"They tried to make me go to rehab. I said, no, no, no". Representations of 'deprived' urban spaces and urban regeneration in Turin, Italy

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Title: "They tried to make me go to rehab. I said, no, no, no". Representations of 'deprived' urban spaces and urban regeneration in Turin, Italy

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Abstract

Starting from a critical perspective on conventional representations of urban margins and traditional approaches to urban regeneration, our article aims to highlight the missing relationships between urban policies and the ways in which places organise their cultural, social and economic life. What are the socio-spatial practices that shape the everyday urban life? In which ways they are related or not to urban regeneration processes? Using Turin as a case-study, the paper discusses these questions and highlights the inconsistency of the normalizing narrative adopted by urban regeneration policies and the heterogeneous, multiple and constantly evolving identities unfolding in the urban margins.

1.   Introduction

Urban regeneration is a *passe-partout* term, used widely today in the international debate to indicate the set of transformations of the consolidated urban fabric, and in particular the most 'fragile' parts of contemporary cities, characterised by more or less acute situations of physical and social decay (Cochrane, 2007; Leary and McCarthy, 2013a). While it is difficult to identify a precise date when urban regeneration began, the birth of this policy field is usually referred to intervention intended to fight the 'urban crises' of the Seventies in Western European cities, even though some earlier examples are recorded in previous decades in the UK and the USA, specifically relating to the demolition and reconstruction of 'black neighbourhoods' and the consequent expulsion of the black population. It is equally difficult to clearly understand what we refer to when talking about urban regeneration (and similar terms such as *urban renewal*, *urban renaissance* etc.) (Carmon, 1999; Imrie and Raco, 2003; Tallon, 2010). Indeed, there is no explicit theory of urban regeneration (Lovering, 2007), and so the practices relating to this process are marked by many differences, also in relation to the various national and local contexts in which they are implemented (Vicari Haddock and Moulaert, 2009).

Leary and McCarthy (2013b) identify the minimum common denominator of urban regeneration as the strong political motivation of the State (and more generally, public bodies) to intervene locally through 'area-based' initiatives which produce "significant sustainable improvements in the conditions of local people, communities and places suffering from aspects of deprivation, often multiple in nature" (p. 9). Following this definition, which the same authors consider to be an ideal type (an "aspirational regeneration"), urban regeneration has positive connotations and as such is difficult to counter. According to the positive bias associated with urban regeneration, urban transformations, which strongly alter the character of most European cities, are defined as something that is good for everyone. Yet, the rhetorics of inclusion, community and empowerment are used to legitimise actions and interventions which, when considered in their urban outcomes, are often resolved in processes of real estate enhancement which tend to normalise spaces and practices and lead to the exclusion of diversity and conflicts. Critical thought on urban regeneration often highlights the substantial discrepancy between objectives and results, indicating the (theoretical and practical) inconsistency of regeneration which is good for everyone (Porter, 2009; Obeng-Odoom, 2013), underlining the increasingly evident subjugation of urban regeneration to the ideas, processes and perspectives of neoliberal thought (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Lovering, 2007).

Falling within this set of thoughts, this article aims to present and discuss the (lack of) relations between the urban regeneration policies driven by institutional bodies and the everyday practices of residents and city users, and outlines the need to move away from the conventional framing of deprived and or marginal urban spaces which highlights their isolation from, or non-conformity to, the dominant society or culture as a gap or a fault. Acknowledging that concepts are open to revision, and tracing the evolution of marginalising discourses and representations of predefined urban margins in Turin, the aim is to critically discuss mainstream categories of urban deprivation and exclusion, and the counter-narratives of inclusion and empowerment. It is therefore on the representations (and self-representations) of the spaces to be regenerated that we aim to reflect, according to the hypothesis in which some mythical and stereotypical images of urban margins - from the

stigmatisation of poor places and people to the revival of organicist metaphors that conceal differences and conflicts, even to the point of denying their presence and legitimacy - define and legitimise mainstream urban policies. By replacing the gaze from the dominant Anglo-Saxon perspective to a different set of places, that rather roughly can be brought back under the attribute of 'southern' or 'mediterranean', we may deconstruct these stereotypes and deepen our knowledge of the socio-spatial processes crossing the city: without contending a peculiarity of the South-European cities with respect to the other, nevertheless the way the social groups are organised and located within many urban areas of Southern Europe has some specificities that deserve to be explored. Our work is devoted to Turin, a city where different Italian regional subcultures and foreign communities have been for a long time coexisting, due to multiple waves of migration, first domestic during the so-called "fordist urban development" (Bagnasco, 1980) and then international starting from the end of the XX century.

The article has been conceived as a critical reflection on the results of several field-works that the authors have previously conducted within a common wider research project on the city of Turin[1]. A first work within this context focused on interstitial socio-economic practices characterizing a marginal area of Turin with the aim of identifying possible potentials for development (Governa et al. 2015). In a subsequent work, two Mediterranean cities - Turin and Marseille - have been critically presented in order to question mainstream categories on urban deprivation and exclusion and reflect on the notion of 'ordinary city' (Governa, 2016). In turn, Salone et al. (2015, 2017) reconstruct cultural actors and practices in a marginal area in Turin elaborating on the concepts of embeddedness and place-making and reflecting on the relationships between cultural practices and institutional policies.

The field-work has been conducted for a period of approximately eight months (2015) and mixes different methods, according to a conscious eclecticism (Law, 2004) aiming to avoid any mechanical

application of qualitative methods. The methodological approach includes ethnographic observation (Crang and Cook, 2007; Walsh, 2009); a contemporary reframing of traditional *flânerie* dating back to Walter Benjamin (and first to Charles Baudelaire) following the example of Kramer and Short (2011) using it as a lens for understanding and representing cities undergoing globalization; analysis of representations, mainly of policy documents and reports (Crang, 2005); semi-structured interviews with inhabitants, local government officials and civil society representatives (Dowling et al., 2016). Evidences emerged through fieldwork in 2015 have been integrated with those collected within another study (Cardone, 2018), which was carried out under the supervision of one of the authors. This study allowed to return to the field for around three months (2017) in order to catch the heritage of the industrial past and the feelings of inhabitants regarding its ongoing physical transformations.

The critical approach to mainstream regeneration policies and literature, the common interest on everyday practices conducted by inhabitants of marginal spaces, and the shared methodological and epistemological approach underlying their works have pushed the authors to further elaborate on the large amount of material collected during fieldwork and reflect on the different tales emerging from their previous work, trying to integrate them in a common framework. As we will try to show, the variety of methods and the multiplicity of representations, beliefs and values raised through the research is mirrored by the heterogeneous socio-spheres (Albrow, 1997) and related images of the margins, but not within the urban regeneration policies.

The article is organised as follows. After the introduction, §2 presents the issues at stake in order to move away from normal tales of deprived urban spaces. §3 explores various representations of so-called urban margins in Turin, based on their industrial past and the transition to de-industrialisation; their predefined status as deprived and problematic spaces; their semi-central location and relatively established nature. Deliberately, we will not immediately reveal the name of the places: the patient reader will understand the reason for such a choice only in §4, when we will discuss urban regeneration strategies carried on by institutional bodies. By focusing on the multiple representations of urban margins and drawing attention to things and processes normally ignored or not

fully highlighted by urban policies, the conclusions outline the need to escape from both conventional and more recent mainstream urban knowledge or, conversely, on the nostalgia for the 'imagined cities' of the past, for a regressive and repressive urban identity, for the idea of local community and place as the only sources of identity and belonging (Amin, 2005) and to consider urban margins as poised, contested and not very certain spaces, where different practices are deployed by different actors in their contextual unfolding in space and time.

2.   Urban regeneration and normalising tales

L. Wacquant (2008) begins his book, *Urban outcasts,* with this sentence: "*Ghetto* in the United States, *banlieue* in France, *quartieri periferici* (or *degradati*) in Italy, *problemområde* in Sweden, *favela* in Brazil and *villa miseria* in Argentina: the societies of North America, Western Europe and South America all have at their disposal in their topographic lexicon a special term for designating those stigmatised neighbourhoods situated at the very bottom of the hierarchical system of places that compose the metropolis" (p. 1). Identifying differences and similarities among concepts is not an easy task. Although every concept highlights various features of urban deprivation and has its theoretical background and traditions, boundaries among them are blurred. This vagueness outlines the uncertain understanding of the nature of urban poverty and deprivation, "especially as class divisions have become increasingly intricate and cross-cut by ethnic, racial and gender divisions" (Maloutas, 2012, p. 14). Indeed, migration issues emerge more and more as the key-factor of urban deprivation: according to Amin (2012), when a space is collectively perceived as dysfunctional or degraded, «strangers are often pointed as guilty for every abnormality and accused of "being over-demanding or undeserving"» (p. 68). If compared to other national contexts, as France or UK just to mention European examples, international migrations towards Italy is a relatively recent phenomenon dating to early Ninenties. However, the presence of foreign communities in Italian cities has given and is increasingly giving rise to the same reactions of conflict and rejection identified in other contexts,

with the addition of a recent political legitimacy brought by the current Government led by the Lega (formerly Lega Nord) and the Movimento Cinque Stelle, two parties inscribed into the current populist wave at the international level[2].

Deprived urban spaces are variously represented as "pockets of poverty", "excluded places", "spaces of danger and violence". Their emergence is normally explained as a result of increasing social inequality, mainly related to global and local economic restructuring processes and defective welfare policies (Musterd and Ostendorf, 1998). According to M. Lancione (2016), "being at the margin means to be situated on the other side of a border, while someone else is on the 'inside' somewhere more towards the 'centre'. Borders render the margins at the same time possible and visible, tangible and effective, embodied and felt" (p. 3). Margins are relationally defined and constructed. They cannot be isolated and treated as such, they are always related to something, they always imply a reference, a dichotomy, an "us" and a "them". There are not margins *per se*, but for something and / or someone.

The rhetorical opposition between deprived urban spaces and idealised conceptions of "good places" seems to be based on, and at the same time construct, a normative view, "setting aside" urban differences (of people and places) in order to both justify and consolidate the existing spatial order and the need to regenerate. Indeed, literally, regenerating means reconstituting parts of an organism that no longer work to make them efficient once more, renew them or generally "generate again", "give new life" according to the hypothesis in which "life as it is" is not good, right, suitable, and needs to be changed. A meaning which, as also underlined by Rossi and Vanolo (2013), is therefore part of the long list of organicist metaphors dealing with the city (or some parts of it) as a sick body. This representation not only moulds our perceptions of poverty, deprivation and exclusion,

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[2] Specifically, Lega has always based its national political campaign on its harsh position against "illegal" immigration, while the issue of 'deprived peripheral areas' has been at the core of the local political propaganda of Movimento 5 Stelle, to the point that the polls in the peripheral neighborhoods have aroused an upheaval in Turin the municipal government.

but also forms the basis for concrete policies and, according to G. Baeten (2001), "it reproduces stigmas, prejudices, fears and fantasies of mainstream society, whether intentional or not" (p. 236) (as most categories and discourses on urban poverty, including those produced by social science, do).

Nevertheless, the worldwide diffusion of some powerful metaphors to describe the increasing urban inequalities, «such as 'fragmented city' or 'dual city', or even 'quartered city', implicitly assume a single entity that is then fragmented, quartered, divided» (Marcuse, 2005, p. 241), gives the impression that the hierarchy of urban spaces, from the centre to the periphery, is inscribed within a fixed, certain and reassuring spatial order. Urban poor, migrants, violence, deprivation and so on are there, away. And if, in European cities, such spatial order does not take the closed forms of the ghetto (Wacquant, 2008), urban deprivation may be quite significant even without the support of intense segregation phenomena. Indeed, according to T. Maloutas (2012), in European cities «housing of very different quality may exist in the same area, the same street or even the same building, and households in the same areas may be using completely different commercial and social services (such as school) which may further differentiate living conditions and life prospects in decisive ways. Social and spatial distances are far from corresponding» (p. 25).

Following a conventional view of the social world in dualistic terms, as undergoing a transition from the traditional to the modern, from culture to civilisation, the rationale at play in these processes is to grasp, define and even manage urban margins as a deviance from what is considered to be the cultural/social/economic or spatial norm (Governa, 2016). These interpretations assert a crystallised and closed idea of differences (Said, 2007), as well as establishing a norm, at least implicitly (explicitly in policies). The classification of differences as fixed and stable features justifies and legitimises interventions and actions of separation, control, inclusion and exclusion through strategies based on control and security (Raco, 2018). A sort of "mechanism" of co-optation, made of alternative practices, such as the participation or self-organisation of the inhabitants, functional to, or at least highly compatible with, mainstream urban policies (Brenner et al., 2012), as revealed by the many examples in which multiculturalism is used as a "banner" on flagship projects to legitimise urban transformations that give rise to gentrification processes in many European cities (Lees, 2012;

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Uitermark, 2014). Even in the case of culture-driven regeneration, it is often taken for granted that these particular policies lead to a democratisation of culture and multi-cultural integration, reinforcing local communities and fostering the quality of life (Bailey et al., 2004; Hall and Robertson, 2001). However, the results often diverge from those expected and the long-term impact of culture-led regeneration policies is far from being demonstrated. Moreover, against the utilitarian imperative consistent with the neoliberal agenda and increasingly used to justify the intervention of the public sector in the cultural sphere (Florida, 2002; Landry, 2000; Santagata, 2002; Scott, 2000, Vuyk, 2010, Scott, 1997; Tucker, 1996), recently an emerging set of independent and radical movements are struggling with normalisation practices and asking for new and unconventional approaches, as the critical literature contends (Sharp, Pollock and Paddison, 2005, Belfiore and Bennett, 2007). Such actors, associations and urban movements experience practices that seem to impact more deeply and intensely on the socio-spatial mechanisms unfolding in cities. These initiatives can revitalise neglected or abandoned urban spaces and offer a more meaningful tool for fostering urban transformation compared to conventional regeneration policies based on physical cultural facilities, large events and support to creative industries (Bridge, 2006; Stern and Seifert, 2007). Above all, such practices do not act to recognise and cure the differences, but rather aim to cross the urban diversity as a permanent condition of the everyday life.

Focusing on an a-priori definition of what margins are, and seeking to contain urban heterogeneity in strict conceptual boxes, conventional representations of urban margins are the basis for mainstream urban regeneration policies that make all the margins the same. In this way, a whole set of fundamental issues - like the nuanced way power affects work in the everyday life of people and their spaces, or the way in which mundane urban practices organise and change urban spaces — get dismissed or are not adequately acknowledged.

3.   Tales from the margins versus regeneration narratives

3.1 The industrial past

This neighbourhood can instantly be identified as the historical industrial district of Turin. Initially a farming area - dotted with farms and farmhouses from the 15th century onwards - in subsequent centuries the district specialised firstly in silk processing and later, was transformed radically to heavy industry and steelworks. At the end of the 18th century, the area already counted numerous industrial activities[3], including *Ditta Nebiolo,* a leading typography materials manufacturer, *and FIAT,* undoubtedly the most famous Italian automotive industry. Despite the great diversification of this industrial panorama, from 1899, when FIAT was established, the development of this neighborhood, along with its industrial, urban and social transformations, were closely bound to the fate of the car company which, through targeted mergers and take-overs, acquired many of the factories in the area.

In the following years the local industrial situation did not change much, while the existing businesses benefitted from the reconstruction at the end of World War Two (Castronovo, 1975). Only in the 1970s did the industrial fate of the city change, leading to the progressive abandonment of manufacturing in the district. In 1994, also the Grandi Motori – the last FIAT plant located in the neighborhood - finally closed its door.

We cannot precisely know what remains of all this today. Only a few of the large factories which made industrial history in the 19th and 20th centuries have been recovered, restructured and redeveloped. The majority however have been demolished, or are in a state of total abandonment.

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[3] Just to name a few, we can mention *Ditta Sclopis e C.,* a chemical industry, *Società Anonima di Colla e Concimi,* a glue factory, *Fabbrica Giovanni Gilardini*, a tannery, *Officine Meccaniche Ansaldi*, one of Italy's most important engineering works, the foundry and turnery *Casa G. Poccardi e C.*, and *Società Anonima Tedeschi Ing. Vittorio e C.* (later renamed I.N.C.E.T), a leading electric cable manufacturer.

Strolling along its wide roads and talking to the inhabitants however, it is easy to feel the heavy imprint left by industry, even where the - more or less explicit - choices have moved in the direction of the demolition and abandonment of the old factories. From the corner of Corso Novara, for example, you can see an imposing yellow building which represents one of the few remains of *Grandi Motori F.I.A.T.* (See Figure 1).

Today owned by Esselunga S.p.a (one of Italy's major supermarket chains), much of the ex-factory in Corso Novara has been demolished. As explained by Cardone (2018, p.142) ,who has collected a number of interviews with local stakeholders, the feelings of some witnesses among the local inhabitants are strongly against the fate of the building, and underline the durable sense of belonging and identification with the place: "I was upset when they knocked it down …that place really made the history of Turin"; "I think these places should be left just like we left the Colosseum, why shouldn't we leave some things as they were? We might as well knock down the Colosseum too"; "We should turn them into historical places! I think the Grandi Motori should have been taken over by the Superintendence, it was something unique! Why knock it down to build an Esselunga?" It is a collective history which intertwines with private history, contributing to the definition of the family and social identity of many people: "FIAT Grandi Motori is called that because it produced engines for ships and aircraft, and so it was also very important as a piece of history, during World War Two it was bombed because of what it represented! What's more, one of the last people to work there was my father-in-law" (Cardone, 2018, P. 150).

Continuing along Via Cuneo and Via Damiano, we come across the architectural remains of the old *Officine Meccaniche Ansaldi,* which was also subsequently incorporated by FIAT and today is partially demolished or abandoned. In the ex *Industrie Metallurgiche* area in Via Cigna, on the other hand, today we find the 'Aurelio Peccei' Park, a huge open space covering around 27,000 square meters used to host local and municipal events, the industrial past of which has however been almost totally deleted. Here too, the considerations of the persons interviewed by Cardone (2018, p.157) reveal a hint of disappointment, that of a betrayed identity and history: "Seeing it like this

doesn't give you an idea of what was really done here, what the place represented"; "They left something out of duty".

Along Via Bologna you come across the old *Nebiolo* factories. Although the factory houses a number of buildings which are - at least partially - used, the majority of the space is still unoccupied, and is in a state of abandonment. However, the prestige of the factory is still alive in the memory of the local inhabitants, who continue to underline its value: "Nebiolo was really famous…in some respects this was where excellence could be found!" (Cardone, 2018, p.155).

These are just some of the ghosts in this area, that influence the everyday life in the quarter (Hill, 2013) by haunting the urban space thanks to its "inescapable revenance" (Wylie, 2007). In any case, today there is still no updated systematic mapping of the industrial heritage, what parts have been reused and the voids left by a past which is so recent and the "fault" of which, as Nigrelli states (2005, p.63) is precisely that of "not being sufficiently old, not being seen by us as memory, a mark that tells a story, but simply objects which, unfortunately for them, talk to us of our time in the present."

3.2   The creative turn

Some people call this district the "Chelsea of Turin" (Salone et al. 2017, p.2123). While the name may seem rather pretentious, it is certainly true that in the past few years the neighbourhood has enjoyed a boom in its cultural and artistic activities, characterising it as one of the city's most avant-garde districts. Our personal exploration in this sense began in Via Baltea 3, an ex-print shop which, at the initiative of the Sumisura cooperative now hosts a bar and restaurant, a jazz school, a bakery, a woodworking shop, a kitchen-for-rent, a co-working hub, a theatrical school, a children lab on the city, numerous dance classes and cultural and recreational initiatives. Although the facilities in Via Baltea 3 have become a reference for many local inhabitants in a very short time, in institutional terms the actual "Casa del Quartiere" ('neighborhood house') – opened in a public building funded

by a bank foundation - are housed in the Public Baths in Via Aglié. Here, the social cooperative consortium Kairos manages public showers, reopened following large-scale restructuring works on the municipal building, and coordinates the activities of a number of local associations and initiatives, also acting as an information desk providing advisory services for the various needs expressed by the local people.

With the help of the members of Sumisura and Kairos, we were able to contact a number of other cultural organisations in the neighbourhood, which we investigated starting from the visual arts scene. These included the Ettore Fico Museum, the only museum within the neighborhood founded in 2014 in via Cigna to exhibit the collection of the famous painter, Progetto Diogene, a cultural association renowned for having begun an artistic residence project in a tram car, and "Gagliardi Art System", an art gallery founded by advertising consultant (see Figure 2).

Insert Figure 2 around here

Our attention then shifted from visual art to the world of design, communication and architecture meeting the managers of Bellissimo, a limited company which works in the field of design, graphics and architecture, the members of Plinto, a collective of architects which develops projects linked to self-construction and self-produced design using recycled materials, and Maurizio Zucca, whose traditional architecture firm works with the Associazione Attivismo Urbano to document the transformations of the neighbourhood. The district also offers room for the music scene, with Le Ginestre, a historical Jazz Club opened in 1987, association TRAD!, which carries out research and dissemination activities linked to the culture of Southern Italy, plus Spazio211 and Variante Bunker, two key references for rock music. Finally, cinema, with the activity of the De Serio brothers and the Antiloco association, which in 2012 opened the Piccolo Cinema in the municipal facilities in Via Cavagnolo 7: not a film club but a verylaboratory where anyone wishing to put their cinema skills to the test is welcome.

These are just some of the many known and lesser known cultural and artistic initiatives available in the neighbourhood (Bertacchini and Pazzola, 2015). As Salone et al. state (2017), the choice of locating these initiatives here is based on three factors: the availability of large, low-priced

spaces; the desire to work in fragile districts with mainly social aims; the artistic liveliness of the neighbourhood. A sort of "cultural atmosphere" and "ecology" that – beyond the fragmentation of the activities – takes shape in the practices and behaviour of the growing artistic community: "We chose this place because of its special atmosphere, hoping that our presence can help to bring change to the neighbourhood." (Salone et al., 2017, p.21.27). Progetto LAND, promoted by the Ettore Fico Museum, has developed a database of 43 interlocutors working in the neighbourhood, aiming to bring them together in a Contemporary Arts Round Table. Other activities have perhaps fallen through the net of both the collective initiatives and the researchers seeking to understand the extent and composition of the neighbourhood's lively cultural scene.

3.3 Neighbourhood of strangers: the multi-ethnic economy

Here we are in the most multi-ethnic neighbourhood in Turin. In 2011, the concentration of foreign nationals in this part of the city was around twice the average in Turin (Ponzo, 2012). In 2013, the district was home to the largest number in absolute terms of the foreign population compared to other districts, and had the highest percentage of foreign nationals out of the total of the resident population in the city (CIttà di Torino, 2013). In 2009, furthermore, the growth rate of the foreign population was higher in this district compared to the rest of Turin (+10% compared to +7%, Dossier PISU Barriera di Milano, 2010). The recent immigration from foreign countries is added to that of the migration from southern Italy after the war, and has led to the birth of a particularly lively and complex neighbourhood.

As occurred with the migrants from Apulia, Sicily and Calabria in the 1950s and 60s, when many southerners migrated to Turin, today Romanians, Moroccans, Chinese and Senegalese nationals populate the area, and here – even more so than in the rest of the city – have found a potential for developing their own productive and commercial activities. Cheng Ming, chairman of ANGI, the Association of the New Generation of Young Chinese, explains the presence of Chinese businesses

and the 500 or so bars and restaurants in Turin run by Chinese owners[4]. The clients of the vast majority of these are Italian. Those serving only traditional Chinese dishes and specifically targeting the Chinese population (Hong Sheng, Ristorante Pechino, Ristorante Imperial, Ristorante La Grande Muraglia) are located in this neighbourhood, known as one of the most interesting places for Asian cuisine. A particularly lively sector in the neighbourhood is that of ethnic bread-making. In Corso Vercelli, for example, you can buy typical Romanian bread and products at "Forno-Brutarie" while in Via Sessia the Senegalese and Moroccan community buys its products from the Panificio Forno Magrebino.

The progressive spread of foreign shops brings conflicts with the "local" population, in a difficult path of meetings and clashes, which becomes increasingly complex when "the foreign immigrants enter (…) a fragmented economic context, where (…) the presence of small foreign businesses risks being perceived as competitive in the face of the crisis of traditional commercial and trade activities" (Ponzo, 2012, p. 38). While on one hand there is an economic problem of competitive dynamics, in cultural terms the spread of foreign shops is considered by the more elderly Italian population as an "attack" on the collective identity of the neighbourhood, as a self-representation of "we southerners" opposed to the new immigrants (Cingolani, 2012). One significant example is that of the "Panificio Antico Forno" (Via Malone 27A): the owners are Italian, they opened the shop 12 years ago, the customers are Italian and foreign, the bread is bought and resold both at the market in Piazza Foroni, and in a dozen other bakeries in Barriera di Milano which have no oven. Despite the virtuous operation of the bakery, the interview with the owner reveals a progressive "irritation" towards the presence of foreign shops in the neighbourhood[5].

The centre of this complex cohabitation is exactly the market in Piazza Foroni. The square, with its particular butterfly shape (in fact there are two squares: Piazza Foroni and Piazza Cerignola), is the

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[4] The Nuova Generazione Giovani Cinesi ANGI association facilitates communication between the Chinese and Italian communities - http://www.angitalia.org/site/it/index.html (last access: 16/7/2015)

[5] Non-structured interview with the owner of "Panificio Antico Forno" (Via Malone 27A), 9/3/2015.

most active and lively area in the neighbourhood, a place of meetings and exchanges between producers, sellers and consumers (see Figure 3).

Insert Figure 3 around here

The market has 216 stalls, 152 are occupied, selling food (83) and non-food goods (clothing and household goods, 69)[6]. There is a clear subdivision in the management of the stalls: the foreign traders, an absolute minority in the food stalls, on the other hand represent one third of the clothing and household goods traders (Cingolani, 2012). The market has a particularly deep-rooted tradition of typical Southern Italian products and customs, which create an authentic Southern niche. This is the case, for example, of "Il Covo", the historical tarallo producer owned by a family from Cerignola, Apulia, who decided to open a shop right in Piazza Cerignola over 16 years ago. This famous shop, which has been featured in newspapers and is very well known among the local population, bakes and sells only *taralli*, both retail and to other shops in and beyond Turin [7].

Despite the deep-rooted southern communities, certainly the arrival of foreign immigrants has led to a progressive transformation (or rather: complexification) of local trade. As Cingolani states (2012, p. 75), "what happened in the Sixties and Seventies, when southern shopkeepers took over from those from Piedmont, is happening again" in this neighbourhood. According to a vacancy chain model (Waldinger, 1996), the bakers' shop that was once managed by local Piedmont people, which then passed to a Calabrese, is now in the hands of a Moroccan family". These are minute, interstitial transformations, small-scale economic practices that animate the everyday dynamics of the neighbourhood, just like the forms and methods of living and making the city. As examples of a diverse economy (Gibson-Graham, 2008), "these seemingly irrelevant and ordinary practices, often neglected both by research and policies, constitute a widespread fabric that composes and constantly

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[6] Source: Piedmont Region, 2013

[7] Non-structured interview with a worker from the "Il Covo" tarallo baker (Piazzetta Cerignola 2), 9/3/2015.

reassembles the complexity of socio-spatial relations and represents a potential for the city as a whole" (Governa et al., 2015, p. 130).

4.   Urban regeneration strategies

Despite the persistent and somehow 'haunting' memory of the industrial past, the lively cultural scene, and the wholly rich and dynamic economic life enlivening the streets and the squares, the dominant imagery conveyed through the material interventions on the physical fabric is the expression of the imperatives of the hegemonic visions on the post-industrial transition, as we will show below: massive volumes maximizing the exploitation of space and the development of the land, banalization of the architectural language disregarding the physical context, commercial poles supposedly attracting new functions and residents. Amidst these conventional aspects, there exist some special actions that attempt to reinforce local foci of cohesion – Bagni Pubblici, action on the local marketplace – but they are not sufficient to subvert the normalization of the neighbourhood enacted by major regeneration policies.

While inevitably simplified, the specific characteristics described in the previous paragraphs show how many differences cross and segment the city (cities), telling of social stories, economic events and physical transformations which cannot be reduced to the outcome of simple cause-effect mechanisms and which are even more difficult to tackle with generic intervention "therapies" like those offered by urban planning. While a part of these differences is undoubtedly linked to tangible elements – the physical structure of the settlements, the past and present economic functions, etc. – a component that cannot be denied is on the other hand the result of an imagination sedimented over time, also linked to "objective" aspects which have however played a dominant role in conditioning the external perception and the very forms of internal self-representation of the neighbourhoods.

This is even more true if we consider that the profiles described here do not in fact represent three different neighbourhoods but are actually nothing more than three different portraits of the same neighbourhood, Barriera di Milano. The narrative expedient may, perhaps more than many sophisticated theoretical considerations, help to clarify how, depending on the chosen point of view, our idea of what a "neighbourhood" is, what are its characteristics, problems and specificities, can change significantly. According to N. Thrift (1996), «there is (…) no big picture of the modern city to be had, but only a set of constantly evolving sketches» (p. 1485). Big pictures are mainly based on mythical and stereotypical urban images that dismiss urban margins or include them in normal and normalising tales.

In Barriera, old and new social structures live side by side, as do (residual) industrial, commercial and cultural functions, and this kaleidoscope represents the area's greatest wealth. And yet, in the public discourse, and in the regeneration policies which have involved the neighbourhood on various occasions, simplifying representations seem to prevail (the immigrant neighbourhood, the working class heritage) alongside dichotomic representations ("us" and "them", the "Italians" and the "others"), which inevitably also affect the conceptual premises and operating instruments of the public action taken to improve the cohabitation conditions. In particular, public debate has emphasised diversity as a problem, both in the recent past and in Turin today, mixing the specific problems of the neighbourhood with those of other areas of the city, in a general mishmash of the "abandoned suburbs". Indeed, much of the 2016 electoral race was based on this issue, and ended with the landslide victory of the "Movimento Cinque Stelle" which reaped its greatest successes in this neighbourhood, as in other peripheral areas of the city.

Some significant public interventions in the neighbourhood between 1997 and 2014 focused on this hardship, induced by multiple and controversial transformations, but marked also by significant social and economic difficulties, starting with the physical redevelopment of the area between Via Cigna and Corso Venezia (Spina 4) and ending in an Integrated Urban Development Programme (PISU), called Urban Barriera.

The first set of interventions are those which can most easily be seen proceeding north along Via Cigna, one of the preferential routes for crossing the area along with Corso Giulio Cesare. This area is marked by large green areas ("Aurelio Peccei" Park and Parco Sempione), large condominiums filling whole blocks and other large buildings, both new and the result of the redevelopment of abandoned industrial complexes (see Figure 4).

Insert Figure 4 around here

This is the largest intervention of those carried out under the 1995 General Regulatory Plan (PRG): it replaces almost all of the existing factories, with the building of large residential blocks interspersed with medium-large retail spaces. The result is a patchwork of buildings with different heights and colors, variable sloping roofs, all clashing with the previous industrial context and with commercial activities that are out of scale compared to the tiny yet very rich fabric of the district's historical areas. Even without commenting on the quality, type and style of the interventions, we must underline the passive adoption of the large-scale intervention models revolving around large retail hubs that have contributed to the uniformity of many peripheral areas of European cities in the name of urban regeneration.

The second set of actions on the other hand is the Urban Programme, which began in 2011 and ended in 2015. The Programme falls in the framework of the long history of urban regeneration initiatives in the City of Turin: the area was included in intervention framework of the Progetto Speciale Periferie (Special Peripheries Project), established by the City of Turin in 1997, which in 2001 became the Settore Rigenerazione Urbana e Sviluppo (Urban Regeneration and Development Sector) and, today, Arredo Urbano, Rigenerazione Urbana e Integrazione (Urban Furnishings, Urban Regeneration and Integration). In its original formula, the Project involved a series of structural and social interventions in the urban areas and districts in difficulty, according to the French model of *Quartiers en Crise* and using the integrated methodology of the Complex Urban Programmes introduced into Italian legislation and practice in the early Nineties (Governa and Saccomani, 2004; Bighi, 2017).

In this first phase, inaugurated in 1997, the area was the focus of one of the "Participated local development actions" included in the Project, thus experimenting, mainly through intangible activities, a co-design working method in the Committee set up by the city administration which was further developed later on in the Urban Programme (Cianfriglia and Giannini, 2017). Around ten years later, the latter experience began, formally approved and funded in 2010 within the explicit plan of the Piedmont Region to reserve part of the ERDF 2007-2013 programme resources for the extension of the Urban initiative experimented in another neighbourhood in Turin.

Without denying the severe fragmentation of a district already marked by differences and social micro-contexts (Caritas, 2007), it is – also – the public action of "recognising" the neighbourhood as problematic, a "suburb" that is more metaphoric than "positional", thus further reinforcing a representation which ends up replacing that of working class Turin and reducing the image to stereotypes - "the people from Barriera" as Magatti reminds us (2007) - an indistinct image alluding to a neighbourhood renowned for its urban petty crimes, theft and drug dealing, which the inhabitants themselves end up being tarred with.

In addition to the restructuring of Spina 4, PISU Urban is in fact the only initiative implemented in the neighbourhood as part of the town planning strategies of the last decade: indeed, the other large-scale transformation projects in the area, essentially included in the so-called "Variante 200", for now remain on paper only.

This intervention has considerable scope, if we consider its tangible effects on the neighbourhood: the pedestrianisation and redevelopment of the Foroni market, which over the years is destined to become a concentration of commercial and other initiatives, activated with the cooperation of cultural realities like the Museum Ettore Fico; various interventions relating to "widespread urban quality", including the redevelopment of school yards, the improvement of the green areas along the cycle paths, and a *street art* programme which has certainly brightened up some key built-up areas.

Moreover, Urban has taken on a function as a "container" of projects aiming to transform some vast areas abandoned by the industries which previous programmes had begun without managing to

complete the works due to a lack of funds: this group includes some *flagship* interventions in the neighbourhood, including the development of the "Aurelio Peccei" Park in the ex-Iveco Telai area (43,000 m2), designed not only as a park but also a place of industrial memories and the redevelopment of the ex-INCET sheds, which today house Open Incet, Innovation Center Torino. The latter hopes to become a melting pot of public initiatives linked to social innovation on the issues of environmental sustainability and urban practices inspired by sharing and social inclusion.

Seen together, the actions promoted have certainly contributed to modifying the quality of life in the neighbourhood: new green areas, greater care of public spaces with street furniture, residential buildings with modern living standards (yet completely inconsistent in terms of scale and design in relation to the other buildings in the neighborhood), requalification of trade, particularly market trade, with a focus on the *marketing* and *brand* of the neighborhood. At the same time, the interventions on the cultural functions which, partly spontaneously, have been developed in the area have not had significant effects. While the street art programme was positively welcomed, other activities aiming to strengthen the "creative atmosphere" (the Urban Committee's "Tavolo delle Arti") have not been so lucky. Generally, the urban cultural policies have clearly underestimated the process of localisation of cultural production underway and which today survives substantially independently from the public sector (Salone et al. 2017). The vast Open Incet operation, admittedly still in its initial phases, seems far from the needs of the small cultural players mentioned at the 3.2 paragraph, who prefer porous urban gaps and need above all organisational and regulatory support and tax relief.

5.   Conclusions

5.1 Barriera di Milano: a fragile, heterougeneous hemiphery

In the urban historiography focusing on the history of Turin, in some ways Barriera di Milano plays a paradigmatic role: in just a few decades it has gone from being a key neighbourhood in forming

Turin as city of the working class and socialism (Spriano, 1972) to that of a restless, involuntary laboratory of the multiculturalism brought by globalisation. Starting from the late 19th century, Barriera di Milano was a "noteworthy place" in Turin's geography for a long time. The emblem of industrial Turin, the working class culture and later the resistance where the first trade unions were born, where the Communist Party laid its roots, where the wartime destruction and the workers' revolts during World War Two all define a common past which was maintained until the unrest and contradiction of dying Fordism in the late Seventies. The stigmata of de-industrialisation at the turn of the Nineties marked high levels of unemployment in the neighbourhood, with the precarious and at times difficult cohabitation of "local" and "new" residents, high overpopulation due to the high density of degraded, low-cost housing and a lack of quality public services. These images however represent only partial truths which, precisely because they are easy to communicate, have ended up by conditioning and monopolising the representation of the neighbourhood in a kind of "sociological" metonymy, the nature of which is however far more complex. So complex that it seems to incarnate the idea of a "fragile hemiphery", "geographically crushed between the centre and the periphery", something "in the middle, fragile and disoriented, afraid that the transformations taking place may turn it into a periphery even though it was not born as such" (Magatti, 2007, p. 140).

It is not possible to reduce urban heterogeneity to *a* community or *an* identity. "Community" is a highly romanticised - and widely misinterpreted (Esposito, 1998) - term, as we are reminded by the wide range of *community studies* (Bauman, 2001; Blackshaw, 2010), and identity is a slippery term (Remotti, 2010): both are closely linked to a "nostalgic" interpretation which the very members of a "community" offer of their own history, often in opposition to a presumed loss of the "sense of community", attributed to modernisation, the new generations, the arrival of new (social, ethnic and other) groups who are considered to have irretrievably jeopardised the harmony and peace of the past. Today Barriera di Milano is often described as a deprived and poor space in comparison to a mythical past made of togetherness and harmony. The past neighbourhood is celebrated as a village, where social life was real and authentic, while today urban life is dehumanising and anonymous. Thus a widespread, stereotyped conflict is generated between a nostalgic ideal of Barriera di Milano

of the past, working class and cohesive (characterised by a mythical, idealised "identity") and Barriera di Milano today, represented as chaotic and cosmopolitan, made of fragments from a wide range of cultural and social contexts. This representation is based both on a nostalgic account of the working class neighbourhoods of yesterday, «where communal ties and a sense of collective destiny supposedly prevailed» (Caldeira, 2009, p. 850), and on an anti-urban discourse, made of media, policies, advertising and so on (Slater, 2009) as part of the ideological use of the term city. Today in Barriera di Milano, we can certainly no longer talk of the uniformity of class, nor the cultural uniformity of the social groups who live there, contributing to weaving the mix of relations which make its spaces lived places and continuously defining and redefining the social identity.

The self-representations of the persons and social groups within certain urban spaces may radically differ from each other, as they are fuelled by very different ethno-cultural, religious and social imaginations. The fact of living in proximity is not in itself a guarantee of relational exchanges or cultural closeness: M. Albrow (1997) introduced the concept of "sociosphere" aiming specifically to underline the cohabitation/overlapping of spatial uses and dynamics marked by separateness in contemporary urban contexts: the sociosphere constitutes a social formation created by globalisation, the ties of which with older categories like the family, community, friendship are still to be investigated. Without entering into any discussion on the universality of this analytical category, we consider that it is in any case useful for our aim to highlight how "individuals with very different lifestyles and social networks can live in close proximity without untoward interference with each other" (Albrow, 1997: 51).

5.2 Urban regeneration policies and the "dark" side of urban margins

Since the end of the Nineties, the Municipal Administration has implemented many actions for the regeneration and renewal of the area, aiming to respond to the needs of a rapidly transforming community and, at the same time, to take advantage of an enormous reserve of derelict lands which would have been the engine for subverting the post-industrial urban decline. This is not however the problem: meaning that here we do not doubt the – accused – inertia of public urban policies

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towards the needs of the neighbourhood, but rather the 'inadequacy' of the responses – and the underlying representations - to the questions, in such a changing framework like that of recent years, marked by an effervescence which is perhaps more perceived than real – Olympic Turin, Turin of Culture – and an economic recession which, in Turin far more than in other cities of northern Italy, hit extremely hard. While Barriera di Milano is a "field of contradictions", where both innovations and changes in living, lifestyles, and social relations are tried out and decadence, segregation and social exclusion thrive, urban regeneration policies continue to act only on the "dark" side of the neighbourhood. Not only in official or outside perspectives, but also by its inhabitants, Barriera di Milano continues to be described as the symbol of the deprived urban spaces in Turin: it is a poor, problematical, tough and neglected neighbourhood; a place of theft and drug dealing; an unsafe place; a slum (Pogliano, 2016). In this sense, regeneration has given no responses or, better, the responses have confirmed the prejudices and reproduced the pre-existing internal fractures. The new residential blocks around large distribution surfaces are contrasting visually and substantially to the surviving small-scale workers' tenements and the lower middle-class early-XX century buildings along the main streets. There have probably been no real questions, if not in the simplified and simplifying form of degradation, stigma, the "disease" to be treated. This representation recognizes only the negative aspects of urban margins and does not foresee or allow for the possibility of redemption or, even perhaps, of rehabilitation and especially highlights how, in such a strong way and using pre-defined categories, in order to classify places and people in "conceptual boxes", we tend to always tell the same story and make all the margins the same. Such an image describes only part of the reality: the urban poor, migrants, violence, deprivation and so on are there. And if, in European cities, such spatial order does not take the closed forms of the ghetto, the words used to tell the tale are not so different. This image is the more simple, the more reassuring, the more "normal" image of urban margin on which urban policies act to renew, to rehabilitate, to erase all the differences and to reaffirm the existing spatial order made of one centre and several margins that have to be normalised in order both to justify and consolidate the fixed, certain and reassuring hierarchy of urban spaces. Yet, how far traditional urban regeneration is aligned with the desires of the urban elites and

instrumental to policy making itself, and is based on "normal" urban representation denying the multiplicity of actors, practices and projects and the plurality of functions, resources, and settlements of so-called urban margins, so that specific actions and interventions, that serve specific interests, can take place legitimately is an open (legitimate) issue. And how far urban margins wish and need to be treated and 'cured' by normalizing and uniform interventions is also – as the famous lyric by Amy Winehouse recalled in the title says – an open, not trivial question.

Despite its changes, Barriera di Milano continues to be describe as a neighbourhood far from the centre, both from a physical point of view as well as from social, economic, cultural ones; a 'problematic' district, where decadence, segregation and social exclusion thrive; a non-place, with no quality or history where the centre keeps what it needs but cannot (or will not) host. This view not only continues to deny the complexity of today Barriera (with all its cultural and economic effervescences), but reproduce the need to regenerate without appreciating the differences unfolding in the urban realm. In this way urban regeneration loses something: and in particular the possibility to gather the complexities, the contradictions and the conflicts as the very features nurturing urban lives. This approach does not mean denying the situations of difficulty and exclusion. Poverty, deprivation and exclusion are very real for those who try to survive in these spaces. At the same time, the many "stories" which can be told of every place, and the many geographies that can be described in every place, help us to recognise the questions (and the possible responses) which nestle within multiplicity and heterogeneity, to grasp a deeper reality and depict a geography of the contradictions and differences as an opportunity for change.

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