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THE COUS-COUS CULTURE. HYBRIDIZATION, INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES AND TRANS-CULTURAL PRACTICES IN GLOCAL ORGANIZATIONS.

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Abstract

Cous cous is a typical North-African food but it is cooked, in different versions, in the two sides of Mediterranean sea. Couscous is made of tiny balls of flour and water which are left to dry in the sun, then steamed over a boiling pan of water. The Arabs would use lamb, possibly chicken, to accompany the couscous. As we know, from 827 to 1061, Sicily was under Arab rule, a period of enlightenment whose cultural, social and economic reforms had a profound and long-lasting influence that is still felt today. The Arabs brought with them the cous cous. With the abundance of

fish, this changed, and a classic Sicilian dish in the province of Trapani, is couscous cooked with the broth of the local fish to give it a seafood flavor (Simmons and Eigeland 2011).

Cous cous is also a helpful metaphor to describe the kind of cultural milieu that could constitute a bridge between the two sides of Mediterranean Sea. And it is also a good starting point to reflect on the dynamics that may facilitate the growth of transnational organizations (not only), in the Mediterranean geo-cultural space.

Transnational organizations need to cope with a very complex and varied environment, in order to develop and exploit organizational diversity (Schauber 2001, Adler 1997). We assume that transnational organizational should become “real” multicultural spaces, to survive and grow in a global economy. Multicultural spaces may produce a sort of third culture (Casmir in Padovani 2002), or bridge cultures, e.g. a shared set of schemes, values and behaviors that enable organizational members to work, communicate, negotiate and solve problems together without renouncing their own national identity.

Cous-cous culture is also a useful metaphor to describe the core culture of a real multicultural organization: a set of competences and practices that may help people to manage diversity without neglecting differences. To support this process, we need to foster a deep cross-cultural competence.

Cross-cultural competence is the development of knowledge and skills that enable individuals to adapt effectively in cross-cultural environments: it is about the ability to interact, communicate, share and manage human resources in multicultural environments characterized by various working and communicative styles. Cross-cultural competence implies the development of new abilities and expertise gained through experience, social customs, training and communication practices.

Cross-cultural competence is the capacity to work effectively across cultures through a deep understanding of them (Gertsen, 2006). According to Holden (2002), the key elements to bring about cross-cultural competence are participation, interaction, networking, collaborative learning, knowledge transfer, experiences and values, creation of a cooperative climate. Johnson, Lenartowicz, and Apud (2006) draw a model of cross-cultural competence, considering three areas of competence such as personal attributes, skills and cultural knowledge. Moreover, cross-cultural competence include the ability to gain and interpret new information, approaches, practices and products of a different cultural context (Koehn & Rosenau, 2002).

Such theoretical framework, that is clearly broader, considers cross-cultural competence and cultural diversity as significant sources of learning, both at personal and organizational level. They express the need of cohesion, sharing, innovation, creativity and interaction. It is not enough to possess such competences but to apply them in different situations: the more a person is able to apply these competencies, the easier it will be for her/him to reduce cultural distance and favor cultural understanding and sharing. Cross-cultural competence is a key element in professional and personal skills today.

We focused on two key questions: what are the main intercultural competences that could favor a positive and constructive intercultural encounter? What are the links and the boundaries between intercultural competences (at individual levels) and the intercultural practices (group/organizational level)?

We argue that multicultural organizations are nurtured by generative and hybridative cultural processes, facilitated by a shared “participative competence” (Holden, 2002). Then we assume the theoretical and pragmatic relevance of an emergent “meta-competence”: the cultural mindfulness.

Introduction

Cous cous is a typical North-African food but it is cooked, in different versions, in the two sides of Mediterranean sea. In Sicily, for example, cous cous is cooked by Sicilian people (especially in the southern side of the island), using fish instead of meet. Cous cous is also a helpful metaphor to describe the kind of cultural milieu that could constitute a bridge between the two sides of Mediterranean Sea. And it is also a good starting point to reflect on the dynamics that may facilitate the growth of transnational organizations (not only), in the Mediterranean geo-cultural space.

The mix of cultures that characterizes the countries of the south Mediterranean sea is testified by the complex stratification of habits, traditions, food, languages that composed the varied cultural landscapes of Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece. Dried cod fish, or stockfish, or bacalao, is a “typical” food in Portugal, Spain and the ancient mariner towns of Italy, even though the origin of the dish is Scandinavian. In the Sicilian dialect the word for “anchovies” is “ancioia” and “la boîte” become “a buatta”. The traditional chief of the crew that plays the very ancient rite of the “mattanza” (the

traditional fish of tuna) is called “rais”. Some historians affirmed that the world renowned Italian dish “spaghetti” was introduced by Arabs in Sicily and only afterward it was diffused in all Italy.

Historians agree that one of the most important and wealthy period in the history of Sicily was represented by the times of the Arab Caliphate (Davis-Secord 2010) and the following “syncretic” kingdom of Frederick II (Marongiu 1964). Both periods were characterized by a certain degree of tolerance for cultural differences, cultural exchange and hybridization. So, history seems to support the hypothesis that living together is possible and that different cultures may learn one each-other and build a bridge upon prejudices and barriers. And so far modern transnational companies may learn from the past and adopt a cultural intelligent approach to cross-cultural management.

Business is becoming every day more “glocal”: it is assumed that multinational companies must adapt to foreignness (Matusitz 2010), in order to compete in the world business arena. Transnational organizations need to cope with a very complex and varied environment, in order to develop and exploit organizational diversity (Schauber 2001, Adler 1997). This means that MNCs should be able to “generate diversity in response to local conditions” (Ib., p. 225, see also Ulrich & Smallwood, 2006).

According to Sheth (2006) transnational companies should learn to conciliate the “Anekanta”, a buddist “philosophical viewpoint that considers that multiple perspectives of a single observation or phenomenon can be true” (Ib. p. 219), and the *Gestalt* , e.g. the overall picture that is supposed to be something more than the sum of single parts.

We assume that transnational organizational should become “real” multicultural spaces, to survive and grow in a global economy. Multicultural spaces may produce a sort of third culture (Casmir 1999), or bridge cultures, e.g. a shared set of schemes, values and behaviors that enable organizational members to work, communicate, negotiate and solve problems together without renouncing their own national identity.

We assume that the global/local perspective is the key to unlock the development of real transnational companies also around the Mediterranean sea. But we argue that “be glocal” is simply a slogan, if transnational companies don’t succeed to learn to develop a real cultural mindful attitude. And we assume that a glocal attitude could be facilitated but not be imposed by top-down policies, because cultural intelligent behavior are not simply a matter of vision and policies, at a macro-level, but the product-productions of individual competences and collective practices that are produced and re-produced at a micro-meso level and that could be nurtured and fostered, but not artificially created, by managerial intervention. So this paper is aimed to shed light to the

mechanisms that may enhance the development of real intercultural competences and practices, with a particular (but not exclusive regard) to the development of cross-Mediterranean business.

We focused on two key questions: what are the main intercultural competences that could favor a positive and constructive intercultural encounter? What are the links and the boundaries between intercultural competences (at individual levels) and the intercultural practices (group/organizational level)?

We are not interested in measuring and/or mapping cultural differences, in this study: the focus of this paper is the interaction between cultural differences and the mechanisms that lead to the creation of individual intercultural competences and social knowledge and culture that may favorite the developing of a real multicultural organizational space.

We argue that the concept of social practice may provide an effective analytical lens to help the researcher to find out the link between individual and social (collective) behaviours and to explain the mechanisms that could favorite the developing of a culture of “multiculturality”. Then we assume that a multiperspective model of analysis, focused on “competences”, “practices” and “culture” may offer a new and powerful approach to shed light to the generative and emerging processes that lead to the creation of real multicultural organizations.

Even though the scientific literature already offers some evidences on the role and the centrality of intercultural competences in the development of multicultural organizations, this paper tries to go beyond the contingent analysis and to provide a systematic and multi-perspective approach to the understanding and management of social, cultural and individual aspects of intercultural encounters (not only) between the two sides of the Mediterranean sea.

Intercultural competences

As we perfectly know, culture affects the way people behave, think, perceive, communicate, learn and express themselves. Although it can be perceived in almost every human action, rarely people are aware of how and how much culture affects their social behaviour and attitudes. Therefore, in order to survive the complexity of the world, people need to understand cultural differences and deal with them, being able to adjust to unfamiliar environments where they work and live with other people coming from different cultural backgrounds. The acquisition of intercultural competence has become a critical issue for individuals to survive in the globalized society.

Cross-cultural competence is the development of knowledge and skills that enable individuals to adapt effectively in cross-cultural environments: it is about the ability to interact, communicate, share and manage human resources in multicultural environments characterized by various working and communicative styles. Cross-cultural competence implies the development of new abilities and expertise gained through experience, social customs, training and communication practices. At the beginning of the 90's, the meeting point between the individual qualifications and organisational requirements enhanced the re-evaluation of new professional profiles, which progressively tended to be defined in terms of competence.

Studies on intercultural competence concern many different areas such as cross-cultural adaptation (Kim, 2002), intercultural effectiveness (Cui & Van Den Berg, 1991), cultural shock and intercultural communication competence (Wiseman, 2002). Consequently, the concept of intercultural competence is meant to be regarded as cross-cultural effectiveness (Kealey, 1989), cultural adjustment (Benson, 1978), cultural communication effectiveness (Ruben, 1987), and intercultural communication competence (Kim, 1991; Gudykunst & Kim, 1997). Other intercultural scholars variously refer to the concept of intercultural competence as “attitude” (Deardorff, 2006), “sensitivity” (Chen & Starosta, 1997), “dispositions” (Gudykunst, Wiseman, & Hammer, 1977), or “personal characteristics” (Caligiuri, 2000). Despite the various terminology, scholars generally agree with focusing on qualities such as respect, open-mindedness, empathy and curiosity (Chen & Starosta, 1997). Therefore, all definitions and conceptualizations concur that intercultural competence involves the ability to interact effectively and appropriately with people from other cultures, and this interaction includes both behaviour and communication skills.

Intercultural competence is progressively more necessary in our multicultural and globalised world and, as a result, scholars from various disciplines have attempted to define and assess it. In fact, the theoretical framework is considerable.

Cross-cultural competence is the capacity to work effectively across cultures through a deep understanding of them (Gertsen, 2006). According to Holden (2002), the key elements to bring about cross-cultural competence are participation, interaction, networking, collaborative learning, knowledge transfer, experiences and values, creation of a cooperative climate. Johnson, Lenartowicz, and Apud (2006) draw a model of cross-cultural competence, considering three areas of competence such as personal attributes, skills and cultural knowledge. Moreover, cross-cultural competence includes the ability to gain and interpret new information, approaches, practices and

products of a different cultural context (Koehn & Rosenau, 2002). Intercultural competence entails not only knowledge of the culture and language, but also affective and behavioural skills such as empathy, human warmth, charisma, and the ability to manage anxiety and uncertainty (Gudykunst, 1998; Spiess, 1996, 1998).

Rubens behavioural approach consists of seven dimensions of intercultural competence (Ruben, 1976):

- display of respect (ability to show respect for others);
- interaction posture (ability to respond to others without diminishing and criticizing);
- orientation to knowledge (ability to recognize that individuals see and understand the surrounding world differently; they have different viewpoints of what is ‘truth’ and what is not);
- empathy (ability to identify with another person’s situation);
- self-oriented role behaviour (ability to deal with the arising problems through adaptation);
- interaction management (ability to initiate, direct and terminate communication);
- tolerance for ambiguity (ability to act constructively and creatively in an ambiguous situation).

Moreover, the Intercultural Behavioural Assessment Indices (Byram, 2001) comprise five key dimensions:

- attitude (openness, curiosity, qualitative communication between representatives of other group, social class, sex or race, learning from another social community);
- knowledge (about social communities of one’s own as well as different cultures, ability to compare value attitudes of another community with those of one’s own);
- skills of interpreting and relating (ability to interpret the events of another cultural community while relating them to the events of one's own culture);
- skills of discovery and interaction (communicating with individuals from another community, display of flexibility and understanding, mimics, understanding of non-verbal communication);
- critical cultural awareness (helps evaluate critically negative attitude to another community while perceiving oneself as different with regard to another community, i.e., how specific context affects my relationships with others).

Another intercultural tool named Intercultural Competence Assessment distinguishes six dimensions (Byram, Köhlmann, Müller-Jacquier and Budin):

- Tolerance for Ambiguity (ability to tolerate the lack of ambiguity and to conduct oneself appropriately);

- Behavioural Flexibility (ability to adapt flexibly to the changed situation);
- Communicative Awareness (ability to determine the connection between ways of linguistic expression and content of culture, to align one's form and content of communication to the partner of the foreign country);
- Knowledge Discovery (knowledge about different cultures and the ability to use them while communicating);
- Respect for Otherness (preparedness to cease distrust in another culture);
- Empathy (ability to intuitively understand what other people think and how they feel in a specific situation).

When analyzing the various intercultural competence models it is evident that scientists do not provide a unified structure and definition of the concept. However, they do not deny the fact that intercultural competence comprises four key elements: knowledge, attitudes, abilities/skills and behaviour. But even these four dimensions can produce many other considerations on the concept of intercultural competence. According to Lustig and Koester (2006) intercultural competence requires knowledge, motivation, skills in verbal and non-verbal communication and appropriate and effective behaviours. Hiller and Wozniak (2009) link intercultural competence to a tolerance for ambiguity, behavioural flexibility, communicative awareness, knowledge discovery, respect for others and empathy: each of these dimensions has a cognitive, emotional/attitudinal and behavioural dimension. Heyward's model includes understandings, competencies, attitudes, language proficiencies, participation and identities, necessary for successful cross-cultural engagement (Heyward 2002).

According to Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity there are six stages to develop intercultural competence, each characterised by certain perceptions and behaviour towards the "own" and the "other" culture. The author considers intercultural competence as a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioural skills supporting effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts (J.M. Bennett 2008).

<i>Cognitive</i>	<i>Affective</i>	<i>Behavioural Skills</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural self-awareness • Culture-general knowledge • Culture-specific knowledge • Interaction analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curiosity • Cognitive flexibility • Motivation • Open-mindedness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship building skills • Behavioral skills: listening, problem solving • Empathy • Information gathering skills

Intercultural competence has also been described as a process. Also Deardorff's (2006a) pyramid model of intercultural competence places particular attitudes, that are cognitive, affective and behavioural components, as a fundamental starting point for the development of intercultural competence.

Significantly, a gradual inclusion of the construct of intercultural competence is recommended among the professional competences in multinational companies or in the human resources management, collaborating in the development of intercultural skills as a structuring element of companies' policies and strategic plans. For this reason companies started to implement strategies which intended to meet the intercultural training need, trying to optimise the possibilities of effectiveness at work (Phatak, 1992; Tung, 1997). Considering intercultural competence as effective factor, can clarify the mission of a teamwork, the professional and behavioural profile of a worker, the priorities to be determined, the responsibilities to be evaluated, the leadership to be performed, the decisions to be made, the communication strategies to be implemented, and also the conflicts to be managed.

Therefore, the development of the intercultural competence is an active process of ongoing learning which implies even a transformation of the person's identity while experiencing other different cultures or group interactions, in the own country or abroad (Locke & Parker, 1991; Kerka, 1992; Taylor, 1994).

In the majority of cases, these models present the intercultural competence as a transversal element which at the same time has to do with the capacity of learning how to perform and know how to face situations; learning to coexist and be prepared to face possible conflicts respecting different points of view; learning to be in a process of an experience based on self- learning. Or, simply, the

intercultural competence has to do with knowing, knowing how to perform, knowing how to act, how to be. It is therefore the intention to point out that the concept of intercultural competence is also related to self-esteem, creativity, adaptability, self-control, team working, etc. (Unesco Report-Delors, 1996).

When analyzing this broad scientific literature, different definitions of intercultural competence are encountered, and some of them emerge: 1) the ability to develop and maintain relationships; 2) the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately with minimal loss or distortion; 3) the ability to attain compliance and obtain cooperation with others. In the most common meaning, intercultural competence is considered as the set of attitudes, approaches, special behavioural and reflection abilities facilitating integration in intercultural situations.

Such theoretical framework, that is clearly broader, considers cross-cultural competence and cultural diversity as significant sources of learning, both at personal and organizational level. They express the need of cohesion, sharing, innovation, creativity and interaction. It is not enough to possess such competences but to apply them in different situations: the more a person is able to apply these competencies, the easier it will be for her/him to reduce cultural distance and favour cultural understanding and sharing. Cross-cultural competence is a key element in professional and personal skills today in order to promote intellectual opening and curiosity, the respect for cultural differences and the enjoyment in the interaction with people from other countries.

Intercultural practices

So, the concept of intercultural competence may explain the ability of individuals to cope and manage proactively and effectively intercultural encounters. But, as a matter of fact, competences are not always enacted and “translated” into social agency. There are several factors, at individual and organizational level, that may facilitate or become an obstacle for the application of competences and their transformation into organizational behaviours. At the same time competences are not easily transferable, in virtue of the overall tacit nature of their core of knowledge. Therefore, individual competences not always become a collective knowledge. Social practices instead may provide an effective conceptual tool to understand and explain the collective mechanisms that permit to groups and organizations to become real multicultural workplaces.

According to Mau, Mewes and Zimmermann (2008, p. 4): -“inter-ethnic and inter-cultural relations promote the development of cosmopolitan values, as well as lower the level of prejudice, and improve the capacity to accept the other in his otherness as equal and to perceive cultural differences as a source of enrichment”. In other words intercultural encounters may favourite the creation of a “cosmopolitan culture” (ib.). But we assume that the “culture of interculturality” is not an “automatic” outcome of intercultural encounters, instead it should be considered an emerging propriety of multicultural workplaces, that depends on individual and social factors.

But what are the dynamics that may assure the shift from individual intercultural competences in social intercultural practices?

According to Orlikowski (2002, p.270): -“core competencies or capabilities of the organization are not fixed or given properties, embodied in human resources, financial assets, technological artifacts, or infrastructural capital. Rather, they are constituted every day in the ongoing and situated practices of the organization’s members.”-. Practice is an old-new concept in organizational studies, that refers to the “regular, skilful performances of people, their routinized activities of human bodies” (Reckwitz 2002: 251). The theory of social practice asserts that -“social or cultural structures exist only through their continuing reproduction in practices through the variety of the actions and performances of agents.” (Yakhlef A. (2010). So then, Orlikowski (2002, p.270) evidence the centrality of the study of: -“the conditions (e.g., human, social, structural, financial, technological, infrastructural) under which skillful performance is more and less likely to be enacted.”- Practice based learning, by the way, is also based on reflexivity, according to Gherardi and Nicolini (2001: 51) reflection provides enable people to “move learning outcome into the verbal and conscious area, which make[s] it possible to share with others”.

According to Strati (2007 p. 65): “The concept of ‘practice’ therefore does not separate the mental from the corporeal, routine from improvisation, tradition from creativity (Bourdieu, 1980). Instead, it emphasizes social and post-social interaction, collective negotiation, the collective construction of the ‘legitimacy’ of the practice itself within a specific organizational setting.”-. Moreover, Nicolini (2009, p. 1394) affirms that .“ Practices are mutually connected and constitute a nexus, texture, field, or network (Giddens 1984; Schatzki 2002, 2005; Latour 2005; Czarniawska 2007). Social co-existence is in this sense rooted in the field of practice, both established by it and establishing it.”

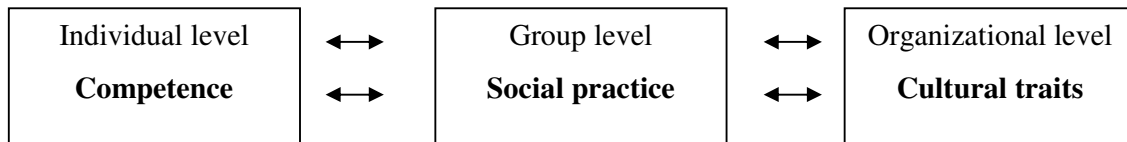
We argue that the adoption of the practice based perspective does not necessarily lead to the revision of the concept of competence. We strongly believe that competence is a key concept to understand the individual capability to manage proactively intercultural encounters. We assume nevertheless that the construct of social practice may be considered a central key to unlock the collective and or socio-organizational dimension of intercultural encounters. The production and reproduction of (intercultural) social practices may, then, lead to the arising of new cultural traits, according to the structuration theory proposed by Giddens (1984).

Intercultural competences, social practices and cultural traits

So, we assume that intercultural competences, practices and cultural traits are not separated and entirely disconnected entities. On the contrary, we believe that competences, practices and cultural traits may be interrelated and linked by a relationship of mutual reinforcement. For example, a sample of managers and workers, working at the Italian branch of ESA (European Space Agency), interviewed for a field research, affirmed that the core values of ESA, the specific norms concerning cooptation processes (recruitment and retention) and the specific attitudes and behaviours of employees contributed to build up a specific “multicultural place” in which people learn to engage, communicate, collaborate and solve conflicts, coping with linguistic and cultural differences (Maimone 2005). So, this organization was seen as a sort of “gym” for the training of intercultural competences and practices. The same perception was shown by managers working for an international Management school based in Bruxelles (Ib.). In both cases, the mission, the core explicit values of the organization and the institutional practices provided the breeding ground for the spontaneous (e.g. emergent) development of competences and social practices.

The well known model of “selection, attraction and attrition” (see Reiche, Carr and Pudelko 2010) assumes that “organizations engage in homo-social reproduction for filling key position” (Ib. p. 135). This model explains how multicultural organizations tend to attract and hire new members that show attitudes and behaviours convergent with the main cultural traits and the expectations of the organization itself. And both the organizations cited above used to adopt specific recruiting policies and practices, aimed to attract and hire candidates with cosmopolitan attitudes and intercultural competences.

Obviously, in the real world to distinguish the three constructs of “competence”, “practice” and “cultural traits” is more difficult than in theory, because we know that each component of a complex system is interrelated with the other ones. Nevertheless, we argue that a conceptual model that permits a multiple perspective analysis, focused on the (individual), the social and the cultural level of intercultural effective behaviours may provide a better view of the phenomenon and a deeper knowledge of the mechanisms that impact on the intercultural encounters in multicultural organizations.



The figure described above tries to represent graphically the theoretical approach described above. It is a two way (interdependent) path, typical of complex phenomena: at individual level people learn to interact with the “other”, facing linguistic and cultural barriers, and develop intercultural competences. Individual competences then shall be translated into collective behaviours: the personal knowledge, then could be considered a necessary but not sufficient condition for the “roll out” of a real multicultural space. At group and network level people need to behave in an intercultural skilful way, that implies the need to create and reproduce intercultural social practices, enacting individual competences and constructing a group/network framework for the full expression of the same competences. Such practices, then, may then be selected, diffused within and across the organization and eventually crystallized in cultural traits, e.g. values, mind schemata and patterns of behaviours that overcome time and space and are transmitted to next generations, being included in the culture of the organization (see Malizia 1998).

If the organization learns to learn how to manage effectively cultural differences, then it is assumed that the process could lead to two kinds of specific outcomes: a) cultural hybridization b) a bridge culture. Culture hybridization (see Pieterse 2003) is the phenomenon of the melting among cultural elements coming from different cultures, that may produce new traits, values, symbols, behaviours, artefacts and could lead to the relative differentiation and/or fragmentation of the organizational culture (Maimone and Mormino 2012). The “third culture” (Casmir 1999) or “bridge culture” (Maimone 2005) is some kind of interface protocol that help people to communicate, work and

manage conflict in a multicultural environments, without renouncing at their own national identity. This attributes are not an universal characteristic of multicultural organizations, but they are an emergent property of a specific organizational context, that is able to enact the well known principle, adopted by European Union: “united in diversity”. It is a particular kind of organizational configuration, that it is assumed to be an useful opportunity to develop transnational and multicultural organizations that could become a bridge between different cultures characterized by a strong identity.

Conclusions

As we know “similarity breeds connections” (McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook, 2001), e.g. homophily plays an important role in the building up of social networks and people’s personal networks tend to be homogeneous (Ib.) with regard at personal, social and cultural (see Maimone 2005) variables. This could be viewed as a weakness, in terms of intercultural encounters, but at the same time it could be a resource, if the similarity regards (we could say paradoxically) the orientation to the respect and the effective management of diversity. Then, similarity could play a role also in intercultural relationships, because we know that people belonging to some cultural groups may perceive some other cultural group more similar or close one each other (see Shenkar 2001).

So, we argue that multicultural organizations are nurtured by generative and hybridative cultural processes, facilitated by a shared “participative competence” (Holden, 2002). Participative competence (Ib. p.) is the “adeptness in intercultural communication to engage in a discussion productively, even when using a foreign language [and being able] to contribute, to communicate experience, and stimulate team learning” and it is related to the so called “interactive translation” (Ib.).

Then we assume the theoretical and pragmatic relevance of an emergent “meta-competence”: the cultural mindfulness (see Thomas 2006).

According to this premises, we assume that the common historical and cultural background of people living in front of the south-Mediterranean and the implementation of a mindful approach to the management of cultural and linguistic barriers, focused on the three dimensions of intercultural “competences”, “practices” and cultural “traits” could facilitate the development of transnational

companies, across the Mediterranean sea. This process may facilitate and be facilitated by processes of cultural contamination, and therefore hybridization, and by the emerging of a bridge culture, that could enable the cooperation, respecting the different identities involved.

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