Global Diversity, Local Identity:
Multicultural Practice in Macau

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Since its 16th century beginnings, Macau has dialogued with a set of complex relations of multicultural nature, which are usually recognized as only distinctive of 19th and 20th century colonial and post-colonial societies. Despite the continuous coexistence of ethnic others, conflict and extreme tension have been absent from the city's history. The production of cultural and ethnic diversity through processes such as migration and intermarriage has informed the construction of a rather harmonious society. This paper aims to analyze how this and other processes have provided a multicultural experience that is closely involved with the construction of Macau's identity in the long term.

Cultural and ethnic diversity in contemporary urban societies often appears as an outcome of processes of decolonization of the 20th century. As the motivation behind the production of social complexity, the postcolonial frame, followed by the discourse of globalization, has guided much of the studies on multicultural societies. Yet, a critical approach suggests that social complexity has not emerged as the product of recent political and socioeconomic developments, but evolved through long-term processes of distinct nature within global systems (Friedman, 1994; Friedman & Ekholm Friedman, 2002). With this in mind, the European Maritime Expansion launched by Portugal and Spain in the 16th century, and later followed by other Dutch, British, and French enterprises, appears as a process that accounts for the production of multicultural societies much earlier than the decline of the very European colonial powers (an idea apparently disregarded by postcolonial studies theorists)[1]. This is particularly the case with regard to the Portuguese in Asia, since both mixed marriages and the employment of local qualified workers have been extensively encouraged by the Portuguese authorities in the attempt to overcome the difficulties imposed by the shortage of men as well by the need of operating as middlemen (Montalto de Jesus, 1926; Ptak, 1991). As argued by Roderich Ptak (1991): "Thus, in the course of time, many Portuguese settlements in Asia became 'melting pots' with Portuguese men taking Asian wives…" (p. 30).

In view of the extension of the Portuguese overseas empire in Asia, known as the *Estado da Índia*[2] (Boxer, 1963; Ptak, 1991), Macau appears as one specific location in the South of China, which saw the establishment of a Portuguese enclave in the 16th century, and later that of a Portuguese colonial regime in the 19th century. Henceforth, we aim to trace the origins of cultural and ethnic diversity in a city where, being the last possession to be disconnected from the metropolis, interethnic and cross-cultural encounters have flourished throughout the centuries. Believing that this path could also reveal to what extent complexity carries on a historical and structural nature, we finally aim at discussing the role cultural diversity or complexity plays in the construction of this society that local people often evoke as harmonious.

A "Special" Place

On December 20, 1999, Macau became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China (PRC). Along with Hong Kong, handed over to the formal sovereignty of the PRC in 2007, both cities have been entitled a period of 50 years of autonomy in the domestic sphere. From a legal-political perspective, this implies a high degree of self-government, whereas defense issues and foreign affairs fall under the jurisdiction of China's Central Government. As a result, the laws, the political structure, and the economic system of the past Portuguese and British colonial administrations, respectively, remain largely unchanged, although progressively adapted to the current times.

While reshaping Macau's social and political configuration, the handover also signaled important changes in people's lives and ways of living. Bearing in mind the one and a half centuries of Portuguese rule over the city, the fact that after 1999 its government was to be headed by local Chinese residents, who came to occupy the higher levels of the administrative hierarchy, was already significant in itself. Yet, most of the efforts and formal negotiations that aimed to create space for a smooth transition began much earlier, in the late 1970s, following the Portuguese Carnation Revolution of 1974 (*Revolução dos Cravos*), which saw Portugal change the status of Macau from an "overseas province" to a "territory under Portuguese administration" (Fernandes, 1997; Fifoot, 1994; Simpson, 2008).

From this time until the last decade of the 20th century, the Portuguese and Chinese Central Governments, the local Portuguese administration, and a selected group of experts including technocrats, academics, and businessmen, engaged in developing and coordinating the conditions that would guide how Macau was to be ruled from 1999 onwards. Within the framework provided by the Portuguese administration, a number of developments thus took place over several years. These ranged from the training of local civil servants, who would later replace many of the Portuguese existing officials, and the adjustment of laws within certain boundaries as specified in the PRC Constitution, resulting in the Basic Law of Macau, to the political arrangements for the appointment of the first Chinese Chief Executive of the Macau SAR (Fifoot, 1994). As a result, most of the structural changes ensuing from the handover started appearing during the period that became to be known as the "transition period" (Pina-Cabral, 2002), rather than after the actual handover.

Replacing Expectations: Les Jeux Sont Faits

Since critical changes have been defined throughout the long and cautious process that led to the city's integration into the PRC in 1999, life in Macau has followed a relatively stable path subsequent to the first few years of handover, despite the great anxiety and uncertainty that preceded this major political event. Nonetheless, contemporary Macau saw another event that would entail changes of considerable proportions to its socio-cultural configuration, having a more significant short-term impact than the handover itself: the liberalization of gambling in 2002. This new phase of the long-established gambling industry in Macau, of which official recognition and regulation dates back to the first half of the 19th century (Pina-Cabral, 2002), gave new life to the city's until then dismal economy, in turn producing soaring revenues and a growing flow of immigrants.

By liberalization, we mean the end of the monopoly that operated for 40 years under the *Sociedade de Turismo e Diversões de Macau* (STDM), in February 2002, and the subsequent concession of three gambling licenses to the *Sociedade de Jogos de Macau* (SJM, a subsidiary of STDM), the Wynn Resorts, and the Galaxy Casino. However, alterations in the contract of the Galaxy Casino a few months later, allowing for a sub-concession to the Venetian Macau, granted other companies the same right. SJM and Wynn Resorts therefore also signed sub-concession contracts with MGM Grand Paradise and Melco PBL.[3] As a result, from 2002—when the first concessions were granted—to the third quarter of 2008, the number of casinos operating in Macau has almost tripled. From the 11 gambling houses operated by the STDM before the liberalization, the number of casinos has risen to 31.[4]

Soaring rates of economic growth[5]—even higher than those of the PRC—have resulted in Macau being dubbed the "Las Vegas of the East" since 2006, when for the first time the industry's revenues exceeded those of the Nevada industry. At first, economic expansion brought general improvements to people's lives, from more job opportunities to higher incomes and consumption. Following the increasing levels of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), both the GDP per capita and the Human Development Index (HDI) have tended to increase[6]. On the other hand, real estate speculation, a growing demand for an imported labor force, and increasing inequality have come to highlight the limits of economic benefit in a society where health and education reforms are long-awaited. Political instability following a corruption scandal involving high-ranking officials revealed at the end of 2006 added to the feeling that Macau's booming economy had gotten out of hand (Liu, 2008). Many lost confidence in the government and regarded it with mistrust while frustration grew over the glittering promises of a wealthy life.

Nevertheless, there is no room to doubt that gambling is behind most of Macau's present economic success. By the end of 2007, life in the city seemed to have found a more stable course. Aside from the doubtful effects of the corruption scandal that disclosed the private scheme operating behind the concession of public land to the new developments (Liu, 2008), the gambling industry had demonstrated its force more than ever. Visitor entries reached the striking figure of 27 million, putting Macau in equal footing with Hong Kong and even Paris.[7] Although such a figure is largely related to gambling, visitors also seem to be steadily attracted by an industry that relies on the city's long lasting, specific cultural heritage, of which the Historic Center was included in UNESCO's world heritage sites list on July 15, 2005. Furthermore, a growing effort has been made to promote Macau as a business and convention center, followed by the development of several facilities intended to accommodate world-standard demands. But one could still argue that a certain amount of the daily entries recorded actually correspond either to a number of immigrant workers who maintain their residence in Mainland China or to the small traders who cross the border back-and-forth in the attempt to make a living. The informal "fair" that usually takes place in the busy street *Almirante Ferreira do Amaral*, in northern Macau, remains here a case in point.[8] In this respect, the border area is well known for its activity spaces, within which trade on a minor scale tends to flourish regardless of legal constraints (Breitung, 2007).

By bringing higher revenues to the city, tourism is the source of much of Macau's contemporary social and economic conjuncture. At this point, it is unlikely that any macro level phenomena taking place in the city could be fully explained without considering the role that this industry, and more specifically its gambling sector, plays as a platform of growth and

change, given the extent of its interference and effects in Macau's socio-cultural organization. We could, however, argue that the industry's outcomes affect people differently, varying according to age and gender, economic status, and ethnic or national category. As a result, while the development of tourism and leisure activities on a large scale has transformed Macau into a core of economic attraction and a major tourist destination in the region, it has also produced a feeling of unease among Macau residents, who claim that the city has become rather unrecognisable to their eyes. Yet to the tourists, we should add that the intensification of growth has also brought on more and new immigrants. While signaling a significant aspect behind the outbreak of change in the ways of living today, migration further invokes an old, structural process through which Macau's identity has been shaped in the long term.

The Whereabouts of Complexity

Drawing from distinct processes of migration, Macau's social and historical construction has been permeated by fluxes of immigrants of various ethnic origins, adding to its current significance as a place of cultural diversity. Yet, Chinese, Portuguese, and Macanese—the Eurasian type resulting from complex processes of intermarriage—appear as the three broad ethnic lines that have been involved in the production of Macau's society in the long term. Although one could argue that the Chinese represent an overwhelming majority amongst them, particularly from the 18th century onwards (Amaro, 1998), other ethnic minorities have also been continuously woven into Macau's socio-cultural fabric since the 16th century beginnings of the Portuguese enterprise in China. Moreover, even the Chinese, who are often regarded as one whole, homogeneous category, in fact tend to have varying origins, mainly coming from the Guangdong and the Fujian Provinces, or from Hong Kong.

Owing to historical processes produced through the vicissitudes of the regional and the global conjunctures, the arrival in Macau of Malays, Indians, Africans, and Japanese from other Portuguese outposts established in Asia, as well as of Thais, Indonesians, Filipinos, and eventually other Europeans, reveals a multicultural presence that is still reflected in the city's reality today. To that effect, the category of local Eurasians stands as the most comprehensive product of this complexity. The Macanese ethnicity has evolved from a mix of distinct and variegated ancestry, of which the Portuguese element has been a constant along with other ethnic categories, from Malays, Indians, and Japanese to the more recent and deeply involved Chinese element (Pina-Cabral & Lourenço 1993; Pina-Cabral, 2002). Furthermore, we must note that, insofar as the presence of cultural and ethnic others, e.g. Filipinos, Thais, and Americans, has provided a large number of possibilities for cross-cultural encounters and mixing, cases of intermarriage without the involvement of a Portuguese element have also emerged. Despite the fact that we have so far accounted mainly for the moments defined by the arrival of travelers and immigrants, the departure of residents and sojourners has also occurred, as is corroborated by the transition period preceding the handover. At this time, several residents left Macau in search of a better and more stable life in the belief that after 1999, the Chinese Central Government's interference would reveal itself to be greater than announced and that it would lead to what many saw as a threat to civil and political rights. Embodying one of Macau's distinctive historical traits, that of being a *stepping stone* for the Chinese *diaspora* or a place of transit (*point de passage*), the few years leading up to the handover witnessed the renewal of emigration movements, followed by the fragmentation of

families and wider social bonds to the benefit of economic and socio-political security (Pina-Cabral, 2002). Many Chinese and Macanese people headed to well-established settlements of the Chinese *diaspora* in South-East Asian countries, Australia, Canada, and the United States, while other Macanese headed to Hong Kong and Shanghai as well as to Portuguese-speaking countries—mainly Brazil and Portugal—following the lead of several Portuguese people who had left the administration (Pina-Cabral, 2002).

However, due to the oscillation between periods of demographic attraction and repulsion, we have evidence to believe that immigration and emigration have operated rather in balance. Therefore, local diversity has not been substantially affected, as there has never been a withdrawal of such an extent as to deprive the city of its founding multicultural attribute. Furthermore, it emerged that in addition to those that chose to return once the handover anxiety was demystified, and the local economy started improving, others would come either to increase in number the existing ethnic categories (e.g., the Filipinos, whose numbers have greatly increased in recent years), or to widen the variety—and indeed, newcomers are steadily settling in the city (e.g., North Americans).

Immigration Today: It's All Old Hat…

At this point, immigration includes both the working force employed in construction sites and the high-ranking executive boards of casinos and hotels. Thus, in addition to the usual and well-known Chinese immigration from Mainland China and from Hong Kong, foreign investment in the leisure industry have also brought new immigrants to the city, such as Americans, Australians, and British people, even though Asians continue to arrive and settle in much higher numbers (Yearbook of statistics, 2005, p. 64-67). Occupying the middle positions in the service sector are the Thais and Chinese, but also the Filipinos, who count for roughly 2% of Macau's population today. Added to the top of the list are a number of Macanese and Portuguese people who have now returned to Macau or have come to the city for the first time after the handover, mainly due to the city's promising economic conditions. These new immigrants come to occupy posts in the legal breach of a Portuguese-oriented juridical system as lawyers and jurists, in media and communication as journalists for newspapers, radio, and TV, as architects, designers and advertising employees, and as civil servants in the public sector, which does, however, employ mostly Macanese people, in addition to the Chinese.

In spite of the few niches fulfilled by the Portuguese and the Macanese alike, either newly arrived or returnees, immigration figures have essentially kept track with the rising needs created by the development of Macau's gambling and tourism industry at large. Demands from the private sector continued to prevent the government from tightening legislation on the importation of workers, who still come in great numbers mostly from the Mainland and from Hong Kong. Government statistics suggest that 101,195 non-resident workers had been authorized to enter Macau by the third quarter of 2008—a number that corresponds to almost 20% of Macau's total population, which was estimated at 551,800 inhabitants for the same period.[9] Even though these numbers imply that "tough regulation" could hardly apply to the nature of Macau's current policies for the importation of labor, it has but hindered illegal workers from reaching Macau's labor market, often with the connivance of local entrepreneurs, according to repeated denunciation of local associations,

mainly the *Associação Novo Macau Democrático* (ANMD), and the *Associação Geral dos Operários de Macau* (AGOM). While the government fails to or avoids adjusting immigration policies according to the demands of those groups that are said to look after the interests of the local resident workers or the wellbeing of Macau's population at large, it seems that immigration will continue to parallel economic growth.

Whereas we believe Macau operates as an important pole of immigration in China today, we do not seek to compare the numbers of working immigrants that have been attracted to cities such as Shanghai, Beijing, or Shenzhen due to recent developments (Smart & Li, 2006), since this would be beyond our scope here. We do, however, intend to highlight that the arrival of so-called "foreign" workers—even though most of Chinese ethnicity, as is the majority of Macau's population—has produced substantial changes in the ways of living of Macau residents. These have reflected on issues that vary from the quality of life and the necessity to readjust daily habits to changing strategies of local identification, due to immigration's ultimate effect on the construction of social spaces that interchange with a multicultural continuum. The overall picture here is that of a stronger assertion of feelings of belonging to Macau by those who at present experience challenges of economic nature brought by the arrival of "foreigners," with regard to the competition for jobs, the raise of real estate prices, or the deterioration of an already inadequate social security and health system.

Tracking the Global in the Local Sphere

At this point, it is crucial to emphasise that the close relationship between migration processes and cultural diversity verified through the outcomes of socioeconomic dynamics observed today, further embodies a historical and structural aspect of Macau's cultural identity in the long term. With this scenario or reality in mind, we therefore believe Macau to have reconciled with a sense of global connectedness, given that this relationship reproduces the historic condition of its existence. That is, owing to the global conjuncture of the 16th century Maritime Expansion the encounter between Portuguese and Chinese that became the founding pillars of its identity. The global dimension at that time did not carry the current worldwide connotation, but already signaled some of the elementary dynamics that can be found under the label of "globalization" today, such as trade and investment on an international basis and the development of multicultural societies. As a trade platform, born under the principle of *entente cordiale* between Portuguese merchants and Chinese officials, Macau also functioned as a platform for intercultural exchange, within which science, religion, and the arts fostered a permanent dialogue between East and West (Alves, 1996; Montalto de Jesus, 1926; Porter, 2000; Sena, 1999).

Through trade, Macau tailored its geopolitical importance in the region, particularly during the periods when Chinese ports were closed to foreigners in the 17th century (Sena, 1999). Operating more often than not as an intermediary city, Macau has shaped its place and chances of survival through the commerce of silver and silk between China and Japan, and of regional goods such as porcelain and spices. The traffic of opium and coolies thus represent its last important mercantile effort before being limited to the leftovers of regional trade in the 19th century, following the takeover of Hong Kong by the British in 1843, and the final ban on the coolies traffic in 1873 (Pina-Cabral, 2002; Porter, 2000; Sena, 1999). While the launch of the gaming industry, which would later become Macau's main economic activity, appears

at this time, the city's established role in trade had already provided the conditions for intercultural exchange and cross-cultural encounters to evolve on a regular basis. Ultimately, it had long functioned as the stopping point for traders and middlemen coming from different parts of South and South-East Asia as well from Europe, since other European maritime powers had likewise settled outposts in the region (Sena, 1999).

Despite the fact that we cannot develop here a detailed historical account, we deem appropriate to argue that it is during cycles of economic expansion rather than economic decline that the city has seen the influx of more foreigners or immigrants, who settled permanently or temporarily in the city. Considering that the same is observable today, it seems that a higher sense of global connectedness among Macau inhabitants responds to a conjuncture that is favoured both by economic growth and by the intensification of interethnic contact. Through a set of events that have reinstated a place for Macau in the world picture, this sense or awareness of the global has tended to inform changes in people's perceptions, mentalities, and ways of understanding the world. On the one hand, this is chiefly explained by the role Macau's gambling industry plays on pushing up the local economic standards to levels that could be compared with those of Hong Kong,[10] the financial center and metropolis *par excellence*. Furthermore, it is also a phenomenon sustained by the longitudinal effects of the handover, in that the ensuing political autonomy has allowed Macau to engage in several international organizations and trade agreements as an independent member (Fernandes, 1997).

On the other hand, the development of a sense of global connectedness has responded to an intensified cohabitation with foreigners, by whom we do not mean, however, the Mainland Chinese, but the non-Chinese and, above all, Western immigrants. All through the present phase of economic growth, the arrival of native English speakers, from Australia, North America, and England (including the British nationals born or having residence in Hong Kong), has somehow urged for a review of the meaning of "foreigner," and thus of the way the global is perceived. This is mainly due to the fact that the Portuguese, even though identified as Westerners, are not regarded as foreigners by the local Chinese in the same way Americans are today. Whereas embodying the global, the Portuguese have been part of the city's cultural imaginary for so long that social practice and history have provided the time and space necessary for these foreigners to become also "locals." Drawing from Tereza Sena's (2001) discussion on the question of foreigners in Macau, the emphasis on the continuous presence of outsiders in the history of the city she termed the *metropolis of equilibrium* ultimately evokes the implication of distinct global processes in the production of an enduring multicultural attribute. Yet, this has slightly new features today. While bringing on economic prosperity, these processes have further ascribed a complex trait to Macau's identity in the long term.

Multicultural (Dis)encounters

Today, cultural and ethnic diversity persists in a relatively stable society that continues to deal with multicultural traits of an increasingly diversified nature, even though the Chinese still account for the overwhelming majority of the population. This is partly the result of socio-cultural and economic dynamics that have, throughout the centuries, led to the accommodation of cultural and ethnic differences within a macro, structural level of Macau's

society, further contributing to the creation of this society that people continue to view as harmonious. Henceforth, we aim to discuss a few processes and phenomena, both from an ethnographic and a theoretical angle, which could aid an understanding of how this condition was and still is made possible in Macau. Later on, these will lead us to a closer examination of the impact of a diversity of global nature on the production of Macau's identity today.

Migration. Primarily, diversity leads us to examine the process at the core of the multicultural trait that has long informed Macau's identity, which is migration. The movement of populations has been a rather common process in Macau's history, in the sense that many have entered or left the city following the vicissitudes of the local, regional, and even global conjunctures. In addition to the impact that periods of economic expansion and decline have had in either fostering immigration or prompting the departure of local inhabitants, political instability in the Mainland or in other neighboring regions (albeit to a lesser extent), has also been a major factor behind the various population fluctuations in Macau (Pina-Cabral, 2002; Porter, 2000). Therefore, important to the comprehension of the nature of Macau's society today, is an approach which leads us to infer that the impact of migration processes on people's lives has been marked by two different but significant effects related to the construction of a harmonious society.

The first deals with the fact that people with different national and ethnic origins, mainly Chinese, Portuguese, and Macanese, seem to be relatively aware of the fact that migration has been part of Macau's society for a long time. Since many among them have directly or indirectly known the experience of movement within a family or larger social circle, migration evolved as part of the local, historically built imaginary, and may have, unconsciously or otherwise, hindered the production of deep claims of belonging to Macau. To the extent that people have often perceived Macau as a place of transit, more often than not having another place to turn to in order to fulfil and reassert their identity claims, which are generally represented by their place of origin, the migration element seems to have hampered the development of the sort of attachment to place and land that is commonly promoted by the national state. While weakening people's expectations of claiming this place as their own, the practice of migration has also tended to reduce prejudice among themselves and against others, who could have been seen as intruders and as the culpable source of problems in times of political instability or economic downturn. Weak belongingness seems thus to have left little room for intolerance and further space for harmony.

Georg Simmel's (2004) essay on the life of big cities also clarifies the matter of tolerance, although his discussion does not point to the issue of belonging. According to him, given that people are subject to the continuous audio and visual stimuli of daily life, derived from regular experience and contact with others, they feel compelled either to avoid interaction or to restrain their attention to the minimum, in order to deal with the demanding intensity of urban life. With regard to this phenomenon, the presence of a large number of visitors in Macau, who repeatedly occupy the city on a daily basis, mirrors somehow the intensity implied by Simmel's idea of the urban condition. In Macau, the constant presence of others hence acts in the sense of pushing the locals to a stronger demarcation of their social and affective spaces, leading people to ultimately preserve a sense of tolerance that would otherwise be unsustainable.

As migration parallels Macau's history, intermarriage processes have also evolved, adding to the complexity of a society within which intermarriage has revealed itself to be one

of the structural aspects of its cultural identity. In this sense, intermarriage behind the production of the Macanese ethnicity has proved to be one significant means through which stability and balance have been reached, since Macanese role and commitment in intermediation has often provided the space for communication among different ethnic others. While it is unclear whether intermarriage has been capable of promoting deep understanding or simply of avoiding tension and conflict, it is likely that together with migration processes it has tended to delegitimize claims of an ethnic and political nature that, according to Rogers Brubaker (2004), usually operate as the grounds for conflicts. Supposedly narrowing the distance between cultural heritages, at least on a close relations scale, intermarriage embodies an intermediary voice of consent that has also become part of the imaginary of the local inhabitants.

Language. Another dynamic that signals a significant and noticeable aspect of diversity is the use of languages, since it mirrors the extent to which distinct cultural and ethnic belongings as well as national origins converge within the same society. In Macau, while Cantonese Chinese speakers are the main linguistic group, other Chinese dialects such as the Fukienese (*Fujian hua*) as well as the official Mandarin Chinese are also present, along with other minority Asian languages, e.g. the Filipino, and the Thai. As for Portuguese, in addition to being the language of the administration for about a century and a half, it is still recognized as one of the official languages (together with Chinese).[11] However, notwithstanding the political importance granted to the Portuguese language, its social impact has been narrowed since the handover.

A key change, however, has been marked by the use of English on a wider scale as the language of intercommunication among different ethnic categories. This is a phenomenon that came only to reassert a common practice among the Portuguese and Chinese who have long surrendered to the use of English as the intermediary language of daily communication, given that they could not always rely upon the support of the Macanese usual bilingual skills in Portuguese and Chinese, or given that very few would learn each other's languages. However unoriginal, the use of English now seems to have occupied new spaces and gained new strength with the arrival of native English speakers who have been somewhat responsible for the phase of internationalization the city has undergone behind the development of the casino industry. As a result, English has not only been asserted as the local *lingua franca*, a status that it had been granted, or had imposed, since the 19th century in the trade outposts of Asia and Oceania, but it has also considerably reduced the chances of Portuguese, the once regional *lingua franca* (Boxer, 1948), regaining appeal with non-Portuguese speakers. Proof of this is the fact that Chinese schools offering students the possibility of pursuing their education within an English section outnumber those offering a Portuguese section by far.

Labor. Usually informing a key line of identification, language is intrinsically connected to the way people see, interact and understand the world they live in, further defining the extent to which they can communicate in a given society. Thus, considering that in Macau we are dealing with significant diversity, this observation is noteworthy since language skills here define many of the ways the division of labor operates in the city's socioeconomic organisation. Therefore, apart from the Chinese who, being the vast majority and having political control of the city, absorb most of the labor market, in different private and public spheres, other ethnic categories tend to continuously fulfill and engage in the same line of jobs and occupations. From this perspective, the Portuguese have been identified by their

involvement in civil services and law, while the Filipinos by their work in domestic services, and the Chinese, in the past, by their almost exclusive relation with trade activities.

This certainly reflects a dynamic that has much to do with the socioeconomic environment people originate from, but it also comes to show that this division is further related to ethnic segmentation. This does not mean however, that we are dealing here with a phenomenon that translates the way traditional societies work, within which people are expected to accomplish a precise function, following a specific and previously defined line of work. In most of today's complex societies, people's individual strategies to achieve or pursue economic or larger goals have to be taken into account. This is significant with regard to those who experience migration, since a range of possibilities of reinventing and transforming the "tradition" is available to those who are de-territorialized from their origins (Hall, 2003). Contrary to the typical organization of communities, individual choices here may have an important influence over this aspect, although we acknowledge that the role of building network relations among ethnic equals is not a negligible aspect of economic insertion in this case. Individual strategies might explain in part how the Chinese who managed to learn Portuguese had better chances of acquiring a higher position in public services during the Portuguese administration, or how Filipinos who have a certain proficiency in English progressively obtain jobs in the middle-ranking hierarchical levels of the casinos.

This and other examples encountered during the field research in Macau prove that despite the fact that a macro-level division of labor suggests the accommodation of economic activities along ethnic lines, micro-level scrutiny conducted through interviews and observation shows that language and socioeconomic background may have a more significant impact on the arrangement of economic dynamics, although even these factors eventually converge with ethnic origin. Yet, while this reveals specific realities, it is also worth considering that ethnic origin tends to inform, more often than not, a person's language skills, and thus the level to which an individual might trace his or her strategies. Knowing, however, that segmentation, be it linguistic or ethnic, tends to inform a fragmented experience of the local diversity, it reveals that the construction of harmony in this multicultural society is somehow also the result of limited intercultural and interethnic contact.

From Multicultural to Multiculturalism

Drawing a few conclusions as regards the case of Macau, social complexity or cultural diversity does not appear as new, but as a historically contingent process (Friedman, 1997). Having evolved through distinct long-term global processes, of which the expansion of European powers since the modern era remains a case in point, social complexity has certainly been intensified both by the development of and greater access to transports and communication. Yet, it is interesting to note that, being often claimed as one fundamental condition of the construction of the modern national state, as pointed by Gérard Noiriel (2001), the development of transports and communications ultimately reveals the paradox that is behind the "homogenizing" national agenda. Also, as a product of the end of the territorial domination by European powers in their overseas possessions, which defined the decline of the colonial empires in the 20th century (Hall, 2003), the existing global diversity within specific locations further evokes the historical bond between old metropolises and new

independent territories. Former colonial and further European cities thus epitomize the nature of complex contemporary societies, which often remain associated with the idea of both a multicultural and urban place.

Furthermore, the fact that social studies have only recently addressed the issue of complexity from a historical perspective signals a shift of focus that is academic but also political, since both the developed and the decolonized world seem now to experience the outcomes of the postcolonial era to a greater extent. The fact that cultural diversity or complexity is not new demands a more comprehensive understanding of the colonial impact both within the recently-born, fragmented nations that are struggling to overcome the effects of violent independence processes, and within the societies, e.g. European or American, which have been concerned with the effects of growing immigration phenomena. This is an issue that has also been associated with the increasing importance of cultural rights, as established by the multiculturalism debate, since the conquest of social and civil rights has occasionally revealed itself to be insufficient in accommodating diverse cultural interests within complex societies, or rather unaccomplished with regard to the inclusion of colonial subjects (Hall, 2003). The question here responds to the challenge of the precept of cultural neutrality of the modern liberal state in view of the double demand for equality and difference (Hall, 2003).

Understood as a set of strategies and policies adopted in order to respond to the problems originating from multicultural societies (Hall, 2003), multiculturalism makes a reticent, if any, entry into Macau's society today. However, while we have discussed the nature of processes and dynamics that we believe are involved in the production of Macau's multicultural attribute and further identity, we could argue that they have not yet been grasped within the multiculturalism frame. Both historical and present reasons may stand behind this condition, although we intend here to point out only a few, since this discussion is beyond the scope of this essay. To start with, the principle of negotiation and mutual understanding that emerges from the Portuguese settlement in Macau with the consent of the Chinese authorities seems to have informed many of their relations within a political and an economic sphere. Even by the time Portuguese colonial intents had subjugated the local Chinese population to their rule and authority in the first half of the 19th century, very few moments had entailed ethnic tension or conflict. To that effect, the outbreak of the Chinese Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) had more of an impact on Macau's usual stability than the city's handover to the PRC's sovereignty in 1999. With this in mind, we could argue that contrary to the independence processes that have been marked by tension and conflict in the postcolonial era, Macau's handover to China appears as a rather singular case of stable and peaceful de-colonization, a term that we still use with some reserve. Yet, to the extent that multicultural and multiethnic cohabitation have been marked by a conciliatory nature on a historical basis, implying the accommodation of cultural and ethnic demands within a social rather than a political sphere, there lies a clue to how present day Macau may have passed unscathed through the rise of the multiculturalism debate. However, at this point requiring much closer scrutiny, we believe this is a discussion to be addressed on another occasion.

Notes

[1] I have particularly in mind the works of Stuart Hall (1996, 2003), and Homi K. Bhabha (1996).

[2] The *State of India*, centered in Goa, stands as the representation of the Portuguese imperial authority in the East, embracing all the Portuguese possessions and trading-posts between Sofala (Africa) and Macau (Boxer, 1963; Ptak, 1991).

[3] *Gaming liberalization after the handover* (DICJ).

[4] *Number of Casinos in 2004-2009*, Gaming Inspection and Coordination Bureau (DSEC).

[5] Real growth rates: 27,3% in 2007; 17,0% in 2006; 6,7% in 2005; and 28,3% in 2004 (DSEC).

[6] *Per capita GDP* (DSEC).

[7] Paris has received 28 million visitors in 2007. *Rapport d'activité*.

[8] I'd like to thank Professor Werner Breitung for calling my attention to this fact.

[9] *End-balance of non-resident workers* and *Population Estimate of Macao* (DSEC).

[10] In 2007, Macau's GDP per capita was estimated at MOP 289,200 (1 USD = 8 MOP), while Hong Kong's at HKD 233,358 (1 USD = 8 HKD). Government of Macao SAR Statistics and Census Service (DSEC), and Government of Hong Kong SAR Census and Statistics Department, respectively.

[11] In legal terms, the Portuguese has only been defined as an official language in Macau following the handover, in 1999 (see Chapter I, Article 9, Basic Law of the Macau SAR).

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