

# Inclusion dans les Cités de l'Éducation

Défis, Cultures et Ressources

# Inclusion in the Cities of Education

Challenges, Cultures and Resources

Jean Pierre Pourtois, Anna Pileri, Nicola Giacopini,  
Roberta Caldin, Clara Silva (Eds.)



CONNECTIONS  
DANS LES CONTEXTES  
D'APPRENDISSAGE

CONNECTIONS  
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CONTEXTS

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**CONNEXIONS**  
**DANS LES CONTEXTES**  
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Direction:  
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La collection "Connexions dans les contextes d'apprentissage" se consacre à la recherche et à l'étude de l'apprentissage ainsi que les connexions nécessaires pour le soutenir sur base d'actions partagées et coordonnées. La référence à la perspective systémique-écologique, suivant le modèle bio-psycho-social de la CIF (OMS, 2001), est donc privilégiée.

Cette collection met l'accent sur le rôle essentiel que joue la création de liens lorsqu'il s'agit de répondre aux besoins des élèves avec handicap et de leurs familles. Ces liens dépendent d'enseignants compétents et passionnés. Ils sont essentiels pour favoriser l'apprentissage individualisé et personnalisé, de même que pour guider les trajectoires de vie. En effet, les enseignants vont se montrer capables d'accompagner tous les élèves, de favoriser la réussite sociale, de soutenir les familles et de créer un environnement dans lequel tous les élèves peuvent s'épanouir, quelles que soient leurs capacités.

La collection accueillera aussi des travaux de recherches – de niveaux national et international - axés sur l'expérience d'apprentissage dans des contextes allant de la crèche à l'école secondaire. Dans ces contextes, il s'agit de la mise en oeuvre d'actions de planification et d'enseignement destinées à tous les garçons et à toutes les filles, à tous les élèves, est devenue incontournable, de façon à prêter attention à la synergie entre la participation spécifique et leur réussite, dans l'apprentissage, dans la vie présente et future.

Les thèmes couverts sont inévitablement interreliés : de la formation, des perceptions et des compétences des opérateurs scolaires (directeurs, enseignants, éducateurs) avec la collégialité, en utilisant outils multiples et innovants, y compris des outils technologiques. Cette collection porte également attention à l'impulsion inévitable à donner à l'apprentissage pour tous, grâce aux outils multiples et innovants, y compris des outils technologiques. L'espace offert permettra d'entrer en résonance avec de multiples réflexions scientifiques, des recherches et des projets centrés sur la pertinence et l'engagement didactico-pédagogique.

Concernant tous les élèves et ceux en situation de handicap, différents types de connexions s'avèrent nécessaires, afin d'assurer la coordination des actions structurées dans le cadre des projets individualisés et personnalisés. La planification et l'accompagnement de projet de vie apparaissent indispensables. De plus, ces connexions influencent les actions de soins et de réadaptation, les services à la personne, les services à la personne, les initiatives de participation sociale, ainsi que le soutien en matière de collaboration écolesfamilles- communautés.

Chaque volume sera soumis aux membres du Comité scientifique international. Il sera examiné par les pairs et fera l'objet d'un arbitrage en "double aveugle". La Direction accepte les propositions de publication en effectuant une première sélection.

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*En hommage à Huguette Desmet, son engagement  
pédagogique reste pour nous une source précieuse d'inspiration.*



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## **2.2. Narratives, detours, and creative learning between schools and social contexts. Promoting intercultural dialogues by exploring places, images, and imaginaries**

*Rosita Deluigi<sup>1</sup>, Miriam Cuccu<sup>2</sup>, Francesca Mondin<sup>3</sup>, Ilenia Marino<sup>4</sup>*

### **2.2.1. Artistic itineraries, intercultural dialogues, and plural creativities**

The role of art and creativity in educational and learning processes can be seen through different lenses in numerous educational contexts. Languages and means of expression intertwine to establish new models of communication that offer dignified and cooperative spaces to be reinterpreted from an intercultural perspective. Differences and pluralities meet in spaces of interaction, words, images, and imagery, where there is no need to establish clear boundaries between contexts, thoughts, and creative subjects.

The approach to the enjoyment of works of art and artistic expression can create a free and informal dimension where everyone can share their interpretation and express different meanings (Panciroli, 2012). Artistic languages raise doubts, questions, and possibilities, orienting exchange, and bringing about original forms of decoding, starting from a range of

1. Rosita Deluigi, PhD, Associate Professor of General and Social Pedagogy, Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism, University of Macerata (Italy).

2. Miriam Cuccu, PhD student, Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism, University of Macerata (Italy).

3. Francesca Mondin, Research fellow at the University of Palermo and academic examination assistant at the Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism, University of Macerata (Italy).

4. Ilenia Marino, Teaching tutor and academic examination assistant at the Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism, University of Macerata (Italy); Special education teacher in an upper secondary school.

The paper is a result of a common research conducted by the authors. Rosita Deluigi wrote paragraphs 2.2.1 and 2.2.7; Miriam Cuccu wrote paragraphs 2.2.2, 2.2.3 and 2.2.4; Francesca Mondin wrote paragraph 2.2.5 and Ilenia Marino wrote paragraph 2.2.6.

different reference contexts that, if appropriately questioned, can become fertile ground for a cross-cultural hybridisation.

The dialectic between artistic and creative languages is an interesting field for intercultural education, which includes activities in which children and young people can become protagonists in an interdisciplinary learning process. Active education in art means taking kids in the direction of cognitive experiences that fascinate, amaze, and arouse curiosity and divergent thinking. Creativity allows everyone to combine, imagine, and create something new (Vygotsky, 2004) and children, who have not yet internalised the information that allows adults to act in a socially shared way, can think differently and embark on imaginative itineraries (Munari, 2017) that do not reflect homogeneous canons, but release the pleasure of discovery.

Relational spaces help to nurture further views of the world and ways of thinking about it in a global and ecosystemic key (Morin, 2016), seeking connections with the uncertainty and wonder of an explorer approaching new lands, without any claims to conquer them. Exploration is a possible method for renewing education and didactics, committing oneself to a dialogue between subjects and contexts, focusing on questions rather than answers, believing that everyone could bring meaningful doubts (Guerra, 2019).

In these learning transitions we discover fantasy, inventiveness, creativity, and imagination, elements that Munari distinguishes to link them together. «Fantasy: is our ability to think of something that did not exist before, even if it is unrealistic. Invention: is our ability to conceive something that did not exist before but with a strictly practical use that does not concern form or aesthetics. Creativity: is our ability to conceive of something that did not exist before, which is realisable in scale and in an essential way. Imagination: imagination, invention, and creativity think, imagination sees» (Munari, 2017). With the motto “Playing with Art” (1968) Munari developed a teaching method that uses multi-sensory education to stimulate the child’s development in cognitive, emotional, social, and physical dimensions.

«Creativity, as the ultimate goal of imagination and invention, is formed and transformed continuously. It needs a ready and flexible intelligence, a mind free of preconceptions, ready to learn what it needs in any case and to change its opinion when a more just one comes along. The creative individual is therefore constantly evolving and his creative possibilities derive from the continuous updating and expansion of knowledge in every field» (Munari, 2017, p. 22). The opportunity to move from one subject to another, to relate with peers and adults, and to co-create new ideas enriches individual perspectives and supports openness to a commu-

nity dimension. In a lively context such as this, an intercultural approach can be relaunched, starting from the transcultural traces in an artistic and educational experience as transformative domains of individual and group identities.

This paper will analyze one of the research lines within the TICASS project – Technologies of Communication Imaging, Art and Social Sciences<sup>5</sup> – aimed to discover and promote artistic and creative processes in primary and pre-primary schools in Italy and Kenya, looking for ideas enforceable in heterogeneous contexts, where visual language becomes one of the possible means of intercultural communication (Deluigi, Machová, & Stara, 2021).

Starting from the inclusive and participatory approach, we'll present the workshop experiences of Visual and Urban TICASS, highlighting: collective educational design, learning strategies, methods of using plural languages, the dynamics of interaction between peers, the teaching approach, and the attitudes of teachers, educators and researchers<sup>6</sup>.

### **2.2.2. The language of art, with participatory learning environments and inclusive methods**

The educational experiences underpinning the TICASS project move in a plurality of community multiform contexts, while relying on the enhancement of visual language as a tool for conveying creativity, active participation, and cooperative learning processes. The co-design between Unimc and schools focused on the potential of the art and the mixing of languages. The integration of words and images encourages the creation of a shared dynamic of «being in a productive meeting place» between the self and the other (Cima, 2019, p. 13). The pedagogical function of art in the educational context is deeply rooted in the structuring processes of personal identity, further reinforced through interactions with others (Ber-

5. TICASS – *Technologies of Communication Imaging, Art and Social Sciences* – was a project, financed by the European Union as part of the Horizon 2020 programme (<https://ticass.eu/>).

6. The Visual TICASS and Urban TICASS experiences took place in Italy and Kenya with periods of international mobility between 2018 and 2020. The University of Macerata (Unime) research team coordinated by prof. Rosita Deluigi, involved prof. Giuseppe Capriotti and prof. Morena Muzi with a group of university tutors who supported the development of a didactic-educational approach as well as the realisation of activities in Italy (Jessica Canestrari, Francesca Casamassima, Miriam Cuccu, Ilenia Marino, Francesca Mondin, Maria Luisa Ricci, and Laura Salvatori).

tolini, 1996). The integration of artistic languages in educational contexts, therefore, develop symbolic capacities that facilitate the representation of self and the world, through the synergic use of verbal and visual codes (Arnheim, 1974). The processes of personal identity formation, consequently, traverse education in an aesthetic dimension, conceptualised as the nurture of sensitivity, creativity, imagination, and deep self-perception (Ciarcià & Dallari, 2016).

The experience of contact between differences allows for the transcendence of stereotypical representations. This process enables an understanding of the diversity that is inherent in human beings (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2020). Providing a space of expression for our respective uniqueness within an inclusive framework thus fosters the recognition of the value of difference without renouncing the principle of equality, respect for rights, and access to opportunities (Ciarcià & Dallari, 2020).

### **2.2.3. Educational action starting from the setting**

The adoption of a creative dimension as a means of personal and group expression is reflected in the design of a learning environment as a *third educator* (Filippini & Vecchi, 1996). Space assumes an educational function that fosters interaction, thereby generating coexistence and emotional and cognitive situations that contribute to well-being and trust (Ibid.). Within these experiences, children's nuanced expressions and personalities intertwine, coming into contact with each other in unusual ways, while conflicts are 'resolved' as part of the process of navigating unexplored territories and boundaries. Learning spaces characterised by a collaborative construction of knowledge through experimentation and everyone's engagement promote cooperative dynamics (Comoglio & Cardoso, 2002), peer tutoring, autonomy management, and intergenerational dialogue between children and educators. The use of creative language, enhanced by the co-creation of images and narratives, facilitates the expression of personal interpretations, intuitions, and beliefs, thus inviting individuals to explore the domains of the imagination.

### **2.2.4. Open materials and plural narratives**

The exploration of open, unstructured, and multisensory materials has been shown (Restelli, 2016) to encourage participants to engage in divergent thinking, transcending the conventional right-wrong binomial (Ciarcià

& Dallari, 2016). Through art, «the meanings of otherwise dumb, undefined, limited and contrasted elements become clearer and more focused; [...] through the creation of a new experience» (Dewey, 1996, p. 29). In the process of knowledge co-construction, «cognitive activity [...] involves the interaction of at least three specific and deeply united elements: the knowledge already acquired, our goals and the area of feelings and emotions» (Fabbri Montesano & Munari, 1984, p. 335). It is at this point that experience becomes *meaningful* (Dewey, 2014).

The process of reclaiming and reinterpreting the surroundings becomes a catalyst for new participatory practices, involving the educational community at various levels. By exploring and revisiting familiar and everyday spaces through the lens of children, new nuances and meanings hidden in local contexts emerge. The act of critical observation holds creative potential, provided it encourages divergent and metaphorical thinking (Dallari, 2018). The creative reworking of elements of urban space through visual languages activates new and plural narratives (Deluigi et al., 2021) generated from the perspective of childhood in a *milieu* in which we reside, perceive, love, or repudiate, and which is shaped by its inhabitants (Frémont, 1976).

The integration of different viewpoints becomes a catalyst for new forms of active intergenerational collaboration (Cadei et al., 2016) in which children make a valuable contribution to collective knowledge (Dallabona, 2007). In the context of research focusing on local realities, the adaptability of artistic languages emerges as a valuable educational tool, facilitating forms of participation and expression, both at the individual and community level.

### **2.2.5. Visual TICASS: visual art as an intercultural educational tool**

Visual TICASS utilised visual language and narration to stimulate children's imagination and creativity, enabling them to become users and producers of images. The initiative was structured into three phases in Italy and Kenya. The first experience took place in Italy at Gianni Rodari's pre-primary school in Macerata from January to March 2018, with 110 children participating. The initial narration with silent books was enriched with sounds and music. The second workshop was in Kenya between July and August 2018 in three primary schools: Ocean of Wonders, Kilimo Primary School, and Nazareth Church School, in the districts of Kilifi and Mnarani. Each school took part in three activities involving mixed-age

groups of 20 to 120 children, for a total of 352 children between the ages of 7 and 13. The programme used the visual books “Little Blue and Little Yellow” and “Mix It Up” and the artworks co-created were displayed spontaneously in the school yard. The third workshop was conducted in Italy, at the same pre-primary school, between March and May 2019, and involved 84 children. We read the same books used in Kenya, plus “Say zoop”. Paintings from the various workshops, as well as the narratives and interpretations collected, were exhibited at the final event (Cuccu, 2021).

In November 2019, the exhibition, T.I.M.E. – TICASS Museum Experience was held at the “Buonaccorsi museum” in Macerata, to present the experience with an interactive area.

### ***2.2.5.1. Taking part in the narrative: from silent book to “staging”***

The use of participatory narration was key to the visual experience, promoting a range of interpretations through silent books (Zizioli, 2017). During the workshop, children were able to decode images based on their knowledge, personal experience, and everyday contexts of reference. During the sessions, sounds were used while visuals were kept minimal, allowing imagination to thrive. The images used were simple. Adults narrated and synthesised the contributions of the children without evaluating them. The children felt integral to the group and all viewpoints were considered, including unconventional or humorous ones.

### ***2.2.5.2. The workshop: from experimentations with colour to spontaneous storytelling***

A second art workshop in Kenya got kids working together to use colours in small groups, sharing and working as a team on the same activity. This was based on the ideas of Hervè Tullet who has made major contributions to the field of interactive books. His approach encourages kids to freely experiment and express themselves with colours and materials. However, children from a Kenyan background were initially overwhelmed by the lack of instructions (Tullet, 2020). They adopted a cautious approach, refraining from excessive mixing of colours and maintaining a certain spatial order. As time went on, they became more active and experimental, using tools like leaves, potatoes, and passion fruit skins. Pupils in Italy

immediately engaged with the group, experimenting with colour and contributing to the collective space in diverse ways. As artistic and creative activities progressed, the research team observed a tendency to experiment with unconstrained colours (Deluigi, 2021).

### **2.2.5.3. *Visual and shared data collection***

The working group's strategies (observation, monitoring, reflection) collected quality data for all workshops. Children's voices, feedback, and reactions were collected using grids, audio recordings, and snapshots. Inspired by Art Based Research and Photo Elicitation, we used pictures to document the most expressive moments and look more closely at the pedagogical reflections. The research group also verbally recorded their observations at the end of each session. Researchers shared audio and visual materials to collect data without disturbing the children.

### **2.2.5.4. *Urban TICASS: views, details, and urban contexts***

Urban TICASS is a project that took place in Italy and Kenya between 2018 and 2019. The various editions of the project demonstrated a circularity between experiences and a mutual change in the definition of activities depending on the contexts in which they occurred.

In Italy, two editions were held (Urban TICASS in 2018 and Urban TICASS 2.0 in 2019), in which approximately 200 primary school students from the Istituto Comprensivo Mestica in Macerata engaged with the theme of the city through a variety of media, including photographs, videos, texts, narratives, and drawings. These activities were initiated with an examination of urban details and spaces.

In Kenya, the activity was completed in a single stage in 2018 (Urban TICASS Kilifi), involving 25 children from the Ocean of Wonders primary school in Mnarani. The objective was to develop the students' familiarity with visual language through the use of photographs to discover the details and contexts of a Kilifi suburb.

## 2.2.6. Exploring the city: visual architecture and plural narratives

In Urban TICASS, the children explored the city with parents and teachers, taking pictures of some details of the public space and creating a short description and imaginative story of what they had observed. In Urban TICASS 2.0, the children, after taking pictures, made short videos to present a part of the city they liked.

Subsequently, the material produced by the primary school pupils was reworked from the perspective of cultural heritage and didactics by a group of students from the Department of Education, Cultural Heritage and Tourism (Unimc), to realise two playful-didactic events open to citizenship.

In the inaugural edition of Urban TICASS, primary school students participated in the organisation of a “treasure hunt”, during which they visited the city and photographed various urban details. These elements previously fulfilled a specific function but have since lost their significance, resulting in the emergence of enigmatic presences capable of evoking curiosity among both local inhabitants and visitors (Deluigi & Capriotti, 2019). The primary school students were tasked with identifying and documenting elements that piqued their interest, fostering a deeper understanding of these subjects. Concurrently, they have written a narrative around a detail that had captured their imagination, thereby cultivating their creative storytelling abilities.

At this stage, the Unimc students endeavoured to transform the material into a playful educational product about the city and its heritage: a treasure hunt. The true treasure to be discovered and subsequently returned to all participants at the final event was the historical significance underlying every detail. The Cultural Heritage students worked on the cultural-historical and art-historical value of these details, using theoretical knowledge to create a ‘competence-based’ educational practice (Guasti, 2017; Maccario, 2012). They are tasked with the creation of a 10-line caption that elucidates the historical significance of each detail, which is to be presented as a ‘treasure’ on the day of the final event. This allowed the students to understand the importance of the situation in which the symbols are placed, finding ways to communicate and access information.

The second Urban TICASS edition focused on contexts, i.e. broader places with specific personal significance (for the individual’s experience) or general significance (for the city’s history). Primary school students made a video about a significant area of their experience. Cultural Heritage students brought out the historical significance of these places with 10-line

captions. Students from the Intercultural Pedagogy course worked to understand the meaning of symbols in an urban context, recoding the information in a playful-educational format. The intercultural perspective was decisive in achieving personal and disciplinary decentralisation (Catarci, Macinai, 2015; Fiorucci et al., 2017). The students implemented participatory-creative processes and carefully designed learning paths and tools suitable for primary school students (Cadei et al., 2016).

### ***2.2.6.1. Urban spaces on the move: important places and maps for orientation***

In Kenya, the activity was conducted in December 2018 over four workshops. The first session was an open dialogue with teaching professionals about the activity's rationale and the target demographic. The participatory proposal was to use visual language to discover the territories' values. In the subsequent workshop, each participant created a drawing of a significant place in their suburb. Guided by a facilitator, the group created a map of the area, indicating the locations in the artwork. To enhance the map, the pupils used fingerprints of various colours. The third meeting explored the Mnarani suburb, using digital cameras and mobile phones to capture details. After this, there was a forum at the school where people shared their ideas and impressions. During the final session, the students put their photographic images (transferring them to plastic cards) on a map, which were then used in a memory game (each picture was printed twice). The project achieved its objectives. Some pupils demonstrated an understanding of the difference between a detail and a bigger picture. Some participants displayed storytelling skills right from the start. On exploring the territory, pupils talked about everyday life, interacting with people, justifying choices in feedback. The group's attitudes towards cooperation and interest in the city context were noteworthy (Capriotti & Deluigi, 2021, pp. 121-123).

### ***2.2.6.2. Open dialogue between public spaces and research perspectives***

Both experiences took children, researchers, and teachers into cities and public spaces, encouraging their curiosity as an impetus for research based on details and stories embedded in contexts more or less familiar to the participants. It was necessary to observe, photograph, film, describe,

narrate, and explain choices, sharing activities and ideas with peer groups. The experiential educational approach fostered various soft skills, such as critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. The possibility of being a dynamic part of the spaces and times in the different contexts led to mutual coaching between adults and children, nurturing shared hypotheses and interpretations. In this way, we were able to deconstruct the role of the competence bearer, extending the learning paradigm in a transversal way. Indeed, the adults learned a lot from the children, who “took them by the hand” in discovering historical corners of the city and elements of everyday life.

### **2.2.7. Art, images, and interculture: positions in educational research**

The disparate editions of the Visual and Urban TICASS traversed times and spaces under the banner of curiosity, creativity, and learning, promoting interaction between languages and backgrounds. As has been demonstrated, all the participants were active producers of new and original stories, co-created and mediated through art, creativity, and interaction with peers. Children were able to reveal aspects of their cognitive processes, including modes of thinking, feeling, and perceiving. This occurs when adults are willing to engage in a learning process with kids, paying attention to their needs and potential, and providing support and autonomy in workshop contexts.

Creating a dialogue between generations means taking care of details and abandoning known assumptions to free up creative paths. Being prepared for the unexpected is part of the teacher’s and researcher’s posture in contexts of mutual attention and trust. «Promoting students’ involvement through visual language can help them to be active in experiences. They may remember activities and learning objectives longer because engagement in memorable and actionable experiences is more interesting [...]. The use of local materials and the enhancement of personal attitudes and professional skills are ways to create intercultural dialogue and promote common understanding. [...] It is important to develop training paths for teachers, educators, and curators to improve the creative approach to new media, starting from different perceptions of visual images» (Deluigi, 2021, p. 88).

Designing inclusive and intercultural educational practices and reflecting on them requires attention to the community dynamics. Moreover, openness to dialogue with oneself, with others, and with surrounding

contexts is an essential movement to conduct meaningful transitions, immersing oneself in experiences with blurred and inhabitable boundaries, looking for multiform narratives.

Educational and didactic experiences have promoted significant relationships between teachers and students, creating interdisciplinary research spaces. The theoretical frame of reference (Deluigi, 2019) opened up transversal panoramas and unprecedented scenarios in areas of proximity. The transdisciplinary encounter took place in a border zone, in a place that did not specifically belong to any of the interlocutors. Exploration in the field made it possible to enter lesser-known territories, starting from unexpected points of view and increasing the network of dialogue with the local context, building participatory discoveries toward sustainable strategies and new languages for the future (Capriotti, Deluigi, 2019).

The pathways in Italy and Kenya have encouraged dialogue between university, schools, archives, civic spaces, and associations, highlighting the importance of creativity in urban learning.

These experiences have also emphasised the value of urban spaces as communities. The feedback process was designed to include multiple voices and was open to schools, families, and citizens. This approach highlights the adaptability of research methods and the value of unconventional explorations of living spaces for encouraging dialogue.

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