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ISR Italian Sociological Review
University of Verona, Italy
ISSN 2239-8589 | Editor in Chief Paola Di Nicola
Managing Editor Debora Viviani

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How to cite
Bolzoni, M. (2022). The Diversity That We Love. Commodification and Control of Diversity in Gentrifying Neighbourhoods. [Italian Sociological Review, 12 (2), 435-457]
Retrieved from [http://dx.doi.org/10.13136/isr.v12i2.557]

[DOI: 10.13136/isr.v12i2.557]

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3. Article accepted for publication
Date: April 2022

The Diversity That We Love. Commodification and Control of Diversity in Gentrifying Neighbourhoods[1]

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Abstract

In a time of growing appreciation for urban diversity, consuming ethnic food, sharing the streets with foreign people and showing interest for cultural diversity often operate as a means of social distinction, in particular among the new urban middle classes. Hence, culturally and ethnically diverse atmosphere have come to be considered as an asset for urban branding and neighbourhoods' regeneration. The implications for those who embody such diversity, however, are often unclear.

The paper addresses the ambiguous relationship between diversity and urban upgrading, focusing on the case of Turin and, more specifically, on a mixed neighbourhood that after a period of misfortune has become one of the new trendy spots of the city, also building on its diverse and gritty atmosphere. Bringing together literature on gentrification and social mix, commodification of diversity in urban transformations, and everyday multiculturalism, the paper offers an analysis of practices of negotiation, control and commodification of diversity in different domains of neighbourhood's life: commercial landscape, public spaces and neighbourhoods' representations. It argues that middle classes' love for diversity often appears related to the ability to control it, to decide which kind of diversity is 'good' and should be visible and displayed in the neighbourhood space. In this frame, diversity may become a particular kind of commodity, to be consumed in a safe and sanitized environment and the appreciation for diversity may lead to forms of control, reification and exploitation rather than to integration and social inclusion.

Keywords: diversity, gentrification, consumption.

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[1] Initial ideas and early versions of this paper were discussed during EURA and ISA-RC21 conferences and I am grateful for the comments received in those occasions. The usual disclaimers apply.

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1. Introduction

In recent times, diversity has increasingly emerged as a feature to bet on to promote neighbourhoods and cities: central ethnic districts and multicultural neighbourhoods have been increasingly marketed to attract visitors and prospective residents, and sharing the streets with foreign and non-white residents has come to be considered an element characterizing the authentic urban experience (Aytar, Rath, 2012; Fainstein, 2005; Hoffman, 2003; Zukin, 2008)[1]. Specifically, the fascination for the diverse and the exotic has become part of the lifestyles of the so-called new urban middle classes (Butler and Robson, 2003), and a multicultural environment appears specifically sought in choosing the place where to live or to spend the free time (Blokland, Van Eijk, 2010; Tissot, 2014; Zukin, 2010). These elements would seem to hold the promise for a greater social inclusion of those who embody the features of diversity, such as migrants and people with foreign background: after a period in which a consistent presence of migrants in city neighbourhoods was first and foremost considered a problem to deal with, this new appreciation for diversity in urban spaces seems to open up to new, positive, developments.

However, the pathway is not so simple and linear as it may seem at first. Scholars have indeed shown that cultural, ethnic and class diversity are elements able to attract the new urban middle classes in using and moving into a specific district (Blokland, Van Eijk, 2010; Lloyd, 2006; Zukin, 2010). But, at the same time, the appreciation for diversity often appears as intrinsically linked to the possibility to control the elements and the characteristics of diversity that are present and displayed (Tissot, 2014). Diversity may be transformed in a particular kind of commodity, to be consumed in a safe and clean environment (May, 1996; Shaw, Bagwell, Karmowska, 2004) and the elements that are welcomed and emphasized become those able to attract, be appreciated and consumed (Fainstein, 2007; Semi, 2004). Also, in socio-spatial terms, the interest for (a certain kind of) diversity can activate processes that may result in forms of gentrification[2] and residents' displacement: the feature of diversity would still characterize the area, but it would become a brand, a simulacrum emptied of its original representatives (Annunziata, Manzo, 2013; Hackworth, Rekers, 2005; Hae, 2011; Zukin, 2010). Rather than the promise of a path towards social inclusion, neighbourhoods that are celebrated for their

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[2] Following Hackworth (2002: 815), we may generally refer to gentrification as «the production of urban space for progressively more affluent users».

multicultural and ethnic atmosphere may therefore become new sites of exploitation and exclusion.

This ambivalence is at the centre of the present paper, which investigates everyday practices and situated narratives through which different actors negotiate, manage and strategically use the feature of diversity in gentrifying neighbourhoods. In so doing, it brings together the literature on social mix and gentrification (Blokland, Van Eijk, 2010; Lees, 2008; Uitermark, 2003), on the commodification of diversity in urban transformation processes (Aytar, Rath, 2012; De Oliver, 2016; Hackworth, Rekers, 2005; Zukin, 2010) and on everyday multiculturalism (Colombo, Semi, 2007; Wise, Velayutham, 2009). In other words, the contribution asks: which kind of cultural and ethnic diversity is actually sought in neighbourhoods celebrated for their diversity and multiculturalism? How is this translated into everyday practices and narratives? And what are the implications for the migrants/foreign background residents and users of these urban spaces?

To address these questions the paper takes into account the case of Turin, an Italian (wannabe) post-industrial city that has increasingly betted on culture, leisure and entertainment to steer the economy out of the crisis (of Fordism first, of public debt and post-2008 recession later). More specifically, the neighbourhood of San Salvario will serve as a reference. This neighbourhood, historically mixed in terms of provenience, class and religion, in the mid-Nineties went through a period of social tension and distress during which the large presence of foreign people was often referred to as one of the main problematic issues (Allasino, Bobbio, Neri, 2000; Belluati, 2004). In more recent years, however, its diverse composition has come to be considered an asset to promote the area's regeneration, and its gritty and authentic atmosphere has made it one of the new trendy spot of the city. For these reasons it offers an interesting setting where to address the ambiguous relationship between diversity and urban regeneration, its implications for the neighbourhood's urban spaces and everyday practices, as well as the approaches that the new urban middle classes entertain with the features and embodiments of diversity in urban spaces.

The analyses here presented rely on a qualitative longitudinal research (Saldaña, 2003) on the city of Turin (2011-2021), investigating dynamics, actors and socio-spatial implications of urban change in the city as a whole as well as focusing on different urban areas in different periods[3]. In particular, the

[3] While the research on San Salvario was done entirely by the Author, the broader longitudinal research on Turin can be rather considered a collective research effort, with the involvement of Prof. Giovanni Semi (University of Turin), Dr. Lucilla Barchetta (Ca' Foscari University of Venice) and university master students too.

neighbourhood of San Salvario was investigated through an ethnographic fieldwork between 2011 and 2012, and with follow-up qualitative interviews, observation and media research in the following years. Overall, different data collection methods were adopted, such as participant and naturalistic observation, in-depth interviews, archival and media research. Participant observation was performed in neighbourhood's public spaces, commercial activities and public events as well as within its associative fabric. Qualitative in-depth interviews have been recorded with different actors of the neighbourhoods: local authorities (4), association representatives (15), residents (11) and entrepreneurs of commercial and recreational businesses (43).

The paper develops as follows. First, it outlines the theoretical approach that frames the research, elaborating on the different literatures mentioned above. Then it presents the case of Turin and of the mixed neighbourhood of San Salvario, highlighting the role of diversity in its process of change. Addressing the ambivalences between social inclusion, commodification and control of diversity, it draws attention on three domains, namely the commercial landscape, the public spaces, and the discourses and narratives surrounding the neighbourhood's (external/internal) image. The conclusions offer an overall discussion and some final remarks on the ambivalent relationship between diversity and urban renewal.

2. Diversity and urban renewal: an ambiguous relationship

As works such as Said's Orientalism (1978) already showed, the fascination for the diverse and the exotic is nothing new: both desired and feared, they are understood as opponents of the construction of Western identity. Rather than an actual desire of knowledge, however, this fascination appears mostly based on, and producing, imaginative geographies and stereotypical images. In the Nineties, May (1996) critically examined the fortune that ethnic goods, and ethnic food in particular, were having among the representatives of what she referred to as the new cultural class. She underlined that «rather than articulating a genuine interest in other cultures, the new cultural class may be consuming this food as part of a quite different project, a project of social distinction» and, in so doing, «rather than challenging racism, [their] consumption practices […] reveal a host of racist stereotypes» (May, 1996: 59). In the words of hooks (1992: 21), «the commodification of Otherness has been so successful because it is offered as a new delight, more intense, more satisfying than normal ways of doing and feeling […] ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture». Consumption, then, is a process that attributes to goods a symbolic meaning, provided by both producers and

consumers, that operates as a means of social distinction (Bourdieu, 1979; Featherstone, 1991). These studies already contained issues that have been later developed in the discussion about the relationship between a neighbourhood's 'ethnic packaging' (Hackworth, Rekers, 2005) and gentrification: the risk that diversity would become just a commodity, whose appreciation and consumption are part of certain lifestyle, without any real interest towards the social inclusion of those who carry such features, the risk to reproduce fixed stereotypes of what diversity is or should be, and, overall, the risk of new forms of exploitation and exclusion.

Even if a certain fascination for diversity, as seen, is not new, the conscious use of ethnic and cultural diversity as positive assets to brand and market neighbourhoods and to foster their redevelopment (i.e. commodification of diversity) is a relatively recent trend (Fainstein, 2005; Florida, 2002). The same can be said about the analysis of the socio-cultural implications of these processes (Annunziata, Manzo, 2013; Aytar, Rath, 2012; De Oliver, 2016; Hoffman, 2003; Shaw, Bagwell, Karmowska, 2004; Summers, 2019). Diversity, in general, has emerged as a new central feature in urban planning too (Fainstein, 2005). And yet, a certain degree of ambiguity characterizes the relationship between ethnic and cultural diversity and urban spaces and their transformations (cfr. also Arrigoni, Bifulco, Bricocoli, 2018; Briata, 2019; Fioretti, Briata, 2019; Manzo, 2017). The spatial concentration of foreign people in cities has always been a crucial concern of urban sociology, often framed as a problem to tackle, as the classic works of the Chicago School, as well as more recent researches on 'neighbourhood racial transition' (Gotham, 2002), on socio-spatial segregation or on social mix (Blokland, Van Eijk, 2010; Lees, 2008; Manzo, 2012; Uitermark, 2003) well show. European cities present patterns of migrants' residential spatial arrangements that are very different from the ghetto-type segregation of American cities (Aalbers, 2006; Arbaci, 2007), but the arrival and spatial concentration of immigrants in specific areas of the city have been often perceived as alarming sign of trouble and decline. The rhetoric that an area might become increasingly dangerous, degraded and unattractive because of migrants' presence is in fact quite popular and it has often been used to veil or justify strategies and policies of redlining and speculation, in phases of both neighbourhood decline and regeneration (Aalbers, 2006; Gotham, 2002; Lees, 2008; Smith, 1996; Uitermark, Duyvendak, Kleinhans, 2007). Social-mix policies, for example, are based on the assumption that the spatial concentration of migrants would deter social cohesion and individual integration in the local society, while the presence of the middle classes in previously deprived, or diverse, areas would improve both the general context and the individual opportunities of its long-term residents. Indeed, social mix has been increasingly promoted in policy circles, it is often part of urban renewal agendas

and, more generally, it has been seen and encouraged as positive process, despite the fact that there is very poor evidence that supports this approach (Agustoni, Alietti, Cucca, 2015; Bricocoli, Cucca, 2012; Lees, 2008). Different studies indicate indeed that spatial proximity of middle class and working class, or ethnically diverse, groups is not sufficient to create mixed networks (Blokland, Van Eijk, 2010; Butler, Robson, 2003) and that, especially in Southern European cities, spatial proximity cannot be assumed as a proxy of social proximity and inclusion (Arbaci 2007 2019; Maloutas, 2007; Pfirsch, Semi, 2016). This is also true in contexts such as the gentrified/gentrifying neighbourhoods, where the new urban middle classes live: even if diversity is one of the leitmotifs in the new tastes and lifestyles and social mix is often actively sought (Annunziata, Manzo, 2013; Lloyd, 2006; Tissot 2014; Zukin, 2010), there is no evidence that 'people who like diversity' actually have mixed networks (Blokland, Van Eijk, 2010). Finally, there is no evidence that social mix improves the quality of life for neighbourhood residents, both in terms of social cohesion and economic opportunity, and it may even has an opposite effect, increasing the chances of displacement, paving the way to gentrification (Lees, 2008; Uitermark, Duyvendak, Kleinhans, 2007).

The fortune and diffusion of these policies are also related to the new status that diversity has acquired in the set of preferences and lifestyle of the new urban middle classes. In a time of growing appreciation for the cultural diversity of city-life, «sharing the streets with working-class and non white residents, even if personal interaction remains superficial, is part of [the] image of an authentic urban experience» (Lloyd, 2006: 78). Changes in tastes and consumption are socially constructed and reinforced, and have a concrete impacts on urban shape (Zukin, 1995; 2010). In a time of competition between cities, localities need to differentiate themselves in order to attract capital. If culture is at the core of the competitive advantages of cities, urban cultural diversity is, then, a vital resource for their prosperity (Florida, 2002; Zukin, 1995). In such a frame, we witness the affirmation of ethnic, multicultural neighbourhoods as new sites for tourism, leisure and consumption (Aytar, Rath, 2012; Hoffman, 2003; Huning, Novy, 2006; Shaw, Bagwell, Karmowska, 2004). Since the end of the Nineties, diversity has become a relevant element of city branding and city marketing: as Hoffman (2003) underlines, cities' diversity has been transformed from disadvantage to unique advantage, to promote tourism and consumption in marginal neighbourhoods. Diversity and social mix have come to be considered as central ingredients in urban renewal processes, in which upgrading properties doesn't imply tearing buildings down. As seen, ethnic foods or goods do not only provide a nourishing meal or a fancy object: they also offer an immersion in vicarious travel, with the re-creation of exotic atmospheres through the use of architectural and design markers. Such

atmospheres expand from the interior world of restaurants and shops into the streets and «everyday places and features of multicultural districts may […] be transformed into objects of place-consumption» (Shaw, Bagwell, Karmowska, 2004: 1984-1985). As in other forms of cultural consumption, cultural diversity too needs to be codified and presented in order to be readable and consumed (Hackworth, Rekers, 2005; Hoffman, 2003; Shaw, Bagwell, Karmowska, 2004; Urry, 1990). In a continuous process of cross-reference between producers and consumers, specific markers and stereotypical, aestheticized, features are used and displayed. If we assume the everyday multiculturalism perspective (Colombo, Semi, 2007; Wise, Velayutham, 2009), difference and diversity can be understood as social constructs, with a situational, procedural character, performed and constantly re-defined through everyday practices, tactics and strategies. In combining these elements to focus on the urban commodification of diversity, some authors underline a top-down dynamic, while others emphasize the agency of ethnic entrepreneurs and their potential empowerment. The work of Shaw, Bagwell, Karmowska, (2004: 1983), for example, stresses the role of urban policies and local authorities that in recent years have «selected, developed and marketed» multicultural districts to make them «accessible, safe and visually appealing to visitors who are considerably more affluent than the local population». Rath (2007), on the other hand, complicates this frame, underlining that, in those settings, foreign entrepreneurs may have access to opportunities that otherwise would not exist. Overall, however, it is possible to state that the transformation of ethnic, diverse or multicultural neighbourhoods into places of leisure and consumption holds a number of risks and ambiguities (cfr. also Arrigoni, Bifulco, Bricocoli, 2018; Fioretti, Briata, 2019; Manzo, 2017)

To investigate these risks and ambiguities, we focus on the city of Turin, Italy, and on the neighbourhood of San Salvario, more specifically. This area has witnessed the transformation of diversity from a problem to manage to an asset to bet on for re-launching the area. The analysis aims at inquiring whether and how the promotion of diversity as a positive and attractive feature is performed and takes place in the everyday life. Diversity, indeed, has come to be a feature sought by a particular segment of urban population, therefore emerging as an asset to support rather than as a problem to address. But what are the actual implications of this fascination?

3. A diverse neighbourhood in a post-industrial city?

Turin is the capital of the Piedmont region, in the North-West of Italy, and the country's fourth largest city in terms of population. It is an example of a

former industrial city, quite emblematic in the Italian context, whose urban authorities have tried to move forward and to imagine new paths of development in the transition towards a post-fordist economy (Belligni, Ravazzi, 2012). For almost a century, Turin has been known as the one-company-town of Italy, whose social and economic profile revolved around the FIAT industry and its satellite factories (Bagnasco, 1986). While, globally, the shift towards a post-industrial society and the global transformations in the geography of state power (Brenner, 2000, 2009) promoted a new centrality of cities and a movement from a managerial to an entrepreneurial approach in the urban governance (Harvey, 1989), in Turin, from the Nineties onwards, a new generation of local authorities have invested in moving away from a Fordist past and in outlining new directions of change (Belligni, Ravazzi, 2012). One of these directions has been the promotion of the city as an attractive place of leisure, culture and consumption, a trend shared with other Western post-fordist cities too (Aytar, Rath, 2012; Clark, 2004; Zukin, 1995), drawing attention to the preferences and needs of specific segments of the urban population, such as tourists, young urban middle classes, temporary residents and city users. While the 2006 Winter Olympics are the most notable example of this process, a number of smaller events and, more in general, the image of a city that is vibrant and lively, especially in terms of culture, consumption and night-life, have become central features of local promotion and branding (Crivello, 2011; Vanolo, 2008).

Turin was the first Italian municipality to establish an office directed to the support of foreign migrants – Ufficio Stranieri, in 1982 – and it created in 2004 a bureau devoted to integration and multiculturalism, on the one side, and urban regeneration, on the other (Caponio, 2014). And indeed these two aspects, especially from that moment onwards, have become increasingly interconnected. The bi-faced role of diversity and multiculturalism in urban spaces (as both challenge and asset for urban development) has become a common thread, as it is shown, for example, by the tensions connected to migrants' squats (Belloni, Fravega, Giudici, 2020; Bolzoni, Gargiulo, Manocchi, 2015) and to demands on the use of public spaces (De Martini Ugolotti, Moyer, 2016), on the one side, and by the promotion of spaces and cultural events marketed and branded with the feature of diversity (Gilli, Ferrari, 2018; Iandolo, 2021; Semi, 2004), on the other.

To focus on a defined urban space, such as the neighbourhood of San Salvario, then, allows us to analyse these processes at the micro-level, observing from different perspectives the actual implications and the specific narratives and practices they entail. San Salvario is a dense district, just outside the city historical centre, comprised between the central railway station of the city and its main park, which runs along the river Po, resulting in quite a narrow and

well-defined area of a few blocks. Built in the mid Nineteenth century, it has been first beachhead for successive waves of immigration, firstly from the rural areas around the city, then from the South of Italy and, from the Eighties onwards, from other countries. The presence of a synagogue, of protestant and catholic churches, and, lately, of Muslim places of worship, characterize the area as the main multi-religious place of Turin. Indeed, San Salvario historically presents a relatively high degree of social mix, in terms of class, religion and ethnicity, a dense urban fabric, where both residential and commercial functions are present, and a housing stock of a certain historical value, even if with cases of decadence and bad maintenance, characterized by a relevant degree of homeownership. The central railway station on one corner of the neighbourhood and the park and the University on the opposite side are two landmarks that have contributed in framing the (social) space of the area.

The number of non-Italian citizens living in the neighbourhood has been rising since the late Eighties, showing a continuous increase until 2010, shifting from 5.5% in 1990 to 26.3% in 2010. Even if San Salvario was not the neighbourhood that accommodated the highest number of foreign-born residents in the city, the incidence in this area was at the time strongly above the city's average[4]. From that year onwards, however, the numbers have been slowly but steadily decreasing: in 2021 foreigners constituted only the 13.2% of the neighbourhood population[5]. Interestingly enough, the period marked by such a decrease is also the period in which the promotion of the area as diverse, multicultural – and trendy – become widespread. Even though we may partly read this decrease as the expression of a stabilization of the migration flow and of the Italian citizenship acquisition process, it is undeniable that the resident population has, partly, changed and forms of displacement (Marcuse, 1985) most likely emerged.

In the mid-Nineties the neighbourhood became nationally known as a symbol of urban crisis (Allasino, Bobbio, Neri, 2000). Media and public discourses drew the attention on the presence of foreign people, considered as linked to issues of public safety, drug dealing and general decline of the neighbourhood, which came to be described and perceived as dangerous and unsafe. Around ten years later, however, San Salvario became portrayed as a successful example of multicultural integration, a model of positive encounters between people from different cultures, where diversity was something to be prized. The transformation appears as the cumulative expression of multiple

[4] In 2010, foreigners were the 26.3% of the residents of San Salvario, but only the 14.2% of the residents of the whole city (Author's elaboration on Turin Statistical Office data).
[5] In 2021, foreigners represented the 15.3% of the city population instead (Author's elaboration on Turin Statistical Office data).

actions of individual and collective actors, such as civic and cultural associations, local entrepreneurs and private actors, rather than the result of an integrated regeneration plan by the local authorities. Civic, socio-cultural associations, and bottom-up initiatives have had a preeminent role in reshaping the imaginary connected to diversity and to the presence of foreign people (Bolzoni, 2019). The proximity to the city centre and the university, the housing market relatively cheap if compared to the surrounding area, the emerging effect of zoning policies carried out in other areas of the city, have all contributed in the neighbourhood transformation, and processes of commercial gentrification (Ocejo, 2014; Zukin et al., 2009) and studentification (Smith, Holt, 2007) become visible. San Salvario has emerged as one of city's new hip neighbourhood, prised for its gritty, authentic, diverse atmosphere: a place of leisure and consumption, where art and graphic studios, alternative stores, fancy cafés and trendy nightclubs have sprung up alongside older, mom-and-pop and ethnic stores, attracting university students and the young representatives of the new urban middle classes. The new, hegemonic, narrative over the neighbourhood is that of an authentic, young and vibrant area of consumption and night-time entertainment (Bolzoni, 2016). The arrival of university students and young professionals has contributed in reshaping the residential and, even more, the commercial fabric of the neighbourhood. In this process the media coverage also had a certain importance and the elements of diversity and cohesion at first, and those of culture, leisure and entertainment later on, have been the most underlined ones[6].

4. Observing diversity in urban spaces

To investigate how the appreciation for diversity is translated into urban spaces and everyday practices, three domains are here examined: commercial landscape, public spaces and neighbourhoods' images and narratives.

4.1 A little taste of something more exotic[7]

The interest for diversity shown by the new urban middle classes has been often interpreted as a premise and a promise for a greater social inclusion of the migrant population and for bigger economic returns for foreign entrepreneurs. However, such premises have often been considered disregarded by studies on social mix (Blokland, Van Eijk 2010; Lees, 2008) and on the ethnic marketing

[6] For further analyses on San Salvario's transformations please refer to Bolzoni (2016, 2019) and Bolzoni, Semi (2020).
[7] The title echoes that by May (1996).

of multicultural neighbourhoods (Hoffman, 2003; Lees, 2008; Shaw, Bagwell, Karmowska, 2004). While some scholars argue that processes towards the commodification of diversity might revalorize deprived neighbourhoods only at the expense of long-time residents and businesses (Shaw, Bagwell, Karmowska, 2004; Zukin, 1995), others underline the need to recover the agency of migrant entrepreneurs and to consider the chances of empowerment that may emerge from these dynamics (Aytar, Rath, 2012; Rath, 2007).

The case of San Salvario shows a progressive decline of ethnic shops and ethnic restaurants, counterbalanced by the opening of restaurants with an exotic atmosphere. While this statement may appear a contradiction, it actually represents the existent tension between inclusion, commodification and exploitation of diversity.

Since the Nineties, ethnic shops, ethnic groceries and small ethnic restaurants have started to become part of the commercial landscape of the neighbourhood. Run by migrants and catered to fellow countrymen, they have provided food, items, ingredients and services to recreate a sense of home far from home. Their presence contributed in shaping the image of San Salvario as a diverse, multicultural neighbourhood, whose positive interpretation played a key role in the revival of the area. However, these businesses barely attracted Italian consumers. We may consider, that, as in other forms of cultural consumption, cultural diversity needs to be codified and presented in a way that makes it understandable and consumable first. While these stores were authentically diverse and have created the basis for the multicultural character of the neighbourhood to develop, they did not provide culturally accessible products. Authenticity, after all, is a matter of power much more than of origin and history (Zukin, 2010).

Semhar[8] is an Ethiopian restaurant launched in 1996 by an Ethiopian woman married to an Italian man, which used to cater mainly for Sub-Saharan migrants. In 2001, the restaurant was taken over by their eldest son who had consciously (and successfully) tried to make the business more attractive for Italian customers. He recognized that at the beginning he used to be particularly strict on the flavours' combinations, dishes offered and the way they had to be consumed, but then he has come to be «more tolerant of the way people want to consume the food we offer» and more willing «to meet their expectation instead of just reaffirming what we think is right and correct»[9]. In other words, for diversity to become an economic asset, a cultural translation process seems

[8] The name of the restaurant, as well as the country of provenience, is fictional to ensure anonymity.

[9] L. interview, Italian with foreign descent, restaurant's owner and worker. All the interviews were carried out in Italian, translation by the Author.

to be needed, in order to make it accessible and attractive. The transformation of diversity into an object of consumption, therefore, seems to imply the construction of stereotypical and simplified images of culture, a static essence to be expressed and performed according to a fixed plot. This process of translation, which may be performed by migrant entrepreneurs, requires a knowledge and understanding of the local society as well as of the consumption preferences and cultural expectations of the potential target. It also implies the acceptation of performing a fixed role and of reifying the culture into essences whose relevance and authenticity is determined by an external, consumers', gaze. For the process of cultural adaptation to be successful, then, effort, negotiation, and compromise are needed.

The cultural translation and the creation of an aestheticized, reified version of diversity appear crucial as it allows a shift from businesses catering for the needs of country fellowmen, to those directed to the local population tastes and to the particular segments that find diversity engaging, such as the new urban middle classes. Pointing this out may help us in understanding why a positive evaluation of diversity does not necessarily imply a greater (social or economic) inclusion of the migrant population. Indeed, enterprises that offer 'a taste of something more exotic' (May, 1996), rearranging the ethnic into the exotic and presenting diversity as a cultural product, are those that are often more able to attract the new urban middle classes (Zukin, 2008). In the case of San Salvario, we may note a decline in the number of ethnic shops and ethnic fast foods, such as kebab shops, whose number, for example, halved in the area just between 2011 and 2012 and that are now almost disappeared. Ethnic shops are still present in the neighbourhood, but they are mainly used by foreigners and clustered in specific areas (with few exceptions), creating micro-dynamics of spatial segregation within the neighbourhood. On the other side, San Salvario, whose image has become associated to multiculturalism and diversity, provides the perfect environment for the establishment of new exotic restaurants. Indeed, a number of restaurants recalling a diverse, exotic atmosphere have opened. Yet, they are mostly owned and managed by Italian entrepreneurs, whose decision to open a restaurant serving exotic food appears connected to a mix of cultural fascination and economic evaluation. The necessity to appropriate and adapt foreign items in order to meet local tastes is, in these cases, aware and explicit.

> With time we have learned to better define our concept, with concessions to the Italian taste and Italian market, and this is absolutely inevitable, it would be false to say that we serve a pure [Mexican] cuisine. But then, I feel that the tradition is always in progress, […] the tradition goes through the expertise and the knowledge of the ingredients, of some cooking techniques that give

> to a dish its specific character. And from there you shape a cuisine, a gastronomy. [10]

The reference to authentic tradition and to an excellent knowledge of its features is claimed to be the basis that allows creative and aware reinventions (Johnston and Baumann, 2010). These venues often employ foreign people, originally from the area the food refers to or sharing the somatic traits of the main populations of those parts of the world. Their presence is often researched to sustain the place branding and to support the authenticity and exotic character of the food.

> The owners and the partners are Italian, but anyway we have got, and we have always got, not only now, between our employees a strong Latin American component, in its broadest meaning: maybe not Mexicans, even if we had them in the past, but Colombians, Ecuadoreans, different nationalities, who all together contribute in expressing the feeling of the Latin American cuisine, in its broadest meaning. [11]

The reference to chefs' or waiters' original provenience is often an element adopted to shape the exotic atmosphere of the place. Indeed, exoticism manifests itself through an emphasis on both geographical and social distance (Johnston, Baumann, 2010), which, however, tends to reproduce racial stereotypes and allows the economic inclusion of migrants in segmented market niches only (Portes, 1995). On the one side, it may be argued that employing young foreign people is purely a marketing strategy and a form of exploitation of diversity, which has to be performed as a fixed and reified element of identity. On the other side, it may also be asserted that this kind of fascination, regardless, provides new job possibilities to the migrant population, even if not in managerial or entrepreneurial positions. The case of San Salvario does not solve these ambivalences, but it clearly shows their existence.

4.2 Streets and public spaces

The commercial landscape represents a very specific aspect of the neighbourhood, in which diversity is often staged and performed to meet the consumers' tastes. There are, however, other settings that may be observed to investigate the implications of the new value attributed to diversity in everyday life too. The use of neighbourhood's public spaces, and the interactions that in such frames take place, offer another possible field of investigation.

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[10] E. interview, Italian, owner of a restaurant opened in 2012.
[11] E. interview, Italian, owner of a restaurant opened in 2012.

During the Nineties, the visible presence of migrants in the neighbourhood's streets, and their use of public spaces for gathering, was perceived as problematic and dangerous. The sidewalks of some streets of the neighbourhood used to host, and they still do, other uses; prostitution and drug dealing have been for example recorded for a long time in the area (Belluati, 2004). But streets and sidewalks are also spaces of sociability and conviviality and there has been a particularly intensive use of public spaces, and especially of certain specific areas and during specific time frames, by foreign men. They do not necessarily live in the neighbourhood, but they may be attracted by its services, places of worship or simply by the chance of meeting with country fellowmen. The precarious housing conditions of many of them, especially in the initial periods after their arrival in the city, may encourage them to use the public spaces to gather, meet or even only to spend the daytime while waiting the shelters to open.

Despite the positive value theoretically attributed to diversity, this use of public spaces is not positively perceived: both in the media and in the interviews with Italian residents and commercial entrepreneurs it is described as problematic and negative, connected to drunks, drug users or drug dealers rather than to a mere expression of sociability.

> This place has got problems also during the day time, because we are in a corner that… let's say that the relationship with the people using, living the street is kind of… it is a corner that used to be, and still is, a problematic corner. […] I mean, at the end the peculiarity of this corner, as of the whole San Salvario actually, is that really, a part from what happens in the streets, people are very different, diverse, mixed. But more and more young entrepreneurs start arriving, young craftsmen, a scene that actually represents us too. And that may coexist quite peacefully with whatever happens in the street. Coexisting peacefully, this helps also to have… a gradual transformation. […] I mean, they might be drug dealers, they might be drunk people who are always staying there at the corner… [12]

In time, the presence of migrants in the streets and the use of streets as places of sociability have become more clustered and limited in few areas of the neighbourhood. One of the reasons is the increasing establishment of nightclubs, restaurants and the emergences of terraces and sidewalk cafés, disrupting the availability of public spaces. Even if many terraces are not used during the day, they create islands in the flux of everyday life (Bolzoni, 2016). They contribute in shaping new uses and functions of the streets and they signal the presence of a different population taking over the public space, more

[12] A.'s interview, Italian, owner of a night-club opened in 2011.

affluent as well as more legitimate (Zukin et al., 2009). We may oppose the use of the public space considered undesirable and to be hidden and removed, those by migrants, to that welcomed and legitimized by the emergence of the neighbourhood as a place of leisure and consumption. Indeed, from the late afternoon onwards, the terraces and streets of San Salvario start to be animated by a young crowd of people between 20 and 40 years old, university students, young professionals and representatives of the new urban middle classes who do not necessarily live in the neighbourhood, but go there to spend their free time, to have dinner in one of the restaurants or to have a drink with friends. The sidewalks, especially those between the terraces and the venues, become places where to stop, stay, consume, chat and spend time. In other words, they become places of sociability, consumption and distinction (Bourdieu, 1979; Zukin, 2010). While the actions, per se, are not dissimilar from those staged by foreigner people in their use of public space, who often just stand, chat and sometime eat or drink, the social meaning and legitimacy are completely different. The actions and uses of public space by the young nationals are legitimate, while those by migrants are not. To eat and drink just outside an exotic restaurant is trendy, to do the same outside an ethnic store is dangerous: actors and meanings are different and the separation between these different worlds appears even more striking because of their spatial proximity.

4.3 Representations, images and narratives

Interestingly enough, in the outside representation of the neighbourhood these uses of the public space are often hidden: while the existence of a diverse population, and of a commercial fabric mirroring such social mix, is acknowledged and positively underlined, only some aspects of this coexistence are showed, while other are dismissed. In the late Two Thousands, media and local authorities increasingly depicted San Salvario as a successful example of multicultural integration, a place of peaceful coexistence and social inclusion. According to the new discourses, migrants had become part of the social and economic fabric of the neighbourhood: the irregular, problematic ones had left the area and those remaining were bringing new colours, flavours and vitality to the neighbourhood. In these narratives, diversity came to be described as a positive asset, and integration as a reached goal. As emerging in interviews and in local media, San Salvario was portrayed as a neighbourhood with an historical predisposition towards a positive reception of the newcomers, also referring to the previous waves of immigration from the South of Italy during the industrial economic boom. And yet, in these new narratives the everyday uses of public spaces performed by migrants are not present. Investigating the discourses of those living or working in the neighbourhood, the presence of migrants is often

mentioned, but rarely addressed or discussed. In their words a differentiation between two different kinds of expression of diversity often emerges. On the one side there is the attribution of the quality of multiculturalism to the neighbourhood, which appears to be a note of colour, a seasoning (hooks, 1992), in the everyday reality. It is a positive kind of diversity, which appears in the interviews as a puzzle of exotic commercial enterprises, foreign kids attending the local primary school and their mums, and some smiling foreign neighbour or local businessman, working hard and willing to integrate. On the other side, those migrants who hang around in the neighbourhood, spending their time and using the streets as places of gathering and sociability, are often considered problematic and described as 'leftovers' of a troubled past of the neighbourhood that is going to disappear soon. As the declining numbers of foreign residents shows, this disappearance seems increasingly, and more generally, taking place.

Moreover, the narratives, discourses, and points of view of migrants appear largely absent in media, public, or external representations. Even when their presence is acknowledged and it is perceived as an important feature characterizing the area, their perspectives or perceptions are rarely taken into account in the creation of the main discourses over the neighbourhood. The everyday multiculturalism (Colombo, Semi, 2007; Wise, Velayutham, 2009), namely the situated practices that in the everyday life make and re-make the meaning and the value of diversity, presents a complexity and continuous negotiations that are not included in the neighbourhood's new image. Diversity rather appears here as a staged and performed element in landscapes of consumption, as a style and atmosphere that may attract the new urban middle classes. At the same time, it is often removed from the everyday use of the streets and reshaped to respond to local socio-cultural model (Semi, 2004; Tissot, 2014). The new narratives of the neighbourhood tend to ignore the practices and the uses that are not hip, young and cosmopolitan.

The image of San Salvario as a positive model of multiculturalism, so clearly depicted to the outside world, becomes more nuanced and complex as soon as it is more closely observed. Indeed, in the internal representation of the neighbourhood, contradictory images also appear, such as those describing migrants and Italian residents as two parallel worlds, that have learned not to fight against each others, but that are not integrated either.

> San Salvario was zero, nothing back [in the Nineties], it was the time to talk about immigration, about the fusion, the integration that was not, it is not accomplished. Because... I mean, a lot of residents here are from the South of Italy, as my parents. They are old and very traditional. Integration has never

> happened, really. There have always been two realities, two separated realities within a single ghetto. That's what I experienced. [13]

What probably strikes the most, then, is the lack and marginality of migrants as active actors in shaping narratives or interventions on the neighbourhoods. Even in projects concerning migrants' social inclusion, the terms of the game are defined somewhere else and by someone else, and they rarely have any voice. There might be someone speaking on their behalf, but very few of them have actually an active role. The already mentioned study carried out by Blokland and Van Eijk (2010) showed that people who like diversity, such as the new urban middle classes, do not necessarily practice diversity in their neighbourhood life. In this sense, they do not interact with migrants on a regular basis or have a diverse network, even if the presence of a diverse atmosphere is something they look for and prize in their own neighbourhood. The situation that emerges in San Salvario is even more ambiguous: also thanks to the rich associative fabric and the numerous projects targeting migrants that have been carried out, together with the number of ethnic and exotic commercial activities of the area, a certain connection with the foreign population is actually present. Personal connection with foreign people is a recurring element proudly underlined in interviews to highlight the multicultural character of the neighbourhood and the membership to such a diverse environment. These interactions often remain superficial and, moreover, they are often connected to a specific and coded interpretation of what diversity is and should be. Also observing local association working on migrants' social inclusion, it emerges a precise image of how diversity should be staged and addressed, which are the expected features and the ways a foreign person who is willing to be integrated should behave. Unwritten categories and silent expectations create a frame through which diversity is accepted and interpreted. Those who do not feel like playing by those rules are often considered as lazy, not ready to integrate into the new society and even ungrateful by those who set up initiatives for their integration (Camozzi, 2007; Vacchiano, 2005). In this sense the remark of Tissot (2014), stating that the love for diversity of the new urban middle classes is often connected to the symbolic and material control they may exercise over it, finds evidence.

5. Some final remarks

The paper has put attention on the tensions between the endorsement of the feature of diversity, that has recently come to be considered a positive

[13] F. interview, Italian, former resident and owner of a café opened in 2010.

element to brand and promote neighbourhoods, cities and urban spaces, and the actual expression and translation of this element in the neighbourhood's landscape and everyday life. To investigate this tension, the paper has focussed on the city of Turin and, more specifically, on the neighbourhood of San Salvario, where diversity has come to be considered a value to brand and market the area. The commercial landscape, the everyday practices and uses of public spaces, and the narratives and images concerning the neighbourhood have been taken into account, investigating the micro dynamics through which diversity is staged, performed and negotiated.

The emerging picture is controversial. Hostility, explicit discrimination and opposition towards foreigners in general do not characterize the neighbourhood's atmosphere anymore, as they did during the mid-Nineties. The migrants interviewed mostly evaluate positively the transformations that have been taking place in the area and there are examples of social and economic inclusion of people with foreign background. Also, there are a few successful businesses run by migrants and the coexistence between locals and foreigners is mostly peaceful. And yet, there are some shadows too. The diversity that is welcomed in public spaces, commercial landscape and everyday life appears as a sanitized, prefixed and normed version which is defined much more by the tastes and expectations of national residents rather than by any interactive negotiation. What does not comply with these fixed images is dismissed as problematic, dangerous or not ready to integrate. Moreover, even if the diverse, authentic atmosphere of the neighbourhood has contributed in supporting its recent fortune, it strikes the absence of migrants' point of view in its representations or in its associative and cultural fabric. Ethnic shops have been closing down, mostly because the rising rents and the increasing concurrence by other commercial activities attracted in the neighbourhood by its emergence as new hip place of the city. The presence of foreign-born people in public spaces is increasingly clustered in specific areas, while new terraces and sidewalk cafés, even with an exotic atmosphere, have been taking over.

On this basis, the case of San Salvario draws the attention on the possible side effects that the fascination for the feature of diversity may have for the neighbourhoods' character and migrants' lives. Ethnicity, diversity and culture become reified and understood as static essences, to be expressed and performed according to a fixed plot. Leaving the prefixed role that is assigned, or failing to perform the expected elements, may lead to harsh evaluations by the very same persons who are allegedly fascinated by it. Reducing the complexity of these processes to a flavour, a dish, an item, an object of consumption seems to reinforce a stereotypical and simplistic approach to diversity, whose normalized and pacified representations may often hide exploitations and tensions that take place in the background, reducing the issue

of social inclusion to a simulacrum of integration. Such processes, to conclude, instead of promoting the social integration of marginalized areas and population, risk exacerbating existing forms of social and spatial inequalities and create the basis for further socio-spatial segregation.

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