The Urban Politics of Juventus’ New Football Stadium

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Introduction

The increased marketization of sports has favoured the construction of modern football stadia as multi-functional places, not only with sports grounds, but also with museums, shopping centres, cinemas, hotels, etc., encouraging new forms of consumption. Construction of new private sports stadia emerges as a topic of interest to urban politics scholars, for it involves power relations. Supporters laud the positive overall impacts to the city, including substantial savings for public finances and higher revenues for sports clubs (Bennett 2012), enhanced security for spectators and improved international attractiveness (Giulianotti and Robertson 2012). Opponents view new stadia as commercialized manifestations of global capital flows, crystallizing class divisions, separating the elite from the potentially unruly and conducting surveillance that may be perceived as intrusive on civil liberties (Frank and Steets 2010). American researchers have argued that the process of building private sports stadia with public money is more
suitable to plutocracy and oligarchy than to democracy (Sullivan 2001, Delaney and Eckstein 2003, deMause and Cagan 2008, Bennett 2012). European scholars emphasize the local social costs these projects impose in the form of congestion, vandalism, graffiti, noise and litter, that are common causes of concern for local residents (Bale 1993, Bale and Moen 1995, Churchman 1995, Jones 2001).

The aim of this article is to employ regime analysis, an American urban political theory, in order to unveil the political dimensions of a private football stadium project for Juventus FC in the city of Turin, Italy. Four facts have guided this aim. Firstly, there is an ongoing debate over the use of American politics theories in studying cross-national urban affairs, and that invites additional research. Secondly, while European scholars have used regime theory, their research is unrelated to sport, the single exception being the study of a symbolic sport project in the city of Sheffield (Henry and Paramio-Salcines 1999). Thirdly, this case study serves as a pilot for at least Italy and possibly other European countries, given recent trends in the demand for new football stadia. In Italy, the municipalities typically own football stadia, sometimes shared by two clubs. Most clubs participating in Serie A have announced plans either to renovate existing stadia or to build new ones in more convenient and profitable locations. Finally, the case under study has been the focus of social research, but not from the lens of US urban politics theories (Palvarini and Tosi 2013a, 2013b).

In the next sections, this article provides a brief review of regime theory with a discussion of the value of the ‘agency vs structure’ problem for understanding the theory’s cross-national application. This is followed by the research method employed in the analysis of the case and the detailed narratives underlying the urban politics dimensions of Juventus’ new football stadium project, before concluding.

**Regime Theory and Sports Stadia**

Urban Regime Theory (URT) has dominated American urban political theory, since Clarence Stone’s seminal work on Atlanta. Stone (1989, p. 6) defines urban regimes as “the informal arrangements by which public bodies and private interests function together in order to be able to make and carry out governing decisions”. Those governing decisions or public actions are not outcomes of hierarchical government structures but rather actions of coalitions of forces engaged in ‘governance’. One important element of urban regimes is their continuity over time. Stone (1989, p. 183) proposes that in Atlanta ‘one governing coalition...formed and held sway over its challengers for more than forty years’. Finally, regime governance is related to broad local economic development issues in the city.

Using Stone’s conceptualizations and employing a comparative analysis framework, Mossberger and Stoker (2001, p. 829) argue that urban regimes are coalitions that are based on informal networks and formal relationships and can be identified using the following four criteria:

- Partners drawn from government and nongovernmental sources, requiring but not limited to business participation;
- Collaboration based on social production - the need to bring together fragmented resources for the power to accomplish tasks;
- Identifiable policy agendas that can be related to the composition of the participants in the coalition;
• A longstanding pattern of cooperation rather than a temporary coalition.

6 In a much later work, Stone (2005, p. 329), proposes a set of similar criteria:

• An agenda to address a distinct set of problems;
• A governing coalition formed around the agenda, typically including both governmental and nongovernmental members;
• Resources for the pursuit of the agenda, brought to bear by members of the governing coalition; and, given the absence of a system of command,
• A scheme of cooperation through which the members of the governing coalition align their contribution to the task of governing.

7 While some differences appear to exist between the two criteria sets, e.g. a regime’s longevity and the identity of its nongovernmental members (see Van Ostaaijen 2010), it is now generally recognized that urban regime coalitions are not temporary, their nongovernmental partners are not limited to businesspersons, collaboration is based on social production, and policy agendas are identifiable.

8 More often than not, urban regimes include members that do not share the same ideology but support pro-growth policy agendas combining elements of corporatism and pluralism. Stone’s (1989) study on Atlanta makes abundant reference to opposition from various segments of the city’s society, summarized typically in (p. 38): To actually carry out a program required an ability to keep resources mobilized over a period of years in the face of considerable resistance. Urban renewal was a political process at heart, which attempted to disaggregate opposition while holding support together [bolds by author].

9 In a later work, Stone (2002) addresses the problem of local democracy as a key element of a regime’s policy agenda. For Stone, if only the elites and the rich can make claims on a strategic local agenda, then governance is not grounded on democratic representation. Such deficits imply that at least some portions of the local policy agenda may encounter social opposition at the project implementation stage.

10 URT has faced detractors on at least two counts. Firstly, it is too localistic, failing to account for inter-govermentality, i.e., the relationship between city governments and other scales of authority, such as state, regional and national governments. This criticism came out of studying regimes within a framework that incorporates the ‘agency vs structure’ problem. Savitch and Kantor (2002), among others, were specifically interested in how regimes bargained over local development, focusing on how politics and change was constrained by economics and how cities could work to secure inter-governmental support.

11 Stone feels comfortable with this criticism: Governing regimes are informal, hence negotiations can easily include state govt. Several Atlanta projects, including the Convention Center, are under the official auspices of the State of Georgia. The key connection is that state officials, such as the state’s governor see the economic health of the state tied up in how much Atlanta thrives (private communication, 21 June 2016).

12 Secondly, URT’s use for cross-country comparisons is under scrutiny. Scholars such as Davies (2002, 2003) and Wood (2004), among others, are critical about the value of US urban theories in explaining European urban affairs. Their main contention is that, in Europe, the material interdependence between political and economic elites is either weak or non-existent, preventing the creation of urban regimes as stable urban coalitions engaged in governance and that ‘social production’ is carried out by the state. Unlike them, Mossberger and Stoker (2001) suggested that URT has considerably facilitated the
analysis of urban politics beyond the formal institutions of government outside of North America.

European scholars have observed the emergence of urban regimes in Europe. John and Cole (1998), using a comparative analysis of urban politics in Leeds, UK and Lille, France conclude that non-institutional factors promoting regimes are local business ownership, business integration, large metropolitan context, and economic advantage or disadvantage. Studying London’s boroughs, Dowding et al (1999) propose that the regime concept becomes very useful when applied to evaluate the durability of political coalitions, the structuring of partnerships with the private sector or with the central government, the regime’s specific agenda and the effects of partisan divisions on the creation or maintenance of regimes. Urban regimes arise as immature, unintended and uncoordinated outcomes of localized crisis-management strategies (see Brenner 2009) or as well-organised informal coalitions that gain legitimacy through the inclusion of local authorities in leadership positions (see e.g. Holman’s 2007 UK study). Pinson’s (2012) study suggests that the traditional relationship between the French central state and local political actors is becoming inappropriate, giving way to the mode of governance suggested by URT. Finally, Blanco’s (2015) study of Barcelona shows that URT can help overcome the networks/neoliberalism dualism, by showing how different coalitions mobilise different sets of resources over time and in different policy arenas.

Researchers on sports stadia in the US, using URT, took their turn to raise the intergovernmentality issue. Bennett and Spirou (2006) question URT’s ability to explain the case of Chicago’s MLB stadium, because the local regime shifted the final decision-making to the state. Sapotichne and Smith (2012) further explore this view in their study of two new baseball stadiums, one in Chicago and another one in Seattle. They argue that, rather than simply placing structural limits on city officials, extra-urban institutions provide opportunities to local agents for advancing their policy goals, by showing how city-level actors sought extra-urban institutional support towards these projects. Studying the Chicago case, Smith (2010) proposes a triangular frame involving the city, the state and a special purpose authority, within which urban politics evolves. As he notes (p. 438): The intergovernmental triad approach, then, explains the sporadic entry of governors and other state actors onto the scene of urban politics for the purposes of securing cities’ economic health or solving large political disputes. This activity does not constitute membership in a regime, which as Stone (1989) instructs, is an informal cooperative arrangement that stays steady over long periods of time... expanding regime theory to include such state-level entry into local development coalitions would reflect what Mossberger and Stoker (2001) identify as parochialism within the regime literature.

Beyond the need to research the existence of urban regimes carefully, this article asks the additional question, “do extra-urban institutional structures play an important role in the formation and/or performance of regimes, whose agenda includes the building of new private sports facilities”? With respect to the United States, the answer to the first part of this question is positive, although not researched specifically. Stone himself (1989 p. 41) notes: The actions of ten or more official bodies had to be coordinated for urban renewal to proceed: the state government and the state voting public that approved the changes in the Georgia constitution and laws to allow urban renewal.

While the answer to the second part of the question appears to be negative – as already explained – European scholars have not dealt with the issue as of yet. The only known difference between the US and European extra-urban structures applying to sports is that
American leagues are exempt from antitrust laws and so they can form cartels controlling the entrance of new teams in a city (Sag et al 2013). Sometimes sport teams threaten to leave their cities unless they build new stadia for them. European leagues follow the promotion-and-relegation system, which allows free entry of teams to a sports league upon achievement, so the cartel problem is non-existent.

**Research Methods**

17 In presenting the politics of the Juventus new football stadium project, this paper follows the case-study approach, which is a predominant feature of urban research on sports stadia. It begins by highlighting the main features of the Italian extra-urban institutional structure as regards both city planning powers and the organisation of sport, including construction of new private football stadia. Material supplied by the known global law firm DLA Piper, Italy, as well as private communications with the firm’s staff assisted the analysis greatly. By its very nature, the case-study approach assumes a qualitative descriptive format with emphasis on exploration and content, thus offering flexibility and freedom to discovering issues as they arise in everyday political reality (Yin 2012).

18 The research, that lasted from 2014–2017, looked for visible fan forums or other organized internet websites in support or opposition to the project but found none and Juventus’ official website included only a list of the stadium’s stages of construction. Thus, a full netnographic approach (see Kozinets 2010) was not viable. However, searching through the city and region portals, using key words such as “Variante di Citta di Torino” (variants of the Turin city), revealed several key Turin city documents which were translated and properly analysed in narrating the case. Local academic scholars secured contact with key persons within and outside the city’s municipal administration. A semi-structured questionnaire was prepared for reference regarding:

- the process of licensing a new sports stadium;
- the steps followed by the Turin administration in granting permits and transferring land;
- who paid for the stadium’s construction costs,
- who else assisted Juventus how, and
- if there was any local opposition to the project.

19 Two municipal architects, the director of the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps (ICPA), the secretary of Pro Natura Torino (PNT), a former city commissioner responsible for managing the construction project of Stadio delle Alpi, a Polytechnic School graduate with a thesis on the stadium, and a notorious local athlete and activist received this instrument by email. The instrument was sent out in parts so that any doubt that might arise around a query could be resolved before embarking on to the next one.

**Extra-urban institutions in Italy: Opportunity for local growth**

20 How important is the Italian extra-urban institutional structure – e.g. laws, regulations, court rulings – that determine the status, power and functional capacities of city governments and other autonomous bodies (Province, Metropolitan Area, Region), in the formation and effectiveness of urban regimes and their agenda that includes new private sport stadia projects?
The Town Planning Act of 1942, parts of which remain in force, introduced a complex hierarchical system not favourable to city planning (Scattoni and Falco 2011). In addition, the central government dictated regional and local affairs, as both regional governors and mayors were political appointees. After 1970, regional governors were directly elected, but the national parties, having colonized the whole of the state apparatus, were able to control them (Keating, 1988). Regional laws regulated changes of land use in urban areas. In the specific region of Piemonte, which includes Turin, the home of Juventus, a 1977 regional law - LR 56/77 still in action - foresees two types of variants towards altering a city’s masterplan: partial and structural. The first requires a more streamlined approval process that involves only the Province. The second is much more complex, requiring also the opinion of the Region. Thus, mayors had limited powers in deciding on matters of urban regeneration (Burdett et al 2010).

The turning point for the transformation of Italy’s local government system came in the 1990s, with two major reforms, relating to the direct election of the mayors and the new style of city governance: Law 142/1990 and Law 81/1993. These laws played an important role in the economic and political transformation of Italian cities, as they placed the city (comune) at the centre of the institutional system, giving mayors legitimacy and weakening the capacities of the provincial and regional governments (Maggi and Piperno 1999, Ravazzi and Beglini 2015). While Law 142 gives provinces the power to approve city plans in cooperation with the regions, the law’s most critical provision is its laying the bases for a large number of communal activities to be performed through autonomous forms of organisation. For example, in Turin, water and electricity services have been converted into limited companies and urban hygiene has remained under communal control with ‘special company’ status. Maggi and Piperno (1999) have pointed out that this favours the process of privatisation and the formation of powerful local affairs governance coalitions, although they feared this is not helped by the de-professionalization of politics - i.e. the election of politically non-professional, ordinary civil society people.

The extra-urban Italian institutions do support the modern football stadium model. The political system has mobilized to produce specific legislation promoting extremely facilitated procedures for the construction of such stadia. Only when it comes to construction has the Province a role. According to Ministerial Decrees 407300 of 1996 and 18429 of 2005, the assessment of risks related to the conduct of sporting events, the inlet system of the spectators and the necessary steps to overcome contingent critical situations, are subject to the prior approval of the superintendent of the Province.

In October 2009, following earlier deliberations, with the advent of the global economic crisis, Bill 2800 was submitted to the Italian Parliament. Although it did not turn into a law due to protracted discussions in Parliament, the Bill sought to encourage construction of new stadia and the refurbishment of existing facilities through two kinds of measures: simplifying administrative procedures in order to obtain building permits quickly, and providing financial incentives to the proposer. The provisions of Bill 2800 were hastily incorporated in article I, paragraphs 303-306 of the country’s Budget Law, 147/2013, which came into force on 1 January 2014. This specific ordinance, which took four years to materialize, constitutes now Italy’s new stadium regulation.

The regulation explains in detail the administrative procedure to be filed in order to develop sports facilities, sets short deadlines for the approval of the project and its subsequent realisation, and establishes a financial fund in order to support the
promoters. As regards municipal areas, the city cannot transfer ownership or real rights of the surface area directly to sporting associations at market price, but through an open tendering procedure between the proposer and other market participants. A DLA Piper expert posits: “the procedure follows three steps (a) the interested party submits a feasibility study accompanied by a financial plan for the project, and a principal user agreement with one or more associations or clubs, to the municipality; (b) if the project is approved at this first stage, the municipality declares it to be of public interest within 90 days; (c) the final proposal is then submitted to the region or the municipality which will decide whether the project should go ahead, possibly making its approval conditional on any changes deemed necessary (Inzaghi 2014, p. 46).

26 A few good reasons may explain legislative change supporting new modern stadia. New stadia would not only boost Italian football’s finances but would also support Italy’s intended bid to host the 2020 UEFA Games. In addition, while the football community weighs strongly in Italian political affairs, the municipalities own football stadia and the economic crisis has impeded their renovation or replacement. Based on all of the above, the Italian extra-urban institutional structure has given Italian cities more freedom in managing local affairs, including the construction of new football stadia, and therefore favours the formation of regimes.

Juventus’ new stadium in Turin

27 To understand the urban politics around Juventus’ new football stadium in the city of Turin requires tracing first the city’s local political dynamics within the prevailing extra-urban institutional structure. Turin is the fourth-largest Italian city and capital of Turin province and the Piemonte Region. It is also the stronghold of automaker FIAT, which has earned it the label ‘Italian Detroit’. Since the very late 1800s, FIAT’s main shareholder has been the Agnelli family, an important industrial dynasty of Italian capitalism. The family is also owner of Juventus FC since the early 1920s (Burdett et al 2010).

28 Regarding FIAT’s involvement in Turin’s politics and governance, a respected local journalist has stated (O’Leary 2009) that: Globally, a rapport between a city and a company such as that between Fiat and Turin has never existed, and never will. This was once a rapport of power, true and absolute. Politics was held by Fiat, the company, the church, everything. Fiat accompanied you from birth to the tomb. When a son was born to an employee, they gave a gift. There was a Fiat nursery, a Fiat school, summer camps for Fiat holidays. La Stampa and other great Turin dailies were owned by Fiat for years. On Sundays they went to see (the Fiat-owned football team) Juventus. They accompanied you for the whole arch of your life. The monarchy of the Savoys was substituted by the Agnelli monarchy.

29 While this statement appears to be a bit too strong, it does bear truth. It is a fact that, before the 1990’s, FIAT was in a conflictual status with Turin’s communist government (Locke 1995; Pinson 2002). FIAT controlled local politics essentially by ‘dictating’ its terms to the local authority. It exercised a somewhat pre-emptive power strategy to make sure that nobody would do anything to bother it or stand as an obstacle in its way.

30 As Pinson (2002, p. 483) put it: Turin had been ‘ruled’ by confrontation between FIAT and the representatives of the working class: the omnipresence of Fordist major industry and its hierarchical forms of organization had tended to make industrial conflict the basic mode of regulation for social relations in the city.
While FIAT’s role in the development of Turin was a leading one, the company’s decline due to the economic crisis of the 1970s and 1980s, rendered municipal authorities unable to keep up with the demand for local welfare and social services support at the time (Burdett et al 2010). The city faced a leadership vacuum and paralysis of the local administration throughout the 1970s and 1980s, which ended in 1992 when the Italian government appointed a city commissioner.

In this environment, since the mid-1980s, a group of intellectuals belonging to the reformist left, developed a collective reflection about the nature of the urban crisis and carved a model to modernise urban policy and the local economy (Belligni and Ravazzi 2013). The group was led by Valentino Castellani, Professor of Physics at Turin Polytechnic, a prestigious engineering college. Although he was active in the Christian and Social Left circles in Turin, he had no prior previous institutional experience other than being a member of the Italian Socialist Party for a couple of years in the early 1970s. Behind Castelanni’s selection as Mayoral candidate to challenge the communist candidate, however, was the famous “Group of 70” consisting of businesspersons and professionals that had gathered around the powerful president of the local Chamber of Commerce.

Elected in 1993, with new mayoral powers, according to Law 81/1993, Castellani had realized that the transformation of Turin would require the involvement of a wide range of social, economic, political and cultural actors in the city (Burdett et al 2010). First, he worked closely with the Regional Authority and the Polytechnic School. In 1995, Turin’s new masterplan (Piano Regolatore Generale) provided a basis, supporting the diversification and re-orientation of the city’s economy, less dependent on FIAT. However, in the April 1997 municipal elections he barely managed to win the second round with a marginal one per cent, awakening for him and his group.

During a two-year long campaign that began in 1998, Castellani consulted with the city’s most important actors to inform of his plan to revitalize Turin. Fifty-seven public and private leaders signed the plan, which became the first strategic plan ever drafted by an Italian city. The plan’s three axes were infrastructure (the physical transformation of the city), technology (the enhancement of the science and technology sectors), and culture (the promotion of culture and leisure). The infrastructural axis was the main spring for growth, with the Municipality, FIAT, the Association of builders, the National Railway Company and the Polytechnic and University involved as principal actors. The Municipality, the Region and bank foundations supported the other two axes. The resources all these actors contributed with included not only money but also skills, expertise, informal contacts, etc.

The 2006 Winter Olympic Games, which Turin had gained in 2000 were an unexpected ‘gift’. They brought huge financial resources to the city, contributing decisively to the first axis of Turin’s strategic plan - infrastructure. Overall, the political and business circles of the city had finally managed to build a consensus, coming to establish a new pro-growth urban regime the led the city imposing its own agenda for a long period. Castellani served as Mayor two terms, from 1993 to 2001, when Sergio Chiamparino, a professional politician from the socialist party, replaced him for the next two terms. Chiamparino maintained the alliance with the local elites and carried out the previously planned projects (Belligni and Ravazzi 2012).

As for FIAT, specifically, the company did participate in the regime’s initial phases, until about the 2006 Olympics, yet as a powerful ‘special interest group’ (Belligni and Ravazzi,
Its purpose was to essentially negotiate - in favourable for itself terms - the transfer of its dismantled industrial sites to public institutions (the Region and the Municipality especially). FIAT and the Agnelli family were also making sure that their friends received appointments in important managerial positions in public and semi-public organisations.

The stadium project plan and its advancement

Beyond its position as capital of the Province and Region, Turin is also the home city for Juventus FC and Torino FC, both clubs accommodated in the municipal stadium, Stadio Communale. Prior to the Castellani administration, in the 1980s, the city had been selected to host the 1990 FIFA World Cup, so it decided to use Stadio Communale and also build a totally new stadium, the Stadio delle Alpi - an all-seater stadium but with a few problems such as poor visibility and high maintenance costs.

The idea of building a new stadium for Juventus, was the club’s. Juventus always wanted to have a stadium of its own. In fact, it had proposed to the city a plan for a modern facility to host the 1990 FIFA Games but the council did not accept it. Juventus, unhappy with the delle Alpi, began to pressure the city for a new stadium unsuccessfully, threatening to relocate. In the words of a former city commissioner: The first formal threat to leave the city was in a letter signed by Giampiero Boniperti on 17 February 1992, to which I answered with a letter on 22 February 1992 (see Matteoli 2002). They reiterated the threat continuously, since then, with interviews and articles in La Stampa (interview, 4 March 2016).

Under Castellani, two of the regime’s axes were directly favourable to the construction of Juventus’ stadium. One was the physical transformation of the city and the other the promotion of culture and leisure. In March 1997, much earlier than Castellani’s initiation of the 1998-2000 campaign to draft a strategic plan for Turin, city council’s resolution 152 approved a reorganisation plan of Stadio delle Alpi. The resolution stated, among other things, the city’s commitment to allow both Juventus FC and Torino FC to hold all home games for the domestic cup and internationally, until the end of the 2001-2002 football season. Juventus, unhappy with this arrangement, came up with a fresh proposal to demolish the delle Alpi stadium and build a private facility in its place, completely new, consistent with the new philosophy of modern stadia as multifunctional venues. The city councillors came to a dead-heat vote (25-25), as the right-wing opposition parties together with the Communist Refoundation Party united to oppose the plan. The opposition called for Castelanni’s resignation and the Green Party called for a local referendum on the issue.

Juventus threatened once again to leave the city. In the words of a media report: Juventus are threatening to leave the city of Turin after the city council failed to back the club’s plan to destroy the Delle Alpi... A spokesman for Juventus told Reuters the club was now considering a move out of the city, possibly to the town of Borgaro, just three kilometres from the Delle Alpi but outside of Turin (Geocities 1999, single page).

The secretary of Pro Natura Torino (PNT), a large environmental organisation and close collaborator of WWF added: Juventus not only threatened, but actually played some matches (some minor European competitions...) in other cities, namely Milano, Bologna and Palermo. This was done because Juventus did not accept the obligation to use always the Delle Alpi Stadium (interview, 3 March 2016).
In June 1998, approving motion 33, submitted by Castellani, the city council decided to propose to Juventus FC, among other things, to acquire the delle Alpi stadium and the adjacent area of Continassa. The proposed transfer was also in line with a 1994 ruling of the supreme administrative court, the Council of State (Torino 2007). According to this ruling – 1257 Section V – a transfer is considered legitimate when the football team plays in the top division and it is reasonably believed that the ‘public interest’ is better served if the stadium is used by the team, that mostly provides utility for the local population.

With the regime’s strategic plan in action, special variant 56, approved by the city council in December 2002, allowed the transformation of the delle Alpi area from "green and services" to a “public services” area, i.e., public spaces, playground and sports, with the area intended in part for tertiary activities and equipment of service to people and businesses. Two months later City Resolution of 17 February 2003 approved the transfer of the delle Alpi area to Juventus, which took place in July of the same year.

In December 2005, the city council passed variant 123, which increased the share of commercial activities provided in the district Stadio delle Alpi further. In February 2007, Juventus and the City signed A Memorandum of Understanding, which allowed much heavier land restructuring than that provided by variant 56 of 2002.

Until 2006, as Stadio Communale was being renovated into Stadio Olimpico to host the 2006 Winter Olympics, the delle Alpi was used for matches of Juventus FC and Torino FC and after the Olympics it was closed down. In April 2008, Juventus proposed an Integrated Programme (PRIN) variant, which was approved in November the same year. The PRIN foresaw the signing of a new Memorandum of Understanding, which provides for the total demolition the old delle Alpi, its complete reconstruction, and a further increase of the business boundary.

Between November 2008 and August 2011, the projects were advanced and completed quickly by Italian standards, thanks to the use of simplified planning procedures followed by the city, which were only formally approved by the Provincial authority as regards safety standards. On 8 September 2011, the Juventus Stadium was inaugurated in a ceremony with a great impact on national and international media.

Juventus managed to also acquire the surface rights to Continassa, a large area adjacent to the stadium extending to approximately 180,000 m² and including a seventeenth-century farmhouse from which it took its name. This was facilitated by city variant 277 of October 2012. At the end of 2013, Juventus and Turin jointly presented the project of redevelopment of the area, including 80,000 m² of public property, in which the football club featured, among other things, football fields with synthetic turf, a gym, company headquarters, cottages and small buildings for players, a luxury hotel, a spa, a multiplex cinema, and residential construction (Pro Natura Torino 2015).

**Stadium Supporters and Opponents**

The stadium project had ‘gatekeepers’, supporters and opponents. Using political/legal resources, the ‘gatekeepers’ included the cities of Turin and Venaria Reale, the Turin Province and the Piedmont Region. The city of Turin and Piedmont Region were procedurally involved as regards the development of Continassa, while the Turin Province and Venaria Reale were overseeing the improvement of the road network.
Nevertheless, those same ‘gatekeepers’ were also the main supporters of the project.

Architect Giorgio Migliavacca conceded to this view: The public administration (Comune, Provincia, Regione) basically wanted to come to an agreement with Juventus because the “Continassa-area” (where the stadium is located) was a strategic area but also problematic (large area not controlled) so...they can be considered also as “allies” because their aim was to modernise that area...the goal of Juventus was to use the area for its economical profit (interview, 3 March 2016).

Juventus had other allies with potential interests in the project, using either economic or cognitive resources - that include experience, intelligence, competence and task-relevant knowledge. The Nordiconad Group, Sportfive Italia S.R.L and the Istituto per il Credito Sportivo (ICS) offered financial assistance. Nordiconad, a large Italian mass retail cooperative, acquired from Juventus the rights to manage the commercial area adjacent to the stadium and helped it defray some of the construction costs. Sportfive Italia S.R.L. which belongs to the Sportfive Group - a European leader in the field of sports marketing - concluded a 20-year long agreement with Juventus under which it can sell the naming right of the new stadium. ICS, a public bank with an autonomous management, for the support of sport and culture, provided stadium construction loans. Allies using cognitive resources included five engineering and architectural groups (Migliavacca 2012). The local media, especially the newspaper La Stampa owned by FIAT, as well as Juventus’ fans offered symbolic support (Palvarini and Tosi 2013b) - e.g. commentaries in favour of the stadium.

Among the project’s opponents was a short list of small agencies and groups including the Centro Sportivo Italiano, Radio Flash, independent leftist groups, and others, with a minimal, almost unnoticeable, impact. Exhibit 1 shows a poster released by these groups.
Pro Natura Torino (PNT) had opposed the project since 2002, when the city council was debating Variant 56 (Soave 2008). PNT’s Secretary stated: *There was a lot of formal opposition to the project. The most relevant was the one from FIAT group, since the latter participated in the competition for the assignment of the construction work, but did not win and the project was assigned to another company (Acqua Marcia). Also, several social and environmental associations tried to oppose the project, but again they did not succeed* (interview, 10 December 2014).

Beyond objections to altering the use of an agricultural area near the Alps, PNT contended that self-financing by Juventus was a myth, as the idea is always to use public resources such as the Comitato Olimpico Nazionale Italiano (CONI) and the Istituto per il Credito Sportivo. Along a similar line, Ceccelani (2013) argued that the stadium was conceived not only as a pure city gift to Juventus, but a gift financed through Turin’s ‘bankruptcy’.

The Director of the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps (ICPA) commented: *The history of the Juventus Stadium is a typical example of Italian bad administration. The municipality of Torino decided to give the Stadio delle Alpi (and the adjacent land, including the construction rights for commercial use) to the Juventus football club whose owners are the FIAT and Agnelli family. The city of Turin has not received even one euro from this operation! So the Juventus Football Club has found a private stadium and the Municipality spent more of 30 million euro to realize another stadium, which now is adapted for football matches of the first team of the city, FC Torino* (interview, 18 December 2014).

Finally, a writer (d’Angelo 2014) and former athlete, who was a critic of Turin’s style of decision-making, expressed an extreme view: *First Juventus has destroyed the value of the stadium (80 million euro paid by the city and by the Italian government…). The council has always...*
voted “yes” to every request of Juventus. There were reports of bodies and associations, but it is FIAT that decides what the mayor of Turin will do. So, the prosecution has covered up everything. [However] It is better [for me] not to unveil to you the whole truth... (interview, 28 December 2014).

The criticism advanced by all those opponents, intellectuals and sceptics was not enough to place the project off its track. It is also similar with that of critics who argue that building private sports stadia with public money is more suitable to plutocracy and oligarchy than to democracy (Sullivan 2001, Delaney and Eckstein 2003, Bennett 2012).

Conclusions

This article is an attempt to supplement the scarce literature on the urban politics of new private sports stadia in Europe, with some evidence based on Juventus’ stadium project.

The argument of this work is not that the evidence is necessarily reflective of such politics in all European cities. European governments may or may not have a strong voice in the politics of downtown city development, where coalitions may be emerging through different bargaining processes. However, the evidence represents an additional step in testing the cross-national application of American urban politics theories and in contributing to the relevant debate on sports stadia specifically.

Juventus’s bid for a new private stadium was successful. To what extent can American urban politics theories explain this outcome as well as help towards relevant future research? Was the Italian extra-urban institutional structure favourable to the formation and effectiveness of the Turin regime?

In answering these questions, it is important to realize that, regime analysis fails to explain what occurs in stadium cases such as Chicago’s, with scholars now in search for its refinement or total abolishment. Either the local regime opted not to fund a new stadium proposal and the decision-making was shifted to the state-level, or the state created a special purpose authority under its auspices to oversee and fund stadium construction. Castelanni’s coalition combined all the features of a US-style urban regime. The coalition embraced both local government and nongovernmental actors around a local policy agenda spelled out in the city’s Master Plan and focused on infrastructural, technological and cultural developments. In addition, it used various tangible and non-tangible resources and lasted for at least four consecutive mayoral terms. Juventus’ new stadium in Turin was the product of that regime, which had a direct connection with the club’s owners and its actions were amply facilitated by Italy’s extra-urban institutional structure. Even the supreme administrative court’s 1994 ruling was in favour of Juventus’ bid for a new private stadium. Given this and also that Turin’s administration was able to secure the support of supra-city governments for the deal informally, regime theory, even in its classic form, positions itself as an effective approach for studying future European cases in countries with similar extra-urban institutions.

An unexpected element in the Juventus stadium case is the behaviour of the football club and the city. Juventus threatened to leave the city, just as American teams do in order to secure new private stadia and Turin appears to have bowed to this threat. Surely, Juventus’ threat is not comparable to that of an American’s team, either in terms of magnitude or in terms of Italian football’s organisational structure. Nevertheless, it is still a significant element to consider in Turin’s urban politics. Even with Juventus’
‘departure’, Torino FC would still represent Turin in Serie A but the gravity of FIAT as an Italian industrial colossus and of Juventus - as a very famous football club all around Italy and the world - would probably have had grave impacts on local political dynamics and governance as well as their national and international image.

Finally, the argument advanced by the stadium’s critics that it was a city ‘gift’ to Juventus is in line with claims by American scholars that private sports stadia are financed with public funds, although the finance form in this case was not direct taxes or tax-exempt bonds. The stadium critics felt that, among other concessions that could be monetized, such as low rate loans from a public bank and the value of land transferred to Juventus, the city threw away public funds invested in a most recently renovated stadium, which was then demolished to accommodate Juventus’ own desire for a new stadium.

With this evidence in hand, the key questions for future research should be conducted on the impact of financial challenges and constrictions on municipalities and how those challenges might sway them to seek resources from business and social spheres in order to accomplish their goal. Within this effort, research should also look at the impact of the current economic crisis on the politics of urban development, especially in Southern Europe. Such questions will need to address the current crisis as a factor favouring the formation of urban regimes in large European cities, under shifting extra-urban institutional structures facilitating local growth via projects that include new sports stadia.

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ABSTRACTS

This article examines the local politics around a new private football stadium construction project in Southern Europe, within the frame of urban regime theory. The project aimed at demolishing a recently renovated municipal stadium in Turin, Italy and building a new one for Juventus FC. This new stadium project was the product of an urban regime that governed Turin for some years, an outcome that raises an important issue as, in the US, the explanatory power of regime theory for most stadium projects is in doubt. Using this evidence, the article adds to the ongoing debate on whether US urban politics theories can explain urban affairs in European cities and draws some similarities and differences between European and US urban politics.

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Keywords: urban politics, Juventus, Italy, sports stadia, extra-urban structures

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