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# THE FORDIST CITY AND THE CREATIVE CITY: EVOLUTION AND RESILIENCE IN TURIN, ITALY

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## **ABSTRACT**

Turin is an industrial city which has been a key site for Italian industrialisation in the past century, particularly because of the presence of FIAT car manufacturing. Turin is regarded as the archetypical Italian Fordist city, but as a consequence of the gradual crisis of Fordism, local institutions started diversifying the city's economic basis, particularly in the last decade, by embracing a culture-led approach to urban regeneration. The article analyses the evolution of Turin from Fordism, drawing on the concept of resilience. Specifically, the analysis will support two arguments. First, by focusing on the evolutionary patterns of alternative segments of the socio-economic base of the city, it is possible to detect synergies between the variety of local economic cultures and practices, on the one hand, and the capability of coping with shocks and transformations, which is basically resilience, on the other hand. Secondly, emphasising a multi-equilibrium perspective, it is possible to argue that apparently contrasting urban typologies, such as the 'Fordist city' and the 'creative city', have a hybridising potential, producing mixed forms of industrial-cultural cities as a result of the interaction between creativity and path-dependent growth.

## **KEYWORDS**

Resilience; Turin; Fordist city; Industrial city; Creative city; Cultural city

## **Introduction**

The concept of resilience, intended as the capability to resist or to adapt to shocks, stresses and pressures of different kinds, has been widely applied in urban studies. The aim of this paper is to propose some theoretical reflections focusing on the linkages between resilience, an urban economic base and culture. Since the city is a highly complex socio-economic, cultural and political system, there are a number of potential and non-linear relations between these three elements. Drawing on a specific case study, i.e., the city of Turin, Italy, this paper illustrates some potential synergic connections between socio-economic resilience and the variety of diverse economies and alternative economic cultures circulating in a city. This thesis is built on the analysis of the transition of Turin from Fordism to a hybrid industrial/cultural economic base, and to the effects and reactions in the framework of the current situation of economic crisis.

The paper is organised as follows. The first section introduces the concept of resilience and its potential understandings in the fields of urban and regional studies. The following section presents the evolutionary dynamics of Turin from Fordism to the current economic crisis. Then an analysis of the evolutionary path of the city is produced through the mobilisation of the concept of resilience, with a specific examination of the role of local cultural assets and heritages as elements favouring the resilience of the urban economic base. Finally, the concluding section discusses potential theoretical problems and suggests synergies between cultural variety and socio-economic resilience.

## Resilience and the city

The concept of resilience is well known in a number of scientific fields, including physics (applied in engineering and construction, for example) and ecological studies. Although there is not only one definition, in an intuitive way resilience is basically understood as the buffer capacity or the ability of an element (for example, a material or an ecosystem) to absorb perturbations (for example, by deforming elastically), or the magnitude of disturbance that can be absorbed before a radical change in its structure (for example before reaching deformation, in the case of a material, or collapse, in the case of a building). In the last two decades, the idea of resilience has been translated into a number of human and social sciences, including psychology, organisational studies and network studies. Urban studies have been exposed to this contamination too, and resilience is today a popular keyword in the analysis of cities and regions (MacKinnon & Derickson, 2013). Resilience may be therefore intended as the ability of a spatial system to absorb disturbance without metamorphosing into another state or phase (Gunderson, 2000). According to McGlade et al. (2006), all socio-economic systems that can be seen to persist – particularly over long periods – can be described as being characteristically resilient, in the sense that they are able to incorporate change and perturbation without collapsing. This ability to absorb changing circumstances as defined by environmental, social, political or cultural fluctuations is itself a function both of the flexibility of structural organisation and system history. In fact, analyses of the capacity to adapt to change must be framed within an understanding of cultural values, historical context and the ethical standpoints of the kinds of actors involved (Cote & Nightingale, 2013).

In urban studies, the concept of resilience has been mostly applied with reference to the capability to recover from 'natural' disasters as earthquakes, floods or wars (Stehr, 2006; Vale & Campanella, 2005). But the concept of disaster includes many other critical events, such as economic crises. A recent critical field of research is mobilising resilience in order to understand, interpret and describe wider transformations in urban and regional systems. This is basically a new field of research: it is probably no coincidence that popular encyclopaedias such as Hutchinson's *Encyclopedia of Urban Studies* (Hutchinson, 2010), Gregory et al.'s *The Dictionary of Human Geography* (Gregory, Johnston, Pratt, Watts, & Whatmore, 2009) and Kitchin and Thrift's *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* (Kitchin & Thrift, 2009) do not include resilience as a specific entry. On the other hand, a number of authors have used resilience as a key concept in their analysis of regional economics: this is the case, among others, of Simmie and Martin (2010), Pike, Dawley, and Tomaney (2010), Hassink (2010), and Cooke and Eriksson (2012). The mobilisation of resilience in regional studies is not simple: while resilience in ecological studies is often intended as the capability of returning to a pre-existing stable or equilibrium state, in regional economies it may be positive to move quickly to a new state. This may be the case of a regional system coping with an economic crisis by quickly changing its economic basis, for example by moving to a different economic specialisation. For this reason, Simmie and Martin (2010) distinguish between two interpretations: on the one hand, resilience may be closer to the notion of 'elasticity', that is, the ability to absorb and accommodate perturbation without experiencing major structural transformation; on the other hand, shocks may cause a system to move into another regime of behaviour, linking resilience with adaptability (Lazzeretti, 2013). In this sense, it is useful to think of resilience as an evolutionary concept, that is, the differential ability of a region to adapt to changes in competitive, market, technological, policy and related conditions that shape the evolutionary dynamics and trajectories of that local economy over time. In addition, resilience is most often used in connection with sudden shocks, but in the case of regional economies many shocks present their effects quite slowly, as in the case of deindustrialisation, a problem strongly connected to the case study analysed in this paper.

## **Turin: from the service sector to industrial specialisation, and back**

Turin is a Northwestern Italian city, with a population in 2013 of about 900,000 inhabitants in the municipality, and 1.7 million people in the metropolitan area.<sup>1</sup> It is the capital of the Piedmont region (4.5 million inhabitants), and the fourth Italian city in terms of population.

With a high degree of generalisation, Turin's evolution in the last century has been quite similar to that of other major urban areas in Europe whose growth has been connected to industrialisation and immigration. Differently from other cities who experienced industrialisation by the end of XIX century, industrial growth in Turin was quite slow until the First World War, and then extremely fast with the growth of FIAT car manufacturing and the consequent growth of a system of small and medium enterprises working as suppliers for FIAT.

The economic hyper-specialisation of Turin did not start with car manufacturing. Being a national capital up to 1865,<sup>2</sup> the city was highly specialised in the service sector, and then with industrialisation it turned into a productive centre, compared by Mumford (1938) with cities such as Pittsburgh, Lyon and Essen. While at the end of the XIX century a number of car manufacturers and industrial enterprises were located within the city, in the XX century the history of Turin was mostly connected to FIAT (Gabert, 1964). The demographic growth of the city during the century, in fact, was driven by immigration of people willing to work in FIAT from Eastern and Southern Italy, and at the beginning of the 1970s about 80% of industrial workers were involved in car manufacturing.

Putting it briefly, Turin might be considered a typical factory-town: it is no coincidence that it has been often considered as the Italian equivalent of Detroit (Pizzolato, 2008), as both cities grew up thanks to a deep specialisation in the car manufacturing industry. In the case of Turin, the tight form of control imposed by FIAT over local suppliers – including financial control – made the concentration of capital even higher than the economic specialisation (Spriano, 1985), producing a kind of symbiotic relation between the city and FIAT: a 'total embedding' where the spatial, institutional and cultural developments of the city and the firm were highly interconnected (Grabher, 1993).

During the 1970s, the local economic shock connected to the beginning of the Fordist crisis determined both an internal reorganisation of FIAT and a rescaling of industrial relations, with re-localisation of plants both at the national (particularly in Southern Italy) and international levels (Latin America and Eastern Europe). These transformations had visible consequences on Turin: population growth stopped, and employment in the service sector started to rise. The city was clearly still industrial, but industrial relations and productive chains were no longer limited to the metropolitan area: Turin was just part of a wider productive system. Former location factors and sources of external economies became, of a sudden, problems and diseconomies, as in the case of the diffuse presence of an unskilled workforce, no longer useful for the industrial sector, and the abundance of small and medium enterprises working as FIAT suppliers, as these SMEs were often unable to cope with technological and market innovations. The introduction of new productive processes, based on automation technologies, led in fact to a decrease of 38,000 workers between 1980 and 1982, while during the 1980s a large number of local suppliers disappeared from the market due to failure or to processes of merging/acquisition.

The crisis of the 1980s was just the beginning of the deterioration of the car manufacturing industrial system: during the 1990s the situation became critical, reaching a nadir in 2002 (Whitford & Enrietti, 2005). A number

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<sup>1</sup> Data source (if an alternative source is not explicitly mentioned) is always *Piemonte in Cifre 2014*; <http://www.piemonteincifre.it> (accessed 25 November 2014).

<sup>2</sup> Turin has been the capital of the Duchy of Savoy from 1563, of the Kingdom of Sardinia from 1714 to 1720, of Italy from 1861 to 1865.

of reasons, including unwise business strategies on FIAT's part, led to a severe crisis, and in 2002 FIAT announced the closure of 18 production plants all over the world. The following year, a public policy<sup>3</sup> was introduced in order to help local suppliers to diversify their clients and their geographical markets: using different words, local suppliers started reacting to the hypothetical closure of FIAT. The era of the 'total embedding' of FIAT in Turin was definitely over.

Since the diffusion of the crisis in the 1980s, local policy makers and cultural foundations (Fondazione Agnelli, Ires Piemonte, Compagnia San Paolo) started to imagine alternative development paths for the city, which were less focused on the car manufacturing monoculture. It worth mentioning four urban visions debated between the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s: *Mito*, the idea of promoting economic synergies with Milan; *Gemito*, a similar idea including also Genoa; the *Pianura meccatronica*, or the development of a vast region with economic specialisation in the mechanical and electronic industrial sectors; *Torino Technocity*, the vision of an ICT industrial city. In short, these urban visions emphasised the need and the quest for other manufacturing vocations for the city. But after the huge industrial crisis started at the end of the 1990s – which can be interpreted as a second local economic shock – different aspirations, focused on non-manufacturing vocations, started to emerge: a number of local agencies started working to attract firms, to encourage entrepreneurialism in the most qualified service sectors (such as R&D, ICTs and 'new economy' in general), and to attract tourists and cultural events. This line of development became evident with the publication of the first strategic plan of the city, named *Torino Internazionale*, in 2000: the will of local policymakers and local stakeholders was basically to favor the transition towards a 'knowledge society'.

A pivotal event in the evolutionary path of Turin's economic basis was the hosting of the Winter Olympic Games in 2006. When the Games were awarded to the city in 1998, Turin policymakers launched an intensive branding campaign in order to show to the world that the city was no longer a dark industrial city, but rather a 'new' vibrant, cosmopolitan and cultural city. A number of transformations took place in the city: new infrastructures were built (such as the metro line, read by many observers as a further decoupling from the image of the 'city of cars'), as well as new buildings by famous architects (Isozaki, Fuksas) and improvements in the cultural offer (local museums, events, public art installations).

It is worth mentioning that the years right before the current economic crisis – which can be read as a third crisis and a further pivotal point of rupture in the local development trajectory – were characterised by a vast hype surrounding discourses on a hypothetical transition of Turin towards the 'cultural', 'creative' or 'knowledge' economy, and the branding of the city in the framework of the 2006 Winter Olympic Games insisted on this idea (Vanolo, 2008). For example, public art events located all over the city since the end of the 1990s, included projects such as *Luci d'artista* (installation of artistic lights), *Opere per il passante ferroviario* and *Nuovi committenti* (art installations in areas subjected to redevelopment). Even the car culture was promoted in an artistic perspective: the local car museum was closed in 2007 for radical renovation, and in 2011 it was rebranded MAUTO and reopened with suggestive staging. Today, it is estimated that the cultural sector as a whole employs about 6.6% of the workers of the province of Turin and generates about 5.9% of local GDP.

If the Games supported a general idea of 'centrality' of Turin in the global scenario, the 2009 agreement between FIAT and Chrysler emphasised more and more the international visibility of the city, even if once more in the car manufacturing sphere. Although currently FIAT is apparently performing well in economic terms, it has to be noted that the company is often no longer perceived as a 'local' firm: most of the production is carried out outside the city and outside Italy, most of the cars produced by FIAT are sold abroad, and in 2014 the headquarter of the FIAT-Chrysler group has been moved away from Turin, to London and

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<sup>3</sup> Project *From concept to car*, started in 2003 (Whitford & Enrietti, 2005); <http://www.fromconcepttocar.com> (accessed June 2014).

Amsterdam. The social and emotional attachment to the company is a complex social phenomenon: for example, some people are not exactly aware that FIAT is progressively leaving Turin. Anyway, more and more inhabitants and policy makers debate about how American' FIAT is becoming, generally posing little faith in a prosperous coupling between FIAT and Turin (see Giaccaria, 2010). In the meantime, the number of FIAT workers in Turin is falling: today, just 7400 workers are directly employed by FIAT in production lines. Although it is estimated that about a quadruple figure is employed in local enterprises working mainly as suppliers for FIAT, Turin today is far from being a one-company town.

In the meantime, the current economic crisis struck Turin gravely. The unemployment rate reached 11.4% in 2013, the highest among Central and Northern Italian cities, and unemployment among young people reached 46.4% in the same year. Between 2008 and 2012 there was a loss of about 20,000 jobs in the industrial sector, and about 5000 in the building sector, not balanced by the growth in the service sector (about 10,000 jobs). Extreme poverty is rising: it is estimated that, in the city, there are currently 16 homeless people for every 10,000 inhabitants, but what is striking is that 68.4% of them started living in the streets less than 2 years ago. Consumption is falling, particularly in the cultural and entertainment sectors (-21% from 2008 to 2012). The economic crisis is, in fact, not limited to the industrial sector, but in many ways also the workers of the cultural sector strive to maintain their jobs, as investments from both the public and the private sphere are really low.

### **A multi-equilibrium perspective**

This short review of the evolutionary dynamics of Turin, focused mainly on Turin's economic basis, may be read and interpreted by mobilising the concept of resilience. Particularly, it is possible to detect three major economic shocks that affected the city in the last decades: the Fordist crisis of the end of the 1970s, the FIAT crisis started in the 1990s, and the recent global economic crisis started in 2008.

Starting from the Fordist crisis, Turin has shown a certain degree of resilience by moving and mutating through different urban forms and typologies, from Fordism to post-Fordism, where 'post' never means 'non-Fordist', but rather, particularly in the case of Turin, a mix of industrialism and cultural/knowledge economy. During the years, up to the current economic crisis, Turin demonstrated a considerable capability to cope with transformations with limited social sufferance – for example, in terms of employment, GDP growth and urban shrinkage – while the situation, in recent years, has become critical, as testified by rising levels of poverty, unemployment and economic stagnation. Is it therefore possible to argue that the resilience of the urban system has diminished? Or that Turin's resilience allowed absorption and dispersal up to a certain level of economic stress, while the current level of stress is excessive? The answer to these questions depends on the understanding of resilience assumed in the analysis.

First, it is relevant to consider that the ideal types of the Fordist city and the cultural city are useful for conceptualising urban phenomena and for supporting comparative reasoning (for example by considering how and/or how much 'real' world cities differ from ideal types), but it is basically impossible to detect cities completely fitting in these ideal types. Even during the years of the 'total embedding', there used to be much more than FIAT in Turin, also in the economic sector. It is useful, in this perspective, to refer to the famous works of Gibson-Graham (2008), and particularly to their concept of 'diverse economies'. According to Gibson-Graham, it is possible to destabilise the idea that capitalism is everywhere and unavoidable by promoting a politics of presence emphasising that there are – right here and right now, in niches of economic life – non-capitalist or even anti-capitalist forms of economy.

Although Gibson-Graham's 'diverse economies' are non-capitalist, being based on alternative forms of transactions, labour and enterprise, it is useful to mobilise the idea of diversity in order to destabilise the

idea of Turin's economic monoculture. In this sense, it is easy to demonstrate that in Turin there have been a number of economic niches outside car manufacturing. In order to develop the argument, this section briefly discusses three examples of economic activities that resisted the monoculture of car manufacturing: the movie industry, urban gardening and 'alternative' food markets.

In the case of the film industry,<sup>4</sup> it has firstly to be noted that one century ago, at the end of the XVIII century, Turin was a key city for Italian cinematography, as testified by the presence of a number of theatres and small studios. In that period, films were basically produced by small firms, each one dealing with all the activities that were necessary for producing an entire film, and the city hosted a number of such firms. Turin was an attractive city not only for Italian directors, actors, writers and intellectuals, but also for French ones. The production, in 1914, of the colossal *Cabiria*, featuring 20,000 extras and monumental scenic designs, testified to the presence of a meaningful industrial milieu in the cinematic sector.<sup>5</sup> But in the following decades, a number of factors led to the apparent disappearance of that milieu. Particularly, during Fascism, the dictator Mussolini moved most film productions to Rome, in order to give cultural centrality to the Italian capital: the propaganda institute *Istituto Luce* was founded in Rome in 1924, while the famous studio *Cinecittà* was opened in 1937. In Turin, the numerous small and medium enterprises of the film sector progressively went bankrupt before the beginning of the Second World War, making Turin more and more dependent upon the economic monoculture of car manufacturing. But this is just one part of the story.

Over the years, Turin maintained an important role for debates *about* cinema (Crivello, 2009): the first Italian cinema museum being born in Turin in 1956, and many specialised reviews started publication during the 1960s. Associations, forums and festivals survived over the years, and many documentary movies focused on the lives and cultures of factory workers. In other words, the film productive system collapsed, but the culture of cinema survived, proving high resilience and adaptability. And what is particularly interesting is that, with the diffuse crisis of FIAT at the end of 1990s and the quest for differentiation of the urban economic base, local policy-makers started to look again at cinema as a potential source of development. For this purpose, the publicly funded organisation *Film Commission Torino Piemonte*, born in 2000, started to provide facilities and support to filmmakers willing to make films in the city. Since 2000, more than 700 productions have been attracted, helping the growth of a local tissue of small and medium firms and independent practitioners working in this field: it is estimated that about 5100 workers are directly employed in the film industry in the province of Turin.

The case of the movie-production industry in Turin testifies to the complexity of the idea of resilience when applied to social phenomena. Life in the city is regulated and influenced by a number of social dimensions, including the economic basis, the industrial organisation, cultures and identities, etc. It is plausible to hypothesise that, particularly in periods of crisis, many individual and social 'energies' move from one field to another, as much as capital moves from one circuit to another (Harvey, 1982). In this vein, cinema moved from the capital circuit to an almost purely cultural space, in order to come back to life as an economically relevant sector in more recent times. In this sense, resilience in social phenomena must be related not just to notions of resistance and adaptability, but also to the capability of hybridising different spheres of urban life. Cinema, in Turin, demonstrated remarkable capability in moving through different spheres, despite the fact that cinema has been 'invisible' in an economic perspective for many decades.

Another example, closer to Gibson-Graham's original idea of 'diverse economies', may refer to non-commercial agriculture in the urban space. As discussed, Turin's population growth was principally a result of immigration from Southern and Western regions of Italy. Many of the immigrants were peasants and non-educated people from the countryside. Many of them, once they arrived in Turin, started to practice non-

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<sup>4</sup> Of course, the film industry was linked to the Fordist monoculture (Shukin, 2009).

<sup>5</sup> The film, directed by Giovanni Pastrone, was by far the most expensive Italian film of that period, costing about 1 million lire.

commercial agriculture on small plots of land within and on the borders of the city as a hobby or as an integrative form of auto-production. These forms of urban agriculture have been invisible – or even opposed, being synonyms of ‘uncivil urban life’ – in the eyes of local policy makers, stakeholders and economic actors up to recent times. But right now, the economic crisis and the quest for ‘alternatives’ have given huge momentum to *urban gardening* – today a popular phenomenon on a global scale – that is now supported by local policies and public initiatives.<sup>6</sup> Urban gardening, in fact, is currently framed as a social phenomenon that may unite different subjects such as architects, farmers, residents, children and artists in order to cope with urban problems like those characterising post-industrial wasteland: lack of collective spirit and ecological awareness, lack of youth facilities, lack of public money for park keeping. It may be argued that the creativity of people who ‘invented’ gardens in unexpected places all over the city gave resilience to the gardening culture.

A last example of ‘other’ economic practices that, over time, have become interesting for local policymakers and economists refers to the case of cheap popular food. Over time, there has been an evident reframing of local food by the promotion of specific cultural constructions; for example, many specific local wines produced in the region used to be considered ‘cheap’ wines, but today they are more and more branded, in the market economy, as ‘rare’ and ‘authentic’ high-quality wines to be sold both locally and in international markets. Wines such as *Nebbiolo* and *Barolo*, for example, are today well known high-quality wines, in many cases considered superior to the most prestigious Tuscan wines. This phenomenon has been strongly promoted by the local association Slow Food,<sup>7</sup> which has had a global impact in the revitalisation and reinvention of old gastronomic traditions. Slow Food was originally founded in 1986 by Carlo Petrini in order to promote local foods and traditions of gastronomy and food production, opposing at the same time the culture of fast foods and industrial food production. The Slow Food association has expanded to include over 100,000 members with branches in over 150 countries. Slow Food organises in Turin the Salone del Gusto, which is the world’s largest food and wine fair. It is highly symbolic that the fair takes place in the Lingotto building, which used to be the main FIAT factory in the first half of the XX century. And operating right next to the Lingotto building is Eataly, the famous high-end Italian food mall chain. The food market is currently considered strategic in the region, despite the open anticorporation and non-utilitarian approach of the Slow Food association.

The point of these three examples is that the cinema culture, urban gardening practices and local popular food cultures were already present in the Turin Fordist city, albeit on the margins of car manufacturing activities and car manufacturing spaces, as well as other socio-cultural phenomena like punk music and religious social movements. All these ‘cultures’ survived the monoculture of car manufacturing, and have progressively come back to life, in terms of visibility and economic relevance, after the local economic shocks experienced by the city. The resilience of the city as a whole, it may be argued, has been strongly enhanced by the mere presence of ‘other’ cultures than car manufacturing. These ‘other’ cultures may be imagined as local resources that, recognised and mobilised by inhabitants and local actors in general, aided and aid the survival in difficult times and in coping with the transformations of the urban system. Of course, it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss whether these ‘other’ economic practices may meaningfully support the local population and therefore increase local resilience or, rather, if their contribution is limited and mostly grounded in optimistic discourses produced by local policy-makers. Certainly, Turin was not only the city of

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<sup>6</sup> It is worth mentioning *Miraorti*, a participatory project started in 2009 with the aim of promoting urban agriculture in the area between the Sangone river and the South of the Mirafiori district. The goal is to gather local actors and local institutions, and particularly local populations and schools, in order to promote urban gardening. Currently the project involves about 300 gardeners in 1000 collective gardens.

<sup>7</sup> The Slow Food association was founded in Bra, in Piedmont, at the end of the 1980s. According to its website, “Slow Food is a global, grassroots organization linking the pleasure of good food with a commitment to local communities and the environment”: <http://www.slowfood.com> (accessed June 2014)



car manufacturing, and today it is not only a cultural, creative and tourist city, despite the fact that urban representations – particularly those produced in the framework of urban branding policies – tend to focus only on these dimensions and identities of the city.

In this sense, the emphasis on a multi-equilibrium perspective, stressing the importance of instability and evolution, allows us to argue that apparently contrasting urban typologies, such as the 'Fordist city' and the 'cultural city', have a hybridising potential, producing mixed forms of industrial–cultural cities as a result of the interaction between creativity and path-dependent growth.

## Conclusions

The use of the concept of urban resilience in order to understand and interpret the capability of a city to cope with social and economic transformations poses theoretical challenges.

First, it is difficult to hypothesise a kind of 'failure' of cities in terms of lack of resilience. While for an ecosystem it is easy to image examples of dead-end points (the extinction of species, the impossibility of supporting the feedbacks and circuits allowing life in an ecosystem), it is much more complex for cities. Consider the archetype of the 'failed' industrial city, Detroit, a city which, as mentioned, has often been compared to Turin, and which is currently connected to Turin because of the Fiat-Chrysler merging. Right before the 2008 crisis, Turin and Detroit have been often mobilised as key examples of the multiplicity of alternative urban development path. In fact, despite sharing a Fordist mono-industrial culture, Turin has apparently evolved coupling successfully, up to a certain degree, with the local and global economic shocks, while Detroit has become a sort of ghost town (cf. Pizzolato, 2008). In fact, Detroit is today characterised by profound crisis, poverty and problems in the sphere of social reproduction. Nevertheless, Detroit is still arguably 'alive', showing a certain degree of vitality and, therefore, resilience (Coppola, 2010). In other words, with the exclusion of the more dramatic examples of urbicide or disaster, cities are always to some degree resilient, and the difference between an 'acceptable' and a 'non-acceptable' urban equilibrium state or urban evolutionary phase is subjective and socially constructed. For example, the current crisis in Turin is tragic and it surely causes suffering to many families, but it also stimulates the rethinking of ideas of growth, urban life, sociability, and the collective experimentation of new (and old) forms of economy, housing, entertainment and so on.<sup>8</sup>

Secondly, the evolution of cities is constantly characterised by metamorphoses to new status, i.e. permanent changes in structures and forms of organisation of social, political, economic and environmental forces. A dynamic perspective is therefore mandatory, rendering more and more complex the use of resilience as an explanatory concept: economic change, for example, is always characterised by social conflicts, but it may be positive in the long run. The point, in thinking about urban resilience, is evidently not to evaluate the capability of a city to resist or to cope with change, but to have 'positive' and 'just' transformations.

Third, questioning resilience is a highly political exercise. The distinction between a 'positive' and a 'negative' urban transformation, or between a 'just' and an 'unjust' one, is evidently political. Certain local actors will gain from an urban transformation, and certain actors will even obtain gains from states of pressure or emergency, while other actors will lose. Resilience is therefore always fragmented, partial and political; on the contrary, a static and linear understanding of resilience as mere capability to 'resist' or to 'cope' with change may have a rather conservative meaning when applied in social sciences (MacKinnon & Derickson, 2013).

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<sup>8</sup> It is possible to mention local projects such as *Etinomia*, uniting a number of entrepreneurs, farmers and other economic actors in order to bring ethics to the centre of economic transactions.

These remarks never imply that resilience is a useless concept for the analysis of urban economies. On the contrary, thinking about urban resilience opens the way to the production of knowledge and of alternative understandings of cities and their evolutionary paths. The point is to avoid considering resilience as a 'template concept' that may be mobilised in the same way in every city and with regard to every form of urban pressure, but rather it has to be adapted and conceptualised according to the nature of different cities experiencing different forms of stress. In this sense, resilience in urban studies may be intended as a metaphor: it is useful because it is hermeneutic, i.e. it may allow the search for and exploration of analogies, perspectives and alternative understandings. Finally, mobilising resilience in the analysis of the evolutionary path of Turin, from industrial city to hybrid industrial-cultural city, and now a city struggling with crisis, allows us to form some hypotheses concerning the relations between culture and resilience. The case of Turin highlights a well-known idea in urban studies – that cultural variety supports resilience (Florida, 2003; Tidball & Kransy, 2007).

The examples of cinema and urban gardening confirm that marginal cultures may become unexpectedly strategic with time. The fact that cultural, social and economic variety may enhance the adaptive capabilities of cities is intuitive as well as resonating with ecological studies emphasising the role of biodiversity in supporting resilience. But, far from conventional wisdom, a genuine and open-minded attitude in observing city diversity is often difficult for social actors, policy makers and even urban scholars, since it implies destabilising the centrality of what we consider meaningful and marginal in the urban sphere. The case of Turin and the shifting centrality of car manufacturing constitutes a good example of the changing positions of centrality and marginality in a city's cultural and economic base.

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