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Urbanism from within. An oblique gaze on Lavapiés

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Neighbourhood Portraits

53 Lo sQuaderno

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Neighbourhood Portraits

a cura di / dossier coordonné par / edited by
Andrea Mubi Brighenti, Cristina Mattiucci & Andrea Pavoni

Guest artist / artiste présentée / artista ospite
Enzo Umbaca

Editorial

Chima Michael Anyadike-Danes
You've got to be there to know it. Experiencing LA's Koreatown

Sara Bonfanti
Walking along in Southall. Changing frames of a fabled ghetto in greater London

Fuad Musallam
A Hamra Crossroads. Particular Histories in the Historic Neighbourhood

Nick Dines
Stop Pasolini. Excavating the social underbelly of a gentrifying neighbourhood in Rome

Serena Olcuire
Quarticciolo, the perfect dimension. Decay, coexistence and resistance in a roman ecosystem

The Housing History Collective
Tiny events. Tales of urban domesticity from Lingotto, a former working-class neighborhood in Turin

Alessandro Coppola
The differentiation of the trivial. The bars in NoLo (Milan) as micro-publics in the age of urban super-diversification

Lucia Baima & Angelo Caccese
Urbanism from within. An oblique gaze on Lavapiés

Plácido Muñoz Morán
Imagining the future of Vallcarca. An ethnography of urban materials and their politics

Luca Onesti
Da Tatavla a Kurtuluş. Storia e memoria di un quartiere greco di Istanbul

Miriam Tedeschi
Multiple neighbourhoods. Affective manifold spaces in Turku

Valeria Raimondi
'Free zone Exarchia.' Narratives of an antagonist neighbourhood

Ilektra Kyriazidou
Complex intimacies in a Thessaloniki refugee neighborhood

Giuseppina Forte
The Neighborhood in the Morro. Heterogeneity, Difference, and Emergence in a Periphery of the Global South

EDITORIAL

This issue collects a series of neighbourhood portraits, or, as we conceive them, immersive explorations of this most peculiar of urban scales. While the urban may often appear deterritorialised and prolonged by global processes, and while the boundaries of the city become increasingly porous and unstable, it is here, 'between' the city at large and the domestic unit, that urban habits emerge out of the rhythmic routine of daily activities, and peculiar affective atmospheres coalesce. In the midst of contemporary dislocation, the significance of the neighbourhood as a unit of action, identity formation, and symbolic status remains crucial and, perhaps, intensifies. Belonging to a neighbourhood, dwelling in closeness, means that common ways of being emerge and merge in the coming together of bodies, trajectories, histories, and spaces.

Of course, a neighbourhood is also a geographical and administrative unit, spatially and bureaucratically defined. Yet, each neighbourhood overflows this bi-dimensional confinement assuming a porous, rhythmic and atmospheric consistency that challenges us to develop new ways to explore, describe and attune to it. This is what the contributions to this issue do, through different gazes, sensibilities, and disciplinary backgrounds, equally attempting an immersive engagement with the social and spatio-temporal stratifications of the neighbourhood, its crystallisations and prolongations, managing to convey its most unique traits, while avoiding freezing them into clichés.

We begin in the US West Coast. Chima Michael Anyadike-Danes brings us to Koreatown, Los Angeles' most densely populated neighbourhood, looking at the way the place's identity and belonging is symbolically and strategically negotiated, especially via the use of toponymy, producing different readings and (in)visibilities among Korean-American and non-Korean-American inhabitants.

Subsequently, we found ourselves walking along London Southall with Sara Bonfanti, whose delicate ethnographic portrait follows the trajectories of a variety of diverse locals: marginal youths, pious elders, entrepreneurs, homeless persons. Their diverging and converging paths reshape the frames of this 'fabled London ghetto.' In the next text, Fuad Musallam looks at Hamra, Beirut, and particularly at a crossroad that at first appears untouched by the intense historical transformation this neighbourhood has undergone. Exploring the ordinary rhythms and the unexpected moments that populate this intersection, Musallam shows how the site's heterogeneous and contingent reality does not easily fit within, but rather punctuates and punctures the imaginary of the broader neighbourhood.

A consistent series of Italian neighbourhoods follows. Based in Pigneto, Rome, a fast-changing neighbourhood apparently undergoing a classic trajectory from 'formerly popular' to 'hip' and 'bohemian', Nick Dines sets out to challenge the usual 'gentrification' interpretive frame, employed by scholars and journalists alike to describe the place. Instead, he chooses to unfold the narratives occluded by the mainstream framework – from a long-standing middle-class presence, to the novel tensions and alliances that are surfacing. We remain in Rome with Serena Olcuire, in Quarticciolo, planned suburb of the Fascist era that today epitomises the typical dynamics of many Roman peripheral agglomerations: namely, the 'degradation' that results from neglect by the public governance bodies, and the related survival and resistance tactics of its inhabitants. Exploring local stories, Olcuire shows how alternative, not necessarily reactive, stances are created locally.

Moving to the Italian North-West, The Housing History Collective look at Lingotto, a former working-class neighbourhood in Turin. They present six case studies, currently the subject of

their ongoing research on the forms collective living and the daily appropriation of public space. These micro-stories provide a revealing entry point into the neighbourhood's dense signification, challenging the depiction of this part of the city as merely heterogeneous and fractured. Not far from Turin, in Milan's trending neighbourhood of NoLo, Alessandro Coppola sets out to explore the different socio-cultural dynamics, relations and micro-publics that are visible in local cafés (the Italian 'bar'), examining the shifting differences between more 'traditional' establishments and the novel places that are emerging while the neighbourhood comes to be re-branded as a 'cool' destination.

Other stories, mainly of gentrification, come from Spain, and are told by Lucia Baima & Angelo Caccese, in the case of the airbnb-fied neighbourhood of Lavapiés in Madrid, and by Plácido Muñoz Moránin in the case of the embattled, anti-tourist Vallcarca neighbourhood of Barcelona.

The following contributions report from, respectively, Turkey, Finland, and Greece. In Kurtuluş, Istanbul, Luca Onesti draws an immersive portrait of the former Tatavla neighbourhood, once home to a lively Greek community. Onesti addresses its changing socio-cultural fabric looking at its turbulent history, its sedimentation in more or less visible layers of memory, and the neighbourhood's collocation in the complex socio-political reality of contemporary Turkey.

Miriam Tedeschi explores the multiple dimensions of some affective spaces in Turku. Alongside private houses, a series of residential complexes linked to the university and inhabited mainly by foreign students and researchers are architecturally designed and spatially organized to act as aggregators of temporary tenants, who relentlessly come and go. Here, human and non-human spatial interactions visibly affect the environment, adding multiple layers to the apparently uniform, well-organised local geography.

It is in Exarcheia, Athens, that Valeria Raimondi develops her portrait, seeking to pierce through the area's international imaginary as an anarchist neighbourhood, and its contemporary allure as a site of radical activism, street art, and political dissent. Portraying the neighbourhood's everyday life, she describes the struggle for constituting a 'Free Zone' within Athens, negotiating internal contradictions and external interferences, and the way these are changing the physical appearance of Exarchia and compromising its political spirit. Also based in Greece, Ilektra Kyriazidou reports from a low-income refugee neighbourhood in Thessaloniki, characterised by a landscape of multiple-storeyed apartment blocks that has produced one of the highest-density areas in Greece, by reading the complex socio-spatial intimacies between newly arrived and long-term female inhabitants.

Finally, moving to South America, Giuseppina Forte strolls us through Furnas, São Paulo. Via a sensory methodology, she unfolds the singularity of Furnas as a palimpsest of multiple temporalities, where violence, power relations, economic inequalities, and imagined geographies have produced a specific pace and a stark sensorium.

The still-frames from a videoart piece by Enzo Umbaca, the guest artist of this issue, depict the Isola neighbourhood in Milan. *360 degrees* is a spinning video that conveys the disorientation of the old inhabitants of this old artisans' neighbourhood endowed with a lively social fabric, before the coming of a powerful real-estate speculation that has completely spoiled the place (incidentally, in 2010 *Io Squaderno* no.15 had hosted Stefano Boccalini's work, dealing with the same area).

AMB, CM, AP

a neighborhood known as belonging to the "Partisans", soon

You've got to be there to know it

Experiencing LA's Koreatown

Chima Michael Anyadike-Danes

Introduction

On a blazingly hot, azure-skyed morning I walked from Van Nuys' austere metal and concrete bus station to its extravagant, art deco civic building where the LA City Council held a meeting. My route included a main street, fronted by tall, sun-stretching palms, where numerous bail bonds agencies abutted franchise eateries, like Subway, and banks, like Chase. Later, at the meeting, while puzzling over the anomalous landscape I heard a neophyte council-person in an ill-fitting, shiny, gray suit say condemnatorily, 'I think it is a problem that people in Los Angeles seem to care more about their neighborhoods than they do their city'. Appropriate, as the rationale for occasionally meeting in a strongly secessionist neighborhood twenty-eight kilometers north of downtown was to render municipal government real. The council-person's statement serves as a prompt for my discussion of Koreatown, an LA neighborhood, whose landscape has long fired fierce passions amongst its stakeholders.

Koreatown is a densely populated neighborhood of several square kilometers whose toponym belies its multicultural, multilingual, and multi-ethnic landscape. Its boundaries are disputed by various municipal agencies and social scientists. Uncontested are Koreatown's origins in the 1965 Hart-Cellar Act, which repealed a 1924 ban on Asian immigration, and a South Korean policy of incentivizing emigration. A late 70s Korean American growth machine promoted the area while white capital and bodies fled. In 1980 Mayor Bradley, the city's first black mayor, acknowledged their lobbying and designated it Koreatown. Then, as now, Korean American capital and black politicians dominated, but residents were mainly Latino and indigenous.

Since the 1970s scholarly literature has largely focused on Koreatown's Korean American *umwelt* (Bonacich, Light, and Wong 1977; E. Park 2012; Suh 2016), while lavishing considerably less scholarly attention on the neighborhood's other inhabitants (Blackwell 2017; Sanchez 2018). In this piece I seek to strike a balance by describing the lifeworlds and landscape that I encountered between Wilshire Boulevard and Third Street – two of Koreatown's commercial thoroughfares – while I was conducting my fieldwork between 2013 and 2015. My account is informed by phenomenologically influenced works favoring personal, illustrative, and experiential description over statistics' seemingly omniscient perspective (Tilley 2019). This literature emphasizes how dissimilar ways of dwelling result in continually contested reconfigurations of urban landscapes (Bender 2001).

In describing these varied landscapes I focus on marking and movement. The former term describes how inhabitants sought to draw others' attention to their dwelling through acts of inscription. These were necessary because, as I detail in the latter section, the more informal acts of landscape forma-

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tion while deeply sensorial were frequently transitory. They were erased by other beings in other lifeworlds. Thus, arguably, the very constant bustle that was Koreatown's chief characteristic ensured impermanence.

Marked Landscapes

In late 2013 I attended a neighborhood meeting at Young Oak Kim Academy. The school was built in the 2000s and its gray and yellow exterior walls and chain-link fencing on its roofs had a penal quality, but inside were classrooms with posters and artwork telling of community and an interior courtyard with splendid trees. At the meeting the Koreatown Cultural Gateway, a proposed futuristic archway with LED lights strung between white-painted steel poles, was discussed. This name, like the toponym, obscured a complex reality. With that reality in mind I detail a range of signs inscribed on this landscape that reflect its diversity.

Boo Eung Koh, a South Korean Professor of English, visited Koreatown in 2003 and described Korean language signs as dominant. He felt they more accurately delineated Koreatown's boundaries than any government agency's map and made it something of a foreign landscape to non-Korean speakers. However, to my eyes, this purported Korean symbolic hegemony was consistently disrupted by other signs, like the neighborhood's graffiti, which indexed other collectives and forms of dwelling. At the edge of Third and Catalina, a place of plentiful palms, browning lawns, several story-tall apartment buildings with tired exteriors, and distressed, wooden family homes converted into apartments, was the local thrift store. There I would routinely see Koreatown Youth and Community Center workers, a non-profit contracted to provide services by the city, furiously scrubbing the store's faded brown walls to remove gang tags. The simple tag of a letter and numbers was written in a lurid red and marked the area as being MS13's – a transnational Salvadoran American gang founded in Koreatown in the 1980s – territory. When I crossed Third the tags continued. Indeed, MS13 and the 18th Street gang seemed to be in an ongoing struggle to signify dominance through tagging. Consequently, the tags were swiftly resprayed.

Long before the toponym existed Korean Americans were drawn to the neighborhood's Korean shops to purchase Korean goods. However, spaces that seem to mark ethnic identity can be misleading. One hot summer day in June I was walking along Wilshire Boulevard with Ronald – a tall, plump Mongolian man in his late twenties studying for a business degree. We had just finished enjoyably unctuous *tsuivan* (a fried dish of noodles, vegetables, and meat) at the tiny Golden Mongolian restaurant – LA's only Mongolian eatery and an informal Mongolian meeting place. There identity was reflected in both the cuisine and the many curios and pictures that decorated the interior. While there we had witnessed an American customer leave because they did not serve Mongolian barbecue– a Taiwanese invention advertised as 'real' Mongolian food whose popularity in California predated any significant Mongolian presence in the state. During our walk we discussed this incident and Ronald observed that restaurant signage was not necessarily reflective of reality. He gestured at a sushi restaurant and explained that they may have a Korean owner, Mongolian waiting staff, and Latino kitchen hands. And yet the sign and the cuisine suggested a Japanese presence otherwise absent from the neighborhood.

Not all Koreatown studies have focused on signage as indicative of hegemony. In 1992 Koreatown was badly affected by civil unrest that followed the acquittal of three LAPD officers for brutalizing Rodney King. Afterwards *p'ungmul* (farmer's music bands), with their rhythmic drumming and striking gongs, played an important role in helping to 'rewrite a Korean-American identity onto the landscape' (Tangherliini 1999, 155). However, these were far from the only sounds helping to mark presence in the landscape. Since the 80s thousands of Bangladeshis had settled in Koreatown. Street signs on a section of Third Street bore the toponym Little Bangladesh and there were several restau-

rants and supermarkets. The community had wanted their toponym affixed to considerably more land, but the Korean American growth machine's opposition had resulted in long-standing bitterness. Normally I barely heard the Bangladeshi presence as I walked along the street it carried faintly in sounds like Dhallywood music radiating from a restaurant. Once in March of 2015 raucous cheers emanated as spectators watched the cricket on a restaurant's wall-mounted television. Ordinarily such sounds were drowned out by constant traffic. However, the Bangladesh Day parade was exceptional. The community marked their presence sonically through flutes, brass bands, and drums.

Mutable Landscapes

The Koreatown I encountered was akin to an infinite regress where each apartment building, street, and block mirrored the other levels in their boundless diversity

Thus far I have described attempts made to preserve evidence of lifeworlds in the landscape. These were a response to an awareness that any landscape's duration is limited. However, dwelling rarely completely reconfigures the landscape more often it creates half-acknowledged palimpsests understood differently by varied stakeholders. This was readily evident on Wilshire Boulevard where the art deco Bullocks Wilshire, a former department store with a tarnished copper green tower and large display windows, was now a law school library and filming location. With this in mind I focus on describing some of the contemporary movements producing Koreatown's palimpsestic landscape.

Recent Koreatown studies have highlighted Korean Americans out-migration to Southern Californian ethnoburbs (K. Park and Kim 2008; Trinh Vo and Yu Danico 2004). However, such migrants and their children would frequently return to shop and partake of nightlife. Indeed Stephen Cho Suh has argued that for second-generation returnees acts of consumption are 'their primary means to claim a sense of affiliation or belonging to the district' (Suh 2016, 414). Gene, a thin, wiry civil engineer, with a Southern California drawl, would seem such a person. Despite residing in the suburbs he would frequently visit Koreatown in the evenings to meet friends, down deceptively intoxicating *sojo* shots, eat *budae jjigae* (a hearty Korean stew of American processed foods, red-chili paste, and *kimchi*), and sing in *norebang* (Korean karaoke parlors with soundproof rooms). Gene and his friends shaped Koreatown's landscape through consumption, but they also actively participated in creating its infrastructure. They helped organize the Koreatown element of *Ciclavia* (an open streets event where streets are closed to motor cars), campaigned for parks and trees, and sought to bring small lots subdivisions to the neighborhood. Gene explained that the last of these was part of a bold plan to reverse out-migration by providing affordable family housing for middle-class Korean Americans.

In contrast to these Korean Americans other actors reconfigured the landscape through highlighting specific parts of the area's pre-Korean heritage. On Wilshire Boulevard where the towering temple-like headquarters of nation's biggest Korean American banks were located one also found a pocket-park and memorial to Bobby Kennedy. These fronted the spacious grounds of the Robert F. Kennedy Community Schools, so named because in 1968 he had been assassinated there. Also on the boulevard was the oddly named Brown Derby Plaza. At the back of this beige three-story mall was a curiously hat-shaped structure. The remnants of the Brown Derby restaurant. In the 1920s it had been patronized by Hollywood glitterati. Wilshire Boulevard was full of these remainders from a period when white capital defined its landscape. Their wealth was visible in the many elegant churches that lined the boulevard and once led to it being nicknamed Five Million Dollar Church Street. A historical society had lovingly erected plaques allowing navigation of this landscape. Meanwhile the Wilshire Centre Business Improvement District's (WCBID) purple-shirted community safety officers patrolled the street in pairs on their bikes. Their presence, the buildings, and plaques served to differentiate this

area.

Private citizens were not the only ones whose movements shaped Koreatown's landscape. Several blocks east of the Brown Derby were the Wilshire/Vermont subway station entrances. The county's transportation planners envisioned such stations as a means to reclaim LA from the car. They believed in increasing the density of human habitation near stations to succeed. Consequently, the city had approved a development on the opposite side of the boulevard and above the station had constructed a mixed-use development with parking, a school, eateries, and a courier's office. During the week the courtyard at the center of the development was a hive of activity with office workers, the unhoused, and school children all mingling. For a few hours a weekly farmer's market would intensify traffic. Infrequently activity would subside as the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department arrived to inspect the tickets. Rarely protests were held in the square. During my fieldwork Korean American protestors twice congregated to vent their fury at the South Korean government. Thus, although the car was an ever-present feature of the neighborhood's landscape, the imperative to move bodies by public transit, as shaped by investment of public funds, also played a prominent role.

Conclusion

The Koreatown I encountered was akin to an infinite regress where each apartment building, street, and block mirrored the other levels in their boundless diversity. The toponym has continued to matter too despite this diversity, the circumstances in which the neighborhood was named, and the various other signs people made. Even as recently as 2018 there was tension over an attempt by some Bangladeshi activists to split the neighborhood association with one section being renamed Wilshire-Center Bangladesh. Some eighteen thousand people opposed this move with a number waiting for three hours to vote down the proposal. A commitment suggesting that in Koreatown, at least, the toponym serves as more than a mere signifier of boundaries but in fact plays an important role in how Koreans and Bangladeshis imagine themselves.

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Walking along in Southall

Changing frames of a fabled ghetto in greater London

Sara Bonfanti

There is an analogy between immersive ethnographic fieldwork and mobile people's resettlement: a disturbed pace of apprenticeship until one has embodied a progressive sense of the place (Massey 1994).[1] It's been two years since I started doing research in Southall, and every time I return, caught in the whirlwind of multisite ethnography and rapid narratives, trying to re-emplace myself in this multiverse urban fringe, flukes open up new insights. Fifth return to the field, early May 2019; pending Brexit, my EU passport is still flexible enough to let me enter and leave the UK anytime, my wallet stuffed enough with high skilled White capital to allow me an easy stay. It's not just a lore that depicts Southall as Britain's Little India, or *Chota Punjab*, like its inhabitants dub it. Disembarking the Tata shuttle train started in Paddington, one's ears throb with Eastern words gushed in London's far West, eyes fill up with strings of Punjabi script signposted on every step, nostrils replenish with extant curry and frankincense, coal and rubber from deserted factories. Everyday life in any given neighbourhood is a matter of senses, like Rhys-Taylor (2017) poignantly described of East London, whose smells and food are integral to understanding both its history and urban present, betwixt gentrification and class antagonism, new ethnicities and cosmopolitanism.[2]

Tucked his mobile in his pocket, Ram greets me on the platform. We met months earlier by chance, he then agreed into being interviewed upon lunch invitation at a *tandoori* diner nearby and we have been friends ever since. Literally a fine artist, he sent me a greeting card for Christmas, including a portrait of his homeland expressly drafted for me (his mother wearing a *sari* and placidly carrying a vessel of water on her head amid lush green countryside: nothing farther than ladies wrapped-up in shawls dashing under London's grey skies). Not that all informants come as close as this, but when they do, ethnography allows human relationships hard to surpass in collaboration and engagement. Ethnographic intimacy is the one tool that permits to conceive the incommensurability of radical alterities (Povinelli 2001). How can a White mother and professional and a Brown bachelor and outcaste come together to interpret of what Southall appears to them? Phenomenology starts with what seems, primarily non-verbal clues, and inquiries the relations of meaning that surface through sensation to verbalised thought, possibly embracing the awareness of others, history and values (Husserl 1964). Raised in the habit of Buddhist musing, my informant masters self-consciousness and direct-object alertness, but it is his warm smile and scruffy hair that brings my wandering mind back to the present moment. Born in Telangana, southeast India, 31 years ago, Ram moved to

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2 Picture 1: Welcome to Southall, Chota Panjab. Source: Wikimedia Creative Commons, 16/7/19.

London in 2017 with a Visa for master students after securing a place in a reputable college through a scheme for disadvantaged talents (lit. for "scheduled castes" as per affirmative action in India, Deshpande 2013). Southall has become his home away from home, *desh/pardesh* like Panjabis say: a place where to settle rather seamlessly. A cheap borough, he had found abode in a temple which also serves as a temporary dwelling for many migrant peers (like most houses of worship do in South Asia and worldwide in the diaspora, Singh 2006). His home (a rented room with shared bathroom and kitchen facilities) is set in a terraced house next-door to a Hindu *mandir* and Sikh resource centre.

Disembarking the Tata shuttle train started in Paddington, one's ears throb with Eastern words gushed in London's far West, eyes fill up with strings of Punjabi script signposted on every step, nostrils replenish with extant curry and frankincense, coal and rubber from deserted factories

There is no detachment in Southall religious pluralism. Starting in 1985, a patron refurbished the place in order to host a Buddhist centre within the anticasteist Ambedakarite[3] movement (Jaffrelot 2005) and provide transnational fellows with a haven upon a small donation.[4]

As Ram helps me carry my luggage around, the foul today is unbearable. Crossing the bridgeway in front of the Railway station, he points to the ashes of a construction site which promises to be the most ambitious new residential hamlet ever developed in the Borough of Ealing. Southall Waterside is the building proof that environmental racism does not only exist (Hage 2017), but it is a critical and disguised threat to social housing and spatial justice. The 45 ha site sits alongside the rail tracks between the Grand Union Canal and Southall Station, right on the former Gasworks spot which closed in 1973, leaving an underutilised and inaccessible place. Waterside is one of the most audacious brownfield developments under way in the UK, where councils speed up development of derelict land as part of a national plan for housing. Though its planners are known to engage in 'Collaborative Placemaking', a good slice of citizens are cagey of the alleged regeneration. That same morning, Ram explains, a protest march has flooded the main Junction Avenues (the Green and the Broadway, which cut across the quarter and identify the dials of the Old and the New Southall). Some residents now plan to move out of Southall despite not wanting to leave their extended families which have resided there for generations. Besides anticipating stellar prices for the central and classy flats which this renewal will yield, current residents in the adjoining areas have complained for the long-term health impact of the "petrol-like" odour, which alarming reports admit contain carcinogenic toxins such as benzene, phthalate, and asbestos (Griffin 2019).[5]

It is a dreadful coincidence that the leaders of this campaign for the right to an healthy neighbourhood are parents and teachers of the local "Blair Peach" Primary School, whose name takes after the activist who died on 23rd April 1979 during a demonstration in Southall against a National Front meeting (probably hit on the head by a member of the Special Patrol Group (SPG), a specialist unit within the Metropolitan Police). Although major riots in the area date back to June 1976, after the racist murder of Gurdip Singh Chaggar, outside the offices of the IWA Indian Workers' Association, it is Peach's death that marked the era of Southall Riots and launched the rise of community-mixed social claims, leading the way to socialist, feminist and Brown&Black vindications (like the founders of SBS Southall Black Sisters recounted – see Gupta 2003). While we pant through the Saturday eve crowds,

3 B. R. Ambedkar (1891-1956), draftsman of the Indian Constitution in 1949, has since been recognised as the national leader of the anti-caste movement, which has accompanied the long haul of India towards and after Independence. Ambedkarite followers have been waging a mostly non-violent protest against the inequalities engrained in the caste system. Within this hierarchical organization of social difference, people belonging to certain birth-groups are ascribed a higher/lower status which denies many the right to freedom and equality while perpetuating severe discriminations.

4 Pic 2 Featherstone Road: terraced houses of worship. Source: Google Maps Street View, 16/7/19.

5 Pic 3 Southall Waterside under construction: seeing the dream, inhaling the drama. Source: the Author.

Ram recounts that another mass event has taken place two weeks earlier, commemorating Peach's mourning and reviving Southall's thirst for equality. Heading to my friend's dwelling, we literally step on the cobblestones where all these social leaders have been engraved, in a sort of walkable map of the neighbourhood's history. Ramadan is due to begin tomorrow, thus we have the last chance for a month to queue for a *naan* bread in the most glamourous bakery in town: the Naan shop is run by a family of Sikh Afghans who fled to London a generation earlier, and has since produced in store naan breads for both domestic customers and caterers. Though elated with the smell of fresh garlic naan, cheese and chilly as well as chocolate ones, we can't resist the bargain of 3 plain naans for £1: a yummy gift to shower Ram's inmate fellows at the 'holy hostel' where he stays.[6]

The plan is that tonight I will sneak in and sleep in Ram's room, since women are not formally allowed in the premise unless accompanied by their husbands. While he gets ready to set off for his night shift (though pursuing a programme in Arts&Design, to make ends meet as a *freshbie*, newly arrived immigrant, Ram got an informal job in a south Indian restaurant), we bump in Venerable Wissamalang, the monk there appointed. The senior *bhikkhus*, native of Sri Lanka but British national since the late 70s, has just returned from his yearly 4month trip across Asia, where he hopes to raise funds for training Buddhist nuns. Although Thero (lit. elder in Pali) is jolly and invites me to next night's contemplation practice, there is no way I can sleep over tonight. Diverted to another roof, I ring my friend Hansa who lives with her widow mother a few blocks away, in the Commons, along the Canal side. Thero raises concerns over my safety walking alone at night, thus entrusts a friend of his to pick me up and drive me to destination. Rakesh is an amiable middle aged engineer who has lived in Southall since childhood, once his parents, Indian natives there residents under Commonwealth treaties, were expelled from Tanzania following Independence. He dares inviting me for a drink and comfort food in the nearby Inn, i.e. ale beer locally brewed and piping hot fried *samosa*, a Brit-Asian blend that is the norm in any pubs down here, but I owe my hostesses an early night's sleep.[7]

Hansa's family home is a three-bedroomed flat on the second floor of a working-class condo, overlooking all the neighbours' rear gardens. A *guadhia* (vicinity) that my friend tries to snub, wary of rumours about her still spinsterhood at age 33. Past the door with a Parvati insignia, their house is spotless, with one spare room since her brother married to a *goora*, a white woman, and opted to move out. While my friend fixes the wifi, her mum serves me homespun *roti* with *chai* (bread and tea) in the sitting room, under the picture of her deceased husband who first moved there forty years ago from Gujrat. I sleep like a log, until Hansa comes in to gentle wake me up and take me for a Sunday stroll: the weather is unusually warm and bright, perfect to go down to the allotments in Bixley Fields (community gardens). On our path we traverse Southall Greens, cheering for kids who take turns in playing cricket and soccer. We pass along waste furniture illegally disposed, where discarded mattresses can't give relief to the hundred rough sleepers in the borough (despite the shelters provided by a new-born civic association, Hope for Southall Street Homeless). At every crossroad, veiled women and children go in one direction, turbaned males take another; some nod their heads, others simply pass by. Elders, youth and families alike are on their way to their places of worship; Gurdware, Churches, Mandirs and Masjids are almost stormed in for socialization on a blissful day off. There's not much to do in my friend's plot either: her green tending abilities dwindle since she has taken up a job at a make-up retailer.[8]

We manage to harvest cardamom crops and, locking the patch of land allotted to Hansa's family, we run into Baljit Pyaar, once chief of her passed away father. Pyaar is known as a lifelong leader in town, who, since retiring from his CEO post at a premiere transportation company, has devoted himself to

6 Pic 4 Marbled cobbles engraved with the founding moments and characters in Southall's history. Source: the Author.
7 Pic 5 A birdlike view from Hansa's home over the neighbours' rear gardens. Source: the Author.
8 Pic 6 Waste furniture illegally dumped along residential estates. Source: the Author.

collect all documents which trail blazed 'Panjabis of Southall', a book just published thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund. Memorable his saying when he fares us well and invites us to a screening of the homonymous movie in the Dominion Centre (the first Bollywood cinema in town): 'When South-all sneezed, the British Asian community caught a cold'. Hansa and I giggle, how much self-pride and community promotion is distributed via this film threaded with oral history materials? Not only urban ethnographers do recognise the tides of time at every yard (Katz 2010), Pyaar's project reveals that long-resident Southallians are well aware of how history is stamped onto their neighbourhood, and to have it effaced, now that new diversified immigrant flows are coming in, is an option they wish to defy. We head back in town, and although Hansa customarily attends the Shri Ram Mandir according to her hindu upbringing, she proposes to stop by at the main Sri Guru Granth Gurdwara: the Sikh *langar* (shared food) tastes nicer, she admits bluntly.[9]

Following Kusenbach (2003: 2), even though 'natural' go-alongs are ideally rooted in informants' everyday routines, "[they] are always 'contrived' social situations, which intentionally aim to capture the stream of perceptions, emotions and interpretations that informants usually keep to themselves". What kind of 'walk alongs' did my strolls with Ram and Hansa fulfil, during a long May Bank Holiday weekend when the rest of London rested under a drowsy spell, while Southall almost never respited? It took Gerd Baumann (1996) six years as a scholar in-residence to deliver his study of Southall as a multi-ethnic and yet single social field. Hanging out with Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims, Afro-Caribbe-an, Irish, and English, Baumann's main thrust was analysing how the terms culture and community were used. He described an alternate 'demotic' discourse among Southallians, where communities and their ascribed cultures are not necessarily equated as they are in the dominant discourse, bearing evidence of cross-community and cross-cultural activity. Since then, the multiculturalism backlash has borne a new idiom to interpret diversity and its everyday practice in a district which is classified for administrative purposes as BAME: Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic. While Baumann determined that the one ambiguous common trait was Southallians' description of their neighbourhood as 'grotty', no local informants of mine would give in to this satiric resignation. In the span of this article stretch barely two days of Southall beats; street phenomenology might pass in a blink, but its reflections take time to shine. Urban ethnography is done at a frantic pace in the field, but at desk raw notes and impromptu visuals magnify a researcher's endeavour. To me, Southall fabled ghetto keeps changing frames at any visit and with new closer informants. All my previous blogposts (Bonfanti, 2017, 2018a, 2018b) about the neighbourhood compose a prismatic portrait, my own home away from home within a research project on home&migration that I can't toss out of the airplane window taking off from Heathrow. The largest UK flying hub which Panjabis came in flocks to build and operate since the late 50's: easier to fly in and fly out when the right times might come. Very few ever went back to their homeland in the following decades: the railed enchantment of this neighbour-hood, with its many drawbacks and mounting criticalities (from racial-ist relations to health hazards, homelessness and illegal dealings) is the tag that almost all Southallians share, each with their story. Ram as an Indian immigrant resident who forecasts to overstay despite his temporary visa. Hansa as a 2nd generation Brit-Asian who would never leave the borough that has made her the independent woman she is proud to be. And I couldn't agree more.[10]

9 Pic 7 Panjabis of Southall: a promo of their Heritage Month 70 years on. Source: Courtesy of Panjabis of Southall project, 16/7/19.

10 Pic. 8 Landing and taking off (no more?) at Heathrow Airport. Source: Oli Scarff/Getty Images, 16/7/2019.

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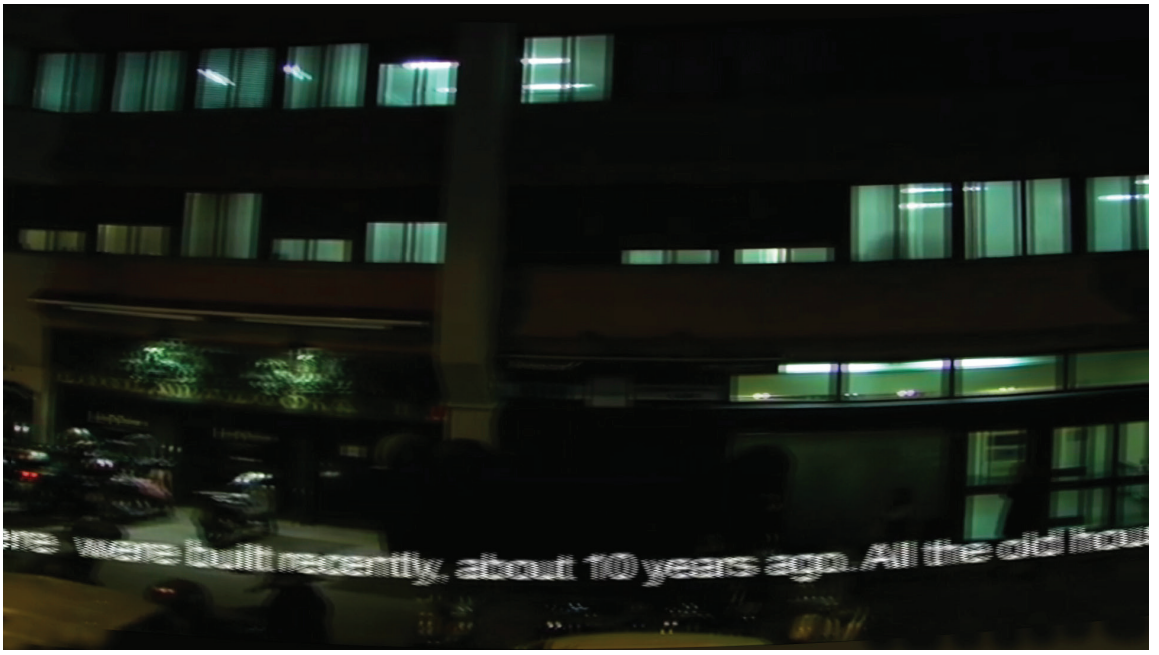
were built recently, about 10 years ago. All the old

A Hamra Crossroads

Particular Histories in the Historic Neighbourhood

Fuad Musallam

The Hamra neighbourhood of Lebanon's capital, Beirut, was, in the 1950s and 1960s, a key site of modern Arab cosmopolitanism and political experimentation, where literary avant-gardes intermingled with revolutionary political groupings. A central space of contention with the outbreak of civil war in 1975, in 1982 it was bombarded from the sea by Israeli forces to drive out the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, occupied by the Israeli Defence Forces, and the site of the first guerrilla actions that ultimately drove the IDF out of the city and back to the south of Lebanon. Post-civil war reconstruction and gentrification tore down many of its historic buildings. With the opening of cafes and bars through the 2000s and 2010s it became for many once again a site of 'diversity, progressive politics, and revelry' (Jadaliyya Reports 2011[1]).

But these aspects of Hamra's past and present are not necessarily apparent on a daily basis, particularly on many of the side streets up and down the neighbourhood. In particular, two intersections in Hamra's west appear, at first, relatively untouched by these events. Even here, though, the ordinary is at turns surprising and discomfiting and the day-to-day is always open to disruption. In what follows I give a sense of the atmosphere of these crossed streets in Hamra – their ordinariness, immediacies, temporal and embodied rhythms, as well as those moments that cut across the everyday. Intermittently peripheral and central to the wider neighbourhood's imaginaries, what takes place on these streets undercuts those imaginaries and, sometimes, brings into relief aspects of the neighbourhood's reality that fit far less well.

I have known a set of two intersections on Hamra's western side my whole life. Visiting family as a child in the early 1990s I would be woken at dawn by the sound of building works at the top of the road, as a new hotel complex went up facing away from us onto Hamra street, signalling in its promised luxury the end of the civil war by architectural fiat. Many businesses from that time are still here: a row of squat two-story houses, the owners running their businesses out of the bottom floors: parking lot, corner shop, vegetable stand, telephone and money-transfer serving migrant workers calling home. Down a side street, a butcher and *furn* (pastry oven) side-by-side, next to a dry cleaners. Further along the road another corner shop. Other businesses I became aware of later, or else opened in the years since: round the corner either side more fruit and vegetable sellers and a convenience store. There, too: a furniture and utensils store, two carpet stores, a sandwich bar, an electronics store turned pirate-DVD one-stop-shop, a coal furnace out the back of a residential building. All of these businesses are located in buildings either built in the 1950s and '60s, their six stories reflecting a maximum height on residential buildings put in place during the French mandate

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1 Jadaliyya Reports. 2011. "One Night in Hamra." August 4, 2011. http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/2305/one-night-in-hamra

period, or else increasingly ramshackle-looking two- or three-story homes from even earlier. Many of the shop owners live right here on this set of streets, have done so for decades, if not their whole lives, either owning property or else on 'old rent' (*ājār qadīm*) contracts, fixed at the end of the civil war. Coffee shops, hookah cafes, resto-pubs open on side streets up and down the main Hamra drag. They do well, sometimes move to larger premises. On these crossed streets they flounder. One space opens, closes, opens again, closes. For a year or so bright red neon signage advertises the current restaurant at an angle back up the road towards Hamra street itself to entice passers-by, at night so bright that my curtains can't keep the red from painting the room a strange hue. An art gallery has opened at the same time as an outlet store. An old six storey has been torn down, something much larger being erected in its place, contributing to the street's wireless internet being cut off for those of us unable to get it through a phone line. On the next street along a whole block came down in the early 2010s; in its stead now stand two monolithic black edifices, all sheen, angular and diagonal. Ostentatiously unlike the buildings in their vicinity, they are still mostly empty a few years after completion.

I have known a set of two intersections on Hamra's western side my whole life

During the day you hear the sounds that mark many small neighbourhoods in Beirut: mopeds and car traffic, air conditioning units in the summer and generators year-long for the three hours a day (sometimes more) that state electricity cuts off. Men shout to one another, kids play and scream, every so often someone sings a line or two of a song to themselves. In the distance the sound of honking horns from the main road. Twice a day you hear the rag-and-bone man call out for scrap metal, his practiced nasal twang cutting through all other noise to reach the highest floors. At night, you hear the WhatsApp alerts of the police officers who guard a person of interest's house. Every few nights at around 3am a joyrider does circuits, revving his car to its highest pitch before launching down the street. On weekends live Oriental music judders loose fittings from the hookah café near the top of the street. The officers and the café have gone, but the joyrider still comes by.

The times when the noises down below are not so normal, we flock out to our balconies and look. Like when the *nātūr*'s (building caretaker) daughter opposite got hit by a police car and was screaming in pain. The officer shouted that she was fine while demanding to know why she was playing in the road. Her father cried but couldn't show anger. A plain-clothes officer came up quickly on a moped, and took her and her father away. Or like when a female migrant worker was confronting the man who owns the photocopying shop. She screamed and hit him as her friend tried to take her away. He looked angry and affronted but didn't retaliate. Others came near but didn't interfere. She left, and things went back to normal. Or like when those two men none of us knew were fighting. The other men sitting in their chairs on the street only got up to separate them when their rising-inflection roars turned to kicks and punches.

Electricity and water cuts give a staccato rhythm to daily life – when to shower or do the laundry, when it's best to leave the house, when will the elevator be working. For some residents, a line comes in through a balcony window, enough electricity to power essentials, perhaps also a large battery to run the television. Others might have their own generator in their building's basement, if it has one. Tap water can't be drunk: many people have watercoolers, new bottles delivered weekly; or households send their domestic workers down to the corner shop every few days to lug back multiple 1x6L or 6x1L bottles. Even still, there is not enough tap water. When I first returned to Beirut in 2013 a handwritten cardboard sign from the building's *nātūr* would make weekly appearances, stuck with

blue tack at the elevator: '*mayy qalīle – rāh tiftah al-mayy sā`a 7*' (little water: the tap will open at 7). A few years later the sign is there almost daily. Homes that can afford it have water delivered by large tanker trucks. Ubiquitous as one further blockage on the street, their large hoses spooling up to lower balconies or else through to wherever the building's water tanks were placed decades ago.

Torrential rain this morning, the *nātūr* came up because water was coming in from above, but he saw the empty pots on the balcony and said he'd send Abu Hamed to come clear them when the electricity came back. I said I didn't recall Abu Hamed.

> 'He's always been here, you were small and probably don't remember. He's Palestinian, your grandfather really loved him. When your grandfather couldn't do it anymore Abu Hamed would bring the water up to the flat.'

I mentioned my idea of a history of the *hayy* (the quarter) and asked him if he thought people here would be interested in participating. He said it was a good idea and that they would, that this is an important place:

> 'Charles de Gaulle stayed in the building across from here during the mandate –'
>
> 'Oh, really?'
>
> '– and Abu Ammar stayed in our building during the war,[2] while the Israelis were attacking. He was always moving between different places in the area, and for a while this was one of them.'

I look at his hand, the missing third knuckles on a couple of fingers, whispers that it happened while he fought in the civil war.

A friend comes over one evening. At around nine we hear banging and shouting downstairs. A little after the friend goes to bring his partner to the house. I follow him a few minutes later, to find four of the policemen from around corner in our building's foyer, speaking into phones and walkie talkies, giving instructions, blocking the entrance. Two women and a man, migrant workers from the Indian subcontinent, are facing the wall, their heads hanging towards the ground. The man is having handcuffs put on him, the two women are already handcuffed to one another. The door next to the *nātūr*'s office, until now always closed, is wide open, and an older Lebanese man is sitting on the floor fiddling with the lock. Two other residents stand watching: a man in pyjamas and a woman with rust-brown hair. The *nātūr* is talking animatedly with a plainclothes officer. He is giving orders, telling the other policemen to take the three migrant workers outside, where they are put into an unmarked car. The *nātūr* gives the officer his phone number, making sure he gets it right. 'I am always in the office', he says, gesturing towards the now-open door. Outside perhaps a dozen people are watching at street level, more on the balconies.

As the migrant workers are put in the car my friend returns, and the *nātūr* gestures towards him, apologising profusely: '*sorry, ba`tizer!* The police were looking for Bangladeshis, for *haramiyye* (thieves)'. My friend, whose parents are both from India, tells me that one of the policemen had grabbed him and pointed a gun in his face. Apologising again, the *nātūr* continues: in the morning the police had raided the building behind ours for '*balā iqāme*', migrant workers without residency papers, seven men and four women. All had escaped except these three, who somehow got into the room next to his office. Seeing the police holding my friend he had gone over to explain that he knew someone in the building, to let him go. He apologised again. My friend smiled glassily and said '*mush mushkila*' (it's not a problem).

The descriptions of ordinary life on these crossed streets, its rhythms, sounds, movements, serve to show how life goes on in relatively unmarked ways. The *longue durée* of (not)change provides context for making sense of the ordinary. The vignettes, meanwhile, serve as a reminder that any site

2 This was Yasser Arafat's *nom de guerre*.

is always more than what is immediately apparent. Experience is always only partial and suggestive of more, and who sees, hears, speaks, and remembers matters: the person of the descriptions above shifted, depending on how (and through whom) one might access the site. One's experience of the neighbourhood, then, is both a product of its ordinariness, its immediacies, its temporal and embodied rhythms – its feel – as well as those moments that cut across the everyday: its what-might-have-beens, its what-could-still-bes, and its what-was-there-all-alongs.

Stop Pasolini

Excavating the social underbelly of a gentrifying neighbourhood in Rome

Nick Dines

Via Braccio da Montone cuts through the bottom end of a former *borghetto* (shantytown) in Pigneto, a district located to the immediate east of the historic centre of Rome.[1] Today this pavement-less thoroughfare is flanked by an assortment of reconditioned brick shacks set in private gardens and low-rise pre-war condominiums that open directly onto the street. At the intersection with Via Fanfulla da Lodi, protected by a canopy of shady trees, is the long-established neighbourhood bar now officially entitled "Necci dal [since] 1924". The preeminent venue in Pigneto's nightlife scene since a change in ownership and major refurbishment in 2007, Bar Necci's success over the last decade has prompted the opening of similar establishments in the immediate surrounding area.

A few metres along from Bar Necci it is possible to make out the words "Stop Pasolini" scrawled in dark grey letters near the foot of a three-storey block.[2] At first sight, this nondescript if cryptic piece of graffiti appears somewhat out of sync with the flamboyant murals, stencils and stickers that clamour for the public's attention on more prominent walls nearby and which have enabled Pigneto to take its place in the Italian capital's pantheon of street art. But the enigmatic plea starts to make sense if one considers that this part of the neighbourhood has manufactured its sophisticated ambience around none other than Pier Paolo Pasolini. In the late 1950s – as is now common knowledge – the Friulan poet and filmmaker started to frequent Necci during his peregrinations around Rome's rapidly expanding periphery, and the bar would later become a logistical base for the production of his first feature film Accattone, parts of which were shot on adjacent streets. Necci's current owners milk the bar's historic associations with various homages to Pasolini on the premises, including a vending machine that offers you a one-in-three chance of acquiring a pin badge with the bust of the great man himself. There are also numerous Pasolini-themed murals in the vicinity, such as Pier Paolo's giant black and white eye that gazes towards the original spot where the opening scene in Accattone was filmed.

Once a relentless critic of consumer capitalism and bourgeois conformism and hagiographer of the urban lumpenproletariat, Pasolini now finds himself implicated in neighbourhood 'renewal' and an accessory to the commodification of *Roma popolare*. "Stop Pasolini" would hence appear to be a comment on the direction that this particular corner of Pigneto has recently taken. The provenance and significance of the two words are open to interpretation. Perhaps it was an outburst of anger from someone connected to the anarchist centre across the street, which after years of lone resistance has found itself gradually hemmed in by swanky night spots. Or maybe it is an example of hipster

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1 This article is dedicated to the memory of Sandra Annunziata, one of the most astute writers on gentrification in Italy and someone who knew Pigneto well.

2 A picture taken by the Author can be seen here.

irony, daubed in jest like other epigrams dotted about the district such as "I ❤ Degrado" (I love urban blight) and "Rispettiamo solo il degrado" (We only respect blight).

Street art, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Bar Necci, refurbished informality and popular heritage together tell us much – but also very little – about Pigneto today. On the one hand, these elements provide mainly outsiders with the opportunity to embellish their enthusiastic portraits of a "trendy leftwing neighbourhood" (*The Guardian* 13/07/11) and "Rome's answer to Bushwick, Brooklyn" (*New York Times* 19/03/14), but they also represent the stigmata for caustic critiques about demographic change, the disappearance of local shops, and rent gaps. Either way, Pasolini and the other props get deployed to define what is at stake in Pigneto.

On the other hand, the same common denominators operate to ring-fence the physical, social and moral boundaries of the neighbourhood. Pigneto is here, but it is not there: it gets felt in quirky, tumbledown lanes like Via Braccio da Montone, but not among the eight-storey post-war residential blocks a few streets away. The selected tropes filter out the mundane, not readily perceptible and sometimes inconvenient pasts and presents: the numerous middle-class enclaves that have existed since Pigneto's inception that counter the image of a proletarian stronghold; the histories of rent hikes, dispossessions and campaigns for social housing that predate the area's recent changes; the voluntary relocation of many low-income residents to modern apartments in outlying suburbs during the 1970s and 1980s and the subsequent return of later generations to Pigneto as middle-class newcomers; the unscrupulous locals who rent out uninhabitable cellars to migrant families who are always first in line for eviction and who have little part to play in imaginaries of popular Rome; or the collective struggles to combat building speculation and to create new spaces of intercommunity sociality, such as the ex-Snia lake and park, which have seen the active participation of long-established and new residents alike.

Even graffiti has a far longer, ambiguous and contested tradition than either its lionizers or detractors would have us believe. For instance, a few hundred metres to the east of Bar Necci, emblazoned in thick black capital letters on the marble base of a 1960s lower-middle-class apartment block, is a mural that never features on street art lists. The words "MARIO VIVE" (Mario Lives) accompanied by a Celtic Cross commemorate the murder of a sixteen-year-old neofascist in 1975 outside what was once the local branch of the Italian Social Movement. After years of being intermittently defaced by political opponents, the mural was finally eliminated during a municipal decorum campaign in late 2017. Before it was restored two months later, a Fratelli d'Italia MP, Fabio Rampelli, wrote a public post to Virginia Raggi, accusing Rome's mayor of dishonouring the memory of "a whole popular district" and being accomplice to the continual desecration of the city's walls that were covered in "words in Arabic, the scrawls of mythomaniacs, coded messages from Satanic Sects, instructions left by nomads for breaking into apartments, and the usual threats aimed at the police". Both Rampelli's rant – in perfect tune with the hate-mongering hysteria that characterizes Italy's political Right – and the mural itself confound the lingering assertions that Pigneto, like neighbouring San Lorenzo, is united in anti-fascist values.

Such contradictions and irritating details are easily overlooked or denied. "Mario Vive? That's not Pigneto, that's Malatesta". As Pigneto becomes increasingly associated with gentrification in local, national and international imaginaries, both from celebratory and critical standpoints, ideas about the neighbourhood tend to get collapsed into a predetermined set of signifiers. This is not to deny that gentrification is very real in Pigneto or that it is not embroiled in instances of structural and symbolic violence. Rather, it is simply to point out that any attempt to understand a gentrifying neighbourhood will be wholly inadequate if the narrative approach clings to class and political identities that no longer exist or perhaps never existed in the first place.

"Ha ha! You live in the bo-ho neighbourhood!"

Since 2013 I have lived with my family on the southern edge of Pigneto. Although I had previously frequented Pigneto for its leisure and cultural facilities, it is primarily through the multiple social networks associated with my children's school that I have come to learn and appreciate certain neighbourhood dynamics. On the basis of this personal experience, here I want to start to outline some of the more prosaic dimensions that I believe have been largely missing from discussions about Pigneto and gentrification.

As Pigneto becomes increasingly associated with gentrification in local, national and international imaginaries, both from celebratory and critical standpoints, ideas about the neighbourhood tend to get collapsed into a predetermined set of signifiers

First of all, a brief (and very incomplete) summary of the social composition of the school is in order. The families can be divided into three broad 'residential' groups. About a third of parents are second- or third-generation *pignetari*. This low figure is perhaps not surprising if we consider that until recently Pigneto had one of the highest over-65 populations in Rome (Scandurra 2007), but it is also a vivid illustration of the extent of residential turnover during the last decade. Some of these 'natives' have actually returned to the neighbourhood after periods spent elsewhere, occasionally thanks to an apartment becoming available following the death of a relative. Around 20% of parents are of foreign origin, which is considerably lower than the proportion for other schools nearby. The total number, however, continually fluctuates, especially among the sizeable Bangladeshi community (see Pompeo 2011), as a result of changes in residence or onward migration as households strive for improved employment and living conditions.

The largest group of parents is made up of new Italian residents, some of whom have relocated from other districts in Rome but mainly originate from other parts of Italy. In the latter case, most people have either remained in the city following higher education or have moved to the capital for work, and have gravitated towards Pigneto due to the relatively cheap cost of housing, the proximity to city-centre workplaces and the attraction of the area's social and architectural diversity. Some of the non-Roman Italians work, like the 'natives', for municipal and government bodies, others are employed in cultural and entertainment industries or education and research institutions, while only a handful are in managerial or professional positions. A substantial proportion of the non-Roman Italian group, especially among women, are in insecure or temporary work and a few of those who own their apartments have rented rooms on Airbnb to make ends meet. While parents from all three groups form their own cliques, the interaction between and within them greatly depends on the friendships formed between children, but also on the intensity with which family members use local public spaces and amenities.

For the majority of the residents in question, the neighbourhood is a malleable space that stretches and contracts concertina-style as far as people's different networks and routines carry them. There is little interest among parents to partake in quibbles about the boundaries of 'Pigneto' and to indulge in its links with famous people. Bar Necci is rarely a destination of choice (it is too far from school, too busy and too full of non-locals), but its notoriety and location nevertheless make it a key coordinate in mental maps of the area, at least until some other place assumes greater collective significance, such as the nearby *campetto* (little football pitch). Over the last six years, street art has almost never been a topic of conversation, apart from the time a giant mural advertising an Italian Netflix series was painted on the side of a building opposite the school which initially aroused people's curiosity and triggered debates about its artistic merits, but after a few days it faded into the background.

Clichés about "cool Pigneto" commonly deployed by the media to promote or chastise the area hold

little meaning and are substituted by commonplaces about the richness of social relations and support networks afforded by the school. Those who possess friends in the neighbouring white-collar district of San Giovanni typically repeat the refrain that the situation on the other side of the railway tracks is instead one of isolation and boredom. The school functions as a marker of social and cultural distinction that differentiates native, migrant and new resident families from Pigneto's night-time users who clog the streets with traffic and patronize bars and restaurants that, for the most part, are rarely frequented by locals.

At the same time, most new residents are well aware of the transformation of both the school and the neighbourhood and how they are variously implicated, for instance, in the increased desirability of both. There is general respect for the knowledge and memories of people with roots in the neighbourhood, but there is no infatuation with the idea of the 'popular' both because some local figures are known to be reactionaries or bullies or both, but also because some 'native' parents are and have always been 'middle class'. The activities that revolve around the school – from the acts of solidarity among parents to self-organized campaigns in support of extending ius soli to migrant children; from football-related camaraderie to various forms of (inclusive and exclusive) cultural consumption – function as levers with which parents negotiate, counter, dissociate themselves but also compound the effects of gentrification in the local area, even if the term itself is almost never used.

Forget Pasolini?

Conflating the representation of a gentrifying neighbourhood with a figure of facile derision such as the hipster or insisting on ritual arguments that pit vulnerable natives against predatory incomers is not only reductive: it neglects the continually shifting dynamics of class composition and is oblivious to the everyday tensions and alliances that emerge between different residents and their divergent cultural, social and economic relationships with the neighbourhood. As Michaela Benson and Emma Jackson have recently argued, there is a need "to shift the conversation from the blunt and binary lens within which gentrification research seems to become repeatedly entrenched – the structural and economic determinism of Marxist approaches versus the cultural lens oriented towards human agency; the gentrifier versus the non-gentrifier; the new middle class versus the working class. These binaries serve little more than to reify identities and stagnate debate, while gentrification continues as a classed and classifying process full of contradiction and ambiguity" (2018, p.77). With a similar concern, "excavating the social underbelly" in the title of this article was not a call to search out some inner truth behind the veneer of street art or the rhetoric of popular Rome, but a more modest invitation to take gentrification's humdrum details and unintended consequences more seriously.

Pier Paolo Pasolini never lived in Pigneto but he ventured out to the neighbourhood from the city centre to meet with non-professional actors who, in turn, travelled in from peripheries further afield. It was in Pigneto where Pasolini first set out to select and aestheticize the constituents of popular Rome for the big screen. As such, Pasolini might be considered a precursor to gentrification rather than its antithesis. This is not to belittle the man's artistic production nor is to discount the commemoration of his persona on the streets of Pigneto, be this commercialized or otherwise. Instead, it is a reminder that the local nostalgia for Pasolini must be understood, first and foremost, as a particular (contested) discourse about place. Otherwise the filmmaker risks to become little more than a distraction that impedes our ability to craft a truly trenchant portrait of a neighbourhood undergoing major change.

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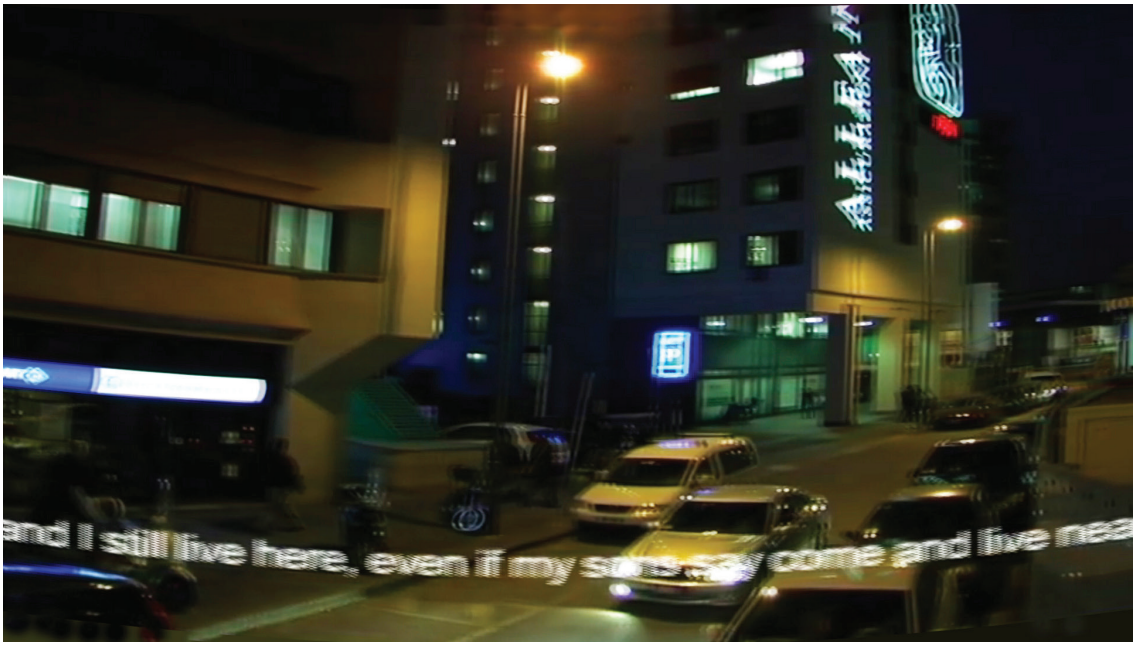
and I still live here, even if my s

Quarticciolo, the perfect dimension

Decay, coexistence and resistance in a roman ecosystem

Serena Olcuire

Quarticciolo[1] is often described as one of the most significant examples of the *borgate ufficiali*, the public housing settlements built by the Istituto Fascista Autonomo Case Popolari in the late 1930s in the Roman countryside[2] (Cianfarani and Porqueddu 2012). The Government Programme envisaged the *borgata* as the fulfillment of the new principles of urban health and the implementation of an urban model that responded to various socio-political needs: the solution of the housing crisis, the removal of shanty towns, the provision of public housing for internal migrants, and shelter for those populations displaced from the historic city centre[3].

The hard physical boundaries of Quarticciolo, delimited by major roads and, historically, the Fosso di Quarticciolo [a small canal], testify its deliberate mission to confine the hosted population. The masterplan aimed to create an autarkic microcosm (Cianfarani and Porqueddu 2012): the Casa del Fascio, the church, the square and the market are arranged so as to suggest the orderly spatial rhythm of a self-contained district. The architectural composition simulates building types from different historical periods, creating a fictitious historical coexistence (Cianfarani 2012), with an almost metaphysical effect. The political aim of this choice, however, was to encourage forcefully displaced populations to find new roots.

Today, Quarticciolo is an architecturally seductive neighbourhood that offers living space at a human scale. Its associated discomforts are those typical of the Italian low income periphery: the concentration of poverty, unemployment, a lack of transport connections to the rest of the city[4]. Policies and activities promoted by the public institutions are almost absent, with a few significant exceptions

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1 This contribution collects ideas gathered during an ethnographic observation carried out between 2017 and 2018, as a case study of my doctoral dissertation at Sapienza University of Rome.

2 "Autonomous Fascist Institute of Popular Houses", during the fascist period, the Italian entity promoting, building and managing public buildings to allocate housing to the lower income population. *Borgata* literally means "village", but in the city of Rome it indicates a suburban area, with a pejorative sense. Fascist regime reused the term in the expression *borgate ufficiali*, to indicate its 11 interventions of public housing. A *borgata ufficiale* has a very rigid structure and it is divided in smaller administrative parcels, the *lotti*.

3 Such as the *sventramenti*, the gutting style politics of urban planning implemented to remove some of the popular neighbourhoods from the city centre to make room for monumental interventions. The connection between the *sventramenti* and the corresponding displacement in the *borgate ufficiali* (see Cederna (1979) and Insolera (2011, orig. ed. 1962)) has been criticized by Villani (2012). However, it is important to take into account recent analyses of displacement, highlighting the difficulties of evaluating its dynamics. On this debate, and on the particular case of Rome, see Herzfeld (2009).

4 The average income of the Municipality V corresponds to 18,900 euros per year against, for example, 40,296 of the Municipality II (Source: Reddito individuale imponibile medio per municipio e cittadinanza nel 2014 a Roma. Dati del Rapporto Il reddito dei romani, Ragioneria Generale, I Direzione Sistemi informativi di pianificazione e controllo finanziario, U.O. Statistica). Employed population is at 10,416 out of an active population of 17,078 (Source: Census ISTAT 2011).

such as the Quarticciolo Theater-Library, which opened in 2007 but which fails to attract residents[5]. Progressive commercial desertification is another significant issue: following the closure of the local market (imposed by the public administration), the arrival of large-scale retailers just outside the neighbourhood gave the *coup de grâce* to local family-run trade. Meeting places have also been severely curtailed: for instance, the main square was the subject of a redevelopment project that kept it inaccessible for over twenty years until 2015. Overall, as the public institutions watch the neighbourhood from the outside, informal forms of livelihood fill the gaps from the inside.

Although Quarticciolo gives the impression of a complete and autonomous place (as originally intended by the Fascist regime), the neighbourhood obviously lives on a multitude of exchanges with the outside. The illegal economy, and particularly the drug market, is one such exchange: indeed, Quarticciolo is considered one of the major locations in Rome for heroin and cocaine dealing. This also creates some local redistribution effects. Fortunately, the void left by public governance is not only filled by illicit activities but also by self-organised bodies who seek to support the neighbourhood. For instance, the Casa del Fascio now hosts the occupied *centro sociale* Red Lab Quarticciolo and, on the upper floors, a housing squat.

Since 2014, Red Lab has managed to establish a degree of solidarity with the inhabitants of the neighbourhood. This dimension, almost pre-political in a sense, is grounded in daily mutualism in order to bridge the huge void of social policies left by the institutions: a dense set of actions, built on a dynamic, relational process that allows for the discovery of different situations and provides an overall image of the vulnerabilities and the resources of the neighbourhood itself.

Inspired by similar informal institutions in popular neighbourhoods worldwide, the Palestra Popolare del Quarticciolo, a grassroots gym promoted by Red Lab's member Manu', seeks to use boxing to strengthen social bonds among the youth. Boxing and *muay thai* martial arts make the gym a very *cool* place for the hundreds of local kids who gravitate around it. Neither the Red Lab nor the gym enjoy any formal recognition from the institutions. Despite their social importance and the array of social activites they organize, like many other informal bodies on which a large part of Roman welfare depends, these organisations receive no public support whatsoever (Vereni 2015, Cacciotti and Brignone 2018). Here in particular, it is ironic that Red Lab is situated directly in front of the official Theater-Library: the non-institutional and the institutional face each other on the same street, promoting distinct parallel models of education, culture and sociality that, however, hardly intersect.

The *favela* is a set of two squatted buildings, having been dubbed with this name in reference to both the dilapidated conditions and to the presence of many Brazilian transgender sex workers. In the framework of my doctoral research, I had the opportunity to frequent the *favela* for a few months and interview its inhabitants. My main objective was to investigate the particular form of collective living, and, in doing so, to reconstruct the dynamics of interpersonal relationships and highlight their nature of survival tactics. The situation in the *favela* is not just the result of the extreme needs of those who live there, but also the type of relationships that the dimension of the *borgata* allows to build. After all, every area of coexistence works as an ecosystem, as a delicate apparatus of relationships held in tension by an unstable, dynamic balance between the organisms that compose it and between them and their environment. The scale of the neighbourhood proposes a possible dimension to observe these relationships, their changes and what is produced by them. Quarticciolo, conceived as an autarkic microcosm, and the *favela*, in its character of a small enclave of illegality, are areas whose dimension makes the ecosystem even more readable.

Seen from the outside, the two buildings look quite run-down, but are certainly not abandoned: the

5 One of the employees of the library, during an interview, indicated that the service reaches only the 10% of the population of the neighbourhood.

entrance is studded with mailboxes, and the staircases are stacked with everything that does not fit in the flats. The interior of the flats interestingly contrasts with the external lack of maintenance: many of them are decorated with rich ornaments and refined details.

Most inhabitants are here due to a lack of alternatives, and are employed in precarious, low-skilled and underpaid jobs. The interviews with residents provided a glimpse of the local activities and expedients deployed to make ends meet. A particularly interesting example is that of P., a person with a physical disability, who uses her charity as an expedient to accumulate a minimum of income through the packaging and sale of food parcels: these are composed of expired foods she and her husband collect for free among bakeries and supermarkets of the area, purportedly for free distribution among the needy. In fact, parcels are sold for an albeit small price. The parcel mechanism is certainly a fraud; at the same time, however, it represents a double form of welfare: it supports those who provide the service, and distributes food at a bargain price to a group of people who do not have access to the services of charitable assistance, but for whom supermarket prices are inaccessible.

The ecosystem of the local neighbourhood allows for social outcasts to feel somehow at home

The ecosystem of the local neighbourhood also allows for social outcasts to feel somehow at home: transgender sex workers, for instance, badly tolerated elsewhere in Rome, here somehow find themselves settled among the other inhabitants. That does not mean that small, daily battles for coexistence do not occur: the equilibrium of the ecosystem is dynamic and the uses of space must be reasserted over time. Some describe the conflicts and quarrels that break out for a range of reasons, be it drunkenness, screaming at night, or improper attire. Rather than resorting to the police, however, such issues are solved through discussions, yelling, threats, and eventually agreements: this is probably because of the condition of shared illegality, which makes the top-down intervention of public authority an operation undesirable for everyone.

Certainly, while there is no open hostility, the *favela* remains a stigmatised building even in Quarticciolo. Most residents seem concerned with preserving the neighbourhood as a homely place, even if it is surrounded by illicit activities. So, the sex workers who work on viale Togliatti become a problem only if they cross the boundaries of the neighbourhood with their customers, stepping into the *lotti* to have intercourse. So long as boundaries are respected, prostitution on viale Togliatti is perceived practically as a job, to be tolerated as such. This tolerance, always bound to the respect of certain limits, is also expressed in the relationship with the "local" sex workers, those of the *favela*. Their presence is perfectly metabolised by the neighbourhood, and to have breakfast side-by-side a forty-five-year-old Brazilian transgender person in a low-necked top and with a hint of beard, does not disturb anyone. Despite this, the *favela* and its inhabitants are easily singled out as the origins of the decay experienced by the whole neighbourhood – by the same people who perhaps have breakfast next to them at the bar. The forced proximity reveals how sharing space with stigmatised social categories can entail a process of negotiation in a shared condition of marginality and, often, illegality: as all are occupants of public buildings, no one can claim in front of an institution a greater legitimacy over others. This extra-ordinary situation, where the rules imposed by "legality" do not hold, generates an oasis in which norms must be elaborated collectively: the *favela*, a place often represented from the outside as shameful and dangerous, turns out to be a singular laboratory of urban coexistence.

Popular neighbourhoods such as Quarticciolo raise questions about the role played by public institu-

tions. After all, the latter is mainly responsible for local 'decay': the lack of investment in education and training programmes, in employment and youth policies, and the lack of provision of basic social services take their toll. Criminal organisations substitute public institutions in providing residents with an income– even if obviously an illicit one. The inhabitants respond to precariousness by employing survival tactics such as squatting and engagement in the informal economy. Furthermore, the local ecosystem proves to be resilient and capable of fostering not only survival tactics, but also unprecedented and ever-changing relationships.

Ultimately, however, one must recognise that the lack of public governance leads to an increase in isolation and the risk of regression. Which policies and approaches could prove to be more fruitful? The work of Red Lab squat offers an example: a neighbourhood-wide action brought about through the fundamental daily work of weaving social relations – an approach that adopts mutualism and sharing as a means to foster the collective dimension. The Red Lab engages in a dialogue with illegality, being itself an illegal squat, but one which emphasises the difference between the criminal and harmful illegality of the drug market, on the one hand, and the fruitful and constituent illegality of self-organised spaces, on the other. Such action, rooted in the neighbourhood, provides a key that can perhaps be extended to other spaces characterised by "otherness", whether embodied in migrants or sex workers: spaces in which coexistence cannot be imposed or denied by force, but only built through relationships and around the fight against precariousness.

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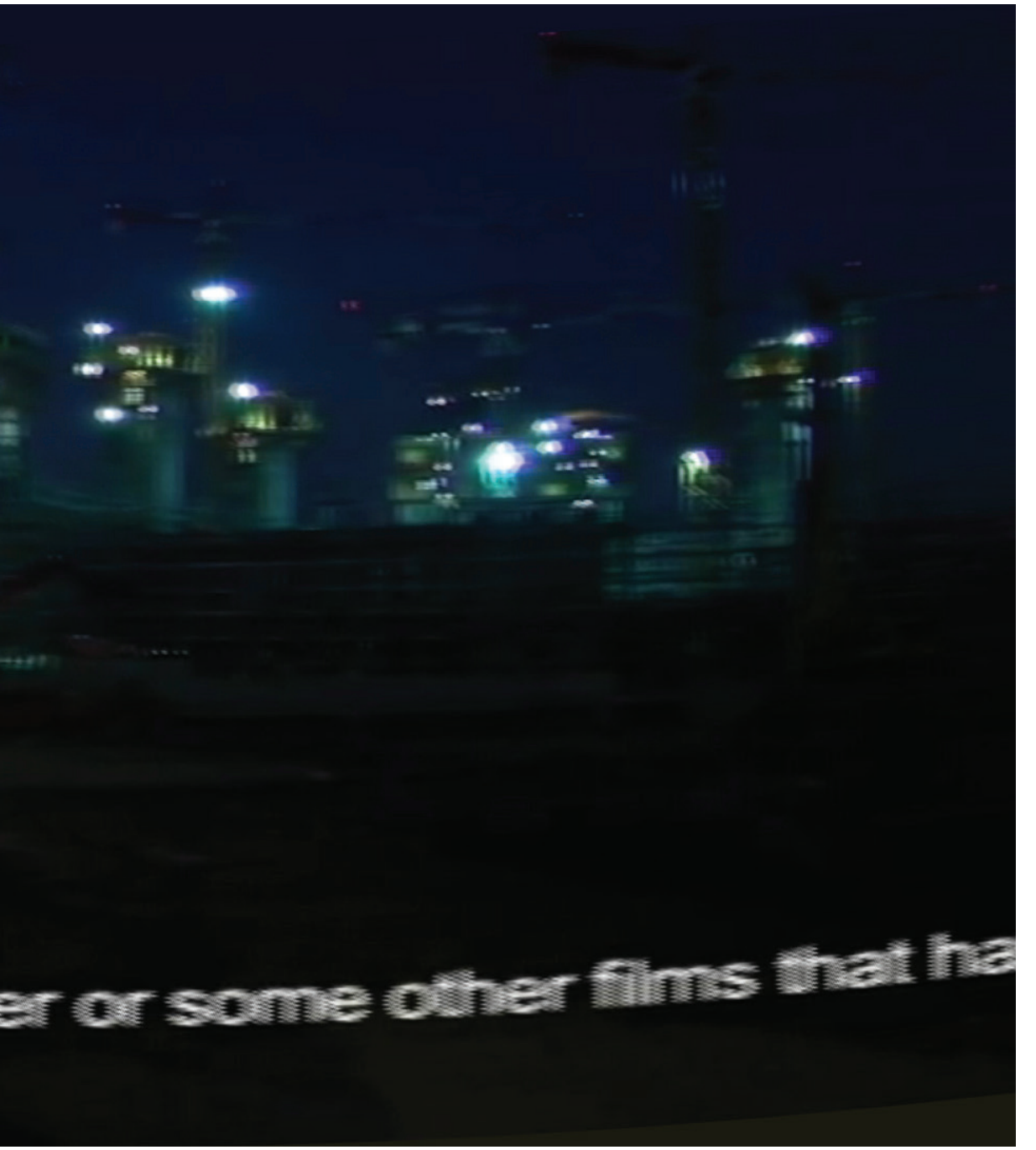
er or some other films that ha

"Isola, storico quartiere Milanese dotato di forte identità operaia, si è da sempre caratterizzata per un'intensa produzione artigianale e per la vivacità del suo tessuto associazionistico e sociale. Nel tempo, alcune parti dell'area si sono ri-attivate in modo spontaneo, come la storica fabbrica chiamata Stecca degli artigiani, parte del complesso Tecnomasio-Brown-Boveri, che è diventata negli anni, anche grazie alle associazioni OUT e IDA, il luogo più dinamico dell'arte contemporanea a Milano. Oggi questi spazi sono chiusi a causa di una radicale trasformazione urbana e di una speculazione edilizia subita dal quartiere contro cui gli abitanti del luogo hanno protestato attivamente, presentando numerosi ricorsi al TAR Lombardia.

Ho cercato di lavorare a questo progetto, riflettendo – come frequente prassi dei miei percorsi sugli spazi urbani – su uno dei quartieri più discussi riguardo al cambiamento imposto dai privati, limitandomi a non aggiungere altro a quanto esisteva già, ma intervenendo invece con elementi minimi che si trovavano sul luogo.

In questo caso ho agganciato la videocamera a una di quelle strutture girevoli utilizzate per la pubblicità, in modo da ritrarre a 360° il cantiere e gli edifici attorno in costruzione. Ho chiesto ad alcuni abitanti del quartiere di raccontare la loro esperienza riguardo alla mutante identità del loro spazio circostante.

Il movimento rotante della macchina crea un ipnotico effetto estraniante rispetto ai cambiamenti in corso che disorienta persino la narrazione realistica sulla storia del quartiere.

L'intento non era tanto di mostrare la mia ovvia posizione di denuncia, ma piuttosto di mostrare un punto di vista inusuale, diverso da quello abitudinario di una minacciosa "macchina" attiva giorno e notte che come un tritacarne aggredisce la quotidianità delle persone. Inoltre ho conservato così una testimonianza delle storie-interviste raccontate dalle persone che là sono cresciute."

360 Giri *è stato realizzato per la mostra di artisti italiani* We do it *al Kunstraum Lakeside, Klagenfurt Austria, curata da Marco Scotini.*

360 Giri, 2009 - Video DV

https://www.enzoumbaca.eu/

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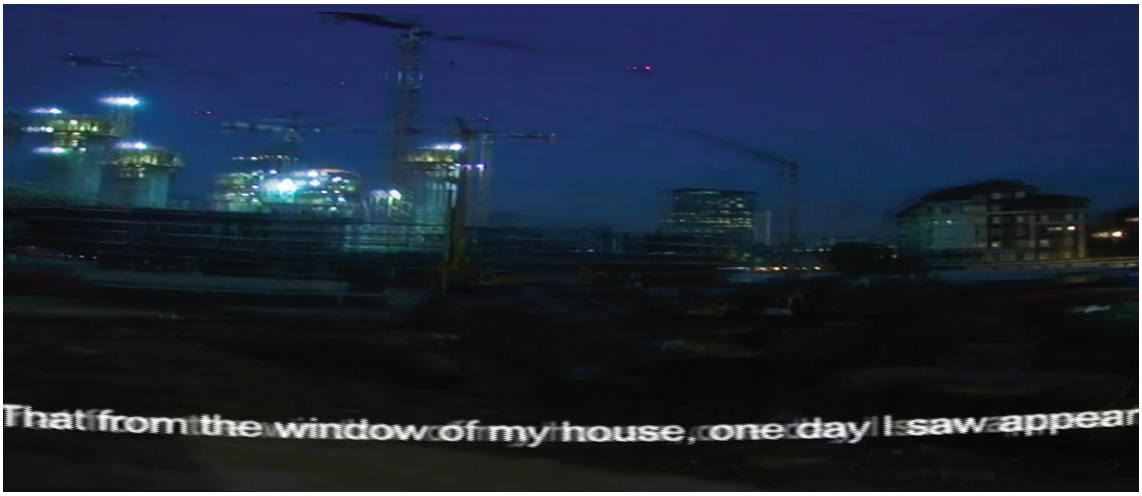
That from the window of my house, one day I saw appear

Tiny events

Tales of urban domesticity from Lingotto, a former working-class neighborhood in Turin

The Housing History Collective

Lingotto used to be perceived as a working-class neighborhood. It was, after all, the place where the iconic factory of the same name – one of the symbols of automobile production in Turin – was erected by Fiat between 1915 and 1926. But it was also one of the early-20th-century popular suburbs that developed out of Turin's excise gates. The place was often seen as antithetical to the central areas of the city, both in its physical appearance and social identity. In 1974, historian and political activist Giorgina Levi wrote *Il Lingotto. Storia di un quartiere operaio*, a book that contributed to establishing Lingotto as one of the working-class districts worth of historical attention. A few years later, however, the factory closed and the scholarly interest for the social identity of the place waned.

There is possibly no other area in Turin that has been affected by large-scale architectural projects as this narrow strip of land stretching southwards between the Po river and the railway. Name a major transformation of the 20th century, and you are quite likely to turn up here. *Italia 61*, the exhibition marking the centennial of Italy's unification, had its pavilions built in a large park facing the river. The city's major hospital, the Molinette, was built in the area in 1926-35, and there are presently ambitious plans to relocate hospitals in a different area of the neighborhood. The transformation of the Fiat factory after 1982 was itself arguably the single most relevant project of regeneration in post-industrial Turin. The 2006 Olympic games had most of their urban premises located in the vicinity. The year also marked the opening of the only metro line of the city, now being extended further south. All of these processes and objects are well documented by recent literature – not so the transformations of the neighborhood existing within and around them.

What follows is a collection of micro-stories taken from an ongoing investigation of the residential fabric of Lingotto: the ordinary landscape of tiny events that somehow represents the reverse of the great events that have affected the area for decades. The truth is, this is a puzzling place. It challenges community-oriented investigations, exposing a recent history of social and spatial fragmentation rather than integration. It also seems to defy widely accepted urban theories. One would expect the transformations having touched the neighborhood during the last thirty years to have triggered significant processes of gentrification, be it residential or commercial, but these are barely visible. Surely, there must be more hidden changes at work – or, are we observing a place characterized by a remarkable degree of stability despite being literally surrounded by neo-liberal turmoil?

Piazza Carducci: a persistent bakery

F.lli Piana's bakery has always been a reference for those living in Piazza Carducci, the wide and busy square that marks the access to the northern side of the district. In 1963, following the enlargement of Via Nizza, the bakery moved to the ground floor of a brand new, blue-colored building promoted

The Housing History Collective is an open research group coordinated by Filippo De Pieri (Politecnico di Torino) and Gaia Caramellino (Politecnico di Milano) and linked to the research and teaching activities of the Ph.D. program "Architecture. History and Project" of the Politecnico di Torino. The present paper was collectively written by Gaia Caramellino, Matheus Cartocci, Giorgia Cestaro, Filippo De Pieri, Matteo Gianotti, Elena Guidetti, Giulia La Delfa, Silvia Lanteri, Sasha Londono, Caterina Quaglio, Niccolò Suraci, Giulia Viale.

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by a local developer.

Every Tuesday afternoon, Ms. A. and her two friends sit around a small table of the bakery, chatting charmingly and sipping a macchiato. The quietness of the place shields them from the noise and traffic of the adjacent parking lot. Since the subway arrived in Piazza Carducci, many shops have been replaced, and the green playgrounds have been covered with wide ribbons of asphalt.

Since Ms. A. moved back to Turin with her family, at the end of the Second World War, she has always lived on the 9th floor of the building. The people who bought the apartments were not blue-collar workers of the Fiat factory, rather part of the local bourgeoisie attracted by the many job opportunities offered by the neighborhood. Shiny blue tiles and well-crafted windows were the distinctive elements of a new way of living.

The ordinary landscape of tiny events somehow represents the reverse of the great events that have affected the area for decades. The truth is, this is a puzzling place

On summer days, Ms. A. often sits with her grandson at the same table, waiting for his parents to pick him up after work. They used to live in an apartment close to Ms. A.'s, but recently sold it and moved closer to the city center. Plenty of offices have opened in Lingotto, but despite the years, if you walk by F.lli Piana's bakery, you can still spot through the window long-time residents chatting and drinking coffee.

IACP 8 and 22: public housing, with hospitals

Public housing and public hospitals are strictly intertwined in the northern part of the area, where two housing complexes built in the early 20th century by Iacp (Turin's agency for social housing) seem to undergo different trajectories.

The complex number 22 in via Biglieri (1938), pejoratively known as "the Bulgarian houses," bears the stigma attached to this kind of residential environment. Walking along the street, insulting graffiti can be seen on the walls of the buildings. Inhabitants are suspicious; they do not allow visitors shooting photos and do not even want to answer questions. However, a kind of lively energy is in the air.

At just five minutes' walk, Iacp complex n.8, built around 1911 in corso Spezia, is one of the oldest public housing schemes of the city. Its use and image have changed over the decades. One of the former vehicle gates is now occupied by a bar-pizzeria that offers a popular meeting point for both hospital users and residents. The owner of the pizzeria is a man from Southern Italy known as Ciccio, who shouts a lot and looks like knowing everyone around. Ciccio prepares an *espresso* and illustrates the many benefits of living in this part of the neighborhood, such as the location and the low house prices. The blocks are not occupied by the working class anymore, he stresses, but by doctors and nurses that represent the majority of the inhabitants. What will happen to them if impending plans for relocating the hospital area further south should be implemented?

Via Ventimiglia: a green oasis for the upper middle classes

Sitting at one of the tables of the historical bocciofila located at n. 63 of via Ventimiglia, in a peaceful environment protected by the foliage, one can hardly perceive the traffic of the street and the presence of the nine-story towers of the "Orsa Maggiore" residential complex that surrounds it.

Built in 1968, as part of an ambitious operation leading to the construction of an exclusive compound close to the site of Italia 61, the bocciofila, with its tennis fields, represents today a space of mediation between the fully fenced complex with private pool, and the rest of the district.

Advertised by the developer in 1966 as a "green oasis located in the most important core of modern

Turin," the compound faces the hills, the river, and the Valentino park, avoiding forms of interaction with the former working neighborhood. Expression of a time of unprecedented transformation of the area, guided by private initiative, the complex seems to preserve today its character of a gated community.

However, close observation of the spaces reveals significant changes in the DNA of the site. Groups of international students populate the complex, sharing the 6-to-8-bedroom apartments initially conceived for an emerging middle-class that aspired to settle in the new area, while an intermediate space like the bocciofila, a fragment of the original scheme, has lost its relations with the adjoining buildings, becoming part of a core of facilities for the district.

Piazza Giacomini: neogothic nostalgia

The *Castelletto* – the "little castle," as the local community calls it – is framed by the glazed door of *Caffetteria Sole*. The neogothic building (1927) stands out in the surrounding residential landscape because of its rich facade, made up of arches, columns, and pinnacles.

With some nostalgia, Mrs. L. remembers how different the neighborhood was. She first entered the building when her parents, who ran the bar before her, sent croissants for a newly married couple living there. Lodgings were tiny then, with a double bed, small tables, a couple of seats. Some had to share toilets outside.

Fifty years ago, Mr. P. on the fifth floor, Mr. B. on the fourth floor and Mr. C. on the first floor started to live in the Castelletto due to a common circumstance: they were all Fiat workers. They got married, bought an apartment, and eventually enlarged it. But new inhabitants recently arrived: young couples, doctors, students.

Mr. C. comes inside. He says everything is changing. Since the underground extension and the coming of shopping malls, this place was left in between, too far from metro stations to keep its own commercial and social vitality. Small shops closed, people changed their habits and daily geographies, everyday life slowly faded. Piazza Giacomini is also becoming different: while during the 1930s the neogothic façade of the building offered a perfect background to portrait new Fiat cars as society icons, now the opposite corner is getting all the attention, with recent renovation projects of the Fermi school complex trying to affirm a new idea of public space.

After his coffee, Mr. C. walks away: the nearby local market is shrinking, he says, but he doesn't want to lose his daily habit of going there.

Via Lavagna: taking care of cars

In the block facing the north-eastern corner of the former Lingotto factory lies Bellini's small auto electrician workshop. It is there since 1963, in a ground floor building that connects the historic part of the block (1903-1911) and the blue mosaic condominium overhanging the workshop, built in 1957.

The location was strategic because it overviewed a car park for Fiat employees. After every storm, Bellini was very busy trying to restart the dozens of cars that had remained still. All this part of the district was related to the factory: mechanical workshops, body shops, engine adjustments, canteens, and wineries, were all crowded in work-shift changes. They created a sort of ecosystem of dependencies and mutual support.

Today the workshop is run by Bellini's son. The parking lot is a public garden with a small tree-lined avenue and cars are hardly blocked by a thunderstorm. However, Bellini's activity continues to respond to calls from the nearby hospital district for extraordinary maintenance interventions. To the left of the workshop, where the canteen once stood, there is a bar. To the right, instead of the engine

adjustment, there is an architectural firm.

When the underground arrived at Lingotto, the main street became a fast traffic line serving the new services created in the former factory: a branch of the university (Politecnico), a large congress center, a music hall, an art museum, a shopping mall, a high-quality food store (Eataly). Nowadays, when passing in the shadow of the blue mosaic condominium, it is still possible to perceive the life of the block, made up of exchanges and a shared investment in taking care of the public space right in front of one's private.

Via Nizza: Fiat City and the shadow of modernity

In front of the Lingotto building, further south along the historic via Nizza, a residential area destined for factory workers took shape in the 1950s within the context of the Ina-Casa social housing program. Today, this Fiat residential complex lies quietly at the feet of the yet-to-be-completed Piedmont Region skyscraper – proudly declared the third tallest building in Italy – like a faithful photograph of old industrial Turin.

Closed by a continuous fence on all four sides, this superblock has hardly changed: the thirteen building units erected between 1949 and 1952 are almost identical. Even the inhabitants have not changed much: the first assignees, who obtained the keys in 1952, went on to redeem the apartments within two to three decades, becoming owners and thus consolidating the spatial presence of the two main original groups of Fiat workers: Venetians and Istrians.

Mr. C. spends some time to recollect his childhood memories, the geography of which seems to correspond precisely to the spaces he sees today. But he does with a certain pride point out of the window, towards the glittering silhouette of the Region's skyscraper, and claims that the neighborhood is about to change, and for the better. He doesn't mind the new afternoon shadow cast by the new building; indeed, he feels closer to the *ever-running* city, he says.

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The differentiation of the trivial
The bars in NoLo (Milan) as micro-publics in the age of urban super-diversification

Alessandro Coppola

In a context of booming housing costs, neighbourhoods traditionally inhabited by working and lower-class natives and immigrants are becoming primary destinations for an emerging, highly qualified and relatively younger middle-class, leading to significant – albeit possibly temporary – situations of spatially-bounded social mix.[1] As explained by the literature, such situations seldom lead to the establishment of truly heterogeneous social networks,[2] rather turning into a form of intensified juxtaposition of a variety of groups, practices and frames of action. One strategy to make sense of this situation is to focus on the evolution of certain micro-publics[3] in terms of the characteristics of their users, on one side, and their strategies of engagement, on the other.

This contribution looks at such publics as essential arenas for the production, reproduction and intensification of processes of social specialization and differentiation in neighbourhoods experiencing wider situations of change. Despite being a functional space that is fairly sensitive to changes in the demographics, social composition and discursive identities of neighbourhoods, bars have rarely been addressed by the literature. Particularly in Italy, they have played a historical relevant role as the social practice of "taking a coffee" is seen as one of the pillars of casual sociability and conviviality and is often associated to spatially-bounded, localised patterns of every-day life. However, and especially in reference to the cores of large metropolitan areas, such practice is experiencing a phase of deep re-definition and pluralisation as it is more frequently combined with the performance of other practices (working, engaging in structured activities, cultural consumption) within spaces that are becoming more complex and intentional in nature.

For the complexity and diversification of its social composition and urban lifestyles, Milan is arguably the city where such processes can be more distinctively observed and assessed. Under investigation is a highly diverse area located north-east of the centre close to Piazzale Loreto that, after having been a residential and commercial hub for successive waves of national and international migrations,[4] has more recently become attractive for the new middle-class. The foundation of a so-called "social street" initiative animated by new-comers associated to a re-branding of the neighbourhood; the

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opening of new recreational and cultural establishment, the organization of events related to the arts and design; and some beautification investments, are having significant impacts on both the image – with the rise of a discourse presenting it as a hype place – and the social realities of the neighbourhood.

The author engaged in a continuous practice of participative observation of six bars, three of which opened only recently, located both in the area where most signs of change are to be observed (the Piazza Morbegno and Via Venini area) and in an area (Via dei Transiti) closer to Via Padova, an area characterised by a strong presence of foreign immigrants, that has shown less significant signs of change. Based on observation, the paper addresses the social composition of the public involved, the functional nature of the places, the relational style of the management and, finally, the communication identity associated to the establishments. While the characteristics of the establishments and their users seem to be distributed along a sort of incremental continuum, we will focus on the two poles of such continuum by defining them as the "old" and the "new", as a reference to both the establishments themselves and the populations that use them.

These highly gendered bands of retired natives and supposedly long-standing residents truly are the rulers of the place

The parallel, mutating worlds of bars in changing neighbourhoods

The so-called "bar dei cinesi" (bars managed by members of the Chinese community) convincingly represent one pole of our spectrum. To this pole essentially belong working class-bars, in the sense that a multi-faceted aesthetics of working-class people and the related ways of sociability are the dominant tone here. Being working-class also means they are by far the most diverse bars in the area in terms of the national background and citizenship status of the patrons. However diverse they are, groups of elderly peers play an absolutely central role in such environments: these highly gendered bands of retired natives and supposedly long-standing residents truly are the rulers of the place. Such groups are loose because they are based on the elective decision of members to actually go to the bar at a certain time and to join a certain table where other peers are sitting. But they are also close-knit because the repetition of this practice of "joining" builds very deep conversational identities and routines among the participants that tend to involve, in a binding relationship, the managers as well. Of course, as said, they are not the only relevant group, as groups of male and female native and non-native co-workers, caretakers of the retired, more lonely elderly, native grandparents with kids, and youth belonging to some national communities (mostly South Asians and Pacific Latin Americans) also join and spend time here. In a lesser number, members of the more recent younger and more professional populations also make an appearance here, following an increasingly visible filtering-up pattern that, especially during evening hours, involve traditional establishments that are closer to the new-ones.

The new establishments – bars located in Piazza Morbegno and immediately north of it – are the realms of a younger crowd approximately between their 30s and 50s, overwhelmingly native and with a significant incidence of individuals coming from other areas of Italy, with higher cultural capital and a more distinctively "new" urban lifestyle. Here a logic of social and functional specialisation seems to set the tone of the places, even if in different degrees. Besides food and beverages, such establishments offer a variably sophisticated set of events of different kinds – performances, talks, even counselling on social services – and act as spatial platforms for the reproduction of certain com-

munities of practice such as elderly women practising knitting, self-employed doing smart-working, kids participating to organised activities.

Of course, casual individual attendance is present here as well but, differently from the "old" establishments, these peculiar organisational patterns are what critically contributes to the making of the local identity of these places. Although at times they can be quite small and unsuitable for organising events, as it has been recognised is at least one specific case, the drive to be not "just a bar", by engaging in the organisation of "events" and being a "community", is so strong to overcome evident spatial limitations. Furthermore, some of the new establishments clearly perform and proudly expose their function as hubs for the new forms of neighbourhood activism promoted by the social street – e.g. meetings of the neighbourhood radio, or of groups advocating for pedestrianisation and tactical urbanism initiatives –, something that puts these places on the map of a new community identity and discourse based on ideas of conviviality and collaboration. At another level, such spaces act as spatial platforms both for individual, casual work and for the production of mobile and face-to-face opportunities for project-making among people who are differently involved in the valorisation of the neighbourhood as a place for the arts, creativity and social innovation.

A strong indicator of this more articulated profile, and of the position of the establishments along our spectrum, is the level of engagement in building a communication identity, if not a branding strategy. The "Chinese bars" do not have social network accounts nor web-pages, and even if they had them, there would be little to communicate, while just a portion of their public would be able to access this information. Instead, all new establishments have regularly updated social network pages mostly presenting events variably packaged in storytelling strategies that often revolve around representations of the intimate, affectionate atmosphere that would bind owners, managers and the public. If there is significant variation in how communication strategies are built, deep differences can be expected also in reference to the semiotics of the places themselves. The "Chinese bars" are the result of fairly limited capital investment with the apparent recycling of the furniture put in place by the previous, most probably native, managers associated with a rather un-designed, incremental decorative activity mostly resulting in the juxtaposition of disparate pieces – calendars, plants, little frames, elements of Chinese decoration such as mandarin trees and money pigs – clearly aimed at making the place "nice" in the absence of a plan. Differently, most new establishments have designed environments – even if always characterised by a fairly minimalist, low-cost aesthetics – associated with a strong effort in terms of visual communication, especially the kind that ostensibly aims at building a playful, ironical but intimate sense of community (actually one of the establishments, the one hosting the most sophisticated set of activities, is called HUG).

Finally, strongly related to the communication strategies is the capital dimension of the different managers' relational styles that powerfully contribute to the shaping of the public of each establishment, mostly through the setting of informal rules of entry and expectations of engagement. In the "Chinese bars", the atmosphere of warm courtesy involving the very diverse community of users turns into more conversational and routine intimacy only with respect to a sub-section of the users, mostly members of the groups of elderly peers. Differently, in the new establishments, there is a clearer, assertive performance of a register of both intimacy and belonging. Participants are invited to be part of a "community" and to enjoy the pleasure of a daily, place-bounded human experience of conviviality and exchange. Here, deeper conversations regarding personal and professional life, as well as the neighbourhood in general, take place, in a more distinctively ironical register, also as a consequence of the higher social and cultural homogeneity among the managers and the patrons. In one occurrence, that unequivocally represents such intimate connection, the owner resorts to family-like titles to define and engage both in-person and on the web with the community of potential and actual users.

Conclusions: spaces of (benign) indifference and spaces of election

With this contribution, we have intended to show how a focus on a specific functional space or micro-public can open a relevant perspective over processes of neighbourhood change. Beyond assessing how such micro-publics contribute or not to the bridging of social, cultural and ethnical diversity, such approach allows for exploring more in-depth how processes of social super-diversification are associated to the redefinition and pluralisation of traditional functions in a context of spatial proximity; and how such pluralisation contributes to the locally-bounded reproduction of social groups, environments and perceptions of difference and distance among these groups and environments.

Under certain conditions of wider neighbourhood change, the opening of a true gulf between entrenched and emerging understandings and practices of functional spaces as trivial as the "bar" can be observed. Such situations – that may be just temporary, processes of change were to continue and generalise – are indisputably a source of interest and fascination for the urban researcher, who has the opportunity to access a rich texture of rapidly differentiating behaviours, discourses and strategies in the context of a fairly contained spatiality.

In the case observed, while the new establishments are distinctively although differently involved in the pro-active and reflexive performance of a "new urbanity" made of "communities" where "events" take place and a range of self-organized groups can gather in order to perform activities that are essential to their existence as a group, the "old establishments" seem to act more as traditional urban public spaces where a fair degree of indifference, if not invisibility, can be expected. If all bars share some common abilities, in particular that of being essential platforms for the development of place-bounded forms of sociability – bounded, insofar as not only depending on a specific place, but also because often they do not continue outside of that place – they do so in increasingly diverging ways.

Diversification and divergence become, in this perspective, the essential language of neighbourhood life with social groups getting reshuffled and recombined in reference to how do they relate to the structuring of a complex field of "old" and "new" establishments. At the same time, these "old" and "new" establishments differentiate based on how they perform against some essential criteria of performativity of ties, practices and discourses that structure the life of the neighbourhood. It is within this framework that we can observe and make sense of a wealth of situations ranging from emerging forms of every day, casual and light, urban cosmopolitanism, based on a sort of individual and collective co-existence through indifference; and of urban neo-communitarianism based on a sort of elective if not selective belonging.

Urbanism from within
An oblique gaze on Lavapiés

Lucia Baima
Angelo Caccese

In 2018, to celebrate its 50th anniversary, the magazine *Time Out* set out to identify the 50 coolest areas of the most vibrant cities in the world. The first place went to Embajadores, in Madrid, the world's most intense neighbourhood according this ranking. Such intensity seems to mirror the highest Airbnb supply of the city. According to data, the short-term rentals platform has taken on a significant share of rentals, reporting a 43% increase in the number of announcements between 2017 and 2018. With 18,045 listings and around 60,000 beds, Airbnb is by far the most popular online platform among Madrid tourists. This data is even more relevant if we focus on Embajadores, where the number of listings (2,632) is the highest in the city, with equally significant growth (+54%) between 2017 and 2018.[1] Based on these initial considerations, Airbnb becomes the lens through which to take a perspective point of view that allows us to explore and outline the multiple and intrinsic processes that describe the dynamic component of the urban space, from the macro to the micro scale.

Recognized in the collective imaginary under the name of Lavapiés, the neighbourhood is perceived as the place where the *"authentic"* Madrid can be found. Authenticity appears to be closely related to the stratification of the socio-spatial practices that have characterized its history. Considering the last 40 years, the neighbourhood comes out as an outpost of intensive-subversive practices, now condensed into a more complex ecosystem. Quickly retracing its recent history, it can be said that the 1980s were years of abandonment, due to the poor condition of the housing, combined with the presence of the so-called *infravivienda*[2]. Such conditions, coupled with affordable rents, became encouraging aspects for the establishment of large immigrant communities, that perceived Lavapiés as a solid settlement where to root. This process has created a mix of transnational immigrants and elderly inhabitants – an heterogeneous but fragile social framework.

Despite its central location, the neighbourhood remained marginal and blighted. The stigma began to fade when, starting in 1997, the City Hall promoted a series of plans aimed at revitalizing the historic center of Madrid and renewing the housing stock (PGOUM 1997). However, results were mixed, and the substandard housing conditions – concentrated at a higher proportion in Embajadores – has been eradicated only in small part. On the contrary, the rehabilitation of public space and neighbourhood infrastructures has encouraged the rise of a new urban image (Pérez Quintana, 2010). Since then Lavapiés has become appealing to otherwise groups such as the feminist movement, the LGBT community, and so on.

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1 Open data source: www.insideairbnb.com. The data are updated as of 10 October 2018.
2 The building, or part of it, intended for dwelling, which not meeting the minimum habitable requirements is called in Spanish, *Infravivienda*.

The city wanted to imagine Lavapiés as an area dedicated to culture and creativity (García Pérez, 2014). The rising cultural legacy, mixed with the reputation of cheap and alternative neighbourhood, ushered in large groups of young professionals. The multicultural quality of the neighbourhood was then perceived as an added value in cultural terms (Sequera, 2014). It is at this point that the first hints of gentrification make their way into Lavapiés. A different perception of the neighbourhood emerges, in which immigration becomes multiculturalism, urban decay turns into street art, and the porous urban fabric is redefined by Airbnb apartments in which to enjoy an "authentic" experience of Madrid life.

Today, Lavapiés' past is intertwined with the increasingly complex dynamics of the present. A present that identifies itself with a kind of society, which, as already widely illustrated by Richard Sennett, is built on flexibility, mobility, risk, uncertainty – the new qualities that mark the life of the contemporary subject (Sennett, 1999; Sennett, 2018). Describing Lavapiés through Airbnb allows us to take on an intrinsic point of view that embodies its intensity – the third dimension of density, the dynamic and perceived one, which tells the experience of the urban time. Airbnb, unlike other sharing economy platforms that mostly involve the social and economic sphere of users (Botsman, Rogers, 2010), seems to be able to produce embedded and profound alterations in the very structure of the physical space in which it operates. Airbnb steps into Lavapiés as an additional layer that brings with it a new population, this time not permanent, but floating. So, the urban tourist is no longer just a passive observer of scenarios, but an individual who seeks to participate in the life of the neighbourhood, producing the city *day by day*, together with the residents who already develop their socio-spatial practices (Arias-Sans, 2018). The neighbourhood is thus projected into a glocal perspective: on the one hand, it responds to the needs of a global consumer, the tourist, on the other, it experiences localized consumption (Gotham, 2005). This process has prompted local businesses to move towards a global demand that could jeopardise them (Sorando, Ardura, 2016).

At this point, Lavapiés is not exempt from becoming a scenario of divergence between the daily social-spatial practices of the neighbourhood, and the macro-speculative practices that seem to have found fertile ground. The latter, thanks also to the legislative limbo in which Airbnb operates, seem to have identified the clear profitability of the short-term rentals and the potential of domestic space. Following the trend of the city real estate market, Airbnb likely represents one of the causes in the increase in rental prices[3]. This also subtracts houses from the traditional rental market (Sequera, Gil, 2018) and creates frictions between permanent inhabitants and the logic of the short rental market.

By adopting a zoom-in to the intermediate scale – that of the block – a new way of collective dwelling is emerging, in which the Airbnb user becomes an additional variable within the multifaceted ecosystem, already long stratified by intensive inhabiting. This trend is even more evident within the traditional housing typology of the neighbourhood, the so-called *Corrala*. Its specific conformation – rich in common parts such as the courtyard and the gallery – makes these in-between spaces experience a continuous socio-spatial reconfiguration for different and uncommon uses, thus becoming an extension of the Airbnb apartment. This way, it is possible to outline a rhythmic elasticity of the public/private thresholds, creating blurred semi-public and semi-private spheres. The spatial dimension intersects with the social dimension of dwelling, creating conditions of coexistence that can generate either friction or mutual adaptation.

Such mutual adaptation is more evident if we zoom in onto the domestic scale. This perspective can help measuring the physical impact of Airbnb. The change triggered by this platform becomes, in

3 With reference to the data, it can be observed that in the city, rental prices rose in 2018 by 7.8% compared to the previous year, and by 39.1% compared to 2014. Source: "El precio medio de los alquileres en Madrid sube un 7,8% en el último año". *El País*, April 2018.

fact, the means by which one rethinks the concept of *home* – with its immaterial essence – now *transformed into a financial commodity measured in square meters* (Grima, Bagnato, Shafrir, 2014). An awareness of the economic power generated by every single square metre, which also extends beyond the single dwelling. Indeed, the practice of transforming ateliers and art galleries into temporarily tourist accommodations is rising.

Once again, it is precisely in Lavapiés, within its porous urban fabric, that the effects of this transformation are concentrated, intensifying the use of domestic space and substandard housing units. The latter – usually less than 20 square metres – are densified and optimized in order to accommodate more people, thus generating additional profit margin. It is thanks to the use of minimal domestic devices – sofa beds, retractable beds, partitions, curtains, hatches, mezzanines or micro-structures like a box in a box – that the domestic space is rethought in its potential, namely as a space to be redefined in its use, or more uses, over time.

Describing Lavapiés through Airbnb allows us to take on an intrinsic point of view that embodies its intensity

Investigating the Airbnb phenomenon has enabled us to adopt an oblique gaze (De Certeau, 1980), which not only allows to read the space of the neighbourhood, but also to explore it, detecting its thickness. Space is crossed by social micro-processes that widely and constantly transform and hybridize it. This transversal gaze goes beyond the apparent bi-dimensional homogeneity, bringing to the foreground a three-dimensional narration. This is reminiscent of the animated section made by George Perec in *Life: A User's Manual* – as a slice of life – that makes it possible to explore and investigate the rhythmic routine actions produced within the city's rooms. The effects of the invisible space of electronic flows and algorithms – which are at the basis of the Airbnb platform – and their power to shift the balance between the different thresholds without giving an apparent material consistency, are made tangible.

The cross-section that emerges is marked out by a sequence of actions which, acting three-dimensionally on space, transform the private dimension of the home into *domestic urbanism* (Upmeyer 2016). In response to the elastic reconfiguration of private space – triggered by the forces examined above – comes a temporary dwelling, from which emerges a widespread tendency to externalize purely domestic activities outside the perimeter of the home, partly merging them with the neighbourhood or the city. As Aldo Van Eyck (1962) put it, "a house must be like a small city if it's to be a real house, a city like a large house if it's to be a real city". A condition of reciprocal exchange, of constant redefinition of the limits between the private sphere of inhabiting that opens up to the public dimension of the city, showing a new existential narrative. In such a way, the two spheres seem to merge: the domestic interior becomes the city, perhaps the neighbourhood itself, and vice versa, generating an *urbanism from within* (Bhatia, Roach, 2016).

The urban space must be thought as a complex assemblage (Deleuze, Guattari, 1980; De Landa, 2005), made of interchangeable tiles that determine an incessant sequence of temporary equilibriums. A process-oriented interpretation invites to adopt conceptual tools to look through the physical dimension of space, rethinking space as a proactive platform where actions, practices, and processes outline trajectories that intensify relations and experiences in space-time. Such tools must enable us to interpret practices, actions and directions – in other words, "the networks of these moving, intersecting writings compose a manifold story that has neither author nor spectator, shaped out of fragments of trajectories and alternations of spaces" (De Certeau, 1984[1980], 93). From the intersections of the city's folds – the *striated space* – emerges the *smooth space* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980)

of continuous variations, of incessant change within the very fabric of the city. This kinetic dimension emphasizes how much the urban space and each neighbourhood are the "perpetual oeuvre of the inhabitants, themselves mobile and mobilized for and by this oeuvre" (Lefebvre, 1996, 173).

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Imagining the future of Vallcarca
An ethnography of urban materials and their politics

Plácido Muñoz Morán

Introduction

My first encounter with the neighbourhood of Vallcarca was connected to my PhD research on graffiti and the use of public space in Barcelona. As part of my fieldwork in 2013, I began to collect data linked to a Barcelona's council project called *Pla Buits* (empty plants).[1] Through this initiative, the council of the city opened a public contest to offer empty building sites to local collectives and citizen associations. The project tackled some of the effects of the financial crisis of 2008: on the one hand, it made available the many empty building sites that existed in the city after the crisis; on the other hand, it promoted collaborations between formal and informal ways of making politics and understanding the public. However, some neighbourhoods in the city rejected being part of the project. Those were not neighbourhoods without the will for self-managing projects, but on the contrary, they were places where inhabitants were particularly engaged with the environment, creating community projects without the consent or participation of the Council.

Located in the north of Barcelona, between two hills, Putget and El Coll, Vallcarca was one of the neighbourhoods that refused to collaborate with the council of the city. This area of the city has been immersed in a process of urban struggle and mobilization since the beginning of 2000, when an urban renewal plan was approved without consultation of inhabitants. The plan had been preceded by a period of institutional neglect and speculative practices, which ended in many forcible evictions. Then, squatter collectives started to move into the empty buildings of the neighbourhood. Although the relations between squatters and long-term inhabitants were not always friendly, both groups were concerned with the neighbourhood.

Meanwhile, the urban renewal led by the council continued with building demolitions and plans for the construction of new flats – unaffordable for most inhabitants of the neighbourhood. The financial crisis of 2008 slowed down this process, leaving behind a material environment marked by empty building sites waiting for a better time. Various self-managed projects emerged, which transformed the empty building sites through urban agriculture, art projects and sustainable architectural interventions. But, how do the material elements of the neighbourhood participate in these political and transformative processes in Vallcarca? Can we consider the empty buildings sites or the material surfaces as agents in these processes?

Here, I am exploring how the material properties of Vallcarca are influencing the participation in politics of its inhabitants. To that aim, I have engaged in a dialogic ethnography with residents. The use of dialogic strategies in ethnographic research is based not only on learning about how people

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1 See https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/ecologiaurbana/ca/pla-buits

communicate through verbal language, but also on taking into account non-verbal ways of communication. I advocate a methodology inspired by visual anthropology to engage in collaborative and creative practices using audio-visual media. My research has involved the participation in ephemeral and micro architectural interventions in empty building sites, participation in local assemblies, as well as collaboration in murals and graffiti painting.

Graffiti and Mass Tourism

To make my approach more tangible, I consider the tension between mass tourism and the inhabitants of Barcelona. In my work, I argue that processes of urban transformation and the use of public space are contested arenas of individual and collective action in connection with different experiences of the city. In Barcelona, there is tension between, on the one hand, a city imagined and materialized by politicians, urban planners and other actors linked to the tourist industry, and on the other hand, a city experienced by the majority of its permanents inhabitants within their everyday life. The latter have expressed and visualized this tension through different means, graffiti being one of them. Graffiti such as "Tourist go home" or "Good for the tourist, bad for the neighbours" keep appearing in different areas of Barcelona. Locations are not chosen randomly, but are linked to the areas of the city most visited by tourists. Once painted, graffiti may live a life of their own and interact in multiple ways with tourists and inhabitants. In my research, I am interested the life of material and visual elements.

Vallcarca was one of the neighbourhoods that refused to collaborate with the council of the city

Many of the graffiti that target tourists in Barcelona are visible on the walls of the neighbourhood of Vallcarca. Every day, tourists get off in Vallcarca's underground station to walk toward Gaudi's Park Guell, one the most visited attractions of the city. Graffiti get in the middle of their path, questioning their role as tourists in the neighbourhood. What reactions do they elicit? Do tourist feel unwelcome, or do they just laugh and take a picture of it? John Urry (1990) states in his landmark work about mass tourism that: "The gaze is constructed through signs, and tourism involves the collection of signs". I am sure that these graffiti have ended up as signs of tourists' collections in Barcelona, but I also think that they do not only tackle tourists, being part of other processes and relations in the city.

Material agents within transformative processes

The rise of graffiti and street in Barcelona during the 1990s coincided with urban renewal of downtown neighbourhoods such as El Raval. At that time, the surfaces of abandoned buildings and empty buildings sites were taken over by graffiti. The possibilities of the space alongside the permissive approach of the local authorities at the time, allowed graffiti artists to develop their artistic and muralist techniques. At the same time, the existence of their works in the public space of the city created a graffiti scene in Barcelona, and opened debates about the aesthetics and politics of public space in the city.

Graffiti artists highlighted the properties and histories of the material surfaces on which they painted as sources of inspiration and active entities in their creative process. Similarly, I am approaching the material environment of Vallcarca as a transformative force which vitalizes political and social relations in the neighbourhood. According to Ingold (2013), the properties of materials are not attributes, but histories on their way to becoming something else. I am exploring how Vallcarca is made by the engagement of its inhabitants with its materials properties producing stories linked to the possibilities of the present and future of the neighbourhood.

The material properties of the city, therefore, can shape the imagination and experiences of its inhabitants. In this sense, graffiti pieces are not only isolated material elements but also part of the surface of the city or what I called in my work the "graffiti texture". This texture is a mutable surface which stimulates mind, body and senses mediating between different ways of seeing and living the city. Drawing on Rancière's (2004) work, my understanding of aesthetics is not only based on perceptive qualities but also on production of places and performances within sensory orders. According to Rancière, it is in the disruption of dominant sensible orders that politics is made. The anti-tourist graffiti described in this article, could be understood as subversive forms of the dominant sensible order. Using the public space of the city, they communicate a very specific message, which disrupts the conventional relations between tourist, the tourist city and its inhabitants. Instead of sharing a friendly and welcome message, these graffiti foster unsettling situations for both, the tourists and the inhabitants of the city. Do we have to read them literally, or are they part of the histories of a neighbourhood on its way to become something else?

I argue that the engagement between people and material entities in Vallcarca fosters social cohesion and creates alternative ways of participating in politics. Formed by a group of architects located in Vallcarca, the collective Voltes[2], represents an example of how material entities can shape the participation of people in politics. This collective has been involved in different initiatives in the neighbourhood such as housing cooperative projects and sustainable architectural interventions in the empty building sites. Their technical knowledge together with their social and political involvement in the neighbourhood has allowed them to reach a greater level of engagement with the material environment and its possibilities. This knowledge and closeness with the material and social environment of Vallcarca made them act as mediators between the claims of the inhabitants, the local Council of Barcelona, and other actors involved in the process of local transformation. New imageries, future projections and understandings of the material properties of Vallcarca have opened new stories or possibilities linked in this case to a new public contest toward the urban renewal of Vallcarca.

Conclusion

Using Ranciére's concept of the "distribution of the sensible" and my ethnographic experience in the material transformation of public space, I argue that experimenting with social and material relations produce "communities of sense" (Sansi, 2015), in which people become political actors engaging in new ways doing, being heard and being visible. The communities of sense in Vallcarca, however, have been created by the interpenetration between human practices and the material properties of the present neighbourhood. I propose to research these communities by taken seriously not only what people do and say but also how they are shaped and influenced by the material environment that they inhabit and transform.

2 See http://voltes.coop/en/nosaltres/

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Da Tatavla a Kurtulus
Storia e memoria di un quartiere greco di Istanbul

Luca Onesti

Per chi arriva in questo quartiere, nascosto e anonimo dietro un incrocio e una fermata della metro, sembra che la città si confermi identica nel suo eccesso di cemento, traffico e confusione. Ma si tratta solo dell'inganno del primo sguardo, perché Kurtuluş nasconde, dietro le apparenze, una vitalità fatta di mille caffè, pasticcerie, ristoranti, negozi e venditori ambulanti che vendono i loro prodotti da mattina a tarda notte. Se si cammina per le strade principali del quartiere, disposte a scacchiera, e poi in quelle secondarie e marginali, si scopre una grande varietà anche nella costruzione dei palazzi: risaltano in particolare alcune facciate con i balconi chiusi e sporgenti e con eleganti decorazioni. Soltanto però dopo qualche giorno passato qui a fare compere e a percorrere i *passages* che connettono una strada all'altra pieni di gioiellieri, calzolai, sarti, si capisce un po' di più il carattere di questo luogo che, anche se non lontano dalla confusione del centro, conserva un'atmosfera più familiare e accogliente.

Stringendo la lente di osservazione si nota infatti che l'ordine del disegno urbanistico fa da cornice ad un più interessante disordine sulle strade e sui marciapiedi. Se si procede fino al terminal degli autobus, nella zona chiamata *Kurtuluş Son Durak* (che in turco significa, appunto, ultima fermata), allo stesso modo che se ci si muove, secondo una seconda direttrice, dalla parte alta di Kurtuluş alla parte bassa, si nota a poco a poco come la composizione sociale del quartiere si fa meno borghese e più popolare. Ma anche questo punto di vista risulta scompaginato dal rapido e costante cambiamento della città: su Dolaptere Caddesi, la strada in fondo alla valle che delimita la parte bassa del quartiere, un certo numero costruzioni in altezza e di alberghi abbastanza recenti si affiancano a vecchie case in legno abbandonate e a costruzioni di un piano sormontate da tettoie di lamiera che fungono da officine di meccanici e gommisti.

Kurtuluş ha una lunga storia. Sorto nel XVI secolo per ospitare i marinai greci che lavoravano nei cantieri navali ottomani non molto distanti di Kasımpaşa, sul Corno d'Oro, questo quartiere prese il nome di Tatavla, che in greco significa "stalla per i cavalli". Abitato soprattutto dai *Rum*, come erano chiamati appunto i greci di Turchia, il quartiere incominciò ad affollarsi di chiese e di locande, così come di scuole, di vigne e di giardini. La vita che vi si conduceva differiva così tanto da quella degli altri quartieri mussulmani della città, che veniva chiamato anche "piccola Atene". Insieme con i *Rum*, altre minoranze iniziarono successivamente a vivere a Tatavla, armeni per esempio, o ebrei, ma anche i commercianti europei cattolici chiamati "levantini", che abitavano soprattutto i vicini quartieri di Pangaltı (famoso per i suoi forni, e che deriva il suo nome all'espressione italiana "Pani caldi") e di Elmadağ.

Tatavla cambierà di nome solo nel 1929, dopo un incendio che distrusse molti dei suoi edifici. Il nuovo nome, Kurtuluş, "salvezza" in turco, fu scelto soprattutto in omaggio alla recente instaurazione della Repubblica, nel 1923. Cambiò anche la toponomastica delle strade, alcune di esse vennero

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dedicate a militari e a personaggi politici, altre ad animali della mitologia turca, come successe per esempio per la strada chiamata *Bozkurt*, che, oggi, fa pensare subito ai Lupi grigi, l'organizzazione di destra ultranazionalista che ha preso come emblema il medesimo animale.

Nonostante questo, e dopo 90 anni, c'è ancora chi chiama il quartiere Tatavla: succede, sorprendentemente, tra i molti giovani che vi abitano. Il giornalista Hüseyin Irmak, che abita a Kurtuluş fin dall'infanzia e che ha scritto il libro *Tatavla'dan Kurtuluş'a* (Da Tatavla a Kurtuluş), mi spiega che negli ultimi anni gli abitanti hanno cominciato a voler conoscere la storia del loro quartiere. "Chi abita qui oggi ha spesso un alto livello culturale, e il quartiere attrae nuovi abitanti che cercano legami di vicinato ma anche maggior libertà nella propria vita", mi dice. Questa nuova ondata di persone è la novità di questi ultimi anni. Nell'ottobre 2009 alcuni manifestanti che protestavano per l'incontro del Fondo monetario Internazionale con la Banca Mondiale, attaccati e inseguiti dalla polizia, hanno trovato protezione e riparo a Kurtuluş, e da allora il quartiere ha portato con sé la fama di un luogo di resistenza e solidarietà.

Ma se ancora oggi a Kurtuluş continuano a trovare spazio le minoranze della migrazione interna (i curdi, per esempio), e quelle della migrazione internazionale (siriani, ecc.), che cosa è stato della presenza greca? Contro i *Rum* – che hanno conosciuto un processo di migrazione forzata con lo scambio di popolazioni tra Grecia e Turchia alla fine della guerra tra i due paesi, nel 1923 – ci sono stati nel XX secolo gravi episodi di violenza come il "Pogrom di Istanbul" del 6 e 7 settembre 1955, quando furono distrutti uffici, chiese, scuole e negozi dei greci, furono bruciate macchine e abitazioni, diverse persone furono ferite o uccise. Da allora i *Rum* hanno continuato a tornare in Grecia. A Kurtuluş oggi ne rimangono solo cinquecento. È stato grazie al libro che Hüseyin Irmak, ad Atene, ha potuto rincontrare due suoi amici d'infanzia che avevano lasciato la Turchia 42 anni fa.

Racconta ancora il giornalista: "Dal 2009 al 2014 abbiamo organizzato nuovamente a Kurtuluş il carnevale, che qui ha una tradizione di cinquecento anni e che è stato proibito dagli anni '40 in poi. È stato un successo, i giovani greci sono scesi in strada e i vecchi applaudivano, piangendo, dalle finestre. Ci siamo fermati negli ultimi anni perché abbiamo paura che la polizia possa intervenire e creare problemi proprio alla comunità greca". Ma non per questo è stato vana l'iniziativa di averlo riproposto e organizzato: con la festa è aumentata la volontà di riscoprire le origini di un quartiere che è stato oggetto di una grande operazione di cancellazione della memoria. Adesso ci sono sempre più persone che chiamano con orgoglio il proprio quartiere Tatavla.

Un'altra minoranza che ha abitato questo quartiere per molto tempo fino ad oggi è quella armena. Stretta tra i palazzi della zona nord di Kurtuluş, al confine con un altro quartiere, Bomonti, sorge la Chiesa armena (*Surp Vartanas Ermeni Kilisesi*) e a poca distanza c'è la Scuola primaria e scuola media cattolica armena (*Özel Bomonti Ermeni Katolik İlkOkulu ve OrtaOkulu*). Proprio di fronte a questa scuola però c'è un'altra scuola elementare, la *Ilkogretim Okulu Talat Paşa*, che porta il nome di un politico dell'impero ottomano, Mehmet *Talat Paşa*, prima ministro dell'interno e poi membro del triunvirato del Comitato Unione e Progresso, che prese il potere dal 1913. "Talat Paşa – mi spiega il giornalista e scrittore Serdar Korucu, residente a Kurtuluş – è stato il principale architetto e uno dei responsabili del genocidio armeno. I bambini armeni che frequentano la scuola vicina forse non lo sanno, ma di sicuro verranno a sapere, un giorno, che la scuola di fronte alla loro è intitolata a qualcuno che ha deportato e ucciso i loro bisnonni e antenati".

Korucu lavora per l'emittente televisiva CNN *Türk* e scrive per diversi giornali e siti come ad esempio Bianet.org, organo di informazione indipendente che propone la traduzione di molti dei propri contenuti in lingua inglese e curda. Il tema delle minoranze è al centro del suo lavoro: dal 2009 in poi ha pubblicato diversi libri che si occupano della questione curda, di quella armena o di quella dei Rum, ma anche dell'immigrazione siriana in Turchia, ed è co-autore di libri fotografici su Istanbul e su

Aleppo.

"La Turchia non è, come il Libano o la Siria, un mosaico di culture", continua. Anche se i numeri sono difficili da reperire, l'insieme delle minoranze non musulmane non supera in tutto il paese le 100 mila persone; di questi gli armeni sono 60 mila e i greci sono poche migliaia. All'interno della religione musulmana c'è poi la comunità alevita, che si discosta dalla maggioranza sunnita del paese, e poi c'è la minoranza dei curdi, che conta circa 20 milioni di persone in Turchia.

Sin dalla nascita della Repubblica turca si è perseguita una politica di omogeneizzazione e di turchizzazione. "Il kemalismo, come ideologia, ha significato soprattutto questo e anche se ha assunto delle posizioni contrarie al colonialismo occidentale, non si può considerare come un'ideologia antimperialista". Come in tutta la Turchia, anche a Kurtuluş, e questo ci deve far pensare, è forte il kemalismo: "Tatavla come quartiere della convivenza delle minoranze non è altro che un mito", continua il giornalista. "Le dichiarazioni del neo eletto sindaco di Istanbul che ha salutato le minoranze sono un importante passo in avanti ma hanno solo un'importanza simbolica, perché, in fondo, la politica turca non è mai cambiata su questo tema col cambiare dei governi. Piuttosto che insieme alle minoranze oggi noi conviviamo con il loro fantasma".

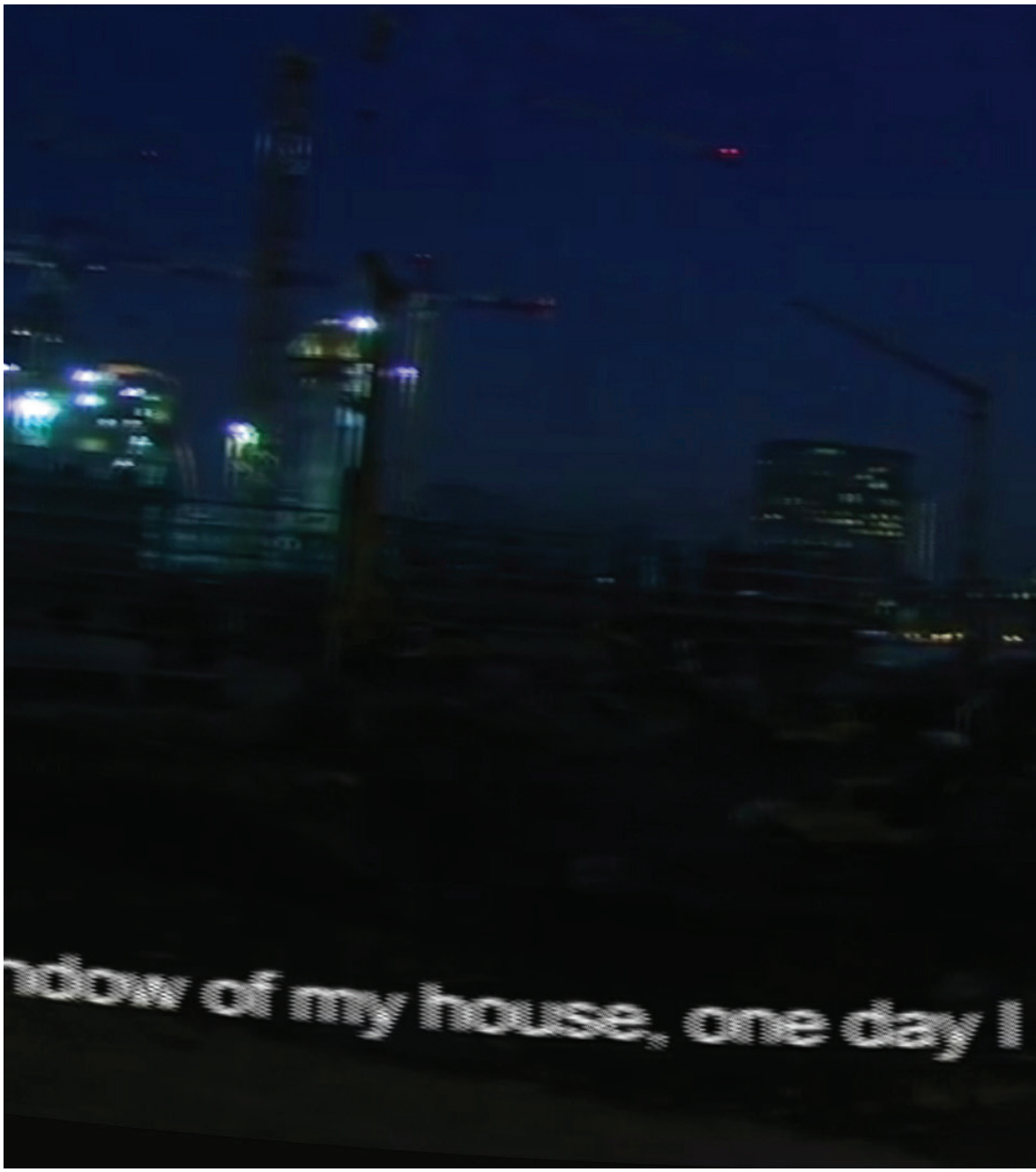
Per chi arriva in questo quartiere, nascosto e anonimo dietro un incrocio e una fermata della metro, sembra che la città si confermi identica nel suo eccesso di cemento, traffico e confusione. Ma si tratta solo dell'inganno del primo sguardo

C'è una vicenda che ha segnato a fondo questo quartiere: l'uccisione, nel 2007, del giornalista turco di origine armena Hrant Dink, proprio davanti alla sede di *Agos*, il giornale che aveva fondato nel 1996. In questo giornale, che esiste tutt'ora e ha anche una versione in lingua armena, Serdar Korucu ha lavorato per tre anni. "La morte di Hrant Dink ha segnato la mia vita e la mia professione, così come ha cambiato il modo di vedere di molte persone in questo paese. Fino a quella data avevo fatto il giornalista e mi ero occupato di diversi argomenti, ma da allora in poi il tema del genocidio armeno ha iniziato a collocarsi al centro della mia ricerca e del mio lavoro", mi racconta. Hrant Dink – per la cui uccisione è stata riconosciuta dai giudici la responsabilità di una sola persona, senza che venisse indagata ulteriormente l'esistenza di mandanti – aveva esortato a pensare le ragioni profonde per cui lo stato turco non ha riconosciuto il genocidio e per cui questa storia è stata occultata: gli armeni in questa visione delle storia sono "l'altro" e il nemico su cui è fondata l'identità turca. Soprattutto, Hrant Dink aveva insistito sulla necessità di un esame storico condiviso delle responsabilità e di un dialogo tra il popolo turco e quello armeno per un riconoscimento reciproco all'interno della stessa Turchia come patria comune. La sua uccisione, e la reticenza dello stato turco a indagarne fino in fondo le responsabilità, ha messo fine a questo percorso, alle domande, al dibattito, al dialogo su questo tema; secondo Korucu "la sua morte è stata la morte del genocidio armeno".

Ma torniamo a Tatavla. Se dobbiamo quindi decostruire il mito di Kurtuluş come spazio multiculturale, non per questo non possiamo guardare a ciò che della diversità della sua memoria ancora si conserva: "Questo quartiere porta con sé, in ogni caso, la cultura dell'accoglienza. I rapporti di vicinato sono di tipo familiare e ciò si riflette nella tolleranza del quartiere verso i migranti, ad esempio, e verso la comunità LGBT". È qualcosa di importante, ma – si chiede Korucu – è abbastanza in un paese che ha nel frattempo perso, nascosto, cancellato molto di più delle sue diversità?

Lasciamo aperta questa domanda, che trascende di molto i limiti del nostro contributo. Ci limitiamo a raccontare come ogni 19 di gennaio, per la commemorazione della morte di Hrant Dink, che si svolge ad Harbiye, di fronte alla sede del giornale *Agos*, c'è qualcuno che sostituisce il cartello della

strada che dalla fermata della metro si addentra nel quartiere di Kurtuluş. Il nome ufficiale del viale è *Ergenekon Caddesi*, "Corso Ergenekon" e si riferisce a un mito fondativo delle tribù turche che dall'Asia centrale vennero ad occupare l'Anatolia (e allo stesso tempo fa pensare a un'organizzazione clandestina nazionalista con lo stesso nome che è stata al centro di un'importante inchiesta in Turchia . . .). Informalmente però, ogni anno per il 19 gennaio, e ogni giorno nei discorsi di molti degli abitanti del quartiere, quella strada è chiamata invece *Hrant Dink Caddesi*, "Corso Hrant Dink", in memoria del giornalista armeno ucciso 12 anni fa.



saw appear this skyscraper,

Scraper, something a bit strange that grew very quickly, in

Multiple neighbourhoods
Affective manifold spaces in Turku

Miriam Tedeschi

Geographical boundaries[1]

Geographically, the neighbourhood in Turku where I live is located in the northern part of the city, 4km from the city centre. It is a district in the Koroinen ward, characterised by lead-though streets, forests, and three university residential complexes, in addition to low-density private houses, local services such as local supermarkets, a church, and a combat arena. Buses run day and night, making the area well connected to the other parts of the city. The three residential complexes, built in the 1990s and owned by TYS (The Student Village Foundation of Turku), add a particular, unique, and dynamic character to the neighbourhood. They challenge and cyclically reshape the neighbourhood's otherwise (apparently) static form dominated by the typical Finnish family houses, which, in their beautiful natural surroundings, seem to remain always the same. The residential complexes I am referring to are all very close to each other, and all together form the geographical 'heart' of the neighbourhood: their inner boundaries are defined by a road running in a sort of circle from the arena to the main road, connecting the complexes with the supermarkets and the church and its cemetery. They are all made of one-, two-, no more than three-storey buildings. Open footpaths allow access to the different houses and buildings, their backyards, green areas, and gardens. In total, the available flats are around 340 – and they can host from a single person to entire families. Numerous children live in the area. Every group of buildings has its reserved parking places, and there are also numerous parking spaces for the bicycles: soft mobility is enhanced and facilitated.

Into the neighbourhood. Private vs. shared spaces

In contrast with the clear, closed boundaries characterising the private houses and their gardens nearby, the simple and functional architecture and design of these three residential complexes conveys an atmospherics (Anderson, 2009) that challenges dichotomous and categorical understandings of space – such as private and public, close and open, formal and informal – and aims at enhancing and strengthening the feeling of open and shared spaces for the inhabitants (Botsman and Roo, 2010; Vestbro, 2012). They are spaces "whose people share care and maintenance" (Mattiucci, 2013: 1594). For instance, each complex has big common rooms with kitchen, TV, stereo, books, toys for kids, and gymnastic equipment. They can be booked for free by the residents, to organise public or private events – or just to enjoy the space and have a chat with a neighbour. They are managed in a very informal way, so that everyone is encouraged to use them. Places for barbecuing during summer time are also available to everyone in the green, common, open areas. Additionally, there

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1 This neighbourhood portrait is the result of an ethnographic approach through which I have personally lived and experienced the described space for the duration of one year.

are common laundry rooms, sauna rooms, and playgrounds for children, with toys bought by the tenants' committees, which, every year, have a dedicated budget that can be used for the complexes and the well-being of their residents. The playgrounds are the visible, spatial trace of the complexes' legal and geographical boundaries (Brighenti, 2008), which are, at the same time, atmospherically, non-boundaries: they are in fact located in the open, green areas surrounding and crossing the building complexes, and their openness encourages, affectively attracts families (sometimes, even the non-resident ones) walking in the open footpaths to come in and enjoy them. Which often happens. Every kid is allowed to use the toys available there, even though they formally belong to the residents of that specific residential complex.

The whole neighbourhood is an interlacing of multiple, non-human and human rhythms

Spaces of becoming

In the playgrounds, a melting pot of various colours, languages and ethnicities can be often spotted, which makes of the place a multiplicity where spatial layers from different traditions and cultures overlap, mix, and, sometimes, live parallel and incompatible lives. People living in the neighbourhood belong to it and at the same time to many countries from around the world. They are here, yet, they remain distant, as one interviewee said: "I am here, but, at the same time, I feel that I am not. I like it here, but I also miss my country." The home countries are then digitally experienced, so in the playgrounds or in the green areas of the building complexes people from different nationalities look at their mobile phones – they might not talk to each other, but they are immersed into the manifold digital spaces talking to them in the language of their home countries.

In general, in these residential complexes, international students and researchers (or students and researcher from other parts of Finland), with or without their families, relentlessly come and go, and, therefore, a unique rhythm shapes the whole area, giving the neighbourhood its multiple and always-in-becoming character (Deleuze, 1994; Deleuze and Guattari, 1994; Vartabedian, 2018). People moving in and out are a frequent view in almost every time of the year, but particularly during summer time, when students move out, or autumn, when lessons restart at the university, and new ones are moving in: houses are being emptied, and, often, only after a few days, are being occupied again, by someone else. Accurate and daily observations conducted over a few months can easily unearth small changes, almost every day, which visibly highlight the relentless movement of becoming of the space and its bodies (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, 2015).

Typically, while walking on the footpaths of the neighbourhood, new curtains with new colours jump out as the apparent trace (Murphy, 2017) that a change has occurred and a new family has moved in. Or, items which remained piled up for months in the vicinity of entrance doors of ground floor flats are suddenly removed: these empty spaces are yet another way in which bodies communicate how they affect a space, by imparting material layers and multiple traces upon it. Items might be abandoned and then suddenly appear in the common rooms of the building complexes; or they are sold online, or in the second-hand shops, which are very common in Turku area. They are, in fact, frequently recycled, and live, themselves, like their migrant 'owners,' multiple lives in multiple spaces and times.

Nature and its rhythms

Both the private houses and the university residential blocks are designed so as to facilitate spending time outdoors in the nature (Coley *et al*., 1997). In fact, living here teaches bodies the non-difference between inside and outside (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, 2015). The outside is fully part and

seamlessly permeates and wraps, as a material layer, the inside of the flats, and vice versa. Right outside of the building complexes and the private houses, immersed in the nature, there is a football playground (which in wintertime becomes a place where to skate or play ice hockey), a volleyball ground, and forests, where many walks are available and reach and/or cross Aura, the river dividing Turku into two.

Due to the vicinity of the forests, animals, such as squirrels, hares, and many kinds of birds, like pheasants, are fully part of the neighbourhood, and affect the everyday life of its residents: "I can't believe I can see so many animals every day, I so much like to go out to do shopping now, as animals are not something that I get to see in my home country. I can easily see them from my window as well," said another interviewee. All in all, the whole neighbourhood is an interlacing of multiple, non-human and human rhythms: the spaces of visible becoming (as they follow the university seasonal work and the private lives of foreign workers) of the neighbouring residential complexes; the spaces of illusory sameness (the private houses), which change their look only according to the season of the year. The wild forests, the river, the public/private gardens, and the animals all follow, in turn, the rhythmicity of the seasons – and all these rhythms (the hectic one of the university complexes; the, at least apparently, uniform one of the private houses; the one of nature) intertwine and influence each other over time, so that the neighbourhood is in the end made "of the rhythmical syncopation of these intra- and inter-atmospheric encounters and frictions, that is, out of the excessive atmospherics of the poliatmospheric materiality of the urban" (Pavoni, 2018: 63–64).

Control

All the university residential buildings – no less than the private houses – enhance the natural surveillance of the neighbourhood, without the need of cameras: "I know everything that is happening here," said a resident. The low buildings, closely facing each other, as well as the wide, green, open spaces, almost without blind spots (so without basements, dark stairwells and landings), athe windows directly facing the green areas, and the open footpaths naturally encourage the control over the territory, what Jacobs calls the "eyes on the street" (Jacobs, 1961) – and constitute the ideal setting and application of environmental crime prevention principles (Newman, 1972). Everywhere in the neighbourhood every resident exercises control – without forcing it. Control is yet another material, spatial layer, part of the multiplicity that the area is, and it is the in-becoming result of the affective combination of bodies and spaces, of their being fully visible to each other when in an open space.

Multiple neighbourhood

Digital spaces, shared areas, private houses, natural control, disparate ethnicities and languages, and nature all affect each other and constitute the uniqueness and multiplicity of this neighbourhood in the outskirts of the city of Turku. If the architecture and design of the 'hearth' of the neighbourhood, the three residential complexes, affectively enhance sharing, control, and community free time, digital spaces make people live the parallel spaces of their home country. Human and non-human elements follow different rhythms – the nature follows the seasons, and opens up to completely different landscapes and colours in summer (green) and winter (white); the buildings and the bodies inhabiting them, in turn, follow disparate becomings: the seeming static nature of the private houses, where only the seasons seem to bring changes to their looks, and the apparent different intensities lived by the university residential complexes, where trace reading can easily allow the alert observer to penetrate the cyclical change which they undergo and the different everyday practices and living styles that people coming from different countries carry out.

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‘Free zone Exarchia’
Narratives of an antagonist neighbourhood

Valeria Raimondi

It is midnight when the first explosion is heard. “The boys started on time tonight”, says a man at the bar, sarcastically. The Greeks sitting at the tables watch indifferently the scene, a show that has often been repeated for years. Some of the (few) tourists go away alarmed, others take refuge inside the cafés on the side of the square to watch the show cautiously, impatient to tell their friends, once returned from vacation, they have witnessed a real urban riot. Until the tear gasses convince them to take a taxi and return to the hotel. Others, instead, readily take out masks and gloves from their backpacks and, despite the smoke and the bodies moving rapidly, try to understand how to reach for Molotov cocktails and stones. They are the anarcho-tourists: young people coming from all over Europe to Exarcheia to experience the thrill of clashes. In general, few really understand what is happening and the reasons behind the skirmishes.

A peculiar neighbourhood in the centre of Athens, Exarcheia is internationally known as an anarchist and leftist area, whose resistance identity is recognisable in the numerous political squats and autonomous centres that compose its space. Characterised by a long history of subversion and antagonist practices, Exarcheia constitutes a sort of ‘free zone’ for the activists who live there – an area ideally free from police and any form of authority, fascism and xenophobia.

In purely spatial terms, Exarcheia is located in the centre of the Greek capital, about one kilometre away as the crow flies from the Acropolis. With approximately 22,000 residents in a land area of 0.9 square kilometres, it is a densely populated neighbourhood, inhabited mainly by lower-middle class workers and young people. The neighbourhood develops around a central triangular square, from which short city blocks radiate, lined with small shops, bookstores and cafés. For its capacity to bring together political activists, artists and troublemakers, the neighbourhood has been defined a ‘magnet of dissent’ (Vradis 2012). Depicted in public discourses as a delinquent neighbourhood, Exarcheia historically represents the fulcrum of political and intellectual life in the city, thanks also to the presence of several bookstores and publishing houses.

The antagonistic activities that nowadays shape the neighbourhood’s multicultural and politically radical urban fabric originate from its past. In the 1970s, when the military dictatorship was toppled in Greece, Exarcheia was already a hotbed of resistance. The presence of universities made it the epicentre of student revolts, the most famous being the anti-dictatorial uprising of November 1973, centred around the campus of the Polytechnic School. The students’ struggle had a lasting effect on Greek activism, and resulted in the spreading of anarchist and leftist ideas and practices in the neighbourhood and all over Greece.

Today Exarcheia is still considered the ‘backbone of social and political resistance in the city’ (Kritidis

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2014, 90). Characterised by 'porosity,' the neighbourhood is a theatre of emancipating practices and expressive acts of encounter of multiple subjectivities (Stavrides 2016): in Exarcheia all voices are potentially audible, and different identities merge in the struggle for claiming rights. Students, migrants, homeless, LGBTQI+ activists, precarious workers and unemployed take part in the life of the neighbourhood, increasing the strength and visibility of the social movement and resulting in a sort of hybridisation of the struggle. The contentious character of the neighbourhood also finds expression on its walls. In Exarcheia walls are filled with posters, scrawled with writings and decorated with graffiti, constituting a sort of urban memorial landscape. Writings in Greek, English, Arabic and Pashto narrate a vision of a post-border future, while street art and murals bear witness of recent (traumatic) memories related to political activism – as the graffiti on a wall of the Polytechnic in memory of Pavlos Fyssas-Killah P, a political rapper assassinated by the fascists in 2013, and the commemorative plate in Tzavella street for Alexis Grigoropoulos, shot by the Police in 2008.

In Exarcheia all voices are potentially audible, and different identities merge in the struggle for claiming rights. Students, migrants, homeless, LGBTQI+ activists, precarious workers and unemployed take part in the life of the neighbourhood

The antagonistic politics that takes place in the neighbourhood define both its space and its time, as daily life in Exarcheia is marked by a rhythm that alternates daytime serenity with nocturnal turmoil (Vradis 2012). Generally, the neighbourhood's life is characterised by a normalisation of radical tactics – i.e. riots, squatting of spaces and use of violence – mainly aimed at preserving the 'free zone' by gaining visibility and constantly laying claim to the territory. The 'Saturday night riots' and the 'annual riot rites' are important components of Exarcheia's life. The latter represent moments in which the memory of traumatic events in the history of activism in Athens is remembered in a contentious form – an example is the massive mobilisation that takes place every year in December since 2008. On 6 December of that year, the killing of 15-year-old Alexis Grigoropoulos, shot by the Police in a street close to the square, unleashed a series of student demonstrations that from Exarcheia quickly spread throughout Greece, lasting almost a month. On a smaller scale, the practice of spontaneous 'everyday riots' has become part of the neighbourhood daily rhythm since 2004, after the Olympics. The *pesimo* (Greek slang for 'assault') consists in small hit-and-run attacks, usually occurring on Saturday nights and mainly directed against the Riot Police.

The air of Exarcheia on Saturday night gets heavy, saturated with tear gas and smoke from burning rubbish bins. Stournari street, next to the Polytechnic, is a battlefield. The rioters run back and forth from the square, where others fill glass bottles with gasoline. The barricades of burning bins and motorbikes seem more than symbolic, small bulwarks erected against an austerity that has been corroding the country for a decade now. On one side, young people, students, unemployed, migrants, anarchists. . . Nothing gives the idea that there is a political ideology behind those barricades but, more than anything, the need to show that they are there, that (at least) that space is theirs – the anger as well, and probably it is worth much more. On the other side, at 28th October street, hundreds of policemen in riot gear await the signal that invites them to intervene. After a week getting bored parked in the buses along the boundary of the neighbourhood, they can finally get into action. They almost never reach the square. They could, but the game would end right away. . .

The geography of political activism in Exarcheia is negotiated between different groups: on the outside, with the police and far-right groups, from whose dangerous intrusions the space must be preserved; on the inside, between the different political assemblies that contribute in the production and reproduction of the neighbourhood's antagonist narrative. The space is not only a scenario that hosts the struggle, but the conquest of the space itself is a main objective of the struggle. In the

anarchists' vision, one of the main purposes behind the struggle for the creation and preservation of the 'free zone' is to dismantle the idea that the space of the city belongs exclusively to its own inhabitants, erasing the discriminatory boundaries between those who 'properly belong' and those who do not (A.K. 2018).

To safeguard the neighbourhood's internal security, a so-called 'security team' has been established, which is mainly acting against drug-dealing and petty theft. Composed of activists belonging to different political groups, this civilian militia has self-appointed to maintain order in Exarcheia, marching throughout the neighbourhood, especially at night, chasing away drug dealers and using violence, if needed. The controversial presence of the 'security team' along with its ambiguous practices cause clashes between different groups, constituting one of the major political contradictions of Exarcheia in the last years. Moreover, if at the beginning its formation was well received by the inhabitants, in recent times episodes of intolerance towards its work are more and more frequent. While consolidating Exarcheia's resistance identity, the production of conflictual urbanity and the strategies of opposition to institutions and capitalism lead to a closure vis-à-vis the outside. Defining the physical and conceptual boundaries of Exarcheia as a free and autonomous zone implies a double process, that results in the enhancement of the divide with the rest of the city and the consequent isolation of the neighbourhood. The revolutionary spirit that characterises Exarcheia is described in mainstream public discourses as a condition of social unrest and perpetual violence. This external vision frames it as a 'no-go zone', producing 'geographies of fear' and exception (Koutrolikou 2016), which offer the ground for discourses and policies of criminalisation of political activism.

Since 2008, when the phase of austerity and neoliberal reform started in Greece, the fertile socio-political context of the neighbourhood provided the ground for the development of a network of grassroots experiences in the effort to establish antagonistic modes of social existence to face the humanitarian crisis. Following the occupation of Syntagma square 2011, several autonomous spaces were opened in Exarcheia, such as self-organised 'anarchist' canteens, healthcare centres, social centres and community assemblies. The result is a sort of solidarity economy within the neighbourhood, which proved essential when, in the summer of 2015, thousands of migrants arrived to Athens. Initially camped in squares or public parks, migrants were welcomed in Exarcheia with the opening of dozen of squats to house people in transit, adding an important new component to the neighbourhood's life. In addition to support structures, migrants found a safe space in the neighbourhood, where the risk of xenophobic and police attacks is minimised. Moreover, the spatial location of Exarcheia in the centre of Athens along with the practices and politics that take place in it help giving migrants significant visibility as well as political agency, which are denied to them in the institutional reception facilities. Migrant squats, along with all the political squats, are under a constant threat of eviction, a threat that has become more serious with the victory in the May 2019 administrative elections of the centre-right party Nea Dimokratia (New Democracy), which called to clean up the neighbourhood from all forms of dissent.

However, the threat to the neighbourhood and its political life does not come only from the institutions but also from internal challenges. Far from being an ideal space, Exarcheia as a socio-political environment is not without problems and contradictions, and solidarity and trust are not always evident. The local space is disputed daily by divergent political groups struggling to affirm their 'supremacy' on the territory, often in a violent way. Drug-dealers take advantage of the 'anomy' of the area, making the neighbourhood unsafe. To counter this trend, the 'security team' acts in an increasingly fierce manner, implementing ambiguous practices that resemble those of the Police, including the unilateral decision to violently evict a migrant occupation in May 2018. Meanwhile, Exarcheia is targeted also by attempts of external interference, which are changing its physical appearance and threat to compromise its political spirit. As in other cities, Airbnb and touristification in general

are raising the cost of living, forcing students to move to other areas further away from the centre. Also international volunteers, activists and artists play a role in this process. Going to Athens with the explicit ambition to live in the neighbourhood, they stay a few weeks or some months, and their increasing demand of short-term accommodation contributes in raising the cost of rents.

After being considered for years a dangerous area by many, Exarcheia suddenly appears in international tourist guides as 'one of the coolest neighbourhood in Europe'. Guided tours are organised to visit 'the most alternative neighbourhood in Athens,' strictly in the daylight hours, leaving only the most fearless the decision to stay in the area after dark. Instead, the anarcho-tourists (as defined by the anarchists themselves) come specifically to experience the political life of the 'anomic neighbourhood,' which very often results in joining the riots. Mostly, they come to take part in specific event: on December 6, 2018, for instance, for the tenth anniversary of the murder of Alexis Grigoropoulos, dozens of activists came to town from all over Europe. Finally, the project to build a metro station in the Exarcheia square along with the new interest in the bohemian area is attracting foreign investors, who buy entire buildings at a low price starting a process of redevelopment. Overall, the hypothesis that the government will intervene with an urban regeneration strategy, with the objective of eliminating the area's 'dangerous riotous character', is increasingly likely.

The clashes on Saturday night go on for some hours. As long as there are breath and bottles to throw. Anger and adrenaline allow the bodies to continue their race, despite the gases that choke the breath and cloud the view. A powerful small-scale resistance system, perfected in fifteen years of struggle. Then the show ends. Perhaps from the other side came the order to retreat: it lasted long enough. In any case, even this Saturday we won, the enemy was expelled and the space is still ours. The next morning everything looks normal, the scene is cleaned up, ready for the next performance. There are only a few carcasses of cars and black marks on the ground to bear witness of what happened the night before.

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Complex intimacies
in a Thessaloniki refugee neighborhood

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This paper is based on an ethnography of a low-income urban neighborhood in Thessaloniki in Greece, and looks at ordinary experiences and relations of intimacy. The neighborhood is characterized by intense urbanization which has created a landscape of multiple-storeyed apartment blocks with one of the highest-density areas in Greece, where green spaces have disappeared under concrete. It is located to the West to the Byzantine walls of the city and forms part of the "Western areas" of the city of Thessaloniki. These areas have the highest numbers of households living below the poverty line and are viewed by as lower working class.

This is a neighborhood of refugees, a neighborhood where all residents or their families are migrants of some kind. Originally a refugee settlement, it was built after the 1922 migrations from Asia Minor when the city's Muslims resettled in Turkey and Greek Orthodox Christians from Minor Asia, of various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, came to Thessaloniki. This enforced displacement created many refugee neighborhoods in Greece at the time (Hirchon 1989). Later, the neighborhood attracted rural-urban migrants, following the rapid post-civil war expansion of the 1950s. Afterwards, migrants from the Balkan and ex-USSR countries in the 1990s moved to the area. Recently, refugee families coming from the Middle East, North Africa and Asia have moved from camps in the Western outskirts of the city to rented flats in the area, under an accommodation scheme aiming at the integration of asylum seekers.

This neighborhood can be imagined as a form of intimate dwelling. Such affective relation of intimacy is a form of recognition embodied in space. These features of neighborly intimacy express shared realms of sociality directly associated to the structures of power (Herzfeld 2005, Berlant 2000). Intimacy is employed here as a 'zone of familiarity (Berlant 2000)' and in this instance, as a zone that includes and excludes in the way constellations of people, opinions and practices become part of one's everyday life. This is defined by the spatial proximity of the households and a local public space culture that is enabled by Mediterranean climate conditions and social and legal institutions. For example, intimate sites are built in the public, at the vegetable and fruit open street-market, at random encounters in the narrow uphill streets, at the Sunday church liturgy, at the corner shop, at the public squares, at the cafeterias but also during neighbors' household visits and dialogues across neighborly small apartment balconies. These intimate sites are terrains on which caring but also hostile relations emerge, evolve, modify and transform.

Intimate sites in the neighborhood are overlapping and hierarchical, as intimacy is fashioned across multiple thresholds of daily life and hierarchically structured around the majoritarian scheme of a linguistic ethno-religious national homogeneity. In the city of Thessaloniki, that was incorporated into Greece in 1914, this involved assimilations of ethnic identities and unique forms of syncretism of

the Ottoman Period into a linguistically and religiously Greek homogenous national ideology. Hence, it is important to note here that the hierarchy of intimacy in the neighborhood is predicated upon expressions of cultural intimacy, the shared sociality that corresponds to an assumed national culture and that links daily social life with national ideology (Herzfeld 2005). Yet, intersections of power and inequalities, as much as daily unfolding affective interactions (Stewart 2007) amidst daily survival, generate complex relations of intimacy in the neighborhood and manifold points of convergence that contest the homogeneity and hierarchies of neighborly intimacy. The focus here is on the complex sites of intimacy between newly arrived and long-term female neighbors and their link to collective memory of past migration to the neighborhood and the gender aspect of neighborly intimacy, and specifically the way women share practices of social reproduction in the everyday.

Approaching the neighborhood through the lens of intimacy offers a new perspective on the different ways the neighborhood is shaped by moments of sociality. And in turn we can see how sociality transforms amidst the recreation of intimate sites between daily survival and gendered affective and material reciprocity in this neighborhood of refugees. We can see how the (re)enforcement and (re) creation of intimate sites includes and excludes the newcomers in pre-existing modes of dwelling and surviving. The dynamics of intimacy in the neighborhood therefore, draw attention to the social transformations that come into view in this neighborhood marked by urban austerity and the present precarious realities of refugees crossing into Europe.

The new neighbors that moved in produced mixed responses amongst residents. Besides the gestures of welcoming, there have also been tensions, as many long-term neighbors – some of which have previously experienced enduring social marginality and degrading working conditions as migrant workers – raised complaints. Some refused to accept the newcomers as their new neighbors, and often objected against the school participation of refugee children. The complaints did not produce direct confrontations, except from one anonymous attack against a refuge family house. Yet they were voiced in public conversations in the social media. The objections nonetheless spawned resentment which was affectively coded in everyday neighborhood embodied behaviors, in looks and gestures. Digital connectivity thus helped spreading feelings of hostility towards newcomers.

Central to these public complaints, often dyed in racism, were the current violent consequences of austerity. Many long-term residents face precariousness and economic exclusion. In this context, refugees were perceived as a threat to living opportunities and as an impediment to access humanitarian help and provision. But this did not inhibit many long-term residents, predominantly women, who struggle amidst deteriorating living conditions, from offering support and sharing material provisions with their new neighbors. These practices of caring and sharing grounded on the gender aspect of neighborly intimacy appeared to have multiple manifestations and motivational bases.

These acts of caring and sharing comprised strategic acts of welcoming and including the refugees in the neighborhood. At other times, they corresponded to practices that became possible through random neighborhood encounters and unexpected affective reciprocities, surges of kindness in daily activities. For instance, once a long-term female resident coming out of the neighborhood store offered to repair her new neighbor's baby stroller which had just broken. Although this woman had opposed the new arrivals, she developed over time common strategies of social reproduction with her Iraqi new neighbor in the caring of the children and securing survival. Likewise, another female long-term resident that complained often about the newcomers, started to regularly donate to her female refugee neighbors, vegetables and fruits from the local open market she worked at, despite the objections of the stall owner.

These acts seem to derive their force from a gender aspect of neighborhood intimacy, the everyday unpaid labor of social reproduction that is performed by both long term and newly arrived female

residents. Practices of offering and supporting that develop between women can be seen, in the context of this neighborhood, as common forms of survival and attempts to share social reproduction, the amalgam of activities and relations that 'reconstitute' life daily (Federici 2012). As it has been argued, these practices of organizing common forms of social reproduction through which women share their struggles as unpaid laborers, evince 'revolutionary' ways of living and organizing the future (Federici 2012)[1] . In this case, they describe ways through which female neighbors improve material conditions while they undo divisions and prevailing hierarchies and change intimacies that are part of everyday neighborhood life. As it appears, tracing these sharing practices between female neighbors without reducing their complexity is an important aspect of the dynamics of neighborly intimacy.

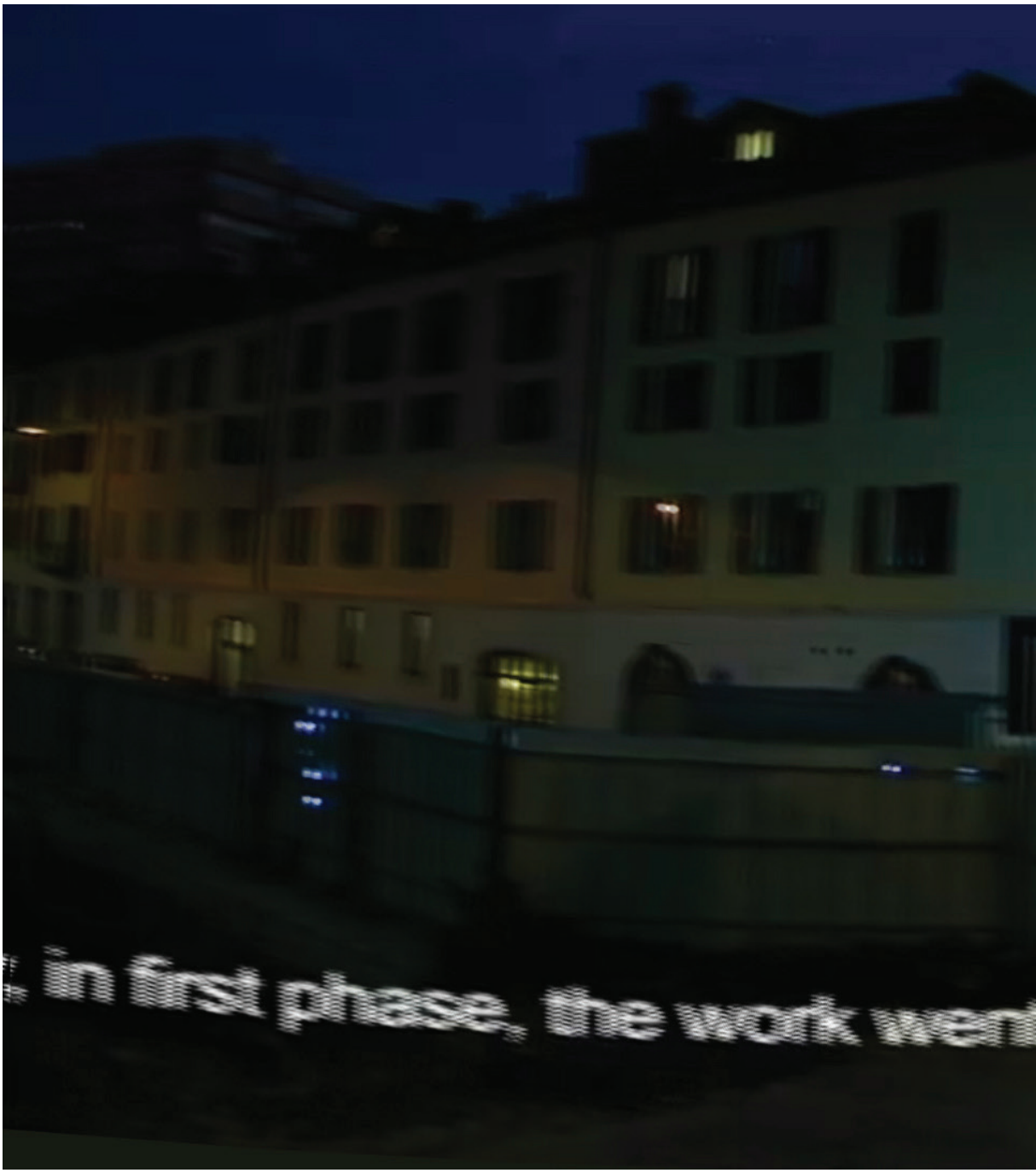
Acts of caring and sharing comprised strategic acts of welcoming and including the refugees in the neighbourhood

These ordinary acts of sharing form part of the documented 'celebrations' of informal giving (Rozakou 2016) and its 'diversification' (Theodossopoulos 2016) in austerity Greece, during what has been called the 'European crisis of migration'. But they are also part of a longer history of local values of neighborhood sharing between women, driven by the significance of care and assistance in the local Orthodox Christian communities (Hirchon 1989). Therefore, there is a continuity in these moments of sustaining common life in the neighborhood.

Many of the long-term residents have welcomed the newcomers, as they see in them their families' histories of uprooting and displacement and associate the refugees' losses and difficulties with those of their parents and grandparents. They recognize in the lives of their new neighbors the struggles of their relatives in the past to construct a novel life against institutional abandonment and the negative and ambivalent ways they were received by the locals. In this context, historical memory is a facet of neighborhood intimacy and has been the foundation of political struggles towards inclusion in the neighborhood. For instance, when the anonymous petrol bomb attack against a neighborly house of a refuge family occurred, a protest was organized by a local autonomous political initiative and participants reclaimed a racism-free neighborhood and sprayed graffiti in the area's central square declaring 'a neighborhood of refugees'.

From the perspective of intimacy, we can explore the different ways the neighborhood emerges through the dynamics of sociality. On the one hand, some of the long-term residents attempt to make the neighborhood a community founded on the interiority of belonging and on a kind of hierarchical intimacy that produces hostility and that seems to lay the groundwork for xenophobia and racism. On the other hand, the neighborhood emerges as an open and inclusive realm of belonging, as the product of a kind of intimacy organized around memory and sharing and caring practices in everyday life. Overall, the neighborhood forms a heterogeneous area of intimate dwelling and relating, a zone of complex and negotiable intimacies.

1 Federici's (2000) autonomist politics approach stresses specifically the revolutionary potential of non-market ways of organising collective experiments of sharing social reproduction.



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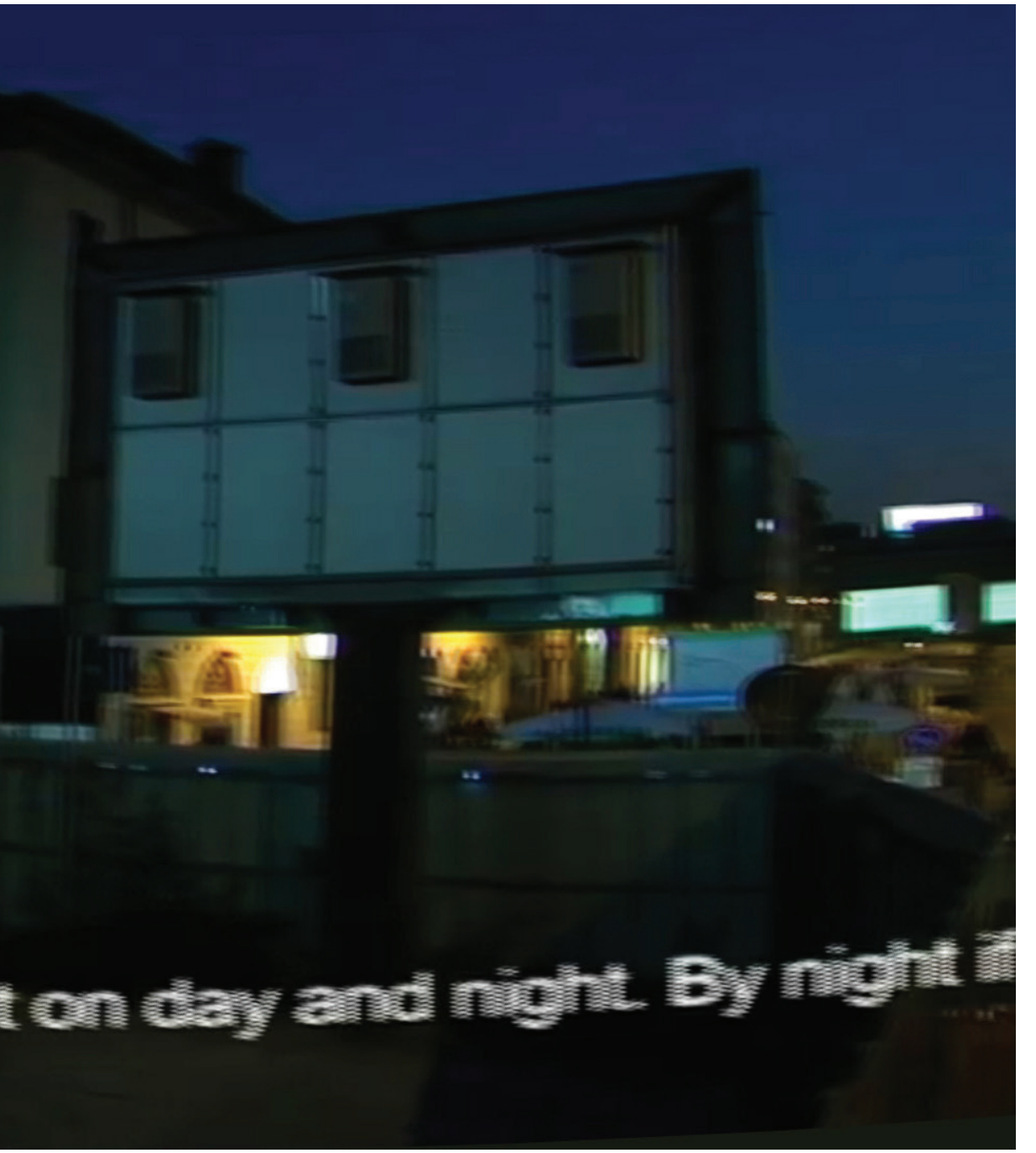
on day and night. By night

ve here, we've moved house but always in the same area

The Neighborhood in the Morro
Heterogeneity, Difference, and Emergence in a Periphery of the Global South

Giuseppina Forte

Read through its most visible characteristics, the neighborhood in the *morro* (hill) can be anywhere in the peripheries of São Paulo, Brazil, and cities of the global South. Its specificities might disappear within general frameworks used to study urban peripheries, including center-periphery dichotomies, informal urbanism, and the essentialized identity of the poor. This portrait, instead, is about the neighborhood as a landscape of multiple histories, where heterogeneity and difference have produced specific spaces, rhythms, and their sensory emanations. Such an ethnographic approach provides a deeper understanding of emergent forms of the periphery assembled around certain visibilities, practices, and subjectivities, and engaged in uneven patterns of democratic city-making.

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Helicopters over Tremembé

Against the bright sky of a weekday summer morning in São Paulo, I have counted 24 helicopters in an hour. They fly from the business center in Itaim Bibi to the Guarulhos airport to the closed condominium of Alphaville, fifteen kilometers northwest of the city. Some of them may land at on-demand heliports disseminated across the Serra da Cantareira, the Atlantic forest that marks the end of the municipality of São Paulo to the north. By helicopter, brides descend amid their wedding guests in the Serra and residents of the residential complex Alpes da Cantareira reach their 1.5 million-dollar houses. One thousand meters below them, a skin-like fabric of dwellings is perched on the hills, along the basins of rivers, and on areas at risk of flooding and landslides in the Tremembé district. As in other urban peripheries of the global South, Tremembé residents have auto-constructed (DIY) their houses in favelas, illegal and legal land subdivisions. If the elites *up there* in the Serra can still enjoy the luxuriant vegetation of the "Brazilian Switzerland," as newspapers used to call Tremembé in the 1960s, people *down there* in the hills and valleys have been exposed since the 1970s to the effects of massive urbanization.

One of 41 neighborhoods in Tremembé, Furnas has developed around the homonymous power plant. Under the pylons of the power line, squatters have built their wooden shacks. Many of them have been removed; others will be in the future. However, for now, their kids play under high voltage wires – where picnic areas and football fields also dot the neighborhood. Squatters are not the only illegal aspect of Furnas: the neighborhood itself is illegal. Right after the end of the Brazilian military dictatorship (the so-called lost decade of the 1980s) and facing an enduring lack of low-income housing policies, organized invasions of private and public lands became technologies of land democratization for the working classes. In Furnas, *grileiros* (land swindlers) seized the lands belonging to the religious organization Santa Casa da Misericórdia to illegally sell them before squatters could invade

them.[1] Immigrants, mostly from poor rural areas of the Northeast of Brazil, bought pieces of land here, usually 20 meters deep by 7 meters wide, lacking any basic infrastructure and services.

The politics of difference

These immigrants have carried with them the racialized identity of rural and Northeastern backwardness, in contrast to the *paulistanos'* (of São Paulo) exceptional capacity for modernity and progress, associated with whiteness (Weinstein, 2015). Some of them have also reproduced this racialized geography by considering the new squatters (mostly black) along Tremembé's rivers as "bandits." The poorer, and possibly darker-skinned, are always to blame. The first evident division is between those who bought the land, therefore entitled to full citizenship, and those who squatted, associated with moral failure (Holston, 2008, pp. 254-260).

All day long, music and construction work from the houses nearby produce a mixture of low-frequency noise: hammers, drills, and funky basses

Stereotypical urban identities are constructed around people's placement: *ao longo do rio* (along the river), *no mato* (in the bush), *na favela*. These narratives are not only representations, but they also shape social interactions and erect barriers among city dwellers (Caldeira, 2000, p. 19). Some of the residents in the valley and the Serra set a clear divide with the *grileiros* in the *morro,* as they call Furnas and its adjacent neighborhoods, for their disruptive urban ecologies: drugs, violence, and the destruction of uncontaminated nature. I myself was influenced by these narratives the first time I visited Furnas by car. Locked doors and windows separated me from people, smells, and humidity. For every curve and person, I could imagine a potential assault. This sense of uncanny would eventually disappear after I learned to walk in Furnas under the scrutiny of residents'"eyes on the street"[2] and take the public transit like the majority of the residents in the peripheries of São Paulo. These citizens spend as much as 2 to 2,5 hours to reach their workplace in the center. Over them, on-demand *aerotáxis* (helicopters) cover the same urban fabric in 15 minutes.

"Building codes"

Two years after my cruising and strolling explorations in Furnas, I visited the neighborhood with M, who has lived there since 1995. He showed me the endless fabric of concoctions in brick, mortar, and sheet metal that have reached stability on the steep slopes on the hills. The steadiness of each house relies on the consolidation of the terrain provided by the adjacent unit below. Residents expand their houses in three dimensions in an uneven way, wherever there is space to do so. These practices of *puxadinho* (little nudge) have given birth to complex overlapping and entanglement of floors, activities, and people. "Several people live on the same piece of land on different floors of the same building. Who should own the land below them?" M asked me. The process of land and house legalization in Furnas and many neighborhoods in the *morro* by Sehab-Municipal Housing Agency has become more and more complicated. These settlements now have the primary infrastructure, but the land tenures are not yet legalized. Residents do not pay taxes on land and houses, but they receive utility bills.

In Furnas, illegal owners have managed to fraction or multiply their properties to create apartments, ground-level lodgings, and outdoor parking lots, making profit from their rents. M is one of them. He

1 The Santa Casa took charge of social outcasts (e.g., the terminally or mentally ill) in the Jaçana district (adjacent to Tremembé) on behalf of the government. For example, their Hospital Luiz Gonzaga operated as a Leprosarium until 1930. Many ailing members of the rural aristocracy would transfer land to the religious organization.

2 In *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), Jane Jacobs wrote that for a street to be a safe place, "there must be eyes upon the street, eyes belonging to those we might call the natural proprietors of the street," p. 35.

told me about the negotiations he had with his neighbor to build three flats destined for the rental market. Controversy arose when his apartment got flooded because of damage in the courtyard of the adjacent house. Since most of the homes in the area share a wall, daily interferences occur, such as leaks, noise, and structural movements. M's neighbor did not have the money to repair the slab so, in the end, he had to pay for it. According to the "building codes" of Furnas, the newcomers pay, for they know the preexisting conditions and therefore assume any risk associated with a new construction.

While a proud M was showing me his in-progress auto-constructed apartments, a black teen removed a pack of white powder from a hole in the unfinished brick wall at the entrance and quickly disappeared. "They are using my wall to store their drugs," said M, and continued with the tour. While struck at the moment, I would soon get used to similar everyday scenes, when I rented one of his apartments the following year.[3]

The unstoppable periphery

Although a dormitory neighborhood, Furnas is anything but quiet. All day long, music and construction work from the houses nearby produce a mixture of low-frequency noise: hammers, drills, and funky basses. People living here always improve their homes at different stages of construction. Jobless people on weekdays, and workers on weekends, mix concrete, pour it into wood molds, mount windows, lay down floor tiles, repair entrance slopes, and paint the walls. Some have been working on their houses for 30 years. The noise of auto-constructors at work embodies modern beliefs in always-progressing conditions for all, funneled by the developmental nation-state since the 1930s—*São Paulo não pode parar!* (São Paulo cannot stop!).

The urban unrest continues at night: youth walk the streets, chatting and laughing out loud. One after another, cars pass with their mounted subwoofers at unimaginably high volume. The funky basses deafen the nerves as the aluminum sheets of my flat's doors and windows become vibrating percussion disks. Subwoofers mounted on cars are the infrastructure used by youth in the peripheries to mark their presence in the neighborhood. Two or three sound-equipped cars in a row can create a pop-up *baile* (dance) funk in the middle of the street.

When the "bandits" of the night end their day, the "workers" and their kids start theirs.[4] At 5.30 am, the school bus organized by the Prefecture repeatedly honks in the street: the kids living nearby are not ready for the pickup. At 6 am, the noise of rolling shutters of garages saturates the air: some residents are going to work and, by then, I have hardly slept—an Uber driver would tell me that many people in Furnas have chronic insomnia.

The sound of power

On the first weekend of my stay in Furnas, the car wash in front of my apartment organizes a *baile* funk: six hours (12-6 am) of uninterrupted loud bass to which slabs, walls, windows, and doors resonate. On the roof slabs of the nearby rented houses, entire families are awake like me, but no one calls the police.[5] Young girls and boys are smoking pot by the fence of my flat's entrance. Bouncers are policing the access to the car wash. At times a luxury car stops by them: they exchange packs (of

3 In Furnas, the slopes of private garages make sidewalksuneven. Hence, people tend to walk in the streets. The few walkable sidewalks are used for parking. People from other neighborhoods used to park and leave their cars for days on the sidewalk near M's house. After pleading with cars' owners, M asked the Subprefecture of Tremembé/Jaçana to plant small trees on that sidewalk.

4 Gabriele de Santis Feltran (2008) describes the dichotomy between workers and bandits as a sedimented discourse in the peripheries of São Paulo.

5 I have been told that there are several reasons for this behavior, such as avoiding the organizers of the *baile* or police violence against teenagers, should they respond.

drugs?) with the driver through the car windows; then another car arrives. Poorly dressed girls walk in the street entirely drunk; the hands of the boys are all over them.

At 8 am, the scream of the priest from the Evangelist church underneath my flat wakes me up: "Fornication brings to hell!" Three times a week, the church has services: the preacher and the believers pray and sing using microphones in the tiny rented room. In those days the whole apartment trembles. An acoustic engineer told me that his Evangelical clients always ask him to oversize their sound equipment. The ministers intend to create an atmosphere of constant tension through high volume services, to produce an experience of peace afterward.

At times, the "state meets the street" (Zacka, 2017), starting with the earsplitting noise of drilling rigs of the operation *Tapa Buraco* (Hole Cover). Many residents lament that the asphalting of street holes is a superficial yet visible intervention for the Regional Prefecture of Tremembé/Jaçana to gather consensus while neglecting more substantial issues. Another day the operator from Sabesp-Basic Sanitation of the State of São Paulo rings the doorbell. He has to check if there are any sources of standing water in my flat that might allow mosquitoes to breed. The Aedes Aegypti is endemic here, responsible for multiple illnesses, including Zika and dengue fever. On the next weekend of the *baile* funk, a squad of the federal military police patrols the neighborhood. On the day of rest, we walk surrounded by machine guns.

The church, drug trafficking, and the state are the three systems of power that dwellers in so-called "informal" settlements in the peripheries navigate in their everyday life – what is informal about them?

Re-imagining spaces of scarcity

Like many illegal settlements in the peripheries of São Paulo, Furnas has neither squares nor green spaces. The necessity for housing has prevailed over the need for public space. People occasionally gather in the streets, sitting at the entrance stairs of their houses, on chairs on the sidewalks, or leaning on parked cars.[6] They meet in bars, bakeries, car repair shops, and beauty salons. They sometimes celebrate birthdays in the garages, the largest rooms of the house. "We made a terrible mistake" admits C, who lives in an adjacent neighborhood in the *morro*: "We focused on building our houses, and we forgot to build the city for our children." During the 80s and 90s, C's generation claimed for access to land, housing, and infrastructure while neglecting public spaces, green areas, and services. "My daughter does not know how to ride a bicycle because there is no street to ride one. We do not have streets; we only have dangerous pathways!" If public space is at the core of modern urbanity (Caldeira, 2000, pp. 299-304), residents of many peripheries of São Paulo are dispossessed of public spaces for outdoor activities at birth.

However, new generations born in Tremembé are repurposing these urban spaces of scarcity. Standing against working-class exploitation and class and race segregation, street artists perform visual, bodily, audiovisual, and popular culture in public spaces and abandoned buildings in neighborhoods near Furnas. Urban farmers and educators challenge capitalist modes of food production and consumption through diffuse urban orchards and pedagogic workshops in interstitial semi-public spaces. Cyberfeminists articulate the periphery as a political territory for feminist strategies of visibility and resistance. Such transforming imagination may turn highly political under the current crisis of Brazilian democracy. These collective identities are marking new territories of belonging and difference and add other meanings to the landscape of Furnas.

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6 The main streets in Furnas are wide enough for one or two cars to pass; the paths between the houses are wide enough for "a man to carry a refrigerator" (Danielle Cavalcanti Klintowitz talking about public spaces in the favelas, Instituto Pólis, March 17, 2018).

The neighborhood emerges as a fragmented territory assembled around geographies of race, gender, class, and age—ranging from the level of auto-constructors negotiating personal interests with regulation and drug trafficking, to residents marking their presence through acoustic territorialization at night and those who need to (re)organize their everyday school/work schedules, to the three systems of power and the geography of "internal orientalism" (Weinstein, 2015, p. 25) that always displaces difference beyond one's neighborhood.

Furnas' portrait forces us to rethink the periphery as an assortment of cultures, histories, and practices assembled in multiple ways by different actors. Ultimately, this implies connecting with its various spatial networks affecting everyday life and opening to new political possibilities.

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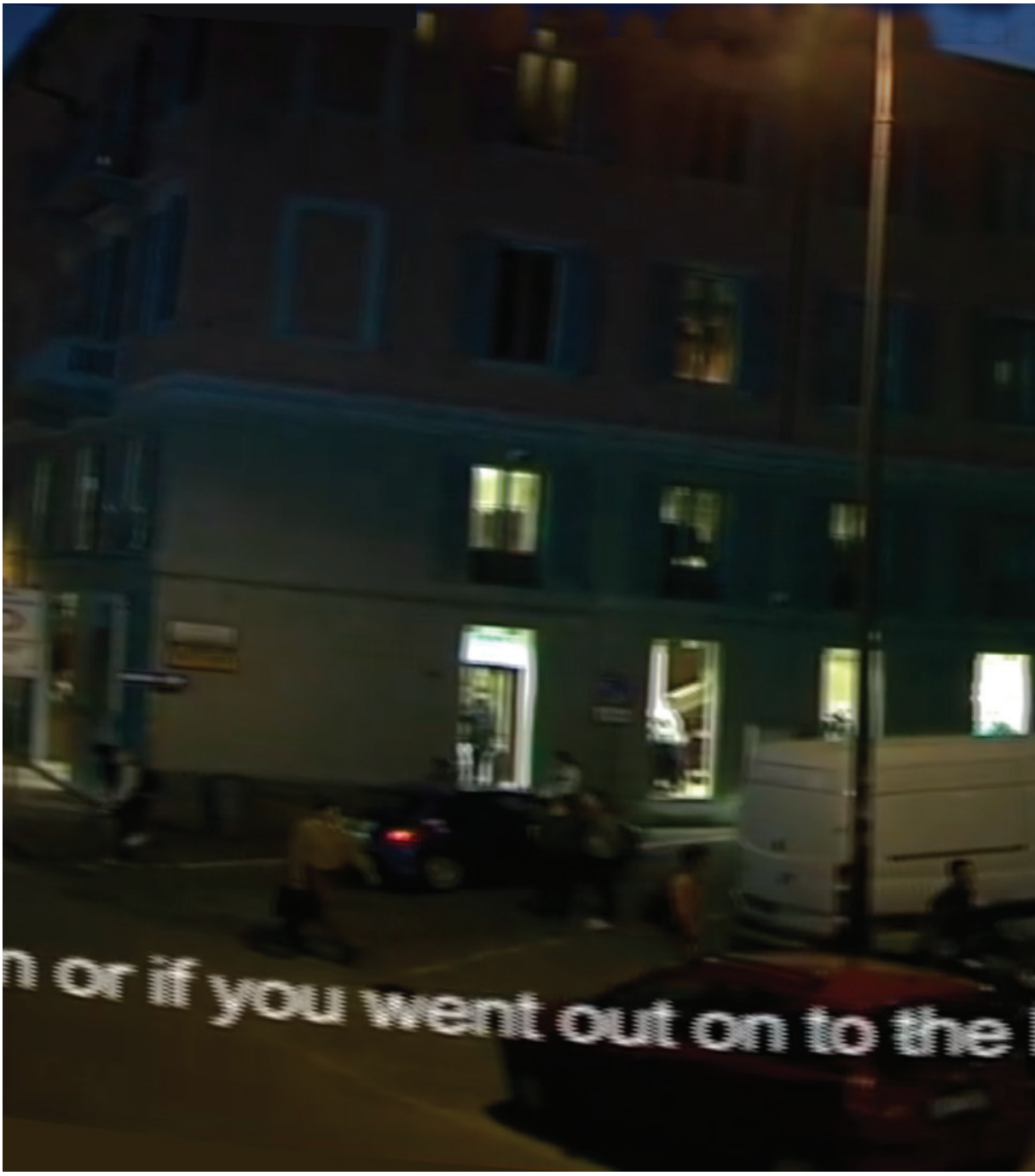

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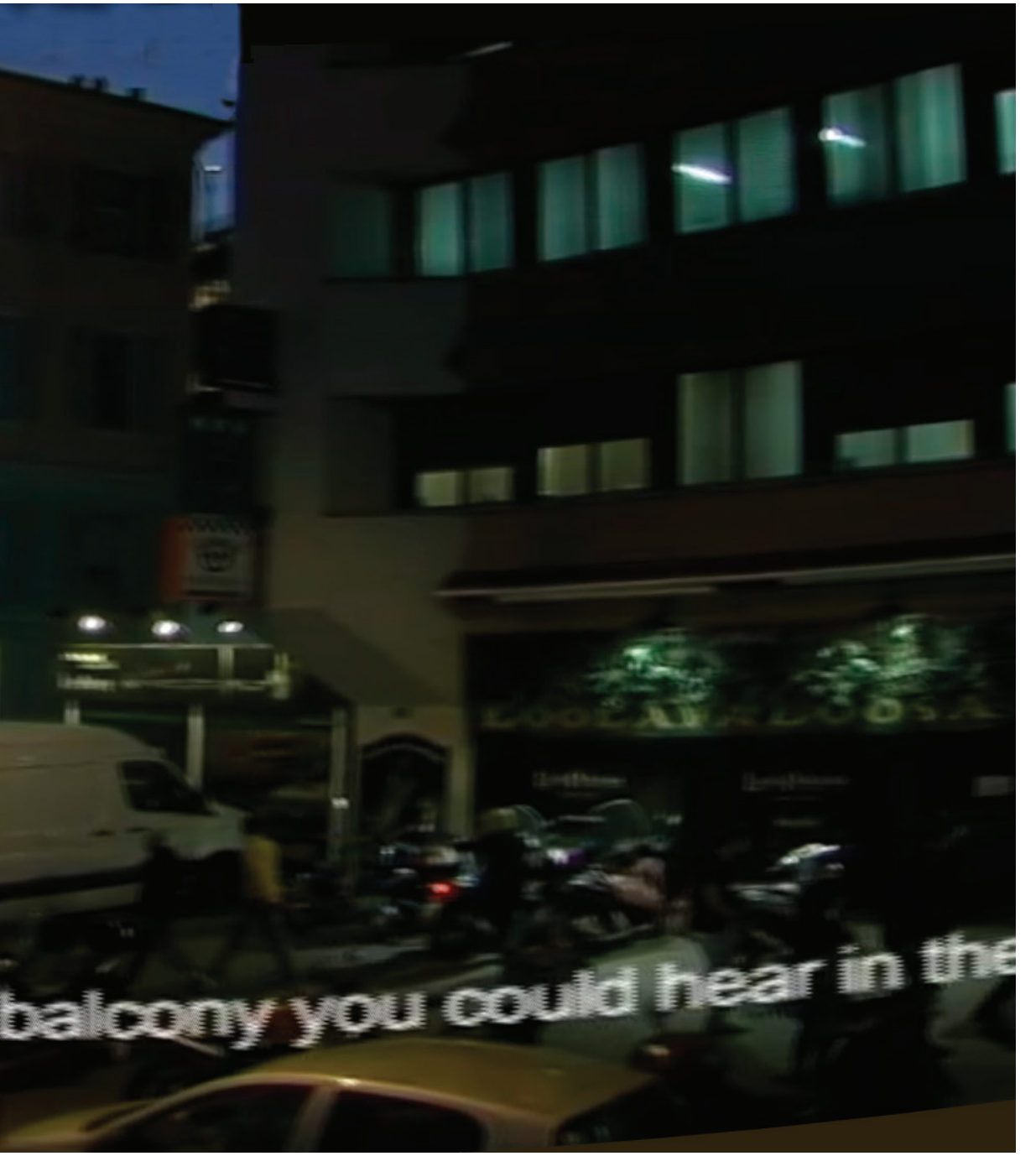

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