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Fear the city

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EDITORIAL

Fear is a complex emotional state and a multifaceted and challenging issue whose exploration has driven the editing of this special issue. Traditionally, fear is surrounded by different narratives depending on the context. Politics, academia, everyday life, all these realms are surrounded by their own rhetorics regarding fear and how fear ought to be taken into account. In particular, urban life is a framework within which fear is continuously experienced, debated and negotiated.

This special issue brings together different perspectives and views to explore the manifold links between fear and city in the contemporary age. Putting itself along a research path that has interdisciplinary roots in the scholars exploring dangers and conflicts of the urban condition from its beginning and within its different shapes, several contributions have been gathered to explore and critically discuss contemporary features of fear as a tool to interpret and shape urban life.

The result is a kaleidoscopic papers' collection in which fear is de-structured within the polyphony of human and urban experiences.

Fear can be a significant tool to thoroughly investigate social phenomena and emotions. Indeed, fear takes on a crucial role in the analysis and interpretation of social practices in the urban space and it has serious repercussions on how public and private spaces are conceived, structured and designed, as well as on individual and collective behaviours. Therefore, our reflection sought to focus on how fear regulates and orients everyday experiences in urban environments.

Today the role of fear can be seen, for instance, in urban security policies. Urban security, with all its two-faced features (from controlling public events, to preventing epidemics, to managing public spaces and so forth), has become a target of urban and social policies which categorize

citizens and reshape their relationships. Current governmental approaches to urban security tend to divide cities in several comfort zones, based on class, gender, ethnicity, thereby creating both manifest and invisible limits and boundaries. These divisions appear extremely relevant and problematic, especially in these uncertain times in which the scarcity of spaces and a limited mobility have become recurrent aspects of our everyday life.

Due to the topicality of the time when this issue has been released, it should be noted that the Coronavirus outbreak has highlighted the role and relevance of fear, becoming the focus of some reflections. Cities today are discussed as an assemblage of spaces which have been reformulated and securitized and within which social distancing rules manage everyday life; according to this, every person that we meet, both friends and strangers, can be a potential disease spreader, hence, all the realms connected to relationships and sociality are soaked with fear. However, as highlighted by several papers in this special issue, the pandemic has worked as a catalyst of processes and phenomena already existing. Indeed, fear is a key element to understand how urban spaces are designed and experienced, and it was already present in the social fabric as an everyday device used to orient and regulate relationships long before Covid-19.

Within this framework, the collected papers aimed to explore the material and immaterial tools managing urban fear (from surveillance devices, to regulations) and the role of politics in the design of these mechanisms. Then, discourses of and about fear as an instrument of power were put under scrutiny, while further reflections are elicited by examining how specific imaginaries around this pervasive emotional state are constructed – and can be deconstructed.

Several contributions consider the dual and frag-

mented city. Here fear appears as widespread and shattered within relations and situations. This polyhedral configuration supports a reflection about fears instead of fear. Thus, in this issue we have considered accordingly different potential layers of personal, emotional and collective experiences, which are connected with the systemic and institutional contradictions that are especially evident in the contemporary urban landscape. Anti-fear and counter-control actions elaborated to respond to these contradictions were analysed as well.

Although these premises may indicate a dark and gloomy issue, this is not the case. Through the lens of the different papers, it allows us to objectify fears and to shed light on the mechanisms through which they are reified, in order to make the fear more manageable and elicit reflections about empowering (anti-fear) practices, also in the path of the *critique (and claim) of everyday life*.

The opening paper is Yana Bagina's analysis of everyday life in the city through a specific metaphor which perfectly adapts to the contemporary urban landscape: "being on alert".

Then, the following contributions focus on one of the main themes that emerge from the issue: gender relations. In her piece, Jelena Bozilovic takes into account the city by identifying the patriarchal dimensions of the public space and analysing how the common notion of the city as a place of freedom should be accepted conditionally, since it continuously reflects the effects of dominant social values, and as such can be the place of non-freedom. According to her, the city is of masculine gender.

By investigating perceptions and lived experiences of women living in Milan, Elisabetta Risi and Riccardo Pronzato carried out an emotionography of that city. Their paper highlights a fragmented city, which is filled with different nuances of fear, as well as physical and symbolic

boundaries, which are connected to long-lasting gender, racial and social inequalities.

Gender inequalities are also the main focus of the contribution written by Chiara Belingardi, Giada Bonu, Federica Castelli and Serena Olcuire. However, here the authors transform fear in an active and generative pulse. Indeed, their paper considers some feminist resistance practices and shows some ways in which the public space can be occupied and re-earned, thereby contesting its patriarchal dimension.

The relationship between gender inequalities, residential segregation and urban architectures is highlighted by Anna Yates. The author investigates the social and spatial nature of women's fear of crime in Husby, a peripheral suburb in Stockholm, with the lowest income per capita of any other neighbourhood in the city.

Then, also Massimiliano Raffa starts his essay from areas connoted by social marginality and cultural intermingling, that he considers a privileged context for the emergence of popular urban cultures. However, his reflection focuses on how fear of physical contacts (haphophobia) can undermine urban proxemics and, hence, creative processes. The author introduces some considerations about the alarming idea that such creative spaces may one day disappear permanently, especially following the dramatic social distancing restrictions imposed since the beginning of the coronavirus crisis.

The Covid-19 crisis is also the framework of two other works, written by Alessandra Micalizzi and Eugenia Siapera, and Emiliano Armano, Tatiana Mazali and Maurizio Teli, respectively. In the former contribution the authors illustrate the results of an empirical research regarding pictures taken in different cities of the world and shared online during the lockdown, and show that the city represented a means by which people escaped social distancing, generating a sense of closeness and a reaction to the restric-

means by which people escaped social distancing, generating a sense of closeness and a reaction to the restrictive measures. In this paper, fear emerges as a dual emotional state: confined at home, people felt safe but constrained, and they found compensatory strategies to create the right balance between social fear and the affirmation of personal freedom. On the other hand, the paper of Emiliana Armano, Tatiana Mazali and Maurizio Teli supports that fear of physical human contacts has become so pervasive, that individuals developed and started using other “spaces” on digital platforms. Physical contacts in urban public spaces are then dramatically redefined and remediated by digital technologies that reshape distances in ways that further studies still need to assess.

The *fear of the other* is the main focus of Asma Mehan’s paper, which analyse Tehran protest squares as inside-out spaces where the state attempts to maintain some form of control, and where the public attempts to occupy it. According to the author, the fear of ‘others’ can lead to exclusion from public space of those who are seen as threatening. This process of

‘otherness’ renders fear as an arena of conflict and highlights the political utility of fear by particular groups and individuals. Then, the essay written by Caio Teixeira still examines street protests, which are fearless, through a really up-to-date case-study: the Black Lives Matter Plaza in Washington D.C. In this case fear is the link between social movements and urban spaces, discrimination and racism.

Also in the following contribution fear is linked to segregation dynamics. This time Leonie Tuitjer and Quentin Batréau take us to Bangkok to explore the multiple sources of fear that shape asylum seeker’s urban experience. Their study reveals that the urban itself, as a site of intense and continuous encounters, shapes the fear of asylum seekers. Finally, the issue is concluded by a case-study conducted by Ana Ivasiuc, which is settled in Rome and that focus, specifically, on the perceived fear connected with the *ronde* (patrols) carried out in the suburbs of the Italian capital by fascist groups that sought to feed anti-immigrants feelings and behaviours.

E. R., R. P., C. M.

Being on the alert: how people experience everyday fear in the city

Yana Bagina

“A large city cannot be safe by definition”, – said a 26-year-old young man while I was interviewing him about safety and fear in his everyday travels, though he could not remember situations when he was in real danger. This view illustrates the ideas of modern scholars who describe fear as being the result of the high level of uncertainty and having a “free-floating” dynamic (Furedi, 2007; Bauman, 2013). Citizens are socialized to look for the signs of danger around them whether it is a suspicious-looking man or an unattended package. Due to their multiplicity, widely varied threats, such as crimes, terrorist attacks, car accidents, infrastructure failures, different kinds of injuries, are considered to be inevitable in urban environments. As a result, a vague premonition of danger becomes a part of everyday travels supporting the reproduction of a climate of urban fear (Furedi, 2007). In this essay, I would like to take a closer look at how people experience this fear in their everyday life.

Since emotions as both social and biological phenomena do not simply reflect social relationships but significantly influence how the city is lived, I suggest that the mode of everyday urban life created by fear could be best described as “on the alert”. By this, first of all, I mean feelings related to the anticipation of a threat. Secondly, this state implies actions people undertake to stay safe which influences their urban mobility. The essay is based on the qualitative interviews with young adults living in Moscow, both women and men, which were conducted in 2017 and 2019.

How does “on the alert” feels

“Fear” might be used as an umbrella term to describe feelings of different intensity which are brought to life by the anticipation of threats regardless of their remoteness in time and space (Barbalet, 2001; Tudor, 2003; Kemper, 2006). People might experience numerous shades of fear, from anxiety to fright, while moving around the city. “On the alert” state comprises worries about facing a threat to one’s safety while nothing is actually happening with them. For example, citizens might sit at the bar at night thinking about how to get home safely, or they might smell burning in a metro car and try to find out what has happened. In any case, their “on the alert” state has been activated: people feel something may threaten them, but they are not really sure what it is and is it a threat at all. The uncertainty of the social situation, whether current or imaginary, is what defines this particular mode of urban life.

However, to be on the alert people need to know that something can happen to them, or put it differently they need to master feeling rules which are norms dictating them what to feel in given social situations (Hochschild, 1979). Fears are socially produced through media, personal contacts as well as the urban environment itself (voice announcements, posters, etc.). That is probably the best explanation of why several participants told me they should pay more attention to safety issues than

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they already do. Thus, the “on the alert” state as a social norm is being constantly supported by the social environment we live in.

How to be “on the alert”

When people feel there is a potential threat waiting for them around the corner, their behavior perfectly reflects their fears. Scholars also describe actions undertaken to manage these emotions or the situation at hand as “coping strategies”. They have been studied in detail by feminist geographers (Valentine, 1989; Bondi, Mehta, 1999) and sociologists of emotions (Thoits, 1990). I would like to discuss just a few of these strategies here: monitoring, categorization, mobility planning, and body management.

Moving around the city, citizens monitor the environment paying attention even to small details, such as faces, movements, noises, smells, etc. One of the participants told me he started to follow the sounds when crossing the street after he was nearly hit by an ambulance while wearing headphones. The other one shared with me she has a special method of how to turn around unnoticed to see who is following her on an empty street at night. In other words, she wants to get back control over the situation by labeling the person behind her as “harmless” or “dangerous” which is another

example of how “on the alert” state works. Citizens categorize other people based on how reliable they look, whether they could be a threat or guarantee the situation is safe. The feeling of unease may also affect how citizens plan their everyday travels: which route they take, what transport they use, where they sit or stand on the transport, what company they are in. Some places or people could be deliberately avoided, like aggressive drunken companies, poorly lit empty

Citizens’ main emotional response to constantly living in an uncertain urban environment could be described as on the alert. This implies feelings which are brought life by the anticipation of threats and behavioral expressions.

streets (a classic image, I must say), or unfamiliar areas. Going to some places, people prefer to be accompanied by others who could prevent unwanted interactions or simply give them emotional comfort. Moreover, the “on the alert” state manifests in body work, especially impression management. It requires an effort not to get too close to the oncoming train or keep your belongings close to avoid being robbed. Citizens often do not pay much attention to these actions, but still they reflect the feelings of anxiety and influence their urban mobility. The same one can say about precautions that people take to avoid interactions with strangers whose intentions cause concern. For this purpose, citizens might try to look confident and bold or, on the contrary, try to be invisible, inconspicuous. These behaviors are expressed in walks, glances, body position, clothes. Women participants, for example, could tell a lot about which clothes they would not wear at night to avoid attention. Thus, the “on the alert” state includes quite a variety of ways to stay safe on a daily basis even if the danger is vague and uncertain.

Conclusion: how fear shapes our urban experience

Emotions have a great influence on the way city is lived: they guide people’s actions, help to explore and interpret the environment. Like any other emotion, fears accompany citizens’ everyday travels in the form of “on the alert” state. Being socially constructed, this mode of urban experience defines not only what people feel in the current situation but also what they do now or in the future. My aim here was not to show the neurotic side of modern citizens but simply to make explicit how small fears are woven into the fabric of everyday urban life.

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Gender and the City: Safety in Urban Spaces

Jelena Božilović

Masculinization of public urban space is a process spanning over multiple centuries and involves the reproduction of dualism based on the view that private sphere is a place where women achieve their social roles, whereas the public (political) space is a man-dominated arena. Although since the 19th century and throughout the 20th and 21st century some progress has been made in obtaining civil rights and liberalization of gender roles, it is still early to speak of gender equality and one possible analysis to support this claim could be the reading of the public urban space (both its material and symbolic aspects). The names of streets and squares, urban monuments, and the organization of space through spatial planning and urban design are just some indicators of patriarchal spatial matrix and insufficient recognition of needs of women as members of society. Feeling safe and freedom of movement in public space constitute a specific aspect in the analysis of the patriarchy of space and numerous studies around the world confirmed that regardless of the fact if the society is so-called open or closed, a political system democratic or authoritarian, countries belonging to the East or West, the feeling of safety is universally more inherent to the male gender. Multiple studies that have been carried out around the world in Europe and also in Serbia in the last 10 years reaffirm this.

The narrative of the city as the place of freedom is supported by various examples from history¹. As early as the beginning of the 19th century in the first capitalist society in the Western world, the city emerged as the centre of freedom not only for those coming from small towns or rural places but also for marginalized groups, such as women and homosexuals, who despite living in the city had been pushed back into the private sphere. Shopping malls, arts districts and other parts of the city infused with a kind of an urban spectacle were not open to so-called fallen women (like prostitutes and lesbians) alone, but also to middle-class women who filled their free time with consumerism in an attempt to shake off shackles of family life permeated with Victorian values. What is problematic here, however, is the fact that these very “places of freedom” became new places where oppression of women happened. Women were not only harassed in different ways as it was believed they do not belong out in the street, but were also symbolically oppressed through consumer culture that mostly sexualized women treating them as objects of entertainment and consumption (McDowell, 1999). With that in mind, Silvia Walby notes that this was just a replication of dominance over women from the sphere of household to the public sphere in which women began to take part (Walby, 1990).²

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¹ There is a famous medieval saying that “urban air makes you free”, which is about the conquering of freedom by an individual upon his flight to cities from feudal shackles of the society of that time.

² Walby explains that, in terms of women's rights, capitalism did not bring much progress, highlighting that by enabling the woman to “penetrate” from a private into a public sphere, patriarchal relations reproduce and the dominance over women is now asserted not only within a household, but also in the sphere of work, politics and other areas of public life (Walby 1990: 185).

For this very reason, the common notion of the city as a place of freedom should be accepted conditionally, since, although the city offers possibilities for freer life choices and life patterns for many, it still reflects the effects of dominant social values, and as such can be the place of non-freedom. Despite this, the hegemony of patriarchal ideology results in sexist coloured cities being perceived as a neutral given, with rarely questioning the fact that the city and its formed environment often send a message to women that it is better and safer for them to stay at home. Due to feeling threatened, women must often modify and limit their movement, although in the long-run submitting and acting in accordance with an inappropriately organized and insufficiently safe urban area may affect one's life opportunities, and possibly determine their life choices.

A research dating from 2013 carried out in 143 countries worldwide showed that a percentage of men feeling safe when walking alone through the neighbourhood where they live is higher than that of women, particularly in developed countries.³ Although it is to be expected that in such countries due to lower crime rates the personal feeling of safety increases for both genders, it appears to be the opposite, and hence the gap between the degree of safety for men and women in developed countries is great.⁴ Such data can be attributed to the fact that in Western countries, despite their economic progress, domestic violence towards women is still a major social issue, which in turn instils fear in women, decreases their personal feeling of safety and manifests as a withdrawal from public space⁵.

Among particularly dangerous places in urban space as listed by women are parks, unlit or poorly lit streets, narrow passages, sharp angles, metro stations or bus stops, underground city passages and public transport. Contrary to this, the environments recognized as places where women, girls and young girls feel safe are the places in which more people are present, vibrant places marked by social interaction. Moreover, the parts of the city that are not dilapidated, but are well developed and maintained, are marked as places that enhance the feeling of safety. Wide pavement areas and good lighting, placing bus stops in spaces with a higher frequency of people, installing panic buttons on public transport or at entrances to residential buildings are some recommendations for creating a safer city. In addition to the foregoing, there is an impression that a higher number of transporters (public transport or taxis) with women drivers could make an additional contribution in this respect, and in some cities efforts are made to educate bus drivers about the rights of women and how they may impact the protection of women against possible harassment (ActionAid, 2017; UN Woman, 2019). Another problem women face on the street and which is a sort of sexual harassment rarely spoken about, is street harassment. Although street harassment is mostly made up of rude remarks, sexist comments, whistling, etc. and does not constitute a physical risk for the woman, it affects a psychological state of the woman and as such may result in her voluntary withdrawal from public space. In spite of the fact that women encounter this type of threat on a daily basis, it is not recognized as a crime. Such incidents are often justified with the argument that such behaviour is "innate", and consequently, "normal" which makes solving this problem in the institutional manner and implementing policies that would go towards sanctioning such behaviour more difficult (Thompson, 1993).

In any case, any kind of safety threat or fear of such situation based on gender should always be

³ It should be said that certain fear of movement through the city at night, particularly in unlit areas, is also present in men, but at a lower percentage. There is a difference in terms of the type of danger expected with men fearing mainly mugging, whereas in women there is a dominant fear of sexual assault.

⁴ <https://news.gallup.com/poll/155402/women-feel-less-safe-men-developed-countries.aspx>

⁵ A paradox is found in the fact that business buildings and companies are better secured with lighting, security cameras, alarms and on-call personnel, than residential areas which are in a greater need of this type of protection. This goes to show that urban space, in addition to its patriarchal colouration, is also privatized under the influence of neo-liberalism, although it should serve the collective interests of its citizens.

viewed in relation to other social aspects, such as class, race, age, etc. Considering that women from higher classes tend to walk less and use their own car as a means of transport or have their personal driver, they are more protected from unpleasant situations, and it is therefore easier for them to perform their daily tasks and activities. Elder women, pregnant women and women with disabilities are believed to be most at risk (Božilović, 2018).

Feeling of Safety in Serbian Urban Context

The analysis of data obtained from the European Social Survey (ESS) from 2018 shows that in European countries the feeling of safety in a local community confirms gender differences to a large extent.⁶ Among the respondents who answered they felt *very safe* walking alone in their local area after dark, 61.3% were male and 38.7% female.. Conversely, feeling *very unsafe* was the response of 77.6% of women, while the percentage of men who felt *very unsafe* was significantly lower and amounted to 22.4%. Serbia completely fits this European trend with 61.6% of men reporting they feel *very safe* in local area after dark, while only 38.4% of female respondents shared this feeling. In contrast, more than three quarters of female respondents (77.5%) reported feeling *very unsafe* walking alone at night in local area, whereas the percentage of men who responded this way was less than one quarter (22.5%).⁷

In conclusion, regardless of the fact that Serbia is a country of the post-socialist block with a hybrid regime, what makes it equivalent with most European countries included in this survey is the patriarchal spatial patterns. Urban space in Serbia was not designed with gender sensitivity in mind. The traditional approach based on the generalization of users is present in urban planning, which means no specific needs of different categories of population are taken into account. This is also confirmed by the findings of the study by the “Belgrade Center for Security Policy” conducted in several Serbian cities with the topic of local safety.⁸ Focus groups organized with younger men and women clearly showed that the feeling of safety is gender-dependant, and hence men felt safe to a large degree in the city they live in, whereas women’s responses were quite the opposite. Moreover, while men associate the feeling of safety with any space in the city, women list multiple locations which they claimed to enhance their feeling of unsafety, alongside recommendations on how to solve this problem mainly through improving the lighting in city areas, and increased police patrols, particularly after dark. Like in other parts of the world, women in Serbia do not perceive the feeling of unsafety in public space as violence alone, but their fear and insecurity also rise with inappropriate looks, catcalls and stalking. Interestingly, due to their distrust of institutions and the feeling that the police would not fully understand them, women regress to patriarchal patterns in the attempt to protect themselves from possible unpleasant situations in public space, and hence they rather walk around the city in male company and avoid dressing in a way that can be perceived as provocative by men. This, unfortunately, shows that the problem is not solved in its essence, but only temporary exit strategies are found, while gender-based relations of dominance and submission continue to replicate.

Feeling safe and freedom of movement in public space constitute a specific aspect in the analysis of the patriarchy of the urban space .

In order to raise police awareness of the feeling of unsafety experienced by women in public urban

⁶ This is Round 9 of the European Social Survey (ESS) from 2018 which includes nineteen countries: <https://www.europe-ansocialsurvey.org/data/download.html?r=9>

⁷ Some earlier studies in Serbia came up with similar results. According to the data from 2011, only 27% female respondents reported they felt safe when walking alone around their neighbourhood, whereas almost twice as many men, 50% gave an affirmative response to the same question (SKGO, 2017).

⁸ More on this can be found at: <https://bezbednost.org/>

spaces, it is necessary to provide further training for police officers and also have a greater participation of female officers in the police, as they will be able to see this problem in its entirety, which opens up a possibility to initiate some positive police practices from within that focus on the protection of women in public space. On the other hand, it is important to highlight that the issue of safety and protection in the city is not only the task of the police. As emphasized on multiple occasions, this is a civilizational systemic problem which requires a change in the way of thinking and patterns of behaviour through different kind of socialization and education for citizens. From the perspective of local municipalities, it is necessary to establish and strengthen local bodies in charge of safety in all places, which would act as an intermediary in communication between citizens, the police and local governments.

The fact that more than 40 municipalities in Serbia have signed the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life is encouraging, so it is expected that concrete policies derived from this Charter which contain proposals on how to improve the safety of women in cities will be implemented in urban practices. A positive example of including traditionally marginalized groups into a decision-making process, these being women and youth, is the urban planning in the city of Šabac in Serbia (SKGO, 2017), while among European cities Vienna and Umea are the leaders in this respect.⁹

In any case, what all successfully completed urban planning processes have in common is the fact they are based on a co-designing principle and involve women in the consideration of advantages and disadvantages of particular parts of the urban space. This participatory approach can use different methods, such as polls, interviews and organizing group meetings and discussions. A stroll through the city with women, girls and young girls may be singled out as the best approach where, through the tour of different parts of the city, possibly dangerous areas may be mapped and concrete suggestions of what should be improved considered. Such an approach to urban planning was advocated by Jane Jacobs stating that “common people”, residents of a particular neighbourhood should be included in the process of space development, while adopting any centralist model and imposing universal solutions top-down are to be avoided. Each part of the city has its own uniqueness and urban material and symbolic history, hence the development of parts of the city should be treated individually without imposing any patterns and ready-made templates (Jacobs, 1961; Božilović, 2019). In the selection of persons to participate in research it is essential to choose women of different social status, that is, the members of different classes, races, ethnic and cultural groups, women of different age, physical ability and health as each of them carries their unique experience and will be able to provide a new insight into how urban space is perceived.

Conclusion

The aim of gender-based urban planning that guarantees safety is to end up producing a spatial environment which enables the woman to know where she is and where she is going, to allow her to see and be seen, to hear and be heard, and to be able to escape when necessary and find help nearby (ECFWITC, 1994). The right to the city is a universal right resting on the demand that anyone living in the city, regardless of their class, race, gender or other biological and cultural determinant has the right to use the city and to participate in creating and transforming its space. At present, women in cities around the world do not feel safe and cannot be said to be exercising the right to the city as equally as men, which makes it certain that they cannot be considered full-fledged citizens. The solution for correcting such social injustice is possible to find, and it lies, among others things, in participative urban planning. Examples of positive practice give guidelines as to how gender mainstreaming policies, if applied to urban planning may turn the city into a community in which

⁹ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2013-09-16/how-to-design-a-city-for-women>; <https://www.blog.urbact.eu/2017/12/umea-gender-equality-at-the-heart-of-the-city/>

each person feels safe and as a member of the society regardless of their gender and sex. Naturally, it would be wrong to claim that urban planning in itself could solve complex social and structural relations such as patriarchal relations are, but it can surely be an extremely useful corrective and a step forward in achieving gender equality in the city.

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Nuances, boundaries and subjects of the fear in the city.

Women's experiences in Milan

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Introduction

Fear is a word used to describe a present feeling, a past experience or a foreseen emotion; a condition that is pervasive but unforeseeable (Galimberti, 2006). Often considered one of the core features of contemporary societies (e.g. Beck, 2009; Tuan, 2013), fear can be a valuable tool to thoroughly investigate social phenomena, as it is one of the most primitive and uncontrollable emotions of human beings (Mongardini, 2004), which can take on different forms and dynamics. Although emotions have not been taken into account by sociological thinking for many years, around 40 years ago "such a central dynamic in human behavior, interaction, and social organization" became "central to sociology's mission" (Turner, 2009, p. 340). Emotions are, in fact, constitutive of our individual and collective experience (Turnaturi, 1995), and can be considered as social constructs that emerge or become meaningful in relation to a specific context and that cannot be isolated from the social structures within which they arise (Cerulo, 2018). Thus, they can have a crucial role in the analysis and interpretation of social practices.

If we look at some of our cities, the ways in which private and urban spaces are designs are dramatically affected by emotions and, especially, by fear. This can be noticed in how western democracies have become obsessed with security in the last few decades, but also individual and collective behaviours seem to follow this path likewise. Although social class and ethnicity are still fundamental "ecological" categories (Park, 1936) in this process, fear is a fundamental element deeply intertwined with these categories, hence, it ought to be taken into account at the theoretical and empirical level.

Following this background, at the Department of Communication, Arts and Media "Giampaolo Fabris" of IULM University (Milan, Italy), we conducted a study aimed at better understanding how fear shapes the lived experiences and perceptions of women living in Milan (see Di Fraia, 2019). More specifically, the study focused on how different cognitive and emotional representations of the city enact and constrain the places and the ways in which women experience their daily life around the urban environment. The outcome is an emotionography of the city, that sought to better understand which depiction of the city emerge from a female perspective.

Fear as a tool to understand the city

As every metropolis, Milan is an ensemble of places and bodies that flows within them. Drawing on qualitative interviews and focus groups, this study aimed to relate lived experiences and emotions with physical places, as well as with media images and stories, in order to investigate how the city

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is experienced by women¹. The result is an *emotionography* of the city, which revealed that fear is a useful tool to better understand urban spaces and to elaborate meaningful interpretations of the ways in which individuals organise their social and personal experiences in urban environments.

Emotional states

Fear is an umbrella term that covers a wide range of ongoing feelings and emotions and as a term it can refer to different emotional states: from worry to phobia, from soft anxiety to panic, and so forth. Indeed, fear emerged from our interviews as a feeling with some nuances and related to different realms of life.

One of the prevalent concepts that women link to fear is *insecurity*. Human beings can feel insecure even when there are no tangible threats: “fear is the name we give to our uncertainty” (Bauman, 2006, p. 1), which is a constant feature of everyday life in Western societies.

Fear is often expressed also as a *feeling of threat related to something or someone*. A common narrative that emerges, for example, is the fear of walking alone down the street during the night, with no one else around, which is associated with the potential peril of meeting ill-intentioned individuals in the darkness: “darkness is not the cause of danger, but it is the natural habitat of uncertainty – and

so of fear” (Bauman, 2006; p. 1). When this emotion gets more intense, participants talk about being scared and feeling the need to instinctively run away, especially when there is someone else that is distantly perceived as a peril.

an emotionography revealed that fear is a useful tool to elaborate meaningful interpretations of how individuals organise their social and personal experiences in urban environments.

Then, another common dimension of fear is uneasiness, such as when a woman passes around a group of men that harass her with remarkable verbal and nonverbal behaviour (catcalling). In general, it emerged that the strength of fear is linked to the fear of strength, as though fear became more powerful when a form of strength is perceived (a man, a group of men, a “herd” of males, etc.), that may potentially violate the vulnerability of a female body.

Boundaries and comfort zones

If fear can surface through different emotional states, it has a crucial role in drawing physical and symbolic boundaries within the city. The municipalities of Milan have different social and urban fabrics, which are divided and reunited by different confines. Specifically, there are two main emotional boundaries that emerge from this study: first, the differences between central upper-class neighbourhoods and suburbs; second, the distinction between day and night. Together with this, there are some inhibited places that recurrently emerge in the narratives regarding Milan. Indeed, women avoid specific places or zones on purpose, in order not to meet someone that is deemed potentially dangerous. This trend is exacerbated especially during the night and it implies the stigmatization of certain neighbourhoods, which are perceived as excessively empty (and therefore with no one that can help) or characterised by the presence of potentially ill-intentioned individuals.

These boundaries tend to divide Milan in accessible and avoidable zones, based on class, gender,

¹ The participants of the study were aged 18–65, thereby covering three age subgroups (18–25, 25–45; 45–60). From November 2018 until January 2019, 9 focus groups and 45 interviews were carried out with women from each of the nine municipalities of Milan. To draw an emotionography of the city, at the beginning of the interviews/focus groups, we showed participants a map of the city and we asked them to describe different neighbourhoods from an emotional perspective. Then, we expanded on these feelings with participants and relate their emotions with personal experiences and perceptions.

ethnicity, thereby creating both manifest and invisible limits and boundaries (Mattiucci, 2019). Thus, while the city appears as an infinite and limitless space (Bonomi and Abruzzese, 2001), that never stop growing, by incorporating and devouring all the places around it, within the urban environment physical and symbolic boundaries are continuously re-marked (Lazzarini, 2013). This is a typical feature of contemporary metropolises: the ceaseless flows of goods, capital and people reinforce and relocate boundaries, rather than reducing them. Whether we use the metaphor of the “dual” city (Mollenkopf and Castells, 1991; Borja and Castells, 2013) or of the “fragmented” city (e.g. Cesafsky, 2017), the division between high-income neighbourhoods and areas inhabited by low-qualified and underpaid workers is getting increasingly evident. In this scenario, fear plays a crucial role in how citizens perceive, behave and move within the city boundaries (Amendola, 2013).

This scenario highlights how common spaces can be often perceived as problematic and hostile. In the background there are images of big apartment buildings, boulevards with smoke, post-industrial areas, and then certain stigmatized public transport lines and a city that in many zones seem to become desert after the sunset. Here it is possible to find those “others” – immigrants, homeless people, drug addicts and so forth – on which is put the burden of insecurity. Wacquant (1999) refers to this process as the “criminalization of misery”. This idea appears reinforced by media narratives and political discourses (Sbraccia, 2007; Borlini and Memo, 2008; Di Fraia, Risi and Pronzato, 2019), which strengthen the stigmatization of marginalized subjects, framed as potential criminals.

Furthermore, it should be noted that certain areas are easily described as accessible and avoidable even when someone has never been there. Accounts of experiences by friends and acquaintances, but also a myriad of clichés and commonplaces, are the basis through which the stereotypization of certain neighbourhoods is perpetrated, through a sort of mixophobic perspective. Here the Other is often viewed, even without previous encounters, as a potential danger, especially when ethnic and class differences appear evident. The contact with them is systematically avoided and, therefore, also the areas of the city in which is possible to find them. These narratives substantiate the risk to chronify a distinction between “us and them”, which reinforce a city based on exclusion and discrimination rather than inclusivity.

Within this scenario, individuals tend to remain in places in which there are people considered similar, while other areas are systematically avoided: citizens develop their own comfort zones, a sort of “city within the city”, which is mainly composed by known itineraries and habits, i.e. the spaces semantized by everyday life, leisure and working activities.

These strategies may be framed as a typical trend of the late modernity: the continuous use of subjective solutions to systemic, collective and institutional contradictions (Adam, Beck and van Loon, 2000; Beck, 2009). People feel lost and disoriented in an emotional world out of control, that lack coherence and certainty, hence, they attempt to develop reassuring practices that can seemingly protect them. This may also be linked to a perceived lack of efficacy of some institutional actors that ought to guarantee the safety of citizens, such as the police, which are often perceived as lacking or sometimes even improper and unfair in their interventions. Some of our informants claimed that their interventions rarely meet citizens’ needs, while there are also accounts of episodes in which improper or violent actions by the police increased fear rather than diminish it.

The presence of the army in streets and squares does not reassure citizens, but it seems instead to highlight how weak the state is now. Indeed, when the state or institutions need to flex its muscles, citizens may interpret that as a sign of unpreparedness against risks and perils. Within this scenario, the state appears not able to protect citizens (let alone the most vulnerable, like women) while it display its (lost) strength by showing a form of force that is traditionally the most brutal and extreme, as the army was originally use to eliminate enemies.

The fear of the power of the state – that in the enlightenment project was considered a cure against individual fears, as well as a symbol that could reinforce social solidarity – today seems to turn into the power of fear. Power is shown by weak states, while people have to cope with fear and systematic uncertainty (which, as explained above, can even be framed as the same thing).

A fearful, fragmented city

Our reflection aimed to investigate some of the core dynamics that underlie how women experience urban environments and the role of fear in their perceptions and behaviours. From our empirical research emerged an *emotionography* of a fragmented city, made up of inhibited places (especially by the choice of the women themselves), complex relationships with the *Other*, and crowded areas that are deserted in the night. In this scenario, fear plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions and decision-making processes regarding which places are more advisable to frequent and what is possible to do (or not) in certain parts of the city, as well as how and when. Furthermore, problems of coexistence with situations of social unease (such as drug addiction, homelessness, etc.) continuously emerge in filigree.

Although the results draw upon a qualitative sample from Milan, the lived experiences that were analysed are probably not dissimilar from the ones that could have been gathered in other cities or even countries. A feeling of insecurity and uneasiness shapes how women perceive and experience the city. They feel their bodies threatened, their images chased, their freedom undermined. The response to these emotional states is often individualistic and consists mainly in the elaboration of comfort zones and in the avoidance of certain places, that are deemed dangerous and implicitly stigmatized. Indeed, certain locations are avoided as they are considered unsafe, often due to a tangible presence of males with distinctive characteristics – such as a different social class or ethnic group – and to the lack of reference places in which is possible to recognize people that comply with one's everyday life.

All in all, fear has a striking impact on social practices and on how urban environments are experienced and explored. The risk entailed in a systematic avoidance of specific places is the chronicization of discrimination and stigmatization logics, within a city texture that tend to exclude minorities, to hide social issues and that appears difficult to freely live by women.

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Female fear and residential segregation in Husby, Stockholm

Anna Yates

'Don't look them in the eye.'

'Wear conservative clothing.'

'Be careful – women aren't safe in Husby.'

(Residents living outside of Husby, Stockholm)

Above are examples of advice I received during my fieldwork from women living outside of Husby, a peripheral suburb, with the lowest income per capita of any neighbourhood in Stockholm (Stockholms Stad, 2017). As of 2017, it is home to a population of 11,893 citizens, of which approximately 86.6% have an immigrant background, recently emigrating from the Middle East and Africa (Stockholms Stad, 2017). In Stockholm and wider Sweden, women are constantly bombarded with messages similar to these. Whilst the source is variable – friends, family, and the media – the content of these messages is remarkably similar. The name 'Husby' elicits a chain of negatively-charged associations centred on one overarching stereotype: dangerous people living in a dangerous area (Pred, 2000).

Stigmatised neighbourhoods, similar to Husby, are no stranger to academic research. The infamous Parisian banlieues and American ghettos for example, are subject to frequent academic study concerning their cause, function, and impact, increasingly in relation to women's safety (Wacquant, 2008) – a popular topic given the 'Me Too' movement. In the case of Husby however, Sweden's world-renowned reputation as a gender-equal and multicultural society has operated as a façade, blocking discussions about gender inequalities and racial discrimination (Hallgren, 2005; Tigervall and Hubinette, 2010). The result: Husby is deemed less worthy of academic attention in comparison to its more 'dangerous' international counterparts.

Nevertheless, this façade has been gradually dismantled by several Swedish geographers (Castell, 2010; Malmberg et al., 2018). Researchers have investigated processes at the level of the government which have led to the racial stigmatisation of 'Stockholm's suburbs' (Andersson and Mollina, 2003). Whilst this literature is significant in furthering understanding of residential segregation in Stockholm, the focus of these analyses and the scale at which they are conducted are limited. First, the absence of any discussion of women's perceived safety is alarming considering Husby's representation in popular discourse. Second, most analysis is conducted at the macro-level, choosing to focus on government scale processes in a quantitative nature. This has been at the expense of incorporating citizens' perspectives whose everyday realities are firmly entwined with Husby's racial stigmatisation. Therefore, this article will address these gaps through investigating women's fear of crime in Husby from the perspective of women living in and outside this stigmatised neighbourhood.

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Central to this article is the data collected from twenty walking interviews and four focus groups. In the walking interview, I adopted a largely open-ended format as I provided limited direction regarding where to walk and what to discuss, leaving the participant free to comment on whatever they deemed relevant to the topic of women's safety in Husby (Carpiano, 2009). In terms of focus groups, I conducted two focus groups with residents in Husby, and two with residents living in other neighbourhoods in Stockholm. Whilst the group had control over the order and length of time devoted to different topics, I used a checklist to ensure a variety of topics relevant to women's fear of crime – including segregation, community spirit, media representation – were covered by the end of the session.

In both methods, only women participated – half resided in Husby and the other half lived in other neighbourhoods in Stockholm. Regarding sampling, this corresponded with whether they were non-European immigrants or white Swedish nationals. Alongside their gender and race, these women were of different ages and class. The findings are subsequently divided into discussions on emerging insider and outsider perspectives, the racialised nature of these fears and the relationship between residential segregation and women's perception of safety.

Insider and outsider fears

It became quickly apparent that two contrasting narratives exist on women's perception of safety in Husby, concomitantly referred to as the 'insider' and 'outsider' perspective. The former, who lived in Husby and identified as 'immigrants of colour', reported a low personal fear of crime. The latter resided in other Stockholm neighbourhoods and labelled themselves as 'white women' and reported a high personal fear of crime in Husby. For both 'insiders' and 'outsiders', their perception of safety was largely dependent on the racial homogeneity of the surrounding population. In this way, discussing their fear of 'crime' is misleading given it is not 'crime' per se that women fear but those who do not fit into their community, predominantly due to the social construction and concomitant stereotypes attached to the dangerous 'racial other' (Lemanski, 2006).

To gain an initial insight into women's fear of crime, respondents were first asked to describe how safe they felt in Husby. With several exceptions, responses fell at either extreme of a qualitative, self-generated scale with half of the women reporting that they felt 'safe' whilst the other half declared feeling 'very unsafe'. Their perception of safety appeared to align with their area of residence as locals commonly reported feeling 'safe' whilst ethnic Swedes living outside Husby were amongst those who felt 'very unsafe'. These perspectives are respectively labelled as the 'insider' and 'outsider' perspective due to the marked spatial division emerging in women's fear of crime (Stark, 1976). Amongst 'outsiders', women's use of space substantially varied over the day. Whilst women reported feeling safer during the day, none felt safe at night, to the extent that women avoided venturing into Husby at night. Nevertheless, in contrast, few residents in Husby experienced a change in fear of crime from day to night. During one walking interview, a woman pointed at a bench in the main square and insisted: *'I would sit here in the middle of the night, I know that is unusual'*. This respondent is paradoxically aware that her fear of crime should change from day to night, demonstrated in interviews with 'outsiders'. Despite this, like other 'insiders', she insists her fear of crime remains low.

Racialised fears

'Outsiders' visiting Husby felt unsafe owing to the presence of immigrants of colour. Whilst some reported simply not feeling comfortable amongst so many immigrants, others explained how they felt unsafe due to the congregation of 'black immigrant men' in Husby's public space (Allen, 2002). Justifying her fear of these men, one woman explained: "There is a gradient of behaviour coming from equator towards the North. The less dark they are, some traits become less pronounced, most of these are dangerous traits that make every woman feel unsafe". Using backward theories of environmental

determinism, this quote constructs men of colour as 'dangerous' for all women. Stereotypes equating black men with criminality and more specifically, sexual harassment, were commonly expressed by 'outsiders'.

Whilst not assuming a logical nor linear relationship between fear of crime and victimisation, not one 'outsider' could recall any incident involving an immigrant man of colour. Due to this, 'outsiders' fears could be understood as 'irrational', however, to label their fears as irrational would be to wrongly conceptualise fear of crime as an individual issue, ignorant of its collective and structural roots (Hille, 1999). In response, it must be emphasised that 'outsiders' are continually misinformed about the 'dangerous other' through friends, politics, and the media (Pain, 2001; Valentine, 1989). Heber (2011) for example, reveals that in discussions of female safety in the media, the location and perpetrator of crimes are only mentioned when the crime has occurred in the suburbs by men of colour. In this context, it is easy to understand why women's fears do not correspond with reality.

On the other hand, 'insiders' reported a low fear of crime within Husby's perimeters, not due to the absence of crime or criminals, but more closely tied to the absence of white individuals. Due to an increase in racial attacks against young immigrant men - in and outside of Husby-, Husby's racially-homogenous population was important for their perception of safety. Similar to 'outsiders' fear of

black men, insiders were fearful in the presence of white men, however, not for their own safety but for their sons'. In this way, the presence of white men and women in Husby's public space prompted stares, however, not for the reasons imagined by 'outsiders'. First, their presence was understood as 'unusual' due to the extent of racial segregation in Stockholm. Individuals are used to residing in racially-homogenous environments and thus, unaccustomed to encountering individuals of a different race (Sibley, 1995). Second, their presence was 'unnerving' due to previous incidents where local men had been attacked by said individuals. Albeit more subtle, 'insiders' collective conflation of 'white people with danger' is as racially prejudiced as 'outsiders' homogenous conflation of 'black men with danger'.

Far from surprising given this context, women's fear of crime is dependent on the racial homogeneity of the surrounding population.

Residential segregation and fear:

The most important aspect to be drawn from this discussion is the importance of the process of residential racial segregation which rests at the heart of both the 'insider' and 'outsider' perspectives. The concrete, spatial expression of segregation, that is the concentration of certain groups and under-representation of others, is frequently discussed in studies of residential segregation in Stockholm. (Andersson and Mollina, 2003; Brama, 2006; Rokem and Vaughan, 2018). As stressed by Brama (2006), ethnic residential segregation occurs on the city-level and results in some areas containing almost exclusively ethnic-Swedish residents - where 'outsiders' reside - and others containing few ethnic-Swedes - where 'insiders' reside. Several explanations have been proposed to explain the cause of this development, the most convincing of which is the aforementioned Million Homes Programme (Brama, 2006). When the most recent wave of immigrants first arrived in Stockholm, they were directed to mass-built neighbourhoods - including Husby - that were designed as part of the programme (Andersson and Mollina, 2003). Due to this influx of immigrants, Swedes subsequently fled to central Stockholm which resulted in a concentration of people of foreign backgrounds in peripheral neighbourhoods (Legeby, 2010). Although women's perceived safety is not discussed in these literatures, the finding that women's fear of crime is dependent on the racial homogeneity of the surrounding population is far from surprising given this context. Due to this segregation, individuals became accustomed to living in racially-homogenous environments.

I do not wish to denigrate this literature's value in understanding female fear of crime in Husby. These literatures have provided an important insight into the context and causes of segregation that undeniably contributed to the *emergence* of the 'insider'/'outsider' perspective. However, their traditional, mechanical conception of segregation is problematic (Andersson and Mollina, 2003). This conception neglects the significant components of the segregation process: the immaterial, symbolic aspects of residential segregation and its dynamic processes (Lundstrom, 2010). Lundstrom's (2010) alternative conceptualisation successfully highlights the constant dynamism within and between separate segregated spaces in the form of everyday travel and transgressed borders which in this context, leads to the *ongoing reproduction* of the 'insider'/'outsider' perspective. (Lundstrom, 2010). Learning from this, investigating female fear of crime in Husby from the perspective of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' provides the opportunity to first, respond to these calls in the literature for a more dynamic conceptualisation of segregation and second, provide a more holistic understanding of women's fear of crime and its relationship with segregation.

In my research, the aforementioned crossing of boundaries occurred when 'outsiders' visited Husby to partake in interviews. For some participants, this was their first time visiting the neighbourhood as their fear of sexual harassment had hitherto led to them avoid Husby. This 'transgression of boundaries' is often positioned as contributing to the dissolution of spatial and social boundaries, or in this context, racial boundaries (Lemanski, 2006; Lundstrom, 2010). Physically encountering the 'dangerous other' in public space is understood to encourage social mixing and challenge preconceived *collective* stereotypes due to the opportunity for individual everyday encounter (Rokem and Vaughan, 2018). For example, 'outsiders' often discussed how they had arrived early for interviews and hence had explored the area, theoretically maximising opportunities for social interaction. Despite its optimistic framing in the literature, individual's transgression of spatial boundaries did not lead to the dissolution of collective social boundaries. This is best summarised by one interviewee's reflection: '*I won't come back here again*'. The aforementioned literature hence underestimates the power of preconceived collective assumptions held by those individuals who are transgressing spatial boundaries. Building on previous discussions, 'outsiders' preconceived assumptions - fuelled by the discussion of their friends, family, politics, and the media- strongly shaped how they understood Husby's people and environment. Moreover, the arrival of 'outsiders' prompted fear amongst 'insiders' due to their own preconceived assumptions that represented all white people as dangerous and racist. To summarise, *individual*'outsiders' transgression of Husby's spatial boundaries clearly served to *reinforce* these existing spatial and racial boundaries, reproducing the both 'insiders' and 'outsiders' fear of crime.

Conclusion

Investigating female fear of crime provides a unique insight into segregation across Stockholm. It challenges how residential segregation should be conceptualised, encouraging us to divert our attention from rigid, homogenous labels of 'immigrant' and 'white' neighbourhoods to the individuals that transgress these boundaries. These perspectives, this paper has argued, provide the best insight into the dynamics of both female safety and segregation. The discussion of segregation in this paper has been pivotal to contextualise the female fear of crime reported by respondents, and to understand how two contradictory perspectives have emerged on the same neighbourhood. However, before concluding on this pessimistic note, I believe that the subsequent *dynamism* of the processes of segregation and female fear of crime should be interpreted as a sign of hope, and an agent of resistance. By that I mean, we should raise the question of how individuals' spatial transgression can *challenge* rather than *reinforce* racial boundaries.

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Trasformare la paura

Pratiche di resistenza femminista, emozioni e spazio urbano

Chiara Belingardi
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Introduzione

Negli ultimi anni numerose sono state le riflessioni e le proposte politiche, che hanno messo a tema il nodo della paura legato all'attraversamento degli spazi urbani da una prospettiva di genere (Stanko 1985, 1988, Pain 1991, 2001, Rosewarne 2005, Stengel 2010, Belingardi e Castelli 2015). In un fiorire di convegni, rapporti, provvedimenti e persino *app*, il nesso tra donne, paura e spazi urbani ha guadagnato notevole visibilità nella discussione pubblica, senza che a questa visibilità sia corrisposta una volontà di approfondimento.

Le criticità di queste iniziative si muovono su diversi livelli: il primo, e più evidente, riguarda il fatto che il nodo tra violenza e spazi urbani non tocca solo "le donne", ma tutte quelle soggettività imprevedute e non normate che attraversano lo spazio pubblico contemporaneo (donne cis e trans, soggettività queer, LGBTQIA+, disabili, razzializzate, precarie, umane e non umane). Insomma, tutto quel che eccede il paradigma dell'uomo bianco occidentale abile e borghese).

Molto spesso, questo nodo guarda ai soggetti femminili come a oggetti statici di studio e non come a soggetti dotati agency e potenziali interlocutori. Una prospettiva di genere, infatti, non sempre coincide con una prospettiva incarnata, o meglio ancora politica, capace di fare del proprio posizionamento un'interlocuzione e non un implicito del discorso. Un altro elemento che si perde di vista è il fatto che la violenza di genere, e la violenza di genere urbana, non riguardano situazioni emergenziali, eccezionali, all'interno della nostra società: è parte della società stessa, pilastro su cui essa si modula e struttura fin dai suoi albori. Non a caso, i movimenti femministi contemporanei parlano di violenza strutturale, legata alla società patriarcale in modo ineludibile (Non una di meno 2017).

Infine, la piega che il nodo paura/spazi urbani assume è spesso quella della tutela paternalistica, della vittimizzazione e del depotenziamento. Come vedremo nel corso di queste righe, molte riflessioni femministe hanno invece fatto della paura una passione attiva e generatrice, sottraendola alla tradizione vittimizzante e mortifera elaborata dalla cultura patriarcale occidentale.

Sotto questa luce, il discorso sulla paura si è rivelato una strategia potente di contenimento, finendo per limitare fattivamente l'uso e l'attraversamento delle città per molte/x e respingendo spesso i soggetti impreveduti di nuovo nell'ambito del privato (l'ambito ritenuto "sicuro" - nonostante i dati sui femminicidi evidenzino il contrario¹ - e in cui non si ha voce, né parola pubblica).

Movimenti femministi, *gendered emotion* e spazio urbano

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¹ Nel 2016 gli autori di femminicidio sono stati partner o ex partner nel 51% dei casi, altri parenti nel 22,1%. Fonte: Dossier sul Femminicidio del Senato della Repubblica, 23/11/2017.

Per lungo tempo gli studi sui movimenti sociali hanno fatto ricorso a teorie quali la mobilitazione delle risorse, i *frame*, o la struttura delle opportunità politiche per inquadrare la nascita dei movimenti sociali al di fuori di quel discorso che li aveva relegati ad emanazione dei bassi istinti, del delirio della folla, delle passioni istintive (Snow e Benford 1992, della Porta e Diani 2006). Rimuovere la fonte emozionale risultava, a livello teorico e politico, una strada per “legittimare” e restituire autorevolezza alle forme di organizzazione collettiva. Solo di recente le emozioni e le passioni sono state riportate al centro dell’analisi in quanto fonti della partecipazione politica (Goodwin, Jasper e Polletta 2001). La rabbia, la frustrazione, la paura, l’indignazione, l’amore, sono state individuate come vettori di avvicinamento, impegno, costanza nell’azione collettiva.

Alcune studiose, come Taylor (1996), hanno definito le *gendered emotion* (emozioni di genere), in riferimento al carattere di genere che assumono alcune emozioni calate nel mondo sociale, come nel caso della “depressione post-partum”. Estendendo il campo di questa riflessione potremmo inquadrare la paura come un’emozione di genere. Essa è veicolo di controllo e organizzazione della vita sociale, sia rispetto ai rapporti interpersonali - paura come forma specifica di violenza di genere e emozione che modella le relazioni di genere - sia rispetto allo spazio urbano (Pain 1991). Le politiche pubbliche, nella loro pretesa neutralità, finiscono spesso per incarnare un punto di vista maschile-dominante rendendo di fatto alcuni spazi meno accessibili per donne e LGBTQIA+.

Ma l’accessibilità è spesso giocata sull’assenza di un senso di timore e disagio per chi si trova ad essere “fuori luogo”, e quindi potenzialmente oggetto di molestia o abuso. In quest’ottica rientra, ad esempio, il lancio dell’app Wher da parte del Comune di Bologna nel 2017, una sorta di mappatura collettiva in cui si raccolgono giudizi delle utenti sulla sicurezza percepita nelle diverse stra-

Il nodo paura/spazi urbani è spesso quello della tutela paternalistica, della vittimizzazione e del depotenziamento. Molte riflessioni hanno invece fatto della paura una passione attiva e generatrice.

de della città, in base ai quali l’app consiglia o meno determinati percorsi a seconda dell’orario.² Un approccio che non si orienta a una trasformazione della città accogliente e inclusiva per tutte/x, ma al contrario mantiene l’inevitabilità di una struttura di genere e tende a “educare” le donne, le persone LGBTQIA+, le persone razzializzate a preservarsi, evitando situazioni di potenziale pericolo.

Nello stesso anno a Pisa il movimento femminista ha lanciato, attraverso una passeggiata femminista notturna, una mappatura della città “sicura”. Nella mappa sono segnati come fonti di insicurezza gli edifici abbandonati della città, non solo perché luoghi potenziali di attività criminali, quanto - soprattutto - perché sottratti all’utilizzo da parte dei movimenti sociali. Giocando sul carattere politico delle emozioni e sul loro potenziale trasformativo, i movimenti femministi impongono un ribaltamento della paura in quanto dispositivo di controllo e violenza di genere. La paura, così come la rabbia, viene intesa come generativa di altre possibilità di attraversare e abitare lo spazio pubblico, e di conseguenza la propria esistenza.

Pratiche femministe resistenti

Le pratiche di resistenza femminista, che affondano nella rielaborazione della paura come emozione politica, vengono messe in campo anche a partire dall’affermazione di “un altro genere di forza” (Chiricosta 2019). Una forza collettiva, che viene dalla sorellanza, dalle relazioni, dal fatto di stare insieme, dal costruire percorsi di impoderamento personale e di risignificazione degli spazi. Tali pratiche possono essere di tipo effimero o stabile.

² Per un approfondimento critico si rimanda a Olcuire, 2019.

Quelle che potremmo definire di tipo effimero, perché hanno una durata limitata nel tempo, mirano spesso alla riappropriazione e all'affermazione di sé nello spazio pubblico. Attraverso la stessa presenza mettono in relazione il corpo singolo con quello altrui, creando un corpo collettivo che investe lo spazio pubblico, producendo forme di resistenza creativa in cui ribaltare le norme dominanti (Castelli 2015). Secondo questa interpretazione, i corpi "espulsi" dall'uso dello spazio pubblico possono così diventare strumenti performativi di contaminazione e di superamento di alcuni limiti. Quando l'azione emerge da una certa consapevolezza, dall'uso del corpo per sovvertire lo spazio pubblico, rendendo visibile ciò che è invisibile (e dunque normalmente interiorizzato), si può parlare di corpi come strumenti di militanza politica (Borghi 2019).

Alcune pratiche che mettono in gioco corpi sessuati e spazi pubblici hanno origine negli Stati Uniti nei primi anni '90: la marcia, la camminata collettiva passano dall'essere manifestazioni di dissenso, solidarietà e rivendicazione a un significato più profondo di messa "in piazza" della propria sessualità e di riappropriazione di alcuni spazi (Custodi, Olcuire e Silvi 2020). Stare per le strade è la pratica di 'stasis' che crea lo spazio per la rivolta e contemporaneamente dispone un modo affettivo, collettivo di vivere lo spazio pubblico. Durante questi momenti, la corporeità si espone in tutta la sua intensità appassionata, e questa nuova centralità dei corpi permette di cogliere la relazione che questi momenti intessono con gli spazi urbani e il nuovo senso della politica che propongono (Castelli 2015, 2019).

Guardando alla specificità di tali pratiche rispetto alla relazione tra paura e spazio pubblico, l'attraversamento delle strade come forma di autodeterminazione ha una lunga (e coraggiosa) storia che non ripercorreremo in questa sede: "Riprendiamoci la notte!" gridavano il 27 novembre 1976 migliaia di donne scese per le strade di Roma contro l'ennesima violenza maschile. E poi ancora dal Gay Pride alle Slutwalks si arriva fino alle Marches de Nuit, che prendono piede dopo il 2010 in varie città francesi e dove gruppi di attiviste/x propongono una riflessione sullo spazio pubblico negato ad alcune categorie (in particolare quella femminile, ma non solo) attraverso la percezione della pericolosità dei luoghi. Le marce diventano esplorazioni per affrontare e decostruire la paura, e per avviare un percorso di riappropriazione che passa, ovviamente, per il loro attraversamento in una dimensione collettiva.

Nonostante sia forse impossibile una ricostruzione precisa delle geografie italiane di tali pratiche, ci sembra importante ricordare in questa sede alcuni esempi³: oltre alle passeggiate, l'apertura di spazi abbandonati o lasciati all'incuria nei contesti urbani propone un'ulteriore esempio di azione collettiva femminista volta a scardinare i confini di accessibilità/non accessibilità, di paura/agio, di vulnerabilità/forza.

È questo il caso delle Cagne Sciolte "alla conquista dello spazio"⁴, che dal 2013 occupano un ex night club chiuso da anni per sfruttamento della prostituzione. La dimensione spaziale dell'azione collettiva emerge con chiarezza dalle pratiche del gruppo, che sceglie di concentrare parte delle proprie forze da un lato nell'apertura di uno sportello contro la violenza maschile sulle donne ("Una stanza tutta per sé"), dall'altro in innumerevoli passeggiate notturne, spesso irridenti e provocatorie, attraverso i luoghi di vari quartieri solitamente ostili. Come riportato in un loro documento:

Come Cagne Sciolte, insieme a tante altre donne, questo quartiere lo viviamo e lo abbiamo attraversato con attacchinaggi, passeggiate, incontri collettivi per ribadire che le strade libere non le fanno le camionette, la video-sorveglianza e tantomeno gli uomini bianchi che vorrebbero proteggerci dall'uomo "nero". La nostra libertà di vivere le strade, di giorno e di notte, ce la prendiamo da sole, lottando insieme contro chi strumentalizza il nostro corpo per imporre controllo e sicurezza sulle nostre vite, contro chi vorrebbe reprimerlo in una morale cattolica, razzista e moralista. Le strade le rendiamo libere creando solidarietà e autorganizzazione, non girando la testa dall'altra parte se una di noi ha bisogno di aiuto, ribadendo la

3 Un'ampia rassegna di tali pratiche è riportata nel volume *La libertà è una passeggiata* (Belingardi, Castelli, Olcuire, 2019).

4 <https://cagnescolte.noblogs.org/2013/11/25/cagne-scolte-alla-conquista-dello-spazio-si-agirano-per-la-citta/>

nostra volontà di andare in giro vestite come vogliamo, amando chi vogliamo, senza bisogno di papponi e protettori.⁵

A differenza di alcuni gruppi femministi che si sono focalizzati sulla dicotomia “donne perbene/donne permale”, scatenando un controverso dibattito sull’adozione di “dignità” e “decenza” come categorie di riflessione femminista, come fece il movimento Se Non Ora Quando a fine 2011 (Garofalo Geymonat e Selmi 2019), le Cagne Sciolte e in generale i collettivi transfemministi hanno opposto un netto rifiuto a questa torsione linguistica (e politica), radicalizzando la critica all’uso del “decoro” come dispositivo discorsivo e adottando pratiche di riappropriazione degli spazi pubblici.

La presenza di spazi recuperati e rimessi in circolo tramite occupazioni più o meno precarie appare come un fattore chiave per l’affermazione della pratica femminista dell’analisi delle criticità e del loro ribaltamento come fonte di impoderamento, e le Cagne Sciolte sono esempio di queste pratiche. Un altro è Lucha y Siesta, casa delle donne occupata nel quartiere Tuscolano a Roma.

Le “Luchadoras”, “Luche” o “Lucine”, le donne che compongono il collettivo di gestione, hanno occupato lo stabile per farne un centro antiviolenza femminista, che mette l’autodeterminazione delle ospiti al centro dei loro percorsi di fuoriuscita. Avendo a che fare quotidianamente con storie di violenza, paura e sicurezza ne hanno tratto alcune riflessioni:

La costituzione di un gruppo di donne era nata anche dall’idea che la sicurezza non sia solo fisica o sociale, ma anche che questa debba essere una sicurezza di vicinanza e di relazione. È chiaro che tu non ti puoi sentire sicura da sola. L’idea con cui abbiamo occupato questo posto sette anni fa, e che continua, è che la sicurezza te la da anche la tua compagna di stanza, chi ti sta accanto, perché nel momento in cui tu sei un po’ meno sicura, magari lo è l’altra, quindi un’idea un po’ più circolare e condivisa. Con tutte le sue sfaccettature. Insomma creare una sicurezza di comunità, tra donne che si aiutano a vicenda, si sostengono. (Belingardi, Castelli, 2015).

Conclusioni

È necessario declinare il tema della paura urbana. Nello scrivere questo articolo abbiamo fatto nostra la pratica del “partire da sé”, dando voce ad esperienze a noi vicine in quanto emergenti dalla medesima postura e dallo stesso desiderio.

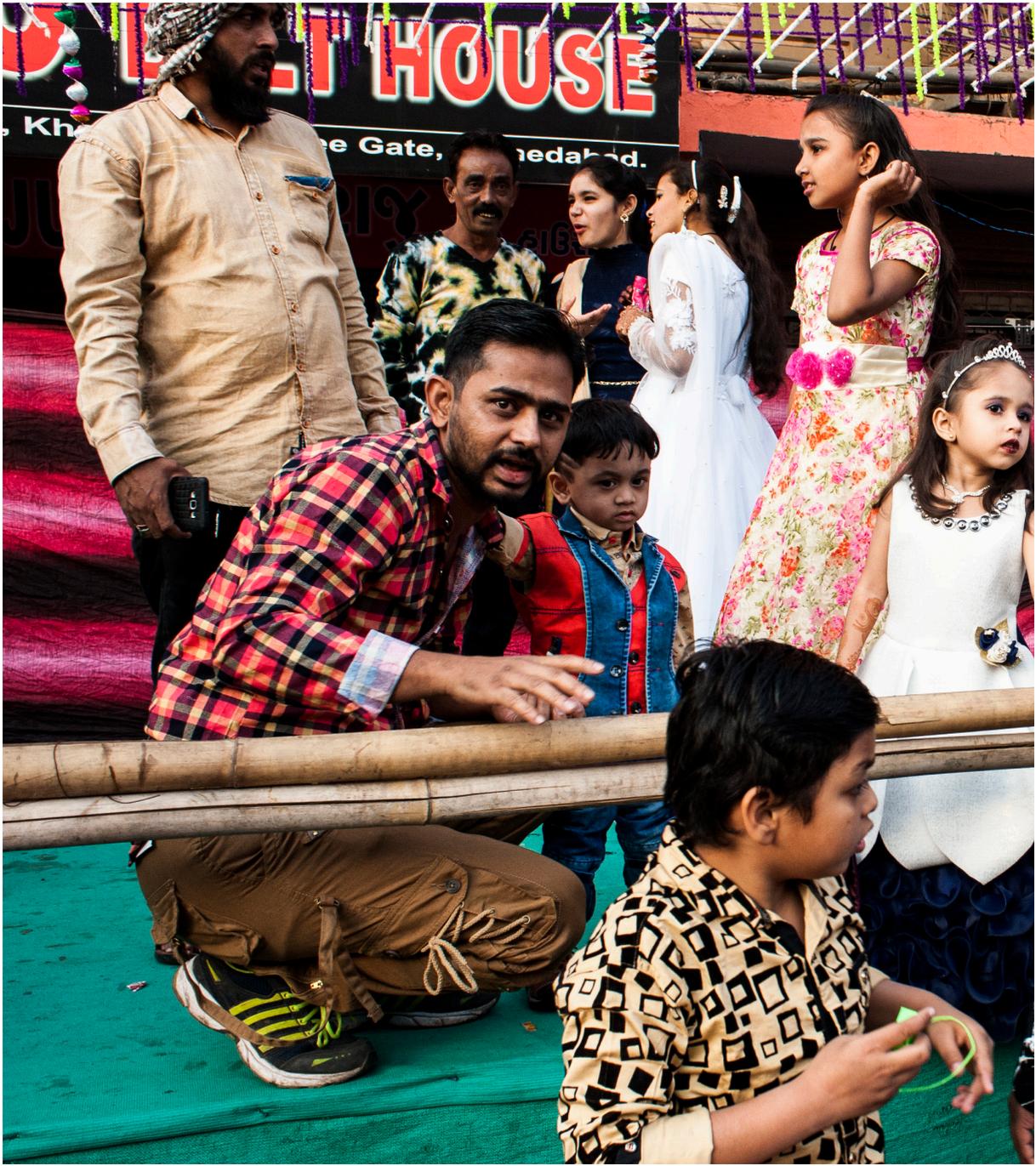
Questa postura incarnata e situata non intende essere paradigmatica per tutte le donne e persone femminilizzate che abitano nella nostra città. Non intendiamo con questo breve scritto togliere voce a chi, nella nostra stessa città, vive disagi di natura molto diversa (e che hanno trovato posto, in parte, in altri articoli di questo numero). Ci sono persone che hanno paura e non hanno relazioni a cui aggrapparsi, che subiscono minacce molto concrete di natura materiale (perdita del lavoro, della casa, povertà) o che già vivono in condizioni di disagio. Ci sono persone che non possono sconfiggere queste paure con una passeggiata, perché esse vanno a toccare la loro stessa possibilità di sopravvivenza. Ci sono persone che subiscono i pacchetti sicurezza, i quali in nome dello slogan “città più sicure” affermano di mirare a sconfiggere la paura urbana. Logiche che subiamo anche noi, perché rappresentano un dispositivo patriarcale e muscolare del potere statale, che colpisce senza creare benessere sociale.

Ed è rispetto alle nostre paure che le pratiche che in questo contributo abbiamo inteso come dispositivi di resistenza permettono di trasformare la paura e generare nuove modalità di presenza e uso dello spazio pubblico. Creare città inclusive significa creare dispositivi di distribuzione del potere, significa attraversarne le strade usando i propri privilegi per aprirne di nuove.

[5.17g-h15-p-le-tiburtino_femardi-e-possibilecorteo-popolare-contro-grandi-opere-sfratti-sgomberi-e-devastazioni-ambientali](#)

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Tommaso Vaccarezza

Selection of everyday images from a reportage in India (2017)

for "Fear the city"

Instagram: [tomvac77](https://www.instagram.com/tomvac77)



Haphephobia and Urban Creativity

The 'Frightful' Case of Western Popular Music

Massimiliano Raffa

When we think about popular music¹, our mind immediately calls forth huge crowds at summer festivals, tarted up popstars captured by exciting music videos, recording studios up-to-date with cutting-edge technological paraphernalia and streaming platforms playlists compiled by hundreds of thousands of users. What we tend to overlook, instead, is where the musical languages spoken by those stars of the entertainment industry originate from. In most cases, these were far from reassuring places. Indeed, a considerable part of the original forms of popular music has thrived within environments characterised by social marginality and demographic thickening, where innovative forms of 'creative experience' have flourished, by means of new forms of inter-individual relationality.

The notion of 'creative experience' in the context of popular urban cultures has been investigated from two main perspectives: the objectivist one (typical of sociological structuralism and anthropological culturalism) which tends to consider social creativity as determined by an autonomous social and cultural structure, and the subjectivist one (typical of the 'formalist' stream of economic anthropology) which focuses on the active and unpredictable role of the individual, who serves as a transformation vector for the cultural structures of society. The present article takes an intermediate position, shared by many study orientations fully established from the mid-1970s onwards. 'Creativity' will be understood as a cultural and communicative process grounded on the tension between 'creative individuality' and a social structure that enables the circulation of its works, fueling processes of cultural production through the provision of a reticular societal framework (Becker 1982).

Popular music is a peculiar field of cultural production: it has archetypal and teleological links with the media system, but it has historically relied on environments within which musical codes are able to reach 'critical mass' and then grasp larger audiences wielding its imaginative power. The metropolis is the most typical of these settings: "The chief function of the city is to convert power into form, energy into culture, dead matter into the living symbols of art, biological reproduction into social creativity" (Mumford 1961: 571). That 'social creativity' at the heart of the prototypical forms of popular music unfolded in industrialised, cosmopolitan urban contexts, as a result of the dialectic synthesis of unremitting contrasts between overcrowded, multicultural areas and uptown districts inhabited by a middle-class which was eager for new kinds of entertainment forms. Urban creativity should therefore not be considered a merely individual phenomenon, as it results from the cooperation of a number of actors involved both in the social world and in production systems and supply chains. 'Creative acts', in popular music, occur within human interaction processes established by what I refer

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¹ The notion of 'popular music' here used is that widely shared in sociology, cultural studies and musicology (cf. Middleton 1990; Frith 1998; Fabbri 2008). We will therefore understand popular music as a field of cultural production and consumption separate from art music and traditional music.

to as 'urban proxemics'. A spectre is now hunting such promising, yet dreadful places – the idea that certain conditions of cultural production can dissolve into the fear of living alongside one another.

Popular music and the city

Ulf Hannerz (1996: 61) argued that the most inventive individuals in the history of human consciousness were *marginal men*, "people who have acutely experienced a contrast between ongoing cultural traditions and who have thereby been provoked into new understandings". The history of popular music can be seen as a history of 'creativity into marginality', 'creativity in close proximity' and 'creativity within scary places' at the same time.

The original forms of musical expression that would constitute the main sources of entertainment music of the 20th century established themselves in the aftermath of the Second Industrial Revolution. In their diversity, they all have one thing in common: they are the product of accelerated processes of hybridisation of languages that only a few years earlier would have required much longer cultural assimilation times. Before the advent of media such as radio, record industry, film industry, and television, it was in metropolitan relationality that forms of *culturemes* sharing developed amidst individuals of different ancestries, catalysed in the slums of large urban areas by the processes of movement of goods and people introduced by advanced capitalism.

A great deal of popular music's pioneering languages has gained a foothold in working-class districts of large conurbations, often culturally diverse port cities (Fabbri 2008). For instance, Portuguese *fado* originated in the brothels of Alfama and Mouraria, the areas of Lisbon at the time with the highest crime rates, and combined native stylistic elements with other coming from the African or the Brazilian Creole population; Choro and *samba* in their most defined forms originated in the areas inhabited by the Afro-Brazilian Bahians who moved to Rio de Janeiro, and mixed together both European elements (and themselves hybrid such as Bohemian *polka* or Masovian *mazurka*) and above all Angolan, Congolese (*lundü*) and Cape Verdean (*batuque*) dances; Spanish flamenco began amongst the Andalusian gypsy minority, with the resulting stylistic richness (the Romani peoples originate in India, and along their migratory route it is unlikely that they have not absorbed musical elements typical of the regions they traversed), while also retaining Byzantine, Arabic and Jewish features. Social marginality, cultural recombination, and urban relationality concern almost all the types of popular music worldwide – emerged at the beginning of the last century, such as Greek-Turkish *rebetiko*, Argentinean *tango*, the *Neapolitan song* or the countless constellation of Caribbean styles. This issue acquires further significance if we consider the African-American genres: *jazz*, *blues* and *ragtime* shared common cultural origins in folklore, but the codicological synthesis they have reached was entirely due to the interactive processes triggered by demographic gatherings in geographically limited areas. If in the processes of acculturation of minorities of African origin we may find joint roots in all three genres, it is once they got immersed into the new urban contexts that the extraordinary musical, cultural, and conceptual dissimilarities become evident. The argument maintains its cogency whether we turn our gaze to more recent cultural phenomena. Hip hop culture is today the 'ground-work' of the most commercially successful youth music. Its 'sonic' expressions in *rap music* emerged from rather depressed urban areas, such as the Bronx in the mid-1970s or Compton in the late 1980s.

The above-mentioned examples do not represent exceptional occurrences, but rather a constant feature: the ability of multiethnic, densely populated cities to foster creativity through creolisation processes. Today, the erosion of spaces generally designated for urban cultural creation have gradually made way for immaterial networks of cultural production. If on the one hand it shall be acknowledged that processes of late globalisation (and thus whatever related to multiculturalism, migratory flows, multiple identities, complex networks) have in some way increased the possibilities that new creolised local scenes may be emerging, on the other hand it shall be admitted that over the last two

decades, urban popular music has gone through a period of substantive stalemate. While the former slums that witnessed the aforesaid emergence of styles that then spread worldwide have been either gentrified or have become tourist attractions bereft of any cultural authenticity, those new urban areas with comparable qualities seem scarcely able to set new creatively lively encounter spaces. Those formerly terrifying, yet culturally surprising neighborhoods no longer seem to instill fear, whereas new threats hover around the future of musical creativity.

Haphephobia and Digital Proxemics

'Haphephobia' is "an anxiety disorder characterised by a fear of touching or being touched", often related to fear of germs, fear of crowds, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Smith 2018). Obviously, the connotation used here does not entirely correspond to the same one shared in psychology; therefore, the concept will be applied metaphorically.

Throughout the global coronavirus pandemic, we have experienced real fear of connecting with others, albeit with no evidence of such phobic traits pointed out by clinical psychology. Recent virus containment measures imposed by governmental health policies – based on physical distancing – have had an immediate impact on the field of creative production. The meeting-places embedded within the city have undergone drastic redesign: theatres, concert halls and public spaces have dramatically reduced their functionality, whilst Internet-based interaction spaces have grown as a 'ersatz'. This scenario might seem unprecedented, though it is actually part and parcel of a well-established process that has been ongoing for years.

By the mid 1980s, as a consequence of the emergence of extensive processes of culture individualisation (Featherstone 1991), urban communities have gradually reduced their influence on the field of cultural production. The altered relation between culture and the city has been mainly studied from the standpoint of cultural consumption, understood either as subordinate to technological and media apparatuses or with regard to the interaction between urban geography and listening modes (Chambers 1994: 49–53; Bull 2007). Nevertheless, today, the realms of cultural production and consumption can hardly be observed separately,

since they both operate within the media system, where those cultural exchanges that once belonged to urban space now take place. Indeed, the platformisation of culture has ultimately accelerated the processes of dislocation of cultural

Haphephobia could have pervasive, irretrievable effects on some forms of artistic production inextricably connected to urban proxemics.

creation spaces from urban communities driven by human interaction to virtual communities based on computer-mediated communication. A number of today's most successful popular music subgenres among youth audiences – such as *Soundcloud rap*, *K-pop*, *chillwave*, *vaporwave*, and so on (Born & Haworth 2017) – did not only circulate mostly within virtual environments, but took the Net as a proper art world, as the main place of creative interaction at the production stages. It is in the online communities of the participatory web, which facilitate "grassroots creativity" (Humphreys 2008), that new music creators get together, interact and exchange their *culturemes* (Jenkins et al. 2013). Even though computer-mediated communication reserves certain frightening threats (i.e. cybercrimes, privacy infringements, etc.) and some hindrances in the information transfers, digital spaces appear to be more comfortable in comparison to metropolitan suburbs, and digital relationships eventually turn out to be privileged in the creative production context. Moreover, the fact that the Internet is a predominantly textual and despatialised medium implies a subtraction – from the processes of creative interaction – of all those nonverbal communication elements that characterise urban proxemics. The kinesthetic, haptic, visual, and sensory factors involved in human interaction are totally by-passed, and out of that hence comes a totally altered sense of 'spatial empathy'.

According to numerous widely shared arguments among popular music scholars, popular music in the past twenty years has witnessed an abrupt slowdown in the process of redefinition and innovation of its languages, which today are mostly oriented towards recombination rather than novelty. Curiously, these regression processes have coincided with the increased relinquishment of urban space as a creative environment. It can therefore be assumed that the fear of physical contact has a direct impact on the creative charge that can be freed in urban space. Interpersonal distance could reduce the individuals' ability to interconnect their experiences according to the traditional modes of cultural creation and transmission: it is thus inevitable that the city's layout will not be renewed by these dramatic changes in individual and collective behaviour patterns.

Ultimately, it is possible to deduce that creativity in popular music largely depends on human contact, especially if it is engaged in urban areas marked by marginality, and therefore cloaked by a potential, generalised sense of 'fear'. Obviously, music scenes still exist, but over time they have lost the disruptive energy that was typical of the historical forms that shaped the defining features of contemporary western popular music. Some might argue that areas like Shoreditch (London), Williamsburg (New York), Kreuzberg (Berlin), Fitzroy (Melbourne) or the Mission District (San Francisco) perfectly represent the idea of 'creative districts'. These are indeed zones bustling with cafés, galleries, clubs, and activities that generally evoke an idea of urban creativity. In actual fact, they constitute the pinnacle of a process of displacement of working-class, immigrant and ethnic communities (Mould 2018: 249). None of these neighborhoods seem to genuinely reproduce cultural clashes or the Simmelian "unexpectedness of onrushing impressions" (Simmel 1950: 410): they rather tend to be more and more inoffensive, homogeneous, and characterised by an increasingly predictable social geometry (Hubbard 2017: 106-111).

Conclusions

Nowadays, the dislocation of the spatial dimension of musical creativity from urban to digital environments is crystal-clear. Presumably, individuals will increasingly tend to meet less and less within urban communities, favouring despatialised meeting-spaces that are totally deprived of the material and communicational qualities enabled by urban space. The fear of physical contact – or 'haphophobia' – could have pervasive, irretrievable effects on some forms of artistic production inextricably connected to urban proxemics, such as popular music, which has an original co-implication nexus with the city and the possibilities it offers.

The repercussions of the recent health crisis are still quite uncertain. However, some of its outcomes on the spatial dimension of urban creativity are already plainly evident, although the impact of 'social distancing' on cultural production is neither predictable nor straightforwardly measurable. At the same time, as history has taught us, popular music has owed many of its production, reproduction and consumption processes to a kind of relationality that is inevitably ruled by a logic of non-mediated, physical interaction, which lies in a well-defined spatial framework. The current situation does not suggest opportunities for a return to the city as an exclusive place of creative interaction: some will welcome the emerging scenario as something new and exciting; others, admittedly, will be gripped by a profound, unrestrainable sense of fear.

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View from my window: social fear, Covid-19 and the power of a shared urban #POV

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The city and social fear during the Covid-19 emergency

When the announcement of patient zero spread, Italy and Europe were both unable and unprepared to comprehend and deal with the spread of the disease. In the space of a few weeks the pandemic affected most European countries, leading to the unprecedented measure of the lockdowns. While lockdowns provided an effective means of curbing the spread of the virus, protracted social isolation and confinement has psychosocial effects that need to be understood and processed as part of the collective trauma of the virus. While effects such as anxiety and depression have been discussed, an overlooked but important dimension concerns the breakdown of the continuity between the house and the city, with all that these places socially represent. The typical psychological association is between house and safety and urban space and danger.

Our cities – considered familiar and taken for granted – changed their faces, losing their standard shared social meanings and filled with dangerous representations. Both mainstream and social media played a pivotal role in constructing a general sense of social fear because of the uncertainty and lack of information about the clinical evolution of the virus, the speed of the spreading of unchecked news and the power of the pandemic. At the same time, digital spaces offered new social contexts where users can experience solidarity, empathy, and a general sense of safety.

We use the expression “social fear” in two senses. Firstly, to refer to the fear of other people, and the consequent fear of socialising (Rauling, Wee, 1984), that was activated as defence mechanism during the lockdown. Some people have developed social fear as a consequence of a long period of isolation. However, social fear is also another way to refer to moral panic (Debrix, 2014): the uncertainty of the moment generated a greater need of information; but, the dissemination of unclear and contradictory information increased and spread panic and fear. In both cases, social fear and the anxiety it generates lead to the creation of coping mechanisms that allow people to manage their stress. In this context, we are interested in examining coping strategies emerging at a particular “interface”: that of the urban and social, to the home and personal space. In seeking to bridge the tensions between these spaces, the contradictions generated between the past and present experiences, and by finding ways to articulate these together in new ways, users are creating new coping strategies that may allow them to manage the trauma of the pandemic.

The case study

“View from my window” (VFMW) is the name of the Facebook group, launched on the 22nd March 2020, and it has been created to connect people from all around the world during the COVID-19 emergency time. All group members are invited to post a shot from their favourite windows, in order

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to share their point of view (#POV) with the rest of the community. The group grew up quickly and, in few weeks reached over 2 million subscribers.

Sharing a picture offers users the opportunity to add text and express their feelings and their point of view not only about the shot – to explain it – but also and above all about their way of living through the pandemic emergency and its restrictions.

The group's description is as follows: «*Lockdown oblige us to stay home. Every day, through our windows, we have the same view. Take a photo! only one. LET'S SHARE IT! Should you see the rooftop of your town, overview a parc, your tiny garden, see buildings, the ocean or a tiny street, our idea is for you to share the atmosphere of your daily Life, from BEHIND YOUR WINDOW, where you live during Covid19 lockdown*».

In our analysis, the VFMW group emerges as an interesting example of how social media are used not only as the most important news channels to collect information – and occasionally dis-information

(Wrandler, 2019)- about the pandemic, but also as the main digital social context where users can share their point of views, their worries, and process their feelings. The typical mode of expression in digital platforms is affective, experiential

In lockdown, we are fighting the same external threat. Confined at home, we are safely together, experiencing a new sense of being part of the world. The “city” partially loses its meaning: it's not a place, it is a point of view.

and personal (Papacharissi, 2015).

In particular, social media platforms constitute fragmented and multiple spaces where users can find contents and information which they then use to construct the frames and representations that help them orient themselves towards the world but also help them manage emotions such as social fear, panic and anxiety (Debrix, 2014). In this manner, they become the principle means by which publics construct bottom up social representations (Moscovici, 1961) about the virus and its effects. Their role becomes even more significant if we consider the current informational uncertainty associated with the pandemic, including the inaccessibility of medical language and the complexity and instability of the situation. This situation contributes exponentially to favouring a spasmodic spreading of unverified information, generating social fear, anxiety and difficulty to orient personal opinion and behaviours about the way in which live safety the city.

At the same time, however, social media platforms represent a socio-technological context (Boccia Artieri, 2012: 2018) where people share their feelings by personal digital narratives. Several authors (among others Demetrio, 2009; Jedlowski, 2000:2007; Bruner, 2006) demonstrate how autobiographical narration, especially when focused on traumatic events or experiences, can help process the emotions with therapeutic effects. Moreover, Rimè (2008) pointed out that the linearity of the act of writing contributes to give order to the events, favouring a process of acceptance of negative emotions. De Carli (1997) defined the Internet as a narrative meta-medium: the coping strategy offered by writing personal thoughts is enriched by the power of sharing them by others, protected by the screen (Di Fraia, 2007).

If social media platforms represent an opportunity for personal affective expression with possible therapeutic outcomes, we then ask: does the work of a group such VFMW enable and encourage the generation of new coping mechanisms that allow users to manage social fear? In particular, we collected posts shared in the group during the period of a month (March-April 2020) and analysed them qualitatively, in order to understand 1) which meanings become attached to the city, as banned space, in the digitally shared narratives during the pandemic and 2) with which effects, with a special focus on coping with social fear.

As explained above, each user can share one shot with a post that includes a caption that describes the place, the date, the moment of the day, and the part of the city portrayed.

This leads to a choice of a specific #POV (point of view) by the user, that brings a specific frame to interpret the shot. We identified at least 4 ways to describe the city that are linked with different ways of expressing and coping with the social fear generated by COVID-19: *the empty city*; *the wounded city*; *the city of memories*; and *my-piece-of-city*.

The first type represents the most numerous of our sample. It includes pictures in which the city appears unnaturally empty and steady: no traffic, no people in the street, no life a part of some sign of nature (trees and sometimes also sylvatic animals). In a lot of cases, texts accompanying these pictures are focused on social fear perceived and on worries about the future: the uncertainty experienced – especially in the first part of the pandemic – contributes to increase the sense of fear. [The empty city](#) appears as if it was suspended. It is surprising how these pictures are extremely similar to each other. Spectators can recognize cities in different parts of the world, but the iconic grammar of the image is always the same: the absence of people, the false stillness, the general apprehension generated by seeing a social space devoid of any life.

We refer to the second type as [the wounded city](#) because in this case the author selects a part of the city – visible from his/her window – in which the viewer can identify the traces of a peril, of a suffering, of something dangerous. This way to narrate the city seems to be heroic, solemn, and typically accompanied by a personal fragmented narrative about the way the author is living the pandemic. It's not something that deals with all the population of the city or of the world. It's something extremely personal that paradoxically contributes to making the pandemic "real". The images confirm the presence of risks and reduce the perceived distance from the pandemic, mobilising the typical psychological mechanism of denial (Rimè, 2008).

Pennebacker (2003) argues that overcoming trauma means to find for it the right place in own personal memory. In the case of coping with social fear, "urban memories" or the memories linked to the city can have a therapeutic effect because they help people to collect past positive emotions of the city and above all of the beauty or the reality of (past) daily life. In order to process, define and accept the so called "new normal", the group's users return to their recent past normality sharing photos that meant something to them. These we group together in the third type, [the city of memories](#). The memories could be personal, linked to the ordinary life of their author, or collective: some users post photos of views that are part of the collective imaginary because of their fame (such as the view of New York City's Times Square. In the latter case, the activation of [collective memory](#) creates a sense of solemnity and participation (with probably a little bit of nostalgia).

The last group of photos includes the [my-piece-of-city](#) shots. We consider this type as comprised of images that give more relevance to the internal part of the house (even if the perspective is turned toward the outside). In these photos we see personal spaces in the author's life: his/her kitchen, his/her favourite seats, his/her porches or balcony. The glance is extremely introvert and expresses the strong link between the house and the urban space, which it is surrounded by. The users privilege the border spaces such as the garden or the balcony, from which it is possible to see a small part of the city. These images are comforting: by focusing their attention on the "[inner world](#)", represented by the house, users can feel safe and grateful for their privileged positions than those "outside", probably struggling against the virus. My-piece-of-city shots are the real antidote against social fear because they mark the borders of the personal space, the comfort zone that, even if it is part of the city, protects from the threat of pandemic and offers familiar comforts. The sense of safety expressed is balanced by the other side: solitude. Many photos depict the moment of the sunset and melancholic backgrounds (hot colours, empty seats, setting that express calm and silent etc) in order to stress this

point: the safety has a big price, we have to renounce social life, because risk and fear are part of it.

Conclusion

Focusing on the remediation of urban and personal space in a Facebook group, this brief exploration sought to identify the creation of coping mechanisms through bottom up resignifications of space. More specifically, by the practice of sharing fragments of their own cities, users activate spontaneously some visual and narrative mechanisms to manage the social fear generated by COVID-19 virus. We refer to three main coping strategies: objectivation, mirroring and memory (Cramer, 2015; Veerman, Ruard Ganzevoort, 2001).

Pictures in the categories of empty city and wounded city make the pandemic real, as it were, by objectifying it using images that are common and familiar in their specificity. If it is concrete, the fear is more manageable than if it is something that we can't touch or see. Looking at the effect of the virus on the city (e.g. the emptiness) helps focus on the problems and activate a response by users. In the case of the categories, the immediate response was to participate in the digital community life.

This latter aspect deals with the process of mirroring which cultivates empathy. Empathy is the process by which we can understand and share the feelings of other people. If people's experiences are shared, mirroring is simpler and contributes to managing social fear through reciprocity. My-piece of city images play a pivotal role in generating overlapping experiences and constructing a common sense of effectiveness against the invisible enemy, in order to appropriate the "new normality" of which we discover some positive effects (e.g. being safe and sound, enjoy quietness).

Finally, the city of memories pictures are linked with the past and are therefore important in constructing a sense of continuity with the previous (familiar) images of users' cities, saved both in personal and collective memory. Maintaining a link with the past can reduce the fracture of identity and community provoked by the lockdown. The orthogonal dimensions of space and time captured and shared online function as 'rescue anchors' for by offering a unified image of the world, made up by the singular fragmented pieces published by the Facebook group members.

From this perspective the word "city" partially loses its meaning: it's not a place. It coincides with a point of view that is personal as well as universal. It is personal because every single picture captures a peculiar part of the world from a unique perspective, by a "private glance". It is universal because those streets, windows, gardens, squares or advertising signs you can be called "city", can be part of the collective imaginary that activate simultaneously the desire to be again part of the urban space.

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The “Pandemic City”.

Ipotesi interpretative per un’inchiesta sulla dualità dello spazio urbano

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Che cosa è la città pandemica? In quali elementi la riconosciamo? E soprattutto, siamo a un punto di svolta contingente oppure si sta strutturando un nuovo modo di vivere la città?

Durante questi ultimi mesi la pandemia ha cambiato la forma della città e dello spazio urbano a scala globale; la nostra riflessione muove a partire dalla constatazione che qualcosa di fondamentale sta mutando nella forma della città, e che ciò sia diventato una percezione condivisa.

Nell’epoca pandemica numerosi fenomeni sono emersi con evidenza. Anzitutto è durante la pandemia che è avvenuto il grande salto nella digitalizzazione, affiancato dallo sviluppo di inedite disuguaglianze, tra vite che possono proteggersi e non, diffusione della paura e richiesta di sicurezza, esperienza di solitudine e richiesta di comunità.

Durante la pandemia gli esseri umani in presenza sono rappresentati come potenzialmente pericolosi e si è sviluppata la tendenza a sviluppare tecnologie digitali che consentono di svolgere attività senza contatti umani. In tale contesto la paura e la minaccia, collegate a qualsiasi situazione di prossimità e di contatto fisico, sembrano spingerci ad accettare la narrazione mainstream secondo la quale le tecnologie digitali costituiscono la modalità migliore, l’unica possibile capace di proteggere le nostre vite dal contagio.

Durante la pandemia globale abbiamo assistito a un grande salto nell’integrazione permanente della tecnologia in ogni aspetto della vita, nell’accelerazione della diffusione della digitalizzazione in un laboratorio vivente di sperimentazione del nuovo modello di città che fa capo alla shut in economy (Sadowski, 2020).

Le città e gli spazi urbani si sono rivelati i più investiti da tale trasformazione anzitutto per come gli spazi vengono concepiti, come re-invenzione e ri-territorializzazione di spazi securizzati e distanziati, in cui i contatti umani vis à vis sono tendenzialmente indesiderabili, e spontaneamente sfilacciati, erosi, vengono ripensati e *ri-mediati* dalle tecnologie connettive che rimodellano le distanze fisiche.

Come ha evidenziato Sennett (2020), emerge qui una nuova contraddizione che si somma alle classiche disuguaglianze sociali e di classe, e riguarda la divaricazione tra chi può permettersi di vivere e lavorare in modo protetto, in un contesto mediato da tecnologie digitali che distanziano le relazioni vis à vis, e chi non può permetterselo.

Emerge in forma rinnovata quella che è stata già definita la *città duale* da Saskia Sassen e da John H. Mollenkopf e Manuel Castells nel libro *Dual City: Restructuring of New York*. Una città è descrivibile come *duale* in quanto ridefinita dal regime di protezione digitale che permette ad alcuni di svolgere quasi tutto in maniera protetta, sia perché il lavoro viene svolto in contesti mediati dal digitale sia

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perché viene richiesto e consegnato a casa il necessario per l'intera esistenza. La premessa di tutto ciò è l'uso di piattaforme digitali di mediazione, che tramite connettività via app provvedono poi materialmente a veicolare oggetti senza, o minimizzando, i contatti fisici. Tante sono le attività che vengono investite dalla generale trasformazione, e tante sono le professioni per le quali è possibile il lavoro da remoto. In questa parte della città mediata dalle piattaforme, dati su ogni nostro gesto, parola, relazione sono estraibili, rendendoci tracciabili e profilabili grazie a una connettività senza precedenti. D'altro lato, questa città duale, lontana dalle immagini della smart city fatta di automazione e sviluppo dell'intelligenza artificiale, nasconde la sua faccia oscura, quella grazie alla quale la prima parte della città può restare protetta e tranquilla. E allora vi sono spazi e interstizi urbani magari contigui in cui pessimi lavoretti proliferano in serie, ma anche spazi in cui negozianti, operai anonimi, postini, addetti alla logistica, in magazzini, data center, opifici, fabbrichette e impianti di lavorazione vari ma anche medici e infermieri, e soprattutto persone fragili e anziani poveri vengono lasciati a se stessi, non protetti da malattie e iper-sfruttamento. Esistenze che vengono sospinte alla deriva, abbandonate al caso.

Durante la pandemia è apparsa chiara la divaricazione tra i lavori più protetti realizzabili in remoto e la varietà di lavori essenziali maggiormente esposti al contagio, tra questi anche quello dei *gig workers* e dei *riders* che durante il periodo di lockdown hanno continuato a essere attivi.

Da questo punto di vista, il modello di servizio a distanza e la sua gestione algoritmica sono diventati ancora più rilevanti che in passato ora che la attuale fase pandemica e post pandemica del capitalismo contemporaneo richiede sempre più che la vita il lavoro l'attività siano *shut in*, distanziate e protette.

Il sistema di management algoritmico delle *delivery platform* ha mostrato la sua efficacia nella possibilità di estendersi in campi nuovi. Alcune piattaforme come Deliveroo hanno espanso notevolmente la loro rete di attività a ristoranti, gastronomie, esercizi vari che per continuare a lavorare non potevano fare altrimenti che ricorrere al servizio mediato da piattaforme. Oltre a ciò, le piattaforme delivery hanno incluso nel sistema delle consegne nuovi servizi e prodotti, a esempio alcuni prodotti "essenziali" come i farmaci o altri prodotti e servizi che pur essendo accessibili in visu, sono sempre più richiesti in modalità distanziata. In questa situazione paradossale di estensione e sviluppo delle catene di fornitura e logistica le piattaforme spesso non hanno fornito alcun dispositivo di protezione per i loro lavoratori/trici, scaricando ancora una volta su di loro l'assunzione del rischio e della responsabilità rispetto all'utilizzo delle misure di protezione per sé e per i clienti.

Anche in questa seconda ombrosa parte della città duale quasi tutte le informazioni sono tracciabili, profilabili, georeferenzabili, anche quando i suoi abitanti non ne sono consapevoli o non usano personalmente tecnologie digitali. La "città intelligente" è sempre piena di sensori. Ed è l'ambiente in cui si è perennemente immersi.

All'interno del processo di sviluppo ed emersione della città duale è però interessante fare dei distinguo. Negli spazi protetti non tutti gli attori che fruiscono e operano con le tecnologie digitali sono sullo stesso piano in termini di potere, autonomia e possibilità di costruire scenari.

Alcuni infatti ne sono a capo, progettano, gestiscono la costruzione dell'infrastruttura digitale e decidono gli standards, operando ad esempio nella costruzione e gestione di piattaforme basate su *cloud* e collegate a una rete 5G. Altri, e sono la maggioranza, utilizzano la tecnologia digitale come semplici fruitori. Costoro sono inseriti in ruoli come insegnanti, impiegati, tecnici.

Se la possibilità di connessione in teleconferenza ha costituito una risorsa fondamentale per questo tipo di professioni nel periodo crisi pandemica, certamente queste attività sono diventate più proceduralizzate e replicabili, più povere di interazioni informali calde.

Ma il cambiamento radicale dello spazio urbano riguarda il nostro abitare nella città duale. Con la pandemia e il diffondersi del lavoro da remoto, le case non sono più spazi esclusivamente personali ma anche, grazie alla connettività digitale ad alta velocità, luoghi protetti, di lavoro, intrattenimento, istruzione e cura, anche sanitaria. Bisogna ricordare che è da molti anni che alcuni studiosi attenti – primi tra tutti già Bologna e Fumagalli nel 1997 – fanno notare come attraverso il fenomeno della *domestication* e della diffusione del lavoro free lance, l’abitazione si stia trasformando nel posto di lavoro e stia venendo meno la distinzione tra orario di lavoro e tempo di vita, e come il tempo di lavoro sia indistinguibile da quello di riproduzione.

Ma certamente la pandemia, e il diffondersi di modi di vivere e lavorare protetti hanno fortemente accelerato tale tendenza grazie al salto consentito dalla digitalizzazione. All’interno delle abitazioni si sono così anche sperimentate per la prima volta a livello di massa e su scala globale forme di apprendimento da remoto, mediante la cosiddetta DAD (didattica a distanza) nella quale non è necessaria nessuna prossimità fisica tra studenti e insegnanti. Nella città duale è diventato realtà da un giorno all’altro un sistema educativo radicalmente nuovo incentrato sulla comunicazione a distanza di ogni cosa e che per funzionare normalmente deve però essere supportato o per meglio dire deve essere abilitato dalla presenza gratuita di adulti, prevalentemente madri che si affiancano ai propri figli, spesso donne in telelavoro – parte del segmento debole della parte protetta della città duale. Tutto ciò non può che essere considerato un enorme esperimento sociale, da un lato di apprendimento via remoto e dall’altro di segregazione di genere, di *re-domestication* dentro le mura domestiche (Mazali, De Vita, Campanella, 2020).

Guardando alla città duale e all’insieme interrelato di processi di cui si compone ci interroghiamo sulle modalità con le quali gli spazi urbani si stanno trasformando. E ci chiediamo se tali mutamenti siano inevitabili oppure se nella trasformazione digitale ci sia la possibilità di prendere parola, assumere un punto di vista capace di co-progettare le soluzioni, orientare le tendenze in corso.

La paura e la minaccia, collegate alle situazioni di prossimità e contatto fisico, sembrano spingerci ad accettare la narrazione secondo cui le tecnologie digitali costituiscono l'unica modalità possibile per proteggere le nostre vite dal contagio.

L’analisi globale a riguardo della *dual city* ci fa porre l’attenzione sui centri storici delle città che diventano sempre più luoghi di segregazione sociale e di declassamento dei ceti medi che non possono allontanarsene per mete più confortevoli e dunque ci sembra sempre più evidente come i flussi di persone, merci e informazioni modellino la forma delle città-hub.

Sulla base di quanto detto sinora è difficile tracciare delle vere e proprie linee di indagine per un’inchiesta sulla città duale ma è già possibile individuare alcuni focus di interesse su cui sollecitare l’attenzione. Alcuni assi tematici e domande ci sembrano che appaiano chiaramente nell’emergere problematico della dualità della città pandemica che è definibile dalla compresenza di spazi urbani mediati da tecnologie digitali protettive, come avviene attraverso lo *smart work* e la didattica a distanza, e spazi urbani mediati da tecnologie distanzianti ma non protettive, come è per i *riders* e molti altri attori sociali.

In sintesi, se da un lato stiamo davvero realizzando quanto sia importante e utile la connettività digitale in tempi di crisi, d’altro lato non è ancora chiaro come possiamo riappropriarci del disegno dei grandi processi di digitalizzazione e trasformazione urbana che sono in corso e non lasciare che la loro direzione sia governata semplicemente dalle grandi aziende della Silicon Valley. Bisogna essere consapevoli che la tecnologia ci fornisce strumenti potenti, ma non tutte le soluzioni che ci fornisce sono scontate, uniche, né socialmente eque. Soprattutto non sono inevitabili le soluzioni che essa presenta in forma di *soluzionismo tecnologico* (González, Rendueles Menéndez de Llano, 2020).

Che siano in corso grandi cambiamenti nel nostro modello sociale, che decidano sulle nostre esistenze senza che noi ne abbiamo voce, è sotto gli occhi di tutti e sta diventando un sentire comune. Da questo punto di vista, l'inchiesta e la conricerca (Armano, 2020; Cavazzini, 2020) in quanto pratiche di conoscenza, presa di parola e trasformazione sociale possono avere un ruolo importante, così come forme di progettazione e produzione tecnologica radicate in relazioni sociali di comunanza e solidarietà (Teli & al., 2019).

E' difficile pensare che con il superamento dell'emergenza, la situazione tornerà come prima. La situazione non potrà essere la stessa e noi, attraversati dall'esperienza della paura e del distanziamento sociale, via digitalizzazione ne usciremo mutati nel nostro modo di stare nel mondo e nelle relazioni sociali.

Ma la forma che assumerà la "normalità" dopo la pandemia dipenderà anche da noi, da quello che non considereremo inevitabile, da ciò che nel frattempo sapremo chiederci, immaginando e provando a mettere in campo collettivamente e singolarmente.

Ci aspettano sfide difficili relative al senso delle relazioni sociali sottese nella tecnologia digitale atta al distanziamento sociale, al suo dispiegarsi niente affatto spontaneo o scontato al servizio del profitto oppure del bene comune.

Da questo punto di vista avviare un'autoinchiesta-conricerca è quanto mai urgente se non altro per il processo circolare di pensiero che implica e potenzialmente può innescare in termini di elaborazione del comune.

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The City as the (Anti)Structure

Fearscapes, social movement, and protest square

Asma Mehan

Fearscapes

Urban fear has been a central theme in anthropology, psychology, geography, sociology and urban politics (Abu-Orf, 2013, p. 158). Fear (economic, political, social, religious, and cultural) and violence (criminal, ethno-religious or political) shape experiences of urban space, and result in physical changes to the built environment. In conceptualizing the fear in planning theory, Abu-Orf addresses what fear does to repress the 'defenseless' ethnic groups and how this fear shapes 'lived space' from three geographical perspectives of the individual, feminist geography and globalized fear (Abu-Orf, 2013, pp. 159-160).

Despite the scholarly attention to the definition of urban fear, its conceptualisation in urban politics is far from clear-cut due to 'fundamental differences over methodologies, politics and explanations' (Shirlow & Pain, 2003, p. 17). Perceived safety of spaces (such as 'good' or 'bad' neighborhood, 'threatening' and 'threatened' urban spaces) can be contingent upon residents' mental map of fear and anxiety. Geographies of fear are often related to discourses surrounding those who are seen as 'others' in social contexts (England & Simon, 2010, p. 201). Physical security infrastructure such as walls, checkpoints and other barriers also work to impede some types of movements and facilitate others (Jaffe & De Koning, 2016, pp. 154-155).

Fear of 'others' can lead to exclusion from public space of those who are seen as threatening (Hebert & Brown, 2006; Nawratek & Mehan, 2020). Desire in planning practice in violent settings is apparent in a 'mobility regime' designed to exclude fearful 'others', using 'avoidance' (Abu-Orf, 2013, p. 173). This process of 'otherness' renders fear as an arena of conflict, and highlights the political utility of fear by particular groups and individuals (Pain, 2001). Focusing on Western context, Simone Tulumello suggested the concept of "fearscapes" - through the process of spatialization of urban fear- in order to describe the growing landscapes of fear (Tulumello, 2015). Geographies of urban fear have been utilized to prevent certain kinds of urbanity from materializing (England & Simon, 2010, p. 204). These fear-based material and institutional settings produce a new physical arrangement and social ordering of the city.

The recent examples of protest squares and insurgent urbanism around the world highlighted the formation of 'a social movement space' through public protests which has triggered the various state-led strategies to control the urban insurgencies (Mehan & Rossi, 2019). Ipek Tureli argues that although protest movements appropriate public space temporally they transform its image, and use, permanently (Tureli, 2013, p. 15). In the Middle East, protests - when they have happened - have been more spontaneous, conflictual and influential in threatening the power structures and the political

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establishment. Moreover, the historical importance of radical spatialities for mobilization and protest as well as the collective political memory of past revolutions, were special factor for protesters, and images and meanings of protest squares were (re)appropriated by protestors during the social movement (Mehan, 2020, p. 69). Most likely due to the fear of wider national uprisings, the authorities in these countries are seeking to institutionalise urban movements by limiting or (de)politicising their spatiality. By shifting the spatiality of resistance to a demarcated and controlled space, the State in these countries focused on changing the sociability and urbanity of specific localities of protests. In response to emerging radical spatialities, various local authorities in the Middle East have pushed for a privatisation of public space, while still acting within the limits of local urban regulations (Zamani & Mehan, 2019).

Tehran as (Anti) Structure

State-led strategies aimed at producing urban security through different forms of social control affects urban spaces and residents in different ways. From this perspective, spaces of fear are understood as being the result of hegemonic production and the product of uneven power relations.

Due to the fear of wider national uprisings, the authorities in these countries are seeking to institutionalise urban movements by limiting or (de)politicising their spatiality.

Drawing on Foucault's rationality of governance, the new urban social order – called as "spatial governmentality" – is governed through spatial mechanism of control (such as exclusion of risky populations,

spatial zoning, ordering and regulations) along with neoliberal ideas of the diminished state (for example encouraging the privatization of formerly public spaces) (Merry, 2001). These state-led spatial strategies are practiced around the world, yet through different mechanisms. In response to civil protests and social unrests, the State imposes increasing temporal, spatial and legal limits on the public practice of politics. Examples of this are the "negotiated management style of protest policing" or the "strict micro-management of demonstrations" (Zamani & Mehan, 2019, p. 483; Vitale, 2005, p. 286-287). Here, protests are normally induced, institutionalised and controlled, to the point that they turn into ineffective and powerless carnivals of dissent. There is a normalization of civil protests that limits their socio-political influence (Gillham, Edwards, & Noakes, 2013).

In the Middle East, protests have been more antagonistic to the State's power and institutions. Accordingly, they have been more spontaneous, conflictual and influential in threatening the power structures and the political establishment – despite the very high cost that they inflicted on civil society and public services. Specifically, this study focuses on Iran, in which recent policies and strategies have been proposed and implemented to reduce and possibly neutralize the impacts

of urban and political protests. More importantly, these spatialities are transforming the memory of public space, as the paper analyzing whether these memories have been accentuated by the radical spatiality of dissent or diminished by the spatiality of control and State domination (Zamani & Mehan, 2019, p. 484).

Tehran expanded its "radical spatiality" through recent movements, social unrests, and revolutions (especially the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and the Green Movement of 2009). The recent movements also highlighted the socio-political importance of Revolution (in Farsi Enqelab) Street and Freedom (in Farsi Azadi) Square as spaces of protests in modern Tehran. The urban centres of uprisings in Tehran, hold a spatial significance as sites of protest and urban mobilization that evoke collective political memory of past revolutions. In analysing how political memory works with and relates to space, it can be argued that the historical importance of Azadi as a square for mobilization and protest prior to the 2009 Green Movement demonstrations was a special factor of attraction for protesters, and

images and meanings of the square were appropriated by protesters during the social movement (Mehan, 2020, p. 69–70).

Starting from December 2017 and continuing into 2018, a series of public protests occurred in various cities throughout Iran, specifically addressing the daily life of women in public spaces. The recent women's movement in Tehran highlighted the socio-political importance of Revolution (in Persian: Enghelab) Street and Freedom (in Persian: Azadi) Square in building and representing spaces of protests in modern Tehran (Mehan and Rossi, 2019, p. 239). After the January 2018 protests, one of the key responses of the State within the context of Tehran has been the de-politicization of public spaces. The local authorities and national government have attempted in multiple ways to limit political protests. In 2018, Tehran's City Council passed a bill to demarcate certain places for protests and political expression. The Iranian Parliament followed suit, delineating a few specific public spaces in Tehran for the specific purpose of political protests, while banning any form of political mobilization in other urban spaces. On June 10, 2018, the Minister's Committee announced 12 locations where authorised protests could be held in the capital. The city council members proposed the specific "appropriate" locations of public protests (inspired by western democratic societies) as legal locations (or protest zones) for people to be seen and heard by other inhabitants, and to identify appropriate places that have the capacity for police protection, security, the emergency services and preventing traffic jams.¹ Following Mitchell and Staeheli (2005), in the case of Tehran, "dissent has become resistance", meaning the emerging forms of control and domination by the State over the public spaces have failed (Mitchell & Staeheli, 2005). Not only are the movements resistant to an ideological cleansing of the physical space, or a normalizing of protest as a tool to sustain the oppression, but they are resistant to the erasure of memories and deep-rooted urban identities of radical spatialities (Zamani & Mehan, 2019, p. 494).

Concluding Notes

In response to the state-led fearscape, social movements and radical spatialities aim to pursue a common political agenda of change through collective action and solidarity. Revolutions and political movements have liminal stages in which the structure of everyday life of the immediate past has been overturned, but new structures have not yet emerged to replace them, a situation – Turner termed as *AntiStructure* in which most of the characteristics that defined the normal configuration of sociopolitical life ceased to function (Turner & Turner, 1978). Followingly, the word *Communitas* describes as an intense feeling of community, solidarity, and togetherness experienced by those who live together in an *AntiStructure* in which the normal social statuses and positions have broken down (Turner, 1969). This situation is not out of place for describing the dominant atmosphere of insurgent spatialities during revolutions and social unrests.

Within today's 'reactionary cycle' characterized by national revanchism across the world, an unconditional pursuit of resistance is critical to the recovery of democracy and even to its expansion, which occurs when small-scale or individual resistance unexpectedly gives rise to larger uprisings, as we have seen (Mehan & Rossi, 2019, p. 244). In this sense, the idea of the city as the (Anti)structure shows that the urban has the vital capacity to multiply the effects of resistance on politics, people and society in order to become an active force of socio-political change.

¹ See Etemad Newspaper (published on 12 June 2018 in Farsi): www.etemadnewspaper.ir/1397/03/22/Main/PDF/13970322-4108-4-2.pdf

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The Fearless Street Protests

Caio Teixeira

On May 25, 2020, a Minneapolis police officer pressed his knee into George Floyd's neck against the pavement. Floyd gasped, "I can't breathe." A cellphone video of Floyd's death documented the police violence for eight minutes and 46 seconds. The police murder of Floyd created a contagion effect, inspiring uprisings and mass demonstrations against police brutality and racial inequality. We can only describe this as peoples' anti-repression coalition. As a result of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and others' deaths, we face deeper questions about structural racism. The anti-blackness sheds light on fear in urban spaces. Floyd's death demonstrates the prevalence of police brutality, targeting communities of color. Floyd's death illuminates the tragic and often marginalized experiences of the tens of thousands of people who fear the unlawful use of police force, police brutality, and discriminatory policing throughout the city. Fears associated with public spaces are reminders of how people of color, regardless of gender or sexual orientation, are targets of state violence, allowing racism to thrive.

England and Simon (2010, p. 203) state that "geographies of fear are bound to differential notions of safety. (...) Absence of feelings of safety and security can be rooted in fear of difference." The distinction between "safety" and "fear" results from how "fear discourses are power-laden as they work to define and maintain the shifting boundaries between deviance and belonging, order and disorder that are instrumental to how cities are lived and built" (England and Simon 2010, p. 204). The city's urban fabric links crime, perceived safety, and fear in public places (Ceccato 2013). One's identity and the range of fear in a city influence the way people experience urban life. Drawing on Southern European urban territories, Tulumello (2017) talks about the relationship between planning practice and fear. He explores how the social practices of fear have accompanied and shaped its relationship with urban space, underlining the production of "fearscapes." The spatialization of fear in urban spaces is at stake. Indeed, fearscapes "have been acquiring a dominant role in the way the city is constructed and reconstructed" (Tulumello 2017, p. 78-9). The city's environment as fearscapes frames the historical and political backdrop of protests and collective action that mobilizes protesters.

Social struggles against fear and suffering are at the forefront of a movement for the racial justice debate in the United States (US). A growing debate on racial justice concerns structural racism and police brutality and their uneasy interface with everyday spatial practices of organized resistance. For Vitale (2017), there is a 'racialization-criminalization nexus' regarding various human rights violations by police, including lethal force. The researcher specifically examines intertwined structural forces of power, such as race, crime control, and the harmful consequences of policing. An outstanding example of such is the unlawful use of force by law enforcement officers that ends in death, injury, and/or devastation. To Vitale (2017), the answer to police violence is defunding the police. The context for

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acts of policing by the state- and non-state-armed actors through a broader lens on structural racism helps build a historical understanding of fear, especially within communities of color. Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015) sheds light on how black communities experience fears through constant threats of coercion. He talks about America's racial history and today's racial practices. He allows readers to reflect on the fear and the body as part of the systemic injustices that deeply divide our society. This fear remains very much alive in people of color.

Against this backdrop, The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement emerged to fight for racial equality and racial justice (Bunyasi and Smith 2018). The #BlackLivesMatter first went viral in 2013 and has been struggling against race-based police violence and racial inequality (Bunyasi and Smith 2018). Since Floyd's death, the BLM movements called to #DefundPolice and #InvestInCommunities. In response, Washington D.C.'s Mayor Muriel Bowser renamed the 16th Street and H Streets NW that lead to the White House as 'Black Lives Matter Plaza.' Local muralists organized by the city's government painted the words "Black Lives Matter" on the intersection's floor. However, activists of BLM criticized the renamed street, arguing that it distracts from deeper policy changes. BLM activists added 'Defund

the Police' to the street mural. For two months, the message "Black Lives Matter = Defund the Police" remained on the street pavement. At present, the plaza remains a contested site of meanings between formal politics and grassroots activ-

A stronger understanding of 'BLM Plaza' allows us to understand the performative practice of people contesting the fear-mongering politics.

ism against racial injustices in the US.

The Black Lives Matter Plaza reveals how streetscape is not limited by its design and structure regulated by planning laws and property rights. The urban streetscape invokes a web of interactions, feelings, and labels. Black communities fearing for their lives and racial justice protests lie at the heart of the spatial-political backdrop of this plaza. Renaming the street to 'Black Lives Matter Plaza' is an illustrative example of how streetscape spaces are discursively performed by the government and grassroots politics. Speaking on "political cosmos" in toponymic studies, some argue that an urban streetscape is a place of memory and spatial imaginaries (Rose-Redwood, Alderman & Azaryahu 2018). The practice of street naming is a performative act (Rose-Redwood, Alderman & Azaryahu 2018). It ties the role of urban streets to the spatiality of politics and its performative effects. A stronger understanding of 'Black Lives Matter Plaza' provides insight into the performative practice of people contesting fear-mongering politics based on the (mis)use of physical violence by law enforcement officers and lack of accountability within police institutions.

Importantly, the Black Lives Matter Plaza helps us understand the politics of renaming streets. It informs us about the racial-justice movement creatively using the urban streetscape to foster their agenda of claims and demands. Iveson (2013) draws on bottom-up initiatives of place-making and points out the notion of 'do-it-yourself' (DIY) to refer to informal ways of urbanisms. This notion is instrumental; it sheds light on the short-term responses of urban activism to the built environment (Iveson 2013). DIY reshapes our understanding of the social production of streetscapes. In the Black Lives Matter Plaza, an unsanctioned addition painting 'Defund the Police' in giant letters provided a provocative meaning to the mural of Bowser's mayor. Depending on how familiar you are with BLM work, you may note how its form of political expression and urban activism are entangled with rapid social media use growth. Moreover, the collective action of BLM acts at the street level. We learn from BLM how activism, protests, and grassroots politics intersect in the spaces of everyday life as images of crowded protesters saturated the American city streets. The act of protesting in urban streetscapes plays an instrumental role within the BLM movement. By protesting on the streets, people contest

the fear-mongering politics. Streetscapes can be a means, they can be ends, and eventually, they are both.

Anti-black racism remains a major issue in the US. Internationally, we observe how racism plays a central role in the dynamics of structural and racialized violence. Although thousands took the streets to demonstrate racial injustice and police brutality following Floyd's death, it is uncertain what the lasting implications of Floyd's murder will be. We will remember the summer of 2020 for its mass demonstrations in cities throughout the US under the sustained state of emergency to manage the COVID-19 pandemic. Today's movements are pushing state violence, austerity, racial justice as encompassing realities contesting a much longer history of racism. They are simmering debates about the sociopolitical constructs bound to colonial legacy shaping black and brown communities, as well as an essential framework for enabling solidarity to meet collective needs. This challenges racial injustice and mass incarceration. As Thompson (2019 p. 29) rightly notes, racialized violence is expressed into structural racism. Indeed, "the form of violence that begins and ends with physical violence, but importantly, refers more directly to the cyclical and encompassing nature of the phenomenon" (Thompson 2019, p. 29). It creates historical conditions for exploitation and oppression, producing racial inequalities between Caucasians and racial and ethnic minorities. Then, racialized violence becomes "a quasi-annihilation of Black people's symbolically" (Thompson 2019, p.3).

The BLM movement plays an instrumental role in fostering black activism and resisting police brutality. It does so in creative ways on streetscapes. It reveals significant tactics for claiming social change. It reframes the modes of producing urban spaces from progressive grassroots politics. Streetscapes can be considered a performative articulation of city-making. The street protest scale of the challenges facing us in a social ordering under neoliberalism demands an unprecedented level of organization for social justice movements. This will offer awareness of institutional racism and ideally lead to the banality of state violence. By asking how streetscapes relate to anti-racist politics, we are challenged to reimagine the social production of perceptions of safety (or lack of) within the city.

The Black Lives Matter Plaza pushes us to consider alternative imaginaries of making streets and communities safer. It calls for a wider policy change agenda, transforming the use-of-force laws and racist police violence and reinvesting into community-based services. The dynamic between street naming and DIY initiatives might offer insight into the grassroots production and contestation of socio-political norms. We learn from BLM (advocating for police reform and demanding racial justice) that collective action may lead to a (re)activation of the urban streetscapes into sites of radical-democratic practices. It is all tied up with fearmongering and how it shapes cities and those within them. We must untangle that means, lean deeply into systemic change, and fight all forms of racism.

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Urban Fears Urban Refuge

Exploring asylum seeker's fear in Bangkok

Leonie Tuitjer
Quentin Batréau

Introduction

Since the early 2000s more and more asylum seekers from diverse countries such as Pakistan, Somalia or Sri Lanka have arrived in Bangkok, the capital of the Kingdom of Thailand. In 2012, approximately 2,000 asylum seekers and refugees were present in Bangkok. Their numbers rose to 9,000 in 2015, and then decreased to about 6,500 in 2017, with influxes from further countries such as Palestine and Syria. While the country is not a signatory of the 1952 United Nations Refugee Convention, it has hosted a UNHCR office since the Indochinese refugee crisis in the 1970s. Thus, asylum seekers arriving in Bangkok can claim asylum and UNHCR coordinates their resettlement. However, the country itself does not recognize the legal status of asylum seekers and refugees, so they are de jure irregular migrants who are subject to the constant threat of arrest and detention. Furthermore, resettlement is an uncertain outcome of an asylum claim and asylum seekers have to wait months and years for their status determination and eventual onward journey to another country. Within this paper, which is based on fieldwork in Bangkok from September 2015 till February 2016 (Leonie) and from September 2015 until February 2019 (Quentin), we draw on interviews with asylum seekers and NGO workers to explore the relationship between fear and the urban for asylum seekers in this “non-convention city” (Tuitjer & Batréau 2019). Specifically we ask: What exactly is urban about the fear of asylum seekers in Bangkok?

Asylum, fear and the city

Fear, it seems, shapes every aspect of being an asylum seeker and in fact, fear is a condition to claim asylum and become a refugee in the first place:

A person is a refugee who “owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it” (UNHCR 1951).

The figure of the refugee is tied to fear through the central role it given in the Convention. Consequently, asylum seeker's fears have been explored in many different contexts (Weaver and Burns 2001; Bloch 2014). The traumatizing events at home and subsequent flights in unsafe conditions are often perceived as a primary source of fear and trauma for asylum seekers (Lacroix and Sabbah 2011). After resettlement and integration in receiving nations asylum seekers are still haunted by their fearful past, often suffering from post traumatic stress syndrome and requiring support (Weaver and Burns 2001). Paradoxically, the figure of the asylum seeker and refugee is also a figure that produces fear and anxiety within the receiving states. Scholars that critically assess border security policies in

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Western countries often relate measures to deter asylum seekers to a discourse of fear triggered by an association between the figure of the refugee and violence (Devetak 2004, Gale 2004).

What then is the relationship between asylum seekers, fear and the city? While fear is paramount for defining who is, or could be, a refugee under international law, the connection between the urban and fear have a similarly close entanglement. Cities have long been perceived as sites of fear and danger, especially, because they are sites of constant encounters with a potentially threatening "otherness" (England & Simon 2010). From the beginning of urban studies, the city seems to have

Fear evolves and amplifies with time for asylum seekers in Bangkok. While first encounters with the city are often unproblematic, the city turns into a landscape of fear the longer they have to remain there as irregular migrants.

been defined by its density of people and housing and the proximity of strangers that forces us to repeatedly endure deeply uncertain encounters with "the other" (Amin 2008, McFarlane 2016).

From such a perspective then, fear emerges as tied to the identities of the strangers meeting. Fear is always subject to change, interpretation and produces diverse urban experiences. Within the geographic literature on fear, one has thus proposed to "begin from the understanding that fear is not known, nor wholly measurable ... [it] is diverse, dynamic and open to interpretation" (Shirlow and Pain, 2003, p. 18). We situate our paper within such a perspective on fear that views it as not wholly measurable but diffuse. Rumours and myths contribute to the spread of fear and enhance this subjective feeling. We equally see fear as dynamic, which means it is not stable over time but can shift and morph into new sets of fear, or wither away. Finally, we agree that fear is always open to interpretations and thus works differently across different people.

Arrival

Many refugees arrive in Bangkok by airplane. Their transport to Thailand is seldom marked by the traumatizing stress of refugees who flee through the Mediterranean Sea, for example. As Thailand has been promoting itself as a cosmopolitan tourist destination for decades, obtaining a tourist visa whether in a Thai consulate or for the citizens of some country even on arrival at the airport is a simple procedure, even for people intending to seek asylum (Palmgren 2013). With a stamp in their passport, they can stay in the country for 30 days and use the time to claim asylum with UNHCR. If they can effort trips to neighbouring countries, like Laos, they can even renew their visas twice for a maximum of 90 days. Thus, arrival is often hopeful, rather than fearful and the border crossed at the airport is unproblematic for many.

During our research in Bangkok, Leonie met Zahid from Pakistan who told us about his arrival. He arrived with his family by plane and they reported to be tourists at the airport, making their border crossing a smooth experience. With a tourist visas in their pockets, everything was easy at first. No one questioned them at the airport. And during subsequent encounters with law enforcement in the city, they could simply present their passport with the visa and the little stamp on the document would prevent any potential conflict. Later in the conversation, we learned that fear only kicked in afterwards, once the UNHCR agency announced the date for the scheduled status determination, which was months away [Conversation between Leonie and Zahid, November 2015]. During the research period in Bangkok, Quentin was volunteering as a French-English interpreter with a refugee NGO. During the volunteering work, he received a call from a worried asylum seeker one day. The asylum seeker only spoke French and had just received his interview date from UNHCR and explained on the phone: "There must have been a mistake, see, because they gave me an interview in more than a year, but my visa expires in two weeks. So who do I call so that they change my date?" After

the question was translated to an NGO worker, she sighted and replied: "The date cannot be changed. We know it's hard, but all applicants are on short-term visas, so it's the same for everyone. He will have to stay in the country without a visa until his interview date." Hearing the news, the asylum seeker sounded confused and lost, but thanked the NGO worker and hanged up the phone [Conversation between Quentin and anonymous asylum seeker, April 2016]. Fear, it seems here is dynamic, it evolves and it amplifies with time for asylum seekers in Bangkok. While first encounters with the city are often unproblematic, the city increasingly turns into a landscape of fear for the asylum seekers the longer they have to remain in Bangkok as irregular migrants. It seems that fear slowly evolves and that a catalysing event for many is the moment when they receive the official notification for their interview date. For Zahid and his family at least, this was the turning point.

Encounter

After arrival and claiming asylum, asylum seekers have to disappear into the city's void, as they inevitably stay past the expiration of their visas. A few sympathetic NGOs and faith communities provide the infrastructure to hide in the local communities. Many refugees find shelter in the outskirts of the city. Here, a constant worry for asylum seekers in Bangkok is the ever present danger of arrest. Many thus limit their daily mobility and travel to spend most time in their homes, hoping to avoid encounters with law enforcement in the city.

"[...] arrest and detention are simply part of what you are facing. There is nothing that we can do about it. So people are afraid and [sometimes] they ring us to say, you know, my one cousin hasn't left the house in six months and it is causing mental problems. [And] from my point of view there is very little we can say [to help], apart from "if you are in a building if you are in a room[...] you have to try to get out. try to walk around in you building, up and down the stairs". You have to try to balance it with the threat and the likelihood of arrest. Otherwise you will drive yourself mad" [Interview between NGO Worker 1 and Leonie, November 2015, Bangkok].

While the home appears as the only safe space within an increasingly hostile city, staying in for weeks and months can enhance the feeling of being trapped and cause a huge amount of stress. Fear becomes a dynamic force that often shapes the "mental maps and hence, [...] everyday geographies" (England and Simon 2010, 202) of asylum seekers in Bangkok that tend to be very confined to their homes and close surroundings of the neighbourhoods. As the interview sequence shows, the only geographies they can try to reclaim are the stairways and corridors of their apartment blocks. The few routes within the city that they have to take to reach NGOs or other supportive institutions are already perceived as uncertain and dangerous terrain by the asylum seekers.

Yet, the same NGO worker said in the interview that some women manage to obtained a higher degree of mobility than men within the city, as they are less often harassed by law enforcement [Interview between NGO Worker 1 and Leonie, November 2015, Bangkok]. Asylum seekers and their advocates repeatedly told us stories of police officers being more willing to arrest men than women, especially when children were involved. Fear does not demobilize asylum seekers equally in Bangkok; rather fear can trigger a redistribution of options and behaviours. However, this seems highly dependent on the personal resources and psychological strength of the individual person, as was suggested in the same interview. Fear, risk and perceived safety thus seem to be at least partially tied to the gender identity of the asylum seeker. As gender can be an important element that influences the outcomes of urban encounters it shapes the amount of fear, demonstrating how subjective fear is.

The asylum seeker's fear of arrest in Bangkok, however, does not only springs from real encounters with law enforcement, but also circulates through the communication networks of asylum seekers, refugees and NGOs. This became evident in a conversation with an NGO worker in May 2016: "When the government announced that immigration rules would toughen after March 28th, many rumors spread that there would be waves of arrest and other things. In practice, it only led to longer bans

for overstayers.” [Interview between NGO Worker 2 and Quentin, May 2016, Bangkok]. The fear of encounters and their outcome is thus “not wholly measurable” as Shirlow and Pain (2003, p. 18) put it. Fear arises from the uncertainty and the potentiality of danger within every encounter between the asylum seeker and the city.

Conclusion

In this paper, we asked what exactly is urban about the fear of asylum seekers in Bangkok. The fear of urban asylum seekers in Bangkok arises from within the city itself, rather than during the passage from one country to another or during border crossings, our research suggests. The metropolis Bangkok is both a void into which asylum seekers can disappear, whilst at the same time they are subjected to arbitrary arrests, frequently being stopped by law enforcement. As the urban has been defined by its intensity of encounter, its density of population and its juxtaposition of otherness since the beginning of an urban sociology/geography (Amin 2008; McFarlane 2016), the fear of asylum seekers in Bangkok arises from the potentiality of encounters with law enforcement. As each encounter can potentially lead to arrest, the city becomes a fearsome place unless asylum seekers do not develop specific strategies of trying to deal with such encounters. At times gender identity can help lessening the presence of fear as it lessens the risks of arrests, showing that identity can at times act as repository for meeting fear and negotiating passage in the scary urban space that Bangkok presents for asylum seekers.

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'This is Not the Bronx': The Ambivalent Contestation of Urban Imaginaries of Fear

Ana Ivasiuc

Introduction

In the summer of 2019, one could read on the Facebook page of a neighbourhood patrol in the peripheries of Rome a warning.¹ It said that on a given day in the near future, residents should avoid certain places in the neighbourhood because there will be 'public order issues'. 'What we will do', the post reads, 'is for the best interest of our entire territory'. The man posting this message is the leader of a patrol initiated in 2013 in Nuova Ponte di Nona, in the eastern periphery of Rome, in a bid to protect the neighborhood from property-related crime. Allegedly, crime rates would be on the rise because of the presence, at about 4 km, of one of the largest and most infamous *campi nomadi* in Rome, known as the camp of Salone. The mobilization of the group to fight 'Gypsy crime' explicitly earned them the nickname 'anti-Roma patrols'. In 2015, about nine cars patrolled the three neighbourhoods regularly.²

The Facebook page of the group displays many photographs and videos from the neighbourhood taken during night patrols, but also racist comments about Roma and other immigrants, praise for fascism and the 'forces of order', and political commentary explicitly on the far-right of the spectrum. Hate speech and instigation to violence against Roma and immigrants are recurrent, and many posts advocate openly for vigilantism.

While the patrols receive support for their security practices from some of the residents, not all inhabitants share the imaginaries of insecurity that the group produces and circulates in the social or traditional media. The neighbourhood committee, for instance, often emphasizes that the neighbourhood is far from being a dangerous place.

This essay explores how the patrol group constructs a discourse of fear and insecurity in the neighbourhood, which they purport to combat. To the imaginaries of insecurity that the patrol produces, I then superpose the discourses which contest the omnipresence of insecurity, and explore their potential to reframe the debate away from security, towards infrastructural investment able to sustain the hopes of the middle-class suburbanites inhabiting the neighbourhood.

'People are afraid'

¹ The research conducive to this article was carried out within the Collaborative Research Centre 'Dynamics of Security: Forms of Securitization in Historical Perspective' (SFB/TRR 138), funded by the German Research Foundation and implemented by the Justus Liebig University Giessen, the Philipps University Marburg, and the Herder Institute for Historical Research on East Central Europe, Marburg. This article is a thematic development from this research conducted between 2014 and 2017; a draft paper was presented at the 2019 RC21 conference in New Delhi, India, with support from the Postdoc Career and Mentoring Office of the Justus Liebig University Giessen.

² Between 2014 and 2017, I have conducted research with this group in Rome, accompanying them on patrols shortly before being denied further access. I then resorted to digital ethnography performed on their public Facebook page.

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I have written extensively on the practice of patrolling, exploring the urban materialities of blithe that the group mobilizes to legitimate its undertakings (Ivasiuc 2015 and 2020), the cultural and moral roots of the patrol and the kind of surveillance that they enact (Ivasiuc 2018), and the complex of securitarian visuality that the photographs that they share on their social media reveal (Ivasiuc 2019). I will only summarize here briefly what patrolling entails, and how the insecurity discourse is produced to legitimize their practice in the neighbourhood.

The initiator of the group, a man in his sixties, wrote in March 2013 in the local newspaper:

People are afraid, afraid to return home late at night and in danger of being assaulted by criminals, hiding in wait for their victim, people are afraid to return home and to find their own house violated and robbed, people are afraid to have persons walking behind them on the streets, people are increasingly afraid, at a certain time at night starts the curfew, there are ever more people who do not get out at night, even for a simple walk.³

He then goes on to explain that this untenable situation and the exasperation of the residents are what motivated him to organize what he called '*ronde pontenonine*'.⁴

One or several men drive around at night, making regular, brief stops (*presidio*) at the points of entrance into the neighbourhood. When they see people walking, in particular Black and brown men, they lurk behind them, photograph them, and sometimes prompt them to leave. Everything foreign-looking, such as cars with an Eastern European license plate, is reported as suspicious on the Facebook page, with photographs accompanied by calls for vigilance. They report on their night patrols on social media, where they also post images of urban blithe from Rome, numerous links to the (far-) right press, criticism to leftist '*buonisti*' (good-doers), praise for the 'forces of order', but also racist and violent commentary against Roma and immigrants, and diatribes on an untenable state of insecurity and the exasperation of 'decent citizens' (*gente per bene*). If anything has linked the name of the neighborhood to the word 'security', it is their numerous appearances in newspapers and on television as 'sentinels of the periphery'. The neighbourhood, they claim, is plagued by crime, against evidence that in fact, the neighbourhood is not high on crime statistics. They speak of 'curfews' and complain that 'our women can no longer go out after 8 pm'. They speak of the country being invaded by barbaric and criminal others, pitched against a community of law-abiding, hard-working, civilized Italians by default. Against this invasion of incivility, they call for citizens to 'take things in their own hands' and protect their neighbourhood, and they lead by example.

One night in May 2015, while I accompanied the group on a patrol, they spoke about lynching Roma 'to teach them a lesson', and the leader boasted about his ability and willingness to organize a mob attack on the *campo nomadi* of Salone. The warning about 'public order issues' at the start of this essay was one such attempt at DYI justice (*giustizia fai da te*), stopped short, as the leader later confessed on the Facebook page, by concerns to not trouble the police. But the recipe for a better life in the neighbourhood remains the same: more security.

'This is not the Bronx': Idyllic suburbanity

The leader of the patrol was one of the active members of the neighbourhood committee. When he decided, in 2013, to start patrolling the neighbourhood, his initiative was met with opposition from the other members, who judged it politically dangerous, but also unnecessary. 'This is not the Bronx', they often explain, rejecting the imaginaries of insecurity constructed by the patrol.

³ Franco Pirina, "Ronde pontenonine," in *Via Ponte di Nona* VIII.2 (2013), March, p. 4.

⁴ '*Ronde*' refers to the practice of paramilitary militia patrolling during the rise of fascism. *Ronde* were revived by the precursor of the Lega Nord in Northern Italy in the seventies and resurfaced in the mid-nineties, and again over the last few years. Since the group was criticized for its practice with fascist resonance, the members now vehemently refute that what they do is equivalent to *ronde*.

Their imaginary around Ponte di Nona is one with a different resonance. They frame it as 'the neighbourhood of the parks', and mirror this by posting photographs of greenery on the website of the committee. They post rather idyllic pictures emphasizing an aesthetic of tranquil suburbanity, albeit one strangely devoid of people. Indeed, human presence on the sidewalks is rather scarce in this postpedestrian neighbourhood, and the parks, as can be seen from the greenery invading the alleys of the parks, not so popular. Nature is at the core of what they frame as most valuable in the neighbourhood. When someone discovered a small pond in the margin of the neighbourhood in 2007, the committee undertook action to beautify the area and turn it into a park. Twelve years later, the works are finally completed, with a playground and paved alleys around the pond, known as 'il laghetto'.

But not all nature is benign and worthy of representing the neighbourhood. Situated in the Eastern part of the metropolitan area of the capital, the neighbourhood extended in 2002 into the *agro Romano* – a belt of agricultural land surrounding Rome. As a vestige of the emplacement of the neighbourhood in this agricultural land, a shepherd still herds his sheep in the surroundings of Ponte di Nona, on private fields he rented in the nineties. Now and then, the sheep intrude onto the roads of the neighbourhood, wreaking havoc among drivers and provoking episodes of moral outcry among inhabitants. The presence of the sheep in the urban space, they claim, is a security issue for drivers, and a health hazard for children playing in the main park of the neighbourhood – and that, because of sheep droppings that may carry disease. There

is a continuous struggle to displace the shepherd (il pecoraro), whose figure came to embody, in the discourses of many of his detractors, a symbol of rural presence incompatible with the vision *pontenonini* urbanites have of their own neighbourhood. Although one might take the sporadic presence of the sheep on the streets of the neighbourhood for another idyllic touch to the surrounding nature of the neighbourhood, *pontenonini* vehemently refute the compatibility of this pastoral detail with their post-pedestrian, middle-class neighbourhood made of concrete blocks of flats, and pursue incessantly their lobby to displace the sheep from their sight.⁵

The idea of ronde took off so successfully. Perhaps it is not so much fear of Others, or fear of crime, that mobilized citizens, but fear of seeing the value of their mortgaged houses plummet amidst this incipient process of degentrification.

The idyllic image that the committee projects on the neighbourhood does not mean that all else is well. There is work to be done for the benefit of the neighbourhood. They lobby extensively: to repair potholes and broken infrastructure, to open kindergartens, to connect the neighborhood to the suburban railways⁶, to deal with waste improperly disposed on sidewalks, to purify the space of urban blithe. For that, they organize cleaning up sessions together with Retake Roma, a group that intervenes to clean up urban areas of superficial signs of blithe: graffiti, layers of obsolete posters on urban walls and fences, weed encroaching upon paved spaces, and waste. Contrary to what the patrol advocates for, the committee sees a brighter future for the neighbourhood not in more security, but in more infrastructure and services.

In conclusion: More security or more infrastructure? Less nomadi!

When I started my research on the securitization of the Roma in Italy at the end of 2014, the initial group of Ponte di Nona involved eight men using three cars irregularly. When I returned for fieldwork six months later, the leader had successfully mobilized patrols in two neighbouring areas: Corcolle and Colle degli Abeti. Both figure regularly in the local press as areas of public disinvestment.

⁵ In the meantime, they have apparently managed to displace the *pecoraro*: last summer, when I last visited the neighbourhood, his stall was no longer there, and the sheep were nowhere to be seen.

⁶ The train station Ponte di Nona finally opened in 2016.

Potholes, lacking sewerage and water pipes, broken lamp posts, waste scattered around: this is the landscape that none other than one of the members of the neighbourhood committee of Ponte di Nona, a journalist, describes in her articles. Converging with the committee's advocacy for more infrastructure, her articles depict an urban landscape of ruin and abandonment precisely where the idea of *ronde* took off so successfully. Ambivalently, then, the discourse on infrastructural needs invites an unintended mobilization that ends up turning against 'crimmigrant Others' (Franko 2020), silencing its own claims in the process. Yet it is not so much fear of Others, or fear of crime, that mobilized these citizens for patrols, but fear of seeing the value of their mortgaged apartments plummet amidst this incipient process of degentrification. When resources do not reach suburban neighbourhoods, their residents are quick to embrace the narrative of scarcity that neoliberal governance so readily disseminates, and that informs anti-immigrant discourses.

There is, however, one issue on which both the patrol and the neighbourhood committee largely concord: both undertake lobby and advocacy for the municipality to put a halt to the 'criminal pyres' plaguing the neighbourhood, and to displace the *campo nomadi* of Salone. One of the issues that causes the most moral panic in the neighborhood are the 'toxic pyres' (*roghi tossici*), caused when waste accumulated over time around the *campi nomadi* is burnt, mostly by Roma. A recent journalistic investigation (Belli et al. 2015) has revealed shady, mafia-related practices of refuse management in which bulky detritus from construction sites or private individuals is ultimately dumped near camps or given to the Roma instead of being transported to special sites, which would cost more time, more hassle, and more money. But the Roma are constantly blamed for the large quantities of pungent smoke that emerge periodically and immediately make it to the social media accounts of both the patrol and the committee. While they disagree on whether to have more security or more infrastructure, they all agree on having less *nomadi*. The anti-*nomadi* discourse unifies opposing visions, mystifying the precarization of the Roman suburbs and offering an easy scapegoat for the discontent of suburbanites. The claims for more infrastructure, then, disappear in the anti-gypsist chorus of voices from the peripheries of Rome.

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Fear the city

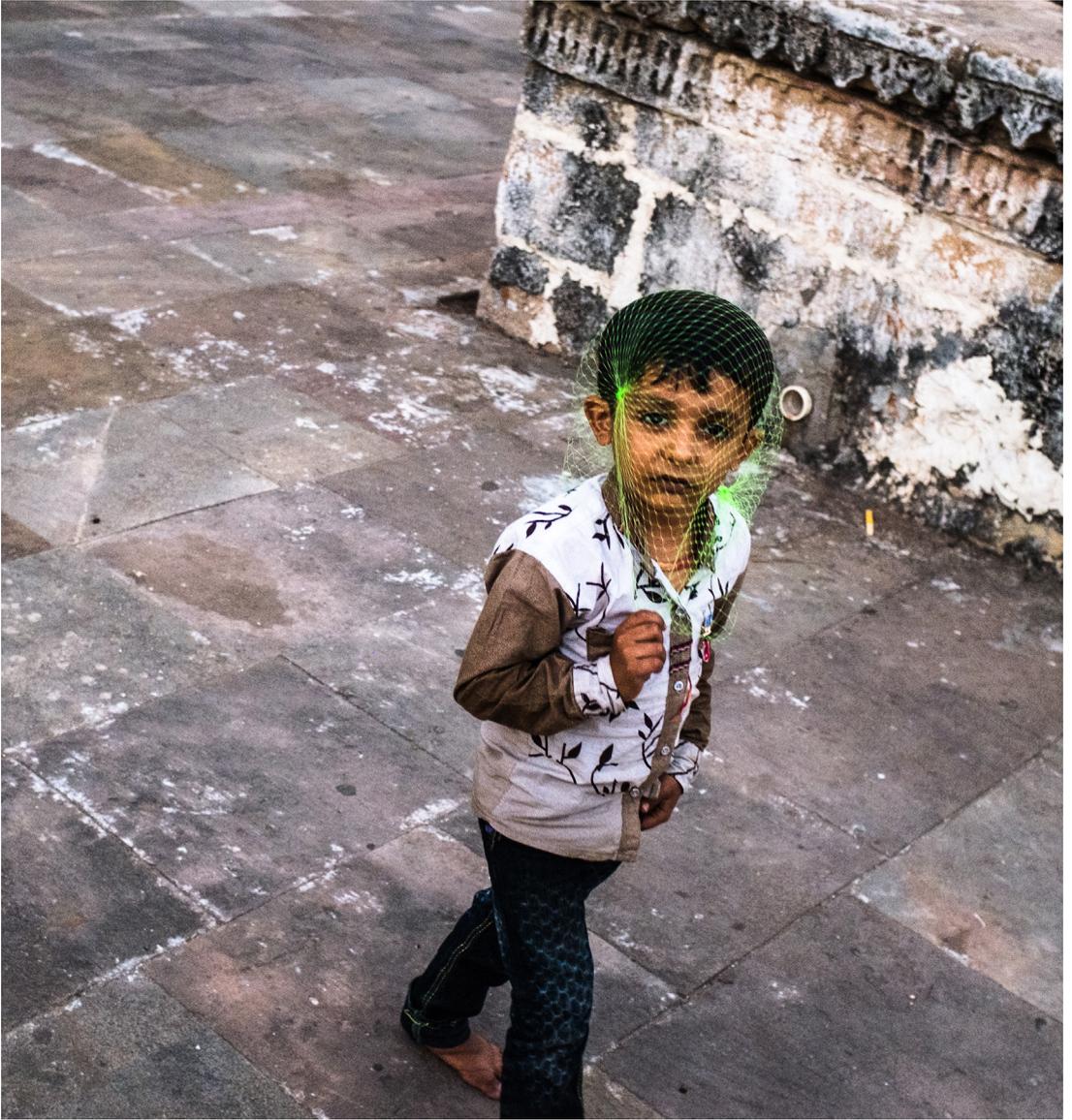
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