

Tactics of Altered Consumption: Young People's Drinking Choices in the Italian Movida

*Franca Beccaria, Sara Rolando, Enrico Petrilli, Luigi
Arcieri*

How to cite

Beccaria, F., Rolando, S., Petrilli, E., Arcieri, L. (2022). Tactics of Altered Consumption: Young People's Drinking Choices in the Italian Movida. [Italian Sociological Review, 12 (1), 65-85]
Retrieved from [<http://dx.doi.org/10.13136/isr.v12i1.519>]

[DOI: 10.13136/isr.v12i1.519]

1. Author information

Franca Beccaria

Eclectica, Institute for research and training, Torino, Italy

Sara Rolando

Eclectica, Institute for research and training, Torino, Italy

Enrico Petrilli

Department of Sociology and Social Research, University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy

Luigi Arcieri

ASL Città di Torino (Local Health Service), Italy

2. Author e-mail address

Franca Beccaria

E-mail: beccaria@eclectica.it

Sara Rolando

E-mail: rolando@eclectica.it

Enrico Petrilli

E-mail: enrico.petrilli@unimib.it

Luigi Arcieri

E-mail: luigi.arcieri@aslcitytorino.it

3. Article accepted for publication

Date: October 2021

Additional information about

Italian Sociological Review

can be found at:

[About ISR-Editorial Board-Manuscript submission](#)

*Tactics of Altered Consumption: Young People's Drinking Choices in the Italian Movida*¹

Franca Beccaria*, Sara Rolando*, Enrico Petrilli**, Luigi Arcieri***

Corresponding author:
Enrico Petrilli
E-mail: enrico.petrilli@unimib.it

Abstract

Urban nightlife is often depicted as a homogeneous category dominated by the entertainment industry and characterised by at risk drinking practices. Taking on a more critical perspective, which recognises the heterogeneity of the physical and social settings as well as how nightgoers exercise their agency to manipulate and shape products and spaces defined by the consumeristic economic order, the paper aims to 1) explore the physical and social settings of two districts of Torino (North Italy) characterised by an intense nightlife, and 2) understand young people's tactics with regard to alcohol consumption. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach including non-participant observation (40 hours) and face-to-face interviews (No. 22). Results show that youth drinking in an urban nightlife setting is a 'tactical operation' that concerns both the choice of what, how and where to consume and how to reduce potential risks. Indeed, young people embrace the possibilities offered by the night districts to achieve their goals (mainly to socialize and have fun) while limiting negative outcomes by adopting self-regulation and harm reduction practices.

Keywords: alcohol, nightlife, De Certeau, harm reduction.

¹ Franca Beccaria directed the research design and produced a first draft of the paper which she presented during an international thematic conference. Enrico Petrilli and Sara Rolando engaged also in designing the research instruments and data collection and analysis, gave a substantial contribution in the subsequent process of refining and improving the article in its actual form. In particular, Enrico Petrilli contributed to frame the theory, while Sara Rolando to select and interpret data. Gigi Arcieri contributed to design the research, bringing his professional knowledge on harm reduction interventions.

* Eclectica, Institute for research and training, Torino, Italy.

** Department of Sociology and Social Research, University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy.

*** ASL Città di Torino (Local Health Service), Italy.

1. Introduction

Since the eighties consumption behaviours have entered the sociological field of interest for both cultural and political reasons. On the one hand, this was a result of the cultural revolution of the sixties and the spread of youth subcultures of the seventies. On the other hand, neo-liberalism has extended the instrumental rationality based on economic calculation to a growing number of life areas (Wiedenhof, 2016). The works of De Certeau (1984) and Maffesoli (1996) have marked a turning point in consumption theory by considering consumers as active and reflexive actors, and consumptions as results of individual choices rather than of manipulation processes operated by marketing and mass media (Grown, Warde, 2011; Wiedenhof, 2016). In this context, leisure time is no longer simply considered as a second order time, opposed to working time in which recreational spaces are functional and dependent on wider social needs. It has become a time for oneself, in which to fulfil the need for authenticity, uniqueness, recognition, autonomy and identity (Bramham, Wagg 2010; Lo Verde, 2011).

Since the nineties alcohol and drug research has been influenced by sociology of consumption, so that getting high and having nights out have been investigated under the lens of consumption practices beyond the mainstream of epidemiological studies on psychoactive substances. A line of research set up in UK describes a new culture in which legal and illegal drug consumptions are part of planned and structured activity embodied in night-time and weekends. Within this framework, the “normalization” hypothesis has taken hold, suggestive of the growing social acceptance in Western society of drug consumption and heavy drinking, that are lesser perceived as deviant behaviours (Aldridge et al., 2013; Measham, Shiner 2009). New concepts have been developed to describe the nightlife attendees’ attitude, such as “controlled loss of control” (Measham, 2002: 349), which refers to the search for pleasure through a rational calculation of costs and benefits, and “work hard, play hard equilibrium” (Parker 2003: 142), namely a search for the balance between work and enjoyments, where the psychotropic excesses of the weekend serve to soothe the stress of working days

In Italy the nightlife setting is commonly called ‘movida’, a Spanish-derived term that describes a social environment where large informal groups of all ages move around bars, restaurants and clubs, or simply stand in streets or squares while chatting and drinking (Aresi, Marta, 2016). As already happened in other countries, this search for enjoyment and social relations does not find much space in the public debate, while the media attention is focused on the risks and excesses caused by night-time economy, such as binge drinking, noise, violence and vandalism with the consequent request of social control that underpinned

modern urbanity (Jayne et al., 2006). The moral panic about the “«alcoholisation» of urban night-life” (Van Liempt et al., 2015, 413), where young people are labelled as problematic drinkers unable to control their own drinking and prone to risks (Cricher, 2008), is visible also in Italy, included Turin, where newspapers talked about “*movida armata*” (armed movida), with reference to fights between nightlife attenders and residents (La Repubblica, 2014¹), or “*malamovida*” (evil-movida) (La Stampa, 2018²), and published alarmist articles entitled “*Movida, a war that does not find solutions*” (La Stampa, 2012³). Urged by the public opinion, since 2008 many municipalities have introduced local ordinances to reduce negative consequences of public drinking, e.g. limiting hours and places for the sale of alcohol.

No doubt that alcohol and drug consumption is higher among nightlife-goers compared to the general population (Measham, Moore, 2009), but this general view should not underestimate two important points. First, as argued by Jayne and colleagues (2006) nightlife setting is not a homogeneous category, and there is a need to develop a more nuanced understanding of the social drinking practices in urban spaces, avoiding oversimplification as in standardised views. Physical and social settings play a relevant role, as they influence behaviours and risks by setting up spaces, norms and values that shape meanings linked to alcohol and drugs and which consumption styles are accepted or not (Aresi and Marta 2016; Hughes et al., 2011). Second, the majority of consumers in leisure time contexts are socially integrated people in stable economical situations (Measham, Moore, 2009; Beccaria et al., 2015). Therefore, they can be defined as “non-problematic consumers” able to apply self-control strategies in order to keep their alcohol and drug consumptions compatible with work and social engagements and to reduce health risks (Parker, 1997; Moore et al., 2011; Cruz, 2015). Indeed, for most of people leading a socially integrated and meaningful life is an important motivation to limit their psychoactive substances consumption (Decorte, Muys, 2010).

Nevertheless, the nightlife attendees are often described also by scholars from political-economy and medical sciences as subject to the influence of the entertainment industry, as unable to make independent choices about drinking

¹ La Repubblica (2014) Le folli notti della movida italiana https://inchieste.repubblica.it/it/repubblica/rep-it/2014/07/10/news/la_movida_della_discordia-91218876/

² La Stampa (2018) Dal primo luglio partono le nuove regole contro la “malamovida” <https://www.lastampa.it/2018/06/25/cronaca/dal-primo-luglio-partono-le-nuove-regole-contro-la-malamovida-u70JPutN9Za8Rt5UiQLEWJ/pagina.html>

³ La Stampa (2012a) Movida, una guerra che non trova soluzioni <http://www.lastampa.it/2012/07/15/cronaca/movida-una-guerra-che-non-trova-soluzioni-rOUZtjEDYq0iej2Mmt6R5K/pagina.html>

and prone to risk (Jayne et al., 2006). For instance, to Hollands and Chatterton (2003, 380) nightlife “is increasingly packaged as something which happens to people, rather than something which people participate in or shape”. These kinds of interpretation reproduce the passivist perspective criticized by consumption theorists mentioned above, among which De Certeau (1984: xii). He developed the concept of tactics to explore the creativity of everyday consumer practices or, to put it another way, the ways in which “everyday life invents itself by *poaching* in countless ways on the property of others”. To him “tactic is an art of the weak” (De Certeau, 1984: 35) because it takes place inside the gaps of imposed set of rules, in “the grid of «discipline»” (De Certeau, 1984: xiv). Therefore, tactic is a subversion of a normative and ordered logic, manifested through manipulative “ways of using” (De Certeau, 1984: 30) products and spaces defined by the consumeristic economic order.

Taking into account the aforementioned considerations about nightlife settings and night-goers as well as De Certeau’s tactic thinking, this paper aims at 1) exploring the physical and social settings of two districts of Torino (North Italy) characterised by an intense nightlife, and 2) understanding young people’s tactics with regards to their alcohol consumption. Alcohol use is in fact a central practice in the movida context, and, when compared to the more studied English-speaking-countries, some peculiarities are expected to be found. Although an international globalization of youth alcohol consumption has been observed (Järvinen, Room, 2007), also boosted by the night-economy, the Italian context seems to maintain some characteristics related to the traditional non-intoxication oriented drinking culture (Allamani et al., 2010; Beccaria et al., 2015).

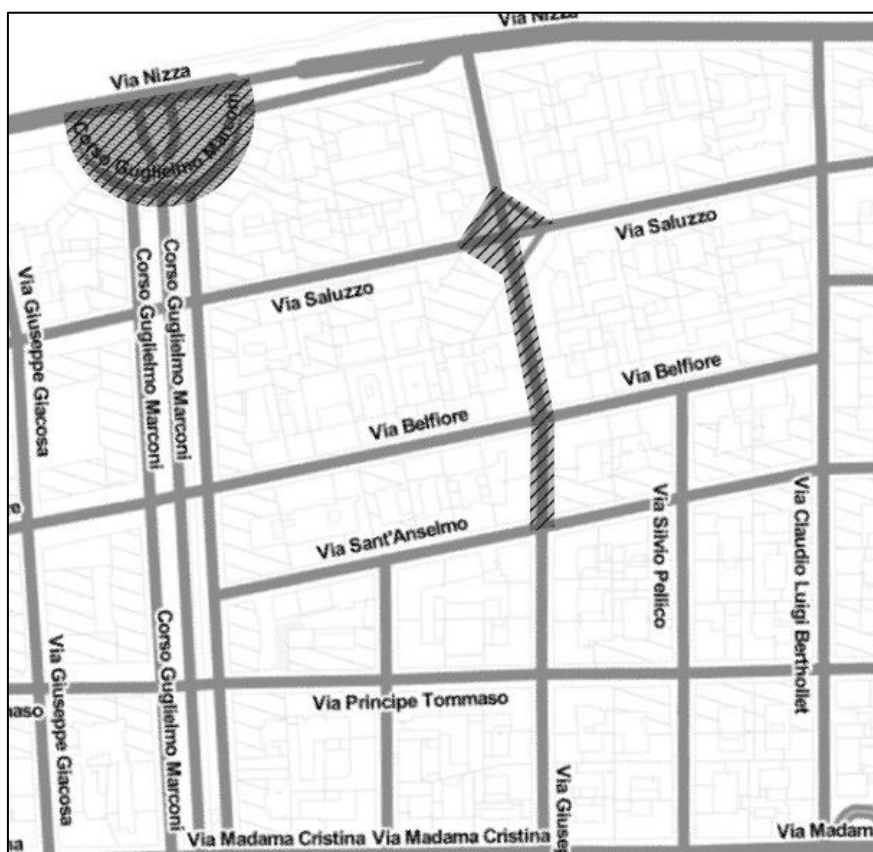
2. Methods

The study is part of a larger research exploring substance use and risks in urban contexts of leisure time aimed at providing useful information in order to improve harm reduction interventions. The whole research process was carried out in synergy with the professionals of the Local Addiction Services (ASL Città di Torino) who participated in the definition of research tools and data collection. A mixed-methods approach was applied including non-participant observation and face-to-face interviews in order to deepen insights into the life world of young people who regularly attend the nightlife districts. The study targets places where the highest concentration of nightlife is currently observed. Two popular districts were chosen: Vanchiglia and San Salvario.

The observations were done between June and July 2018 in the areas represented in figures 1 and 2, and consisted in a full immersion in the observed

social context keeping notes in a systematic way. The very crowded context and the young age of the researchers ensured that they would not be perceived as such by participants. An observational grid was filled at the end of the night or the day after where the observers were required to report field notes about contexts, persons and groups, use of space, communication, practices, alcohol and other drug consumption and risks. In each district observations were made on two occasions, carried out separately by two observers. Each observation lasted approximately from 10:00 pm to 03:00 am, so a total of about 40 hours of observation were carried out.

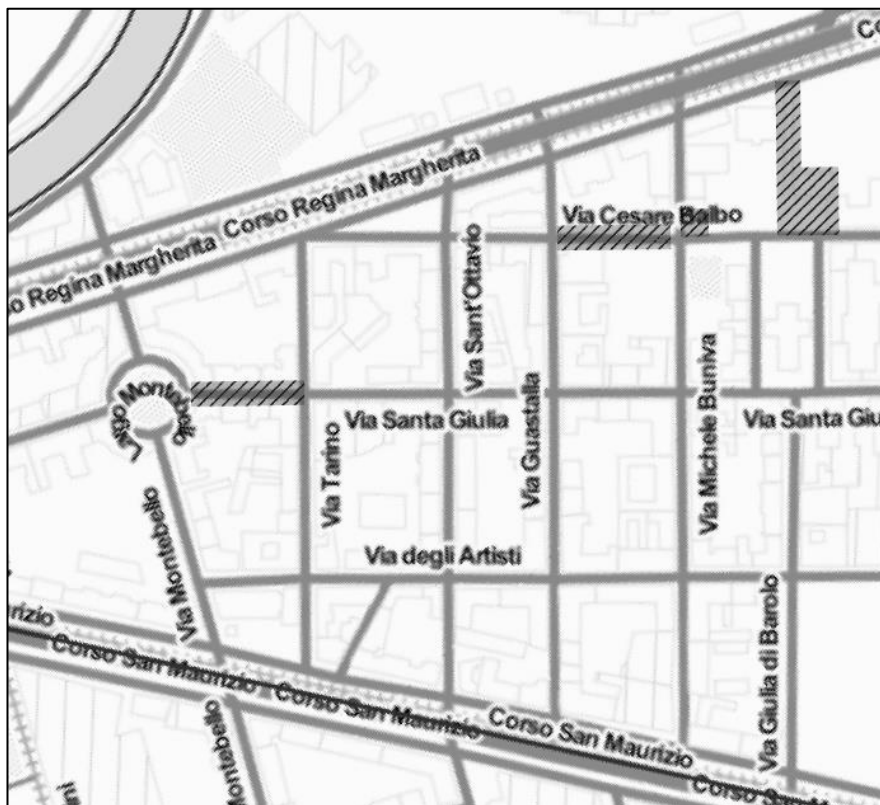
FIGURE 1. *San Salvario's observation places.*



22 face-to-face interviews were completed by 4 young harm reduction workers, specially trained by senior researchers about how to approach potential interviewees and conduct the interview applying a narrative approach, i.e.

enhancing the interviewee's point of view by promoting a spontaneous narrative, free to follow his own logic of thought (Jovchelovitch, Bauer, 2000). Candidates for the interview were young people approached by the interviewees in the 'movida' context who declared to regularly attend one of the two nightlife districts (at least 2-3 times a month). It is a "convenience sample" (Clark, 2017) drawn from the participants to the nightlife with some characteristics defined by the research group: age range between 16 to 25, both male and female, with different educational and/or work profiles.

FIGURE 2. *Vanchiglia's observation places.*



Interviews were conducted between June and October 2018 and transcribed verbatim⁴. Semi-structured guidelines were used including the

⁴ Quotations in the text report the interview number, the district (SANSA=San Salvario; VANCH=Vanchiglia), gender and age.

following main topics: their vision about the context and why they choose it, personal and others' observed consumption behaviours and, in the movida setting, risk perception and any bad experiences. All the interviewees signed an informed consent according to the national law requirements. Some interviews were done during the evening or night in quiet corners or bars, but most of them were done in agreed specific appointments in the days following the first contact, in public or private places. All the transcripts were coded and analysed with Atlas.ti adopting an abductive approach, that is, both data-driven and theory-driven (Timmermans, Tavory 2012).

TABLE 1. *Individual interviews sample.*

District	Gender		Age		Students	Status		
	M	F	16-18	19-25		Worker/Students	Employed	Unemployed
San Salvario	5	7	6	6	7	3	1	1
Vanchiglia	6	4	0	10	7	2	1	0
Total	11	11	6	16	14	5	2	1

3. Results

3.1 The 'movida' settings: a non-participant observation

As already pointed out by Aresi and Marta (2016) nightlife settings are not homogeneous, neither for type of attenders nor for consumption styles. However, Italian public debate about the so-called "malamovida" revolves around young people's alcohol consumption and their anti-social behaviours, leaving aside the complexity cited by Aresi and Marta (2016). To overcome this limitation, we present the main features observed during the ethnographic fieldwork by referring to specific places (stretches of streets, squares and corners) previously individuated by the research group based on their experience. Following we sum-up the results of observations focusing on characteristics of the attenders, main activities carried out, alcohol (and drugs) consumption styles and most evident potentially problematic issues.

3.1.1 First district: San Salvario

Largo Saluzzo is a small square, a wide crossroad with little pedestrian areas. This is the most crowded and noisy observed zone – so much that "noise is unbearable" after midnight, according to an observer, with a massive number

of broken glass bottles on the pavements and streets (the garbage baskets were already full at the beginning of the evening), characterised by the spread of a childish and light-hearted style of entertainment among attenders, which can be due both to the substances effect and to the general state of excitement that characterises the context. Even if the area is small, the observation permitted to identify three sub-zones that underpin some specificities.

The first zone is a large churchyard, which occupies the only one corner of the square without pubs or bars. The stairways of the big church hosted young people who seemingly did not want or cannot spend money in pubs or clubs. This is the only place in the district where different groups of immigrants could be seen socializing, as well as young alternative (punk, ravers) Italian groups. With respect to alcohol use, this area seems to be the most potentially problematic among those observed: drinking styles were characterized by heavy drinking and by mixing different alcoholic beverages or beverages and drugs. At the end of the night observers often spotted “a remarkable expanse of vomit”. Illegal drug consumption, mainly of hashish and marijuana, was widespread and manifest, as well as dealing of these drugs probably due to the lack of off- and on-premises nearby.

The second zone is a corner that includes a cocktail bar and a bakery that sells also alcoholic drinks. Groups of younger people (around 20), foreign tourists and international students with branded clothes gathered in front of these two venues. Differences were observed between the bar customers and those freely sitting in the front of the on-premise establishment: the first drank mostly cocktail, while the latter take-away beer and wine. A general excitement was perceivable, one observer describes it as “a crazy mess” and cites the case of “a guy who shouts that he’s drunk and swears, jokingly slapping one of his friends”. Drinking consequences were observable especially among young males, some of which were sick (e.g. vomiting alongside the square).

The third zone is another corner, in front of a lounge bar and restaurant, with a much more mixed population compared to the rest of the square. Next to young people, not easily identifiable with a specific style, more adult customers were sitting at the restaurant tables or on benches. These adults have a “tacky” and “somewhat vulgar” style, according to the observers, when compared to the next area patrons. In the late evening new people arrived, younger (16 and up) and more interested in drinking. They brought different types of alcoholic drinks (beer, wine, vodka, and other spirits) to get drunk, and shared sitting on the floor, like in a “alcoholic picnic”. They easily socialised with strangers. Some people were rolling joints that they passed around, but drug consumption seemed to be less abundant than in the first zone.

Another area in *San Salvario* is a stretch of road between *Sant’Anselmo street* and *Largo Saluzzo*. This area showed the highest concentration of off- and on-

premises observed in both districts. Accordingly, attenders were very different in terms of age and style, and they were not only young people, but also adults and families. Drinking styles were rather different between restaurants and bars. In restaurants a convivial drinking style prevailed, with wine or beer slowly drunk while eating, while in bars cocktails were the favourite beverages. After midnight the effects of alcohol were visible: customers became noisier, some were staggering in the middle of the street. Nevertheless, no alcohol-related harms and behaviour that could be considered risky were observed. The risk of accidents seemed actually to be the main problem in this zone, since people in the street seemed not even conscious of motorbikes and cars, like they were in a pedestrian area. The second observed problem was the noise, not due to shouting or music as in other areas, but mainly to the huge number of people simply moving and talking: "people do not shout, they simply chat, but the whole is very troublesome".

At the margin of the district, *largo Marconi* seemed a place for young people not liking chaos, who seek "an intimate dimension with their group and are not interested in socializing with strangers". The widening of the road close to the underground station offers places to sit with friends in a more intimate situation. Groups were made by young people (around 18), among which some could be defined as 'alternative' but less flashy than those observed in front of the church, while others showed a 'casual style'. Drinks and joints were consumed in a quiet way, "it's not a voracious, nonstop use". Also, here the main risk seemed to be accidents for pedestrians who did not seem to care about cars and motorbikes.

3.1.2 Second district: *Vanchiglia*

The largest observed zone was the centre of Santa Giulia square, where groups of university students seemingly aged 20-25 sit. They showed either an 'alternative' style, but tending to 'casual', that is, not very flashy and extravagant. During the evening the number of people grew, and the atmosphere became more and more cheerful. This was the most festive observed spot in Vanchiglia where people showed a desire for socializing, groups were open with a lot of exchanges also among those who did not seem to know each other. It was also the place in both districts where the music had the highest relevance; some people brought a loudspeaker, others were dancing and others playing the guitar. This aspect combined with the high concentration of people made this place among the noisiest observed. Many people drank low-cost drinks bought in takeaway shops in a picnic way, sitting in the middle of the square or standing at the border. Many of them appeared stoned and stumbled, in a happy atmosphere, while someone was in a semi-conscious state, after vomiting. Drug dealing activities were also observed. Drug dealers were mainly young Africans,

who stood most of the night at the border of the square asking people how they were and if they were looking for ‘something’. This was also the zone of the district where the cannabis consumption was more spread and visible, because according to one observer: “confusion and crowds works as a shield”.

Another zone was located in the same square around a bar whose clients seemed older than those standing in the square, apparently 35-40 year-old, but with the same “alternative-casual” style. Groups were heterogeneous in terms of age, gender and consumption styles and gave the impression to be habitués. The main activity was not drinking but talking and meeting people. Drinking was slow and drinks were not at the centre of the scene, “people left their drink on the table while chatting and sipping it every so often”. Unlike other premises, this bar had a security guard, even if his main activity seemed to be to collect plastic glasses thrown away by clients. The main observed problem was the noise due to the huge number of clients and the high music volume.

The near *Giulia di Barolo street* was divided into two stretches. The first was in front of two restaurants, where customers’ average age appeared over 30 years, and there were also parents with children who played around the outdoor terraces. The dominant consumption style was characterised by prolonged dinners, accompanied and followed by drinking and talking at the table long after the end of eating. During dinner people drank mainly beer and wine, and digestives (herbal liqueurs) after dinner Cocktails were rare. This was also a very noisy zone, due to the huge number of passers-by involved in what is described as “a continuous flow, a real procession”. The second stretch was in front of two other premises. Customers wore either casual or posh clothes, showing in general a style less alternative than that observed in the square. Another peculiarity was that one of the two premises did service at the table. All kinds of drinks were consumed: beer, wine and cocktails. None alcohol-related problems were noticed among these venues’ clients, but stumbling passers-by were observed.

Not far from Santa Giulia square there is another observed zone: *Santa Giulia street*, between *Largo Montebello* and *Luigi Tarino* road, the second place for concentration of pubs and bars among the districts. The premises seemed to differ for type of clients and type of service but shared the customers’ average age (over 30 years) and a hipster style. Two bars seemed to be patronized by habitual customers who know each other and as a matter of fact “waiters and managers are more friendly” with their customers compared to other areas. The main risky factors observed in this zone were noise and possible accidents between pedestrians and drivers; but the situation was perceived as much less problematic compared to other zones. The drinking styles were seemingly more oriented toward conviviality than to get high.

Balbo street, a pedestrian street between *Guastalla street* and *Buniva street*, was described as a drug-dealing and gathering place. Young immigrants sold drugs (mainly marijuana) with a friendly approach, and the interaction between dealers and customers was affable. One observer was amazed because “despite the presence of drug dealers” the atmosphere was relaxed, with many families and old people walking in the street or sitting on the benches. The pedestrian street was also a place for lovers, small groups of Italian youth (under 25), and immigrants who met here to talk, listen to music, drink or eat take-away food. While immigrants drank only beer, it happened that Italians handled bottles of spirits. In general, alcohol consumption was moderate, but some drunk people were observed passing-by. With beer, hashish and marijuana were the most popular drugs, joints were smoked and shared outdoors, without any apparent concern for others.

Last place under observation was the corner between *Cesare Balbo street* and *Michele Buniva street*. The premise at the corner was a mix between a bar, a kebab, and an off-licence. The place was less classy and more spartan compared to the other on-premises of the district: chairs, tables and benches had different styles and they were placed in a mess. Customers, aged between 20 to 30, were ‘alternative’ as the young people observed in the churchyard of San Salvario district. This was the only premise in *Vanchiglia* in which interactions between young Italians and young immigrants, and clearly multi-ethnic groups were observed. They drank beer from bottles bought in the bar, but along the evening consumption of cocktails increased. In the outdoor terraces people openly rolled and smoked joints. This was one of the observed places where the effects of alcohol and drugs were more visible, with people talking heatedly, or arguing, while others were singing while hugging the music speakers.

3.2 The young people's voice: face-to-face interviews

In this section we summarise the main results of the individual interviews, focusing on young night-goers' point of view about the movida setting, its leisure and consumption practices and possible risks. Results from the two districts are not separated but differences are highlighted through the text.

According to the interviewees the main motive to attend the ‘movida’ is to socialise. The nightlife of the two districts represented for them a relevant point of reference to meet friends or to find new friends. Many interviewees told that what they particularly liked was going out without having a specific appointment, sure to meet some friends or acquaintances to talk with anyway. Young people expressed the need of *vis-à-vis* gatherings in public places, perceived as belonging to them, where they feel free to socialise, and this will

come first than that of consuming. Also, for this reason many young people preferred to stand outside of bars and pubs instead of consuming inside.

You know that if you go there, you find somebody that you know finally (INT_16_SANSA_F_19).

Interviewers described differences among the two districts mainly in relation of the age of attenders: younger in *San Salvario* compared to *Vanchiglia*, where goers were depicted mainly as university students. Many interviewees declared to have changed their habits over time, moving from the first district to the latter once grown up, that is, in many cases, when passing from the secondary school to the university. *San Salvario* was described as chaotic, crowded and noisy, with a higher number of venues (bar/pub/clubs) and a higher mixture of people who also come from the city suburbs, while *Vanchiglia* emerged as a more quiet and familiar place where regular visitors are mainly students or workers, often also living in the district.

It's a nice mix of wealth and poverty; on one side there is a place where if you don't spend 14 euros, you can't drink, [while] outside there is the guy who is injecting drug on the bench, dressed in rags [...] in the same block you see all different economic categories (INT_1_SANSA_M_22).

Accordingly, in the interviewees' view, the two districts would be also characterised by different drinking style, i.e. more oriented toward drunkenness in *San Salvario* where attenders are younger. The argument is that drunkenness occurs mainly among the youngest who have still to learn about their own limit and capacity to hold up alcohol, while after the age of 20 it gradually becomes less frequent and occurs occasionally, typically during special occasions like birthdays, graduation parties, and other celebrations.

Maybe in *San Salvario* there is more the idea to go there in order to get drunk and that's all. People who go to *San Salvario* are much younger and difficult to manage, in the sense they have a bad hangover, they do not hold well what they take. (INT_15_VANCH_F_22)

As shown by the following quotation, especially older interviewees maintained that they plan in advance how much to drink and are able to control their consumption, so that, if there are special evenings where they decide to get drunk, there are also evenings where alcohol consumption is very limited.

It depends on whether we went out for a reason, that could be a graduation party, or could be [the intention] "tonight we ruin ourselves and go home at

4-5”, “let’s go dancing”, or there are also the evenings when you decide “now I have a beer and a few words very quiet, and I go home at one o’clock”. (INT_4_VANCH_M_25).

According to the older interviewees, growing up would also change the reasons for drinking, from the will to experiment and to act like adults, to the desire to enhance the pleasure of being together and social performances. However, alongside “positive” motives to drink mentioned by interviewees also coping motives were cited, like the desire to forget problems and the need to vent the stress of daily constraints and worries related to work or study.

Maybe I have had a wrong day so I say ‘I do not want to think, I drink’, and for 2-3 hours I do not understand anything anymore. [...] a not passed exam, a girl, my parents: starting points can be actually many (INT_13_VANCH_M_21).

Apart from this age-related perceived distinction, also within the same district the ‘movida’ attenders were not described by interviewees as a homogeneous crowd. Some were regular customers of specific public premises, others preferred to drink in the square and, in order to spend less, to buy alcoholic beverages at the supermarket or in small nearby off-licences – the so called ‘bangla’ or ‘paki’⁵ – that sell alcoholic beverages at very low price.

There are those who take alcohol from home, but also those who buy a cocktail and then drink it in the square... in general my friends buy from bangla; maybe at home they have wine, but they do not have vodka to bring with them (INT_16_SANSA_F_19).

As illustrated by the following quotation, even within the same group of friends, drinking styles are not necessarily homogenous and the public space of the square offers the possibility to sit together with friends even though they have different tastes and pockets.

A friend of mine is used to say “Let’s sit here in the middle of the square, so that we are in a neutral zone: you want to take a Spritz, he takes some wine, while I take my bicycle and go to [off-licence], I take two beers and come back. It’s even cheaper. (INT_5_VANCH_M_23).

Thus, the square becomes the place where friends of the same group drink different alcoholic drink bought in different places. On-premises are chosen

⁵ Off-licenses owned by foreign people, in particular from Asia.

based on the bartenders' sympathy or skills, the quality of their alcoholic beverages, the type of customers (generally people look for similar age and style), the music tastes, or the presence of other kinds of entertainments (e.g. provision of ping-pong tables). Also alcohol marketing promotions can provide a reason to choose a specific venue.

If you are a university student you pay 5 euros and they give you two cocktails, [so] I go there and I take two [...]. Except that this thing cheats you a bit, since you don't want to be there with two glasses in your hands - because maybe you have to smoke or you have to say goodbye to someone - [so] you guzzle down the first glass in a second, then the other one maybe lasts a little longer, but the first one gives you a super hit. (INT_9_VANCH_F_22).

Young people's choice of alcoholic beverage is not only based on a cost evaluation; especially among over 20, also the search for quality can play a role in the choice of what drinking. It is not surprising that this argument was brought about the wine, the symbol beverage of the Italian traditional drinking culture.

Thanks to my father I got an education also on that [how to drink] - I would say exemplary for my age - for that I refuse to drink wine that is not good or in any case, even if they said that the bottle is the best in the world, I mean, I would never buy it at the off-premises. I know that beer anyway is what it is, but I would never buy [there] wine or spirits, only beer. (INT_13_VANCH_M_21).

The search for quality is one of multiple possible ways to avoid unwanted consequences of drinking, some of which equally get back to the tradition, such as not to drink alcohol on an empty stomach or not to drink spirits. In the interviewees' view cocktails are especially dangerous, since the taste of the other ingredients covers the taste of alcohol and makes the drinker to think that they are lighter than they are. Furthermore, interviewees appeared quite conscious about alcohol-related risks, especially those related to drinking and driving, indeed the most spread harm reduction practice which was mentioned and supported by all the interviewees was not to drink and drive.

Another often-mentioned harm reduction practice is to avoid using alcohol together with illegal drugs, which are considered easily available and used in both districts, while police controls are perceived as almost absent and impossible, especially in San Salvario since "there are so many people, that everyone allows himself to do what he wants where he wants" (INT_1_SANSA_M_22).

They are 2 on 100 people, all of them have something [some drugs]. If they pass, they pretend to see nothing, because you either do a raid or pretend to see nothing, because you know that 80% of people there have something they shouldn't have. (P 3: INT_16_SANSA_F_19).

According to interviewees mixing alcohol with other substances (cannabis and cocaine are the most quoted) frequently provokes unwanted consequences, specifically what they called “collapse” (a faint or a strong state of sleepiness when a person does not react to any external stimulus) or a state of paranoia. According to some interviewees these incidents are also due to the bad quality of drugs sold in the ‘movida’ places, which are suspected to have a low level of purity and/or being cut with bad substances; for this reason, despite the high level of accessibility, almost all respondents said they usually bring drugs, which they purchase from friends or trusted dealers, from home.

The attention towards quality concerns not only alcohol and drugs, but also food sold in certain venues of the ‘movida’ setting which is also told as unhealthy and a contributory cause of malaise experiences.

It's not that you drink stuff of great quality, so if you have taken chips from [shop's name], which taste of rotten oil, with strange sauces, then you drank a bottle of Keglevich and then you have smoked two joints of tire ... I mean, maybe if you had drunk some good things, smoked the grass grown at home, quiet, without strange stuff, and eaten a plate of pasta, maybe you wouldn't even feel bad. You eat disgusting, you drink disgusting, you smoke disgusting ... I mean, at some point it must happen, in my opinion it is a matter of general abuse. (INT_16_SANSA_F_19).

However, thanks to the spread of the above-mentioned harm reduction practices, including the informal regulation function exercised by the peer group, most of the episodes of malaise that were told by the interviewees in the two districts were resolved with the help of friends. This consists in reassuring the person who feels sick, supporting him/her while vomiting, accompanying him/her in a secluded and more peaceful place, making him/her drink water and basically wait for the bad moment to pass. Almost all the interviewees talk about the forms of mutual aid and their centrality and importance.

For example, a friend of mine was sick practically every time [...] she sat there and then collapsed, and in those situations there it has always been quite complicated to find a quiet place. It was always resolved perhaps by going to the Murazzi, we would lie down there and keep her company until she recovered, because it happened three or four times. (INT_10_SANSA_M_22).

4. Discussions

The non-participant observation combined with interviews shows the complexity and heterogeneity of the ‘movida’ in Torino, with its most frequented spots differentiated by consumers, offers and services, legal and illegal substances, problems and potential risks. If we look at the two nightlife districts differences were found with a more marked presence of very young people – often minors – in *San Salvario*, while university students seem to prefer *Vanchiglia*. In addition, the nightlife population in the first district is more heterogeneous in age and social background, with many people coming from suburbs. These differences can be linked to the fact that the nightlife in San Salvario started far earlier, around 2010, while more recent in Santa Giulia. Comparison among the two districts at a different stage of development of the night-time economy shows how the movida setting is subject to constant modification, and how the processes of gentrification – a process of neighbourhood colonisation due to a concentration of new middle classes (Atkinson, Bridge, 2004) – intertwines with changes in consumer choices. Due to its high accessibility (also for the presence of the underground station) and a higher number of off- and on-premises, San Salvario is no more considered an “alternative” place, but a place for mass fun. As a consequence, university students and hipsters are gradually abandoning it, in search of new lesser known and cool places.

Consistently, drinking styles seem to be slightly different among the two districts: more oriented towards drunkenness in *San Salvario*, more oriented to conviviality and gathering in *Vanchiglia*. These differences, explained by interviewees as a consequence of age, seem to confirm previous studies, arguing that in Italy after an experimental phase characterising adolescence, in which the search for drunkenness is typical, young people gradually tend to adopt less risky drinking style, limiting excesses to special occasions (Beccaria et al., 2015; Rolando, Beccaria, 2018).

San Salvario shows also more problems and risks, due to a sum of factors: the absence of pedestrians’ streets that forces a crowd of people standing in the streets to coexist with cars and motorbikes passing by; frequent quick-to-violence fun scenes; a lot of garbage on pavements and street since the beginning of the night. This district is more crowded, noisy and chaotic, pick-pocketing is not rare, as well as fights or aggressions. Contrarily, *Vanchiglia* was described as more quiet with many regulars, even though the music plays a major role, and loudspeakers disturb the residents. Here young people move more easily in and out of groups.

Despite differences, the two districts showed many common aspects: the coexistence, in limited territorial areas, of legal and illegal substances market;

areas almost only organised around alcoholic beverages sale and others where drinks and food are integrated (restaurants and street food). Then there are those (pedestrian and not) open spaces frequented mainly by young people, which are characterized by specific ways of being together (sitting around like in a picnic), consumptions (mixing and sharing drinks and drugs brought from home or bought in off-licences) and other entertainment practices (playing games and listening music). The latter zones well represent how night attendees develop tactics (De Certeau, 1984) that subvert the normative logic on the nightlife consumeristic economies and are able to take possession of public spaces using and shaping them according to their own purposes and tastes, which do not necessarily coincide – or are in contrast – with those of the formal offer. Indeed, these zones significantly differ from other places of the two districts that are more spatially disciplined and attended by more aged and wealthy consumers.

Likewise, our results show that drinking practices are much more nuanced and diversified than those depicted by media representations, which are only focused on the excesses, such as binge drinking and drunkenness. They show how, through the logic of the night-time economy is undoubtedly powerful in shaping consumer and leisure practices in the urban context, cultural practices are not determined by economics but intertwined with them (Latham, 2003), so that in urban social contexts and even within nightlife districts various and different drinking styles are observable (Jayne et al., 2006). Furthermore, the young attenders are aware of the pressure exerted by the consumer logic and able to safeguard a certain power of self-determination and choice. The interviewees' point of view well reflects the profile of the active and reflexive consumer that sociologists have scrutinised since the eighties (Grown, Warde, 2011; Wiedenhof, 2016), with alcohol (and drug) consumption conceive as a result of an instrumental thinking, an outcome of a rational calculation of cost and benefit (Measham, 2004).

About the cost, there is equally an awareness of risks linked to alcohol consumption so that many control practices – or tactics – are applied by night-goers to reduce harms (Valente et al., 2018). While formal norms – e.g. the sale of alcohol to minors – are easily circumvented or even ignored since this form of control is perceived as impossible in the crowd⁶; the traditional informal norms of the drinking culture seems to still play a central role also in this context. Some of these norms give practical advices (such us not to drink on an empty stomach, to choose beer or wine instead of spirits), while others reflect attitudes inherent to the collective nature of drinking (Rolando, Beccaria, 2018),

⁶ Opinion that was confirmed by the policemen in another part of the research (Rolando et al., 2019).

in which the socializing function of drinking takes a central role. On the one hand it encourages young people to drink, on the other hand it contributes to limit consumptions under the socially agreed threshold (Beccaria et al., 2015). Lastly, also some innovative elements of the new Italian wine culture, with its focus on knowledge and quality, seems to play a protective role even among young people (Beccaria, Rolando, 2016) and to contribute to resist the process of globalisation of youth drinking cultures (Järvinen, Room, 2007).

As to the benefits, the search for an altered state is a common behaviour, purposely tried as functional to the context and own goals, which are mainly to increase fun and joy of being together, to ease tensions related to everyday responsibility, to take distance from problems. With respect to the latter motives they do reflect those observed in other European contexts, and particularly the logic of time-out drinking styles (Measham, Brain, 2005), which can be seen either a consequence or a form of resistance to the logic of productivity and rationality required by the consumerism society (Petrilli, 2020).

5. Conclusion

By analysing two districts characterised by an intense nightlife we showed how the youth urban drinking is not simply a passive adaptation to the pressures of the night-time economy, but it is a ‘tactical operation’ that concerns both the choice of what, how and where to consume and how to reduce the risks related to the use of alcohol and drugs. Indeed, young people employ opportunities provided by the night districts to achieve their goals (mainly to socialize and have fun) while limiting the potential risks by adopting self-regulation and harm reduction practices.

Therefore, despite young night-goers are apparently marginalized due to their ages and their economic possibility, they are able to innovate and reinvent public spaces and cultural products available to them. This is De Certeau’s argument applied to the ‘movida’ environment: consumption is not mere passive process but entails a creative potential. Moreover, this sociality-driven alcohol consumption is able to transform social spaces itself: young people have brought ‘movida’ squares back to their original meaning, a place of meeting.

References

- Aldridge, J., Measham, F., Williams, L. (2013), *Illegal leisure Revisited: Changing Patterns of Alcohol and Drug Use in Adolescents and Young Adults*, London, Routledge.
- Allamani, A., Beccaria, F. Voller, F. (2010), ‘The Puzzle of Italian Drinking:

- Trends in Alcohol Consumption, Harms and Policy, *Nordic Studies on Alcohol and Drugs*, 27, 465-478.
- Aresi, G., Marta, E. (2016), Consumo di alcolici dei giovani italiani nei contesti del divertimento notturno, In G.B. Modonutti (Ed), *Fummo, eravamo, siamo e...saremo in grado di affiancare i giovani in un progetto di vita più salutare*, pp. 381-398, Trieste, Edizioni Goliardiche.
- Atkinson, R., Bridge, G. (2004), *Gentrification in a Global Context*, London, Routledge.
- Beccaria, F. (2010), *Alcohol and Generations: Changes in Style and Changing Styles in Italy and Finland*, Roma, Carocci.
- Beccaria, F., Petrilli, E., Rolando, S. (2015), Binge Drinking vs. Drunkenness. The Questionable Threshold of Excess for Young Italians, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 18(7), 823-838.
- Beccaria, F. Rolando, S. (2016), The More you Know, the Better you Drink: The New Drinking Culture in Italian Wine Production Areas, *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy*, 23, 293-301.
- Beccaria, F., Molinengo, G., Prina, F., Rolando, S. (2018), Young People, Alcohol and Norms: Italian Young People's Opinions and Attitudes towards Alcohol Regulation, *Young*, 27(4), 395-413.
- Bramham, P., Wagg, S. (2010), *The New Politics of Leisure and Pleasure*, Hampshire, Springer.
- Clark, R. (2017), Convenience Sample, In G. Ritzer (Ed), *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*.
- Critcher, C. (2008), Moral panics and newspaper coverage of binge drinking, In B. Franklin (Ed), *Pulling newspapers apart*, pp. 162-171, London, Routledge.
- Cruz, O.S. (2015), Nonproblematic Illegal Drug Use: Drug Use Management Strategies in a Portuguese Sample, *Journal of Drug Issues*, 45, 133-150.
- De Certeau, M. (1984), *The practice of everyday life*, Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Decorte, T., Muys, M. (2010), Tipping the Balance. A Longitudinal Study of Perceived 'pleasures' and 'pains' of Cocaine Use, In T. Decorte, J. Fountain (Eds), *Pleasure, Pain and Profit* (pp. 35-54), Lengerich, Pabst Wolfgang Science.
- Grown, J., Warde, A. (2011), *Ordinary Consumption*, London & New York, Routledge.
- Hollands, R., Chatterton, P. (2003), Producing Nightlife in the New Urban Entertainment Economy: Corporatization, Branding and Market Segmentation, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 27(2), 361-385.
- Hughes, K., Quigg, Z., Eckley, L., Bellis, M., Jones, L., Calafat, A., Kosir, M., Hasselt, N.V. (2011), Environmental Factors in Drinking Venues and Alcohol-related Harm: The Evidence Base for European Intervention,

- Addiction*, 106, 37-46.
- Järvinen, M., Room, R. (2007), *Youth Drinking Cultures: European Experiences*, Aldershot, Ashgate.
- Jayne, M., Holloway, S.L., Valentine, G. (2006), Drunk and Disorderly: Alcohol, Urban Life and Public Space, *Progress in human geography*, 30(4), 451-468.
- Jovchelovitch, S., Bauer, M.W. (2000), Narrative Interviewing, In M.W. Bauer, G. Gaskell (Eds) *Qualitative Researching with Text, Image and Sound*, pp. 57-74, Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Latham, A. (2003), Urbanity, Lifestyle and Making Sense of the New Urban Cultural Economy: Notes from Auckland, New Zealand, *Urban Studies*, 40(9), 1699–1724.
- Lo Verde, F. (2011), *Consumare/investire il tempo libero. Forme e pratiche del leisure time nella postmodernità*, Milano/Torino, Mondadori.
- Maffesoli, M. (1996), *The Time of the Tribes. The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society*, London, Sage.
- Measham, F. (2002), “Doing Gender” - “Doing Drugs”: Conceptualizing the Gendering of Drugs Cultures, *Contemporary Drug Problems*, 1, 335–373.
- Measham, F. (2004), The Decline of Ecstasy, the Rise of ‘Binge’ Drinking and the Persistence of Pleasure, *Probation Journal*, 51, 309–326.
- Measham, F., Moore, K. (2009), Repertoires of Distinction: Exploring Patterns of Weekend Polydrug Use within Local Leisure Scenes Across the English Night-Time Economy, *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 9, 437–464.
- Measham, F., Brain, K. (2005), ‘Binge’drinking, British Alcohol Policy and the New Culture of Intoxication, *Crime, media, culture*, 1(3), 262-283.
- Measham, F., Shiner, M. (2009), The Legacy of ‘Normalisation’: The Role of Classical and Contemporary Criminological Theory in Understanding Young People’s Drug Use, *International Journal of Drug Policy*, 20(6), 502-508.
- Moore, K., Measham, F., Østergaard, J., Fitzpatrick, C., Bhardwa, B. (2011), *Emerging Drug Trends in Lancashire: Focusing on Young Adults’ Alcohol and Drug Use*, Lancashire, Lancashire Drug and Alcohol Action Team.
- Parker, H. (1997), Adolescent drugs pathways in the 1990s, In J. Braggins (Ed), *Tackling Drugs Together: One Year On*, London, Institute for Study and Treatment of Delinquency.
- Parker, H. 2003, Pathology or Modernity? Rethinking Risk Factor Analyses of Young Drug Users, *Addiction Research & Theory*, 11, 141-144.
- Petrilli, E. (2020), *Notti tossiche. Socialità, droghe e musica elettronica per resistere attraverso il piacere*, Meltemi, Milano.
- Rolando, S., Törrönen, J., Beccaria, F. (2014), Boundaries between Adult and Youth Drinking as Expressed by Young People in Italy and Finland, *Young*, 22(3), 227-252.
- Rolando, S., Beccaria, F. (2018), Young People and Drinking in Italy: The Good

- Side of Familism, *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, 23, 93-107.
- Rolando, S., Petrilli, E., Beccaria, F. (2019), *Movida, consumi giovanili, interventi - Una ricerca in San Salvario e Vanchiglia* (report), Torino, ASL Città di Torino.
- Timmermans, S., Tavory, I. (2012), Theory Construction in Qualitative Research: From Grounded Theory to Abductive Analysis, *Sociological theory*, 30, 167-186.
- Valente, H., Pires, C.V., Carvalho, H. (2018), Nightlife as an Educational Setting: The Harm Reduction Perspective, In A. Eldridge & J. Nofre (Eds), *Exploring Nightlife: Space, Society and Governance*, pp. 75-89, London, Rowman and Littlefield.
- Van Liempt, I., Van Aalst, I., Schwanen, T. (2015), Introduction: Geographies of the urban night, *Urban Studies*, 52(3), 407-421.
- Wiedenhof, M.W. (2016), *Consumer Culture and Society*, Los Angeles, Sage.