentes ao multiculturalismo. Um inquérito por questionário ( $N=119$ ) com residentes nativos italianos de dois bairros sub-urbanos multiculturais onde decorreram duas intervenções urbanas (“top-down” versus “bottom-up”) indicou que: a) os residentes no bairro “bottom-up” relataram maior sentido de comunidade, maior ligação ao lugar, e mais sociabilidade em espaço público do que os residentes no bairro “top-down”, mas não revelaram maior percepção de participação na comunidade; b) a relação entre a participação percebida da comunidade e a sociabilidade em espaço público é mediada pelo sentido de comunidade; e c) este efeito positivo indireto não depende do apoio dos residentes ao multiculturalismo. São discutidas as consequências e implicações práticas de considerar os significados de comunidade e do lugar para reverter o declínio do bairro, a falta de coesão social e as ameaças do crime.

*Palavras-chave:*

sociabilidade em espaço público, regeneração, participação percebida da comunidade, sentido de comunidade, ligação ao lugar, ideologia multicultural

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## Introduction

This research intertwines the theories and practices of community planning and community psychology with the environmental psychology literature on people-place bonds—to study of the use of urban public places for everyday sociability. Despite each area constituting an investigation field *per se* with respective constructs and methods—to date, very few links between the disciplines have been attempted by researchers and scholars (Manzo & Perkins, 2006). In fact, each area of research faces limitations in providing an exhaustive and comprehensive overview of the nature of people’s relationships to place and the dynamics within communities. The present paper seeks to contribute to the “cross-pollination” (Manzo & Perkins, 2006, p. 336) among disciplines by examining the social psychological processes involved in the use of public places for everyday sociability in regenerating contexts. In focusing on public places (e.g., streets and squares), we chose two relatively stigmatized urban neighbourhoods in the city of Padova (Italy), because of their high levels of ethnic diversity—among the highest in the whole Veneto region (Istat, 2008; as cited in Romania & Zamperini, 2009)—and the regeneration interventions that, there, are taking place.

As cities are changing their urban and social fabric under the effect of economically and politically driven processes of globalization, homogenization, migration, and integration of world territories (Lewicka, 2010), many urban areas are left facing problems like poor health, poor housing conditions, high crime rates, and unemployment (Blanco, Bonet, & Walliser, 2011; Heath, Rabinovich, & Barreto, 2017; Taylor, 1995).

The consequences of such social problems have been highlighted by the psychological literature for what concerns the mental health and well-being of the populations living in these

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places (Curtis, 2010; Nelson, Lord, & Ochocka, 2001; Prilleltensky & Stead, 2013; as cited in Heath et al., 2017).

Moreover, while contemporary urban societies no longer depend on the town square for basic needs, good public space is still considered a requisite for the social and psychological health of modern communities (CooperMarcus & Francis, 1998). To this regard, Western European governments sought to find solutions to the uneven development of cities through the implementation of different urban regeneration schemes (Brenner, 2004; Lees, 2008; Roberts & Sykes, 2000). Among the various goals of such regeneration strategies—e.g., improving the liveability while addressing crime and disturbance of public order (Uitermark, Duyvendak, & Kleinhans, 2007), improving the quality-of-life (Jarvis, Berkeley & Broughton, 2011) and finding solutions to deprivation and social exclusion (Pethia, 2011)—some urban regeneration strategies aim at promoting communication and interaction between various groups of the society in the realm of public space (Mannarini, 2014; Mazeri & Savvides, 2013; Rose, 2004). Indeed, local social interactions have long been considered to play a key role in the community health and wellbeing (Bridge, Berry-Bobovski, & Gallagher, 2004; Du Toit, et al., 2007; Stafford, Bartley, Wilkinson et al., 2003). However, the long-term impact of regeneration initiatives was demonstrated to be variable (Allen & Cars, 2001; Mawdsley & Darlington, 2002). Scholars argue that this may be due to a failure in engaging the communities of the areas that are being regenerated (Controller and auditor general, National audit office [NAO], 2004; Jarvis, Berkeley & Broughton, 2011).

Few studies in the literature took a social psychological approach to this issue (but see Bettencourt & Castro, 2015; Heath et al., 2017). Those that exist do not examine *whether* and *how* the perceptions of community participation in the regeneration interventions may affect the

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use of public place for socializing purposes, i.e. public place sociability. Moreover, they have not yet directly clarified how different regeneration strategies (i.e., “bottom-up”, where the community took part in the decision-making process, versus “top-down”, where the community had little or no control over the decision-making) affect social psychological variables related to community, (e.g., sense of community and perceived community participation) and place (e.g., place attachment and public place sociability).

The frequency of the use of public places has been shown to be different between native and non-native populations by a recent study conducted in stigmatized neighbourhoods in the city of Padova (Romania & Zamperini, 2009). Moreover, qualitative studies focusing on native residents in ethnically diverse areas found that those who *preferred diversity as a neighbourhood characteristic* did not differ in the use of public places and interethnic ties compared to the rest of residents (Blokland & van Eijk, 2009).

Building on existing research, we sought to comprehend whether different types of regeneration strategy— “bottom-up” versus “top-down”—affect differently four social psychological features: perceived community participation, sense of community, place attachment and public place sociability. Moreover, we proposed that in regenerated contexts, the perceived participation of the community in the regeneration initiatives will be positively related to the use of public sites for socializing and that this relationship occurs via sense of community and place attachment. Finally, we aimed to understand whether the endorsement of multicultural ideology by native Italian residents may affect the social psychological processes predicting public place sociability.

In the next sections we start by illustrating current approaches to urban regeneration. We then review how residents’ use of public places for socializing purposes may be affected by

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perceived community participation in regeneration projects, sense of community and place attachment, linking them to multiculturalism. Finally, we will illustrate the context of the study and propose a model to test to what extent – in regenerated contexts – perceived community participation, sense of community and place attachment can predict public place sociability and whether their impact depends on residents' endorsement of multicultural ideology.

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## **Chapter I – Literature Review**

### **Approaches to Urban Regeneration**

Although many of the concepts investigated by social psychology are related to the notion of place (e.g., ‘community’, ‘ethnicity’ and ‘nation’), place dynamics have long been neglected by social psychology (Canter, 1986; Dixon & Durrheim, 2000). The sub-disciplines of environmental psychology (Russell & Ward, 1982) and community psychology (Wandersman & Nation, 1998) offer more relevant work on human-place relations (Di Masso, Dixon, & Durrheim, 2014), although community development of deprived neighbourhoods has traditionally been studied in the field of urban planning and criminal justice (e.g., for what concerns crime prevention). Several studies documented the contribute of psychology in the understanding of urban regeneration interventions (Wandersman & Nation, 1998). A study examining the role of place attachment (i.e., an affective bond with specific settings towards which people want to maintain a close relation and where they feel comfortable and safe) in a revitalizing neighbourhood demonstrated that place attachment is higher for home owners, long-term residents and for individuals perceiving fewer incivilities on their block as well as for those with higher sense of neighborhood cohesion and control (i.e. collective efficacy), among the other outcomes (Brown, Perkins & Brown, 2002). Plas and Levis (1996) evidenced that the architectural characteristics of a town were linked to residents’ sense of community (i.e., a multidimensional construct capturing the sense of belonging to an organized collectivity). Furthermore, it has been shown that the change and transformation of buildings and spaces diminish place-based meanings, such as place identity, sense of community and sense of place (Hull, Lam & Vigo, 1994) and the quality of public spaces in the city (Oatley, 2000). Scholars

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thus advocate for the inclusion of psychological aspects along with the physical aspects of a place in remaking cities (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015).

On a general level, urban regeneration (or renewal) is defined as an approach aiming to improving the environmental quality (Roberts 2000), tackling the urban decline problem and meeting various socioeconomic objectives (Lee & Chan, 2008a): enhancing existing social networks, improving inclusion of vulnerable groups, and changing adverse impacts on the living environment (Chan & Yung, 2004). Over the last three decades, there has been a rise in the attempts made by governments to increase citizens' involvement in a variety of sectors, for instance, environment, public health, social services and urban regeneration (Mannarini, 2014; Rabbiosi, 2016). That is, there have been some efforts to shift from a “top-down”, centralized and sector-oriented approach, mainly based on interventions in the urban fabric, towards “bottom-up”, community-inclusive approaches, integrating initiatives based on the involvement of public, private and voluntary sectors (Tedesco, n.d.). The rationale behind this transition is manifold (Burton, 2003; Korfmacher, 2001) and takes into account political, democratic, ethical, pragmatic and social reasoning. The social reasoning, specifically, is based on the belief that citizens' adoption of an active role is likely to contain, and possibly reverse, the decline of social capital—norms of reciprocity and trust within the civil society (Putnam, 2000)—by enhancing community networks and social trust (Mannarini, 2014). Indeed, scholars point out that the pro-growth, centralized, regeneration strategies of the pre-crisis decades did not succeed in managing the social change taking place in the cities (Chasking & Garg, 1997), solving the inequalities (Joyce et al., 2010) and the widespread deprivation of many urban areas (Dorling et al., 2007;



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Unsworth et al., 2011). Hence, the need of more local, community-based, participatory strategies has become increasingly strong (Chasking & Garg, 1997; Rabbiosi, 2016).

Given the amount of resources invested in regeneration projects, the demanding effort requested by governments at the local level in order to implement them and the impact that they might have on local communities—it is relevant to understand how different policy models affect the social relations *in* place and relations *to* place (Di Masso, 2015). To date, the social psychological literature concerning the effects of different regeneration strategies is still scarce and does not provide an explanation of the *processes* leading to successful regeneration interventions (Heath et al., 2017). An exception was a recent study showing that residents of areas where a “bottom-up” regeneration strategy was used, reported higher level of community identification compared to areas undergoing a “top-down” regeneration intervention, which, in turn, was linked to greater perceived social support, community-esteem, personal self-esteem, and self-efficacy. These processes were also shown to be linked to increased resilience, well-being and stronger willingness to pay back to the community (Heath et al., 2017).

To sum up, to date no studies examined how different regeneration interventions, i.e., “bottom-up” vs. “top-down”, affect community-related constructs (e.g., perceived community participation and sense of community) and people-place bonds, i.e., place attachment and public place sociability. Literature showed the predictors of place attachment (Brown, Perkins & Brown, 2002) and the determinants of sense of community (Mannarini, Talò & Rochira, 2017), yet no studies investigated if place attachment and sense of community predict public place sociability. Also, despite of sense of community and place attachment being related phenomena, analyzing both factors allows to assess how they may act differently according to community changes (Long & Perkins, 2007). Finally, immigration changed sharply the physical and societal context

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to accommodate newcomers to the city, who found themselves to share the same areas with households as “neighbours-but-strangers” (Allen & Cars, 2001, p. 2197). Especially in multicultural communities, the way people experience place may often result in feelings of uncertainty, fear or avoidance (Peters & De Haan, 2011). It is thus important to understand, in regenerated communities, the social psychological dynamics predicting the use of public place for everyday sociability.

### **(Perceived) Community Participation**

The role of community participation has been studied in a wide variety of areas, such as community development, community psychology and policy analysis. A meta-analysis conducted by Talò, Mannarini and Rochira (2014) illustrated the overall positive effects of community participation on community development. Specifically, community participation is positively related to quality of life (Nussbaum, 1999; Radcliff & Shufeldt, 2016), social wellbeing, (Keyes 1998; Rondinella, Segre & Zola, 2017; Wandersman & Florin 2000), social empowerment (Chavis & Wandersman 1990; Zimmerman & Rappaport, 1988) and social capital (Putnam 2000; Wollabæk & Selle 2003). Wandersman and Giamartino (1980) found that community residents taking part in block associations reported more neighbouring behaviours than nonparticipants. However, a great level of ambiguity is still present in the way community participation is conceptualized in the literature. For example, Arnstein (1969) argues that community participation ranges from passive forms, in which people have no control over the processes and the outcomes, to active forms, wherein community members have control over both the processes and the outcomes. Conversely, Chaskim and Garg (1997) rely on a spectrum of “government involvement”, wherein at one end an initiative is the product of government legislation, whereas

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at the other end there is no formal government involvement in the initiative. In the context of urban regeneration, these different approaches are expressed through “top-down” or centralized versus “bottom-up” or community-inclusive initiatives.

At a terminological level, an interchangeable use of terms has spread across the literature in order to refer to community participation, for example, social, civic, citizen or public engagement or involvement. A widely accepted definition sees community participation as a process in which the citizens participate actively in the decision-making of institutions, programs and environments that directly affect their lives (Heller et al., 1984). For what concerns the assessment of community participation, to date, there is no validated reference scale. Most of the empirical studies employs ad hoc scales listing behaviours and ask the respondents to report the frequency of each behaviour (Talò et al., 2014). Moreover, the fact that participative practices are highly dependent on the context in which the actors are embedded and on the cultural specificities that permeate the different participatory experiences, make them difficult to be assessed and compared (Buchy & Hoverman 2000; Mannarini, 2014).

This lack of a comparative review of the participatory practices as well as the variability in the measures utilised, put into question the identification of advantages and drawbacks of the participatory experiences (Mannarini, 2014) and might lead to the belief that community participation is often merely tokenistic (Burton, 2003). To date, no study has tried to tackle this issue examining the *perceptions* of participation of the community in the decision-making, rather than the *objective* participation of community members. In other words, for what concerns urban regeneration initiatives, it is relevant to assess whether a “bottom-up” or community-inclusive regeneration strategy corresponds to higher perception of community participation by residents compared to a “top-down” or centralized initiative. Moreover, as urban regeneration is one of the

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field where participatory practices have first been introduced (Mannarini, 2014), we add to the existing research, proposing that in regenerated contexts, the perceived participation of the community in the regeneration initiatives will be positively related to the use of public sites for socializing and that this relationship occurs via sense of community and place attachment. We will hence now consider the literature on sense of community and place attachment and how the two constructs are linked to community participation to the study of public place sociability.

### **Sense of Community**

Despite much criticism in relation to its empirical validity, the most accomplished and used theoretical model to define sense of community is the one proposed by McMillan and Chavis (1986), which includes four components: membership (i.e., a sense of belonging that draws the boundary among those who belong to a community and those who do not), influence (i.e., a sense of having an effect on the community), need of fulfillment (i.e., the expectations regarding the possibility of having one's needs fulfilled by a community) and shared emotional connection (i.e., the feeling of being deeply involved in collective experiences). The association between sense of community and community participation, as well as, their interconnection in promoting community development has been evidenced across the literature (Talò et al., 2014). For instance, residents involved in neighborhood organizations or living in neighborhoods with higher rates of community participation reported higher sense of community (Brodsky, O'Campo & Aronson, 1999). This is consistent with Chavis and Wandersman (1990) proposal that sense of community plays a "catalyst" effect in fostering local action. Indeed, the same positive effects of community participation on quality of life, social well-being, social empowerment and social capital can be also attributed to sense of community (Chavis & Wandersman, 1990; Keyes, 1998;

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Nussbaum, 1999; Putnam, 2000; Wandersman & Florin, 2000; Wollabæk & Selle, 2003; Zimmerman & Rappaport 1988; as cited in Talò et al., 2014). Despite the link between the two constructs, the direction of the relationship has not been clarified yet. As Talò et al. (2014) argued, most of the empirical studies have investigated community participation as a dependent variable, however theoretical assumptions posited a bi-directional relationship between sense of community and participation where the sense of community fosters the engagement of citizens, which, in turn, reinforces sense of community.

Research has also looked at sense of community as a form of social identity (Fisher & Sonn, 2002; Mannarini, Rochira, & Talò, 2012) and the two have demonstrated to have similar effects (Cicognani, Palestini, Albanesi, & Zani, 2012). Drawing upon the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) and social categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) to study intra-community and inter-community processes, Mannarini et al. (2012) argued that identification processes within communities can be similar to identification processes within groups. Moreover, membership—a fundamental subdimension of sense of community, as postulated by McMillan and Chavis's (1986) model -, reflects the process of both self and group categorization, i.e., others as members of the same group (in-group) or members of different groups (out-group). Heath et al., (2017), applying a social identity approach to the regeneration context, showed that a community-inclusive, “bottom-up” urban regeneration lead to higher community identification. This, in turn, was linked to a variety of outcomes such as greater perceived social support, community-esteem, personal self-esteem, and self-efficacy. Given the previous findings evidencing that sense of community and community identification work in similar ways according to the principles of the social identity and social categorization theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986; Turner, et al., 1987), we suggest that a “bottom-up”

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regeneration strategy would lead to higher sense of community compared to a “top-down” initiative.

Moreover, extending the literature on the association between sense of community and community participation to the study of public places’ use for social interactions, we propose that the positive impact of perceived community participation on public place sociability occurs via sense of community. That is, higher perceived community participation should increase public place sociability by increasing sense of community.

Besides sense of community, place attachment can also be an additional underlying mechanism that accounts for the relationship between perceived community participation and public place sociability.

### **Place Attachment**

In the literature, the psychological dimensions of place have been described through a multiplicity of constructs (e.g., sense of place, place attachment, place identity, etc.) and investigated through many different approaches, theories and measurements (Devine-wright & Clayton, 2010; Patterson & Williams, 2005). However, the concept of place attachment lies at the heart of the studies focusing on people’s relationship with significant places (Altman & Low, 1992; Brown, Perkin, & Brown, 2003; Giuliani, 2003; Knez, 2005; Kyle, Graefe, & Manning, 2005; Manzo, 2003; as cited in Hernandez et al., 2007) and there seems to be a general consensus in the literature regarding the use of the term. Hidalgo and Hernandez (2001) define place attachment as an affective bond with specific settings towards which people want to maintain a close relation and where they feel comfortable and safe. The authors point out that the construct has been often associated with place identity since place is a fundamental aspect of identity

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(Lalli, 1992; Proshansky, Fabian, & Karminoff, 1983; Wester-Herber, 2004). In some cases, the constructs have been considered as synonyms (Brown & Werner, 1985), while in others have been included in the supra-ordered concept of sense of place (Hay, 1998a; Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001). Some scholars also considered place attachment as a multidimensional construct including identity (Kyle, Graefe, & Manning, 2005).

Despite the different conceptualizations, many researchers argue that place identification—intended as a sub-structure of the self-identity of the person, (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983), is subject to the same rules of the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and self-categorization processes (Pretty, Chipuer, & Bramston, 2003, Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). Indeed, Hernandez et al. (2007) highlighted that place attachment and place identification may coincide, in particular, when samples of native residents are employed, that is, persons who have resided in a place for a long time and who are more likely to show high levels of both place attachment and place identity (Brown et al., 2003; Vidal, Pol, Guardia, & Pero', 2004). Finally, what has been labelled as the 'spatial turn' in social psychology (e.g., Dixon & Durrheim, 2000) considers public spaces as the arena where some of the social-psychological processes such as membership and belonging (SIT, Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) are experienced and performed (Di Masso, 2012; 2015). In this sense, access and use of public spaces (e.g., squares, streets, parks, etc.) is demanded and perceived differently according to the different social groups (Hopkins & Dixon, 2006; Painter & Philo, 1995).

In regard to the relationship between community participation and place attachment, scholars showed that place attachment is positively linked to motivation towards social action, that is, local community participation and civic behaviours (Lewicka, 2005). Conversely, some studies evidenced that community participation is a consistent predictor of attachment to place

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(Guest & Lee, 1983; St. John, Austin, & Baba, 1986) and that participation in local community is the best predictor of the feeling of being at home in the neighborhood (Cuba & Hummon, 1993). Thus, these results suggest that there is no consensus about the causal direction: place attachment seems to predict participation and vice versa (Rollero & De Piccoli, 2010).

To sum up, researchers locate place attachment within the psychological and the functional domain of environmental experience (Hernandez et al., 2007; Ujang & Zakariya, 2015). In the context of place regeneration, the sense of belonging, degree of attraction, frequency of visits and level of familiarity are indicators of place attachment. Indeed, it is argued that place attachment, can be considered as one of the criteria in place making (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015). We thus propose that a “bottom-up”, community-inclusive strategy might lead to a higher level of place attachment than a “top-down” regeneration policy.

Moreover, within environmental psychological research it is acknowledged the role of place identity relations in shaping behaviour in public urban environment (e.g. Di Masso, 2015; Gustafson, 2001; Rollero & De Piccoli, 2010) and that, in the case of native samples, place identity and place attachment work in a similar way (Brown et al., 2003; Hernandez et al., 2007; Vidal, Pol, Guardia, & Però, 2004). The literature also evidenced the relationship between place attachment and community participation (Rollero & De Piccoli, 2010). We add to the existing research, suggesting that perceived community participation might positively affect the use of public place for social interactions through place attachment. That is, higher perceived community participation should increase public place sociability by increasing place attachment.



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### **Diverse neighbourhoods and Multicultural Ideologies**

The literature suggests that different social groups make different uses of public places as sites of social interaction according to characteristics such as origin (Romania & Zamperini, 2009), age (Mazeri & Savvides, 2013) and length of residence (Malheiros et al., 2012). For example, Górný and Torunczyk-Ruiz (2012) found that interethnic relations moderate the relationship between ethnic diversity and neighbourhood attachment differently for natives and migrants. In particular, ethnic diversity does not erode neighbourhood attachment for natives who have ties with people of other ethnicities. Similarly, Peters and de Haan (2011) showed that for residents who embrace cultural diversity, the appreciation of diversity does not lead to multicultural interactions that go beyond small talks in stores. The authors point out that by examining individuals' use and experience of public space is possible to explore the extent to which inter-ethnic interaction in public spaces generates more acceptance of multiculturalism. Multicultural ideologies of the host society constitute a fundamental element in intergroup relations (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2002). They refer to the overall endorsement of majority groups of positive attitudes toward immigrants and cultural diversity (Berry & Kalin, 1995; Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2002). This ideology, which attempts to achieve a balance between unity and diversity among host society and minorities, is a precondition for the societies advocating for multiculturalism as a policy for managing cultural diversity (Citrin, Sears, Muste, & Wong, 2001). However, scholars show that living in the proximity of members of other ethnic groups or social classes is insufficient for overcoming racial, ethnic and possible class divides in social networks (Atkinson, 2006; Blokland, 2003, 2008; Butlet, 2003; as cited in Blokland & van Eijk, 2009). In particular, they showed that residents "who enjoy diversity" (Blokland & van Eijk, 2009, p. 315), that is, those who sought diversity as a characteristic of the neighbourhood to live

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in, do not have more diverse social networks either in the neighbourhood or elsewhere, compared to residents who did not list diversity as a preference (Blokland & van Eijk, 2009). These findings confirm previous research showing that, despite of the rhetoric promoting multiculturalism within a city or a neighbourhood, relatively poor ties take place between residents of different backgrounds living in the same area (Butler, 2003; May 1996). Moreover, research showed that even for people who moved into a mixed neighbourhood with openness to diversity, their use of public space, such as parks and playgrounds, does not differ from other residents (Blokland & van Eijk, 2009).

Adding to the previous literature, we suggest that native residents' endorsement of multicultural ideology might affect the processes predicting the use of public spaces as sites of social interaction. In particular, we propose that the relationships between sense of community, and place attachment with public place sociability may vary depending on the level of multicultural ideology of native residents.

### **The Present Study**

The current study aimed to understand if different urban regeneration policies “top-down” vs. “bottom-up” affect differently perceived community participation, sense of community, place attachment and public place sociability. Additionally, extending previous research, the present study examined the relation between perceived community participation in urban regeneration initiatives and the use of public place for everyday sociability of native Italian-born residents. In particular, it examined whether the relationship between perceived community participation and public place sociability occurs via sense of community and place attachment and if the

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relationships between sense of community and place attachment with public place sociability are affected by residents' multicultural ideology.

### **Two neighbourhoods: Stanga & Arcella**

The current study was conducted in two neighbourhoods – *Stanga* and *Arcella* – in the city of Padova (Italy). The neighbourhoods belong to the first suburban ring and have some of the highest percentages of non-native population of the city, with the 18% and 27% of foreign population respectively (*Comune di Padova – settore programmazione controllo e statistica*, 2007). The security concern in the city of Padova is strong and is related to the immigration phenomenon (Romania & Zamperini, 2009). In particular, in the neighbourhoods considered, the change in the social composition of resident population has become associated over the years to the problem of criminality and, in turn, to illegal traffic and to social and urban decline of neighbourhoods (Romania & Zamperini, 2009).

Many interventions focused on citizens' security have been adopted over the years by local or regional municipalities. They have especially focused on curbing small-scale crimes as well as urban decline, the factors more strictly associated with a threatened sense of security (Romania & Zamperini, 2009). These problems have long been tackled through large-scale adoption of video-surveillance and police patrolling.

As for the top-down regeneration intervention, the current research focused on the neighbourhood of *Stanga*. The neighbourhood first originated as industrial and commercial area shifted over the years towards being a residential site for students and immigrant population. Labelled over the years as “the Bronx of the city” (Romania & Zamperini, 2009, p. 38), the area has long suffered problems of illegal drug traffic. In 2006, the municipality built an 80 meter long and 3 meter high fence in order to separate the “common” residents from the block of flats where

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the drug traffic used to take place. The issue saw some developments in 2007 with the removal of the fence and the eviction of all the residents from the block. The last decision taken by the municipality (*Padovaoggi*, 2018) can be considered a “top-down”, centralized regeneration intervention— where little or no voice has been given to the residents—that consisted in moving the police headquarter of the city to the block of flats where the illicit traffic was happening.

As for the bottom-up regeneration strategy, the neighbourhood of *Arcella* was chosen. The neighbourhood has been assessed as slightly more welcoming than *Stanga* (Romania & Zamperini, 2009) by the community residents. It is, however, considered among the sites most affected by urban and social decline in the whole city. Here, in 2018 a self-organised civic network funded an association called “*ArcellaGround*”, whose initiative “*The ring*” consisted in hosting cultural events and shows in abandoned buildings of the neighbourhood in the perspective of making them marketable again ([www.csvpadova.org](http://www.csvpadova.org)).

A survey conducted in the city of Padova (Romania & Zamperini, 2009) showed differences between native and non-native populations in the use of public places. In general, the amount of participants with Italian origin reporting to use public space on a weekly and daily basis was less than half of the amount of participants with immigrant origin (22.6% vs. 48.0% in the Station neighbourhood – a neighbouring area of *Arcella* and 29.2% vs. 59.1% in *Stanga* neighbourhood). The authors speculate that the non-native population, due to its lower financial resources and poorer housing conditions, finds in public places a space for leisure, sociability, aggregation and restoration (Romania & Zamperini, 2009).

It is thus relevant to understand the social psychological processes predicting the use of public places for socializing purposes by native residents. In particular, as forms of attachment and meanings associated with places change as modifications are made to the urban fabric (Ujang

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& Zakariya, 2015), it is important to comprehend the dynamics in the face of transformations taking place in the regenerated areas.

Considering previous findings regarding community participation, place attachment, sense of community, public place sociability and multicultural ideology we formulated the following hypotheses (see theoretical model, Figure 1.1).

### **Hypotheses**

H1: The “bottom-up” urban regeneration strategy will lead to a higher perception of community participation (H1a), higher sense of community (H1b), higher place attachment (H1c) and higher use of public place for everyday sociability (H1d), than the “top-down” urban regeneration strategy.

H2: Perceived community participation will be positively related to public place sociability, and this positive effect will be mediated by increased sense of community (H2a) and place attachment (H2b).

H3: Residents’ multicultural ideology will moderate the positive indirect effect of perceived community participation on public place sociability through sense of community. Specifically, this positive indirect effect will be stronger for those less supportive of multicultural ideology (H3a). Similarly, residents’ multicultural ideology will moderate the positive indirect effect of perceived community participation on public place sociability through place attachment, such that this positive indirect effect will be stronger for those less supportive of multicultural ideology (H3b).

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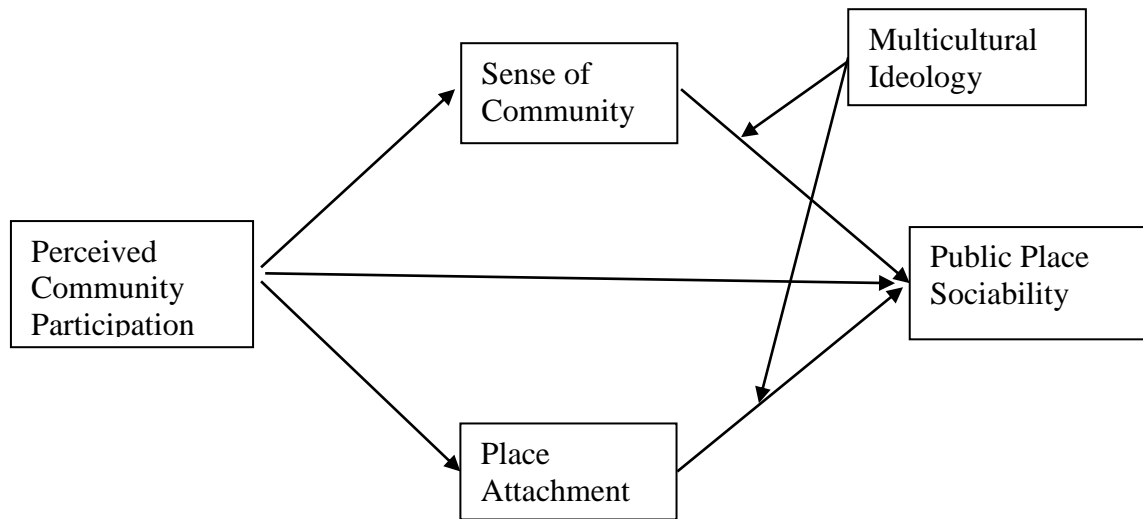


Figure 1.1. *The proposed conceptual model.*

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## Chapter II – Method

### Participants and procedure

The participants were 119<sup>1</sup> native-born Italian residents in the neighbourhoods of *Arcella* ( $n = 84$ ) and *Stanga* ( $n = 35$ ) in the city of Padova (Italy). The participants (56.3 % female) were aged between 19 and 81 years ( $M = 35.16$ ,  $SD = 16.23$ ). The majority of participants were high school graduates (33.6%), 27.7% were bachelor's graduates and 31.9% were master's graduates. The remaining 6.7% reported lower education levels. 43.2% were workers 37.0% were students and 5.9% reported being unemployed. The majority of the participants indicated that they live relatively comfortably on their income (47.0%) ("I can make it with my current income"), while 29.9% live comfortably with their current income ("I live perfectly with my current income"). In terms of political views, the sample was rather left-winged ( $M = 3.01$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ , *range*: 1-7). Participants were approached in public areas, i.e., outside convenience stores, in libraries, in the streets and public parks of the neighbourhoods and asked if they were residents of that area. If that was the case, they were asked to fill a paper and pencil self-report questionnaire of about 10-minutes duration. An informed consent stating that the study was voluntary, anonymous and confidential was handed in to all participants before taking the questionnaire. Some participants suggested one or more individuals who they were acquainted with, living in the same neighbourhood and who could be contacted and involved in the survey. In some cases, appointments were scheduled at times that were convenient for the participants, and the questionnaire was administered in settings such as offices, participants' home and local associations.

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<sup>1</sup> The initial sample consisted of 128 participants. However, one participant has been excluded due to a large proportion of missing data and 9 participants for being non-native Italian residents, obtaining a final sample of 119 native Italian respondents.

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## Measures

Before answering the questionnaire, participants were presented with a paragraph briefly defining urban regeneration interventions and the broad purpose behind it. Then, respondents were provided with a brief description of the urban regeneration intervention taking place in their area of residence, *Arcella* or *Stanga*.

Overall, the final instrument was composed of 72 items to which participants responded on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).

*Perceived Community Participation.* There are no validated reference scales and the majority of empirical studies used ad hoc scales listing behaviors (Talò et al., 2014). Thus, we developed three items ( $\alpha = .82$ ) specifically for this study, based on the systematic review of Stephens and Berner (2011) proposing three important facets of participation: *process* (e.g., “The residents of your neighbourhood have been given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making for the regeneration of the neighbourhood. (In other words, they have been given the opportunity to discuss their proposals, different opinions have been heard, the decision-making process has been accessible and transparent.”)); *outcome* (e.g., “The residents of your neighbourhood think that this way of regenerating the area represent their values. (In other words, the initiative has been accepted by all the parts involved; it promoted the trust of the residents in the institutions)”) and *costs* (which includes both *direct* and *indirect costs*) (e.g., “The residents of your neighbourhood have spent resources, i.e. time, materials, travels for this regeneration initiative”).

*Sense of Community.* The 8-item Brief Sense of Community Scale (BSCS; Peterson et al., 2008b) was used (e.g., “I can get what I need in this neighbourhood”). This scale is based on the



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theoretical model originally developed by McMillan and Chavis (1986) and is designed to assess four first-order factors (i.e., needs fulfilment, group membership, influence, and emotional connection). The scale showed a good reliability index (BSCS  $\alpha = .85$ ).

*Place Attachment.* We used 10 items referring to attachment ( $\alpha = .92$ ) created by Hernández et al. (2007) and based on those used by Hernández, Hidalgo, and Díaz (1998), Hidalgo (2000), and Hidalgo and Hernández (2001), (e.g. “I like living in this neighbourhood”).

*Public Place Sociability.* The 7 items used to assess this variable were created by Bettencourt and Castro (2015) (e.g., “I meet and socialise with my neighbours in the streets and squares of this neighbourhood”), ( $\alpha = .81$ ). The items assess the extent to which residents of a specific neighbourhood use neighbourhood’s public places (i.e., streets and squares) to socialise with neighbours, friends, family, people in general and people from different ethnicities.

*Multicultural Ideology.* This variable was assessed with an adaptation of the Canadian Multicultural Ideology Scale of Berry and Kalin (1995), with 10 items ( $\alpha = .78$ ) (e.g., “Italians should recognize that the Italian society consists of groups with different cultural backgrounds”). The scale assesses the support for living in a culturally diverse society, the degree to which ethnocultural groups maintain and share their cultures with others, and the extent to which all groups take part in the life of the larger society (Arends-tóth & Van de Vijver, 2003).

*Socio-demographic Characteristics.* Finally, participants were asked to indicate their age, length of residence in the neighbourhood, level of education, current employment status, income satisfaction, if they were native-born citizens, and political orientation (ranging from 1 = far-left to 7 = far-right). In addition to these, other socio-demographic characteristics have been asked (e.g., father and mother’s place of origin, nationality of the group which the participant would identify with, to what extent, in a scale from 1 to 7, they would identify with it, etc.), as well as

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characteristics related to the neighbourhood (e.g., experienced positive and negative social control, perceived neighbourhood quality), yet not being employed for the final analysis of the data.

### Chapter III – Results

#### Correlations Between the Variables

Correlations between the variables are presented in Table 2.1. The social psychological (e.g., perceived community participation, sense of community and place attachment) variables were positively correlated with the outcome variable—public place sociability. Moreover, sense of community and place attachment were strongly, positively, correlated, giving support to the literature defining them as related but separate phenomena (Brown & Perkins, 1992; Long & Perkins, 2007). Feeble associations with the study variables were shown for multicultural ideology making thus relevant to understand how residents' multicultural ideology may affect the processes predicting public place sociability.

#### Comparing “Top-down” vs. “Bottom-up” Neighbourhoods: Perceptions of Community Participation, Sense of Community, Place Attachment, and Public Place Sociability

To examine the impact of the type of regeneration strategy used in a particular neighbourhood on our outcome variables, we conducted independent-samples *t*-test with regeneration type as an independent variable (“bottom-up” vs. “top-down”) and each outcome (i.e., perceived community participation, sense of community, place attachment and public place sociability) as a dependent variable (H1). Results showed that the type of intervention had no significant effect on the residents' perception of community participation ( $t(52.37) = 0.99; p = 0.327; d = 0.24$ ), thus not supporting H1a. Conversely, as predicted, residents in the “bottom-up” neighbourhood reported greater levels of sense of community ( $t(69.54) = 3.72; p = 0.000, d = 0.70$ ) (H1b), place attachment ( $t(70.45) = 2.81; p = 0.006; d = 0.53$ ) (H1c) and public place sociability ( $t(55.73) = 2.90; p = 0.005, d = 0.66$ ) (H1d) than those in the “top-down”

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neighbourhood (see Table 2.2). Overall, these results support H1 with the exception of the non-significant findings for residents' perceptions of community participation.

### **Indirect effects of Perceived Participation via Sense of Community and Place Attachment**

To test our theoretical model (see Figure 1.1) we conducted first a parallel mediation model (Model 4) with 5000 bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals using PROCESS macro – a path analysis tool for mediation, moderation and conditional process for statistical software package SPSS 24.0 (Hayes, 2018). In this model, perceived participation was entered as a predictor, sense of community and place attachment were entered as parallel mediators and place sociability as an outcome. This analysis was conducted prior to testing the full moderated mediation model in order to first examine the simple indirect effects of perceived community participation via sense of community and place attachment.

As predicted, the indirect effect of perceived community participation on public place sociability was significant through sense of community ( $B = .20, SE = .06, p = .00, 95\% CI [.099, .321]$ ) (H2a). Specifically, perceived community participation had a positive and significant relation with sense of community ( $B = .34, SE = .08, p = .00, 95\% CI [.185, .493]$ ), that is, higher levels of residents' perceived community participation were related to a higher sense of community. Increased sense of community was then significantly related to higher level of public place sociability ( $B = .60, SE = .07, p = .00, 95\% CI [.452, .745]$ ). However, contrary to the expected (H2b), the indirect effect of perceived community participation on public place sociability through place attachment was not significant ( $B = .05, SE = .07, p = .47, 95\% CI [-.092, .199]$ ) (H2b).

Moreover the direct effect of perceived community participation on public place sociability was not significant ( $B = .02, SE = .05, p = .62, 95\% CI [-.071, .119]$ ). The analysis

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also revealed that the total effect of the perceived community participation on public place sociability was significant (total effect:  $B = .24$ ,  $p = .00$ ).

### **Conditional Effects of Perceived Participation: the role of multicultural ideology**

To test H3, that multicultural ideology would moderate the indirect effect of perceived community participation on public place sociability via sense of community and place attachment, we conducted in PROCESS (Hayes, 2018) a second-stage moderated, parallel mediation model (Model 15). Perceived community participation was entered as the predictor, sense of community and place attachment were entered as parallel mediators, public place sociability as the outcome and multicultural ideology as a moderator.

Perceived community participation was positively related to sense of community and to place attachment (see Table 2.3). That is, the more the residents perceived community participation in the regeneration strategy, the more they felt sense of community and the more they were attached to the neighbourhood.

The relation of place attachment with public place sociability was not significant, but sense of community was positively, and significantly, related to place sociability (see Table 2.3). However, the interaction between sense of community and multicultural ideology on public place sociability was not significant, as well as the interaction between place attachment and multicultural ideology (see Table 2.3). Thus, contrary to the expected (H3), multicultural ideology does not moderate the relationship between sense of community and public place sociability, nor between place attachment and public sociability.

Moderation of the indirect effects was probed by estimating the conditional indirect effect of perceived community participation on public place sociability through sense of community, and place attachment at various values of multicultural ideology (one SD above and below the

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mean). The index of moderated mediation for indirect effect of perceived community participation on public place sociability, through sense of community (index = -.046, 95% CI [-.118, -.001]) was marginally significant (the lower bound is very close to zero). Indeed, the indirect effect of perceived community participation on public place sociability, through sense of community was positive both at higher levels of multicultural ideology (+1 SD),  $B = 0.46$ , 95% CI (0.26, 0.67), and lower levels of multicultural ideology (-1 SD),  $B = 0.74$ , 95% CI (0.52, 0.95). However, partially in line with the hypothesis the magnitude of the indirect effect seems larger for those with low levels of multiculturalism (0.74 vs 0.46).

Similar findings were found for the indirect effect of perceived community participation via place attachment. The index of moderated mediation was also not significant (index = .033, 95% CI [.000, .092]). In addition, the indirect effect of perceived community participation on public place sociability, through place attachment, was not significant both at high levels of multicultural ideology (+1 SD),  $B = 0.21$ , 95% CI (-0.02, 0.44), and low levels of multicultural ideology (-1 SD),  $B = -0.12$ , 95% CI (-0.34, 0.10).

In sum, for native Italians residents the more they perceived community participation, the higher their level of sense of community, which then is related to a greater use of public places for sociability purposes, regardless of their multicultural ideology.

*Table 2. 1. Correlations: Socio-demographic and Socio-psychological Variables*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age										
2. Em.	.53**									
3. Edu	-.04	.17								
4. Pol.O.	-.01	-.02	-.30**							

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Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
5. Leng	.60**	.31**	-.30**	.02						
6. PCP	.60**	.31**	.00	-.07	.11					
7. SoC	.06	.17	.01	-.02	.28**	.38**				
8. PA	-.08	.03	.10	-.20*	.25**	.23*	.72**			
9. PPS	.09	.26**	-.01	.07	.31**	.32**	.77**	.59**		
10. MI	-.33**	-.11	.14	-.47**	-.36**	.12	.13	.18	.12	

*Notes.* \*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed) \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Em. = employment; Edu. = education; Pol. = political orientation; Leng. = length of residence; PCP = perceived community participation; SoC = sense of community; PA = place attachment; PPS = public place sociability; MI = multicultural ideology.

Table 2. 2. “Top-down” and “Bottom-up” Regeneration Strategy: Descriptive Statistics and T-tests for Main Variables

Outcome	Type of regeneration strategy						95% CI for Mean Difference	t-test	df
	“Top-down”			“Bottom-up”					
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n			
Perceived Community Participation	3.73	1.849	35	4.08	1.446	83	-1.05; .36	-.99	52.37
Sense of Community	3.52	1.267	35	4.50	1.391	84	-1.50; -.45	-3.72***	69.54
Place Attachment	3.98	1.236	35	4.70	1.376	84	-1.24; -.21	-2.81**	70.45
Public Place Sociability	3.60	1.273	35	4.31	1.088	84	-1.21; -.22	2.90**	55.73

\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

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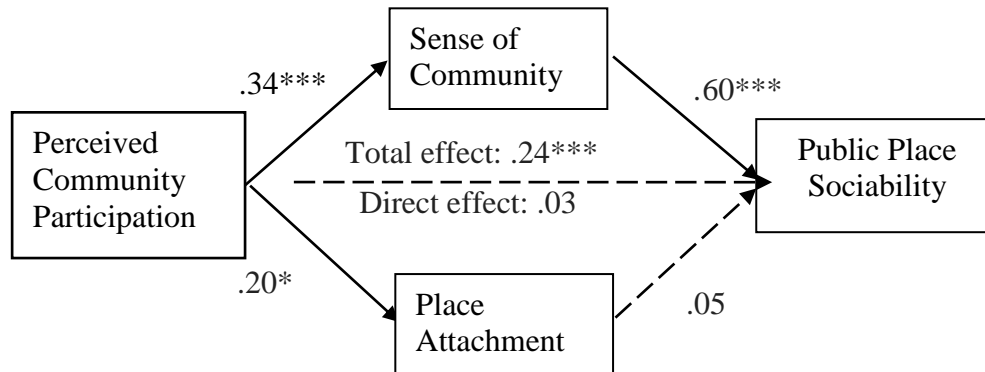


Figure 2.1. Effect of perceived participation on public place sociability, through sense of community and place attachment. Note: The values are unstandardized regression coefficients, \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , the dotted lines are not-significant paths.



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Table 2. 3. *Conditional Indirect Effect on Public Place Sociability*

	M (Sense of Community)			M (Place Attachment)			Y (Public Place Sociability)		
	Coeff.	SE	P	Coeff.	SE	p	Coeff.	SE	p
Constant	2.85**	.33	.00	3.68**	.33	.00	1.26**	.27	.00
(X) Perceived Community Participation	.34**	.08	.00	.20**	.08	.01	.02	.05	.62
M (Sense of Community)	-	-	-	-	-	-	.59**	.07	.00
M (Place Attachment)	-	-	-	-	-	-	.05	.07	.47
	R <sup>2</sup> = 0.141 F(1,116) = 19.095, p < .001			R <sup>2</sup> = 0.053 F(1,116) = 6.480, p < .01			R <sup>2</sup> = 0.597 F(3,114) = 56.279, p < .001		
Constant	.00	.12	1.00	.00	.12	1.00	4.06**	.07	.00
(X) Perceived Community Participation	.34**	.08	.00	.20**	.08	.01	.01	.05	.78
M (Sense of Community)	-	-	-	-	-	-	.60**	.07	.00
M (Place Attachment)	-	-	-	-	-	-	.05	.07	.53
(W) Multicultural Ideology	-	-	-	-	-	-	.01	.07	.87
X x W	-	-	-	-	-	-	.05	.05	.30
M x W	-	-	-	-	-	-	-.14	.08	.08
M x W	-	-	-	-	-	-	.17	.09	.06
	R <sup>2</sup> = 0.141 F(1,116) = 19.095, p < .001			R <sup>2</sup> = 0.052 F(1,116) = 6.480, p < .01			R <sup>2</sup> = 0.615 F(7,110) = 25,129, p < .001		

Note. \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01. The values are unstandardized regression coefficients

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## Chapter IV - Discussion

Urban regeneration is one of the fields through which Western governments seek to address the uneven development of modern cities in which many—often stigmatized—urban areas face social problems, such as high levels of crime, poor health, poor educational attainment, and poverty (Blanco, et al., 2011; RTPI, 2014; Taylor, 1995). If on the one side such regeneration schemes grew in popularity, on the other side their success is still unclear (Allen & Cars, 2001; Mawdsley & Darlington, 2002). To date, there is very limited research on the social psychological processes underlying regeneration outcomes and on whether these may be affected by different urban regeneration policies (Curtis, Cave, & Coutts, 2002; Furbey, 1999; Jarvis, Berkeley, & Broughton, 2011; Kearns, 2003; Pethia, 2011; Putnam, 1994, 1995, 2000; as cited in Heath et al., 2017). The current research extends previous work by addressing these two important issues.

Specifically, we sought to examine these issues in the context of two programs conducted with a “bottom-up” or community-inclusive, versus “top-down” or centralized, regeneration policies. Furthermore, we investigated whether the perceived participation of the community in the regeneration strategy is associated to residents’ sense of community and place attachment, which could lead to the use of public place for everyday sociability, particularly for residents endorsing low multicultural ideology.

Overall, our findings show that psycho-social variables matter in the understanding of the use of public places in regenerating areas. The findings seem especially relevant when considering that native residents of deprived neighbourhoods make use of public places to a lesser extent compared to non-natives (Romania & Zamperini, 2009) and that processes such as belonging and membership, play a key role in the use of public places (Di Masso, 2012; 2015; Hopkins & Dixon, 2006; Painter & Philo, 1995).

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H1 was only partially confirmed, that is, the bottom-up regeneration strategy led to higher sense of community (H1b), place attachment (H1c) and public place sociability (H1d) than the top-down intervention. These findings extend the literature showing that a “bottom-up” urban regeneration lead to higher community identification (Heath et al., 2017) and that sense of community and community identification work in similar way according to the principles of the social identity and social categorization theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986; Turner, et al., 1987). Furthermore, they extend the analysis to people-place bonds such as place attachment and public place sociability in regenerated contexts. However, contrary to the expected, perceived community participation (H1a) did not show any significant difference between the “bottom-up” and “top-down” conditions. This suggests the scale may not be robust to the study context. In the context of the present study the items might have been not accurate enough to convey differences regarding the perceptions of community participation in the regeneration interventions.

Consistent with our hypothesis (H2a), the indirect effect of perceived community participation on public place sociability was significant via sense of community. That is, residents perceived community participation in the regeneration strategies related to increased sense of community, which was associated with increased use of public spaces for sociability purpose. This finding is in line with previous research showing a link between community participation and sense of community, although most of the empirical studies have investigated community participation as a dependent variable (Brodsky et al., 1999; Talò et al., 2014). Furthermore, it extends the relationship between community participation and place attachment to the study of public place sociability.

Previous research also showed an association between community participation and place attachment (Cuba & Hummon, 1993; Guest & Lee, 1983; St. John, Austin, & Baba, 1986), although no consensus about a causal direction (Rollero & De Piccoli, 2010). We

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added to the existing research, extending the relationship between community participation and place attachment to the study of public place sociability. Results did not reveal a significant indirect effect of perceived community participation on public place sociability through place attachment (H2b). This result might reflect the widespread implicit assumption in the literature related to place attachment according to which attachment to the neighbourhood is believed to be greater than attachment to other spatial levels such as, for instance, the house, the city, or the region (Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001). Studies show, in fact, the opposite, that is, in the case of native residents, the bond to the city is higher than the neighbourhood (Hernández et al., 2007). Therefore, in the context of a regenerated neighbourhood, place attachment might be not relevant to the prediction of sociability in public places. Moreover, a study differentiating the physical and social dimension of place attachment—with the latter defined as an attachment to the people who live in that place, which we argue to be similar to the concept of sense of community—found that, in native residents, the social dimension of attachment is greater than the physical one (Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001). This finding might explain, at least in part, why sense of community is a better predictor of public place sociability than place attachment.

As previous research showed that the use of public space—such as parks and playgrounds—by people who moved into a mixed neighbourhood with openness to diversity, do not differ from other residents (Blokland & van Eijk, 2009), we subsequently hypothesized that residents' multicultural ideology will moderate the positive indirect effect of perceived community participation on public place sociability through sense of community. Contrary to the expected (H3a), multicultural ideology does not moderate the relationship between sense of community and public place sociability, nor between place attachment and public sociability. However, partially in line with the hypothesis, the magnitude of the indirect effect via sense of community seems larger for those with low levels of multiculturalism (0.74 vs

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0.46). Conversely, the indirect effect via place attachment is not significant at any of the levels of multiculturalism.

The findings seem especially striking when considering that sense of community and place attachment are closely related yet separate phenomena and that keeping the concepts separate allow to assess whether they behave differently according to changes in the community (Long & Perkins, 2007).

Overall, this study empirically reveals the unique effects of different types of regeneration strategy on social psychological variables, namely perceived community participation, sense of community, place attachment and public place sociability. Moreover, extending the scope of research on community participation and public place sociability, this research revealed the unique effect of sense of community and showed that for native Italians residents the more they perceived community participation, the higher their level of sense of community, which then is related to a greater use of public places for sociability purposes, regardless of their multicultural ideology.

### **Limitations and future research**

Despite the novel theoretical contribution, these results should be interpreted with caution and as limited in their generalizability. In particular, we acknowledge the imbalance between the sample sizes in the two neighbourhoods, *Arcella* ( $n = 84$ ) and *Stanga* ( $n = 35$ ) used for this study. Furthermore, it is plausible that the chosen areas, and the individuals living in them, are different on other dimensions, besides the regeneration strategy used. For example, a recent survey revealed that *Arcella* has been assessed as slightly more welcoming than *Stanga* neighbourhood by the community residents (Romania & Zamperini, 2009). Thus, future research could attempt to test these hypotheses with more equal sample sizes, as well as, in different national contexts. In addition, future research might test the model differentiating between native and non-native residents. Finally, future research could also

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address additional mediators and moderators that conceptually could explain the effects of community participation on public place sociability and more importantly, if there are different underlying processes that account for the effects of sense of community on public place sociability.

Another limitation of the present study is related to the perceived community participation measure, as the three items created for assessing the construct might have been not accurate enough to detect significant differences regarding the type of regeneration strategy. According to the researcher's observations during the face-to-face data collection, these items could be misinterpreted – specifically, participants seemed not understanding if the items were addressing their own involvement in the urban regeneration intervention or their general perception of the community members' participation.

### **Practical implications**

This research provides insights with practical implications regarding urban regeneration interventions as they often demand a high amount of resources by local governments (i.e., municipalities and regional administrations), yet demonstrating variable success (Heath et al., 2017). In particular, there is the belief that centralized, “top-down” strategies have failed and that policies should be designed and implemented by the individuals who will be eventually affected by them (Allen & Cars, 2001; Chaskin & Garg, 1997). Moreover, the absence of comparative analyses of participatory practices hinders the evaluation of such experiences as well as the identification of advantages and drawbacks of participatory policy-making (Mannarini, 2014). It is thus crucial to understand the social psychological processes leading to the success (or lack thereof) of a regeneration intervention.

Finally, the public ‘sphere’ “is not just an ethereal political atmosphere, but it importantly includes a material public ‘space’ in which different ‘publics’ make themselves visible and enact, negotiate and contest their condition as legitimate ‘publics’ on a daily

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basis” (Di Masso, 2012; Dixon et al., 2006; Gray & Manning, 2014, as cited in Di Masso, 2015, p. 67). Hence, examining individuals’ use of public space for everyday sociability, more widely contributes to explore the citizen’s right to the city, that is, to what extent any urban dweller is entitled to freely access and use public space (Gilbert & Phillips, 2003; Lefebvre, 1968; Mitchell, 2003, as cited in Di Masso, 2015). Overall, community and place meanings should be considered by policy makers to reverse neighborhood decline, lack of social cohesion, and threats of crime in order to enhance neighborhood quality of life.

Finally, migration processes are creating specific areas within Europe which are highly ethnic diverse and this discourse is oftentimes related to issues like ethnic segregation, hostility and racism (Allen & Cars, 2001). It is thus important to understand the practical implications regarding the extent to which intra and inter-ethnic interactions in public spaces might be affected by people’s acceptance of multiculturalism in regenerating communities.

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**Conclusion**

The present research adds to the existing literature on urban regeneration, community and place-related bonds by showing that the everyday sociability of public places varies as a function of community participation's perceptions in the regeneration strategies through sense of community. Our results indicate that residents' perceived community participation in the regeneration strategy leads to higher sense of community which elicits significantly higher public place sociability and that this effect is stronger for residents endorsing low multicultural ideology.



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