

## WORLD CITY FORUM OF MILANO



creative **intercultural**  
industries **human** cultural identities  
**cooperation** rights peer to peer  
participation **capacity** citizenship

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### 1. Context

The Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat) estimated that 236.855 foreign-born residents lived in Milan in 2011, representing almost 20% of the total resident population (1.300.000 inhabitants). The territory of Milan and its province (pop. 4.500.000) counts the presence of about 500.000 migrants, both formal and informal.

After World War II, Milan experienced two main distinct epochs of massive immigration: the first period saw a large influx of immigrants from poorer and rural areas within Italy; the second period, starting from the late 1970s, has been characterized by the preponderance of foreign-born immigrants. The early period coincided with the so-called Italian economic miracle of postwar years, an era of extraordinary growth based on rapid industrial expansion and massive public works, which brought to the city a large influx of over 400.000 people, mainly from rural and overpopulated Southern Italy. In the last three decades, the foreign born share of the population soared. Immigrants came mainly from Africa (in particular Egyptian, Moroccans, Senegalese, and Nigerian), and the former socialist countries of Eastern Europe (notably Albania, Romania, Ukraine, Macedonia, Moldova, Poland), in addition to a growing number of Asians (in particular Chinese, Sri Lankans and Filipinos) and Latin Americans (Ecuadorians and Peruvians).



Decades of continuing massive immigration have made the city the most cosmopolitan and multi-cultural in Italy. For example, Milan notably hosts the oldest and largest Chinese community in Italy, with almost 21,000 people in 2011.

## 2. The project

The "Forum della Città Mondo" is the place for active participation of over 600 associations representing approximately 120 international communities in the territory of Milan. It was established in 2011. It is an important place to share ideas, projects and proposals for the development of cultural policies, especially in view of Expo Milano 2015.

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The origin of the project relies on a mapping of all communities and foreign associations (mainly cultural) in Milan. The project was carried out by the Culture Department of the City, in collaboration with the Mayor's Office - International Relations, as well as with the Department of Social Affairs and has been coordinated by the Networks and Cultural Cooperation Service - Culture Department. The creation of the "Forum della Città Mondo" was announced in 2011, during the "Expo: Milano chiama Mondo" convention, at the first International Participants Meeting (IPM) with the representatives of the Expo 2015 countries. The project

anticipated several difficulties, such as the fragmentation of cultural initiatives and the lack of facilities and networks.



The Forum organized itself with plenary assemblies, which meet approximately every two months, and working groups, such as:

- women and cultures;
- nutrition, urban gardens, “Tavola Planetaria” and events related to Expo 2015;
- Museum of cultures;
- communication and cultural events,
- citizenship and rights.

All working groups are coordinated by representatives of the communities, as the best way to empower them. The working group on citizenship and rights, for example, focused its endeavour on migrant’s participation in urban life and evolved to become a second level association, with its own legal personality, which today brings together more than 80 representatives of associations belonging to different geographical areas.

The “Forum della Città Mondo” has produced several events, including speakers at seminars, meetings, initiatives related to “paths of citizenship”, political participation by migrants and intercultural projects.

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The “Forum della Città Mondo” has also participated in the organization of events such as:

- Carnivals of Peoples.
- “Tavola Planetaria”: All the communities in Milan presenting their traditional dishes in Piazza Duomo, Milan. This is connected to the main theme of Expo Milano 2015: Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life.
- Conference “Women Migrants protagonists of Milan”.
- Festival “Latinoamericando” Summer edition 2012 and 2013.
- Project “Urban Cooking & Gardening. Grow food, grow people, grow community” (Call EIF 2012, Action 6).
- Construction of the “Multicultural Map of Milan” with Vallardi Editore.
- Initiative “Scritti dalla Città Mondo” at Bookcity 2013.

### 3. Project management

The key partners and allies of the project are the following:

- Department for culture (*Assessorato alla Cultura*), Municipality of Milan: coordination
- Migrants Cultural Associations (about 600): partnership.
- EU Funding Opportunities: European Fund for Integration.
- Expo Milano 2015: partnership for singular initiatives.
- Ciessevi Association: partnership, technical assistance.
- International Organisation for Migration: partnership for singular initiatives.
- Other cultural associations, both institutional and private: partnership for singular initiatives.



We wish to highlight that the main success of the project is that the associations, despite their diverse backgrounds and capacities, have succeeded in creating a true dialogue and put their countries, peoples, religions, cultures and traditions in relationships both within and outside the Forum itself and its communities.

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We wish to highlight that there are two very tangible outcomes of the project:

- the associations have their own spaces in the Museum of Cultures, with full autonomy and self-organization necessary to implement a true intercultural dialogue;
- the local government has supported the creation of a second level association, a platform that now promotes policies and actions run by the migrants themselves and which therefore has the right to participate in formal partnerships, public calls, national, EU and international financial support.

## **4. Recommendations**

The "Forum della Città Mondo" touches a difficult issue which needs solid leadership. We believe it was crucial that the municipality of Milan gave the most solid political leadership to this issue, with the commitment of all the partners (associations of migrants) and with the support of external expertise. We also believe that it is important to secure public economic resources to associations as well as to the projects of platform (second level association).

## **5. Other information**

Social network: Youtube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/Forum25102011>

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