Transforming Places, Changing Deities: Spatial and Symbolic Negotiation in Marseille

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Marseille has undergone a deep transformation since the *Euroméditerranée* national action that started in 1995. When Marseille was crowned the European Capital of Culture in 2013, local *élites* applauded it as the finalization of a process that aimed to internationalize its image in order to attract tourism and investments. Nevertheless, the *urban regeneration* led by the state and enforced by local administrators was widely contested. The inhabitants' complex system of practices reveals that attachment to the old representations of the urban space of Marseille is still very strong and can be identified in the use of the public space. I explore the symbolic production of space in the case of Marseilles' urban regeneration process and observe how different grassroot social groups appropriate, negotiate and resist the new symbolic regime proposed and asymmetrically imposed by powerholders at international, national and local levels. Moreover, the conflicting use of space is a result of a dialectical negotiation between forms of instrumental power masked by the labels of legality, formality and order, as opposed to the values of solidarity, spontaneity and informality.

Keywords: Urban regeneration, symbolic representations, urban spaces and places, Marseille.

Urban Marketing as a Contemporary Production of the *Genius Loci*

In classical mythology, the Latin expression *genius locus* refers to the protective spirit of a place. It is a guardian that watches over a part of the world and imbues it with a special character. As an embodied symbol, it brings together all the qualities that the place is supposed to have, endowing it with a sort of magical protection. Thus, the *genius locus* keeps a place out of reach and save it from the practices of negotiation among human beings. It is thought to be a natural, prior existence born out of the place itself. Its legitimacy lies in its sacred nature. However, although the *genius locus* is a human creation, regardless of its sacred nature, sooner or later it is inevitably critically and secularly redefined for more down to earth purposes. While in the past people imagined the *genius* of a place, today people create *images* of a place. These images are used as tools to frame, understand, brand and even sell spaces and places. As these deal with people's ordinary representations and plural customary practices, through the study of the case of Marseille we will find out that they are, more than we thought, a matter of recognition (Taylor 1992) and, lastly but most importantly, a matter of social justice.

Marseille has undergone a deep transformation since the *Euroméditerranée* national action that started in 1995. When Marseille was crowned the European Capital of Culture in 2013, local *élites* applauded the award as the finalization of a process that aimed to internationalize Maresille's image in order to attract tourism and investment. Nevertheless, the efforts to bring about an *urban regeneration* led by the state and enforced by local administrators were far from being uncontested. A complex system of practices by the inhabitants reveal that attachment to the old representations of the urban space of Marseille is still very strong and can be identified in certain uses of the public space.

Here, I explore the symbolic production of space in the case of Marseille's urban regeneration. During my fieldwork in Marseille-Provence, under the collective research project titled *Publics et practiques culturelles de Marseille-Provence 2013* carried out between 2012 and 2014, I focused on the practices, values, lifestyles and life projects of ordinary people, especially in relation to the urban space. The material that I gathered helped me to reconstruct the way *Genii* — or images — evolve and drive human spatial practices. I observed places both by standing aside and by participating, interacting intensively with people while using those spaces.

I used visual instruments to register the use of space. I also asked people to draw the space for me in the form of maps and landscapes, in order to obtain a graphic trace of their cognitive representations. I compared these drawings with the official graphic representations produced by the Tourist Office or published in the media.

While focusing on the process of urban *renewal* and *touristification* of Marseille, the present discussion aims to explore how multi-level governance affects social dynamics and people in relation to urban space. I will focus on some contested places; that is, those seats of micro-conflicts among different social groups that are part of and subject to the effects of the regeneration process. The case studies will show how the traditional model of tourism development (Miossec 1977) has been substantially turned upside down, as city-marketing no longer exploits a traditional image of a given area but creates, instead, a distinctly new form which promotes specific interests (Appadurai 1990). An intentional, deliberate action is enforced at a symbolic level by powerholders in order to channel the management of the territory while transforming it for specific ends.

However, changing the image of a place is neither easy nor without consequences. Like changing deities, it is a delicate process that cannot be quickly and successfully imposed from one-side only. In my analysis I will observe how different grassroots social groups appropriate, negotiate and resist the new symbolic regime asymmetrically imposed by powerholders at international, national and local levels. Moreover, the (often) conflicting use of space is a result of a dialectical negotiation between forms of instrumental power masked under the label of legality, formality and order in opposition to values of solidarity, spontaneity and often informality.

On the Change of Marseille

According to its leading *élite,* for a long time the image of Marseille conveyed by the film *The French Connection* and episodes of violence in the *Quartiers Nord* has needed a symbolic and material reinvention at both national and international level. The need for a deep transformation was raised as a public issue and attracted a number of actors. In the economic sphere, a group of local prominent entrepreneurs gathered in 2006 under the umbrella denomination, *Ambition Top 20 Club;* their aim was to place Marseille among the twenty most important European cities in terms of economic activities.

The quarrelsome local political class was determined to collaborate with the Club and to participate in the realization of this project, the finalization of which could produce a great political capital for them. On the other hand, the central government under Sarkozy saw it as an extraordinary opportunity to enhance the presence and influence of the French state in the Mediterranean World. The first substantial visual transformation of Marseille, which initially started under the *Euroméditerranée* national action, worked on changing its image rather than providing or improving services for its inhabitants[1]. This 'cosmetic' operation started in 1995, under the supervision of the major, Jean-Claude Gaudin, who was also Minister for the Management of the Territory, City and Integration in Alain Juppe's Second Cabinet. The operation was presented as a state action to solve the problems of the city. This state-led action focused on the redevelopment of a rather large area in the Northern districts of the city, commonly reputed as the most problematic one. It involved three main public institution at the local level: the Region, the Department and the Municipality. These local players, despite their opposing views, agreed on the project to renovate both the national and the international

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[1] This also happened in previous cases like, for example, the social housing project of 1960s and 1970s.

reputation of the city by creating new icons. Within the same framework, each institution engaged in further initiatives. For example, alongside the involvement in the *Euroméditerranée* project, the Municipality planned a deep renewal of the Old Port (*Vieux Port*) which was projected to host a prominent landmark: Norman Foster's *ombrière*[2].

This *growth machine* (Molotch 1976) became even stronger in the following years. As an official at the Conseil Général des Bouches-du-Rhône explained, 'Independent of the political creed, we were not used to collaborate nor to work together with other institutions (*collectivités*), but we learnt to do that under a common goal'[3]. Moreover, the group of entrepreneurs of *Ambition Top 20 Club* gathered several private funded institutions and influential local stakeholders around the idea of regeneration. And it was not by chance that the Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie de Marseille-Provence (CCIMP) became the leader of the bid of 2013 European Capital of Culture: a target which was good enough to achieve the end of these *élites* — the change of city image.

The prospect of hosting such a *mega event*, and the preparation for it, transformed the issue of *city image* into a public concern. As an external player to, and distant from, local political rivalries, the State engaged in communication campaigns that not only affirmed but also projected the change of Marseille's image as a *necessity* along with its urban transformation. Icons of modernity, such as Zaha Hadid's CMA -CGM tower and the MuCEM (Museum of the European and Mediterranean Civilizations) became the main symbols of the regenerated and renewed image of Marseille. Region PACA placed its auditorium Villa Méditerranée on the *esplanade* J4[4]. These buildings, together with new or renewed buildings of the 'old' Marseille, were part of the *showcase* promoted by public institutions, which also included the old Docks (mainly used for offices), the Silo (an old granary, converted into a stage), the Archives, the malls *Les terrasses du Port* and *Les Voûtes*.

Challenging the usual perception of the urban space, these symbols of the *new Marseille* are printed on postcards, tourist brochures and in the publications produced by the institutional urban marketing. They are used as tools for 'cleaning the image of the city' (*laver l'image de Marseille*), as explicitly expressed by an official of the city Municipality. This *aesthetic turn* was part of a larger and across-the-board strategy aiming to attract a new middle-class[5], capital and investment in order to make Marseille visible and a potential participant in the global *competition of territories* (Harvey 1989, Lloyd 2006), in which several public institutions feel involved worldwide (Prato 2016, Vicari Haddock 2010, Kavaratzis 2004). The urban projects in the *Euroméditerranée* perimeter of Marseille, are often characterized by an unusual architectural language. The colours, shapes and proportions of the new buildings are very different from the

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[2] Norman Foster's *ombrière* raised objections because it was chosen by the Municipality after a public contest which favoured Corinne Vezzoni's project.
[3] Interview with the Author, Marseille, July 2013.
[4] The Villa Méditerranée, the project of the PACA Region and the national museum MuCEM are in the words of François De Boisgelin, manager of the Villa, 'fully complementary. (…) There are things that States, busy in their diplomatic affairs, cannot achieve, while regions can develop relationships, imagine networks among scholars, businessmen, organizations... Michel Vauzelle (president of PACA region in 2013) has a Mediterranean hyper-trophism: in order to develop collaborations, it is often easier to by-pass Ministries' (Agnès Freschel and Cloarec in *Zibeline,* a popular magazine in Marseille, November 2012).
[5] Jean-Louis Russac, from the Economic Development Service of the Urban Community, says that 'Our goal is to attract in Marseille a real estate clientele who does not yet live here but can be potentially interested in leisure purchase' (*Marseille l'Hebdo*, November 2009).

traditional architecture of the rest of the city and, according to many people, they seem to be inspired by the style of North-European cities. The local *élites* wanted to lower the risk of being reputed as not open enough internationally. In their bid to make their territory internationally accepted and recognized as a good place for investment, the local favoured foreign and assertive canons of architecture over the traditional ones,

Input to Change

The change contemplated in framework of *Euroméditerranée* was limited only to a specific area which was supposed to be transformed from a peripheral and almost empty space into a new centre and *showcase* of the city. The project envisaged the creation of new residential areas and business zones, together with the development of the necessary infrastructures to support them, the construction of new buildings and the rehabilitation of old ones. All this was headed by a number of marketing actions aiming 'to make Marseille attractive; recruit businesses, investors and international organizations, as well as create new jobs'[6].

As I have mentioned, in order to achieve its goal, the *Euroméditerranée* project was presented in contrast with the 'old' city, an approach that fuelled several forms of resistance. Within this framework, the implementing bodies were authorized to:

> 'Carry out its development and facilities projects or projects on behalf of local authorities and institutions; acquire, if needed by expropriation, any already built or yet-to-be built buildings located within the project area; tear down the structures acquired through expropriation; exercise the 'right of pre-emption' when allowed by law' (from the *Euroméditerranée* website, see footnote 6).

In the view of the inhabitants and the local committees that opposed the project, this meant 'erasing an entire section of the city from the map in order to build up another one' (*écraser un quartier en entier pour en faire un autre*)[7]. This deep and somehow traumatic *regeneration* was regarded as an organized and, to a certain extent, radical effort by the public institutions to change the *genius locus* of the city. As such, the whole process cannot fully be understood outside the power relations that affect the conception of space itself. Thus, some areas which were considered by public bodies as 'empty spaces' and, on this premise, were used as a starting point to build the new image of the city, were, in fact, neither symbolically nor materially empty. Represented in the public institutional discourse as *friches*, the former industrial areas and the port, to which the public did not have access, were actually used daily by many inhabitants as their first point of access to the sea. The field data show that these places were viewed by local people as leisure areas for picnics, swimming and sunbathing near the sea. The former dock J4 was seen by the inhabitants of the nearby neighbourhood, in their words, as a *cour* (courtyard): a space for socialisation which worked for more than just leisure time. Emile, a man in his sixties, all tanned and smiling, told me in the summer of 2014, 'I always came here when I did not have work'; he added, 'it is simply the best place for playing *pétanque* near here. It's free, there is a nice view, you always meet someone and you can find some labour if you meet people, I have worked thousands of times in painting walls and in relocations thanks to people who asked me

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[6] From the *Euroméditerranée* website, http://www.euromediterranee.fr/districts/introduction.html?L=1; accessed on 16/3/2014.
[7] From my interview with a member of a local organized movement against *Euroméditerranée*, August 2013.

for my services while I was playing *pétanque*: that is not just a way of spending my time, it is a way to go out and not to stay alone and it is a way to feel good when you have nothing'. Emile comes to the Esplanade everyday (even after its renovation) and can disappear for months, when he has a job. 'I do not have very close friends, but I have instead many… many mates that do the same as me and we always try to help each other. One of them taught me how to use a mobile phone when I needed to stay in contact with the hospital for my mother and after a while we went together to visit her'.

Historical images and postcards from the beginning of the twentieth century portray these same images of leisure and socialisation[8], and can be usefully compared with the images produced today. During the good season, many students come to Esplande after school or during their days off, dressed in t-shirts and swimming suits, often bringing with them some music player and spending their time either on the dock or on the ancient walls of Fort Saint-Jean. Regardless of the new tourist groups visiting the place, they ceaselessly jump in the water and climb back up. 'I come here just because we meet here', said a 14-year-old boy from the *cité* La Viste, in September of 2013. He went on to say, 'When you are looking for me, either I am at home, either at school or here. Where should I go? There is nothing where I live, nothing to do, nor a place where to … where to meet, nor a place where to have a beer, to spend my time'. La Viste is one of the first *cités* we encounter on the way to the North, a town with a relatively good quality of life compared with several other towns. And when I asked a guy at the Esplanade to draw me the place we were in, he drew it in relation to the Northern part of the city, while completely excluding the Old Port (and, more obviously, the South). The mixed residential and commercial area of *Quartiers Nord*, generally poor in services and economic activities, is characterized by informal economic activities upon which a large part of the local population depends (Mattina 2003). The focus of the *Euroméditerranée* programme is organized around a mix of trade and exchange of goods that oscillates between formality and informality and

depends on the international commercial flows of goods exchange. The *Marché aux Puces*, is the main place where these practices — *partage* — take place. It operates as the centre of the local economy in which the local population partakes. While sustaining a communitarian type of economy based on self-subsistence, this marketplace, like a Mediterranean bazar or *souk*, interacts with the economy of the whole city and region. It is defined not only by trade but also as a place for production and consumption where retailers do not just sell their merchandise but also, as for example in the case of clothes, transform it into items which are specifically suitable for their customers. Moreover, here stolen goods or objects commonly defined in Marseille as *tombé du camion* (fallen from a truck) are 'laundered'. According to the *Euroméditerranée*

project, the future of this *Marché* is uncertain. However, within the general aims of the urban regeneration, the area is foreseen as 'normalized' in terms of legality. The shift towards fully formal economic activities worries many inhabitants who are involved in informal exchanges. Some feel that such 'qualitative' leap towards formalized trade would drastically lower their living standard due to taxation. For some others it means going out of business altogether.

Alongside the projected change on the *Marché aux Puces,* part of the residential area of the *Quartiers Nord*, also considered among the poorest in France, is to be transformed through the creation of an '*Ecocité*'. This ecologically compatible complex of residential buildings will replace the 'unhealthy' and otherwise poor houses that currently 'blemish' the landscape of the place and that will be demolished. The blueprint for the new neighbourhood includes the latest

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[8] See for example *Marseille, la baignade aux Pierres-Plates, 1er quart du XX siècle* in the Musée national des Arts et Traditions Populaires, Direction des Musées de France.

generation of apartments constructed with innovative materials, including photo-voltaic systems and solar panels. Instead of feeling happy about this total 'makeover', the current inhabitants are rather worried about rent hikes. Officially unemployed, most of them address their situation of official poverty by actively engaging in informal economic activities in the community. As indicated by Emile's words, this grants them a relative and temporary condition of comfort. With the 'normalisation' and the development of a new, 'cleaner' and undoubtedly more expensive way of life, most of them fear expulsion from the neighbourhood where they have always lived.

The idea of 'expulsion' was not foreign to the implementers of the project. According to the manager of *Marseille-Amenagement*, 'renewal entails a rise in the prices because of the enhancement of services. We do not want to exclude people who live in these neighbourhoods. They will be moved in nearby buildings. It is true that only people who can afford the increase in the rents will be able to enjoy *this* accommodation'[9]. Nonetheless, grassroots local committees such as *Comités de Quartier* organized to protect the inhabitants from the effects of the renewal process. They demanded from the authorities a period of welfare deflation as a measure deigned to ease the burden of these changes. To date, it seems that the measures indicated in these requests and recommendations have not been implemented. Instead, a mixed public-private system of investments is favoured in order to bear the high costs of the whole operation[10]. However, I note, *Les Crottes*, the poorest part of the neighbourhood, is not included within the ZAC system (*Zones d'aménagement concerté*) and will not be affected by the project until 2020.

Changing deities? Adhesion, Resistance and Attachment

The project of *urban regeneration*, driven by the alliance of the State with the local public institutions[11], introduced new values and *genii* into the urban space. Legality, ecology and order were the new values, while the old ones were defined by solidarity, proximity and a sense of informality. These new values were encouraged by international and European protocols, and were enmeshed in state decrees and formalized in laws. They disqualified the old values that were embedded in the customs of the people who lived in the areas under transformation. The new hierarchy of values is instrumentally used by the public institutions to legitimize change as a 'necessity' of globalization and modernity. The idea of change embedded in this new set of values was approached in different ways by the city inhabitants, who share rather conflicting perspectives in relation to the renewal process. The ethnography suggests that the difference in perspectives seems to be not only a product of the plurality of value systems that urban life encapsulates, but to be triggered also by the different values engendered by the symbolic and strategic negotiations in which people engage in the urban space. The categories discussed below highlight the main conflicting positions of the inhabitants of Marseille on the regeneration and renewal of their city.

The first category includes the inhabitants who share a sense of commitment to change.

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[9] Quoted by Erwan Blanchard in *La Marseillaise*, 15 May 2001 (http://boulesteix.blog.lemonde.fr/2008/02/04/citations-assassines-mais-dactualite/).

[10] As part of the ZAC system, they mix private and public interests in order to sustain the development of the project: for example, a 15-year rent was established with CCIMP for the creation of a 'Provence business skylounge*'* on the last two floors of Jean Nouvel's Marseillaise skyscraper in Arenc that has yet been constructed.

[11] The public budget for *Euroméditerranée* 2 is about 120 million, provided by the State (33.3 percent), the Municipality of Marseille (21.4 percent), the PACA Region (15.1 percent), the Departement of Bouches-du-Rhône (15.1 percent) and the Urban Community of Marseille Provence Métropole (15.1 percent). See *Euroméditerranée 2 à Marseille : extension du plus grand projet urbain d'Europe du Sud*, September 2012.

From their point of view, the new look of the city is just fine. They accepted the *international* place-branding that was strongly encouraged by the local public institutions. They felt that the city had an unexpressed potential which needed to be shown worldwide (*à faire connaître au monde entier*). Proud of the symbols of the 'new image', especially of the MuCEM and the Villa Méditerranée, these people shared the same belief as the public institutions involved in implementing the change, that Marseille needed to improve its image (*il faut ameliorer l'image de Marseille*). The way they talk about the city is very similar to the way the institutional city branding strategy represents it to potential tourists and investors. The 'positive' aspects of the city are highlighted whereas the 'negative' ones are avoided in the conversation. When talking to them, the observer has the feeling of being part of one of the video clips produced by *Espace Hyperion*. As a music studio located in Marseille, since 2013 *Espace* has produced a series of video clips aiming to show worldwide a fully positive image of the city. Musicians were brought together to create an original composition and a film clip was produced that involved inhabitants; it highlighted the relaxed life style, the sunshine and the naturalistic, artistic and cultural elements of the city. The images in these video clips are very close to those used by the *growth machine* as place-branding tools to attract tourists and businesses.

However, I observed, the regeneration project was not welcomed by everyone. Concerned with the input and consequences of change, part of the population explicitly opposed it. They did not express their opposition through a united movement but, rather, through groups of concerned citizens who contested specific issues in the Marseille's plan renewal. There were organized protests focusing on distributive justice and targeting the cost of the project. The organizers' concern was not the change as such; they questioned the allocation of important resources that could help to ease, or even solve current social problems, but were being used, instead, to restyle buildings and promote their image. For example, in 2013 concerned citizens criticized the expenditure of public money to stage ephemeral events, while problems related to healthcare, education and social housing remained unsolved. In other cases, the inhabitants of specific areas that were being renewed protested against the *touristification* of the area. The case of the Panier neighbourhood is one worth describing in detail.

When at the beginning of the 1990s, the Municipality of Marseille started to implement urban regeneration in the Panier area[12], the neighbourhood was meant to be transformed into a tourist hub and as such it was included in the touristic tours. The inhabitants who opposed this move reacted by throwing vegetables at the little sightseeing tourist trains that crossed the area and insulting the passengers. This event, described by Girel (2008), took place on 14 July 1994 and it was led by the artist Marc Boucherot, who tried to express in an artistic form the social awkwardness of this regeneration process. Tourism in Panier brought out a clash not only between legality and custom and between public and private bodies, but also between representations of the urban space: since the inhabitants considered the streets and squares as collectively shared spaces, they saw the tourists as foreigners to be kept out of their community. Today, twenty years after this event, the flows of tourists moving through the streets of Panier are seen as something that cannot be successfully opposed, and as a source of income. As the presence of tourism in the area became stronger, the protests lost momentum and the inhabitants channelled their energies into various ways of exploiting the economic potential generated by the tourists. They opened boutiques and souvenirs shops, rented their rooms to the   tourists and provided other services in order to make more agreeable their stay in the neighbourhood.

So, in the case of the Panier neighbourhood, at first the inhabitants felt that because of

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[12] This process started with the first 'Urban pilot project', financed by the EU in 1990-1995.

tourism they lost some privileges, but they quickly found a way to negotiate and compensate their loss benefiting from the economy generated by tourism. However, in some cases, as in *Les Crottes* quartier, the situation was more conflictual as the renewal project developed under the *Euroméditerranée* framework was received as a form of expulsion and strongly opposed by the local population. Most inhabitants felt that they were forced to move out of the area due to the rise in living costs and rents. Resistance, as in the case of the Panier area took the form of an explicit protest, expressed in demonstrations, fliers, stickers and graffiti. The *Euroméditerranée* project managers proposed to involve the local community in public hearings and participatory actions. However, in the local people's view these meetings were more explanatory sessions than proper and sincere consultations aiming to listen to their views and include them in the plans for the development of the area. Believing that the State had undermined their right to dwell in the area, they lost confidence in their local officials, who, they felt, would not defend them in this matter[13]. They saw the *Euroméditerranée* project as an invader (*envahisseur*) that must be fought off. The struggle took place on a spatial basis under the motto *Euroméditerranée go away* (*Euroméditerranée dégage*). For some people, changing deities meant to be expelled from their homes.

Another kind of response to change developed by the inhabitants of Marseille is underlined by a lack of recognition of the transformation, as if everything was the same. This attitude was not expressed publicly; rather, it surfaced in everyday practices. Such instances are particularly interesting because they show how the status and meaning of a given practice can change without altering the form of the practice itself: the 'normalization' (Foucault 1975) process of the areas within the *Euroméditerranée* framework, aimed to develop a 'new image' of the city, explicitly set forth the illegitimacy of the traditional local use of public space. During and after the intervention, the practices by which the inhabitants appropriated public areas for specific uses were overtly stressed under the rules implementing the new image. Practices such as occupying public areas with chairs and tables, selling food without a license or swimming in the sea, which seemed to be allowed by the invisibility and the distance of the existing laws, are now explicitly banned. In these public areas — a world which appeared to be driven by different and very local rules, governed by their specific *genius* — notice boards and signs citing rules embedded in French law now alert people not to engage in such activities. Nonetheless, these practices are considered by a large part of the population to encapsulate the true character of the city. Many interviewees have listed these social practices among the reasons why they love living in Marseille. Emile explained, 'It is a Southern city and this means that you do not live here in the same way you live in Avignon or Paris because here people do not hurry to go to work, do not hurry to come back home. Here people just like to spend their time together and to enjoy (*faire la fête*) and that is why people who are searching for a job go to the North and join a company, people who just want to enjoy their lives stay here, even if you cannot easily find a job, but you always find a way to sort out your life (*t'en sortir*)'. Paradoxically, they claim this informality to be an element of their quality of life, while there is something missing in the better quality of life that *Euroméditerranée* wants to achieve for the place. Others, who used to look at Marseille and France as two distinct worlds, regarded these practices as an embodiment of the 'Mediterranean spirit to the city' and wondered how they could be banned by a project that paradoxically takes

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[13] Local administrators often agreed with the projects of expulsion. For example, in 2003 the town planning councillor, Claude Vallette stated in *Le Figaro* that in Marseille 'We need people who can produce wealth. We should get rid of half of our population. The heart of the city is worthy of someone else' (Eric Zemmour, *Le Figaro*, 18 November 2003).

the Mediterranean Sea as the main symbolic and cultural point of reference.

The field material suggest that regardless of the new operating rules the attachment of the inhabitants of Marseille to a peculiar conception and use of the urban space continues to find expression in their daily practices. It is worth noting that the new supposed *genius locus* failed to suppress them; instead it somehow negotiated their existence by tolerating them in the landscape of the new image of the city. For example, regardless of the big sign that clearly prohibits diving and swimming at the J4 dock area, the guards patrolling the area do not usually rebuke those who swim there unless they interfere with the nautical traffic. Similarly, even though the inhabitants were informed through public notices that selling food was forbidden without a specific workplace hygiene certificate and restaurateur qualification, during the Festival of Panier (*Fête du Panier*) in 2013, no fines where issued to the unauthorized food stands. This tolerance is a basic form of negotiated permissibility that can be also regarded as a mechanism of recognition by the authorities of people's attachment to a customary use of public space that works as well as a means to accommodate such practices within the new image of Marseille.

Here, the resistance to change is not explicit but implicit and it is embedded in the customary use of space which the new city ethos specifically forbids publicly. The ethnography suggests that sometimes people purposely resort to the customary use of space as a mechanism to challenge the new rules and the authority of those who imposed them, while at other times the practice takes place by force of habit. The articulation of old practices, particularly regarding the use of space, in the new context produced by the *Euroméditerranée* project of Marseille can be regarded both as an expression of resistance to new *genius locus* and as a form of hybridization of it.

Conclusions

In this article I have explored the first phase of reaction to the change promoted in Marseille by the *growth machine* through the *Euroméditerranée* project and the European Capital of Culture. My main aim was to offer an overview of the articulated forms of empowerment and endorsement involved in the process of changing the image of a city, such as Marseille. The ethos of the new Marseille proposed and implemented by several public institutions, led by the State and pursued through the ephemeral actions envisaged by *Euroméditerranée* project of urban regeneration and European Capital of Culture, was contested and it generated different reactions among local people. The inhabitants not only showed their disagreement by protesting, but persisted in using the spaces as they conceived them. In the process, they made explicit their attachment to the places which were being transformed as to make Marseille more attractive for investment and tourism. The inhabitants exercised their right to *use* the urban space not as projected by the institutions but as they *frame* it. The case studies that I have discussed show that every form of governance of the urban space (by the State, the local institutions, the private sector or the media) is likely to having to be negotiated with the symbolic *attachment* people have to places. Thus, while the symbolic order encapsulated by places in the urban settings produces behavioural rules and relational codes for their users, their meaning, which is articulated in the representation of a given place and the ways in which it is used, demands negotiation among the agencies that compete in defining it. Therefore, when we speak about 'images' of the city, we need to recognize the relevant contexts of power, whether these images are the results of operations of urban marketing that brand and exploit cities as *mediascapes*

(Appadurai 1990) to influence people's imagined world or emerge from people's customary spatial practices that embody their resistance to rules and regulations imposed by the authorities on the symbolic order. Failure to do so would impair our understanding of urban life and space.

In the case of Marseille, we have seen that the pretence to change 'the' image of the city through a top-down action involving the introduction of new symbols was confronted with the actions of a variety of players, whose cognitive representations of the place could not be easily erased or replaced. The explicit and implicit forms of resistance do not tell us only something about the collision between conflicting views and value systems regarding the nature of space usage, they also show how a negotiated representation of urban space emerges while these conflicting perspectives are negotiated in a coherent frame. Therefore, customary forms of behaviour and activities that are regarded by the public authorities of Marseille as no longer permissible in the public space, are in fact tolerated as long as they become useful for the new image of the city. Such activities not only express an implicit form of resistance by the inhabitants, who claim the right to use the urban space in a way that is meaningful to them, they also contribute to giving consistency to the new image tailored by the authorities while retaining the *picturesque* character and Mediterranean flavour of the city. Moreover, as the case of the Panier neighbourhood suggests, the new image of the city proposed by the institutions can be appropriated and transformed into fruitful practices by the inhabitants who once explicitly opposed it.

Changing the *genius locus* of a place, is neither easy nor free of consequences, especially when it is articulated through asymmetrical relations. As the case that I have discussed shows, regardless of their legality, changes imposed by institutional powers that seriously affect people's everyday practices of space are subject to being morally challenged, particularly when those affected by them feel powerless and see them as unjust. If change cannot be avoided, it should still be studied and treated as a social issue, regardless of the difference between formal legality, substantive ethics and subjective morality. In short, the social practices about urban space that have developed during the decade of urban regeneration in Marseille tell us a great deal not only about people's continuous *struggle for recognition* (Taylor 1992), but also about how space, especially when it is 'sacralised' by social practices, is inevitably a matter of justice.

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