

**“They Are Just Trying to Contain Us”:
Parkour, Counter-Conducts and the Go-
vernment of Difference in Turin's Urban
Spaces**

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n° 02-2015

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Il working paper è una versione rivista sulla base dei commenti dei discussant (Giovanni Semi - Università di Torino, Raffaella Ferrero Camoletto - Università di Torino) di quello presentato dall'autore nel seminario del 21/10/2015 organizzato dall'Osservatorio MU.S.I.C.

Per la grafica della copertina si ringrazia Federica Turco

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ABSTRACT

The following paper aims to contribute to an interdisciplinary debate between studies on “the physical” (Silk et al., 2015), the urban condition, migration and multicultural/super-diverse societies, by exploring how groups of (post)migrant youth practicing parkour engaged emerging forms of social and spatial restructuring characterizing cities like Turin, Italy.

Taking cue from Lefebvre's argument that “space originates from the body” (1991, p. 242) this paper does not aim to address the practices of (post)migrant youth *in* cities, as merely containers of social practices and relations (Glick Schiller and Çağlar, 2011; Schmoll and Semi, 2013), but focuses on the relationship between young men of migrant descent *and* the city of Turin, thus exploring how participants practices negotiated, and were made part of the process of repositioning and restructuring of their city of settlement. The ethnographic exploration of participants' engagement with parkour in Turin's public spaces will enable to articulate local processes of urban redevelopment with emerging global patterns of transnational gentrification (Sigler and Wachsmuth, 2015) and surveillance *orientations* (Manley and Silk, 2014; Bauman and Lyon, 2013) taking place in (First World) regenerating urban areas. Addressing the relationship between processes of urban renewal, subjectivity and emerging unequal definitions of citizenship this paper will finally explore participants' ambivalent practice of parkour as a counter-conduct (Foucault, 2007 [1978]). Through this conceptual lens this paper will address the fault lines of the city's advanced government of difference, and account for participants' negotiation of (contingent) citizenship through their situational physical and spatial re-appropriation of urban spaces.

Keywords: Parkour; Turin; Counter-Conduct; Government of Difference; Post)Migrant Youth

Within this paper I aim to explore the relationship between space, body, and power in the constitution and negotiation of emerging forms of social and spatial restructuring, subjectivity and citizenship characterizing the rebranding of cities like Turin, Italy. As a starting point for such exploration, I acknowledge that the body and urban spaces represent sites where power relations and social inequalities are incorporated, reproduced and localized (Foucault 1970, 1976, 2008 [1978]; Wacquant 2008; Silk and Andrews 2008; Silk 2010) but can also be negotiated (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1996). Following these premises this paper proposes that a contextualised study of the *body in space* (Silk and Andrews, 2011) can provide a nuanced and complex reading of agents' negotiations and navigation of unequal transformations of social relations, definitions of citizenship, sense of self and subjectivity (Glick Schiller and Çağlar, 2011; Manley and Silk, 2014; Sigler and Wachsmuth, 2015) enacted within contemporary urban spaces. As a way of an empirical base, this study focuses on the daily practice of parkour enacted by groups of young men of migrant origin in Turin public spaces. The contextualised analysis of such activity provides a unique perspective to address the discourses, processes, and subjectivities shaping (post)migrant youth bodily and spatial negotiations and emerging from them. Through such focus this study addresses the “everyday” as a site where power, dominant social categories and subjectivities are continuously legitimised, reproduced, and negotiated in actors' lives and urban spaces (Borden, 2001; Skey, 2010, 2011).

PARKOUR: A BRIEF EXAMINATION

Parkour gained worldwide visibility and diffusion soon after being created in France in the late 1980s. The main representatives of the discipline, Davide Belle, the son of French working class parents, and Sebastian Foucan, the son of Guadeloupan migrants, developed parkour by applying training methods they had learned from Belle's father (a fire-fighter) together with Belle's own military and fire-fighter training¹. Belle and Foucan grew up in Lisses and Evry, two Parisian suburbs, and trained in their local environment, motivated by the lack of activities and opportunities for entertainment available to young people in their town (Fuggle 2008). With parkour they were able to transform the urban environment into a playground using physical

¹ The name parkour derives from the expression *parcours du combattant* (fighter's tracks), a training system developed in the early twentieth century by George Hébert as a training method for the French military and subsequently used by fire-fighters.

obstacles as supports to cross through and over spaces and to live in new ways in the city spaces. Practically, parkour consists of using all available urban furniture to move from one point to another in the least number of possible movements and, simultaneously paying attention to the fluidity and simplicity of movements. Practicing parkour does not require special equipment or structures and thus, it can be practiced virtually whenever and wherever. These conditions encourage the practice by urban youth who lack amusement and leisure opportunities especially in peripheral neighbourhoods (Fuggle 2008).

In Italy parkour is a spreading practice amongst (mostly male) urban youth (Stagi, 2015; see also Stapleton and Terrio, 2009), and as many lifestyle sports is currently engaged in an ambivalent and debated process of structuring and formal organisation (see also Gilchrist and Wheaton, 2011; Wheaton, 2013; Ferrero Camoletto et al., 2015). Parkour practice in Turin is developed around few gym courses and some key “spots” in public spaces where *traceurs* (parkour practitioners) usually gather to train (such as Parco Dora, that will be the focus of this paper's discussion). “Parkour Torino” is a grass-root organisation recognised by many of the traceurs I met in the field as the more established parkour body in the city². This association is mainly responsible for the organisation of parkour events (i.e. “Move for Passion”) as well as for coordinating “official” parkour performances at promotional and corporate events in Turin and surrounding areas. Nevertheless the parkour scene in Turin, as far as I experienced it, was far from a homogeneous group with diverse, sometimes contrasting visions about the discipline, and with several “crews” ambivalently engaging with “Parkour Torino” initiatives and more established sporting institutions (see also Ferrero Camoletto et al., 2015).

Literature on parkour focused mainly on the liberating relationship and opportunities parkour it affords practitioners within contemporary urban spaces (Bavinton, 2007, 2011; Atkinson, 2009; Daskalaki et al., 2008; Guss, 2011; Marshall, 2010; Mould, 2009; Saville, 2008; Lamb 2014a, 2014b; Benasso, 2015). However, rare but meaningful literature addressed parkour as a highly commodified global popular physical practice that attracts, and is managed, predominantly by young men (Stapleton & Terrio, 2009; Thorpe & Ahmad, 2013; Kidder, 2013). Kidder's (2013) ethnographic study with traceurs in Chicago, underlined how traceurs co-constructed

² In Turin's parkour communities the creation of “Parkour Torino” as a crew is associated with the origins of the practice in the city around 2005. Later on, the group created a registered no-profit organization.

an embodied masculinity characterized by risk-taking and controlling physical space (p. 6), and addressed the (unintentional and unfortunate) exclusionary result of traceurs' performance of masculinity. Kidder's (2013) analysis partially resonated with my fieldwork experience in Turin. During the research, I rarely encountered young women who were regular practitioners of parkour in public spaces. According to Kidder (2013), the consequence of traceurs' spatialised performances of daring and risk-taking masculinity is the (re)production of public spaces as masculinized spaces. However, differently from Kidder's study (2013), the young men I followed did not embody most of the traceurs' (masculine) features that the authors described (i.e. valorization of risk taking, public display of muscular bodies at any cost, and constant look for audience's approval). Furthermore, the places where traceurs in this study trained ranged from relatively central and frequented areas to peripheral and isolated urban spaces (with a preference on the latter), rather than one central, crowded urban "spot" (Grant Park in Chicago), as in Kidder's (2013) study. The lack of female participation in parkour in this research, might thus also reflect a more general perception of the 'in-between' public spaces observed (i.e. peripheral public parks, street corners, walking footpaths, abandoned buildings) as dangerous sites, unsuitable or not "proper" for young women to occupy according to hegemonic and excluding conventions about femininity in the context of research (on the issue, see also Madriz, 1997a, 1997b; Azzarito, 2012; Sweet and Escalante, 2015). Despite these contextual differences, Kidder's (2013) analysis indicate the entanglement of space and physical practices in legitimizing, or challenging, gender and sexual norms and differences (Silk & Andrews, 2011), which I aim to explore in other contributions. With this paper I aim instead to address through the unique lens of parkour the (micro)political negotiation of (contingent) citizenship and processes of inclusion and exclusion in urban public spaces by groups of (post)migrant young men in Turin.

MIGRATION, PARKOUR AND URBAN SPACE: A RATIONALE

Although the children of migration (Sayad, 2002) are *de facto* European cities' newest citizens, they are hardly portrayed as such in the Italian public discourse (see Palmas, 2009, 2010). Public imaginaries of these youth as a threat to a modern and ordered society are perpetuated through the skewed attention they receive in the media and from politicians. Debates about cultural authenticity, renewed nationalism,

and waves of moral panic that depict a Fortress Europe “under siege” by illegal and unwanted immigrants, increasingly contribute to immigrants and their children being defined as alien bodies who are “out of place”. As Abdelmalek Sayad has argued, in Europe, children of immigrants represent the “inopportune posterity” of migration, an unrequested presence, and a concrete manifestation of the impossibility of two “illusions”: the illusion of sanitized, regulated and temporary immigration for host societies, and the illusion of return for immigrants (2002; 2008). Following Sayad, I argue that immigrants and their children, perform a “mirror function” (2002, p. 43), as their position reflects the deep and hidden contradictions and inequalities of European societies, their politics, relationships with their histories, and with the “Other”.

Following Saada (2000), Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2011), Sedano (2012), Schmoll and Semi (2013), I argue that academic contributions addressing the experience of immigrants (and their children) need to explore beyond the buzzwords characterizing policy makers perspectives (e.g. ethnic lens, integration, criminality, educational attainment). Engaging with the daily sociabilities and everyday practices of (post)migrant communities can provide richer and nuanced accounts of contemporary social diversity, while avoiding the reproduction of “bureau-centric perspectives” (Sedano, 2012, p. 376) on migration and its posterity.

Following these premises, the observation of relatively small, but consistent, groups of young men of diverse migrant origins engaged in practicing parkour in Turin’s public spaces, provided me valuable insights on what was at stake in their apparently mundane activities by “starting with the particular, the detail, the scrap of ordinary or banal existence, and then working to unpack the density of relations and of intersecting social domains that inform it” (Frow & Morris, 2000, p. 354). Although parkour is also taught in structured courses in gyms or social projects in Turin, the engagement respondents’ had with this bodily discipline went far beyond these organized training sites, and involved their everyday life contexts more widely. The young men I met during the research preferred to choose the places for parkour “on the way to school”, “while keeping an eye on younger siblings in the park”, and did not require a dedicated, regulated time or space. Therefore, I observed and followed several groups of children of migration between 16 and 21 years old choosing and transforming “in between” public spaces (e.g. public parks, walking paths, empty parking lots, street corners, abandoned factories) into playgrounds and free open-air

gyms. I gradually developed the idea that the respondents' used the spectacular display of physical abilities implied by capoeira and parkour practices also as means to declare their presence in public in the city's life (and polity) (Mitchell, 1995; 2003), unrequested and irreverent. I decided to focus on their physical practices despite more popular sports (i.e. football, basketball) involve larger numbers of participants in public spaces and are being widely instituted and considered in policies and social interventions as tools of social inclusion for disenfranchised youth. Interestingly, substantial contributions to the sociology of sport and physical cultural studies underlined the ambivalent role that organized sporting activities and programs take in the enactment of social governance practices in disadvantaged urban areas (Spaaij, 2009; Silk and Andrews, 2010, 2012; Fusco, 2007, 2012; Agergaard et al. 2015). Therefore, my interest in the public enactment of parkour in Turin directs my focus towards participants' bodies not through the regulating arenas of organized sport forms, but rather the spontaneous diffusion "from the bottom" of a popular physical practice amongst urban youth, as a meaningful site to investigate the social dynamics and implications that participants' use of their (migrant) bodies and spaces uncovered.

REBRANDING THE CITY "THAT LOOKED LIKE A FACTORY": TURIN'S COSMOPOLITAN URBANISM

"Millions of visitors will be able to seize the opportunity to visit Torino and to explore a city that is often not recognised for the new image that in the last years the city gave to itself. Turin transformed itself a lot, it became more beautiful, much more open [to diversity], much more welcoming, much more accommodating, a great city of arts and culture..." (Piero Fassino, Mayor of Turin³, 10/3/2015)

In the last two decades the municipality of Turin, together with its main cultural-economic lobbies, responded to the decay of the "Italian Detroit" by trying to rebrand the city image and transform it from a "city that looked like a factory" (Bagnasco 1986), to an European and international capital of culture, tourism and leisure.

3 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=smjqwyPKq4>

Undoubtedly such radical spatial and social transformation was enabled, justified and deeply influenced by the hosting of 2006 Winter Olympic Games and their controversial and still debated legacy (see Dansero and Puttilli, 2010; Bondonio and Guala, 2011 Bottero, Sacerdotti and Mauro 2012).

Analysing similar rebranding processes enacted by post-industrial cities across the (First) world, perspectives in geography (Binnie et al., 2006) and successive interdisciplinary studies (Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2011; Glick Schiller et al. 2011; Glick Schiller, 2015) underlined the emergence of a *cosmopolitan urbanism*. The concept of cosmopolitan urbanism refers to a process of legitimising neoliberal⁴ urban regeneration enacted by urban politicians, planners and boosters to attract “global talent”, financial capital and tourism by revaluing urban space (Binnie et al. 2006; Glick Schiller and Çağlar, 2011; Glick Schiller et al. 2011; Glick Schiller, 2015). It was in this framework that the concept of cosmopolitan as a person who appreciated the “other” became salient (Glick Schiller, 2015, p. 106), and ethnic, religious and cultural diversity started to represent the heart of what makes a 21st century city “vibrant” (Binnie et al. 2006, p. 1). Cosmopolitans have been mainly portrayed⁵ as people who, desiring “unfamiliar cultural encounters” have a taste for difference (Ley 2004, p. 159; see also Hannerz, 1999). Urban developers popularized the notion of an ascending “creative class” bringing to cities the needed competitive energy, as well as cultural, symbolic, and financial capital, to positively transform and globally reposition themselves (Glick Schiller, 2015).

Cosmopolitan urban regeneration is usually surrounded by a progressive image of sustainability, economic vibrancy and inclusiveness based strongly on the valorisation of cultural difference (see Glick Schiller, 2015). Specifically in regard to the context of research, Schmoll and Semi (2013) have defined Turin's progressive social policies and urban renewal “multiculturalism from above”, and described this process as relying mainly on one of the most fashionable, consumable, and less challenging aspects of multicultural contexts: *food* (p. 387). Through the promotion of multi-ethnic street markets, the organization of high-end international food fairs (as the internationally renowned *Terra Madre* and *Salone del Gusto*), and more ordinary “cultural festivals”, the city of Turin endorsed a *palatable* and *visible* image of cultural

4 For a more detailed discussion of “actually existing” neoliberal urban transformation see Brenner and Theodore (2002) and McQuirk and Dowling (2009).

5 See Appadurai (2011) and Glick Schiller et al. (2011), Glick Schiller and Irving (2015) for a critique of dominant perspectives on cosmopolitanism and the proposal of more diversified and “subaltern” forms of cosmopolitan identities.

diversity, appealing to the eyes of cosmopolitan, sophisticated travellers “open to otherness” (Glick Schiller et al., 2011) and fascinated by exotic tastes (Schmoll and Semi 2013, p. 388). However, as Schmoll and Semi (2013) have noted, Turin “multiculturalism from above” represents a stark example of the divide between multicultural policies and multicultural realities in contemporary urban contexts. The authors highlighted the fact that the city-sponsored multiculturalism enhanced an ethnicisation of immigrants' trading and living practices, contributing to essentialise migrants' economic and social trajectories and identities, while at the same time eclipsing more concrete, daily practices of ordinary multiculturalism happening in the urban context.

METHODOLOGY

Data for this study are derived from 14 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Turin, where I engaged in consistent parkour practice with approximately twenty research participants aged 16–21. Most of participants were committed traceurs with various level of experience and who were very marginally involved in the ongoing structuring process characterizing the local parkour scene, apart from the occasional participation in promotional events and gatherings (See Ferrero Camoletto et al., 2015). Participants' families originally migrated from several different countries from Eastern Europe, Northern and Western Africa and South America⁶. The young men in the research had been living in Italy from a minimum of two to a maximum of seventeen years and had diverse legal statuses (legal residents or Italian citizens). However, despite the differences between many of them (i.e. in relation to origins, years lived in Italy, and legal status), they were socially defined by their common condition as “children of migration” (Sayad, 2002), which made them to be perceived and addressed in diverse degrees as immigrant *alien bodies* in Turin's public life (see De Martini Ugolotti, 2015, in press). Approximately half of them were still studying at Technical Schools, while those who finished school were in constant search of employment and engaged in several cash-in-hand occupations. Participants' marginal positioning in Turin's social spaces emerged clearly from factors such as

6 Only 2 amongst the twenty traceurs involved in the study did not have foreign origins, an emblematic aspect in itself in relation to the social and spatial dynamics addressed in the discussion, if we consider that parkour is a fashionable lifestyle sport practiced in gyms and urban spaces by increasingly larger number of young people, both “natives” and not.

their lack of “native” Italian friends, and the lack of any formal employment (and related involvement in several, unwarranted, and discontinuous cash-in-hand occupations) for those who had already finished school.

Agreeing with Sedano (2012), to understand the lives and practices of post-migrant youth in Turin, I did not follow them through an ethnic lens (e.g. selecting only children of Brazilian immigrants or with Moroccan or Romanian background) since that approach would definitely have limited my insights about the participants' negotiations of space.

In the research, I engaged in a flexible range of qualitative methods (ethnographic observant participation, documents analysis, semi-structured interviews and focus groups, co-generation of testimonial narratives, co-production of a participatory video with respondents⁷). The flexibility and creativity implied in the use of various methods was due to the informal, fluid characteristics of the contexts where the research took place, and to my intention to accommodate the participants' creativity and preferences in choosing the means and occasions they considered appropriate to engage with the research. This multi-method qualitative approach enabled me to develop a situated and crystallized (Richardson & St.Pierre, 2005) analytical perspective and to engage with the multilayered and mutual constitution of body, space and subjectivity in participants' practices and daily lives. My position as a (tentative) traceur due to my ongoing research on capoeira and parkour (see De Martini Ugolotti, 2015, in press) proved enormously helpful in gaining access to the fieldwork environment and to the research participants. This ethnographic approach enabled my co-presence with respondents in the field as a “passionate participant” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 115) and facilitated a theoretically driven analysis of physical culture (Markula and Silk, 2011) through daily participation in the respondents' practices and lives. My embodied involvement in participants' practices required however a self-reflexive analysis of my embodied participation and my political, gendered, racialized bodily presence in the field, following the recognition that my body did class, gender, race, and unwittingly influenced talk, attitudes, gestures amongst interlocutors (see also Carrington, 2008; Giardina and Newman, 2011; Francombe et al., 2014). A self-reflexive, ongoing, critical awareness of my

7 The documentary that originated from the research “Climbing Walls, Making Bridges: Capoeira, Parkour and Becoming Oneself in Turin” has been released on 12th December 2015. The documentary screenings (that took place so far only in Turin, but are planned to take place also in Cuneo, Ivrea, and Bologna in Italy and Bath, in United Kingdom) represented already a further opportunity for the researcher and the public to engage in a dialogue with the participants (who are present at the screenings) on the unfolding meanings and stakes of their practices.

presence and engagement with participants enabled to interrogate also how my situated body impacted the research practice and context, and how my physicality was part of the meaning making process that occurred in the research (Francombe et al., 2014, p. 3). As such, I used my embodied self-reflexivity to recognize my voice and make it an analytical tool to dialogue and create knowledge *with* participants.

PARKOUR, TRANSNATIONAL GENTRIFICATION AND TURIN'S SURVEILLANCE ORIENTATIONS

“To me Turin seems as it is made for those who like to spend their free time in the city centre, or going to the malls, to gyms, to clubs, or restaurants spread around the rest of the city... for those who for one reason or another don't like or can't do this there is neither much, or a place to go. If you ask me why we are sent away so many times from almost all the areas we train in I'd say it's not just because of racism or because we are considered 'not from here'. Of course there's also that, but in my opinion it's because we ruin the image that people give to determinate places we are training in, as for example, we train nearby the entrance of a building nearby Parco Dora, but the people living or working there think we are ruining the image of that building, or maybe nearby there's a brand new shop there, the owner thinks we are going to scare customers away, he makes a phone call saying 'I don't like that these guys train there, they scare customers' and here comes the police saying that you can't jump there, that it's dangerous or that it's private property when it isn't.” (Karim, 20 years old)

As Semi (2004) suggested, the economic core of contemporary Turin changed from the manufacturing of goods to the consumption of (cultural) products and (cosmopolitan) imag(inari)es. Such process implied also the promotion of regenerated neighbourhoods where the city creative classes could reside, meet up, socialize and consume, and develop a (trans)cultural identity that is simultaneously place bound and global (Sigler and Wachsmuth, 2015, p. 2). Through this process, an “aspirational” emerging middle class comes to represent itself as a part of a global, cosmopolitan class consuming a increasingly homogeneous “gentrification commodity” (Sigler and Wachsmuth, 2015, p. 3) as well as similar economic, and

social, urban restructuring processes. As Semi (2004) described, the “rebirth” of several Turin neighbourhoods made emerge a model of development that associated indissolubly regeneration and market revitalisation, a qualifying element of urban processes of gentrification (p. 93). The gentrification of inner city and peripheral areas of Turin was often branded with multicultural lures and cosmopolitan imaginaries made of “ethno-chic” shops and restaurants, “authentic traditional” workshops and *bistrot*, and international street food parades apparently providing Turin a desired, and desirable, image of (boutique) multiculturalism (Fish, 1997). Turin's own way of being global found physical expression through these locally shared territories (e.g multicultural festivals, gentrified inner city neighbourhoods, or the area of Parco Dora, which will be explored more in detail in the following sections due to its relevance for participants' practices) where encounters with difference were both enabled and constrained by ethnic restaurants, import stores and/or architectural forms (Binnie et al. 2006, p. 15). However, as Semi (2004) underlined, the valorization of essentialised “other” foods, cultures and bodies in specific manners, spaces and times did not facilitate their social inclusion or membership in the overall city public life. Rather, it mainly accentuated the *distinction* of regenerated, vibrant urban spaces from urban areas, and communities, lacking the desired characteristics of “otherness” (Semi, 2004, p. 88; see also Silk and Andrews, 2008, p. 396; Manley and Silk, 2014), and defined by their segregating difference, be it poverty, ethnicity, religion or a combination of such differentiating factors (Glick Schiller, 2015; Manley and Silk, 2014). As a matter of fact therefore, the consequences of Turin urban planners, and gentrifiers initiatives, while aiming to reflect an active celebration of inclusion and desire for diversity, produced in Turin regenerating spaces controversial dynamics that seemed to draw symbolic, but effective boundaries between acceptable and non-acceptable difference (Ley, 2004; Binnie et al, 2006):

“We are young, we are foreigners, we are always around, we are exactly who they [police] look for first ...” (Bogdan, 18 years old)

“Let me tell you one thing, everywhere we go to train at some point someone would come to bother us, it can be the man at the window telling us to get a job, to the elderly who call the police... even guys of our age

often come to us and ask us 'why did you guys come to make these things here?' “ (Ricardo, 18 years old)

According to Karim's and Bogdan's and Ricardo's accounts, the differentiating lines attributing (il)legitimacy to immigrant bodies in urban spaces seemed to sit in the capacity of these bodies to consume, or contribute to Turin's cosmopolitan and consumption-oriented imaginaries of urban regeneration (see also Harvey, 2001; Manley and Silk, 2014). Participants' spontaneous and informal bodily presence and activities in public spaces usually met a widespread sanctioning and surveilling gaze by a wide range of social actors (e.g “concerned” citizens and shopkeepers, police forces, even other young people). On the other hand their parkour performances were applauded within specific regulated contexts or events, when they functioned as (occasionally racialized) symbols of celebrated urban diversity, without nevertheless challenging the unequal power relationships that structured the representation, surveillance and consumption of their migrant bodies (see Carrington, 2001, pp. 108-109):

“We have just finished training in a suburban area South of Turin... As we head towards the bus stop Karim mentions that on his way home he would like to go in the city centre to check a group of his friends who are performing parkour for a urban clothing promotional event. I ask him how does he feel about being called to perform in commercial and promotional events in public areas where he was sent away so many times by 'concerned' shopkeepers and public (as it happened today to us, by the way):

Karim: You know it's kind of... I guess it might be helpful to show a different image of us, so that people could understand a bit more what we do, maybe after a while we'd have less of the problems we had today... also the money they give you, when you share it amongst performers, it is usually worth a day of any off-the-book shitty job, but you have done what you liked, plus you are showing home that what you do is not exactly worthless... on the other hand though I'd feel like an obedient puppy that does what he's said when it is said, and then can be sent away for no reason” (Fieldnotes, May 28, 2014)

Participants' experiences echoed critical readings of contemporary processes of urban "renaissance" where "it appears that the boundaries between the consuming and non-consuming public are strengthening, with non-consumption being constructed as a form of deviance" (Coleman, 2003, p. 27; see also Silk and Andrews, 2008, p. 403).

Following Glick Schiller (2015), the paradox of Turin's, and other cities', urban regeneration seemed therefore to be that to accomplish and legitimate the reclaiming of urban neighbourhoods for the development of the cosmopolitan city, the differences of "the other" were constructed as not only necessary for the success of the urban regeneration project, but also as threatening to this form of city making; the latter scenario being evoked and associated with images of incompatible (cultural) difference, poverty, and "disruptive" uses of space. Following this leads, it can be argued that Turin contemporary urban image and governance focused upon the production of commodified spaces of modernity and alterity. However, rather than generating the promised new or inspiring encounters, these emerging regenerated spaces seemed to produce a domestication and commodification of difference (Binnie et al, 2006, p. 18). Following participants' during the research, one place in particular seemed to concretely locate and emplace the ambivalent and apparently contradictory government of difference the city of Turin enacted in its (regenerated) urban areas: the area of Parco Dora. The following sections will therefore address more in details the social practices and relationships such space enabled and constrained *within and around* its area, as a way of an empirical case exemplifying the spatial practices and rationalities of "conduct of conduct" (Foucault, 2008 [1978]; Rose, 2000; Silk and Andrews, 2008; Rosol, 2015) enacting in Turin urban spaces and negotiated by participants through their engagement with parkour.

PARCO DORA: PROGRESSIVE URBAN GOVERNANCE AND SPATIAL CONDUCT OF CONDUCT

"So they [the police] said us, well, that the place theoretically dedicated to us is there [Parco Dora], if you go elsewhere, for example behind Mc Donalds, they come to send you away, they make you a fine, or threaten to make it, and tell you that the place is always that, right? Well, if you

can't come here, you can't go there, many, especially the youngest, finally end up there.” (Samba, 20 years old)

“After hearing so often, “you can't stay here, you can't go there”, “your place is Parco Dora”, it feels like they're just trying to contain us” (Marcos, 20 years old)

The creation of “Parco Dora”⁸ was unanimously hailed as the symbol of the transformation of a city “closing its factories and re-discovering other vocations” (Rossi, 2011), amongst which it might as well be included the participatory and community-based management operated by the private-public body “Comitato Parco Dora”. Drawing from ethnographic and participants' accounts in this section I critically unpack the spatial power relations hidden behind the creation of “participated” and community oriented spaces as Parco Dora. The works of Huxley (2013), Rutland & Aylett (2008), Rosol (2015) showed insightful examples of critical analysis of participatory and consensual forms of urban governance. Such contributions enabled to illuminate the (spatial) processes through which people are conducted—how they are encouraged to govern themselves and others in certain ways in the aura of key words such as “community”, “participation” and “cohesion” (Rosol, 2015, p. 257). The aim of this analysis however is not to cast doubts regarding the truthfulness or intentions of the ethos of “care”, “participation” and “community cohesion” guiding the public-private management of the park and the regenerating areas surrounding it. Rather, drawing on participants' accounts, the aim of this critical analysis is to explore to what extent, *to what bodies and to what conducts*, this ethos applied more than others. As mentioned above, Parco Dora has been lauded as an especially positive case of community-based management inspiring the future development of a city organised through collaborative planning, promoting multicultural coexistence, and secured by almost invisible and non-intrusive surveillance methods, such as small panoramic CCTV cameras.

Many urban residents, including some participants, cited Parco Dora area as a very

8 Parco Dora is a huge post-industrial urban park (456.000 square meters) located where until the '90s of last century emerged, amongst others, big manufacturing plants of companies such as Fiat and Michelin. The park provided to an urban area heavily connoted by dismissed factory plants a “green lung” constituted by an archeological industrial park, green areas and flowerbeds, walking paths, a botanic garden with protected plants, and a multifunctional space of 12.000 square metres (the Vitali area), all connected to two residential/commercial/entertainment complexes in three different neighbourhoods (<https://comitatoparcodora.wordpress.com/il-comitato-parco-dora/>).

positive location in respect of other city spaces, that, according to the actor speaking, could be felt as threatening and full of “unpleasant” diversity, or territories where they felt unwelcome and judged. Unlike regulated gentrified or temporary entertainment spaces, the area Parco Dora constantly hosts in its huge space all sort of spontaneous interactions and citizens-led initiatives through the year, possibly representing in this sense a path-leading example of pacified, yet vibrant public space, and an emerging reference for tourists and urban planners alike.

However, Rosol (2015) critically addressed the “common good” ethos related to spaces such as Parco Dora, specifically in regard to the *neglect of conflict* they inspire (p. 260). Rosol's arguments enabled to focus on the consequence of the creation of planned-spontaneous, apparently consensual and pacified urban spaces oriented to the abstract, and to some extent deceiving, idea of “common good”: a cohesive “we” where particular interests, and practices, are disqualified. As Fainstein (2000, pp. 457-461) argued, in a context where action is only legitimate when it benefits everybody, *even the already powerful or privileged*, socially marginalized groups cannot use their most important political tool: the contested use of space for their specific needs and claims (Rosol, 2015, p. 260). The practical implications of such ethos are clearly presented in Marcos' and Samba's accounts at the beginning of the section. Parco Dora, and specifically one area of it, the so-called Vitali area⁹, did not simply become *an* urban area where various and multiple residents-led practices acquired social legitimacy and space. It rather became *the* area where practices which did not fit with the ambiance of the surrounding regenerated, and commercially oriented, neighbourhoods *had to take place*. The process of containment, paraphrasing Marcos' quote, of traceurs and other disenfranchised youth in the research, was not enacted exclusively through coercive force and punitive severity by police forces. Possibly even more effectively, such idea of “community participation” in urban governance was endorsed by a good part of the public, which continuously questioned participants' legitimacy of practicing in random urban public spaces, especially “when they could go to Parco Dora”. In Samba's words, echoed by other participants, such aspects, plus the threat of fines or other troubles with police and the fact the Parco Dora was already a reference in many young people urban routes, hugely influenced the (spatial) conducts of many young

9 The Vitali area is composed by 12.000 square meters of a “multifunctional space” (<http://www.comune.torino.it/comitatoparcodora/servizi/attivita/visiteguidate/parcodora.pdf>) and surrounding green areas and walking paths.

traceurs and of those members of the public pushing them to practice there. Despite these factors though, the advanced conduct of participants' spatial practices was not addressed a-critically by participants:

“Well, I think the city has to be for everyone, and especially for us youth, it seems there's only one place for us, if you don't count malls. But at the end of the day we are everywhere, we cannot leave from Settimo [Torinese] every time to come to the [Parco] Dora.” (Hugo, 19 years old)

Following such leads, the ongoing creation of spaces such as Parco Dora area (its last lots are still to be concluded) showed an emerging form of neoliberal urban governance in Turin which did not manifest itself exclusively through “law and order” approaches, market oriented imperatives and militarization/surveillance of public spaces (Sim and Coleman, 2000; Coleman, 2003; Silk, 2004, 2007; Silk and Andrews, 2008). Rather the forms of urban governance and “conduct of conduct” observed in the field were enacted through the incorporation of progressive politics key-words, including a corporate friendly re-interpretation of the Lefebvrian “right to the city”¹⁰, to create compartmentalised and pacified, yet vibrant and tourist-friendly urban spaces.

The enactment of such approach of urban governance represented one example of how practices perceived as disruptive or out of place in regenerated areas were incorporated and made constitutive of a *bounded*, community oriented and inclusive urban space, the spontaneity and “ordered-disorder” (Coleman, 2005, p. 135) of which contributed effectively to the city rebranding as cosmopolitan, dynamic, and youth friendly.

Furthermore, stressing the “freedom” of individuals in such areas makes them responsible for the consequences of their choices and shifts the responsibility for social risks onto them (Lemke, 2001):

“There is a strange, stark contrast between Parco Dora, its Vitali Area, and the surrounding urban spaces. Few hundreds meters from the Vitali Area

¹⁰ As highlighted by Ventura (2015) the political claims of transformative spatial, and self, re-appropriation inspired by Lefebvre's (1991) “right to the city” and by the Situationist movement have been re-appropriated, digested and commodified for corporate consumption by a range of commercial and developmental bodies (as predicted by the Situationists themselves). The fashionable practice of flash-mobs is just one famous example of the legitimization of “spontaneous”, commodified and corporate friendly temporary spatial appropriations.

participants are often blocked, harassed, and sent away by police forces and/or 'concerned' residents according to 'safety reasons' and, less often, due to 'private property trespassing'. At a close distance from these scenes, within the “boundaries” of Area Vitali, I have often witnessed children no more than ten-twelve years old climbing pillars and walls of ten, or more, meters high without any trace of intervention by adults or security forces, despite a discrete but widespread presence of CCTVs. One of the main reasons why Marcos and few others do not like at all Parco Dora is exactly because of this, because, as they say, *they would feel responsible* for the inconsiderate actions, and 'simil-parkour' stunts of reckless people, including children, they barely know.” (Fieldnotes, 16th June, 2014, emphasis added)

As highlighted by Rosol (2015) “governing through participation” is, therefore, not about deceiving people and about distorting the “truth,” not about strategies of manipulation planned long beforehand, and not about ideological deception. It is about specific technologies of governing and conducting that rest on specific discourses (i.e. of urban regeneration, community participation, economic and social cohesion) and that provide the basis for the achieved consensus (Rosol, 2014, p. 270).

At the light of these considerations, the area of Parco Dora, which at first sight seemed to emplace what Lefebvre (1991) considered a space for representation, a spontaneous and ongoing co-construction by different users of a urban space, at a closer look resembled more a space conceived, with its planned “ordered disorder” and spontaneity of manifestations, as a huge *container of diversity*. Specifically, the space of Parco Dora could host all those manifestations of diversity which would create complaints and conflicts with urban residents in most of the remaining areas of Turin, and enabled the possibility to engage, orient and control some of them through initiatives promoting inclusion, social cohesion and participation constantly active in the “Dora” spaces. The government of difference enacted within and through the area of Parco Dora therefore aimed to pacify the city space, with the consequence of creating areas characterised by an emerging and pervasive regulation of conduct within its space *and* in the surrounding regenerating neighbourhoods. Moreover, the creation of defined urban spaces where difference is legitimated, and accumulated,

the elective places for multi and inter- cultural encounters, reinforced a vision which did not consider anymore the possibility of locating the city as the site of such encounters, conflicts, relationships and sociabilities (see also Glick Schiller, 2012).

“THEY ARE JUST TRYIN' TO CONTAIN US” : PARKOUR AS (SPATIAL) COUNTER-CONDUCT

“Well, that annoys me a bit... we are always been told to move away, 'you can't jump here', 'no, you can't do this here' when the spaces we train are abso-fucking-lutely public [...] If in a public space one person, or a police man comes to me and tell me 'you can't do that' if I'm not doing anything wrong, that really annoys me!” (Karim, 20 years old)

Although occasionally incorporated in Turin's cosmopolitan festive parades¹¹ participants' engagement with parkour did not fit completely and a-critically with Turin dominant urban discourses, thus illuminating the disputed, partial and temporary dimension of consensus about urban renewal in Turin, and revealing the axis of difference and exclusion such process of urban transformation produced. As such, micro-conflicts, negotiations and tensions regarding everyday leisure practices within the contexts of urban restructuring represented meaningful sites to observe and explain processes of urban regeneration beyond planners' and city council's claims and perspectives, and beyond reifying accounts about an all-encompassing neoliberalism (McGuirk and Dowling, 2009). As participants engaged in parkour with no specific and elective playgrounds but the city, they negotiated urban governance rationalities and processes of conduct of conduct through an ambivalent and tactical use of spaces which did not aim to deny and overturn the power dynamics they were immersed, from which they occasionally gleaned contingent material and social benefits. Rather they used the cracks and fissures of the emerging urban organisation to navigate such dynamics of inclusion/exclusion, following their aims of socialization, and quest for self-worth and self-fashioning (see De Martini Ugolotti, 2015, in press):

¹¹ Participants' and their peers increasingly interacted during fieldwork with a range of bodies (i.e. local associations, promotional agencies) to perform parkour demonstrations for events and community activities, sometimes through, other in spite of, "Parkour Torino"'s de facto monopoly of many of these events

“Samba: Marcos was saying this thing that they are trying to group us all at the [Parco] Dora, but we always look for new places, because even if it's not bad, the [Parco] Dora is not enough... they say it's made for us, but we didn't ask for that...

Karim: yes, they are trying to close us there, but I don't think they can really...

Micha: Yes, but even if they can, we always look for new places, you can give us as many as you want, but we will look for others...

Karim: it's not even the issue that you [the authorities] have to give me a place, because we don't play tennis or golf, we don't need apposite places, and I am not a thief or a thug, I am not doing anything wrong, so I want to choose where to train... I can even go to Parco Dora or in a gym if I think it's useful for my training, but that's up to me to decide, not them, I want to be able to choose where to make my own training...” (Focus group, 3rd September 2014)

The quote and excerpt presented in this section highlighted the contested and political aspect of participants' unrequested practices within Turin “post-political” spaces¹² (Swyngedouw, 2009, 2011; MacLeod, 2011; Rosol, 2014). In particular, participants' critical acknowledgement and discussion of the spatial and power dynamics related to Parco Dora highlighted how their practices could be addressed as an example of *counter-conducts*, intended as “the struggle against the processes implemented for conducting others” (Foucault, 2007 [1978], p. 201). The notion of counter-conduct, intended as “diffused and subdued forms of resistance” (Foucault, 2007 [1978], p. 200), enabled me to capture participants' daily forms of contestation of urban politics and social/spatial ordering that, nevertheless went beyond open

12 The concept of the post-political and post-democratic city identifies a replacement of debate, disagreement and dissent in current urban governance with “a series of technologies of governing that fuse around consensus, agreement, and technocratic management” (Swyngedouw, 2009, p. 604). This post-political consensus denies the “political”, neutralises dissent and de-politicises deeply antagonistic social relations. It reduces fundamental political conflict to either a “para-political” integration of different opinions “in arrangements of impotent participation” and consensual “good” governance” (Swyngedouw, 2011, p. 371), or to “ultra-politics”, often in the form of outbursts of urban violence (Swyngedouw, 2011).

and/or organised protest, or direct confrontation (Rosol, 2014, p. 71):

“The way we respond to people or police harassing us is not that to directly confront them, with some you can't because they are police, with others you don't simply want to go down at their level, also because it may happen something you'd regret for the rest of your life [...] if we wanted to be like “The Warriors” [cult movie about youth gangs fighting each other in New York] we wouldn't do parkour, but that's who we are. If we started a fight every time someone harassed us, now we'd make this interview in jail, you know that every street fight when the police come they first arrest the 'foreigners' and then ask what happened” (Abdelrazak, 17 years old)

“We go to the centre sometimes, or in some other posh spaces, but it is more a hit and run thing, to bust some moves, see the people drop their jaws and then disappear” (Micha, 17 years old)

The notion of counter-conduct enabled me to highlight one further aspect of participants' practices, which is the *productive* aspect of their spatial negotiations. As highlighted by Abdelrazak's and Micha's quotes, participants usually decided not to confront directly those contesting their presence in urban public spaces. Conscious of the power imbalances characterizing their presence in such spaces, they also oriented their actions in discovering hidden public spaces where to train undisturbed or by choosing times when more visible spaces were less frequented. As such, participants enacted their practices “beyond the purely negative act of disobedience” (Davidson, 2011, p. 27 in Rosol, 2014, p. 76) denying and directly challenging power relations, but expressed their “freedom to think (and act) otherwise” (Cadman, 2010, p. 550 in Rosol, 2014, p. 76), by choosing, and then creating, times and spaces suiting their needs of self-improvement and socialization. Apart from occasional exceptions, which aimed more to be hit and run performances than actual training, participants often choose for their practice spaces and temporalities which were marginal in relation to the rhythms and epicentres of dominant urban practices of entertainment and consumption (i.e. the driveways nearby famous fast-food restaurants, malls' and cinemas' empty parking lots, or multi-storey car parks), and of Turin renovated areas (i.e. pillars and foundations of supra-elevated walking paths,

peripheral public areas/parks, abandoned factories).

Thus, not aiming to overthrow the power relations which influenced their spatial conducts and social trajectories, participants rather mobilised and exerted their power to create opportunities of self-improvement, and socialization within the cracks and fissures, caves and passages of Turin spatial order:

“Take the driveway at that building behind the McDonalds. For passers-by they are just useless, just a driveway, or maybe just part of the background, while we spend hours jumping, slamming, sliding on them, there's a part of us on any of these walls” (Marcos, 20 years old)

“Why we enter abandoned factories? Because we look for spaces... for example at Parco Dora where everybody trains it gets overcrowded, and it becomes difficult to train, here at the bathtubs is amazing, there are opportunities to do movements you can't do elsewhere, but here is the signpost “forbidden entrance”. Therefore we also use abandoned buildings to overcome all these limitations...” (Bogdan, 18 years old)

“The opportunity that an empty, or multi-storey car park gives you is that you are in a not in a place where people go, so it's less likely anyone will come to bother you, you can train as much you want” (Cosmin, 20 years old)

As participants' accounts and bodily performances showed participants' bodily negotiations did not just allow them to navigate the power relationships influencing their movements in Turin cityscape, but enabled them to situationally *create spaces* at the margins of Turin urban renewal, this being a fundamental aspect in the production and negotiation of social relationships, practices and of the identity of both city-zens and the city.

Such contested, and sometimes invisible, re-definition of urban spaces at the temporal and spatial fringes of regenerated Turin spaces echoed the creation of what

Soja defined Thirdspace (1996), or else a place where real and imagined, conceived and lived spaces coexist, and where “(spatial) knowledge becomes (spatial) action in a field of unevenly developed (spatial) power” (Soja, 1996, p. 31). The work of Soja, who drew on Foucault and Lefebvre amongst others, underlined the possibilities offered by a re-definition, and transformations of spatial, and social, margins by those who find themselves excluded within contemporary contexts of uneven urban development. Participants' spatial counter-conducts and negotiations contingently and situationally responded and navigated a progressive surveillance *orientation* (Bauman and Lyon, 2013) which, through the “normalisation” of an accepted majority and spatial norms, tackled social anxieties via the exclusion of “problem” bodies defined by their “undesirable” or “dangerous” class, racial, or gendered diversity (see also Bigo, 2006; Manley and Silk, 2014).

The contested nature of participants' counter-conducts therefore showed revealed hidden negotiations, or *micro-politics*, which are often overlooked but nevertheless present in our cities (Coleman, 2005; Rosol, 2014), and that could be indicative of invisible, emerging practices of urban diversity and subjectivities. The focus on participants' contested spatial negotiations in Turin public spaces could therefore represent a novel perspective that can highlight how the reciprocal construction, regulation and organization of bodies, spaces and subjectivities in contemporary cityscapes (Rosol, 2014; Manley and Silk, 2014), reflected as well on the shifting meanings the concept of citizenship is taking within neoliberal contexts of urban renewal.

CONCLUSIONS: EMBODIED AND EMPLACED PERSPECTIVES ON TURIN'S POLITICS OF (IN)VISIBILITY AND (CONTINGENT) CITIZENSHIP

“You can have a paper saying you are an Italian citizen, but if your face does not show it, you are just as any other *straniero*” (Samba, 20 years old)

This paper's focus on parkour as a practice meaningfully emplacing the body in public spaces enabled to address crucial and elusive power dynamics, tensions and processes of selective inclusion enacted in Turin's regenerating spaces. Drawing on participants' accounts, I contend that Turin progressive image of multicultural and

social inclusiveness is contingent upon the capacity of (post)migrant bodies to comply with established hierarchies of belonging (Back et al. 2012) and spatial ordering, deeply embedded in contemporary global and local anxieties (Bigo, 2006; Manley and Silk, 2014). As such, despite Turin's initiatives of "multiculturalism from above" (Schmoll and Semi, 2013) participants' practices highlighted the ongoing division between the bodies whose class, gender, and race made them belong "without question" (Skey, 2010, p. 730) in Turin regenerating spaces, and those whose membership in Turin public life, and polity, was contingent to the compliance to "acceptable forms" of difference, namely those contributing as consumers, or as "consumed", to the emerging constitution of a cosmopolitan Turin. Such conditions made *normal*, and thus *invisible*, the constitution of ubiquitous checkpoints (Balibar, 2004) which involved security forces and "concerned" groups of citizens in controlling, regulating, hindering and enabling participants' movements and practices. I contend these processes highlighted the spatial dimensions of a "selective and differential inclusion of migrants" (Mezzadra, 2006, p.39) that established differential forms of access to what I define a contingent citizenship (Boehm, 2011). Contingent citizenship can be considered as a civic membership that is *partial*, *conditional* and *relational* (Boehm, 2011). It includes citizens who are culturally, socially politically or physically excluded from the nation, as well as denizens who are de facto members by virtue of their employment/education, civic engagement, political participation. The idea of a contingent citizenship therefore addresses emerging, tenuous forms of membership that create blurred subjects which can be defined as either citizens-alien and/or alien-citizens (Boehm, 2011). Drawing on these considerations, and recognising citizenship as an inherently spatial process (Lefebvre, 1991, 1996; Mitchell, 1995, 2003; Secor, 2004), this paper showed the everyday life-spaces where participants' negotiated their presence and parkour practice as both the medium through which citizenship struggles took place and, frequently, what was at stake in the struggle (Secor, 2004, p. 353; Lefebvre, 1996).

As such, this paper showed how Turin's progressive image of multiculturalism, spoused by its cultural entrepreneurs, gentrifiers and leaderships, celebrated an apparently unproblematic diversity and inclusivity that was in fact *contingent* upon the capacity of immigrant bodies to adapt to established prerogatives as (in)visible others in Turin regenerated spaces (Hage, 1998; Sayad, 2002; Palmas, 2009, 2010; Skey, 2010, 2011; Manley and Silk, 2014).

Analysing participants' contested practice of parkour as counter-conduct (Foucault, 2007 [1978]) therefore enabled to consider the partial and situational negotiations enacted by (post)migrant bodies in Turin public spaces. The discussion of participants' practices enabled to appreciate participants' spatial negotiations in their vulnerability and contingency that neither aimed, nor could *per se*, overcome the power relations constraining and enabling their trajectories in Turin social spaces and public life. Such perspective did not project on participants' bodies and practices romanticizing images of urban subversion and emancipation. Rather, it provided a nuanced perspective addressing participants, not only as *objects* of surveillance, policing, and aestheticized celebrations of diversity, but as *actors* both promoting and challenging neoliberal spatial and social processes taking place in Turin, and capable to indissolubly hold together the structural and the agentic (Pavidilis, 2012; Francombe, 2014) in their daily practice of parkour. In conclusion, although not providing indications about possibilities for social change in the research context, the analysis of participants' practices provided rather a clear account of the fault lines of Turin's government of difference, and a nuanced understanding of an elusive, emerging aspect of urban diversity and subjectivity that calls for further analysis, critiques, and initiatives from academics, cultural workers and citizens.

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