

Méditerranée

Revue géographique des pays méditerranéens / Journal of Mediterranean geography

127 | 2016 :

La ségrégation dans les villes de l'Europe méditerranéenne

Dire et produire la ségrégation

Ordinary spaces in ordinary cities

Exploring urban margins in Torino and Marseille

Des espaces ordinaires dans des villes ordinaires. Explorer les marges urbaines à Turin et Marseille

FRANCESCA GOVERNA

p. 101-108

<https://doi.org/10.4000/mediterranee.8489>

Abstracts

English Français

This article outlines the need to move away from conventionally dualistic framing of deprived urban spaces which highlights their isolation from, or non-conformity to, the dominant society or culture as a gap or a blame. Tracing the evolution of marginalising discourses of two predefined urban margins in Torino and Marseille, the aim is to critically discuss mainstream categories on urban deprivation and exclusion. After the introduction, normal tales on deprived urban spaces and, in particular, on urban margins, are presented. The assumption of 'ordinary city' is then used to explore various representations of two so-called urban margins, namely *Barriera di Milano* in Torino and *Belle de Mai* in Marseille. Findings from the cases are used to transcend conventional and standardised categories and to outline the unfolding of ordinary urban life in urban margins.

Cet article montre la nécessité de s'affranchir de la vision conventionnelle et dualiste des espaces urbains défavorisés, qui souligne toujours leur isolement ou leur non-conformité par rapport à la société dominante, en assimilant leur culture à un retard ou une faute. En retraçant les effets marginalisants des discours au sujet de deux marges urbaines prédéfinies à Turin et Marseille, le but de l'article est de critiquer les concepts dominants de la recherche en matière d'exclusion urbaine. La première partie présente les discours normatifs au sujet des espaces urbains défavorisés, et plus particulièrement des *marges* urbaines. Puis, la perspective de la « ville ordinaire » est utilisée pour analyser les différentes représentations des deux *marges* que sont *Barriera di Milano* à Turin et la *Belle de Mai* à Marseille. Les deux cas d'étude permettent de dépasser les concepts conventionnels et de montrer le déploiement de la vie urbaine ordinaire dans les *marges* des villes.

Index terms

Mots-clés : marges urbaines, lieux ordinaires

Keywords : urban margins, ordinary places

Geographical index : Torino, Marseille

Full text

- 1 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).
- 2 Conventional representations of deprived urban spaces are contained in the tradition of urban studies at least from the Chicago School and the classical view of the social world in dualistic terms (FINCHER and JACOBS, 1998). Nowadays, they are part of a normal and normalising urban knowledge, which is especially suited to confirm and legitimise what it is and not to enter into the disjuncture between the actual and the possible (BRENNER and SCHMIDT, 2015). The very use of the term city is (or has become) ‘a perverse metaphor’ (MARCUSE, 2005), with theoretical and political implications (from the stigmatisation of poor places and people to the revival of organicistic metaphors that conceal differences and conflicts, even to the point of denying their presence and legitimacy).
- 3 Choosing urban margins as a theoretical lens, this article outlines the need to move away from the conventionally dualistic framing of deprived urban spaces which highlights their isolation from, or non-conformity to, the dominant society or culture as a gap or a blame. Tracing the evolution of marginalising discourses and representations of two predefined urban margins in Torino and Marseille, the aim is to critically discuss mainstream categories of urban deprivation and exclusion, and the counter-narratives of inclusion and empowerment¹. In trying to contain urban heterogeneity into strict theoretical boxes, a whole set of fundamental things, like the nuanced way power and affects work in the everyday life of people and their spaces, get dismissed or are not adequately acknowledged (LANCIONE, 2016). A critical exploration of urban margins may allow to overcome categories and models, to adopt a stance open to indeterminacy and change, to engage in a ‘minor theory’ (KATZ, 1996) that rejects meta-narratives and a priori definitions of what is marginal and what it is not.
- 4 The article is organised as follows. After the introduction, § 1 presents the issues at stake in order to move away from normal tales on deprived urban spaces and, in particular, on urban margins. Referring to the assumption of ‘ordinary city’, advanced by A. AMIN and S. GRAHAM in 1997 and more recently by J. ROBINSON (2006) to rethink urban studies from the Global South, urban margins are not taken for granted as predefined poor spaces for poor people defined once for always, but as ‘ordinary places’ in ‘ordinary cities’. § 2 adopts this perspective to explore various representations of two so-called urban margins in two south-European cities, namely *Barriera di Milano* in Torino and *Belle de Mai* in Marseille. These places are selected as representative of urban margins in South-European cities, based on their industrial past and de-industrialisation transition; predefined status as deprived and problematic spaces; semi-central location and relatively established nature. Nevertheless, a direct comparative approach is not a primary aim of this article. Rather, a ‘comparative gesture’ is adopted, trying to put “specific urban cases (outcomes, processes, experiences) into conversation with others in order to extend the ways in which we can understand and talk about the nature of the urban (in both its multiplicity and complexity)” (ROBINSON, 2016, p. 5). The exploration is carried out by mixing three methods, both in conventional and innovative ways: ethnographic observation (CRANG and COOK, 2007; WALSH, 2009); *flânerie* (KRAMER and SHORT, 2011); analysis of representations, mainly of policy documents and reports (CRANG, 2005); semi-structured interviews and focus-groups with inhabitants, local government officials and civil society

representatives (DOWLING *et al.*, 2016)². Finally, the conclusions outline how ordinary urban life unfolds in urban margins not as a pure mimesis of contemporary mainstream narratives of what a city is and could be. Findings from the cases are used to expose theory to interrogation: “this will make the process of theory building more fragile and uncertain, and theory itself more unstable and less secure in its claims, as evidence from diverse and even divergent urban experiences will need to be engaged with and allowed to disturb conventional accounts” (ROBINSON, 2011, p. 17).

1 - Segregation, marginalisation and normalising tales

- 5 Segregation, marginalisation, exclusion, and so on are some of the many concepts used by urban scholars to describe urban poverty and the increasing complexity of urban inequalities, injustices, deprivations and discriminations. Although every concept highlights various features 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, 2012a, p. 14).
- 6 Using various concepts, deprived urban spaces are conventionally represented in a dualistic framework highlighting their distance (physical, social, economical and so on) from a centre (or a few centres). In a stigmatising vein, this distance is seen as the sign of a weakness, of a lack between something good and desirable and something not. Differences are interpreted as social problems, persisting the spatial separation of the middle-class from the ‘dirt’ and ‘deviance’ of working-class slums which dates back to the 19th century to today’s spatial segregation (VALENTINE and HARRIS, 2014). The rhetorical opposition between deprived urban spaces and idealised conceptions of ‘good places’ seems to be premised on, and at the same time to construct, a normative view, ‘setting aside’ urban differences (of people and places) in order both to justify and consolidate the existing spatial order.
- 7 Conventional representations of differences assert a crystallised and fixed idea of them. From the urban mosaic of the Chicago School to the multi-ethnic kaleidoscope of the contemporary city, differences are variously interpreted as positive (according to L. Wirth, 1938, heterogeneity is one of the feature of the urban way of life) or negative elements (difference as deviance, as anomie and alienation) (FINCHER and JACOBS, 1998). Urban policies increasingly focus on differences, either celebrating (the multiculturalism, the cosmopolitanism ...) or repressing them (SANDERCOCK, 1998; 2000; LEES, 2004). In an opposite or sympathetic view, urban difference is seen as a deviation from a norm and a challenge to it, to either punish or to be included through strategies based on separation, control, inclusion and exclusion. A sort of ‘mechanism’ of cooptation, made 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 (UITERMARK, 2014).
- 8 ‘To set aside’ urban differences is not only metaphorically, but also quite literally: urban poverty tends to concentrate and the socially excluded either choose or are forced to live in certain places often strengthened by racial and ethnic characters (MASSEY and DENTON, 1993). Nevertheless, according to T. MALOUTAS (2012b), “the vision of the dual and polarized city as a fitting description of current socio-spatial divisions in large metropolitan areas around the world and its projection as their unavoidable future under the pressure of capitalist globalization” shows a double contextual blindness: “blindness in

terms of the contradicting empirical evidence from diverse contexts; and blindness due to their implicit attachment to specific contexts” (p. 1). Actually, the major assumptions - old and new - about segregation have been always related to US urban experiences. However, 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 polarisation and segregation have assumed “general validity in spite of the contextual attachments to the Anglophone world—and to US global cities in particular” (MALOUTAS, 2012b, p. 2).

9 L. WACQUANT’s comparative study of “advanced marginality” (2008) draws a dissection and a comparison between the evolution of the black American ghetto and the working class *banlieue* of France over the past three decades. The different patterns followed by US and EU cities highlight how urban marginality takes different forms related to space and State intervention and according to the class characteristics found in specific contexts and epochs that have continued to further exclude urban ‘outcasts’ from mainstream urban society. Using a macro-level analysis of the post-industrial economics, L. WACQUANT shows how urban margins are an outcome of structural processes of dispossession, exclusion, and exploitation. However, the traits of *hyperghetto* occur only in US cities and it is not possible to regard such a specific configuration of marginality as the inevitable destiny of European deprived urban spaces. Actually, in Europe urban deprivation may be quite significant even without the support of an intense segregation phenomena: it is more interstitial and dispersed. According to T. MALOUTAS (2012a), “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).

10 Although L. WACQUANT’S (2008) research on advanced marginality overcomes the idea of a predefined destiny of the deprived areas, arguing the thesis of the convergence of the French *banlieue* to the American model cannot be supported by evidence, and helps to nuance “sombre and monochrome tones” (p. 1) by which deprived urban areas are normally depicted, it is always based in a dualistic framework, that is, according to T. CALDEIRA (2009), “the need to theorize deviance from a standard” (p. 849). 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* (LANCIONE, 2016). There are not margins *per se*, but for something and/or someone. Centres are that something and/or someone that causes the existence of margins. Following a conventional view of the social world in dualistic terms, the rationale at play in these processes is to grasp, to define and even to manage urban margin as a deviance from what is considered to be the cultural/social/economic or spatial norm.

11 Normal is an equivocal and ambiguous term, since “it designates at once a fact and a value attributed to this fact by who is speaking, by virtue of a value judgment which one makes one’s own” (CANGUILHEM, 1966, it. tr. 1998, p. 95). Normal is what one encounters in the majority of cases; it is what constitutes the average and the reference measurable feature. The norm is what is right, what is not sloping, what is not to be straightened or, for us, to be regenerated, renewed or normalised. According to G. CANGUILHEM (1966, it. tr., 1998), if the norm is the ‘preferred choice’, what is not normal is “the different from the better (...) it is not the indifferent, but what it rejects, or more exactly the rejected, the detestable” (p. 202). Margin and marginal are the gap between what is normal and what is not, between what is inside and what is outside the norm (and thus from what is preferable). Whoever does not fall within these boxes is different, and, as such, must be watched, studied, labelled and, if a moral judgment is attributed, sanctioned.

12 Conventional representations of urban margins are only a part of the tale. Perhaps we can tell other tales not to deny poverty, deprivation, exclusion and so on, but to escape to mainstream urban knowledge, whether the more traditional or more recent ones, as that based on the myth of urban competitiveness 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.

13 Moreover, as post-colonial scholars have shown, defining (from the centre) what margins and borders are unavoidably leads to the (re)production of stereotypical and disempowering knowledge (FERGUSON *et al.*, 1990). According to a critical stance and referring to the assumption of the 'ordinary city' (AMIN and GRAHAM, 1997; ROBINSON, 2006), one might consider every city as a multiplicity of spaces, times and webs of relations that overlap and intersect; as a juxtaposition of diversities in an ever-changing and not pacified configuration. Emphasis on heterogeneities and contingencies challenges the very idea that generalisation can be made about what cities or urban margins are and allows to trace the entanglements between objects and bodies, discourses and power in their contextual deployment in space and time by drawing attention to the largely unheard voices, by highlighting things and processes previously unseen or not fully put into focus.

2 - Ordinary urban margins

2.1 - Torino, Barriera di Milano

14 Barriera di Milano is one of Torino's historical working class neighbourhoods, built between the late nineteenth and early decades of the twentieth century in physically peripheral areas, later absorbed by urban expansion. Located in the northeast part of the city, today Barriera di Milano is part of the *Circoscrizione 6* (Barriera di Milano, Regio Parco, Falchera) and presents several problematic features (high level of unemployment, higher-than-city-average rates of low educated people, school drop-outs, low-skilled workers, families requiring the assistance of social services and multiple social weaknesses) (CONFORTI and MELA, 2006). Both in the words of the inhabitants and in the media, Barriera di Milano is depicted as the symbol of deprived urban spaces in Torino, also due to its proximity to a today almost completely evicted illegal Roma camp along the Stura River: a poor, problematical, tough and neglected neighbourhood; a robbery and drug dealing area; an unsafe place; a slum (POGLIANO, 2016).

15 Despite its administrative and physical boundaries, Barriera di Milano is not a clear and unified entity either from a physical or social point of view. It is rather a fragmented and heterogeneous part of Torino, a sort of island connected to the city by some main streets, flows and movements, and surrounded by physical barriers and infrastructures (brownfields, railway tracks, a cemetery) and by an intangible 'sea', which belongs to the mental and precognitive dimension of the collective imaginary of a space where 'the stranger' has been ever-present, but where accepting heterogeneity has always been difficult. The urban fabric is made of a central dense and densely inhabited core, where housing quality is low; a large public housing complex along the eastern border of the area and a ring of brownfields only partially reused.

16 As others *borghi operai* in Torino, and despite the intense de-industrialisation process and the economic and social crisis, Barriera di Milano has maintained a clear characterisation of working class district over time, with a high percentage of residents native to southern Italy who have moved to Torino during the economic boom of the late 1950s and 1960s. To this basic social composition, it then added, in recent years, a significant presence of a foreign population that has changed the social composition and

the use of spaces (CINGOLANI, 2016). Data reveal this demographic and social change and the increasing number of foreigners in the last few years. In 2013, the *Circostrizione 6* hosts, in absolute terms, the major part of the foreign population compared to other districts of Torino (24.983 of a total of 140.138 foreign residents), as well as the highest percentage of foreign population of the total resident population (in *Barriera di Milano*, the share of foreigners is 29 % of the total population, much higher than the 13,6 % city average) (CITTÀ DI TORINO, 2013). The composition by nationality reflects the situation of Torino, as Romanians and Moroccans are the most numerous groups. In *Barriera di Milano*, they account for more than 50 % of the foreign population overall. However, Romanians are not particularly concentrated in this part of the city; conversely, Moroccans, Chinese, Nigerians and Senegalese are (PONZO, 2012).

17 The choices of residential location of migrants, who gradually moved (and continue to move), are the result of various processes, such as a change in the neighbourhood where they first lived; the search for less degraded homes, greater stability in the urban and social fabric, greater integration and services and so on. Strangers are particularly located in the older areas of the district, where population density is higher, buildings are older and in a worse state of decay, and the cost of rent is lower (PONZO, 2012).

18 From an economic standpoint, *Barriera di Milano* looks like a traditional neighbourhood. The unemployment rate (15.05 %) is higher than the average for Torino (9.57 %). In 2009, the percentage of enterprises by sector shows a strong concentration in retail (39.6 %), followed by the services sector (29.5 %), construction (19.3 %) and industry (7.2 %) (Regione Piemonte, 2013). The gradual disappearance of a large number of small handcrafting activities mirrors to the transformation of economic and social dynamics on different scales (de-industrialisation processes, migration flows, recent economic crisis). *Barriera di Milano* is now experiencing a process that recalls what occurred in the 1960s and 1970s when southern shopkeepers prevailed on those from the Piedmont: “according to a vacancy chain model (Waldinger, 1996), the bakery that was once run by the Piedmontese, then moved on to a Calabrian, is now in the hands of a family of Moroccan” (Cingolani, 2012, p. 75). Local economy is today mainly centred on traditional shops – cafés, clothing and small grocery stores, garages, opticians, money transfer agencies, restaurants, butcher shops, phone service centres – located in the central areas of the district. The outer zones are characterised by large commercial activities or abandoned or semi-abandoned industrial buildings. Some of these spaces are now reused to host some innovative practices and activities, also related to cultural and artistic productions and events (Eupolis, 2015).

19 The industrial past of *Barriera di Milano* as well as its working class identity have little to do with the current socio-demographical profile of the district and the fragmented spatial organisation of economic activities. Unlike the arrival of foreign migrants, the gradual disappearance of traditional shops and handcrafting activities, and the increasing complexity of the area, a nostalgic view of *Barriera di Milano* repeatedly surfaces in many ongoing urban policies, as well as in interviews realised during the fieldwork³. *Barriera di Milano* is often described as a place where there are no conflicts, where foreigners are not a problem because they have either moved to other places or are fully included. If, on the one hand, there is the economic problem of the competitive dynamics between Italian and foreign stores, on the other, the diffusion of new ethnic activities is experienced by the older Italian population as an ‘attack’ against the local identity, which mostly refers to a working-class history that is now over, as a narrative of a mythical cohesive neighbourhood (that probably never existed), as a self-representation of ‘us southerners’ against them, the new strangers. These representations are based on the illusion of finding again a mythical identity of the past that actually never existed and outline a widespread and stereotyped conflict between a nostalgic ideal of the past working class neighbourhood and the current fragmented and chaotic multi-ethnic neighbourhood.

2.2 - Marseille, Belle de Mai

- 20 Belle de Mai is located near the central area of Marseille and the *vieux port*, to the northwest of the Saint Charles railway station. It is part of the *troisième arrondissement* of Marseille (Belle de Mai, Saint Mauront, Saint Lazare and La Villette) which, according to the INSEE census data, included approximately 45.000 inhabitants in 2009 (13.629 in Belle de Mai). Recent years have recorded a growth in the area's population (+15,66 %, between 1990 and 2008, while Marseille's population growth is +7,38 %), partly due to the neighbourhood's birth rate and mostly to the migration rate, either from other regions of France or from other countries.
- 21 The report of the OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS (2011), significantly entitled *Muslims in Marseille*, focuses on the *troisième arrondissement* to understand the impact of public policies on integration and social inclusion, describing it as follows: "It is a part of the city which is known for its deprivation and growing poverty in comparison with other parts of Marseille" (p. 34). Also the urban fabric is depicted in a similar vein; "Housing is dense and rather dilapidated [...]. Overall, the quality of the living environment is poor; the road network consists of small, winding streets in a dire state of maintenance; moreover, the spatial layout of the neighbourhood was upset by modern highways that cut right through the area" (*ibid.*, p. 44).
- 22 It comes as no surprise that part of the *troisième arrondissement* (in particular Saint Mauront) is classed as ZUS (*Zone urbaine sensible*), i.e. intra-urban zones characterised by a high percentage of public housing, high unemployment rate and low levels of education and considered as a high-priority target for urban policies designed to reduce social inequalities and development gaps (INSEE, 2012). In 2015 a reform identifies a *nouvelle géographie prioritaire* focusing on the most deprived areas. Indeed, the identification of new priority areas is based on the sole criterion of poverty, namely the concentration of populations with an income level below of the 60 % of the average urban income level. The *troisième arrondissement* is classed as a priority neighbourhood, and Belle de Mai is included. Socio-economic data provided by Insee identify some critical features of Belle de Mai, in particular the low income and the limited education of the inhabitants, mainly young (MARSEILLE PROVENCE MÉTROPOLÉ, 2015). However, M. PERALDI *et al.* (2015) point out the stigma of policy documents and media on Belle de Mai. Although other districts in the *troisième arrondissement* (Saint Mauront ou Saint Lazare) or in the northern area (the *cit  Kallist *) have a per capita income lower than Belle de Mai, it is often marked as the poorest district of Marseille, of France or even of Europe.
- 23 Belle de Mai is an old working class neighbourhood inhabited by migrant populations, previously mainly Italians, now mainly North-Africans and Comorians. Actual interactions between groups were and are limited. People of different backgrounds living alongside one another without having regular interaction or exchanges with each other (NASIALI, 2010). Industrial activities flourished in the past. The tobacco factory SEITA - Soci t  Nationale d'Exploitation Industrielle des Tabac et d'Allumettes – opened in Belle de Mai in 1868; other factories were located nearby and more than 15.000 new inhabitants settled in the neighbourhood (in 1851 Belle de Mai counted 892 inhabitants; in 1875, approximately 16.000, 50 % of whom were Italians; PERALDI *et al.*, 2015). During this period, 68 % of the working population of Belle de Mai was employed by SEITA, which recorded the highest concentration of female labour in Marseille, and by other industrial enterprises located in the district (INGRAM, 2009). J.-C. IZZO (1995) described Belle de Mai as "*le plus vieux quartier populaire de Marseille. Un quartier ouvrier, rouge. Autour du boulevard de la R volution, chaque nom de rue salue un h ros du socialisme fran ais. Le quartier avait enfant  des syndicalistes purs et durs, des militants du communisme par milliers. Et de belles brochettes de truands*".
- 24 A strong deindustrialisation process affected Marseille in the 1980s, leaving the city emptied of economic activities and population (between the 1975 and 1990, the city lost over 100.000 inhabitants, which is around 12 % of its population) (PERALDI *et al.*, 2015).

Industrial activities as well as shops closed-down one after the other in Belle de Mai. 1990 was a crucial year, as SEITA closed-down, leaving a friche (brownfield) of 12 hectares, which physically divided the neighbourhood that was already marked by railway tracks.

25 Today, many stores on the ground floor are inhabited; commercial activities are few, mainly cafés, *supérettes* and auto repair shops; social, business and domestic spaces are often overlapped. Stores are mostly closed in Rue Belle de Mai and in Rue Clovis Hugues, once famous for their commercial attractiveness. Shops still open are mainly located around Place Caffo and Place Cadenat, where a market is held. It is a small market (approximately 50 stalls), where clothing and other low-priced products are sold, while food stalls are few. Though it lacks a particular economic specialisation, the square plays an important role for daily practices also due to the presence of schools and other public services, but also more trivially for some benches where women sit down to chat and watch their children play.

26 To face the economic decline, stagnation and unemployment, the recipe made in Marseille in the last 20 years is the usual competitive strategy of using the urban landscape to promote economic growth. This recipe is based mainly on the *Euroméditerranée* and *Marseille European Cultural Capital* programmes and leads to an urban transformation revealing some of the most trivial ideas of neoliberal urbanism (BRENNER *et al.*, 2012), namely a strong link between physical transformation and economic development; the role of culture and creativity as strategic *atout* for urban competitiveness; the commodification of architecture and urban space⁴.

27 The *Euroméditerranée* program was launched in 1995 to revive the international role of Marseille by attracting new economic and financial activities, maritime tourism, the cruise business, cultural services and telecommunications. It is one of the most important and large urban transformations in Europe, covering the district of La Joliette, the Saint-Charles railway station and the Porte d'Aix, the coastal area of the Fort de Saint Jean and the *vieux port*, the *friche* of the old tobacco factory in Belle de Mai. The reuse of the brownfield was a flagship projects of the *Marseille European Cultural Capital* in 2013: it hosted a heritage centre with storage facilities for the MUCEM - *Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée* (a new iconic museum on the waterfront), a media centre and the famous *Friche of Belle de Mai*, a creative place for cultural and artistic events (INGRAM, 2009; ANDRES, 2011).

28 If one googles 'Belle de Mai', results are mostly related to the *Friche*. In Marseille, in general, when one speaks of Belle de Mai, people immediately think of the *Friche*: Belle de Mai is often summarised by the *Friche*. Although Belle de Mai is a part of the city that has not been gentrified yet, as other parts of central Marseille (FOURNIER and MAZZELLA, 2004), in some representations, there seems to be a pre-given fate according to which, starting from la *Friche*, global capital and gentrifiers will arrive even in Belle de Mai as a contagion or a diffusive model. Indeed, real estate initiatives are more evident near the *Friche*, with cranes, construction sites, new residences, a renewal of atelier and theatres, some cafés and restaurants *pour les bobos*.

29 Belle de Mai is obviously not the *Friche* or the 'new creative district' of Marseille's renaissance. This is only a synecdoche, a rhetorical figure that is critically discussed by A. AMIN and S. GRAHAM (1997) who outline the risks to describe the city only from one (renewed) space and one representation of urban life. As P. MARCUSE (2005) points out, the theoretical and political impact of this rhetorical distortion "is to suggest implicitly that what is good for that one part of the city is good for all within it" (p. 250).

30 The inhabitants of Belle de Mai feel that the *Friche* is not really for them. When we enter the *Friche* we penetrate a sort of fence that leaves out Comorians and Maghrebians. What happens inside –not only artistic performances but also consumption practices such as organic markets or urban gardens– has little or nothing to do with what happens outside. The lack of relations between the *Friche* and Belle de Mai allows us to redefine the notion of proximity and the reified idea that what is close is similar. According to this hypothesis, the *Friche*, the heart of the working class identity of Belle de Mai, is no longer

Belle de Mai. It is more similar to other experiences of reuse of old industrial spaces for cultural purposes around Europe than to the 'strange' neighbourhood that winds its way around it and to the daily practices that take place in it.

31 Conclusion

32 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 define and legitimise mainstream urban knowledge. These pictures dismiss urban margins or include them in normal and normalising tales.

33 Barriera di Milano and Belle de Mai are normally represented as poor and problematic neighbourhoods. In both cases, immigration issue emerges as the key-factor of urban deprivation. Besides, 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" (AMIN, 2012, p. 68). Poverty, deprivation and exclusion are very real for those who try to survive in these spaces. However, at the same time, categories and discourses (including those produced by social sciences) not only mould our perceptions of deprivation, but they also form the basis for concrete policies (WACQUANT, 2008).

34 Not only in official or outside perspectives, but also by inhabitants, today Barriera di Milano and Belle de Mai are often described as deprived and poor spaces in comparison with a mythical past made of togetherness and harmony. Past neighbourhoods are celebrated as villages, where social life was real and authentic, since today urban life is dehumanising and anonymous. 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 by media, policies, advertising and so on (SLATER, 2009) as part of the ideological use of the term city.

35 These sketches of Barriera di Milano and Belle de Mai tell us something about these spaces, their marginality and their being. Urban margins are all of this and even more. However, these sketches especially highlight in such a strong way using pre-defined categories, in order to classify places and people in 'conceptual boxes', tends always to tell the same story and to make all the margins the same. The hierarchy of urban spaces, from the center 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, the words used to tell the tale are not so different. However, as KAIKA (2012) shows for Athens, "new ranks of beggars are not migrants, junkies, alcoholics or homeless; they do not fall into any of the familiar categories of the urban 'other' or 'subaltern'. As they belonged, until very recently, to the mainstream aspiring middle classes, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to 'other' them, ignore them or dismiss them politically, or socially" (p. 423). This is not to assert a divisive line between old and new urban poor, but to rethink the taken for granted around urban poverty and marginality.

36 To enter urban margins as ordinary places it means to assign to them the complexity of which all spaces are full; to consider urban margins as poised, contested and not very certain spaces, as all other spaces that make up ordinary cities where different practices are deployed by different actors in various ways; to outline the unfolding and the becoming and to grasp the blurring of boundaries rather than to search for a fixed identification. In Barriera di Milano, the rise and spread of new ethnic activities (bars, restaurants, bakeries, markets), linked to the new urban populations of Torino, show some economic specialisations that can foster urban life. As outlined by A. LAGENDIJK *et al.* (2011), ethnic entrepreneurship, especially in the form of retail, plays a key role in strengthening ethnically diverse neighbourhoods, both from the economic and socio-cultural points of view. In Belle de Mai, the entanglement of daily life shows the urban vitality of this place that one cannot catch if only poverty and deprivation

are scrutinised. Its social and functional complexity can be seen simultaneously as a problem – a source of conflicts among different populations, several established functions, different processes of change, recent and ongoing – or as an opportunity and a widespread potential. Small-scale practices, seemingly irrelevant and ordinary, often neglected both by research and urban policies, constitute a widespread tissue constantly reassembling the life at the margins (LANCIONE, 2016) and the complexity of socio-spatial relations. They are not exceptional things or practices: they are just what the city is (SIMONE, 2016). Ordinary urban margins are, *per se*, parts of the city with their place-specific dynamics and logics and their urban multiplicity that cross and nurture ordinary urban life. Exploring ordinary urban margins tries to grasp a deeper reality and to depict a geography of the contradictions and differences as an opportunity for changes.

Bibliography

- AMIN A., (2012), *Land of strangers*, Polity Press, Cambridge, p. 200.
DOI : 10.1080/1070289X.2012.732544
- AMIN A. and GRAHAM S., (1997), The ordinary city, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 22(4), p. 411-429.
DOI : 10.1111/j.0020-2754.1997.00411.x
- ANDRES L., (2011), Alternative Initiatives, cultural intermediaries and urban regeneration: the case of la Friche (Marseille), *European Planning Studies*, 19(5), p. 795-811.
- BERTONCELLO B., RODRIGUES-MALTA R. and DUBOIS J., (2009), *Opération Euroméditerranée: une affaire d'Etat, Rapport de Recherche*, Programme POPSU, PUCA, p. 138.
- BRENNER N., MARCUSE P. and MAYER M., (eds), (2012), *Cities for people not for profit*, Routledge, London, p. 284.
DOI : 10.1080/13604810903020548
- BRENNER N. and SCHMIDT C., (2015), Towards a new epistemology of the urban?, *City*, 19(2-3), p. 151-182.
DOI : 10.1080/13604813.2015.1014712
- CALDEIRA T., (2009), Marginality, again?!, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 33(3), p. 848-853.
- CANGUILEHM G., (1966), *Le normal et le pathologique*, PUF, Paris, p. 228 (italian translation 1998, *Il normale e il patologico*, Einaudi, Torino).
DOI : 10.3917/puf.cangu.2013.01
- CINGOLANI P., (2012), Dentro la Barriera. Vivere e raccontare la diversità nel quartiere, PASTORE F. and PONZO I., (eds), *Concordia discors*, Carocci, Roma, p. 53-83.
- CINGOLANI P., (2016), Turin in Transition: Shifting Boundaries in Two Post-Industrial Neighbourhoods, in PASTORE F. and PONZO I. (eds), *Inter-group Relations and Migrant Integration in European Cities*, Springer Open, Heidelberg New York Dordrecht London, p. 123-150.
- CITTÀ DI TORINO, (2013), *La popolazione straniera nel 2013*, Torino, p. 35.
- CONFORTI L. and MELA A., (2006), *La configurazione sociale dei diversi ambiti spaziali nella città di Torino*, Ires Piemonte, Torino, p. 79.
- CRANG M., (2005), Qualitative Methods: There is nothing outside the text?, *Progress in Human Geography*, 29(2), p. 225-233.
DOI : 10.1191/0309132505ph541pr
- CRANG M. and COOK I., (2007), *Doing Ethnographies*, Sage, London, p. 376.
DOI : 10.4135/9781849208949
- DOWLING R., LLOYD K. and SUCHET-PEARSON S., (2016), Qualitative methods I: Enriching the interview, *Progress in Human Geography* 40(5), p. 679-686.
- EUPOLIS, (2015), *Potenziali di città. Torino oltre la crisi*, Rapporto di Ricerca, Dist, Politecnico e Università di Torino, Torino, p. 347.
- FERGUSON R., GEVER M., MINH-HA T. T. and WEST C., (eds.) (1990), *Out there: marginalization and contemporary cultures*, The New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, p. 446.

- FINCHER R. and JACOBS J. M. (eds), (1998), *Cities of difference*, The Guilford Press, New York, p. 322.
- FOURNIER P. and MAZZELLA S. (eds), (2004), *Marseille, entre ville et ports*, La Découverte, Paris, p. 320.
- GOVERNA F. and MEMOLI M., (2016), *Murat goes to Belle de Mai. A research*, a film, forthcoming.
- GOVERNA F., ROSSIGNOLO C. and SACCOMANI S., (2009), Turin: Urban regeneration in a post-industrial city, *Journal of Urban Regeneration and Renewal*, 3(1), p. 20-30.
- GRÉSILLON B., (2011), *Un enjeu "capitale": Marseille-Provence 2013*, Éditions de l'Aube, Paris, p. 171.
- INGRAM M., (2009), The artist and the City in "Euromediterranean" Marseille, *City & Society*, 21(2), p. 268-292.
- INSEE ÉTUDES (2012), *Quartiers prioritaires*, Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, p. 19.
- IZZO J.C., (1995), *Total Khéops*, Gallimard, Paris, p. 352.
- KAIKA M., (2012), The economic crisis seen from the everyday, *City*, 16(4), p. 422-430.
DOI : 10.1080/13604813.2012.696943
- KATZ C., (1996), Toward minor theory, *Environment and Planning D*, 14(4), p. 487-499.
DOI : 10.1068/d140487
- KRAMER K. and SHORT J. R., (2011), Flâneries and the globalizing city, *City*, 15(3-4), p. 322-342.
- LAGENDIJK A., PIJPERS R., ENT G., HENDRIKX R., VON LANEN B. and MAUSSART L., (2011), Multiple Worlds in a Single Street, *Space and Polity*, 15(2), p. 163-181.
- LANCIONE M., (2016), The Assemblage of Life at the Margins, in LANCIONE M. (ed), *Re-thinking Life at the Margins. The Assemblage of Contexts, Subjects and Politics*, Routledge, London, p. 3-26.
- LEES L. (ed), (2004), *The Emancipatory City? Paradoxes and Possibilities*, Sage, London, p. 243.
- LOMBARD M., (2015), Discursive constructions of low-income neighbourhoods, *Geography Compass*, 9(12), p. 648-659.
DOI : 10.1111/gec3.12251
- MALOUTAS T., (2012a), The broadening and mystified margins of urban deprivation, *European Journal of Homeless*, 6(1), p. 13-29.
- MALOUTAS T., (2012b), Introduction: Residential Segregation in Context, in MALOUTAS T. and FUJITA K. (eds), *Residential Segregation in Comparative Perspective*, Ashgate, Farnham, p. 1-35.
- MARCUSE P., (2005), 'The city' as perverse metaphor, *City*, 9(2), p. 247-254.
DOI : 10.1080/13604810500197038
- MARSEILLE PROVENCE MÉTROPOLE, (2015), *Contrat de ville de Marseille Provence Métropole. Cahier 1 Diagnostic thématique et territorial*, Marseille, p. 93.
- MASSEY D. S. and DENTON N. A., (1993), *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, p. 312.
DOI : 10.1086/229532
- MUSTERD S. and OSTENDORF W., (eds), (1998), *Urban segregation and the welfare state: Inequality and Exclusion in Western Cities*, Routledge, London, p. 292.
- NASIALI M. A., (2010), *Native to the Republic: Negotiating citizenship and social welfare in Marseille "immigrant" neighbourhoods since 1945*, PhD dissertation (History), University of Michigan, p. 359.
- OPEN SCIENCE FOUNDATIONS (2011), *Muslims in Marseille*, Opens Society Foundations, New York, p. 320.
- PERALDI M. and SAMSON M., (2005), *Gouverner Marseille. Enquête sur les mondes politiques marseillais*, La Découverte, Paris, p. 322.
- PERALDI M., DUPORT C. and SAMSON M., (2015), *Sociologie de Marseille*, La Découverte, Paris, p. 124.
- POGLIANO A., (2016), News Media and Immigration in the EU, in PASTORE F. and PONZO I. (eds), *Inter-group Relations and Migrant Integration in European Cities*, Springer Open, Heidelberg New York Dordrecht London, p. 151-176.
- PONZO I., (2012), Barriera di Milano e Borgo San Paolo. Una storia (operaia) e due destini, in PASTORE F. and PONZO I. (eds), *Concordia discors*, Carocci, Roma, p. 33-52.
- REGIONE PIEMONTE, (2013), online: [www.regione.piemonte.it/commercio/tavole2013.htm], last access: 7/4/2016.
- ROBINSON J., (2006), *Ordinary cities: Between modernity and development*, Routledge, London, p. 204.

- ROBINSON J., (2011), Cities in a world of cities: The comparative gesture, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 53(1), p. 1-23.
DOI : 10.1111/j.1468-2427.2010.00982.x
- ROBINSON J., (2016), Thinking cities through elsewhere: Comparative tactics for a more global urban studies, *Progress in Human Geography*, 40(1), p. 3-29.
- SANDERCOCK L., (1998), *Towards Cosmopolis: Planning for Multicultural Cities*, John Wiley and Sons, New York, p. 258.
- SANDERCOCK L., (2000), When Strangers Become Neighbours: Managing Cities of Difference, *Planning Theory & Practice*, 1(1), p. 13-30.
DOI : 10.1080/14649350050135176
- SIMONE A., (2016), Cities that are just cities, in LANCIONE M. (ed), *Re-thinking Life at the Margins. The Assemblage of Contexts, Subjects and Politics*, Routledge, London, p. 76-88.
- SLATER T., (2009), Anti-Urbanism, in KITCHEN R. and THRIFT N., (eds.), *International encyclopedia of human geography*, Elsevier, Oxford, p. 159-166.
- THRIFT N., (1996), New urban eras and old technological fears: reconfiguring the goodwill of electronic things, *Urban Studies*, 33(8), p. 1463-1493.
DOI : 10.1080/0042098966754
- UITERMARK J., (2014), Integration and Control: The Governing of Urban Marginality in Western Europe, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 38(4), p. 1418-1436.
DOI : 10.1111/1468-2427.12069
- VALENTINE G. and HARRIS C., (2014), Strivers vs skivers: Class prejudices and the demonisation of dependency in everyday life, *Geoforum*, 53, p. 84-92.
DOI : 10.1016/j.geoforum.2014.02.007
- WACQUANT L., (2008), *Urban Outcasts. A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality*, Polity Press, Cambridge, p. 360.
- WALSH K., (2009), Participant Observation, in KITCHEN R. and THRIFT N., (eds.), *International encyclopedia of human geography*, Elsevier, Oxford, p. 77-81.
DOI : 10.1016/B978-008044910-4.00489-2
- WIRTH L., (1938), Urbanism as a Way of Life, *American Journal of Sociology*, 44, p. 1-24.
DOI : 10.1086/217913

Notes

1 “Tracing the evolution of marginalising discourses through different contexts and times reveals how ideas from seemingly disparate settings have come into contact and influenced each other, and highlights the persistence of specific discursive tropes” (LOMBARD, 2015, p. 649).

2 The exploration of Barriera di Milano was conducted by Francesca Governa, Paula Mendez and Felipe Quintero during the spring-summer months of 2015 as part of a research titled *Potenziali di città* (Eupolis, 2015, which also contain a more in-depth discussion of the methodology adopted). The exploration of Belle de Mai is part of a more ambitious project carried out by *Murat - Multiplicity Urban Representation Amazing Theory*, a post-disciplinary group that brings together geographers, photographers and film-makers. During three periods of fieldwork (February 2013; June 2014; September 2014), the methodological path was enriched, and also changed, by a visual approach to shoot a research-movie, titled *Murat, the geographer*. For a more detailed discussion on the methodologies used, see Governa and Memoli, forthcoming.

3 For example, in Urban-Barriera, an urban renewal program, inspired by the Urban Community initiative, which includes physical, social and economic measures, and is also connected to the so-called *Variante 200* that weaves a major infrastructural project (the line 2 of the subway) to a settlement and environmental transformation (GOVERNA *et al.*, 2009).

4 Among the many references on recent urban policies in Marseille, see for example PERALDI and SAMSON, 2005; BERTONCELLO *et al.*, 2009; GRÉSILLON, 2011.

References

Bibliographical reference

Francesca Governa, « Ordinary spaces in ordinary cities », *Méditerranée*, 127 | 2016, 101-108.

Electronic reference

Francesca Governa, « Ordinary spaces in ordinary cities », *Méditerranée* [Online], 127 | 2016, Online since 01 November 2016, connection on 17 January 2021. URL : <http://journals.openedition.org/mediterranee/8489> ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/mediterranee.8489>

About the author

Francesca Governa

DIST, FULL - Future Urban Legacy Lab, Politecnico di Torino, francesca.governa@polito.it

Copyright

Tous droits réservés