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Beyond urban violence

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EDITORIAL

Not many topics have received the amount of (academic, cultural, political) attention that urban violence has had. In a way, since 19th century reflections on the nascent urban modernity, the discourse about 'the city' has always been one of violence, with remarkable consequences in the way cities are discussed, regulated, planned, policed, and lived. Reflection on what urban violence may actually be, however, has been for the most part lacking. The urban in urban violence has often been used as a mere adjective pointing at the location where a physical event of violence takes place, rather than a process, a space, an atmosphere, which may be violent in the first place. In this sense, going beyond a narrow understanding of urban violence means attending to its relational, material, and temporal complexity. This is what the following contributions do. It is neither by chance, nor because the authors featured here have not been capable of capturing the present, that Covid-19 features scantily in this collection and, in contrast, historical accounts are the most common. The epistemology of urban violence calls for extended temporalities: and while the effects of governmental health policies in terms of state violence are there to see, tracing the complex interrelations of the latter with urban violence writ large requires a distancing that is impossible for the time being.

In counterpoint to this realisation, we begin with the one essay by Caterina Nirta that does engage explicitly with the pandemic and its politics. Confronting the framing of the health emergency, Nirta unpacks the political ambiguity played by the notion of hope, whose soothing projections of a post-crisis future risk 'transforming the exceptionality of a moment of crisis into a prolonged temporality where violence becomes ordinary.' This reflection calls for rethinking the ways violence is visibilised and labelled as such. Visibilisation is at the core of the essay by Claske Dijkema, who explores how

these matters get 'lost in translation' as what would be 'race riots' on the other side of the Atlantic is framed, by French media, as *violences urbaines*, thus erasing their racialised breeding ground and political significance. Protesters are seemingly caught in a quandary: normally invisible in the public discourse, they resort to 'spectacular' forms of violence in order to be seen, and yet this hyper-visibility ends up being the way they are framed, and thus silenced, as mere vandals.

What if urban violence is explored as entangled with the process of planning and construction, rather than 'senseless' destruction? Another step beyond urban violence may entail exploring its sedimentation in the infrastructural strata of the city, as a result of historical patterns of urbanisation. This is what the following two essays do, excavating the history of urban conflict and attempted uricide *vis-à-vis* the neo-colonial practices of modern-day Israel and Turkey. Ariel Handel shows how the Israeli planning and development in the Occupied Territories unfolds as an 'inherently urban' violence, 'part of the city's making and unmaking.' Likewise, describing layer upon layer the long history of violence in Diyarbakır, 'omnipresent in the material and symbolic dimensions of the urban experience,' Francesco Marilungo and Francesco Pasta recount the 'continuation of war by other means' by the Turkish state and its violent attempt to 'discipline' the city through rationalist planning.

The contradictory relation between state and violence, especially as regards the legalistic understandings of violence sanctioned by the state, is the concern of the next couple of essays, which bring us to Latin America, the traditional region of choice for research on urban violence. Looking at São Paulo, a city split by ever widening socio-economical fractures and incommensurable 'regimes of normativity' that often communicate merely through violence, Gabriel Feltran considers the asymmetric deployment

of lethal force by the police in São Paulo to place urban violence within a broader political economy of illegal markets and urban inequalities. Similarly fractured appears Medellín, a city 'built' through the violence of land dispossession and socio-economic inequality. Here, Lorenzo Mauloni shows the urban as a fragmented space full of voids, where the State is not understood as that which ensures protection, where vulnerability is outsourced to non-state armed groups, and where violence slowly fill the atmosphere by becoming a normal, chronic state.

Likewise, the violence of exclusion, dispossession and invisibilisation produced by practices and rhetorics of urban planning remains for the most part under the urban radar. This is the focus of the following two essays, which look at the politics and policies of public space, and at the fractures and cleavages these produce. Lauren Brown and Jeff Rose mobilise Rob Nixon's concept of 'slow violence' to discuss how the (re-)activation of a park in Salt Lake City, Utah, ultimately displaces and disenfranchises its homeless populations. Similar policies of reactivation, better known as 'regeneration', are the focus of Marco Alioni's text. Set in Brescia, Alioni looks at the political aesthetics of the Italian notion of *decoro urbano*, reading between the lines of national and local policies, and showing how these produce 'inappropriate' bodies and spaces, violently marked by class, racialised and gendered dimensions.

When trying to reframe urban violence, it is important to consider the role of the researchers themselves. This do Niccolò Giacchetta and Eunice Castro Seixas in the last ethnographic essay of the collection, based on research in an informal neighbourhood in the outskirts of Lisbon, reflecting on how violence – or the threat of it – can become a way to shape interactions between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in stigmatised contexts. The issue comes to a close with Camillo Boano, whose theoretical reflection touches as

diverse cities as Beirut (Lebanon) and Civita di Bagnoregio (in Lazio, Italy), while pondering on the possibility of moving beyond the constitutive violence of urban inhabitation, the violence that lies, barely concealed, beneath practices of planning, regeneration, 'activation.' 'Beyond', here, does entail reworking the process from within, challenging the (often violent) process of construction with a creative and resistant process of de-activation. The politics of inhabitation Boano calls for does not oppose, but rather seeks to dwell in the uninhabitable, a destituent move aimed at making room for new forms of collective living, a suggestion that strongly resonates with our new planetary climate.

ST & AP¹

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Crisis, hope and the new normal

Caterina Nirta

In this essay I would like to reflect on the role hope plays in the framing of a crisis. In particular, I am interested in the way in which hope utilises a moment of crisis and its affects such as vulnerability, uncertainty, loss, to introduce and legitimise low-balling measures that may offer short-term relief or implement desirable change, but, at the same time, sharpen long-standing precarity and disparities of wealth, opportunity, health thus compromising individual and collective engagement with space.

Perceptions of what a crisis might be reflect the hopes and fears of specific cultural, geographical, historical and socio-political circumstances, and tautological affirmations of the ideology underpinning the status quo that certain actions and situations represent: chaos, suffering, disorder, and so forth. The framing of urban problems through the concept of crisis is not novel. It roots back in late 50s and 60s race politics of urban downtown America, and later in the 70s with the emergence of neoliberalism as a model of governance which led to various forms of urban austerity (Weaver 2016) reducing local welfare and causing various forms of stratified hardship in cities. In these contested spaces, conflicting interests appropriate the framing of the crisis transforming it into social reality, each battling to put forth their own idea of post-crisis future (Gotham and Greenberg 2014). Intrinsic to a crisis are in fact discursive normative assumptions about what is desirable or undesirable, and how this may be addressed through quick emergency measures designed to mitigate the sense of danger and instability performed by that crisis. Perceived as events that will endanger our common idea of normality, rights, status, responses to crises legitimise specific modes of government and unorthodox approaches to risk assessment, and project empirical realities and possible scenarios that are largely responsible for the production and regulation of specific patterns of action and reaction. These become inscribed in language, space and the body forming new and more or less acceptable regimes of violence, and unveiling intersectional forms of conflict and responses to conflict that impregnate, alter and, in some cases, forever compromise, the urban tissues where they unfold. To examine the conflicts that constitute a crisis, then, it is not so useful to quantify what a crisis is, rather, paraphrasing Spinoza's materialist approach, we should focus on what a crisis can.

In this short piece I argue that the constitution of specific regimes of everyday life utilises hope, framed by crisis, to materially reference our relationship with space in ways that normalise experiences of violence transforming the exceptionality of a moment of crisis into a prolonged temporality where violence becomes ordinary. Whether narrated, projected, or desired, the function of hope is to provide an image of what is believed possible or expected, and to inscribe that image on our enactments, actions, and engagement with our present and future. In other words, a moment of crisis has material implications that go beyond the time and space of that crisis. These could be the result of change of governance, surveillance, new more or less invasive low-enforcing techniques, and have

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one thing in common: while altering the existing terms and conditions of our everyday life (all those recognised norms and enactments that constitute our normality), they form affects that lay out new parameters for the future utilising the benevolent force of hope to make these changes discursive.

Narratives on how to remain hopeful in the face of conflict and adversity abound in the social sciences. Arguably, hope has been the guiding star of urban planning since the 50s, when narratives of post-war urban resurrection chased the 'utopian city', a space designed to enhance all that was good, positive and desirable in everydayness, that would engage with the world through an ethos of hope (Anderson 2006). This ethos of hope has been interpreted differently over the years according to the regimes of governance that have been in place, however, whether approached from an epistemological angle (Appadurai 2013; Thompson and Žižek 2013) or as a historical shift (Berlant 2011), the generative force of hope has been long theorised as an instrument which, under certain conditions of vulnerability and strain, can serve as a stabiliser acting on two levels: first, it offers a different perspective to the epistemological impasse of a crisis, thus helping establish a new post-crisis 'truth' to adopt once that temporary impasse was over (Bauman 1998; Beck 1992; Mbembe and Roitman 1995). Second, it works as a tranquilliser: it re-establishes order at times of uncertainty, provides a ray of light – however ephemeral and intangible – in the economy of conflict that constitute an urban space. This inevitably stops, or at least controls, the way in which a crisis is played out, its reach, how it is appropriated by individuals and elaborated. Hope claims ownership over that image of what is possible I mentioned earlier offering possible futures to tend to – a future one can willingly accept – while simultaneously soothing uncontrollable (violent) reactions and, in some instances, the very perception of that crisis.

This necessary ambiguity of hope is nowhere as apparent as when it is confronted by more or less propagandistic narratives of futurity. Within environments framed by crisis and emergency, the future – understood as a project, an event, an affect in the making – acquires utopian connotations in the sense that it never really materialises, never in the way hoped, but the space of forthcoming it generates, we may call it a prolonged form of imminent futurity, is essential in the action of neutralisation and normalisation of those affects generated by the crisis. A crisis dominates the present and leaves no space for the actualisation of the future which inevitably becomes symbolic, a mere projection. Its manifestation, optimism, which is the consensual delay of a desire (Chew & Ho 1994), a sort of temporal stagnation where any real, effective move towards the future is depotentialised, requires hope, the tranquilliser, the stabiliser, the soother, to transform the unacceptable into always new forms of 'flexible futurity', a dominant, a-temporal and a-spatial paradigm based on a model of continuous mutation-adaptation aimed at forming adaptive mechanisms of control that seek to capitalise on affects rather than repress them (Deleuze 1992).

Thinking of the current emergency as a point of conceptual reference, it is interesting to reflect on the spatio-temporal of a crisis as material emergency: as an event that exceeds the present we know generating new forms of habitations and misplacement as well as always new thresholds of violence and insecurity which we elaborate and carry into the future as new knowledge. Most countries' immediate responses to the current health crisis involved more or less severe and extended forms of forced confinement which, by April 2020, saw more than half the global population under some form of lockdown. Usual modalities of mobility, interaction and other instances of everyday collective affirmation have become associated to danger. Especially in more densely populated neighbourhoods, surges in visitor numbers to parks and scenic locations has led to increased surveillance and control, resulting in major urban areas to remain closed. While this radical shift has further exposed the precarity of our social spaces, it has also robbed them of that sense of real or just perceived familiarity transforming comfort into apprehension. Communal stairways, for example, once shielded spaces of shared spontaneity and domestic imaginaries have now become symbolic representations of spatial

tension. Similarly, to those for whom home is a space of vulnerability and coercive control, social isolation has become a double trap and, with nowhere else to go, cases of physical or psychological violence, already a major issue, have skyrocketed during lock-down. This is significant because the material suspension of the delimitation between private and public spheres (for example, the sudden loss of safety from being elsewhere, outdoors, in a place of work) has generated a form of stratified tension, that of fearing the aggressor indoors and the virus outdoor, directly aggravated by the dismantlement of all those support community services in place to offer relief or refuge to victims.

This temporary marginalisation of individuals from urban spaces has inevitably generated an array of social compulsions, some of which now widely recognised as COVID Stress Syndrome, with sense of danger and fear of contamination as core elements (Taylor et al. 2020).

Concerns about the future, and anxiety about the shape of life post-crisis are reflected in new modes of engagement with the urban, and today captured by the rhetorics of 'new normal' put forward, for example, by the slogans 'reinvention of the high street' and 'health in all policies'. Both strategies allege to radically transform urban spaces into new clusters branded as local, sustainable and community-oriented, where people really want to be, as opposed to the old-school high street: too busy, too noisy, too violent, too dirty, too dangerous. The virulent symbolism of contagion is carried out in the way in which we imagine our future: the 'health in all policies', also referred to as 'design for health' and 'active design', lays out the foundation of the new standards of urban design with health as its core value. Despite the declared radical intent, these pre-briefed models of life and socialisation are infinitely less incisive than they claim to be: far from really reinventing space and relations, these are rather normative processes of rebranding focusing on communication and aimed at managing the reputation of high streets (Carmona 2015) through ad hoc strategies of good and bad, positive and negative.

As part of this post-crisis narrative, new ideas of urban environment are gathering increasing momentum in mainstream urban design: healthy green spaces, sustainable outdoor living and the slogan 'use nature to reduce urban crime'¹ appear to be gaining significant traction, and are widely used as part of successful communication strategies in the post-lockdown landscape. The invoked devotional purpose of urban design to influence social protection, social justice and inclusion through urban planning, however, has in recent decades tended to achieve opposite results: most notably huge difference in funding and quality of planning between centres and suburbs, precarious quality of life and welfare (Finn and Kobayashi 2020), standardised urban models, and gentrification-induced forms of displacement and disintegration of social networks. Far from engaging with the diverse and multiple singularities of each space, these measures promote fit-all models of governance with urban spaces often seen as neutral fields where to plant de-politicised images of a disembodied future: flexible, green, sustainable, safe, clean, and where violence always belongs elsewhere.

Long-standing structural precarity – inevitably deepened during this crisis especially for minorities, vulnerable and low-income people, as well as youths – has had a significant effect on the freedom

The material suspension of the delimitation between private and public spheres (for example, the sudden loss of safety from being elsewhere, outdoors, in a place of work) has generated a form of stratified tension, that of fearing the aggressor indoors and the virus outdoor, directly aggravated by the dismantlement of all those support community services in place to offer relief or refuge to victims

¹ University of Virginia Health System. "How green space can reduce violent crime: Researchers seek to enhance public safety by harnessing nature." ScienceDaily. ScienceDaily, 27 February 2020. <www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/02/200227144253.htm>.

of movement sharpening inequalities in access to services and habitation. Positive social impact has been sporadic and only in the form of community-driven solidarity. There has not been structural capacity at the level of local or national government to create alternative solutions beyond present models of compartmentalisation and separation. Such oppressive governance has been made more palatable by the reinforced sense of hope that prohibitive approaches, however damaging, would lower number of infections and create the condition for a return to 'normal life' which, public consensus has it, will be a 'new kind of normal'. The rhetoric of the new normal involves a turn to forms of systemic social and physical distancing, and greater attention in the direction of urban sanitification, pathologisation of urban spaces, with obvious aggravated disparities and material ramifications not just in terms of urban deterioration, social conflict, or governance.

Where am I going with this? The crystallisation of social and urban conflicts as 'a crisis' in order to justify short-sighted and prohibitive emergency policies is no surprise. It is expected that political populism will be dipping in the proliferous opportunities offered by this new surge of mainstream attention in public health and 'the new urban living'. The instrumentalization of public health governance from state governance to this day continues to demonstrate structural inadequacy, despite recent scientific studies question models of indiscriminate lockdown (Bulfone et al. 2021) and suggest that different, more rational approaches to mobility are possible. So, the problem faced by urban studies in the making of this post-crisis future is complex and is about addressing, not simply rebranding or balancing, pre-existing urban conflicts largely caused by spatial, economic and infrastructural disparities immensely increased by the consolidation of neoliberal strategies of control. While vaster green areas and more sustainable models of mobility are attractive ways to win short-term consent, medium and long term governance will inevitably have to reconsider this anti-poor turned-green urban rhetoric (Finn and Kobayashi 2020) presented as 'new normal' and instead transform contested spaces with sustainable strategies of socio-economic dynamism modelled on 'human nature to shape and make out environment in ways without precedent in nature, that serve our needs and give meaning to our lives' (Heskett 2002:7). While these concerns are turned into emergency by the current pandemic (with consequent pressure to produce quick fixes), their relevance is to be considered in much wider terms and involves rethinking various contexts of urban conflict characterised by terror, vulnerability, poverty, marginalisation, ecological disaster in relation to the singular creative forces of each social subject that forms these spaces. A new model of spatial governance will inevitably require a move away from ineffective forms of representation and the commitment to creative strategies of solidarity motivated by resistance.

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What is urban about urban violence in France?

Violence in marginalised neighbourhoods as body politics

Claske Dijkema

In France, urban violence is associated with juvenile violence that concerns certain marginalised spaces of the city and certain, specifically racialised, inhabitants.¹ In comparison to British and American contexts, the term is used mostly to address anti-institutional violence: what is called *violences urbaines* in France corresponds to 'race riots' on the other side of the Atlantic. The term 'urban' violence is problematic for three reasons. First, it is used as a euphemism for a racialised representation of juvenile violence. Second, the seemingly neutral term 'urban' underplays the political significance of these forms of violence. Third, the term renders other forms of violence invisible, by symbolically confining violence to certain spaces.

This contribution approaches *violences urbaines* – such as setting objects on fire, in order to provoke police intervention and altercation – as a form of self-defence by subaltern groups. The youth turn the hypervisibilisation of urban violence by mainstream media into a means to publicise their own anger: they choose fire as a means of public address because they refuse to engage in conversation if they are not heard. The riots that took place in Grenoble in 2010 serve as empirical grounding of this argument.

In July 2010, important riots broke out in Villeneuve, a marginalised social housing neighbourhood in the southern part of Grenoble. The riots followed a pattern that has become familiar in France, starting with the death of a racialised young man from a marginalised neighbourhood as the result of a police operation. In many cases, such deaths provoke acts of destruction and setting fire to objects, leading to further police intervention. Confrontations generally last for a couple of days but can last longer, as has been the case in 2005, when riots lasted for a month and spread throughout the entire country. In Villeneuve, the riots that broke out in 2010 lasted three nights. What sparked these riots was the death of Karim Boudouda who was tracked by the police after he had robbed a casino with his partner in crime in a wealthy town not far from Grenoble, and shot in Villeneuve, at the foot of the block where his mother lived. Boudouda was hit in the back by a bullet, after he fired at the police. That night a group of about thirty young men went out on the streets to express their anger about his death: burning roughly 75 cars, breaking the glass of the neighbourhood's tram stops, throwing stones at the police and firemen, and setting fire to street furniture.

I analyse the image that has become symbolic of the 2010 riots in Villeneuve as an example of the hypervisibilisation of violence (Fig.1), and I use the theoretical input of Haraway's space of constructed

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visibility, of Butler's analysis of inverted projections, and Dorlin's input on violent subjects acting out of self-defence to analyse the interaction between speaking through acts of violence, silencing practices and the hypervisibilisation of violence. They help to answer the question what is urban about urban violence.

Violence as a means to make public statements

If one has the feeling that one is not heard, violence – in this case, setting objects on fire – can become a viable option. While the established may well require that post-colonial immigrants and inhabitants of marginalised neighbourhoods ask for their rights politely, and patiently wait for their demands to be taken into account, eruptions of violence are only to be expected if the established are perceived to be unwilling to listen

Violence becomes an option in a context where the use of words does not make sense for those who lack access to the channels of verbal expression

and refuse to recognize the subaltern as legitimate political adversaries (Dijkema, 2021; Springer, 2011). Violence becomes an option in a context where the use of words does not make sense for those who lack access to the channels of verbal expression. If they cannot make themselves heard, what does lie in their power is the ability to make themselves visible and to do harm. This approach to urban violence breaks with the common interpretation that violence is a sign of anomie, of powerlessness, and/or a desperate act to exist in some way. Since rioters know that their voices will not be heard, most of them do not even try to speak and instead choose silence. A postcolonial reading of riots leads Piettre (2013) to the conclusion that it was not an incapacity to speak, but a refusal of interlocution that characterised the 2005 riots in France. It is because rioters understand that they cannot speak – in the sense of Spivak – that they choose alternative means of communication, they choose to speak in terms of acts rather than words.

The urban dimension of 'urban violence'?

This type of violence is 'urban' insofar as it uses physical space strategically, to provoke direct confrontations with the police and to make a public statement. The act of setting something on fire has an important performative function, it produces spectacular images that make visible feelings of anger and revolt. Those involved in riots use the hypervisibilisation of violence by the mainstream media to publicize their anger. I consider the burning of cars, tires, garbage bins, and schools as smoke signals. Hence, fire becomes a means of public address. The only space available to publicize their anger is urban public space. It is there that their public address can meet its audience. Cars, street furniture and walls (graffiti statements) were used in July 2010 to express anger about this death. This message targets security forces but addresses a larger audience. The chosen location for the exhibition of flames, a parking lot at the edge of the neighbourhood, should also be taken into account. Three reasons may have played a part in the choice of this location: it was here that Boudouda was shot; a car park is a logical place to burn cars; and the parking area functions as a transition zone between what is considered to be inside and outside of the neighbourhood. A statement made on the border of the neighbourhood is most likely addressed to those outside of it, but from a space that is considered theirs.

The political impact of these smoke signals is however limited because rioters have little influence on the interpretations of these events, and these expressions of anger mostly lead to the strengthening of the security discourse and to measures that negatively affect racialised inhabitants of marginalised neighbourhoods. The hypervisibilisation of urban violence in mainstream media simultaneously leads to silencing and to making this publicized anger incomprehensible.

Hypervisibilisation of violence

The problem for racialised subjects is that they are seen all the time because they are made visible as 'others' (e.g. skin colour), but they are not heard. According to Haraway (2004: 12), "vision is always partial and provisional, culturally produced and performed, and it depends on the spaces of constructed visibility that – even as they claim to render the opacities of 'other spaces' transparent – are always also spaces of constructed invisibility". It is specific of racism that "those who are 'imaged' or 'pictured' (*mises en image*) are in reality the objects of a 'design' (*dessin*) that has little to do with them in first instance" (Dorlin, 2007: 153). The image of the riots in Villeneuve is such an example. While the image of the rioting youth has come to represent Villeneuve to a certain extent, the neighbourhood's inhabitants feel it has little to do with them. I consider images that hypervisibilise violence in the neighborhood as means to disqualify acts or statements in public space and therefore as a form of epistemic violence. To make this argument, I draw on Butler's concept of inverted projections that transform the meaning of voices and acts through racist representations. The empirical case on which Butler (1993) drew to build this conceptual tool of inverted projections is the Rodney King case, in which physical self-defence was interpreted as an act of aggression. Inverted projections focus on the visual rather than the discursive domain of representation, they deal with an image (projection) of an act that comes to represent the reality. In the interpretation of this image by the established, the intentions behind an act (of a marginalized or subaltern person) are not only made inaudible but the intentions of the aggressor and victim are being inverted: the victim becomes the aggressor. The idea of inverted projections helps therefore to understand the way in which racialised bodies in danger come to be seen as sources of danger.

The image of riots in Villeneuve is not object of an inverted projection as such because the young man's hands in the centre of the picture are not raised in self-defence as in the case of Rodney King. The two other men next to him are throwing objects in the direction of the police. Seeing them as aggressors is therefore not only a projection of white paranoia. However, what this image has in common with the footage of the raised hands of Rodney King is that it suffers from the effect of the "frozen frame", of using an image taken at one moment in time to portray a whole situation. Butler's observation (ibid: 20) that "the raised hand, is torn from its temporal place in the visual narrative" is applicable here. In this case the image comes to speak for the 2010 riots and Villeneuve as a whole but does not say anything about what happened prior to this moment. In other words, what this image brings into visibility leaves out of visibility other aspects of what happened that evening: Karim Boudouda being shot by the police, his body being left unattended for over six hours, and the much more structural tensions around police conduct in marginalised neighbourhoods. This frozen frame reinforces the representation of urban violence as "senseless" or "barbaric" and has the function of a "bestialisation of the [racialised] crowds", as did the frozen frame in the Rodney King case (ibid: 21).

The decontextualization of this image by the mainstream media was subsequently to be recontextualised by the French President, explaining the riots in 2010 as a problem of immigration and integration. This political treatment of the riots in 2010 meant that twenty people, the estimated number of people who participated in the riots, came to speak for an entire neighbourhood, while other voices were made inaudible. While visibilising violence, media did not capture the alternative and everyday prefigurative politics that inhabitants are engaged in.

While urban violence is interpreted by the established as an attack on the Republic, it is interpreted by many in the neighbourhood as an act of defence. The sentiment is widespread in the neighbourhood that the state either abandons the neighbourhood or represents an oppressive force. Dorlin (2017) explains that if the subalterns are not considered worth defending by those in power, physical violence is one of the few tools they have left to defend their dignity. The violence of the subalterns

can therefore be reinterpreted as an act of self-defence. In the case of 2010, rioting and entering into violent confrontation with the police should not be seen as an act of individual physical self-defence, but as the defence of their neighbourhood and the defence of their dignity.

Conclusion

This article analysed urban violence as subaltern violence and focused on the dynamics between speaking through violent acts, being made visible and being made inaudible. I have demonstrated that, at the same time as subalternised rioters are brought into the field of visual representation, they are maneuvered beyond the range of hearing. Subalterns are not mere victims though, they adopt tactics that use the visual attention that is drawn to their physical appearance, such as skin colour, they use this visibility to publicize their anger. I argue that rioters have developed a means of public address adapted to this condition of the subaltern, and to this age of the image and social networks. Media do the work of widely distributing the images produced by angry young people. They use this visibility that media provide to make public statements, to publicise their frustration and anger.

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Urban violence

The dialectics of city-making and ruination in settler-colonial settings

Ariel Handel

Israeli radio report in December 2019 referred to no less than seven deliberate fires of public facilities in East Jerusalem that year, including schools, community centers and playgrounds.¹ According to the reporter, all the places that were set on fire have been “built by the Jerusalem municipality for the benefit of Palestinian residents of the east of the city.” Maor Tzemaeh of the right-wing organization Lach Yerushalayim (“for you, Jerusalem”) added: “The State of Israel has been investing quite a bit of money in recent years, mainly in civilian infrastructure. It is very painful to see the destruction done by Islamic terrorist elements with the encouragement of the Palestinian Authority”.

In Jerusalem, as elsewhere, deliberate damage to urban infrastructure is seen as something between mere vandalism and extreme political response, akin to terrorism. From the authorities’ point of view, in both cases, the action is deemed irrational as the infrastructure under attack is believed to benefit the community at stake. Violence against infrastructures is thus seen as something that lies between ingratitude and thoughtlessness, to the extent of self-inflicted masochism.

The purpose of this short article will be to rethink urban violence. Contrary to common views, violence is not meaningless. Rather it should be understood as part of the struggle in the city for the city. The aim will be to seriously think the urban in urban violence: not just as an arena where violence occurs or plays out, but rather as a place that is formed and come undone by violence. My emphasis is on urbanity in the context of settler colonialism, though the conclusions would point at the relevance of the proposed analysis to urban frontiers at large.

* * *

Walter Benjamin (1996, 236) famously declared that “[t]he task of a critique of violence can be summarized as that of expounding its relation to law and justice.” Indeed, it seems that most theoreticians of violence study its relation to questions of law, order and legitimacy (de Haan 2009). While seen as an important component in understanding society and its institutions, the common assumption seems to be that violence itself is a straightforward thing: a direct injury to the body, done with the intent to harm, and having an “eruptive” dimension – that is, a clearly visible action, with distinct points of beginning and end as well as clear identification of perpetrator and victim (Reiss and Roth 1994).

This approach has two major weaknesses. First, the tendency to focus on questions of legitimacy, law and order reduces violence to a byproduct of legal and social regulations. The outcome is that

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the more common, more mundane and more inherent to the regular operation of power, violent acts become less visible, gain more legitimacy – and are therefore not perceived at all as violence by most actors. This is the profound meaning of Arendt's banality of evil, where the way to hell may not be paved with intentions at all. The second problem concerns the assumption that violence is a clear and visible act that involves a person's decision to harm another. This common view overlooks structural (Galtung 1969) and slow (Nixon 2011) violence, conducted through a network of material and non-material elements, institutions and regimes of management and regulation.

Of specific relevance to urban settings is the notion of "infrastructural violence" (Rodgers and O'Neill

Similar to the laws of conservation of matter and energy, rather than seeing violence appearances as singular and disconnected, the idea is thus to see their interrelations

2012). Based on the critical impact of infrastructure on socio-political systems, infrastructural violence can take two main forms. The first relates to infrastructures of violent control (such as walls) or inflicting

injury and social suffering (e.g., industrial pollution). The second occurs when the infrastructure that connects privileged points neglects and bypasses marginal populations: for example, neighborhoods that are disconnected from running water, sewage, or electricity networks.

Discussing Jerusalem's Light Rail, Hanna Baumann (2018) adds another type of infrastructural violence, one that is derived from forced connection to the network. Under the pretext of urban development and efficient mass transportation, the Rail sets an infrastructural connection between West and East Jerusalem. Thus, instead of seeing it as compensation for decades of neglect and de-development, Baumann reads the new rail as an instrument intended at fortifying the Israeli occupation and normalizing the illegal annexation.

* * *

While the impact on their victims is no less than that of direct physical violence, structural and infrastructural violence do not receive the same attention. Their lower visibility is due to the built-in failure in the mechanism of legitimacy: that is, precisely because the action is mundane and routine, its legitimacy base is broader. At the same time, the damage inflicted deliberately to urban infrastructures – which is surely less harmful than the structural actions – is deemed as violence, akin to terrorism.

Where "top-down" planning-infrastructural violence is not considered violence – and "bottom-up" violence against infrastructures is considered meaningless vandalism or one that undermines attempts to do good for the residents – my suggestion is to rethink urban violence through what we may term the law of conservation of violence. By that, my contention is to point at the elastic and relational nature of violence. Similar to the laws of conservation of matter and energy, rather than seeing violence appearances as singular and disconnected, the idea is thus to see their interrelations, and how cultural, physical, infrastructural, slow and eruptive violences are part of a circle, where the change of form is part of a process and not of discrete rationales.

However, the purpose of this essay is not only to describe the circle of relational violence – violence towards symbols of occupation as a response to the violence of the state – but rather to shed light on the role of violence in the city's making and unmaking. In this context, it is important to note that common political theories tend to see violence as the opposite of the social and the political. Arendt (1970) characterized violence as destroying the common human power to act in concert and argued that it had no power to create anything positive of its own. Foucault (1979) also pointed to the failure of violence to shape the subject on which it is applied. In contrast to the disciplinary power that shapes the subject through indirect actions, violence destroys the core of subjectivity. In other words, violence destroys both the public sphere and the individual subject (Mouffe 2014).

Thus, the claim that the city as a social and political entity is not only undone but also done through violence may sound odd. To better understand the argument, we need to consider the interrelationship between the victim of the violence and its perpetrator: a situation in which the harm for the former is the intensification of the latter. Elaine Scarry (1985, 18) argues that in violence there is an “obsessive display of agency that permits one person’s body to be translated into another person’s voice, that allows real human pain to be converted into a regime’s fiction of power.” Scarry’s analysis shows how inflicting pain is unmaking worlds for the victim, while at the very same time enhancing them for the perpetrator through the intensification of power.

The nature of violence as making and unmaking worlds remains as we expand our view from physical to structural and infrastructural violence. At this point, I seek to develop the question of urban violence in a specific context: that of settler colonialism.

* * *

As its name attests, settler colonialism is a specific form of colonialism, in which the “settlers come to stay” (Wolfe 1999, 1). It is not only a project of physical replacement of the colonized by colonizers, however, but rather also an emotional act of home-making and attachment. For Veracini (2013, 28), the settlers’ ultimate goal is to “cease to be defined as such and become ‘natives,’ and their position becomes normalized”. In other words, settler colonialism is a form of violent dwelling, in which making one’s home is based on the denial of the others’ right to have one.

Being more than a struggle over resources, settler colonialism is a clash over home and existence. In those antagonistic relations of mutual denial, structural violence appears again as a form of world-making and unmaking, intended at building a city and a home for one group, while revoking them from the other. Denying the colonized tangible and intangible home spreads ruins and loss in their collective life texture, thus directly affecting their right to the city by all means. Disinvestment as infrastructural/planning violence which produces ruins and no man’s land are an integral part of settler colonial urban regimes.

Ruin is an act of sovereignty, making violence a form of dwelling (Kotef 2020). For the colonizers, structural urban violence is not only a means for gaining power but rather also an act towards home-making and self-normalization in the colony. For the colonized, on the other hand, violence towards urban infrastructures is not only an act of resistance to the prevailing structural violence but also a positive way of collective world-making. Ruin is thus janus-faced: both a strategy by the settler toward the native that seeks to subjugate and a counterreaction of the colonized undermining the material and symbolic embodiments of the colonizer.

Dwelling is not necessarily violent, but it becomes so in settler colonial contexts. The political slogan *Existence is Resistance*, therefore, expresses the colonized steadfastness, as existence itself is interpreted as a form of indigenous violence and contestation. Therefore, the law of the conservation of violence does not refer only to the occupation, control, or deprivation of resources. It also relates to home-making and a sense of place. Damaging a public facility is not only a city-negation (as it hurts the public sphere) but rather also a city-making (as a way of creating attachment and territorialization). As an act of reclaiming the city and either reassure, fix, or bring back what might have been lost and ruined, paradoxically, the city’s unmaking is a way of city-making. Building is destruction and vice versa.

Whether it is in Palestinian neighborhoods that are in danger of demolition to establish a Jewish archeological tourism project, such as the al-Bustan neighborhood in Silwan – or whether in neighborhoods like Kufr’Aqab, which are within the city’s municipal area but disconnected from the urban fabric by the separation wall, and are therefore in a state of political vacuum, leading to construction

with enormous density, without planning and engineering supervision, while creating unbearable load on the infrastructure – the cycle of violence conservation not only affects the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized but permeates all layers of the urban life of the colonized population. In East Jerusalem, it is impossible to separate the structural and (un)planning violence from the crowdedness of living and the lack of ontological security resulting from the constant threat of losing one's home. These are then part of the cycle of internal violence, from parking disputes to domestic violence.

* * *

To sum up, while (1) planning and development are usually not considered as violence, (2) the destruction of urban infrastructures is seen as senseless vandalism, and (3) everyday inter-communal violence is not considered as political, the article has suggested thinking them together as part of violence's power to make and unmake worlds. By that, urban violence is not only happening in the city, it is also inherently urban, as part of the city's making and unmaking.

However, the relevance of the suggested analysis goes beyond explicit settler-colonial settings. Home-making (for one) by home destruction (for the other) – not only physical homes but the very sense of home as a place in the world – also characterizes gentrification processes in urban frontiers, where "frontier ideology rationalizes social differentiation and exclusion as natural, inevitable. The poor and working class are all too easily defined as "uncivil" [. . .] As such, the frontier ideology justifies monstrous incivility in the heart of the city" (Smith 1996, 16)

Understanding that city-making for the new settlers equals uricide for the colonized gives sense to urban violence. Ruination is fought with ruination. Rather than an act of boredom or extremism, in the antagonistic relations of a zero-sum game, (colonial) building entails destruction – and (indigenous) destruction is a way of steadfastness.

Mahmood Mamdani (2001, 63) explains that the settler can never become a native, as both are relational categories: "Settlers and natives belong together. You cannot have one without the other, for it is the relationship between them that makes one a settler and the other a native. To do away with one, you have to do away with the other."

Violence is not a side-effect of the colonial situation (Fanon 1963). It is inherent in its definition and in the very production of the differences between the settler and the native. In a colonial situation, even "normal" planning is predominantly a violent act. Thus, the way out of the cycle of conserving violence must pass through radical decolonization of the city.

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The continuation of war by other means. Narrations of violence and coercive urbanism in Sur, Diyarbakır

**Francesco Marilungo
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When on November 28, 2015 the lawyer and human rights activist Tahir Elçi was lying shot on the ground, his lifeless body seemed to illustrate the opening lines of a famous song by Ahmet Kaya, written two decades earlier: "I lie down in the middle of Diyarbakır, shot to death. I'd recognize anywhere the sound of this bullet".¹ His corpse, prone on the basalt stone of the ancient walled town, thus recalled to many Kaya's lyrics about the violence that had ravaged the city in the '80s and '90s. As many other local prominent figures of political activism, journalism and culture before him, Elçi was gunned down in the street. The location and timing of his killing anticipated the rampage of violence unleashed on the city's body in the following months. At that time, amidst heightening tension between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Turkish State, youth armed groups affiliated to the PKK were barricading themselves in the alleys of Sur, Diyarbakır's historical core, against the pressuring Turkish army. That morning, Elçi had just released a press-conference next to the 16th-century four-legged Minaret, calling for an end to clashes in order to save the city's architectural heritage. A bullet – which, later investigations concluded, might have come from a police officer's gun² – put an end to his life, inaugurating a spell of conflict during which both the population and the architectural heritage suffered long-lasting devastation. Retracing Diyarbakır's historical evolution and contested representations, here we analyse urban conflict and violence as omnipresent in the material and symbolic dimensions of the urban experience.

Diyarbakır. Historical and cultural background

Diyarbakır, it could be argued, has historically embodied a space-time of conflict. The stone walls of this fortress city, guarding a disputed borderland over the Tigris, are a threshold between different worlds. Ever since the Assyrian conquest in the 9th Century B.C., up to the recent destruction at the hands of Turkish special security forces, chronicles are replete with ominous accounts of death and sorrow, war and blood. Western travellers in different epochs underlined Diyarbakır's dim and violent nature, where the sombre black basalt stones seem to naturally evoke mournful atmospheres. The British intellectual and political officer Gertrude Bell, in her notes penned in 1909, recalls a proverb: "Black are the dogs and black are the walls and black are the hearts of black Amid".³ She imagines a

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¹ "Diyarbakır ortasında vurulmuş uzanırım. Ben bu kurşun sesini nerde olsa tanırım", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l--Vb7Vy36c&ab_channel=byahmetxan.

² See Forensic Architecture: <https://forensic-architecture.org/investigation/the-killing-of-tahir-elci>.

³ Diyarbakır had many names during its history, reflecting the contested nature of this city. The ancient Aramean Amid transposed into the Greek and then Latin Amida. By the Armenians it was known as Dikranagerd. After the Arab conquest, the city's name was turned into Diyar-i Bekr, later on ottomanized in Diyarbekir. In the early republican effort to turkify the toponymy of the region, the name was transformed according to the Turkish language vowel harmony in the actual Diyarbakır. Currently, many Kurds refer to it as Amed.

historical continuity of conflict: since the 4th century C.E. “the din of battle has never been far from Diyarbakir”. At the time, memories of massacres of the Christian population by the Kurdish-Turkish Hamidian Cavalry (1894–96) were fresh: “There is no peace for the lawless capital of Kurdistan [...] The heavy air, lying stagnant between the high walls, is charged with memories of the massacres of 1895. . . .” (Johnson, 2007). Such slaughters foreboded the even larger Armenian genocide, through which the Christian population was almost entirely eliminated (Jongerden & Vereji, 2012). Ghostlike memories and the ruining architectural heritage of the Armenians have haunted the city throughout the 20th century, and beyond.

Since the early days of the Turkish Republic, founded in 1923, Diyarbakir became the main urban stage for the confrontation between the State and its sizable Kurdish minority. The freshly established Turkish army crushed in blood the Sheikh Said Revolt, a Kurdish rebellion that threatened to take over the city. Established Turkish writers and intellectuals, such as Halide Edib Adivar and Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, fabricated a narrative about Diyarbakir that accentuated notions of backwardness and underdevelopment, whilst also highlighting exotic elements: they depicted the city as Turkey’s inner orient (Öncü, 2011) in need of a *mission civilisatrice*. The city expansion was planned in modernist fashion (Bozdoğan, 2001): with its regular grid, green expanses, institutional buildings and official effigies, Yenişehir (the New City) embodies the Kemalist rhetoric of progress and modernity, set in sharp opposition to the “backward” neighbourhoods within the walls. The demolition of part of the walls in 1931 – purportedly to allow better ventilation (Beysanoğlu and Diken, in Gambetti, 2008) – effaced the physical boundary between the archaic, Ottoman Sur and the forward-looking, Turkish Yenişehir (Öktem, 2004). Again in the early ‘50s, the famous writer Yaşar Kemal describes two cities lying next to each other: “An old one inside the walls; and a new one outside [. . .] An oriental city and a modern one. A city of contradictions” (Kemal, 2011).

In the following decades, the tension between the State and the local population escalated. The urban expansion reflected, and was deeply influenced by, the conflict: massive waves of migrants were driven there first by economic needs, then fleeing violence in rural areas (Barut, in Gambetti, 2008) – and became the largest Kurdish urban centre and the epicentre of Kurdish politics. After a certain democratic development of the public sphere through 1960s and ‘70s, the 1980 military coup kicked-off a season of widespread violence characterized by extrajudicial killings and clashes: the infamous “Hell of Diyarbakir”. During those years, Diyarbakir’s prison acquired a notorious reputation as site of torture and ethnic annihilation that bequeathed cumbersome memories (Zeydanlioğlu, 2009; Çaylı, 2015) and a highly politicized generation. In 1984, the conflict between the Turkish army and the PKK erupted, resulting in more than 40,000 deaths, half of which civilians (Gambetti, 2008), and in the displacement of about 3 million people (Jongerden, 2009). In those years, while the Kurdish region was legally defined and ruled as a space of exception under the OHAL Emergency Law (Watts, 2009), Diyarbakir’s population almost tripled (Gambetti, 2008) and the city expanded dramatically, wedged between a vast military base and the military airport, as in a spatial rendering of the chokehold imposed over the Kurdish population. The inflow of refugees has resulted in sprawling shantytowns, by now consolidated neighbourhoods, yet still exhibiting a crammed urban fabric of unrefined apartment blocks. Deriving from the brutal uprooting of hundreds thousands of people, these neighbourhoods are a breeding ground for resistance against the State: their narrow alleys and maze-like structure are sites of periodical clashes with security forces.

Travelling through Diyarbakir in the late 1990s, William Dalrymple (1998) described its “bloody reputation” and the “ruthless attempt” of the Turkish military to crush the Kurdish insurgency. Those were times in which Turkey’s South-East in general was commonly equated to an area of terrorism and disorder in the public opinion, with the media diffusing depictions of Diyarbakir as a dangerous and disreputable place. The cultural industry reinforced an atmosphere of spatial, temporal and

political “otherness” around the city. In 1999, Orhan Pamuk called it “the center of the Kurdish Revolt and its biggest prison” (Pamuk, 1999). Novels characterized the city with orientaling overtones, and TV-series contributed in constructing an image of savagery and threat. Some films told the suffering of the city from the local’s perspective, such as Yılmaz Güney’s *Yol*, showing a Diyarbakır tormented by poverty, honor code and tribal violence. Kurdish productions, such as *Min Dît* (2009) or *Press* (2011), recounted the memories of the violent 1990s. Throughout the past decades, Diyarbakır has thus been shaped by material coercion, framed in a narrative of insecurity and disorder which has, in turn, justified oppressive measures. The recent siege, destruction, and ongoing restructuring are the latest developments in a long lineage of physical and discursive violence.

Sur. Destruction and reconstruction of the historical neighbourhoods

In the 1980s, Diyarbakır is described as a colonized city by the prominent Kurdish writer Mehmed Uzun: the basalt walls are recast as the defenders of the local population, besieged by the intruding Turkish State, and the enceinte is seen as the emblem of Kurdish sufferings, but also as a bastion of pride, courage and resistance, its centuries-old stones imaginatively protecting its authenticity. Pro-Kurdish parties

The urbicidal act is not confined to the wartime destruction, but unfolds throughout the reconstruction

(in power at local level since 1999) have embarked in an ambitious process of urban redesign and cultural redefinition, seeking for a far-reaching “decolonization” (Gambetti, 2008). This endeavor, now abruptly interrupted, countered the State narrative and stereotypical cultural constructions. The municipality-led process of rediscovery and valorization of the city’s multicultural heritage focused in particular on Sur, the ancient walled city still holding the traces of a pluralistic past and of its violent wipe-out, and led to the inscription of Sur and the Hevsel Gardens into UNESCO’s world heritage list.

Only a few months later, armed conflict broke out in Sur. The escalation started in October 2014, when more than thirty died during widespread protests against the Government’s idleness in front of Kobani’s siege by the ISIS just across the border. During the final pro-Kurdish rally in the run-up for the parliamentary elections, an explosive attack killed two, leaving more than a hundred injured. Following the contested vote of June 2015,⁴ youth groups affiliated to the PKK announced the creation of “autonomous zones” inside neighbourhoods across Turkey’s South-Eastern cities. In Diyarbakır, they concentrated in Sur’s Eastern quadrant (Genç, 2016). During the ensuing 103 days of urban warfare, in which guerrilla fighters confronted State security forces, large swathes of the walled city have been damaged. Much of the local population – about 23,000 – has fled the clashes, never to return. Those who remained were placed under curfew.

Throughout the battle, the State employed visual propaganda produced by its forces from within the besieged war zone, replete with sexist messages to display the subjugation as a “rape” of the Kurdish city by the Turkish State (Protner, 2018). This “technique of systematic political violence” (ibid.) overlaid the ongoing brutality with a layer of symbolism of humiliation. Subsequently, the authorities blocked access to the area and bulldozed most of the remaining buildings, preparing the reconstruction process in total secrecy. When visiting Diyarbakır soon after the fight, the then prime minister Davutoğlu declared that Sur will be turned “into a new Toledo”, referencing the Spanish town whose historic core, badly damaged during the civil war, is now a well-restored tourist destination. The reconstruction currently underway aims at remodeling the flattened neighborhoods into a sanitized

⁴ In the elections of June 7, 2015, the pro-Kurdish Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) won 13% of the vote and entered parliament for the first time, depriving Erdoğan’s Justice and Development Party (AKP) of its absolute majority.

and securitized historical fake, where selected monuments are embedded into a fabric of historicized buildings, branded as “traditional Diyarbakir houses”, actually cheap concrete replicas of vernacular typologies covered in thin basalt slabs. In a widely circulated promotional video, the intention to transform Sur from a living urban space into a sterile touristic product is expressed with the line: “The best future is the one which comes from the past”. The city’s multicultural and ethnically mixed character is replaced by a selectively crafted historic identity, a generic “Ottoman” fantasy of social cohesion, conservatism and Islamic faith (Öktem, 2020). This way, the “urbicidal” act is not confined to the wartime destruction, but unfolds throughout the reconstruction.

The transformation also extends beyond war-damaged neighbourhoods, targeting the entire Old Town. The central government had plans for redeveloping Sur since long before the armed confrontation, so that the uprooting of PKK is widely believed to be only a secondary objective of the operations, the main purpose being emptying Sur of its inhabitants for an all-out urban transformation drive (HLRN, 2016). In March 2016, caustically in coincidence with the Kurdish festivity of Newroz, the authorities announced the emergency expropriation of the entire walled city. This drastic measure forcibly dispossessed more than 50,000 inhabitants, leaving citizens legally unarmed in front of the government’s urban policies and paving the way for a wholesale urban makeover. Soon afterwards, the city’s elected HDP co-mayors were arrested for alleged links to the PKK. Ever since, Diyarbakir has been administered by a trustee appointed by Ankara.⁵ Activists from Diyarbakir’s Chamber of Architects, on the frontline against the redevelopment, have stated: “The projects arrive straight from Ankara. No one objects. The heritage protection authority stays silent. Everyone is scared” (interview, 2017). With the main political-administrative obstacle removed, the government has free rein to reshape the city according to its own image.

The effects of this administrative onslaught on the city’s fabric are more evident in Lalebey and Alipaşa, two neighbourhoods that were not massively damaged during the conflict, but have been forcibly redeveloped afterwards. An urban renewal project was already underway since 2009, but plodded along slowly, faced with opposition by residents. After the war, it was swiftly pushed forward by brute force. Bulldozers tore down emptied buildings, light and electricity were cut in some areas with the explicit aim to force people out. Residents struggling to resist had to carry in water from outside, relying on generators and candles at night, when the only light was the neon glaze from the new massive police station. Affected families were supported by associations and parties organized in the Sur Support Platform. Despite the concerted effort to hold ground, resistance proved ineffective. In summer 2017, the entire area was emptied and fenced off. The reconstruction is now almost completed with new properties reportedly selling for between 500,000 and 2 million Turkish liras (Doğruhaber, 2020), unaffordable to most former residents.

The overarching aim of this urban transformation is to reengineer Sur’s political and ethnic demography, efface local memory and culture, and reap the profits from urban speculation made possible by forced dispossession (SAMER, 2017). In the five years since the war broke out, the process hurriedly moved on, alongside a conspicuous militarization of urban space. Fortified police stations have been installed across Sur, raising concerns that the reconstruction plan will cut through areas that survived the conflict physically unscathed, with straight wide streets replacing the maze of alleys in order to guarantee visual control and, if need be, straight lines of fire. As we write, the old town of Sur is going through a massive project of repossession of urban space by the government, remarking the military conquest at physical and symbolic level. The State is deploying an impressive array of measures, from legal procedures to spatial militarization, from symbolic acts and rhetoric to population management

⁵ In March 2019, HDP won the local elections again. However, a few months later, in August 2019, the appointed mayor Zeyyat Ceylan was arrested and removed from office on charges of “terrorism”, and replaced by a government-appointed trustee, as has happened in many other cities in the South-East.

and urban design implementation. In such a radical and comprehensive urban transformation drive, the line between city-making and violence is blurred: spatial restructuring is being carried out as an instrument of coercion; violence – physical and symbolic – is being employed as an urban development tool. This is an example of State violence exercised *through* the city, a coercive “post-conflict” urbanism that actually embeds a war-like logic in the urban fabric, amounting to the continuation of war by other means.

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Slinkachu's images are deceptive. At first, we are presented with 'normal' urban scenes: a snowy park, a Nelson Mandela statue, an overpass. Then, as we zoom in onto another scale, something utterly different emerges: police beating, murder, poverty, death. Situated at the intersection between sculpture, street art installation and photography, Slinkachu's work stretches and bends the threshold between the visible and the invisible, normality and surprise, attuning to the violent white noise that often goes unnoticed as urban everyday life unfolds. The 'universal sense of being overlooked, lost and overwhelmed,' as he puts it, that these images conjure is appropriate to capture the gaseous quality of urban violence as it slowly wears out urban bodies according to their degree of vulnerability and invisibility. Yet, these quirky images carry no desperation. A quantum of humour



emanates from these elusive ‘tiny people’, as well as an ethical call to question the lenses through which we perceive, taking it for granted, the urban.

*Slinkachu (b. 1979, Devon, UK) has been “abandoning” his miniature people on the streets of cities around the world since 2006. His work embodies elements of street art, sculpture, installation art and photography and has been exhibited in galleries and museums globally. His images have been collected in three best-selling art books; *Little People in the City* (Boxtree, 2008), *Big Bad City* (Lebowski, 2010) and *Global Model Village* (Boxtree, 2012) that have collectively sold over 300,000 copies worldwide.*

slinkachu.com @slinkachu_official (Instagram)

Unequal violence

Illicit markets and the relational distribution of lethal force in São Paulo

Gabriel Feltran

Wellington was 19 years old when he received an offer he couldn't refuse: one hundred dollars in one day. He was to work all month unloading trucks at a large supermarket for a minimum monthly wage of \$200. The offer he received, instead, was risky: he was to steal a new Citroën C4 Pallas and deliver it to a local address. An informal dismantling yard needed an engine of this model for resale; stolen parts allow for affordable sale prices with very high profit rates. Wellington knew that Paulinho had a gun and called him to help. It would be easier to find a new Citroën in a wealthy zone of São Paulo, they chose a neighborhood called Lapa and everything went as planned. The robbery lasted no longer than 45 seconds and no shots were fired.

But the police were informed by the victims and immediately notified all their vehicles in the area, which was heavily patrolled. One of them located the Citroën only fifteen minutes after the robbery. Wellington and Paulinho were surprised by a police siren sounding behind them as they tried to flee across the Anhanguera highway, west of the city. Wellington, who was driving, panicked. Instead of stopping, he sped up and took the first available side road in an attempt to escape. A kilometer later, he lost control of the car and the Citroën plunged over the grass cliffs that bordered the road, fell down a six-meter-high ravine and hit the creek at the bottom.

Stunned, but having survived the fall, Wellington and Paulinho tried to escape but the police were hot on their trail. Paulinho managed to make his way into some nearby bushes and got safely away, living to tell his tale the next day. Wellington was not so lucky. As he left the Citroën, he was hit by two bullets fired from a .40 automatic pistol. He fell to the ground. I was doing fieldwork in his neighborhood and was told about what happened hours later. I heard Paulinho telling that the policemen photographed the crime scene but only after having placed an old .38 caliber revolver next to Wellington's body.

In the Brazilian police jargon, revolvers planted next to corpses are known as "candles" because they are there to "watch over" the dead man. The official version written up in the police report contained the detail that Wellington had shot at the police car and that the police had fired back. His partner's version contained the detail that it was him rather than Wellington who was carrying a gun. After the accident the two had merely tried to escape and had not fired any shots at the police.

It was not an exceptional case. In the state of São Paulo, police are responsible for one in every five recorded homicides (Bueno et al. 2019). The typical socioeconomic and demographic profile of police victims is the same as Wellington's: young, black, and male. Indeed, this is the profile of most homicide victims in São Paulo and Brazil in recent decades. All official data and those produced by civil organizations such as the Brazilian Forum for Public Security have shown that more than 90%

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of the victims of these different types of homicides are men; 70 to 75 percent are young people aged between 15 and 29; more than 60% of them are black and about 80% are residents of favelas or poor neighborhoods (IPEA/FBSP 2019).

In public debate, it is common for these correlations to be attributed to a single cause: the police killed because he was black or because he was from a favela or because he was a thief. I argue that the search for causality should consider the intersection of these categories in the dominant representation of urban violence, in addition to scrutinizing the specific profiles of police action related to illicit markets. Illicit markets frame urban conflict and must be taken into account. Those who die are mostly low-skilled operators within illegal markets. Young black poor men that are regarded by society as “workers” or “students” are far less likely to be killed than their peers that are regarded as “criminals.” Nor are wealthy thieves killed in Brazil, and the political scandals of recent years have shown that these are not in short supply.

Between 2012 and 2016, 60 to 70 percent of homicides committed by police in the municipality of São Paulo were related to vehicle theft and robbery (Godoi et al. 2020; Sou da Paz, 2020). Let us take the two areas in São Paulo where vehicle theft and robbery most commonly occur to analyze the selective ways in which the police deploy lethal force. In the 2010s, the largest absolute number of robberies, and also the largest combined total of robberies and thefts, took place in the district of São Mateus, in the poor eastern side of the city. On the other hand, the highest absolute numbers of vehicle thefts, those that do not involve the use of violence, are concentrated in Lapa, one of the richest districts of the city.

I will refer to this richest quartile of the city as “Zone A” and to the poorest as “Zone B.” Vehicle thefts and robberies involve quite different thieves’ profiles in São Paulo. Experienced thieves steal without the use of any violence, which greatly decreases their chances of being arrested or killed. Young, sub-contracted thieves like Wellington do not have sufficient resources, technology or contacts to commit thefts. They tend to rob with guns. Bearing in mind the different characteristics of Zones A and B and the level of São Paulo’s inequalities, let us see how police use of lethal force varies regularly across urban space, based on an analysis of all 183 Police Reports related to police killings involving stolen vehicles in a single year.

Table 1. Vehicle thefts and robberies and police use of lethal force (Zones A and B, 2012).

	Vehicle thefts	Vehicle robberies	Deaths following robberies	Robberies by death rate
<hr/>				
Zone A				
Richest quartile	2109	600	7	85.7
West Zone (Lapa—Vila Leopoldina)				
<hr/>				
Zone B				
Poorest quartile	1376	2297	13	176.7
East Zone (São Mateus—Sapopemba)				

Source: The author with technical support of Daniel Hirata and Edgard Fusaro, using data from the São Paulo Public Security Secretariat and from the 2010 IBGE Census.

The patterns observed here are regular along many years. The police response to vehicle robberies is relatively two times more lethal in the rich Zone A, while far more people are killed in absolute terms in the poor Zone B. Replete with civil, military, public and private forms of policing, Zone A tends to be considered “totally peaceful” by its residents. Not for the thieves. Experienced thieves have told me on several occasions that they avoid stealing cars with violence in the wealthiest areas of the city. They don’t know the territory well and they do know that police control is much tighter. They tend, therefore, to carry out thefts without violence in rich areas and robberies in territories close to those where they live. The number of violent robberies is, therefore, much lower in Zone A than in Zone B. This reproduces violence in the peripheries of the city, deepening urban inequalities.

This mechanism of selective police response by territory according to population composition gives rise to adaptations in the world of crime.

Police reactions to thefts are less violently repressive than they are in response to armed robberies, and these reactions are much harsher in Zone A. Property owners in Zone A enjoy higher levels of protection of their property at the expense of the lives of those who are hired to steal, inhabitants of Zone B. Actually, in Zone A, lethal force is used to send a message and “show who’s in charge,” as one policeman I interviewed put it. “Who’s in charge” here of course triggers the class, racialized and gendered senses of traditional territorial domination.

Lethal force is used not only because a vehicle is stolen – the São Paulo police know how to avoid killing when they want to. They do kill, however, when the territorial codes governing urban conflict are violated. In predominantly rich, white areas like Zone A, where much of São Paulo’s wealth is concentrated, the police do not tolerate “invaders,” especially invaders that act violently. Zone A falls under the purview of the State police, who possess a monopoly on legitimate violence there. In liminal areas like Zone B, the police dispute their monopoly on violence with the “world of crime.”

It is in poorer and darker parts of the population, and through disputes over the material and social profits from illegal markets, that Wellingtons are recruited for violent crime. Thus, Wellingtons are more likely to kill and be killed. Wellingtons are young, black males and come from a favela. The underlying main reason for the regularity in the profile of homicide victims is the fact that Wellingtons tend to occupy the lowest positions in the illegal markets for drugs, weapons, and vehicle theft (Feltran 2019; 2020; Hirata 2018). This regularity also reveals a lot about the way the police operate in different parts of the city. Contrary to popular belief, deaths committed by the police are not concentrated in the city’s poorest and blackest territories but rather along the boundaries of the urban conflict between rich and poor (Feltran 2021).

It is true that young criminals expose their victims to armed violence: murders during robberies account 2-3% of total homicides in Brazil, i.e., about 1,500 murders a year. But their subordinate position within illegal markets exposes the thieves themselves to a much bigger risk of an armed reaction. Wellingtons are victims of 45,000 murders a year in the country. In the city where I was born, this violence is entangled with multidimensional inequalities that make life expectancy in Zone A no less than 23 years longer than in Zone B (Rede Nossa São Paulo 2019). The reproduction of these inequalities does not respond to a simple cause, but to a set of entangled elements that frame our urban conflict.

Contrary to popular belief, deaths committed by the police are not concentrated in the city’s poorest and blackest territories but rather along the boundaries of the urban conflict between rich and poor

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Legitimizing violence

when the State is untrustworthy

Tales from Medellín

Lorenzo Mauloni

This essay comes from the findings of a fieldwork conducted in Medellín in 2019¹. It focuses on the structural issues that made violence a constituent element through the urban and social history of the city. In fact, the broken pact between citizens and the State made people arrange other mechanisms in order to sustain their life, and informality and illegality played an important role through the rapid demographic growth that started in the 1950s. These shortages to secure basic-need services in the rising peripheral communities by the local administration, left governance voids that brought the population to arrange also their own structures of security and justice, recurring to violence in desperate cases. Soon enough, these vulnerable citizens confront with non-State armed groups, urban gangs in particular, that offered alternative forms of fidelity and social order, violently imposing their law or legitimizing their presence by providing employment and other State-denied services. The result today is an urban landscape of several juxtaposed laws, where policemen are not considered reliable while those assuring security and justice might be urban gangs, whose position blurs the boundary between trusted authorities and life threats.

Building Medellín through violence

When “La Violencia” started in Colombia (1948-1958) and the conflict escalated countrywide, people from the inner regions were forced to migrate to major urban agglomerations. Before that, land dispossession and labour exploitation affected part of these populations, as equivocal land titling laws favoured big land owners and colonial settlers to the expenses of peasants and indigenous populations (LeGrand 2016). Although the following agrarian movements claimed their land rights by occupying the stolen lands, the rising violence and the appeal of better wages in cities facilitated rural families’ migrations. In those years, Medellín was facing an important economic crisis and the new-comers settled in the hillsides of the Aburrá valley, where the city takes place. Informal economy and black trades represented the main means of livelihood (Samper 2015). Local authorities attempted to halt the instauration of these settlements, but each time comunas were burnt and torn down, new ones were built, and the increasing migration flow facilitated the spread of new communities throughout the valley. Soon, the criminal market saw an opportunity in fulfilling the need for protection of these informal citizens as the illicit nature of their businesses also required territorial protection from State’s eye.

Common bandits and small criminal networks were present since the 60s, working with a low profile and without recurring to an exaggerated use of violence. When cocaine entered the illegal market,

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¹ The fieldwork took place between July and October 2019. Seventeen non-structured interviews were carried out. For security reasons, some of them were conducted in covert mode (see Calvey 2013).

some of these groups turned into armed forces at the service of criminal entrepreneurs. Other armies came directly from marginalized contexts, such as the case of the galladas, youthful street aggregations not born with criminal means but trying to counter socio-economic exclusion (Melguizo & Cronshaw 2001). Peripheral and informal neighbourhoods transformed into protected narco-traffic hubs, where the underworld provided not only sources of income, but also offered more attractive life alternatives both economically and socially. In some cases, armed groups achieved trust from locals building housing and providing other public facilities, at times turning into political referee such as the case seen with Pablo Escobar. Other times these armed groups violently conquered a district,

usually by overthrowing the previous ruling groups. Once exclusive holders of coercion, these armed actors could decide to apply strong repressive measures toward the community, especially when tensions among groups were high, or to limit violence

One of the people I interviewed, a 50-year-old woman, still recalls the moments of that military intervention along with earlier ones, where many civilians were killed in the State's attempt to eradicate FARC members

in order not to lose people's consensus. In any case, non-State armed groups became the new untested law, and death became the ultimate punishment for dissidents.

The position of State forces and institutions was ambiguous during those years. On one side, they lost territorial control in large portions of the city to the point they were not allowed to enter certain areas. On the other, the growth of the narco-traffic industry turned into an instrument enabling political corruption, and that complicated the war against narco-traffic supported by the US (Samper 2015). However, after the fall of the Medellín cartel in 1993, an internal war started within the underworld, while the State directed its attacks toward the guerrilla cells, once they entered the city. Tactical alliances with other non-State armed groups, paramilitaries in this case, allowed the State to eradicate the leftist threat at the cost of civil losses: military attacks took place in the midst of informal environments and innocent citizens were killed during the operations. After 2002, conflicts and violence levels have drastically decreased, but the underworld is still having a diffused impact in Medellín in different ways (see Mauloni 2019). Spatial sovereignties here are shared (Agnew 2009) and fluid (Armao 2013), as gangs' conflicts are still active and turf geographies constantly changing.

State and citizens: a broken pact

Even before La Violencia, State hardly became reliable to the eyes of the marginalized population, as it failed in protecting peasants' rights in the countryside, and turned later into a repressive actor exerting violence toward second-class citizens (McIlwaine & Moser 2001). As in other cases in Latin America, the rule of law was seen as an instrument to preserve the privileges of the wealthier class while, for the oppressed, its enforcement symbolized an authoritarian tool that turned State forces into enemies (Pinheiro 1996). Several disappointments led people to delegitimize public force and institutions, and they took security and justice in their own hands, legitimizing the use of violence and justifying, in exceptional cases, their *derecho de matar* (right to kill). This situation facilitated the rise of non-State armed actors (urban gangs or drug lords) that offered protection and were also able to provide for other basic services denied by the State such as housing, energy and employment. As this world of crime presented itself as alternative, "the boundary marking what could be considered as socially legitimate was redefined" (Feltran 2020) and local population gave their trust and respect for these organizations.

Authors refer to chronic violence (Pearce 2007, Muggah 2012, Davis 2012) when describing these particular settings, where growing extreme social inequality and disjunctive democratization, the rise of organized crime and illicit trade and the enduring legacies of armed conflict and historic state

society, lead people to “look for protection in smaller, more reliable in-groups” (Adams 2012). In urban environments, the result is “a fragmented, ambivalent and hybrid cityscape with varying manifestations of the complex of poverty, exclusion, coercion violence and fear” (Koonings & Kruijt 2007), where the State has not only lost its monopoly over the provision of security, but also its power and authority (Davis 2009, Armao 2013). The normalization of violence is one of the consequences in these situations, and an example presented itself during a field interview in the district called Padro Centro.

Loud screams were coming from the street as a thief had been found in the midst of his coupe when the pedestrians started calling for the attention of the neighbourhood to stop the man. On his side, the *ladrón* (thief), stuck in the house he was robbing, was faced with two choices: risk his life knowing he would have probably been beaten if someone caught him, or wait for the police to come and pick him up. In the meantime, fifty people had gathered in front of the house:

That is normal here (referring to Medellín), not really usual in this *barrio* but frequent in other areas. Here no one trusts the police and knows that justice will not be made. [...] If someone attacks you, do not shout for help but scream *ladrón*. No one likes to meddle in other people's problems but the community is united against some things. (Student, 22 years old, commenting the mentioned scene).

Although this episode of violence does not reflect the everyday of Medellín, nor a widespread behaviour of its citizens, it underlines the lack of trust between citizens and public authorities that automatically rely on other mechanisms to assure justice.

Security and justice in the midst of controlled environment

Especially in the early 2000s, several initiatives promoted by the local public administration tried to repair the State's lacks by aiming to redefine its role and its duties as a service provider. For example, the improvement brought by the Metrocable² and the Urbanismo Social³ facilitated the mobility of the remote communities with the broader city and furnished public spaces and services to build a sense of citizenship and a feeling of belonging in a larger community. However, people from the *comunas* still feel ambivalent towards public institutions due to its multi-faceted nature shown during the years.

That is the case of *Comuna 13*, where Operación Orion took place in 2002. One of the people I interviewed, a 50-year-old woman, still recalls the moments of that military intervention along with earlier ones, where many civilians were killed in the State's attempt to eradicate FARC members. According to her, the municipality has not formally apologized for these as well as other crimes, of which pain is still vivid in the citizens' memory. The presence of non-State armed groups, on the other side, also posed a challenge for the life of the community. Since the very first moment “they came”, several agencies of violence ruled over the neighbourhood, whose repression and degree of violence changed accordingly (Rozema 2008). People became used to the presence of non-State armed groups and, although they were not accepted as leaders for many, it is through them that security is still guaranteed today. Around the Graffiti Tour⁴, for example, locals were allowed to have businesses only if under the payment of *vacunas* (tax): “As long as you follow the rules, nothing happens to you” otherwise “you know what happens.” The same interviewee also admitted she felt safe knowing someone was watching over her, because her belief was that in any case the police would do nothing.

2 Gondola lift system developed across the valley and reaching the most remote communities.

3 An historical moment for Medellín started in 2004 characterized by strong infrastructural interventions in marginalized neighbourhood aiming to tackle both poverty and violence.

4 The Graffiti Tour is a tourist attraction built along a series of art-works. It represents an important source of income for locals that arranged a tailored tourist infrastructure through the path.

These considerations were shared among people in similar contexts, and many of the interviewees mentioned rape when talking about personal security: “If your husband beats you and you go to the police, you know nothing is going to happen. If you go to them you know something will happen.” (Municipal worker, 36 years old). The same informant, working in the neighbourhood of Villatina, admitted that “in this neighbourhood police do not enter. They are rarely seen here and if they come is just to negotiate with gangs [. . .] The whole system is corrupted here. People trust gangs. Just here, the barrio ‘La Libertad’ was built with the help of M-19. In this way, their power was legitimized.” Non-State armed groups were then able to build their image as life supporters by helping people building their houses when abandoned by the State. With time their role became so powerful that locals accepted their violence as the *modus operandi*, and sporadic episodes are still occurring today. Police forces, by paying gangs in front of everyone’s eye to “keep an apparent peace”, just reinforce the image of an amphibious State (Montoya Restrepo 2014).

Closing reflections

In the history of Medellín, State and its forces have hardly represented trustworthy allies for the marginalized citizens and their violence, whether in form of expulsion or direct attack, drew citizens away from the State. As an entire social world was put aside, another one presented itself as an alternative, especially within the informal communities where other actors became exclusive holders of coercion. If in some cases non-State armed groups violently repressed the population, in others they represented the only reliable device to assure territorial protection and justice for the excluded. Despite that, criminal groups and vulnerable citizens cannot be considered as allies (de Souza 2009) as groups’ socio-economic violence is just meant to preserve the gangs’ status-quo (Moser 2004). In these spaces violence is generally condemned, but its use becomes legitimate in the quest of justice, and so is the use of gangs under certain circumstances. It is through them that this legitimation takes shape, and so is people’s right to kill when fatal sentences are commissioned. After all, “violence justifies violence”⁵, and that makes violence a self-reproducing phenomenon. Furthermore, the shared consciousness of gangs as *sicarios* works as a self-control device within communities.

⁵ Previously mentioned informant.

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Slow violence and homelessness.

Activating public space and amplifying displacement

**Lauren Brown
& Jeff Rose**

At 9:45 in the morning, on a cool, clear Thursday in February, Pioneer Park, a 10-acre urban green space in Salt Lake City, Utah, is nearly empty. The city block-sized park is surrounded by a cacophony of post-rush hour vehicles in motion, as well as nearby construction sites. The ballfield is unused; the swings sit motionless at the playground; the gravel walking track has no pedestrians; the fenced-in dog run is undisturbed by dogs. The park is encircled by low rise buildings with local specialty food businesses and condos, a newly renovated outdoor mall, and an old railway depot turned museum. The landscape is peppered with red anti-panhandling meters asking passersby to 'end panhandling and turn spare change into real change.' Walking a block west of the park, and then turning north, there is one of Salt Lake City's larger and more enduring urban encampments. A medical clinic, day center, food pantry, and other social service providers are nearby. This morning there are 37 tents, tarps, or other sleeping shelters crammed together on a sidewalk near what was, until recently, the site of the state's largest homeless shelter. These tents may stay here for weeks, or they may get displaced at any moment. In the past, many of these community members have slept at Pioneer Park, but there is no visible sign of homelessness in the park today, the latest status of a place that has constantly evolved.

In this article, we weave together a discussion of the slow violence of homelessness and the history of Pioneer Park to examine how park "activation" amplifies slow violence. To be homeless today in North America is to suffer through multiple forms of violence in an effort to survive. People experiencing homelessness exist in a socio-spatial landscape where they are frequently excluded, criminalized, and made invisible through disciplinary systems of control that operate through policing, social services, property regimes, and urban policies. Discourses used to justify and normalize these policy decisions often place blame on the shoulders of those experiencing homelessness, ignoring structural factors that frame housing inequality. Through the lens of slow violence, the long thread of dispossession and displacement becomes more apparent, and implications of park activation become a central question of justice in neoliberal urban settings.

Enacting slow violence

The concept of slow violence helps unpack the layered structural oppressions behind homelessness, contributing to an understanding of how being without housing is part of larger processes of dispossession and displacement. Rob Nixon (2011) developed the term 'slow violence' to analyze the incremental violence of environmental crises like climate change, oil spills, pollution, and deforestation. Nixon's concept builds on Johan Galtung's (1969) thinking around structural violence, introducing the importance of time and the gradual unfolding of the impacts of global capitalism. Nixon articulates that many forms of violence acquire their power over time, so the effects are slow

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and cumulative. Slow violence urges an examination of the past to reveal the systems of inequality in contemporary life, creating links between structural and everyday forms of violence. This rethinking of violence challenges conventional assumptions and perceptions of violence as highly visible acts that are “newsworthy” because they are event focused, time bound, and body bound. Slow violence, on the other hand, results in episodic and ongoing “temporal, geographical, and rhetorical displacement” events that are often hidden, and do not seem to demand ethical response or reflection. Linking to the politics of narrative and memory, articulating slow violence is a “pushing back against the forces of temporal inattention that exacerbate injustices of class, gender, race, and religion” (Nixon, 2011, p. 16).

The slow violence present in experiences of homelessness is complex and relational, rooted in the historical dispossessions of colonization and the commodification of land, and carried forward through racism, ongoing neoliberal welfare reforms, and legislation that privileges profit for the few over basic rights to shelter for the many. For instance, the legacies of racism via private property manifest in current homelessness and housing insecurity, as private housing sectors are deeply linked to perpetuating racialized poverty and displacement (Lipsitz, 2007; Shapiro, 2017; Taylor, 2019). Data on the demographics of homelessness demonstrate that housing insecurity is experienced differentially along lines of race, class, gender, and other categories of difference. BIMPOC, LGBTQ+, and people living with disabilities endure ongoing systemic disadvantages in accessing housing, leading to disproportionate rates of housing insecurity and homelessness among these populations. These groups are also targets of discriminatory policing practices (Herring, Yarbrough, and Alatorre, 2020), highlighting the compounded burdens of housing precarity, race, gender, and disability (Camp and Heatherton, 2016; Gilmore, 2007).

Structural and systemic policy choices have led to an exclusionary and exploitative housing system that dispossesses those who cannot pay, creating increased housing precarity and entrenched, multigenerational inequality. To live without stable housing is to then be exposed to endless forms of violence present in exclusionary, punitive, and dehumanizing anti-homeless ordinances imposed and erratically enforced in public space. These everyday violences of homelessness manifest in slow and insidious ways through insecurities, uncertainties, and the generational burden of poverty. The layered and intersecting forms of slow violence are subsequently entangled with brute force violence, as seen in racial and geographical targeting by police, and the over-exposure of people without housing to violent acts.

Activated parks have become key sites in the enactment of urban slow violence through the regulation and displacement of those facing homelessness. Activating parks and public space is a widely touted technique used by urban planners to encourage particular types of people, activities, and commerce in parks, plazas, and city streets. Activation inherently assumes an inert, inactive space that needs to be changed, fixed, and populated by “new and better publics” (Staeheli, 2010, 72). Activation presupposes the people and the uses of the space that will be discouraged as well, effectively invisibilizing and/or displacing unwanted populations. For those facing homelessness, their invisibilization takes place through the shaping of the normative and aesthetic perception of the urban. The slow violence associated with park activation practices highlights one of the less obvious dimensions of the creeping violence associated with urbanization and, more broadly, the production of public space. Regulation and enforcement mechanisms exacerbate and normalize existing racialized, gendered, and classed inequities, resulting in both the criminalization and invisibilization of people experiencing homelessness.

Activating Pioneer Park

The relatively recent “activation” of Pioneer Park elides a longer and more complex history of the site, one that demonstrates that slow violence through dispossession has been *de rigueur* for centuries. Common themes include powerful actors deciding who gets to be there, who the desired ‘public’ is, who controls the site, and who doesn’t. People without housing have lived at Pioneer Park off and on ever since the initial dispossession of land in this area from the Ute, Shoshone, Goshute, and Paiute tribes when Mormon colonizers first arrived. Pioneer Park was a main site in this dispossession. The first colonizers started building a fort on the site a week after arriving in July of 1847. Over two years, this settlement expanded from its original ten acres to over 40 acres, making Pioneer Park the first large scale colonialist settlement in the Great Basin (Westwood, 2020).

Slow violence urges an examination of the past to reveal the systems of inequality in contemporary life, creating links between structural and everyday forms of violence

After land was appropriated from Indigenous populations and commodified throughout the West, who was allowed access to land and property became deeply implicated in racial inequalities. Numerous laws and practices reserved land ownership for white settlers, while racist practices of segregation, redlining, urban renewal, discriminatory housing policies, lending practices, and gentrification further dispossessed indigenous peoples and communities of color. As Pioneer Park and the surrounding neighborhood evolved from an extended settler fort to a transportation and industrial hub in the late 19th and early 20th century, immigrants arrived to access jobs, boarding houses, and aid organizations. Due to discriminatory lending practices, along with overt racism and city ordinances, African Americans and people of color congregated in the neighborhood. Pioneer Park became a site of exclusion, imposing Jim Crow-era segregation restrictions on park amenities, like, for example, disallowing African Americans in the park’s wading pools (Westwood, 2020).

Plans for the “activation” of Pioneer Park have resurfaced regularly since 1960, often accompanied by urban renewal plans. Large development projects like the Gateway Mall and nearby sports arena cleared many of the city blocks that once contained housing for the city’s low income and immigrant populations (Westwood, 2020). Homeless services were introduced in the area in the 1970s. By the late 1980s, a soup kitchen, free health clinic, and the state’s largest homeless shelter were operating within a few blocks of Pioneer Park. This co-locating of social services and intense gentrification and development made for a turbulent mix of competing forces. In this case, developers recognized that visible homelessness was incompatible with their vision for the urban landscape, and subsequently leveraged the logics of “activation” to accelerate further displacement of people and the accompanying services and resources they need.

The contemporary plan for park activation originated from the Pioneer Park Coalition (PPC) in 2015. The PPC is a local organization led by business interests and developers in downtown Salt Lake City that aggressively and successfully campaigned to close the nearby homeless shelter. This push to remove the shelter came shortly after an Arizona-based company bought the mall adjacent to the shelter, and announced plans to invest up to \$100 million in its redevelopment (Lee, 2018). In 2016, the Salt Lake City Mayor and City Council passed a joint resolution to close the shelter and the county released a plan for new “resource centers,” scattered throughout the county. The new resource centers are smaller and segregated by gender, with the men’s shelter located in a neighboring city adjacent to the County Jail and Sheriff’s Office. The downtown shelter was immediately demolished when the new shelters opened in the winter of 2019, resulting in a net loss of hundreds of shelter beds.

Increased homeless displacement efforts continue, as high-end apartments are constructed on the demolished shelter site and Pioneer Park itself is increasingly regulated, surveilled, patrolled, and sanitized.

Through this most recent activation process, Pioneer Park became a conspicuous site of exclusion and criminalization of people experiencing homelessness, with repressive police responses both targeting and invisibilizing the houseless communities using the area (Amster, 2008; Staeheli and Mitchell, 2008). The PPC credits themselves with inspiring a large “cleanup” operation of the area near Pioneer Park in 2017 called Operation Rio Grande. Citing an increase in violent crime, the police made more than 5,000 arrests, most of them for misdemeanors or active warrants (ACLU Utah, 2018). These arrests targeted conduct that inevitably accompanies the absence of adequate shelter or services — “crimes of poverty” — like sitting, sleeping, sharing food in public, asking for money, and conducting basic biological functions.

Additional exclusionary tactics in the management of Pioneer Park include “defensive” architecture and securitization infrastructure. In 2018, a \$1 million investment led to the removal of the park’s bathrooms and 50 trees to create a brightly lit grass field surrounded by a concrete path at the southern end of the park. Salt Lake City also initiated a Downtown Ambassadors Program and Park Ranger program, expanding uniformed patrols in and near Pioneer Park with an expressed focus on homeless populations. Not only did the most recent park activation not address the needs of the communities historically located there, but it removed basic resources and forcibly displaced them, escalating slow violence for impoverished communities through selective investment in policing and securitization infrastructure.

The specific tactics and outcomes in Pioneer Park are aligned with larger fiscal and social policies. Funding for affordable housing decreased while the state, city, and county invested millions in policing and decentralizing shelters.¹ Framing a socio-structural problem of a lack of housing and inadequate social services instead as a law enforcement problem amplifies the slow violence of homelessness. The everyday violences caused by this policy choice build slowly and seemingly imperceptibly, adding layers of insecurity and instability, manifested by trespassing tickets for sleeping outside, an unattended court date, or an arrest for a warrant leading to further difficulty maintaining access to community and housing resources. These forms of slow violence often lead to more direct forms of state violence (by police, by health departments, or otherwise) over time (e.g., Bloch and Meyer, 2019), and are unevenly experienced across lines of race, indigeneity, sexual orientation, and other categories of difference. These slow violence processes effectively funnel people without housing into jails, shelters, or services based on their perceived criminality (Speer, 2018). Giroux (2006) calls these processes the “new biopolitics of disposability,” where the poor, especially people of color, “not only have to fend for themselves in the face of life’s tragedies but are also supposed to do it without being seen by the dominant society” (p. 174).

Urban violence slowly continues

Slow violence manifests over time and through certain tactics. In the case of Pioneer Park, intentional displacement, selective disinvestment and reinvestment, stigmatization, and criminalization all amplify the slow violence of homelessness. Slow violence has a dimension of invisibility due to its

¹ The cost of Operation Rio Grande was \$67 million (Smart, 2018). The cost of building the new resource centers was \$63 million (SL Tribune Editorial Board, 2020). In 2018, the state legislature established a commission to look into housing affordability, but failed to pass a \$100 million bond to build new housing. In 2019, they again failed to pass a bond for affordable housing, and in 2020, they provided \$10 million, most of which goes into a city-run loan fund that benefits landlords and developers. Utah is estimated to have a roughly 50,000-unit housing shortage of all kinds, from single-family homes to apartments, according to recent estimates by the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute. In 2021, this shortage was finally acknowledged with a one-time infusion of \$35 million to build and preserve affordable housing.

complex scales and temporalities. As seen in Pioneer Park, the slow violence of park activation is not only rendered invisible, park activation directly invisibilizes homelessness by shaping aesthetic and experiential expectations of the urban landscape so that these violences go unnoticed over time. One consequence of these tactics is that their promoted rhetoric becomes socially and politically acceptable, further normalizing the stigmatization and subsequent displacement and harassment of impoverished populations. Because these processes are less visceral, visible, and dramatic for most housed people, they have the effect of depoliticizing and making invisible the social problem of homelessness. For people without housing, their bodies, their spaces, and their lives are the biopolitical terrain upon which these tactics of slow violence are enacted.

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Essere (in)appropriate

Rigenerazione delle periferie e forme intrusive di violenza urbana

Marco Alioni

Tra il 2015 e il 2016 il Consiglio dei Ministri ha strutturato due programmi nazionali di rigenerazione urbana, il *Bando Aree Degradate*¹ e il *Bando Periferie*². I progetti presentati da Comuni e Città Metropolitane sono stati finanziati secondo classifiche appositamente stilate. Il fine di questo articolo è quello di mostrare come forme di violenza urbana 'intrusive' siano comprensibili come conseguenze dei processi rigenerativi innescati da questi bandi, in particolare delle applicazioni locali delle loro direttive. È quindi necessario descrivere come i bandi definiscono l'*(in)appropriatezza urbana*, traendo esempi concreti dai processi avviati dai progetti vincitori. Il caso proposto è stato osservato in *'Oltre la Strada'* (OLS), il piano rigenerativo di via Milano e dei quartieri circostanti proposto dal Comune di Brescia³. La prima sezione esamina la definizione dell'*(in)appropriatezza urbana* in riferimento alle periferie degradate, tenendo presente che la valutazione dei progetti si basava su indicatori statistici che stabilivano il livello di degrado delle aree proposte per gli interventi (Mazzamuto, 2016; Saccomanni, 2016; Mazza, 2017). La seconda sezione presenta un caso concreto di queste dinamiche riferito a OLS. L'esempio proposto presenta delle *forme intrusive di violenza urbana* scaturite dalla rappresentazione di via Milano come un quartiere a luci rosse, una delle narrative che ha permesso al Comune di presentare al governo il progetto di rigenerazione dell'area.

Degrado/decoro e periferie: producendo l'*(in)appropriatezza urbana*

Nei bandi, la presenza di degrado e la mancanza di decoro diventano gli elementi caratterizzanti le periferie degradate: attraverso questo nuovo paradigma della marginalità, quella di *periferia* diventa una categoria giuridica svincolata dalla dimensione geografica (Saccomanni, 2016; Fava, 2010; Mazza, 2017). Gli indici statistici dei bandi mirano a definire lo stato di degrado di un'area a livello urbanistico e sociale; i parametri sono da considerarsi significativi in comparazione ai valori medi del censimento 2011. Oltre ai dati essenziali (deperimento degli edifici, tassi di occupazione e disoccupazione, scolarizzazione, concentrazione giovanile), ai Comuni veniva richiesto di presentare rapporti sulle aree proposte per testimoniare il loro 'stato di degrado', includendo tassi di criminalità, violenza domestica e abusi sessuali, abbandono scolastico, immigrazione irregolare – accompagnati

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1 DPCM 15/10/2015 – “Interventi per la riqualificazione sociale e culturale delle aree urbane degradate” – G.U. 249 del 26/10/2015.

2 DPCM 25/05/2016 – attuazione del “Programma straordinario di intervento per la riqualificazione urbana e la sicurezza delle periferie delle Città metropolitane e dei comuni capoluogo di provincia” istituito dalla Legge di Stabilità 2016 (L. 208/2015) – G.U. 127 del 01/06/2016

3 https://www.comune.brescia.it/servizi/urbancenter/oltrelastrada/Pagine/LIC_AT_080-Introduzione-al-progetto-Oltre-la-Strada.aspx

da analisi delle potenzialità di sviluppo e del posizionamento strategico delle aree in questione. Gli obiettivi degli interventi devono essere legati al riportare le periferie a livelli di decoro, dignità espressiva e resilienza accettabili, promuovendo forme di sviluppo urbano senza ulteriore consumo di suolo. Seppur indirettamente, i bandi aprono la strada per rappresentare in maniera stigmatizzante le interconnessioni di queste condizioni. In OLS, il deperimento degli edifici viene fortemente legato alle strategie dell'abitare delle comunità migranti, coinvolte in circoli viziosi di precarietà legale e speculazione immobiliare nel quartiere. La sicurezza delle donne negli spazi pubblici del quartiere è

La rigenerazione prende la forma di un intervento punitivo contro le periferie nel loro essere costruiti come precisi universi sociali e spaziali

discussa in termini razzializzati, in quanto la presenza di uomini non-bianchi è posta in antitesi a quella di donne bianche, come si vede in questa immagine che ritrae il prima/dopo la rigenerazione secondo un noto quotidiano locale (Fig.1)⁴.

Il principale effetto di questi discorsi

è la costruzione dell'(in)appropriatezza urbana. Questo termine separa le forme in-accettabili che le aree urbane possono assumere nella transizione dal sistema socioeconomico industriale a quello post-industriale. Questa transizione implica profonde trasformazioni spaziali e sociali dei sistemi urbani. I bandi e le loro applicazioni locali si fondano sul presupposto che la rigenerazione possa rendere le città in grado di rispondere alle esigenze del sistema socioeconomico contemporaneo (Saccomanni, 2016). La definizione di (in)appropriatezza si articola attraverso due definizioni della città, una giuridica ed una storica, che si rinforzano e legittimano a vicenda.

I bandi distinguono le aree che possono considerarsi periferie degradate da quelle che mantengono livelli decorosi di appropriatezza – cioè gli standard di civiltà da raggiungere per essere pienamente 'urbane' e 'civili' (Piano, 2014). Nel caso di OLS, via Milano diventa una periferia degradata per la presenza di siti industriali abbandonati, per l'inquinamento causato dall'ex stabilimento Caffaro, per il pesante traffico di automobili e camion, per la fatiscenza degli edifici, ma anche per la presenza di comunità migranti, della prostituzione o dello spaccio, e per i senzatetto che trovano rifugio negli stabilimenti diroccati. L'intreccio di queste situazioni impedirebbe a via Milano di costituirsi come un vero quartiere, rendendo di fatto necessaria la rigenerazione per restituire dignità storica e funzioni spaziali a questa periferia abbandonata. In questi discorsi emerge la prima dimensione dell'(in) appropriatezza: i bandi sono un potente strumento giuridico orientante lo sviluppo urbano italiano, basato sull'identificazione di aree considerate come 'degradate' e 'distaccate'. Essi trasformano gli approcci di sviluppo urbano in forme istituzionali di stigmatizzazione (Wacquant, 2014), dirette verso la trasformazione spaziale di queste aree urbane per accogliere popolazioni più appropriate a vivere nella città contemporanea. Le "classi pericolose del proletariato post-industriale" (Campesi, 2003) e i loro spazi periferici devono essere allontanate e sostituite da nuovi tipi di città e comunità. La rigenerazione prende la forma di un intervento punitivo contro le periferie nel loro essere costruiti come precisi universi sociali e spaziali (Fava, 2010), atto a riottenere il controllo di aree rappresentate come sottratte alle città da parte di popolazioni inappropriate. Queste definizioni giuridiche e le costruzioni dello sviluppo storico delle periferie nei bandi e nei progetti locali si legittimano vicendevolmente. Nel caso di OLS, mentre la zona è rappresentata come il cuore industriale della città lungo il Novecento, negli ultimi decenni è divenuta un mero vuoto urbano, un quartiere sospeso e distaccato dalla città senza più funzioni urbane precise. La storia del quartiere viene però raccontata in modo consensuale, secondo una visione che non include le conflittualità e disuguaglianze caratte-

⁴ https://brescia.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/18_gennaio_31/brescia-riqualificazione-via-milano-palazzina-140-nuova-piazza-362df6f4-065c-11e8-8b64-d2626c604009.shtml

rizzanti la Brescia operaia⁵. Come chiaro esempio, in OLS è prevista la ristrutturazione della Torretta Caffaro, peculiarità architettonica dello stabilimento, ora elevata a simbolo del passato industriale della via — il suo profilo, non a caso, è posto al centro del logo di OLS. Nello stesso intervento è anche previsto l'abbattimento della cinta muraria dello stabilimento per far posto ad un parcheggio; questo muro è però caratterizzato da numerosi murali che testimoniano tre decenni di attivismo politico di sindacati e collettivi di quartiere, esplicitamente riferiti alle condizioni di deprivazione e vulnerabilità in cui versava la via Milano operaia.

La storia del quartiere diventa una serie di punti su una linea del tempo bidimensionale, che passa da un'epoca all'altra senza soluzione di continuità. Il presente della periferia diventa un momento a-storico, sospeso tra il "ricco" passato industriale e il brillante futuro appropriato che potrà raggiungere attraverso la rigenerazione. Gli abitanti delle periferie divengono i responsabili storici e giuridici dell'attuale stato di inappropriatezza; con la sola presenza corporea e simbolica in questi spazi, essi impediscono il pieno dispiegarsi delle opportunità di sviluppo economico e civile di queste aree senza più identità né capacità di adattamento. Lo sviluppo urbano diventa un processo di solidificazione di precise narrative storiche, così come di spazializzazione di specifiche rappresentazioni, condensate nell'approccio a-politicizzato dei processi rigenerativi volti al rinnovamento sociale e spaziale dei quartieri periferici.

L'intrecciarsi di queste due definizioni produce effetti sulle forme di rappresentazione degli spazi, delle relazioni tra persone negli spazi così come tra persone e spazi, portando a forme di esclusione e stigmatizzazione di specifici abitanti e comunità.

Genere e (in)appropriatezza: forme 'intrusive' di violenza urbana quotidiana

Una delle principali rappresentazioni di via Milano è quella di essere il quartiere a luci rosse della città, cioè un'area dove la prostituzione è particolarmente accessibile. Partendo da questa narrativa, si può descrivere una *forma intrusiva di violenza urbana* prodotta dai discorsi sulle periferie degradate.

Con il termine forma intrusiva di violenza si indicano i processi relazionali tra persone e spazi, e tra le persone in quegli stessi spazi, attraverso i quali la violenza e il pericolo diventano i principali riferimenti per interpretare e definire relazioni sociali e spaziali. Questi riferimenti risultano dalla circolazione dei discorsi sulle periferie, che oltre a connotare gli spazi secondo le definizioni di (in)appropriatezza, producono sia forme di auto-rappresentazione che di rappresentazione reciproca degli abitanti (Wacquant, 2014). La violenza, la paura e le loro rappresentazioni si intrudono prepotentemente nelle relazioni tra persone e tra persone e spazi, producendo condizioni che rendono difficile la costituzione di legami affidabili e duraturi tra i residenti e i propri luoghi di vita quotidiani.

La riproduzione dei discorsi che definiscono l'(in)appropriatezza da parte degli abitanti ha diversi effetti, in particolare sulle relazioni interpersonali negli spazi degradati. La presenza fisica e simbolica dei corpi degli abitanti negli spazi degradati produce 'comunità immaginate' (Anderson, 2009), regolanti le politiche di (in)visibilità di gruppi costruiti lungo le linee di classe, nazionalità, etnia, razza, sessualità e genere. In quest'ultimo caso, la riproduzione quotidiana dei discorsi sulla prostituzione da parte dei residenti produce un *frame spaziale sessualizzato*, che porta allo strutturarsi di forme intrusive di violenza urbana nella vita quotidiana delle abitanti. La polarizzazione delle relazioni urbane di genere, costruite a partire dalle narrative riguardo alla prostituzione in via Milano, spinge gli e le abitanti a creare relazioni inappropriate e sessualizzate con gli spazi quotidiani della via (Andrews, 2016; Doan, 2010). Queste narrative sono legate indissolubilmente alla presenza fisica e corporea di

⁵ Si ricorda che Brescia fu vittima della strage di piazza della Loggia: il 28 maggio 1974, durante una manifestazione antifascista indetta dalle maggiori sigle sindacali cittadine, una bomba provocò la morte di 8 persone e il ferimento di altre 102.

donne e transgender nel contesto materiale e politicizzato del quartiere degradato. Esse producono forme di violenza intrusiva simboliche e psicologiche, che influiscono sulle opportunità di appropriazione della stessa materialità urbana. Dalle interviste svolte emerge che abitanti donne e transgender trovano fastidioso incontrare prostitute nelle vicinanze della propria abitazione, perché 'trasformano il quartiere in un bordello', oppure perché la loro presenza crea il rischio che le stesse residenti possano essere 'confuse' da eventuali clienti⁶, come accade in un articolo pubblicato su un portale di notizie locali (Fig.2)⁷.

Le abitanti del quartiere si ritrovano a connettere in maniera profonda spazi urbani, prostituzione, la propria corporeità e la possibilità di essere molestate fisicamente e sessualmente. Questa connessione si traduce in relazioni fugaci, problematiche e violente tra i corpi che abitano il quartiere, gli spazi della loro vita e gli incontri che avvengono in quegli spazi (Andrews, 2016); queste relazioni vengono interpretate secondo un'ottica di violenza e paura, riprodotta dalle interazioni quotidiane che avvengono in quartiere. I discorsi sulle periferie degradate si frappongono violentemente tra questi soggetti e le auto/rappresentazioni di loro stesse e del loro ambiente, aprendo la strada a mobilitazioni opportunistiche dei problemi di genere (Leslie & Mullings, 2013). La connessione intrusiva della violenza tra spazi e sessualità è rinforzata dalla circolazione dei discorsi sull'inappropriatezza, che impongono specifiche modalità di interazione tra le abitanti, i propri sentimenti di sicurezza e la propria sessualità, nel momento in cui esperiscono gli spazi sessualizzati di via Milano. Questa dinamica si esprime in netta contrapposizione alle aspettative riguardo alle relazioni urbane di genere nella città rigenerata e appropriata (Peyrefitte & Sanders-McDonagh, 2018). La combinazione tra le esperienze personali e l'intrusiva natura delle narrative sessualizzate aliena in modo violento donne e transgender dai propri spazi di vita quotidiana, sia da un punto di vista politico-simbolico quanto da quello corporeo e materiale.

La costante intrusione dell'intimità psico-spaziale operata dai discorsi sulle periferie e della violenza impedisce la costruzione di forme di interazione con lo spazio intime, affidabili, fidate, sicure. Questo frame sessualizzato imposto sugli spazi urbani colpisce violentemente la presenza di donne e transgender negli spazi pubblici, rendendole soggetti vulnerabili a giudizi, molestie fisico-verbali, e alla possibilità di essere definite come prostitute perché appartenenti a generi interpretati attraverso il frame dell'inappropriatezza di via Milano. Il frame sessualizzato produce relazioni di genere polarizzate e violente, secondo una logica patriarcale ed etero-normativa ereditata dal passato industriale del quartiere così come costruito dalla politica storica alla base di OLS: un'area alla quale solo gli uomini avevano il potere di dare significati, che non ha definizioni alternative se non quelle costruite dalla città appropriata (McDowell, 1997).

Questo influisce sulle dinamiche di potere quotidiane, in particolare sulle performance di genere che rendono vulnerabili i corpi degli individui che le producono, condizionando l'appartenenza agli spazi e traducendosi in pratiche di alterità ed esclusione (Andrews, 2016). La visione patriarcale della città appropriata si basa anche sulla tirannica spazializzazione del genere, che limita e riduce alla dicotomia patriarcale uomo/donna le identità di genere e corporee performabili negli spazi appropriati (Doan, 2010). Questa spazializzazione definisce specifiche performance di genere come altre, sostenendo il carattere inappropriato degli spazi del quartiere, e regolando le politiche di (in)visibilità delle donne e delle transgender negli spazi pubblici. Lo stesso avviene nei confronti delle violenze fisiche e simboliche perpetrate nei loro confronti, legittimate e interiorizzate come forme di autorappresentazione di loro stesse come cittadine inappropriate della periferia degradata (Doan 2010; Andrews, 2016; Leslie & Mullings, 2013).

⁶ Queste affermazioni sono estrapolate dalle interviste etnografiche svolte durante la ricerca sul campo nella primavera del 2018.

⁷ <https://www.bsnews.it/2018/06/09/brescia-trans-colpito-schiena-cacciavite-grave/>

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Aliens in the space

Violence and interactions between inhabitants and outsiders in a stigmatized neighborhood in the periphery of Lisbon

Niccolò Giacchetta & Eunice Castro Seixas

This paper aims to discuss how various types of violence are at play in a stigmatized neighborhood in the periphery of Lisbon. Through the lenses of several critical, including post-colonial and decolonial authors, we read the data here succinctly described, that was collected and analyzed for the Masters' thesis of the first author (Giacchetta, 2020).¹ The thesis analyzes several neighborhoods in the periphery of Lisbon Metropolitan Area, which were built mostly in the 1970s, by populations moving to the city from rural regions and former Portuguese colonies (Abrantes, 2011). In particular some neighborhoods have become stigmatized places, inhabited mostly by precarious workers of African origin, where the construction of informal settlements and the occupation of private dwellings has resulted in poor housing conditions (Viegas, 2017). In this paper we focus on one of those neighborhoods, *Jamaica*, in the city of Seixal, as a case-study of territorial stigmatization, thus a place with a negative public image,² wherein specific populations are relegated, becoming "urban outcasts" (Wacquant, 2008).

Regarding the problem of violence, in the case of *Jamaica*, the inhabitants have associated it to, on the one hand police's "exuberant" intervention, and, on the other, with 'gang' fights with other neighborhoods in the city of Seixal. An example of the former occurred in a highly mediated police intervention in January 2019, where a brawl between two residents resulted in six people being taken to the hospital (one policeman and five residents), and one person being arrested.³ A similar phenomenon has been described as an endemic problem of collective violence, by Simone (2014), in Jakarta: the *tawuran*. The latter consists in brawls between two groups from different neighborhoods, triggered by trivial reasons. The neighborhoods involved, like *Jamaica*, are characterized by high population density, ethnic mix, and low income. However, some factors can activate a process of violence reduction in these contexts, one of these being the existence of participatory governance initiatives on questions of public interest like housing or public space planning and management. People living in, and associations working in *Jamaica* complain precisely the lack of participatory governance (Giacchetta, 2020), as decisions are made without involving or even consulting the local community. These practices are evident in the ongoing rehousing policy whereby the local administration is gradually relocating the 1,300 inhabitants (about 250 families) throughout the municipality (see Giacchetta, 2020 for a synthesis). This is being done in a paternalistic way, promoting welfare-

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¹ The thesis analyzes the effects of migrations on life practices in the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon through three different dimensions -territorial, social and public action- from a post-colonial view.

² A media analysis of references to violence linked to Jamaica neighborhood in online newspapers has confirmed the negative image of the place (Giacchetta, 2020).

³ See: <https://www.dn.pt/educacao-do-dia/22-jan-2019/a-violencia-no-jamaica-tem-tres-versoes-do-pai-da-vitima-e-a-verdadeira--10468004.html>

dependency practices (Chão, 2018), and destroying existing social networks, which are based on family relationship and proximity. The latter historically represented an attractive factor, together with job opportunities, for the immigrants (Malheiros & Fonseca 2011). All these faces of (state) violence reflect processes of “urban relegation” – “. . . multilevel structural processes whereby persons are selected, thrust and maintained in marginal locations, as well as the social webs and cultural forms they subsequently develop therein” (Wacquant, 2016, p. 1078).

Though most of the dwellers are favorable of moving out of *Jamaica*, some do not want to leave it.

Some neighborhoods have become stigmatized places, inhabited mostly by precarious workers of African origin, where the construction of informal settlements and the occupation of private dwellings has resulted in poor housing condition

During our fieldwork, a participant, a sort of gang leader, said he did not want to leave his house (which is in very poor and precarious conditions), because he felt “*fine*” there. But he has a reason: his reputation. Unlike other inhabitants, he needs to maintain his “criminal” reputation

because of his social media activity and his role of “gang leader”. He perceives himself to be famous in platforms like Instagram, where he advertises cheap branded products like costume jewelers and clothes with his own brand: a balaclava. As he receives benefits from the stigma, he seeks to maintain the violent *status quo* of the neighborhood. In “Critique of Violence”, Walter Benjamin (1986), identifies three types of violence: “lawmaking”, “law-preserving” and “law-destroying”. In the case of the gang leader we can talk about a practice of law-preservation as the reason for violence (in this case, “law” is intended as a “system of rules”). As Rodgers (2016) suggests, this type of violence maintains the status quo, and is generally more invisible than lawmaking and law-destroying types of violence, often involving the threat of violence rather than actual violence. This individual can be defined as a character that swings in and out of “crime” to take benefits from the situations (Feltran, 2020). What is important here is also how the researcher (Niccolò) discovered the entrepreneurial activity of that inhabitant.

After the “gang leader” declared me “his friend”, we talked for a while. Then, when I asked him for a telephone number to plan for an interview, he refused to give it, but he took my mobile and added his Instagram account to those followed by me. Through that channel, from his “Instagram stories”, I was able to find out of his informal business activity as well as other aspects of the neighborhood.

Violence during research and research as violence

We would like now to consider the challenges of researching stigmatized places and communities, especially when the research includes fieldwork. What happens when the researcher enters a stigmatized community? The following is an extract from the field diary of the first author, written after an interaction with a group of inhabitants:

12/06/2019

The fight. The woman with children [possible titles of a chapter of the thesis]

Before getting into the neighborhood, I take a picture of the building under construction, trying to capture a wider area.

Unfortunately, a group of people sees me, and they tell me that they are engaged in the “surveillance” of the place. Indeed, when I pass in front of them, they stop me, ask for my phone and push me to the ground. (. . .) I scream to ask for help and after a short time a woman, with a child, comes and stops them. Thanks to her, I can also have my phone back. I only have slight abrasions in my hand, but she cares about to rinse and put some disinfectant. Anyway, thanks to this sort of initiation I can talk a bit with them. (. . .)

They told me that this surveillance is needed to the neighborhood to protect it from police and other gangs.

This episode reveals the suspicion that some insiders have towards outsiders in this neighborhood. When these young men understood that Niccolò was not dangerous, they said they considered him “a friend” and that he was allowed to go wherever and whenever he wanted. At that moment, Niccolò took the opportunity to talk to them.

At a first glance, what we read from this extract is the (physical) violence perpetrated towards the researcher. However, this episode is also illustrative of the “coloniality of power” and the multiple and intersectional faces of violence and domination that have been historically exerted upon marginalized and racialized communities (Grosfoguel, 2008; Mignolo, 2009). This history of multiple violence originating from both outsiders and insiders explains why these young men have mistaken Niccolò for a police officer or a member of an enemy gang. Although without bad intentions, Niccolò had invaded a territory that is culturally charged with a history of violence and stigma and, thus, his mere presence was interpreted as yet another expression of this violence.

When the researcher that lived it describes this episode, which in this case is more similar to a show-down than to actual violence, embarrassment ensues. On the one hand, the researcher does not want to transform a field episode into a “pornography of violence” (Rodgers, 2007), even if he was not a simple “voyeur”, but the object of violence. On the other hand, we acknowledge the importance of sharing this experience because, as Bernat (2002) says: “(. . .) strategies of improvisation for survival in the field are not commonly discussed” within graduate or post-graduate courses, leading many young scholars “(. . .) to hush out crucial matters of personal safety after already finding themselves embroiled in crisis” (p. 209).

In this formative discussion, one should consider how research itself can be a form of epistemic violence, namely when researchers reduce complex experiences “(. . .) into a few written paragraphs of an ethnographic episode” (Lino e Silva, 2014, p. 324). The encounter with the “gang leader” was key in highlighting the complexity of the experiences in this stigmatized community, beyond the binary of victims *versus* perpetrators of violence. By respecting the complexity of these local experiences and needs, we can produce knowledge for the well-being of the communities rather than for controlling these, or as Mignolo suggests (2009, p. 177), engaging in “decolonial knowledge-making”. But this implies breaking down the assumption of the epistemic superiority of researchers, which is also a structure of violence in and of itself (Lino e Silva, 2014).

Concluding remarks

With this essay we have attempted to illustrate the complexity of violence as it is played out and socially constructed in a stigmatized neighborhood in Lisbon Metropolitan Area. In this case, the inadequacy of local policies and police actions have contributed to build up the aversion, on the one hand, of the inhabitants of Jamaica towards institutions and the welfare system, and, on the other hand, of the rest of the population towards Jamaica. These faces of violence are interrelated and consequential, as they contribute to the production of stigma on *Jamaica*, and its inhabitants. Finally, reflecting on an interaction that occurred during the fieldwork, we argue that researchers studying these stigmatized peripheries should be vigilant to their own potential role in the social construction of violence. Furthermore, as Lino e Silva (2014) suggests, as researchers, we should try “to do justice to the experiences and aspirations” of these marginalized communities that were willing to share their life with us.





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Beyond violence Toward a politics of inhabitation

Camillo Boano

Violence challenges any analytical focus due to its ubiquity and multifarious forms. From the intimate to the global, from the colonial to the capitalist, from the racial to the epistemic and from the personal to the societal. At the time of writing the COVID-19 epidemic violence has covered the entire planet in a deadly way. We are witnessing the violence of the rising medico-techno-scientific state that has emerged strongly in discourses and policies; the physical violence resurrected in places such as Myanmar, Lebanon, Palestine and Colombia, to cite few, and the violence of any direct engagement with living creatures and earth preservation that keep erupting under the camouflage of pro transition and technoeconomic recovery processes. It seems we are left with the question Giorgio Agamben (2020) asked in the mist of the pandemic: “what is a society that has no value other than survival?” A provocative question, as usual, that recalls a sort of *vita minima*, a bare life, as well some sort of grand universal planetary schema. Taking this lead, let me start to reflect for a moment on the city that I have engaged with most recently – Beirut – on violence and its beyond as inhabitation.

The extensivity of violence in Beirut, (the civil War, the 2006 Israel bombing, the 2018 uprising and its financial crisis, the 4th August 2020 port explosion and of course the pandemic) cannot be simply framed with the notion of crisis, even if incremental, connected, overlapping and structural. What is emerging there is an exhausted territory, predated by the absence of the public, brutalised by the fragility of the common and vandalised by the preclusion of a thinkable and imaginable future. Lebanon is living in a catastrophic present. Catastrophe is not a violent event that happens once and for all, that then goes away after having accomplished its gruesome work of leaving a world of ruins, to be fixed, restored and recomposed with the limited resources of its people. For Lebanese peoples it has been a never-ending process, which accumulates and sediments, and that erodes the vitalist and progressive message of those who are working to advocate reclaiming publicness, justice, and equity. Violence is not a linear production of events but a manifold and longitudinal overlapping force of dispossessions, explosions, removal, separation, excavation, evictions that produce complex and contradictory spatial implications. Research on violence asserts that violence goes well beyond physical harm. While suggesting there is no agreed definition of urban violence, Pavoni, and Tulumello (2020:49) warn us against the oversimplification of such complex relations, especially when the adjective ‘urban’ is just “referring to the place (the container) in which instances of violence would occur, rather than as a spatial process constitutive” to it. Challenging simultaneously “the static understanding of the urban and the exogenous understanding of violence” (p.50) the authors look at the ways contemporary urban and capitalist-urban discourses are “framing urban violence as an exogenous anomaly to be eradicated, [and] generate the pervasive atmospheres of fear that increasingly characterise contemporary urban space” (p.51).

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Considering their reflection, Beirut becomes represents the contemporary history of the self-destructive gesture that continuously repeats itself and, by doing so, sets the foundation for a new condition of destruction. Every massive violent event in history was preceded by sequences of smaller events occurring within short periods of time that prepared the ground for additional violence in time and space and led to the last big port explosion; the banking sector crisis with all its destructive implications; the collapsed economy; political crisis; institutional corruption; government inefficiency; the electricity shortage as well as the stress associated with the recent virus. Every violence set the

stage for a new time and additional violence. Perhaps, Beirut is telling a much bigger story. A story of perpetual planetary conflict, close to the one that Guinard, Latour and Lin used to title the 2020 Taipei Biennial: “*You and I don’t live on the same planet*” making Lebanon

Violence is not a linear production of events but a manifold and longitudinal overlapping force of disposessions, explosions, removal, separation, excavation, evictions that produce complex and contradictory spatial implications

where several planets collide. The planetarium includes: ‘planet globalization’, constructed around the promise of modernity in its world-making violence with its massive rise in inequality, neoliberalism and unlimited growth; ‘planet security’, where people betrayed by the ideals and the violence of globalization, ask for a piece of land – a fenced or a bordered haven to live in, protected from others; ‘planet escape’ where a limited number of privileged people invest hyper-techno fix security solutions or leave the earth. For all the others excluded by the modernizing project, the privileged full-security-bordered-land or the escape idealized-communities-of-equals, the only option is to be in an inhabitable territory, that the curators call the ‘terrestrial planet.’

This metaphor of planetary conflict is maybe illustrating a form of violence that is simultaneously destructive and constructive: not an interruption but rather a continuous process, that traverses the political history of the planet itself. The metaphorical landscape emerging in the terrestrial planet, that beyond the explicit reference to Beirut, is the one that Malq Simone would call “uninhabitable”; not because the conditions and limited or impossible capacities of people reside, to shelter or to find a refuge but, rather, because what remains is not intended for habitation: it is a territory that exceed consideration of human emplacement and manifold modalities of livability. Lebanon is inhabitable. It is at the same time a space of exception and an unfinished project, evident in its fragmented, plural, uncertain and temporally precarious grammar, always in motion despite its apparent fixity with a constant movement between past and present. It is exceptional because the very possibility of living and inhabiting has always been inextricably intertwined with violence: the promise of death, destruction, disappearance, displacement, eviction that is regularly and invariably fulfilled. However, the inhabitable is also a continuous creative process through which inhabitants withdraw from death in order to escort it, constituting an industrious community capable of building, maintaining and repairing its living space. A tenacious struggle to resist the violent subtractions of the future, of space, of possibilities, through creating space and forms of life. The intelligence of the urban, when seen beyond the absolute centrality of its violence, is its ability to express politics, excess of life and places of possibility. It is a power that should certainly not be romanticised as it is always constituted by a form of violence as a generative matrix. Lebanon is continuously being produced by the operative efforts of the many voices of resistance in the street, in the arts, as well as in academia. Despite this it remains incalculable. It transcends its historicity of inhabitation, but that cannot be framed under any calculation, any norm, any quality.

So, what is inhabiting the uninhabitable? How is it possible to leave destitute the power of violence and find new ways of inhabiting the urban planet?

One way is to refer to Heidegger who reminds us that human exists insofar as they inhabit: transforming imperfectly an abstract space in some way – imprecise and precarious – in a place that generates the possibility of intimacy. However, the term *Bauen* used by Heidegger translates as *to built* in the sense of to dwell, but also as to preserve and to cultivate, which refers to protecting rather than producing. This interesting connection of dwelling to preserving and cultivating shifts focus not only on to being, staying and existing, but also on to a more complex “ecology” through which inhabitants are constituting an industrious community capable of building, maintaining and repairing its living space. Inhabitation means re-centring the affirmative dimension of enduring relations and it develops an idea of collective life that tenaciously responds to aspects of life and to modes of living, extractive practices and it constructs different horizons of hope.

This is exemplified in (refuge) camps and camp urbanism. With inhabitation, camps expand from exception to become sites of a politics that takes shape around habitation: the continuation of habitual, bodily practices, the small and mundane acts of maintenance or a continuous struggle to cultivate and protect a minimum space of survival. This impossibility of building and dwelling is the essence of the camp: always and already exhaustion and inhabitation. Recalling that Auschwitz was designed in 1941 by Karl Bischoff and Fritz Ertl, both graduate of the Bauhaus, Agamben (2019) asks: “how could it be possible that an architect [. . .] built a structure in which under no circumstances was it possible to dwell, in the original sense of being at home [. . .] building the perfect place of the impossibility of inhabitation.” With this example, he portrays how “architecture at present is facing the historical condition of building the inhabitable” (ibid.). With no inhabitation only building is possible and the camp, as matrix of exception, will persist.

So, “what does it mean to inhabit (*abitare*)” asks Agamben in the preface of Giovanni Attili’s *Civita* (2021): “do still we know what it means to inhabit a village, a city, a territory? and what is a village, a city, a territory if we think of it from the point of view of inhabiting?” *Civita di Bagnoregio*, the subject of the book, is not a camp and it is not in Lebanon. It is a medieval village in Central Italy, built on a gully, a geomorphological zone that is always in the process of sinking into the void in the Lazio hinterland. For Agamben, questioning inhabitation from such spaces means revealing that “the very possibility of living and inhabiting is indissolubly intertwined with death.” Attili “reconstructs the desire and the practice of the people of *Civita di Bagnoregio* over the centuries to inhabit their land, the marvellous stubbornness with which they continue to cling to ‘their tuff hillock’ suspended in the void and to keep intact, and if possible, improve, the form of life that has been handed down through the generations. The people of *Civita* have turned their land into a habitable place [. . .] they have created and continued to forge something without which they seem to have a certain unease: their own presence.” For Agamben inhabitation “it is a creative process through which they withdraw from death in order to escort it” (Agamben, 2021:11-12). Therefore, what seems to matter is an inhabiting life. For Agamben “to inhabit means to be in what one holds dearest, one’s own and at the same time common. That is, to be and to enjoy, that is, to enjoy, one’s own nature. It is certainly a way of resisting, of staying, and of preventing oneself from being dragged elsewhere” (2020).

If the uninhabitable is the impossibility of becoming home; of hosting futures; of dwelling relations and to inhabit political projects, and even (in the case of global violent border regimes) the preclusion of the material possibility of staying in a place, then gestures of inhabitation must be becoming livable, if not ‘home’. It must be livable as a terrain, beyond the emergency from which to think and act, even for a politics that seeks nothing more than to overcome the primacy of life.

Camp urbanism, informal urbanization and, more generally, all the forms that inhabit the uninhabitable, without essentializing them, are arguably the continuous creative process through which inhabitants withdraw from death in order to escort it, constituting an industrious community capable

of building, maintaining and repairing its living space. This impossibility of building and dwelling is the essence of the camp. With no inhabitation only building is possible and the camp, as matrix of exception, will persist.

Returning to the terminology of the Taipei Biennial, the potential for deactivating violence lies in the everyday resistance or in inhabitation intended as “counter territorialization” (Boano and Astolfo, 2020) in a “politics of inhabitation” (Abourahme, 2020: 40). This is an inversion. It is not another planet, (in the language of the Taipei Biennial) but an act of an inverse nature: a reconfiguration of the conditions of possibility. It is an effort of unmaking, of redefinition to re-signify territories; ultimately, to undo or deactivate an established territorial order of modernity, security and escape. People’s practices are a multiform remaking of spatial ordering of state sanctioned planned violence that intentionally produces capital accumulation, expulsions, and marginalization. It consists of a destituent (Tari, 2017; Laudani, 2016; Boano, 2020) politics to create the conditions (an empty space) so that another politics (one that today seems impossible) can happen. Destituent is a politics not founded by power. It indicates a movement to be made: to unleash a politics of the event. The event of politics nests in a singular desertion from what is, breaking the normal course of history and producing a multiple, ecstatic, plurality – not another planet, but another cosmogony. Not the one displayed in Taipei Biennial planetarium rather a different one. Maybe, the one emerging from Giorgio Manganelli’s *La Palude Definitiva* (the definitive swamp) “a place where it is difficult to enter and impossible to leave” (p.43). In the image of the swamp is a perfect image for the exhausted capacity of thinking beyond the violence of ‘planet terrestrial’. The swamp is a space where knowledge mixes to give deadly form to coercion: “the swamp appears to me as [...] a noble and lowest place, a central and peripheral place, well-formed and deformed, shapeless, deformed, obscene, vile, mephitic and at the same time troubled” (p.57). The ‘proper’ of the inhabitation is not given and, therefore, its great intensity is given precisely because it dwells directly on the substance of politics, or rather in its abyss, on what makes it possible everywhere. Two paradigms converge in the swamp as in Beirut: an uninhabitable without any inhabitation as well the paradoxical but destituent process of inhabiting the uninhabitable. It is no coincidence that the centrality Manganelli’s swamp evokes an epistemology of living where you can feel “a profound sense of rest, as if the fatigue of the future dissolved into a contrary procedure, as if yesterday, the uninterrupted yesterday would give refreshment to all tomorrows, the impossible tomorrows” (p.59). The politics of inhabitation might need to be imagined in the swamp, maybe in Beirut as in Civita, but beyond the planetary prospect of constitutive violence to envision a destituent gesture.

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