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At the Intersection of Identity and Finance: Redefining Value Through the Lens of Affordable Home-ownership¹

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This article analyses how new economic and financial practices shape subjectivities and socialities, in two domains of identity: the renter/owner/co-op owner and race/ethnicity/class/gender. I argue for the inextricable (and mutually constitutive) links between the valuations of property and the valuations of people. Through two years of ethnographic analysis of a low-income ownership programme in New York City, I examine how co-op's residents' experiences in a housing environment whose value is partially screened from the speculative housing market can reveal new insights into housing and the capitalist urban processes.

Keywords: Housing, New York, race and ethnicity, class, gender, value

Introduction

Why does the American ideal of homeownership remain so strongly entrenched in the global collective psyche despite overwhelming proof of its political, economic and social costs? In the current era in which the neoliberal ideology of private ownership prevails, inherent is the idea that owners are more responsible, productive members of society than renters (Basolo 2007; Saegert et al. 2009). In the US, the term 'homeowner' is typically associated with private homeownership of a single-family dwelling. This renter/owner stereotype is so persuasive that it holds true in a place like New York City, where, even in the Upper East Side, the country's wealthiest neighbourhood, 70% of residents are renters (Angotti 2006).

This form of property ownership is not working for a great number of people. In this article, I examine through a detailed analysis of an affordable housing cooperative conceptions of property relations among low-income, urban people of colour as they transition to homeownership. I also consider the role of the Urban Homesteading Assistance Board (UHAB), a 35-year-old non-profit organization in New York City, that assists renters in their transformation into cooperative homeowners. I explore how residents negotiate their new roles as collective owners, rather than individual renters, as well as how these new economic and financial practices shape subjectivities and socialities.

Limited Equity Cooperatives (LECs)

Limited equity cooperatives (LECs) are housing cooperatives in which residents own shares of a building, while the resale value of shares is limited to preserve affordability for future generations of purchasers (Saegert and Benítez 2003). All co-ops UHAB helps create are LECs to ensure the long-term sustainability of affordable housing. Co-ops are a difficult concept to understand, since

¹ I would like to thank my advisor Dr John L. Jackson, Jr. for his guidance and support and Dr Amelia Weinreb for her editorial assistance.

residents own shares and the right to live in their apartments, not the actual apartment itself, whether it is low-income or market-rate. LECs provide an alternative form of homeownership, especially for those who could never afford private ownership, and may also provide a hedge against gentrification (Saegert et al. 2003).

Access to affordable housing, especially by low-income minority households, has been a persistent problem in the United States, but as the global economy entered a prolonged period of economic decline in 2008, the outlook became particularly ominous. The number of households paying over half their income for housing rose to 19.4 million in 2009. At least 7.8 million foreclosure proceedings have begun since 2007, with 3.5 million foreclosures finished between 2008-2010 and another 2.2 million loans in the pipeline (State of the Nation's Housing 2011). Although all groups have been hurt by the housing crisis, low-income and communities of colour are disproportionately affected for three main reasons: more sub-prime and other predatory lending practices occur among African-Americans and Latinos; they have a higher unemployment rate than non-Hispanic whites; and the overall net worth of minority groups is much lower than whites, leaving them with fewer resources to counter their losses in the housing market (State of the Nation's Housing 2009).

Yet even before the foreclosure crisis, many critics questioned the relentless promotion of homeownership as the best solution for all households (Herbert and Belsky 2006; Rohe and Watson 2007). LECs can act as a potential buffer against the effects of the housing crisis and recession, since, as de-commoditized housing is removed from the cycle of private ownership and profit, (Achtenberg and Marcuse 1986; DeFilippis 2004), they have a fixed value.

In many ways, the slippery nature of ownership characterizes the neoliberal logic of late-capitalism. Financial decisions about abstract and complex financial instruments like derivatives are predicated on a general uncertainty and ambiguity about ownership and market responsibilities. The global capital system is overly determined by such slippages and ambiguities. To some extent, the economic crisis of 2008 was predicated on this fact — a disconnect of social/educational capital from the workings of unfettered finance capital — all complicated by race, ethnicity, class and gender that over-determine how people experience the pains and possibilities of a capricious marketplace (see Comaroff and Comaroff 2001; LiPuma and Lee 2004). This volatility of value, in which material items like homes and pensions were thought to be worth a certain amount, turned out to be based on 'fictions of finance' (Maurer 2006:18). The fixity of value people relied on did not exist.

By engaging the two ostensibly separate fields of finance and identity, I offer evidence of a new way of conceptualizing value, arguing for the links between the valuations of property and the valuations of people. How can new understandings of 'value' change ways of thinking about ownership itself, about the states of possessive individualism/collectivism?

Graeber (2001) outlines investments into the multiple conceptualizations of value, linking values to action. He believes the objects people consider most important are those that represent social relations and processes of the material world. The fiscal crisis eviscerated the ideal of the

American Dream — buying your own home — introducing a disconnection between the ideal value of property and the reality of what it is worth. LECs, however, represent alternative value conceptions through the stability of price and a different form of sociality, community and equality.

Furthermore, in a recent article on property and persons under neoliberalism, Hirsch claims that ‘contests about new and old property forms are simultaneously generative of new forms of persons...whose outlook and conduct potentially undermine the conventional property claims’ (2010:347). Building upon his model, I explore whether LECs can offer a challenge to the normative capitalist private ownership regime, while simultaneously (and somewhat ironically) preserving the hegemony of homeownership. While LEC residents are homeowners, they are subject to restrictions free-market owners are not, such as limits on resale value. Does this lead to self-perceptions beyond the renter/owner opposition, a third or hybrid category?

To clarify, I am discussing two domains of identity: the renter/owner/LEC owner and race/ethnicity/class/gender. In this short paper, I focus primarily on the first definition. My question is whether, as collective owners who must work together to make a building successful, LEC residents offer an alternative conception of ownership? In other words, can LECs as a property form generate Hirsch’s ‘new forms of persons’?

‘We went through hell but now we are in heaven and we ain’t leaving from heaven’

Miss Ruby, a former Black Panther who as a teenager was a bodyguard for Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr., describes her experience as the driving force behind the formation of an affordable housing cooperative. She has lived in the building for thirteen years, making her a relative newcomer, since some residents have lived in the building for as long as sixty years. She asked me to refer to her as either Ruby or ‘Mom’. Several residents buy her mother’s day presents. Whenever I left their building or after a late meeting that we attended together, she insisted I call her when I got home to let her know I had returned safely.

In order to begin to provide answers to the questions about the process of learning to be a homeowner, I turn to my two years of ethnographic fieldwork, primarily through a detailed analysis of a co-op I refer to as ‘Home Together’ in the Harlem/Washington Heights area. This is a historically African-American neighbourhood that is experiencing gentrification as well as an influx of Latino immigrants (Jackson 2005; Lao-Mantes and Dávila 2001; Taylor 2002). Home Together’s residents are almost entirely Black — African-Americans, Afro-Caribbeans, and Africans. There are only two Asian households, one Latina resident and one white resident. Ethnic and racial tensions exist among all groups. The neighbourhood’s population, however, is mostly Latino, the majority of whom are Dominican. Lyrics of the music emanating from nearby stores, as well as the language on shop signs are primarily in Spanish.

When residents got notice in 2002 that their building was to be sold to a private landlord, Miss Ruby began to research how it could become a co-op. She consulted with a neighbourhood housing organization and organized tenants to begin the long process of conversion; some

buildings have been in the pipeline for fifteen years. There are twenty units in this five-story walk-up, sixteen of which are now owned and four rented. The building was in horrible physical condition and needed a gut renovation. Previously the building had not been a safe place, with multiple robberies, drug deals, and even a shooting and knifing. She persevered and rid the building itself of known criminals. Residents had lived without heat for two years. The water bill had not been paid for fifteen years, so lines were turned off. Sewage backed up, filling the basement to the ceiling. Many people got sick often, suffering cold, coughs and vomiting. Even in the winter, windows had to be open to avoid the smell.

Most residents moved out for two years (2004-2006) as the building underwent renovation. Many are unhappy with the result since rooms were made smaller (partly because of new zoning regulations and partly because of a corrupt contractor). Some bedrooms barely have space enough for a twin bed, and in kitchens in one line of apartments it is impossible to open the stove and the refrigerator at the same time. The contractor ('Green Hill'), which must be from a Department of Housing and Preservation (HPD) approved list, had a notoriously bad reputation (and has since reorganized under a new name). Since they were rehabilitating four buildings in the neighbourhood at the same time, Green Hill took insulation from Home Together and used it in other buildings. As a result, walls are not insulated so when an alarm clock goes off in one apartment, neighbours are woken up too. The contractors also would have taken the hall lights that Home Together had paid for, but Miss Ruby stopped them.

When a building converts into an LEC, tenants already living there have the option to buy into the corporation and continue to live in their apartments, no matter how many bedrooms or square feet, for the price of \$2500.² This is a very poor building—about half of the residents receive government housing subsidies. While LECs differ in their corporate structures and proprietary leases, in newer ones like Home Together, those who decide to remain renters have rent-stabilized apartments, although a majority of residents must buy for a conversion to occur. Outsiders who move in pay more; about \$35,000, which is still a relatively small amount. Twelve people bought, four rented and four apartments were sold. Surprisingly, UHAB obtained a grant making it possible for incoming tenants to pay only \$2,500. As a result, no mortgages were taken out and residents are not subject to predatory lending practices as individuals. As a co-op, the building has both private and public loans. As in the last year two shareholders have died, two apartments became available for sale. Because of the conditions of the grant Home Together received, the new shareholders of the two apartments will pay \$2650 each, while the grant will pay the difference between the 'real' resale price to the corporation (about \$45,000 per apartment).

Despite numerous health problems, Miss Ruby works extremely hard at keeping up the building and dealing with tenants' complaints and problems. Even though she is no longer Board President, residents still come to her with their grievances rather than go to the current President,

²This did not have to be paid all at once, but in instalments of \$500 each.

Antonia. Residents gave me several possible reasons for this: force of habit; the second President is younger, in her thirties and is not seen as a mother figure (despite having a daughter); Miss Ruby is African-American, while Antonia is the sole Latina resident. A third Board was recently elected—the new President is a white male, so this change in gender and race presumably will affect the social dynamics.

Miss Ruby knows that she is older and not in the best of health, so she is consciously grooming a new generation of leaders, teaching them the skills of managing a co-op. She is the self-appointed ‘internal monitor’ of the co-op and takes seriously the idea of keeping it as affordable housing.

Most residents express happiness and pride to be owners instead of renters, stating that they feel more secure on a personal level (always having a place to live), and that if they stay long enough they will eventually make some money. Only a few see it as stepping-stone to owning another home and most plan on staying indefinitely. The background of residents varies ethnically as well as in terms of previous home-owning experience. In particular, many from the Caribbean are not first-time homeowners, having owned a place in Barbados or Trinidad, but people born in the US are more likely to have grown up in either public housing or rental apartments. The exceptions are mostly Southerners, some of whom grew up in houses their parents owned, but they are first-time homeownership themselves.

Asset Accumulation and Affordability

A major policy issue arises from the tension between the two values of wealth creation for homeowners and balancing the long-term affordability of housing stock. LECs offer a potential for both. Government assistance takes many forms, but with LECs, subsidy retention is the main mechanism. This financial assistance does not subsidize the buyer but rather the place in order to ensure long-term, even permanent affordability. Homeowners still earn equity, just not as much as they would under a private ownership model, but are also exposed to less risk, as we see with the many underwater mortgages and foreclosures. One advantage of subsidy retention is that this one-time subsidy is not just for a few ‘lottery winners’ but stays within the community, so new funding is not necessary for each subsequent owner. In this manner, LECs can preserve low-income and mixed-income housing in gentrifying neighbourhoods (Jacobus and Lubell 2007).

LECs also may act as a potential buffer against the effects of the housing crisis and recession. For example, at Home Together, in the summer of 2010, one owner lost her job and another could not work for several months due to illness. Instead of losing their apartments as they might have in a rental situation, these shareholders negotiated with the Board of Directors and worked out payment schedules.

While LECs protect the building shareholders, whether this process protects the block and community from gentrification or crime is unclear. Transforming into a co-op allowed Home Together’s residents to get rid of the criminals living in and working out of their building, changing the dynamic of the entire building, but their particular block still is full of gang

members and drug dealers. It is the only co-op on the block, although the building next door is in the process of co-op conversion, also under UHAB's guidance. The hope is neighbours will see how well Home Together works and want to emulate them.

One woman born on the block says it is much safer now, like in the 1970s when she was a child (the crack era was difficult on the neighbourhood). Other residents, however, believe that because of the bad economy, the amount of crime and drugs on the block has gotten worse in the last few years.

Conclusion

This research brings together two seemingly disparate fields of anthropological inquiry, the anthropology of finance and the anthropology of identity, to argue for the analytical benefits that accrue from putting these domains in critical dialogue, which few anthropologists have done (but see Ho 2009). In *Ethnicity, Inc.* (2009), the Comaroffs explore how and 'why identity congeals into property... [to] fully grasp emerging patterns of selfhood and sociality' (2009:144), but they focus more on the ways in which race and ethnicity are commodified into new forms of commercial enterprises rather than on how new understandings of 'value' can change ways of thinking about ownership itself and about the stakes of possessive individualism/collectivism. By engaging these two ostensibly separate fields (finance and identity), my project will offer a new way of conceptualizing value, arguing for the inextricable (and mutually constitutive) links between the valuations of property and the valuations of people.

The economic crisis of 2008 and the continuing recession it has spawned highlights the need for anthropological interrogations of cultural life in the context of social transactions that have become increasingly volatile and uncertain (and at least partially by design). Using low-income cooperative housing in a gentrifying neighbourhood as empirical grounding, my work will contribute to a new understanding of identities, subjectivities and socialities as seen through the lens of finance capital's global ubiquity and its seepage into areas of social and 'cultural intimacy' (Herzfeld 2005). Overall, this research offers far-reaching insights into the contemporary financial crisis, which I explored through contested conceptualizations of housing value and human value.

Despite all the issues at Home Together, everyone involved with this building, from residents to UHAB employees to myself, believes this will be a successful co-op. Miss Ruby's hard work, mediation, and cultivation of new younger leaders is key. In the face of vast differences among residents, they are able to work together for their common cause, thanks in large part to her leadership.

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Ambiguous Welcomings: The Identity Construction of Asylum Seekers in Turin ,Italy.

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Based on fieldwork carried out in Turin, Italy between 2009 and 2011, this article focuses on welcoming systems for asylum seekers. In political discourses, refugees are usually described as passive victims or even as a 'social problem'. Local institutions often make an exploitative use of this category. Welcoming projects and plans are in fact increasingly conveying policies based on a charitable approach instead of fostering and enhancing individual empowerment. This influences public opinion and political discourse concerning forced migration. Unequal power relations between asylum seekers and their caretakers help to shape the reception of refugees, and humanitarian associations concur in strengthening this idea. As a consequence of these factors, the right to asylum becomes a mere right to basic services that local institutions should provide. In these terms, the welcoming system for refugees loses its main aim and becomes guided by economic and budgetary concerns.

Keywords: Asylum seekers, Refugees, Welcoming system, Displacement, Migration.

Introduction

In every social context we can find particular philosophies and expressions of welcoming. Strangers and travelers are part of everyday life even in places that are far from the global flow of symbols and people. Welcoming practices are usually very complex. They have different aims and strategies in every context. To 'welcome' a person could mean, according to Latin etymology,¹ to try to bridge the distance to create a relationship. This definition may indicate the potential for welcoming to be an important tool for recognizing and accepting cultural diversity. This reception can also lead to cultural enrichment through the adoption of heteronomic practices and symbols. In spite of this, in a world where the circulation of information is perceived as a fundamental process in support of every social development, the circulation of people is generally not seen in this way.

The common public perception of political refugees and asylum seekers seems to be a clear example of this refusal to see the circulation of people positively. Emblematic of this is how the concept of welcoming changes in relation to refugees and asylum seekers and loses this connotation of receptivity. It no longer involves establishing a dialog with alterity. The concept of welcoming, through a complex process of re-signification, becomes completely

¹ From the Latin 'colligere', to 'collect' with a demonstration of attachment. In the Middle English, alteration (influenced by *wel* well) of *wilcume*, from Old English *wilcuma*, *wilcume*, from *wilcuma* desirable guest akin to Old High German *willicomo* desirable guest; probably both from a prehistoric West Germanic compound.

transformed in this case. New meanings are strictly related to the language of bureaucracy (Fergusson 1994) and efficiency (Castoriadis 1975), thus assuming a mere functional dimension. Welcoming has become an 'operation', the aim of which is to contain and isolate cultural diversity. Welcoming projects created by governmental and non-governmental institutions are guided by economic considerations, to guarantee their efficiency. This is the first step toward reducing people to an 'essentialist' representation, usually based on laws and numbers, which normally establish limits such as quotas and budgets. The construction of the categories of political refugee and asylum seeker is founded on these processes.

This article is based on fieldwork carried out in Turin, Italy between 2009 and 2011, during the so called 'North Africa Emergency'. This was a particular case within the history of the Italian asylum system because when newcomers from Libya arrived in Italy they were automatically channeled into the asylum request procedure. Instead of having the choice of choosing whether to apply or not, they were compelled to enter the asylum procedure. In this sense, asylum seekers became victims of a system that they had not chosen.

Turin had, and still has, an important role in managing the immigration flow in Italy: according to the official data, an average of 22% of welcoming requests in Italy are submitted to the Central Services agency in Turin (Sprar 2011). We are referring here to official data, however, official reports offer a quite confused picture of asylum requests. It was first reported that in 2009, 419 asylum requests were made, mainly by Nigerians, Bangladeshis and Moroccans according to the Osservatorio Interistituzionale sugli Stranieri in Provincia di Torino, Rapporto (2009). But this report, said that 518 asylum requests were made at the local police office (Questura) in the same year. It is not clear whether these include some of those 419 asylum requests or not. The same ambiguity is found in the official 2010 report, which first states that 483 asylum requests were made to the local police office, and later reports that 525 asylum requests were made for political reasons. Because of these unclear data, it is very difficult to have a precise picture of the presence of asylum seekers in the city. Thus, in this article we refer to more delimited but more detailed data, namely those emerging from fieldwork.

Using participant observation and in-depth interviews, we have analyzed the reception of asylum seekers, focusing on the issue of housing, currently one of the most important Italian reception measures. In the first part of the research we looked at the collaboration between citizens and asylum seekers that arose as a response to the insufficient institutional support given to the latter. At the time of our field work in Turin, empty buildings were squatted to give asylum seekers a place to stay. Inhabitants of the city actively helped and offered support in different ways, from gathering household utensils to offering free language courses.

To sketch the relations between formal and informal reception of asylum seekers in Turin, we interviewed both institutional and civil society actors, namely one representative indicated by the municipal government, one supervisor from the province, four caregivers from associations that offered material and psychological support to newly arrived migrants, and one activist from a community center. Throughout the research we also had many conversations with migrants (Vailati 2011). The second part of the study is based on fieldwork that focused on

the arrival of 160 asylum seekers fleeing from Libya and their stay at a reception centre run by the Italian Red Cross in 2011. The newcomers were included within the framework of the so called 'Emergenza Nord Africa 2011' (North Africa Emergency 2011), a specific national reception plan developed by the Italian government and implemented by the 'Protezione Civile' (Civil Protection) agency, which is responsible for managing emergency situations in Italy. As we will show, there is an enormous discrepancy between the system as it was planned, and the effective reception measures. We will first focus on the different levels upon which the social construction of asylum seekers and refugees is built, questioning the definition of forced migrants as passive victims. We consider asylum seekers and refugees as individuals who embody a representation of North-South relationships shaped by international migration (Mezzadra 2006; Massey, Jess 1995). Analytically, we assume that the social construction process is based on three main perspectives: the external, which shows the effects of laws that define and create the legal status of refugee; the internal, which is related to how laws shape individuals, their identities and their subjectivities and the public discourse to grasp aspects of the collective imagination and public representation of the phenomenon. Our intent here is to show how categories of asylum seekers and refugees are socially constructed (Berger, Luckman 1966; Goffman 1961). The process of identity construction, seen through the deconstructive lens used in this article, clearly appears to be a complex process that is based on political, economic and social imaginaries.

Intertwining Levels of Identity Construction

The categories of asylum seeker and refugee are historically built. Through legal discourses, the application of the Geneva Convention's² principles created a political and social category. Spatial and temporal aspects also contribute to this construction process.

There are, in fact, specific places for refugees and asylum seekers. They are specifically organized for the category of forced migrants and have special characteristics, such as being *temporary places*. Places of detention are one example. In the collective imagination, built on media narratives, refugees and asylum seekers are associated with such places. Moreover, media discourses usually link these migrants with marginalized categories such as the homeless or criminals. However, refugees do not naturally belong to these places. They are just 'put' there. This statement might appear obvious. Nonetheless it is important to emphasize its implications.

The institutional definition of *refugees* is in fact related to specific spatial features, in particular to borders and transitory places. Spatially speaking, refugees cross national borders, and once they arrive in a European country they are hosted in specific places. In Italy, these involve different kinds of structures according to the different steps in the evaluation of a permit of stay request and include: reception centers, welcoming centers for asylum seekers, centers of identification and expulsion, police stations and commissions that decide on the outcomes of the request. Another space is the national protection system (SPRAR, Sistema di

² 1951, United Nations Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons

Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati), which, as we will see, should provide housing facilities and integration programs, but only for a small percentage of asylum seekers. The broader space to which asylum seekers and refugees are related to is the national territory whose borders they are not allowed to cross.

Not only places play a relevant role in constructing the category. The image of refugees is also related to a specific temporal structure. In fact, it is difficult to find a category of identity that is as time dependent as asylum seekers, while they are on the complex path that involves complying with bureaucratic and legal proceedings. During this time, practices and social policies related to social inclusion often intensify stigmatization and discrimination. In the Italian reception system, as we will show, one example of this is the introduction of a system in which refugees and asylum seekers must use vouchers instead of cash to make purchases in retail stores. This makes them more visible to society in a stigmatizing way. It also increases their dependency on the national welfare system.

As elsewhere, the permanence of asylum seekers' in Italy is strongly influenced by spatial practices in time. Both dimensions are imposed on them: their space is often limited to camps or detention centres; and the time it will take for authorities to examine an asylum request is unpredictable. Structural elements are hence very relevant; however, the only room for manoeuvre for these migrants to make decisions about their own future is in the occasional loopholes of the asylum system bureaucracy.

In public discourse in Italy, and in the dominant humanitarian discourse, the social definition of the condition of refugees is also shaped by rhetoric. As Vacchiano (2011) points out, refugees or asylum seekers undergo a series of bureaucratic procedures in which they are described and also treated as helpless victims, as individuals who need assistance and the state's protection. The reception system in which they are placed reproduces these stereotypes. It is organized upon the difference between care-givers and care-takers.

'The dominant view of refugees as subjects who are considered "weak and in need of help" is accompanied by an expectation of passivity and gratitude. This is expressed by the refugees in their ability to recognize the indulgent effort that the professional care givers are offering in the name of the hosting society.(...) The idea of humanitarian charity turns rights into concessions, highlighting a representation in which beneficiaries are dependent individuals, and institutions are indulgent actors'. (Vacchiano 2011: 173)

There is an implicit understanding that the refugee will be passive (Van Aken 2005). In many European contexts we can find a correspondence between the rhetoric of the humanitarian discourse that treats asylum seekers with pity, and the way that reception procedures are organized. An example is the construction of their image as victims to present themselves as suitable candidates for an asylum request. The consequences of this representation strongly influence the role of the reception system, which constantly reproduces the image of the refugees as beneficiaries of social services. Connected to this approach, in

particular in Italy, what emerges is the contradiction of a system unable to enhance asylum seekers' autonomy. In fact, the reception system impedes the achievement of autonomy, by placing individuals in a situation of dependency. A refugee cannot decide to leave the system without renouncing the opportunity to receive a permit to stay. Moreover, the impediments to the individuals' autonomy are partly due to the fact that the Italian reception system is overcrowded because of the limited amount of space in refugee shelters.

In the last three years, the limited number of places available in the national welcoming system 'sistema di Protezione per rifugiati e richiedenti asilo' (SPRAR), only 3,000 per year, excluded many people from any support. One care-giver emphasized in an interview in 2009.

'Right now, after two years, the situation has changed completely, mainly because the time available for the integration process has been reduced to half of the previous amount of time. While a few years ago asylum seekers could stay in the welcoming system for a year or longer, they are now only allowed to stay for six months, which is too short a time to complete the integration process. This is due to an increase in the number of applicants: while a few years ago there were 10 people waiting; we now have a waiting list of 300'.

(Interview with a member of ARCI, an Italian association that is contracted by SPRAR to provide services to refugees 31/03/2009).

This statement shows the complexity of a system in which the lack of structure clashes with the number of requests and highlights the limits of the welcoming system. It is emblematic that rhetoric about the dis-functionality of the system does not emphasize the lack of facilities, but the number of migrants' that apply for protection. The migrant is perceived as a number on a waiting list. His or her autonomy and agency are not mentioned.

The Global Context and the Organization of the Welcoming System for Asylum Seekers in Italy

There is an ongoing debate in the migration literature about the concept of the state as an interpretative category for society. We will only address this question here briefly to introduce the role of the nation-state and its laws in asylum rights related issues. Transnationalist scholars have criticized so called 'methodological nationalism' (Glick Schiller, Çağlar 2011). From this perspective, the analysis of migration phenomena, including what has been arguably 'forced migration', should not be confined to nation states as the unit that contains societies, but rather by 'looking to the multiple ties and interactions that link people or institutions across the borders of nation-states' (Vertovec 1999: 447).

We share this understanding, and this paper is an attempt to apply it to the categories of refugees and asylum seekers, which are by definition dependent on the state's protection and welfare. Indeed, to deconstruct the image of refugees and asylum seekers as victims, we need to emphasize the link between state territory and personal identity. Although mobility in the global north is usually represented in public discourse as positive, movements from the global

south are described as unnatural or anomalous. We think that this distinction is being challenged by the increasing entanglement of reasons for migration and the growing complexity of migration phenomena. Migration exists in the global South as well as in the global North. The fundamental difference is the right to have access to countries, based on a system of visas and the length of stay allowed.

In this article, we focus on the relevance of state actors in the reception of refugees and asylum seekers, since they are the ones who provide migrants the access to social welfare and reception infrastructure.

The state, through laws and rules that are implemented at various territorial levels, usually defines who is part of it and who is excluded. These processes of exclusion and inclusion are fundamental to the analysis of the experience of asylum seekers. As the definitions *economic migrants* and *forced migrants* differentiate migrants based on the reasons that induce migration, they clearly assume that migrants travel voluntarily for economic reasons, or to the contrary, that the only reasons for migration are socio-political and that individuals have no control over their situation and must flee. From an anthropological point of view, this dichotomy appears to be rigid because in many cases the reasons for emigration are based on a combination of economic and sociopolitical causes (Hansen, Sorensen 2013). However, this distinction is still the basis for the definition of legal status: these two forms of migration among the EU's member states occur through different channels, that is through the labor market or an institutional protection system.

The right to asylum allows a person who is persecuted for political opinions or religious beliefs in his or her own country to request protection from another sovereign authority. According to this principle, asylum seekers are granted a permit to stay based on the socio-political context of their home country. The Italian Constitution (Article 10, paragraph 3) states: 'The foreigner who is denied in his own country the real exercise of the democratic liberties guaranteed by the Italian Constitution, has the right of asylum in the territory of the Republic, in accordance with the conditions established by law'.

An asylum seeker is a person who is waiting to obtain refugee status. From a legal point of view, asylum seekers are in a transition phase: they are allowed to stay in the country until the authorities that regulate asylum make a decision. In Italy, if they obtain refugee status or another form of international protection they will be allowed to stay in the country for a certain amount of time (from 1 to 5 years). If the right to asylum is denied, the person will be required to leave the country.

In this liminal phase, as we noticed during our participant observation, refugees and asylum seekers regularly confront discrimination and stigmatization. The use of public transportation is emblematic. In Turin, care-givers working for the Red Cross had to make agreements with the local transportation system to allow refugees to use buses for free. Usually, they must show their Red Cross identification document. Payment through vouchers has been introduced and adopted for all people who came from Libya asking for protection after the outbreak of the revolts in January 2011.

SPRAR (SPRAR 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011) is the official Italian organization that coordinates the welcoming practices.³ National and European funds are distributed to local public administrations and private associations to ensure an effective reception system for asylum seekers and refugees. From 2008 to 2013, Italy received around 21 million euros from the European Refugee Fund (FER) as a co-funding contribution for welcoming activities.

At a local level, the integrated reception activities include lodging, meals, and complementary activities such as the provision of information and assistance, through the creation of customized pathways to socio-economic inclusion. Mainly based on the work of civil society and Catholic associations, the Italian national reception program is organized to provide funding to these associations. Locally, the associations also cooperate with other institutions, private and public, to facilitate access to the job market.

The response to the 'North Africa Emergency 2011' (ENA) was managed by Italian civil protection agencies (Protezione Civile). The Italian government, in cooperation with the *Unione Province Italiane* (Union of Italian Provinces, a local administrative division), the *Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani* (Association of Italian Municipalities) and *Protezione Civile*, established a plan to receive 50,000 people. This plan operated alongside the national SPRAR program.

In this way, the flow of asylum seekers entering Italy from Libya has been differentiated from all other asylum claims. The Italian government abused the right to asylum in the management of migration movements: many of the asylum seekers or refugees that we have met during our fieldwork told us that the procedure for asylum request had been imposed as a standard measure by authorities especially after the war in Libya. Every person was compelled to sign the document of asylum request upon arrival.

Refugees' Self-representations

The construction of self-representation is strongly influenced by the spaces in which it occurs. In this section our analysis is based on fieldwork observation at two different forms of housing for refugees in Turin. The first was conducted at illegally occupied buildings in which migrants were living. Although migrants have squatted in the past, and city policies have previously recognized *multiculturalism* and *diversity*, the squatting of abandoned buildings by asylum seekers was a significant urban phenomenon between 2008 and 2010 in Turin. Additional fieldwork was conducted at a reception center managed by the Italian Red Cross that has been hosting asylum seekers since 2008 and is located in the suburbs of Turin.

The field-work was undoubtedly influenced by our position as white, young and European researchers. Whereas in the beginning we noticed that our interactions were marked by distance, over time we built a trustworthy relationship introducing some asylum seekers to our friends and sharing other social activities such as visiting art exhibitions.

We met a large number of refugees and asylum seekers during the years of research. They can be differentiated by country of origin, age, education, professional background,

ambitions and expectations. Their experiences in terms of getting acquainted with the local societies and in coping with the constraints that they had to face were also very diverse depending on their previous experiences, personal skills and competencies not only in professional but also in social terms.

Some important moments of transition can be identified in the asylum seekers' path. The first is the moment in which subjectivity begins to be shaped. This happens when a person applies for asylum. The asylum procedure begins with an identification procedure: a photograph and the finger prints of each individual are taken. A new identity is shaped according to rules of national belonging. As in many other migrations, applicants are often called by a different name: misunderstandings of language and pronunciation upon arrival in a new country commonly lead to a person using a new name. As noticed during the fieldwork, in the places where these procedures are carried out, the border is intrinsically present. Identity is shaped by the duality of belonging-not belonging, which is also made evident in the way these spaces are configured.

Secondly, it is important to examine not only how governments manage large influxes of refugees, but also how immigration policies or their absence help or hinder the process of social inclusion from the point of view of the refugees themselves. According to Korac (2003) the lack of a state-organized attempt to meet the refugees' needs forced them to rely on their personal skills and resources to find their way into new societies. They need to form networks to build an alternative self-help system.

Despite the considerable problems experienced by refugees in Italy, including a sense of insecurity in planning their future and the difficulties in achieving minimal financial security, refugees have a certain degree of agency in the Italian context, due to the nature of the ties they are able to develop with local inhabitants

For people living for a long time in welcoming facilities in Turin, the possibility of creating networks with other inhabitants arises and unfolds to the extent to which people are free to move within the city. Through such networks they then start basic income-earning activities such as bicycle repairing, or gathering metal that they can sell in city markets.

As Putnam states, 'The perception that the native and the new culture are not set in opposition strengthened the adaptability of refugees to the new environment, because it encouraged their openness to differences between the cultures and people. It enabled their openness and willingness to invest in building "bridging social capital", that requires that we "transcend our social and political and professional identities to connect with people unlike ourselves"' (Putnam, 2000: 411, in Korac 2003:14)

This 'bridging social capital' tends to compensate, to some extent, for their dissatisfaction with the quality of their functional integration. This attempt is important and could be considered an interconnection, based on basic needs, between local societies and asylum seekers (Feldman Bianco 2009; Glick Schiller, Çağlar 2011). But, due to their invisibility, these processes still remain insignificant.

According to Harrell-Bond (1999) the way in which refugees are 'helped' may itself undermine their personal coping strategies. This may threaten not only their individual life

prospects, but also their ability to use the potential they bring to receiving societies. For example, the characterization of asylum seekers and refugees as helpless and unaware is confirmed by statements from government workers and other caregivers. They define asylum seekers as ‘applicants’, ‘in need of help’, as ‘hopeless’. A supposedly low cultural and educational level is usually the main element in the caregiver’s imagination. In the words of one caregiver, ‘What I have noticed in the interviews we made and in everything that we did for them (refugees) is that they all have very little experience (in terms of education). Very little education, they can barely write or read. Maybe it is also the culturally limited context that they come from that makes them behave that way ...’ (Interview with a Red Cross caregiver 15/06/2011). During the same interview, this interviewee also gave indications of the imbalanced power relations between asylum seekers and care givers saying, ‘If you want to stay here you simply have to do what we tell you. Otherwise, if you do not want to stay here, you see where the door is, and you can just leave’.

It is certainly true that refugees need some help after arrival, and the welcoming system should provide them some benefits. However, it is the paternalistic approach to their needs that we are questioning. The fact that they are given vouchers instead of cash, the fact that they are being assisted by the national protection system, transforms them into beneficiaries of services provided by care givers and institutions. In Turin, during their stay in reception centers or in other lodgings, they usually establish contacts with politically engaged associations that work for the rights of refugees and migrants. This is likely to happen because these associations have been working at the local level for many years gathering important knowledge about actors, places and institutions involved in the reception of asylum seekers. In this way, individuals gain awareness as political and social actors who defend their rights and start claiming these rights. The most common strategies for speaking out are organized demonstrations in the city and at the reception centers. The refugees step out of their role of helpless people and act as individuals who are entitled to claim rights. However, in some cases, the paternalist approach plays an important role, as we can see in the words of a person interviewed who spoke about a strike that had been organized at the reception center: ‘Four people came to me and woke me up at midnight, saying “we are going to strike tomorrow”. I said “things will not be better just because you strike. It’s better to speak to the director first, it’s better to tell him what we need. He will understand everything!”’ (Interview with an asylum seeker in the reception center 30/06/2011).

Here the role of hierarchies inside the center is underlined. They become aware of their situation and start organizing strikes and protests, although they live under constant pressure and fear. An asylum seeker at the reception center said, ‘You get me? When we have a problem, you know we have to be united. When somebody has a problem we have a meeting among us, to solve the problem but there is no need to fight. It’s not necessary. All right! Because when we came here, the chief told us that if there is any fight here, if anybody fights here he will kick that person out. And then when he sends you out, you do not know where to go. You do not know what is going to happen. So you have to be quiet and ... calm down so that you can understand each other and you know. It’s working’. (23/06/2011)

At this stage, for refugees and asylum seekers it is still difficult to understand the complexity of the reception system. It appears to them as a black box. However, they are aware of their precarious situation and, in some cases, they start raising their voices to claim their rights. It can be said that at the beginning the asylum seeker and refugee perceives him or herself primarily as a migrant, a person travelling. Schengen borders are no different from other previously crossed borders.

However, there is a difference in the way migrants perceive entering the EU region and other regions. Europe is usually represented as a rich and 'advanced' region. Consequently, in the European peoples' imaginary, refugees usually flee from their country towards some country of the global North to improve their life. However, evidence shows that in most cases their migratory path has been long and consists of several intermediate stages, and that Italy or Europe are not final destinations. This shows that they are not inexperienced migrants, but people who already have a history of mobility.

The self-representation construction process is obviously related to the possibility to seek asylum and get support and acceptance in a European country. The asylum seekers we interviewed perceived of themselves as people allowed to have access to the 'socially advanced' Western societies. For some, this new status is accompanied by a perception of being saved, or of being in a much easier condition than that experienced in their home country or during the trip to Europe. The feeling of being saved has been particularly evident in our fieldwork, because of the fact that the reception center was run by the Red Cross, which uses a charitable approach. This certainly implied that the self-representation of the care givers, and the rhetoric used was often based on the concepts of *need* and *help*. The position as *saviors* with which the professional caregivers identify themselves is related to the public image of the Red Cross in general. During a period of humanitarian emergency, they see themselves in the role of the *helpful* towards the *helpless*. In fact, the attitude expressed by those who have the institutional role of caregivers is that they are *saviors* who provide care services to people in need, using the static image of the refugee as a disoriented and desperate castaway.

An important point is the interview, during which a decision is made whether a person is allowed to stay in the country or not. While awaiting the interview applicants usually live in temporary housing situations such as welcome centers or camps. This period usually lasts from six months to one and a half years, depending on the efficiency of the territorial commissions. Participant observation at a refugee reception center close to Turin has shown how the relation to people and places changes during their stay. At first, the applicant's aim in daily activities is to acquire familiarity with other residents, other applicants and professional caregivers. Most also spend time getting to know places such as the camp and the urban environment outside the camp. The need to be autonomous in managing their own spaces and activities increases. The need to redesign their experience and refocus their life goals in relation to the new condition also grows.

The applicants gradually become aware of the fact that the spaces of their actions are embedded in a complex organizational and legislative system. They rarely have the opportunity to understand the exact mechanisms that they are subject to. Our research highlighted various

causes: one is related to the poor foreign language skills of the caregivers, who spoke little English. Another is related to the lack of willingness of the caregivers to explain the complexity of the reception system's administration. This lack of clarity in defining the situation creates frustration in the interviewed refugees, a feeling of powerlessness as well as uncertainty. Somehow the situation is as if it was worse than being in prison. Their stay in the reception center is indefinite, even if it is temporary, and the reason for it is not clear. Applicants did not receive information about how to follow the bureaucratic procedures for receiving a residence permit, or about how long it will take to analyze. They are not provided with any detailed information about possible errors in their application, about what institutions are responsible for the process, and the implications of the legal procedures. Hence, given the lack of information about the functioning of the system as a whole, asylum seekers and refugees develop a growing perception of being treated as if they were children. One person living at the reception center told us: 'They treat us like children, but we are all grown-ups!' (Interview with an asylum seeker at the reception center, 15/06/2011). When we asked to explain, he said that the caregivers do not understand them when they speak, and vice versa, because they do not speak English very well. Moreover, the caregivers tell them what to do and what not to do, what is correct or incorrect behavior. The asylum seeker emphasizes it is much more pressure than a parent places on a child.

The complexity embedded in these relationships, combined with the need for caregivers to maintain control at the center, led to the adoption of the so called strategies of voice (Hirschman 1970). In this practice, strikes, demonstrations, and other expressions of dissent that are more or less violent, are the most common strategies. During the research at the reception center the asylum seekers conducted two strikes. The reason was the perception that they were being treated differently from other asylum seekers at a reception center nearby. The different treatment involved different amounts of money that they were given daily, and different food provisions. Communication among people at the two different centers was common. They originated from relations of friendship and solidarity that had developed over time, partly as a consequence of the frequent displacement of people from one reception center to the other carried out by the authorities managing the reception center. During the strikes, asylum seekers refused to show up at the usual mealtime, signaling a break in the everyday routine, and putting themselves in opposition to the rules established by the Red Cross staff. From an external point of view we could say that the applicant finds him or herself in a situation of structural violence (Galtung 1969). We use this term to refer to a form of violence in which some social structures or social institutions purportedly harm people by denying their basic needs. Hence, it is not an institutional violation of rights that establishes this kind of violence, but an entire system that controls and acts invisibly upon people. In particular, in the case study in Turin, this form of violence was evident to the extent that access to certain services was impeded or hindered. One example is that there were no agreements reached for the free use of public transportation, and that the asylum seekers could rarely choose where they wanted to stay: their assignments to and movements among reception structures were decided by higher authorities. In other words, structural violence becomes visible in the agency

of the authorities. In cases when there is no specific law or the possibility to broadly interpret the law, authorities and bureaucrats happen to have more power, which means that they can decide about practical aspects of procedural implementation. As a consequence, it is increasingly difficult for asylum seekers to clearly understand the functioning of the entire reception process.

Public Discourses: Villains or Victims?

As we have mentioned, the state actors and institutions that work at the national and regional level have a crucial role in the social construction of the refugee, both *de jure* and *de facto*, defining their legal status and the practices they must comply with. The state's policies and decisions about immigration and refugees are often highly influential on the media, and consequently on the public perception of refugees. The idea of an immigrant *invasion* created by right-wing political parties and spread by the mass media, is still a powerful discourse that highly influences the imaginary of citizens.

In the public discourse, the word *refugee* evokes ambiguous images often accompanied by a sentiment of compassion and hostility. The media provides incomplete news and inaccurate accounts. It often generates confusion in public opinion, making it difficult for people to distinguish the difference between categories of immigrants. Italian public discourse often muddles labels such as *immigrant*, *clandestine*, *irregular*, *illegal*, *refugee*, and *asylum seeker*. A similar confusion surrounds the places where refugees are housed: in the public discourse they are often vaguely called *camps*. There is no distinction made between the different kinds of reception structures that actually exist: reception structures and identification and expulsion camps for illegal immigrants are referred to with the same term.

In general, the portrayal of asylum seekers and refugees alternates the idea of victim with the idea of villain. The negative labels also include the notion of that *immigrants live at government expense*, which defines refugees and asylum seekers as exploiters of the state's economic and social assistance resources. According to the legal definition, an asylum seeker and refugee is a victim of conflicts and persecution in his own country, from which she is escaping. This makes them a victim in the eyes of those who perceive themselves as saviors. In the collective imaginary, refugees are victims because they are forced to leave their country, which was a safe place that turned unsafe after war, political persecution or climate changes.

The image of the refugee presented by the media as someone deserving pity is based on the fact that by law those granted asylum are victims, and as a consequence are treated as such by the welcoming system. In Turin, as in many other Italian cities, the welcoming system offers basic forms of social intervention in places that were planned for marginal categories of people and not exclusively for asylum seekers or refugees. These spaces are shared with the homeless, drug addicts, etc. The welcoming system also offers a first social and professional integration. This image sticks to the asylum seekers, identifying them as being responsible for deficits in the everyday life of the host society. Instead of being perceived as capable individuals, with agency and the capacity for interaction and integration, refugees are labeled by public discourse

as passive victims. While economics reduces those people to numbers, the public imaginary emphasizes their uselessness.

Conclusions

Throughout this article we have tried to provide an interpretation about how asylum seeker and refugee are socially constructed categories. The two levels have been kept distinct here to grasp the complexity of this phenomenon. External structures such as the legal system and public discourse contribute to the construction of migrants as *refugees* and how the latter perceive themselves. Individuals seem bounded within these discourses.

Process analysis has emphasized the dynamic nature of identity construction (Bohmer, Shuman 2007; McGhee 2006; Selm Thorburn, Van 1998; Vas Dev 2009). People labelled by a system develop tools to cope with the transitional phases established by bureaucracy, laws and funding. Migrants progressively define themselves as asylum seekers and then as refugees, while public discourse shapes an ambiguous image of refugees as victims or villains. The exploitation of the public discourse by humanitarian associations, local operators and by national policies contributes to spreading the idea of refugees as passive victims.

Although being victim of persecution is a prerequisite for obtaining refugee status or other forms of international and national protection, we have tried to show that there is a second victimization process that takes place in the societies of arrival: it is precisely this process that we are addressing and questioning when speaking about asylum seekers as 'passive victims'. Welcoming projects are in fact increasingly implementing policies that reinforce dependency instead of fostering and enhancing individual and group empowerment. This leads individuals that are already victims in their home societies to become victims once more, namely of bureaucratic mechanisms and a welcoming system that is not transparent enough to be fully understood and dealt with by newcomers.

This delicate situation is compounded by problems internal to the complex and not fully functioning welcoming system, which lacks suitable facilities and funding for the number of refugees it must accommodate (SPRAR 2009). Although European Union discourse emphasizes the importance of welcoming refugees (Herzfeld 1992), the work of the Italian government is not as effective as the situation requires. There is a clear contradiction between humanitarian aspirations and concrete efficiency. The notion of efficiency, which is also a category used by public institutions to justify their operations, appears here to be used as a ploy. Nominally, its function is to make it possible to care for a wider range of people, but practically it re-creates a stereotype functional to the contemporary neoliberal nation-state system.

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her recent stage performances⁴ and of her activism as a ‘leftist feminist transsexual’, I describe the process by which Esmeray became a key informant in my anthropological research. In an attempt to understand critically the performative modalities (social poetics, embodied emotions) of her activism,⁵ the analysis offered here draws primarily on her aesthetics of self-representation, leaving in the background other forms of discourse, such as our interviews. In terms of the politics of writing, I believe that, thus, I exert less power in translating my informant’s choices, agency and activism.

Esmeray’s social poetics and aesthetics are in many ways those of a discriminated persona – as a *transeksüel* and feminist activist, and Kurdish immigrant in Istanbul. They are extremely useful in attempting to understand critically how people engage with emotions when they perform activism in the centre of Istanbul.⁶ In other words, by investing on her ‘otherness’ as a transvestite, a Kurdish immigrant and a feminist, Esmeray exercises a cultural critique on sexual and gender prejudices and on social and ethnic discrimination. More specifically, since her double displacement from man to woman and from an Anatolian village to the megacity of Istanbul, she became a marginal/liminal person who experienced civic and gender discriminations, sexual abuse and violence, as well as economic poverty, social exclusion and precariousness.⁷ In a way, she has constantly experienced the neoliberal condition of precariousness as an impoverished Kurdish immigrant and as *transeksüel*, who

into the discussion of those categories in the Turkish and the global cultural and political context. On this topic, see Robert and Kandiyoti (1988), Selek (2001), Kadiyoti (2006), Akin (2009), Öktem (2008). For an interesting anthropological survey regarding ‘transgender studies’ and relevant political activism after the 1990s, see Valentine (2007).

³ *Me and Nuri Bala* by Melissa Önel, released in 2010.

⁴ Esmeray has produced two autobiographical plays. *Cadinin Bohçası* was first staged in 2007 at the Bilgi University 2007, followed by its sequel, *Cadinin Kopçası* in 2009. Both plays are actually stand-up comedies and have been presented in university campuses and coffee-theatres in Turkey and recently in Germany and France.

⁵ On this issue I am in line with the main ideas argued in the works *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986) and *The Predicament of Culture* (Clifford 1988) which raise questions on power, representation and hermeneutics involving anthropologists and their informants. In addition, I found inspiring Michael Herzfeld’s study (1997) of his privileged informant, the writer Nenedakis, as well as the collective volume *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (Marcus and Fischer 1986). However, the outstanding ethnography by Paul Rabinow *Reflexions of Fieldwork in Morocco* (1977) is the main work that always made me search for alternative ways of critically understanding the other and the self and for writing respecting the Other’s devices. Rabinow was looking for informants with an element of ‘otherness’ in their own society in order to establish a critical dialogue with anthropological hermeneutics.

⁶ This fieldwork started in 2008 and was funded for 4 years (2009-10, 2012-13) by the Research Committee of the University of Macedonia. The project focused on people and on space as lived experience in Beyoğlu. This project, still in process, has firstly focused on Amargi, a feminist association where I met Esmeray, and later on different artistic and discursive events (*Becoming Istanbul*). For relevant publications on this project, see Tsibiridou (2013a, 2013b) and Tsibiridou and Palantzas (2014).

⁷ The word ‘precariousness’ has usually been used to describe the economic and the wider instability under neoliberal governance. See, for example, Spyridakis (2014), Athanassiou (2011), Atasoy (2009).

has been subjected to multiple exclusion from citizenship virtues, from the right to work (except for engaging in prostitution), as well as from the right to a home and to the use of her mother tongue. By engaging in social poetics, Esmeray's activism opens an interesting discussion in political anthropology. She links gender constructions, sexuality and citizenship to the liminal condition of people who transgress normality, sexually, ethnically and socially. This encourages us to pay attention to the dynamics of discrimination and to the power practices that Esmeray, as an ambiguous and liminal person, both submits to *and* subvert. However, the move from a form of public social activism that makes use of old methods (old jokes and grotesque ironic comments) for new purposes (feminist activism) to a modern one (autobiographic theatre and film) in order to fight old stereotypical assumptions (violence against women and patriarchal values) derives from her engagement with, as she says, a Western feminist critique and leftist ideology. Esmeray's liminality gives her the power to transgress dominant gender assumptions and social discriminations when she decides to use her otherness positively, with the aim to construct a useful cultural critique for the benefit of the majority of the population.

As Esmeray openly declares in the advertisement of her theatrical plays, her move to Istanbul at the age of thirteen marked her life. She experienced this migration as a rite of passage; the one-way journey to Istanbul was part of the necessary displacement that all boys in her Kurdish village in the Eastern provinces of Anatolia went through at the start of their adolescence. However, it is not coincidental that, following her displacement, all her experiences as a liminal person (sexually, ethnically, economically and socially) have, in anthropological terms,⁸ been constructed and deeply transformed in the controversial space of Beyoğlu.⁹ This neighbourhood, characterized by Western modernity in the Ottoman Empire, was firstly inhabited by non-Muslim minorities (up to the 1960s), and has since been populated by people engaged in the illegal sex industry and by transsexuals, immigrants, artists and political activists. Moreover, in the 20th century, its central Taksim square became the main centre for social protest. However, after the 1980 *coup d'état* in Turkey (Öktem 2011) and under AKP's governance, both the Beyoğlu neighbourhood and Taksim square were reclaimed by neoliberal and Islamist real-estate gentrification projects for entertainment, shopping and commercial enterprise generally.

Istanbul, and in particular the Beyoğlu neighbourhood where Esmeray has been residing for the last twenty-five years, seem to play a predominant role in the consolidation of multiple experiences of liminality in terms of urban space (Low 2003, Pardo 1996). Here,

⁸ I am trying to broaden Victor Turner's concept of 'liminality' (1969) in order to include recent modalities of permanent passage and instability that some people are experiencing in their everyday life. In modern times, people coming from minorities experience multiple discriminations and, under neoliberal governance, people from the majority increasingly risk to experience precariousness (Tsibiridou 2013b). For further interesting cases on marginality, minoritization, liminality and transgression in the Mediterranean context, see the indicative works of Pardo (1996), Tsibiridou (2000, 2007, 2011) and Spyridakis (2014).

⁹ We cannot avoid the association with liminality and in-between condition of people who are accused of transgressing normality in the ambiguity of the district of Beyoğlu.

since the 1980 *coup d'état* the neoliberal agenda has included the further impoverishment of Turkish migrants who, under pressure from the above mentioned gentrification projects, have been forced to move to ghettos and to the poor settlements at the outskirts of the city or to live as outcasts at the edges of Beyoğlu, beneath the Tarlabasi highway.

These impoverished people are often of Kurdish or Roma origin. As a *transeksüel* living in Beyoğlu, for Esmeray neoliberal governance generated additional problems, such as the exclusion from the neighbourhood in which she lived and worked since 1975 under conditions of mutual tolerance with the local population.¹⁰ Thus, these impoverished people are gradually becoming invisible. The gentrification project has included, among other things, the closing of official brothels in 1986 (Altınay 2008), practices of redevelopment and intensive consumerism (Navaro-Yashin 2006, Atasoy 2009) and the commodification of the urban-space through real-estate projects, market expansion and touristic development.

To all the aforementioned civil and social exclusions we need to add Esmeray's intentional choice to act as a feminist fighting the militaristic Turkish state and the hypocritical patriarchal habits of the majority of the Turkish population; two phenomena that feed each other (Altınay 2004, Kaplan 2006, Kandiyoti 2006).

Soon after I started my fieldwork in October 2008, I met Esmeray in the bookshop of the feminist association Amargi. In the following months I met her many times there and in the many cafés in Tünel, right in the heart of Beyoğlu. We engaged in several conversations and I participated in many group meetings. I attended Esmeray's performances and joined her at other social events (such as those surrounding the municipal elections). We also came across each other often in the Beyoğlu neighbourhood. I was attracted more by her personality, spontaneous sense of humour and optimism than by her exoticism as a *transeksüel*. However, I needed to understand how her sharp and effective feminist critique touched her different audiences. For this reason, and because various social events were bringing together secular feminists, LBTs (lesbian, bisexual and transsexual) and religious women activists,¹¹ I decided to focus on the case-study of Esmeray. I hoped that I would be able to understand the impact of feminist critique and emotions, as they are used through local

¹⁰ The departure of Greeks extinguished the bright lights of Western modernity in the neighbourhood of Peran (meaning 'the place beyond'), now Beyoğlu. It was there that outlaws and people at the margins of society settled after 1973, some of them opening brothels with transvestites. Since the dictatorship of 1980, and the collaboration of the governing élite with neoliberal entrepreneurs, Western-type nightlife started gradually to return to Istanbul, transforming stores and private residencies in the district of Beyoğlu – especially around the spaces that came to represent the image of the area – into commodities; mainly, tourist attractions and places of entertainment (Navaro-Yashin 2006, Öncü 2006, Mills 2006, Aytar and Keskin 2003). Groups of activists and separatists are still active in the area. However, under constant police supervision, the main streets are cleared of transvestites, who are often pushed away, in the darker alleys behind the high street (Robert and Kandiyoti 1988, Kandiyoti 2006).

¹¹ It seems to me that their union, under the slogan 'Birbirimize Sahip Çikiyoruz' (keeping an eye on each other; see, on this, the detailed analysis by Eirini Avramopoulou 2013), brings out a new approach among the social movements: engaging with trans-individual emotional and embodied experiences.

social poetics in order to produce a cultural critique in terms of resistance (Abu-Lughod 1990). This kind of critique would appear to have become dominant in the broader social movements that contest not only authoritarian ruling and gender discrimination but also economic poverty and social exclusion of ethnic and linguistic minorities in the centre of Istanbul. To be more explicit, in addition to the claims of the social and political movements that developed between the 1960s and the mid-1990s, Beyoğlu has become the space *par excellence* for the rise of gender and sexual activism. The focus on Esmeray's case contributes to the debate among social science and political anthropology specialists on liberal and social rights. Her case-study shows how the imported counter-policy of human and sexual rights in the 1990s,¹² usually following the neoliberal agenda (Gledhill 2000), can become a useful vehicle for activist training and transmission of knowledge with the aim of reclaiming human and social rights. In other words, Esmeray's kind of activism helps to clarify how, despite political agendas (Benhabib 2011, Özgüneş 2012), human rights and civil society policies can inspire local people's practices; in particular, how people use local controversial priorities and social poetics of resistance in order to stimulate reactions and subvert stereotypes, assumptions, discriminations and economic and social inequalities.

Let us start by looking at how Esmeray experienced her multiple displacements in her urban experience.¹³ As I have indicated, such displacement included moves from the Anatolian village to Istanbul's old cosmopolitan neighbourhood; from a rich to a poor neighbourhood of the city and vice versa; from male to female; from 'childhood' to feminist activist adulthood; from an intimate home environment to the public scene of the stage. These experiences of displacement, narrated on the stage and on the screen, mostly take place in the urban space of Beyoğlu. In her own words, 'I come from a village of central Kars. There, seven-year-old girls must learn certain things before reaching puberty. What do these young girls learn? To weave carpets, to knit and to crochet. Well, I am a girl too'. On stage, she represents such practices using the appropriate feminine apparatuses. 'So', she added, 'I took my mother's head scarf, I stole my cousin's needle point, took some of my mom's yarn and began to crochet, competing with my sisters, trying to finish first! Whack! Something hit me hard on the head! What was it? My brother! But he didn't hit my sisters, just me! Then my mother came and grabbed my head scarf. Another whack and a slap on my face! This time it was my father who was hitting me. What was wrong? I run to the utility room ... I knit and I knit and I knit ... From there into to the living room. Then, I run to catch up with my sisters; then, suddenly, I freeze! Why did they hit me? My father never hit my mother, though he always yelled at her. My brother and cousins used to hit my sisters. Suddenly, the thought crossed my mind: "this means I am a girl too. Let them hit me. It's OK". So, I calmed down'. (Extract from the play, *The Bundle of the Witch*).

¹² The present analysis does not enter into the discussion of transgender rights per se, as other inspired studies have done in cases both within and outside Turkey (Akin 2009, Valentine 2007, King 1993). The politicization of this issue in Turkey after the 1990s leads us to look at the global impact and at the role played by this agenda in the local contest over urban space and rights (Soja 1999, 2005; Tsibiridou and Palantzas 2014).

¹³ On Urban Anthropology see the interesting Forum in *Urbanities* 3(2) 2013.

The study of Esmeray's cultural critique (her discourse and the embodied emotional experiences and performances) brings out specific relations of power and the attendant techniques, but also the ways in which all the aspects of such a critique are experienced by disadvantaged people who live precarious lives under conditions of discriminations based on gender, language, income, political ideology and active involvement with groups of resistance. Mostly as a *transeksüel* (Çinar 2011) and a Kurd, Esmeray experiences multiple macro and micro relations of power and authority in the family, in the village life, in the state and, as we will see later, in the city, in the market and in social relationships, such as friendship, professional networking and social movement.¹⁴ From an ethnographic viewpoint, it is worth insisting on the examination of the modalities that she adopts in order to claim her subjectivity and then sublimate the disadvantages of her liminal condition¹⁵ into a comparative advantage, either by breaking the circle of violence¹⁶ or by taking reflective action regarding her multiple traumatic experiences caused by patriarchal values in the family¹⁷ and by the recurring violent attitudes stemming, among other things, from the modern Turkish nation-state's militaristic ideology and practices.¹⁸ In self-reflective recollection, Esmeray represents her life on stage not so much to shock the audience but,

¹⁴ In Istanbul she was repeatedly raped by so-called friends, and since she stopped being a sex worker she has never been offered a proper job by those who claimed that she had a right not to be discriminated for her gender and sexual choices. It is not coincidental that, having trained in street theatre, only in Amargi, an association open to multiple sexualities, Esmeray found a new home and developed her feminist conscience. It should also be mentioned that Esmeray participated in collective activities in Beyoğlu in early 2000, when civil society, human and gender rights associations and artistic projects activism started to be generously funded by the European Union, International Organisations, Western consulates and cultural centres.

¹⁵ Such a liminality derives from the embodiment of permanently living precariously more than moving away from an unconventional status.

¹⁶ The cycle of violence Esmeray experienced as a woman (Altınay and Arat 2009), from her first sexual experiences (the multiple rapes) and the period of prostitution, culminated when two police officers beat and cursed her and forbade her to move through the safe parts of her neighbourhood in Beyoğlu. This was the defining moment when she ended her silence against state and male violence, especially targeting transsexuals. Esmeray started a legal battle against those two officers and succeeded in having them prosecuted and sentenced. While not seeing herself as someone who has achieved a major accomplishment, she decisively crossed from an undermining to an accusatory discourse, from the stage and the slavery of the streets to television and internet appearances and, recently, to having her own column in the left-wing newspaper *Taraf*.

¹⁷ In between her two autobiographical plays, she decided to produce Dario Fo's play, *Rape*, for a selected feminist audience. She appears on stage as a man and is gradually transformed into a woman. As she characteristically says, by re-enacting in a self-reflective manner the experiences of the raped body, she managed to make the audience cry for hours.

¹⁸ It has been observed that many Turkish men engage in violent behaviour when visiting transsexual brothels. There have been hate crimes; transsexuals have been murdered by being run over by cars when they were in public deserted areas in the company of a man (Kandiyoti 2006, Altınay 2008, Öktem 2011, Akin 2009). The circle of violence/patriarchy that Esmeray describes includes men who beat their wives, brothers hitting their sisters, mothers hitting their daughters and mothers-in-law vainly celebrating discrimination against their daughters-in-law.

mainly, to deconstruct the hegemonic assumptions routinely replicated, through banal habit, by the majority.¹⁹

In the Turkish context, the case of Esmeray becomes a political act of undermining and resistance, inspiring many people, mostly women – many with whom I met and talked. Contrary to Bülent Esroy,²⁰ another very famous transsexual in Turkey, Esmeray does not reassert the male-centric system; instead, she seeks to subvert the practices of the majority and the attendant mentality. She is causing an upheaval, involving the possibility of resistance to established gender, sexual and ethnic stereotypes.²¹ In contrast with Bülent Esroy's choices, she is not only contesting patriarchal values, gender discrimination, authoritarian ruling and the socio-economic neoliberal agenda; equally strongly, she is subverting the majority's hidden desires and hypocritical stance.

The displacement in space and gender that leads Esmeray to use social poetics to produce a cultural critique leads us to a discussion of social activism and resistance in the urban contest (Low 2003, Soja 2005) and of its engagement with emotions (Winegar 2012, Sitrin 2012a, Kazam 2011, Brown and Pickerill 2009). For her, liminality as a condition of life seems to shape her passage from disempowerment to empowerment only when she decides to engage with emotions and generosity. Thus she overcomes the dilemma between liberal human, gender and individual rights, on the one hand, and social and political rights, on the other. However, it is not by accident that liminal categories need liminal spaces for transgression of their internal dilemmas and ambiguities to take place. Beyoğlu, this ambiguous district of Istanbul with all the love and despise it generates in Esmeray, is becoming the marginal space of a passage from negative personal experiences and disempowerment to activist empowerment and the structuration of a meaningful offer to the majority. Let me explain how this is happening.

¹⁹ Looking at her work and discussing it with various Turkish women, I would suggest that this show does not function so much as a 'punch in the stomach' about the unknown and mysterious ways of life of the transsexuals, but more as a minimalist process of undermining the everyday-life routine of people in Turkey; in the family context in the provinces, and in the public space of the big city.

²⁰ Bülent Esroy was the only one who kept performing after the pogrom started by Özal's neoliberal government, targeting transvestites in Istanbul. Taking the pink female identity (see footnote 25) in 1988, as a personal friend of the Prime Minister she transposed the symbol of neoliberal governance, as a Muslim, nationalist, upper-class woman. At the same time, this case proves metonymically the obsession of modern Turkish society for purely homophobic solutions to sexual choices, betraying, however, the general collective repression of homosexual desire (Altınay 2008: 211-213), while ironically making visible those controversial and ambiguous hidden feelings and desires.

²¹ The French *Telerama* places her in the category of Istanbul's insubordinate women (*stambouliotes innsoumises*): www.telerama.fr/critiques/imprimer.php?chemin=http://www.telerama.fr/mondebouge29/7/2010.

Displacements, Liminal Positioning and the Embodied Urban Experience

Esmeray's transposition of her life on stage,²² I reiterate, aims at exposing the hypocrisy of the majority of Turkish society on issues regarding family and state violence towards women, minorities and subaltern people. The whole of her consciousness seems to stem from the moment she was displaced in Istanbul in terms of space, time, gender, language and condition. Her displacement as an internal immigrant from the countryside to the city, specifically to the neighbourhood of Beyoğlu, was determinant in the transformation of negative experiences into positive collective experiences that could be shared with the majority of the people. From 1986 to 2010 Beyoğlu was the place where she lived and worked. At that time this neighbourhood was transformed into a place of protest and resistance against the Kemalist militarist regime marked by a profoundly male-oriented dominance (Kandiyoti 2006, Altınay 2008). It was here that, in late 1990s, her consciousness took form and her feminist action began; it was in this neighbourhood that she trained in street-theatre and stand-up comedy before starting her own theatrical autobiographical performances. However, it was also in the streets of Beyoğlu that she earned her living, first as a sex worker and then by selling mussels. Here, she came face to face with the state's patriarchal ideology and its militaristic, suppressive practices; here, she was repeatedly subjected to police persecution and violent harassment by dominant males.²³ The streets of Beyoğlu became the place *par excellence* for the development of her multiple activist endeavours, while remaining the place where she works and lives precariously and provides her with the experiences that she transforms into emotional and artistic expressions. Operating in the marginal urban district of Beyoğlu and its continuously changing scenery of exclusions, discriminations, but also systematic infringements of standing prohibitions, makes her an individual who does not just 'liv[es] for the moment' (Day, Papataxiarchis and Stewart 1991) but transforms her multiple exclusions, which she conceptualises into positive meanings.

Esmeray begins her performance carrying a basket full of mussels as she crosses the Tarlabasi highway. The highway separates Turkey's poor internal immigrant sub-neighbourhood, inhabited mostly by Kurdish and Roma people, from the contemporary façade of the megacity – the Tünel district of Beyoğlu; that is, the former cosmopolitan district of Western Europeans in the Turkish *rum millet* (Navaro-Yashin 2002, 2006). This everyday routine of crossing between the ambiguous spaces of lower Tarlabasi and upper İstiklal,²⁴ identifies her as a multifaceted individual, due to her sexual orientation, language, poverty, origin, colour and activism. At first, Esmeray's move to the urban space of Istanbul

²² An autobiographical documentary was filmed in Beyoğlu, where I met her for the first time and all the other times that followed. I saw her re-enacting, walking, protesting together with other feminists, selling mussels, but also participating in the pre-election campaign of the feminist party, fighting for office in the 2009 local elections, when another transgendered friend of hers was a candidate.

²³ Under these circumstances she decided to start her legal battle against two police officers, an action that she took mainly for symbolic reasons.

²⁴ Both the Taksim square and the İstiklal Kaddesi street are meeting places for protesters, while artists and activists reside in the streets around them. The crowds crossing İstiklal like a river give one the impression of an endless flow. These features make this place potentially borderline, as shown by my field data and by other relevant research.

and her adjustment to precariousness signified her crossing of gender boundaries and the feminisation of her gendered experiences. It is in this neighbourhood that one day she decided to come out of the closet and then, in 1999, the year of the big earthquake, to leave the sex business altogether. She gradually acquired a Western expectation of building an individualised subjectivity, obviously feminised; she followed a path that, in Turkey is frequently chosen by people belonging to this transgender category (*path-dependence*). In the context of the modern Turkish society, male to female transsexuals embody feminisation in a context marked by cultural priorities and a bureaucracy that keep the two genders apart²⁵ and favour the male over the female.

‘Since I started wearing a skirt and revealed my identity’, Esmeray stated, ‘my close male friends began to tell me: “Don’t carry that table around, you’re going to get back pain”. Also, my girlfriends’ boyfriends started referring to me as ‘*yenge*’ [meaning the wife of a relative, an in-law], which used to upset me as I began to understand that this is the problem in our society. Men treat women as if they were incapable of doing things. Unfortunately, some women internalise this belief.’ In her discourse, she prefers to associate the problem of trans-sexuality with the broader discrimination against women in Turkey. As she says in a relevant interview in the Hurriyet Daily News, ‘As a transsexual, walking at night in Beyoğlu, I can be approached by a man and be asked “how much?”’, for all transgendered people are whores in the eyes of society. That, however, does not mean that this is exclusively our problem. Unfortunately, men believe that a woman found after midnight in Beyoğlu is lost, a potential whore ... We experience difficulties on different levels, though they are all issues of social gender.’

The feminisation of experience, with all its gender, ethnic and linguistic ambiguity, combines with Esmeray’s successive changes of names from a young age – both she and her twin brother, who died very young, were called Mehmet and, in Kurdish, Mihemet Nuri and Zeki respectively, while her mother would tenderly add the Azeri word *bala* (literally, child). When she started going out with groups of gay friends, one of them told her that she had a strange aura and called her Esmeralda, after the protagonist of a Brazilian soap opera. Some of her friends, though, had trouble pronouncing that name and called her simply Esmeray.²⁶ Recalling her first steps into the female way of being, Esmeray said, ‘the first day I wore a skirt and changed my name to Sigdem ... I called my mother. She never says my name, only Mehmet or Mihemet Nuri, never Esmeray. She just says: “Is that you?” ... Twenty years have passed since I last saw my father. I only wish I could hear my father calling me Mihemet Nuri one more time. That’s how he called me to express his love.’

The displacements experienced by Esmeray in the urban space include successive crossings from everyday life to virtual places and times; the cinema, the theatre, as well as different languages and codes; in other words, places of familiarity, idealisation and

²⁵ See the distinction between pink and blue civic identity cards.

²⁶ Even if she does not make explicit this association, we cannot avoid to note the resonance with the famous Turkish singer of the 1960s, also called Esmeray, and with her well-known connotation as ‘dark moon’.

overcompensation; that is, places as utopias. Esmeray grew up with movie heroes of the 1970s. When the woman inside her comes out, she imitates Türkan Şoray's (a female Turkish cinema star) luscious lips, always ready to be kissed, as Esmeray says. However, her one and only true love seems to have been the short, hairy assistant chef with the provincial accent for whom she worked when she first arrived in Istanbul and who reminded her of Kadir Inanir, a movie star from the 1970s.

Esmeray experiences life in Istanbul between cruel everyday reality and home village dreamtime heterotopia. 'Since I cut my ties with my family', she says, 'I have dreamt of my village every night ... the places I used to tread, the soil, the entrance to the village ... the pastures where I used to graze the sheep, the rocks, the little stream ... that smell of multi-coloured flowers – amazing! When I remember that smell, those flowers, I wish to be buried there ... I went to the pasture and came back last night! That's how real that dream was! It was autumn. Everything was yellow, the grass had withered. I walked around the pasture, the empty houses; I heard the sound of running water. Suddenly I woke up! It was just a dream!... For two years I kept dreaming that I was going back to the village as a transvestite. Sometimes they accepted me, sometimes they didn't. When I dared to dress up as a woman they hunted me down. When I decided to come out of the closet, I realised that I could never come back to the village' (From the documentary, *Me and Nuri Bala*).

This in-between positioning feeds her liminality, which matters also in linguistic forms of expression and communication that show her flexibility to change codes, meanings and feelings. Her mother tongue, Kurdish, becomes a refuge. Usually, she sings nostalgically in Kurdish or tells jokes, ironically admitting absolute truths; 'You owe your life to your make-up powder!', she sings in Kurdish.

Esmeray admits that in surviving the street, the feminist discourse reclaiming political correctness is only a utopia. In a scene from her autobiographical documentary, while selling mussels in Beyoğlu she looks at the camera saying, 'What are you looking at, you idiot! Whether you like it or not, we use the language of the street out here. You know, we are trying to create a feminist language, to change the language of patriarchy. But on the street, you can't get hold of yourself. I just called that man an idiot! Because he is an idiot!' Then, she goes on singing in Kurdish about mussels as a metaphor for girls.

Eventually, when all her cruel and ambiguous experiences – such as the repeated rapes – become overwhelming, a river threatening to overflow, she steps on stage and gets it all out, off her chest. She acts, she says, in order to avoid being drowned by these experiences. She draws courage, in this exposure, from the support of the feminist audience and from the familiar environment of the café-theatre in Beyoğlu. Before she reaches the stage she comments, 'Are you sure you want to talk about this?'; 'I am sure. I have kept it in for so long. It's just a play after all, not everyone will know that it was me who lived all this ...'

Beyond Ambiguity and Liminality: When Emotional Heterotopias Encounter Cultural Critique

The foregoing suggests that to a certain extent the move to the theatrical stage is related to the multiple limits that Esmeray has been forced to transgress. Since her childhood, voices in her

body and in her community encouraged her to pursue gender crossing.²⁷ Furthermore, the material, social and symbolic conditions of living under the described extreme precariousness in Beyoğlu led her to construct her subjectivity around the dynamic condition of liminality – she experiences marginalization and minoritization syndromes, very much conceived in spatial, material terms.²⁸

The ability of individuals at the margins of society to transcend limits contingently can lead to utopias that may function, politically, as heterotopias and can be personally embodied in artistic terms as eutopias (from the Greek *ευτοπία*, meaning literally ‘perfect place’).²⁹ Perhaps it is not accidental that Esmeray’s expectation to be transported to another kind of everyday life was fulfilled under conditions of extreme fluidity in 1999, the year of the big earthquake in Istanbul. As I have mentioned, it was at that time that she decided to stop being a ‘sex-worker’ and step into the ephemeral and even more precarious way of earning her living as a street-seller and street artist in Beyoğlu.³⁰

However, her commitment to political activism seems to be generally understood as inherent to her funny temperament and to her devotion to the people around her. The observer quickly realizes the importance of the humour and sarcasm that she employs in her everyday life in order to define the aesthetics of her presence. Expressing her emotions and taking care of others are extremely important for her personal well-being and for the feminist groups to

²⁷ When Esmeray was a child she was associated, in her community, with Avrat Metin, a person from her village who stole clothes from women. The adjective *avrat* denotes a rough, masculine woman. As a child, Esmeray stayed away from boys’ games while feverishly engaging in girly activities. When she found herself in the big city, she associated with groups of homosexuals and was encouraged to express her suppressed feminine side. There, she experienced feminization traumatically; that is, as I mentioned earlier, through repeated rapes.

²⁸ This brings to the fore the classic anthropological concept of *material passage* related to a marginal condition, first expounded by Van Gennep (1909) in his analyses of rites of passage in rituals and myths.

²⁹ Perhaps she experiences utopia in terms of a *eutopia*. My artist friend Dany Stylides helped me to make this association. Eutopia was first conceived by the Renaissance humanist Saint Thomas More, and was further defined in terms of life after the end of the metropolis by the modernist architect Lewis Mumford in his *The Story of Utopias* (1928: 185-187). In my view, in the context of the contemporary megacity and its artistic definition, the concept of eutopia covers well the process of actualisation of the dream of plural non-homogenized subjects. Contrary to utopia, eutopia is achieved in a fragmented, smaller, present-oriented way; it is accompanied by feelings of temporary fulfilment and euphoria, and not exclusively in terms of expectations for the future.

³⁰ Internal immigrants work ephemeral jobs in points of passage, such as passenger docks, bus terminals, open markets and so on. These jobs have increased with the development of tourism, including trading in souvenirs and in local delicacies. Selling mussels in the street is a low-esteem, very low-income job; the sellers are usually young Kurdish boys or men. It was not by accident that Esmeray ended up doing this job. As ideologically like-minded friends hesitated to hire her, she started to sell mussels following the advice of an ordinary woman, her landlady. The latter replied to Esmeray’s objection that that would be a bizarre job for a transsexual woman saying that it was no problem, that Esmeray ‘was strong enough as man and could deal with attacks and harassment.’ Esmeray’s narrative on stage begins with a representation of this key event in her life experience.

which she belongs. She confided, 'I have carried feminism in me since the day I was born, while I remember myself always trying to make others laugh.'

As Esmeray stressed during our first meeting, the title of her play, *Cadinin Bohçası*, was not randomly chosen. It means the 'bundle', the 'sack of the old witch', of the 'old woman' who knows everything, the know-it-all, which is the term commonly used in Turkey to describe ironically polymath feminist women; it is the right button, the small clasp (*kopca*), that opens the bundle. Her autobiographical play expands on the irony and the knowledge and power related to women and to feminist activism. However, the metaphor of the old witch derives from the acceptance and transformation of the stereotypes on old women and feminists in the Turkish context. She transposes 'traditional' social poetics to a 'modern' artistic view. In order to deliver the modern feminist critique on stage, her statements on gender and patriarchy, discriminations against women, the encasements of macho masculinity in the habitual use of violence and aggression towards the weaker family members, and on Turkish society in general go beyond monotonous narrative. Esmeray invests on emotions. She passes from comic humorous and self-sarcastic scenes to deep, sad, traumatic experiences, thus provoking all kinds of feelings, from indignation to rage, from deep sadness to hilarious laughter and laughs of joy. She combines old social poetics of transvestitism and imitation with the modern drama techniques that she learned in another of her ephemeral conditions, while training in street drama. In Bakhtin's terms, by investing on carnivalesque representations and performances, and by using humour and irony, she manages to stimulate people's emotions, provoking her audience into self-criticism. As Esmeray and other informants from Amargi told me, when she performed at the University, on several occasions the University Council tried to stop her but, after watching for a while, they changed their minds and remained in the audience.

Esmeray's being liminal, in a permanent marginal condition, is brought to a head by her everyday engagement with ambiguous feelings and her targeting herself through irony. She constantly deprecates herself for having gained weight, for being naïve about something or for some mistake in doing her hair; as she says, making others laugh is something that she has been doing since she was a child and that gives her immense pleasure. At the same time, she is very controversial about people like herself. For example, while talking in the backstage, she let slip that in a scene of her film she suggests that if they are late for a show 'they' (other transsexuals) should be kept outside the theatre as punishment; then, she almost immediately changed her mind, saying that she wished to perform one day 'just for them'. To make a long story short, she admits that she addresses the majority – who must see themselves in the mirror/stage – with the expectation that increasing their sensitivity will induce them to stop reproducing both the negative, discriminatory stereotypes against women and the circle of violence, discrimination and exclusion against different others.

New Social Movements: Liberal Gender, Human and Social Rights³¹

Through her stance in everyday life and on stage, Esmeray speaks directly about her constant precariousness. Her life is a paradigm of a 'naked life', in Agamben's terms (1998); an example, that is, of a person who is minoritized for cultural, racial,³² social, linguistic and sexual reasons. She transforms herself into a critically thinking feminist subject by investing on emotions and artistic creativity. Thus, she communicates her personal traumatic experience and produces cultural critique (Marcus and Fischer 1986, Clifford 1988), which becomes creative not only for her as an individual and for the category that she represents but also for the majority of the population.³³ As we have seen, her discourse, encapsulating local social poetics in a Westernized genre of art and critique production, is empowered by her penetrating insight and sarcasm vis-à-vis transgendered practices and stereotypes. Through this glocal cultural critique, Esmeray does not merely undermine the dominant hegemonies, questioning outstanding beliefs according to which men are violent and women passive; most significantly, she brings to light the continuum of representational functionality of socially and culturally constructed gender through multi-layered power relations in the family, in the broader society and in the state.

Esmeray's autobiographical narrative involves experiences of living dangerously through a process at once traditional, capitalist and postmodern; a process marked by an aggressive character that delimits both space and body.³⁴ In turn, this process implies that of intensive precariousness in terms of 'minorization',³⁵ which in the shift from modern to post-modern times is produced by dominant political and hegemonic assumptions, as well as by exclusion on the basis of class, ethnicity, language, colour and religion, and is intensified by neoliberal governance. As such governance engenders precariousness across the spectrum of human endeavour, people belonging to the majority increasingly tend to conform to the minority's state of exception. A key question is what motivates people like Esmeray to turn

³¹ On the distinction between human and social rights since the 1990s see Gledhill (2000) and Valentine (2007).

³² See the distinction between white and black Turks. Esmeray is aware of that discrimination too because she has a dark skin.

³³ Esmeray's perspective belongs to a new, bolder critique, as does the film *Majority* (Çoğunluk 2010), by the up-and-coming Turkish director Seren Yüce. Yüce criticizes society by focusing on the patriarchal bond between father and son, thus staying away from the one-dimensional and stereotypical orientalism that used to focus selectively on the female gender.

³⁴ On primary accumulation, the entrenchment of property and the female body, see Federici (2005).

³⁵ The process of 'becoming a minority' is central to almost all my previous research interests (See Tsibiridou 2000, 2007, 2009 and 2011). The contemporary tendency in political anthropology (Mukherjee 2011) and social theory to distinguish between glocal neoliberal governance by the élites and the experience of precariousness of subordinate people beg for a re-examination of the concepts of 'minority' and 'liminality'. In this context the current concept of 'precariousness' needs to be problematized in order to address its multiple meanings either in the theoretical framework provided by the anthropological concept of 'liminality' (see, Spyridakis 2014) and/or in that provided by the concept of political and legal 'minority' (Tsibiridou 2013b).

the traumatic experience of being in a permanent state of minority and precariousness into a positive cultural critique for the majority.

It is commonly held in transvestites' circles in Turkey that 'none of us has Esmeray's strength' (Akin, 2009). In short, I would put to the reader that Esmeray embodies both Judith Butler's theoretical position on gender performativity and the precarious life of people living in-between and experiencing multiple exceptions and exclusions (Butler 1990, 2004). Esmeray becomes a paradigm when, while asking for subjectivity, she invests in her otherness, thus encouraging the necessary motivation and inspiration to engage in activism for human, gender and social rights. I feel, however, that there is more to this. The 'Esmeray paradigm' appears to be opening new ways for us to understand the will to engage in urban protest through an investment in emotions pertinent to local trans-individual sociality, care and generosity. Esmeray's experiences as an individual originating from a subaltern group and as the target of multiple submissions, exceptions and exclusions do not prioritize only issues of visibility and recognition for LGBD people; her priorities as a feminist lead her to be useful to other transgender people – women and homosexuals – who experience patriarchal, family and militarist state violence and discrimination. Her life becomes a powerful lens through which we can understand not only the modalities of dispersed power (Abu-Lughod 1990), but also the alternative engagement in social activism through emotions, as exemplified by the new social movements in Latin America over the last twenty years (Gledhill 2000, Sitrin 2012b, Brown and Pickerill 2009). In both cases, the circumstances of precariousness, accelerated through neoliberal governance, matter equally. A similar case is given by new uprisings in Mediterranean urban settings, where alongside equality and freedom people ask for 'dignity', defined globally through emotional aspects (Tsibiridou and Bartsidis 2014 forthcoming).

Beyond the dilemma between liberal and social rights (Gledhill 2000) and individual and collective rights, Esmeray promotes generosity and love, inspiring both her audiences and her companions (*arkadaslar*) to transgress the old taboo of modernity, which excluded emotions from political engagement and social movements.³⁶ I experienced this the very first time I met her in the Amargi feminist bookshop; significantly, a feeling since confirmed by feedback from people inspired by her love and generosity for others.

Esmeray has now stopped crossing daily from one world to the other, from the lower side of Tarlabasi all the way up to Beyoğlu and Taksim square. She lives on a Marmara island because she needs quiet and silence when writing her columns for the leftist newspaper *Taraf*. She continues to travel and perform, but now has more time for herself and is admittedly looking younger and more beautiful than ever. Recently, we watched her documentary on a day she stayed in, as she often does, knitting something for the son of an old schoolmate of

³⁶ This brings out a key deficiency in the literature, as morality was excluded from the analysis of politics. Addressing such a deficiency helps to question the legitimacy of governance and of its relationship with citizenship. For further discussion on this issue, see the contributions to *Anthropology in the City*, edited by Italo Pardo and Giuliana Prato (2011).

hers, saying to the camera, ‘Perhaps there isn’t a better education in respecting difference than to have in your life a transeküel “aunt”’.

Three years later, in May 2013, other transsexuals were notably present next to religious and secular people protesting in the Gezi park. Such proximity in a public space was something that, apart from the women’s platform of 2008, had never been thought of before. Moreover, sharing *iftar* (the dinner of love during the Remazan) as they did, justifies, in my view, Esmeray’s prophetic activism and her investment in generosity and in the politics of love. I have the strong feeling that all this was ‘only the beginning of a beautiful friendship’. In other words, a new trope to motivate people against authoritarian ruling and a will to reframe the ‘political’ through the new social movements by engaging with emotions of love and care.

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Who is 'World Class'? Transportation Justice and Bicycle Policy

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In many U.S. metropolitan areas, bicycle advocates have been breathing sighs of relief as their elected officials join *with* them in fighting for bicycle facilities. No longer a battle between bicyclists and their government, the partnerships have blossomed into more than just bicycle paths. Through two case studies, we explore how politicians are exploiting the growing appeal of bicycle culture for economic development. In Los Angeles an open streets event, CicLAvia, brings together a diverse array of residents but politicians and local business owners celebrate it for its potential to increase downtown development. In Minneapolis, the city government appears to have used a popular off-street bicycle path to 'clean up' areas of town and create prime real estate for luxury apartments. The city's mayor unabashedly connects his dedication to bicycle infrastructure to recruiting the 'creative class' to Minneapolis. In this article we argue that advocates and policymakers who frame bicycle amenities as 'creative class' bait ignore and potentially undermine bicycle mobility by those who do not fit into this desired group of citizens. Furthermore, conflating the practice of bicycling with specific urban development projects designed to accommodate it, limits what can be seen as 'bike friendly' neighbourhoods and manufactures scarcity in what should be a public resource: urban streets.

Keywords: Bicycle infrastructure, creative class, urban development, city government, environmental gentrification

Introduction

I never expected the way we commute to be shaped by class, but it is (Florida 2012: 377).

As the rate of bicycling increases in the United States, creative class guru Richard Florida's words are more relevant than ever. For Florida, the 'creative class', a demographic marked by their desire and privileged ability to live in specific cities regardless of the career opportunities in them, is *the* group destined to ride bicycles in urban spaces. In fact, Florida found that a person's class status impacts bicycle commuting decisions more than weather, population density, and climate. This would seem to explain why places such as Portland, Oregon and Minneapolis, Minnesota—despite their rather unpleasant weather patterns—have some of the highest rates of bicycling in the United States. The many municipal governments listed as clients on Florida's consulting website speak to the influence his assertions exercise in urban policy and planning.¹ Those looking to capitalize on the growing trendiness of urban living may assume that creatives are willing to pay for quality urban spaces; should this profit motive guide where cities invest in public works projects such as bike infrastructure?

Despite the populist intentions of bicycle advocates who imagine that infrastructure projects will make bicycling accessible for more street users, the political salience of this class-inflected vision of bicycling ties a seemingly positive practice to a new cycle in economically driven urban renewal. In this article, we seek to highlight creative class discourses in the rhetoric

¹ A list of government clients can be viewed on the website for Richard Florida's consulting firm, the Creative Class Group: <http://www.creativeclass.com/clients>, accessed 2 September 2013.

and strategy behind infrastructure-oriented bicycle advocacy by focusing on instances where advocates and policymakers in our field sites spoke about bicycle projects in terms of global competition and urban redevelopment. We argue that advocates and policymakers who frame bicycle facilities as amenities that will attract a creative class population ignore and potentially undermine bicycle mobility by those who do not fit into this desired group of citizens. Furthermore, conflating the practice of bicycling with specific urban development projects designed to accommodate it limits what can be seen as ‘bike friendly’ neighbourhoods and manufactures scarcity in what should be a public resource: urban streets. In this way, bicycle advocacy illustrates the trend toward high quality public spaces being sold as luxury amenities.

Because in the U.S. it has been de rigueur for decades to display wealth and success through car ownership, Florida’s creative class gospel did not take hold overnight. A person’s choice in transportation has long been a canvas for displaying class distinction in the U.S., and this in turn has spill-over effects on the public infrastructure associated with a given transportation practice. A case of opposition to bicycle-driven urban renewal could be found in a coastal corner of Los Angeles County in January 2008, when the City of Long Beach (influenced by Florida)² held a public meeting regarding a proposed ‘bicycle boulevard’ on a residential street. Bike boulevards create barriers to motorized traffic on neighbourhood streets parallel to busy arterials, thus allowing bicyclists to stay conveniently close to destinations while avoiding the stress of heavy traffic. Residents filled the room as a city planner and a consultant explained their plans for First Street, a dense residential corridor which connected the city centre to a more exclusive, beach-front enclave containing many large, well-maintained homes considered historic.

After the initial presentation, the homeowners present that night spoke against the designation of their street as a bike route precisely because it would increase bicycle traffic. One elderly white woman, who emphasized that she biked regularly, said that bicyclists would crowd the new route and make tremendous noise. An elderly white man argued that floods of bicyclists would pose a threat to mothers with strollers and ‘people who like to run in the street’. Others claimed the bike boulevard would cause a parking problem due to people driving cars loaded with bicycles to the street. Though none of the First Street homeowners raised an explicit objection to bicycling for transportation, one man worried that an increase in bicyclists would attract thieves who would decide to ‘vacation’ on the street.

Those in opposition to bicycling shift easily between references to the leisure class and the lower classes according to what serves their agendas, which in this case was to fight against city-imposed changes in the neighbourhood. According to the Long Beach homeowners, they were not opposed to bicycling in general, or even bicycling on their street: they opposed action

² On the website for the Creative Class Group (see note 1), an organization called Downtown Long Beach Associates is listed as a client. Their website identifies them as speaking for the local business improvement district.

by the city that they did not initiate or control. The bike boulevard had become a symbol of this lack of control. Whether bike infrastructure projects truly have the power to change neighbourhoods, people on both sides of the issue believe that they do.

Now that cities are seeing economic advantages to expanding the ownership of the street to non-motorized transportation, the bicycle, rather than the car, is becoming the more valued form of urban transportation. This shift in values is calling into question what is considered efficient use of the streets. Automobiles have long been understood as the fastest and most efficient way to traverse the city. But now, streets are not being defined by speed and efficiency but by what they signify. A street with a crosswalk and bicycle boulevard now signifies a progressive city, a city that cares about the environment and will invest in alternative transportation. But the question remains: who will benefit from this reinvisioning of the streets?

This article consists of two case studies that draw on the findings of ethnographic research about bicycle advocacy undertaken in two very different U.S. cities, L.A. and Minneapolis, to analyse the shifting meanings of bicycling and its infrastructure in a country where the bicycle has long been a toy for the privileged but a burden for the poor. We here analyse themes gathered through participant-observation; we focus less on the demonstrated effects of bike infrastructure than on the *desired* effects articulated by bike advocates and public officials. We deployed this method through a combination of planning bicycle events, volunteering with bicycle organizations, utilizing the cities' bicycle infrastructure, and interviewing prominent leaders in both city government and bicycle advocacy. The street users' shared opinions and experiences with bicycle infrastructure and its planning offer a different kind of data than bicycle counts and other quantitative measures. We posit that these seemingly immaterial discourses, when joined with bicycling in the minds of the powerful, can have material effect. Our findings have implications for sites beyond the two considered here because wider advocacy networks shape bicycle promotion strategies undertaken in specific cities.

Similar to what sociologist Michel Callon (1998, 2007) has observed about economists 'making' the objective markets they claim to interpret, we heard advocates, policymakers, and others proclaim that investing in bike projects would produce particular cycling bodies. By highlighting the resonance between two cities' approaches to bicycle infrastructure projects, we argue that bike advocates and city officials are in agreement that these changes will attract creative class bicyclists. For bike advocates, encouraging policymakers to exploit the creative class link to bicycling may be seen as a means to an end, since their ostensible goal is to increase the feasibility of bicycle transportation. Bicycling, as a low-cost, low-impact form of mobility, could be seen as an avenue to making sustainable transportation accessible to all. Instead, advocates' embrace of the creative class strategy highlights their lack of attention to questions of environmental justice. Bicycle infrastructure is emerging not merely as a response to growing numbers of bicycling bodies; when formulated as a creative class carrot, it is expected to attract specific new users.

Literature Review

The creative class turn in bicycle advocacy exemplifies the movement's complicated relationship with social justice. Although there is a growing literature exploring the current landscape of bicycle advocacy (Carlsson ed. 2002, Batterbury 2003, Furness 2010, Horton 2006, Mapes 2009), titles such as Jeff Mapes' *Pedaling Revolution* indicate the difficulty of considering both the embattled status of bike advocates as road users and their socioeconomic privilege in the same analysis. The bike movement balances on a fundamental tension between bicycling as an expensive, beloved hobby and bicycling as an affordable mobility option. Bicycle advocates were responsible for some of the earliest improvements to the U.S. road system. Looking to expand the freedom of mobility and new markets promised by mass bicycle transportation, early bicycle advocates such as entrepreneur Albert Augustus Pope and the League of American Wheelmen set in motion the 'good roads' movement that gave birth to the U.S. highway system (Epperson 2010). Then, as cars overtook bicycles in the early 20th century American imagination, traffic engineers transformed U.S. city streets from mixed zones to motorways (Norton 2008).

Since the early 1990s, bike advocates have contested the right of motorized vehicles to dominate city streets. The founding of Critical Mass in San Francisco in 1992 launched an urban social movement around bicyclists' right to streets (Carlsson 2002), and in 1991 Congress passed the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), which opened new federal funding for bicycle and pedestrian street infrastructure (Wray 2008). Following ISTEA, bicycle advocacy organizations focused on political strategy as a means to increase bicycling through infrastructure projects. Following Critical Mass, similar rides sprang up around the world and led to stronger networks of bike users that could be mobilized to support the passage of ordinances and levy funding for infrastructure projects.

Considered through the lens of 'transportation justice', the right to bicycle mobility represented by Critical Mass could be undermined by infrastructure-focused advocacy that uses creative class marketing. This article is a preliminary attempt to consider transportation (in)justice's intersections with bicycle policy and planning (see also Hoffmann 2013, Lubitow and Miller 2013, Stehlin 2013). The transportation justice movement and its scholars focus on the intersection of transportation infrastructure, social equality, and civil rights. In a foundational volume on the topic, environmental justice scholars Robert Bullard and Glenn Johnson stated that, 'if a community happens to be poor, inner city, or inhabited by people of colour, chances are it will receive less environmental protection than an affluent, suburban, white community', and this applies to transportation access and amenities as well (1997: 9). Public transportation, reliant on state resources and serving millions of low-income individuals, has been at the centre of this movement; bicycling has not (Lugo 2012). This is perhaps because such a small population uses bicycles as their primary mode of transport³ or because many low-income

³ Official bicycle commuting rates hover around 1 to 3 percent of the population even in cities that have

bicycle users have been overlooked by the professional advocates who lobby for bicycle infrastructure. Transportation justice issues are arising now because more cities are prioritizing the funding of bicycle projects.

Although bicycle infrastructure has entered the discussion only recently, city governments have long known about the purported economic benefits of gentrification, or the process neighbourhoods undergo when middle class people return to inner cities. Academics have been debating the benefits and pitfalls of gentrification for over fifty years. Despite the longevity of research, prominent gentrification scholar Loretta Lees (2008), claims there is a lack of evidence for ‘positive gentrification’, and the trickle-down effect of this middle class mobility remains a myth. Yet cities continue to deploy strategies that recruit and maintain a lucrative middle class population; strategies which are ‘framed around interurban competition, gentrification, middle-class consumption and place-marketing’ (Peck 2005: 740-741). Lees (2012) reaffirms that gentrification can flourish through feeding off of other policies not directly referred to as such, which could include those relating to transportation. The case studies presented here show how gentrifying processes can go hand in hand with the development of ‘world class’ and ‘sustainable’ transportation systems. More specifically, bicycle infrastructure is a prime example of what Melissa Checker (2011) has called ‘environmental gentrification’. Environmental gentrification builds upon the successes of the environmental justice movement and appropriates its language to serve high-end development and displace low-income residents (Checker 2011).

Even if they have not identified with the environmental justice project, upwardly mobile bicyclists have benefited from its focus on urban livability. Advocates for bicycle transportation, as environmental activists, see the bicycle as ‘ideally forming one part of a much wider, new, sustainable, green lifestyle’ (Horton 2006: 51). What they might celebrate as an ecologically-friendly shift to urban living overlaps with environmental gentrification. Florida (2011, 2012) claims that cities where people bike commute are better able to compete in a global economy because ‘today, the terms of competition revolve around a central axis: a nation’s ability to mobilize, attract, and retain human creative talent’ (2005: 3). Thus, Florida’s theory would suggest, creative class bodies are desirable precisely because they bring otherwise untethered economic benefits to businesses and cities.

As Florida’s (2013) predictions materialize in rising rents and changing storefronts, opposition to bicycle infrastructure has emerged from groups with much less socioeconomic power than the aforementioned Long Beach homeowners. In a recent contribution to the study of bicycle gentrification, sociologists Amy Lubitow and Thaddeus R. Miller (2013) reported that the designers and promoters of a bike infrastructure project in North Portland were surprised to find that community members, united in opposition, framed the project as a reflection of systemic racism and gentrification. In leaving implicit the benefits of bicycling, bicycle

robust bicycle infrastructure.

advocates may find themselves blamed for explicitly unequal effects. As cities move toward appropriating bicycle infrastructure as a signifier of creative class consumption, many groups remain at the margins.

Case Study 1: Infrastructure as Progress in Los Angeles

The Los Angeles metropolitan area offers insight into the growing desirability of bicycle policy both as a symbol of participation in global sustainability trends and as an economic development strategy to attract a creative class population. In Southern California, transportation infrastructure has long been a means of achieving ‘world-class’ status, from the once-extensive streetcar system to the development of a street plan in the 1920s (Bottles 1987). Today, discourses about the world-class city have a distinctly bicycle bent and political insiders are connecting bike infrastructure with economic redevelopment downtown.

Upon signing a bike parking ordinance in February 2013, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa commented that ‘the city is undergoing a transportation renaissance and we are changing the way Los Angeles moves’.⁴ It is likely that the mayor meant to include in this “transportation renaissance” his vocal support for the popular open street event called CicLAvia, based on the *ciclovía* that started in Bogotá, Colombia in 1974.⁵ CicLAvia creates a temporary car-free space through central Los Angeles neighbourhoods so that people can try biking and walking without the pressures of motorized traffic. The event began in 2010 after two years of grassroots organizing (see Lugo 2013, 2012), and Villaraigosa has made it into a centrepiece of his time in office that ended in 2013. The first event in 2010, which closed 7.5 miles of streets from East L.A. to East Hollywood on Sunday, October 10, had a turnout of about 40,000 people. Since then, there have been biannual CicLAvias with much popular support. The event on April 21, 2013 attracted an estimated 150,000 bicyclists and pedestrians from across the region, which demonstrates a growing popular interest in bicycling. Politicians and advocates have created a shared narrative about cycling that emphasizes its reliance on physical infrastructure projects.

For example, commentators have referenced these high participation numbers when arguing that L.A. will build its numbers of bike commuters only with physical infrastructure in place. In a post on *The Atlantic* website, Conor Friedersdorf mentioned that he had attended the April 2013 CicLAvia, and commented that, ‘seeing the masses out on bikes hinted at how a safe system of bike lanes could improve Los Angeles’.⁶ In April 2012, when local sustainable

⁴ ‘With All Eyes on L.A., Villaraigosa Signs New Bike Parking Ordinance’, published online in the *Los Angeles Streetsblog* (1 February 2013) <http://la.streetsblog.org/2013/02/01/with-all-eyes-on-l-a-villaraigosa-signs-new-bike-parking-ordinance/>, accessed 7 August 2013.

⁵ Co-author Lugo helped organize CicLAvia during her dissertation fieldwork. Any uncited claims are fieldwork observations.

⁶ ‘The Paranoid Style in Bicycle Politics: A Bicoastal Freak-Out’, published online in *The Atlantic* (4 June 2013) <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2013/06/the-paranoid-style-of-bicycle-politics-a-bicoastal-freak-out/276514/>, accessed 6 August 2013.

transportation website *Los Angeles Streetsblog* asked candidates in the city's mayoral race to comment on CicLAvia, Candidate Kevin James said he was impressed by 'the sheer size of the crowd, which...speaks volumes about the number of Angelenos willing to use their bicycles more often as their primary mode of transportation *if the City were more bike-friendly*' (emphasis ours).⁷ In the same piece, City Councilmember Jan Perry situated the event within a larger bicycle policy framework, noting that, 'while these initiatives are not as fun as CicLAvia, they are certainly important as Los Angeles develops into a mature city with sophisticated transportation networks that focus on means other than the automobile'. With these remarks, candidates framed bicycling as a part of L.A.'s future, but focused less on CicLAvia's social space and more on its role in galvanizing support for infrastructure projects. The city government's participation in and response to CicLAvia indicates a surprisingly friendly relationship with bicycle advocacy.⁸

The candidate who won the spring 2013 mayoral election, Eric Garcetti, also voiced support for CicLAvia during his campaign.⁹ Clearly he meant to capture the urban bicycle voter, a constituency that has been gaining prominence in cities such as Portland, Minneapolis, and L.A. where political candidates are measured on a 'bike-friendly' scale. For example, in February 2013, the Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition (LACBC) posted an interview with then-Councilmember Garcetti on their website that asked, 'Are you bike-friendly?'¹⁰ Garcetti's responses reassured bicycling voters that, 'as Mayor, I will approach cycling as a key part of our city's transportation system...A focus on safety not only protects cyclists, it encourages more people to start cycling'. The LACBC interview also referenced the idea of 'interested but concerned' bicyclists. This phrase came from the Portland Bureau of Transportation's influential typology of cyclists that divides people into categories based on whether they do or do not bike.¹¹ This typology has been used to make a case for infrastructure as a means to move people from 'interested but concerned' to the next category, 'enthused and confident'. This typology and seemingly inclusive terms like 'safety' strip people of their socioeconomic indicators, leaving unasked the question of which communities will move forward in this continuum of concern and confidence.

⁷ 'Beutner, Garcetti, James, Perry and Greuel on CicLAvia', published online in the *Los Angeles Streetsblog* (18 April 2012) <http://la.streetsblog.org/2012/04/18/beutner-garcetti-james-perry-and-greuel-on-ciclavia/>, accessed 7 August 2013.

⁸ For a thorough discussion of the historically tenuous relationship between bicycle advocates and local municipalities, see 'Critical Mass and the Functions to the (Bikeable) City' (Furness 2010).

⁹ Garcetti had also been an early political supporter of the event.

¹⁰ 'Are You Bike-Friendly? Eric Garcetti Responds', published online in the *Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition* (6 February 2013) <http://lacbc.wordpress.com/2013/02/06/are-you-bike-friendly-eric-garcetti-responds/>, accessed 7 August 2013.

¹¹ 'Four Types of Transportation Cyclists', published in the *Portland Bureau of Transportation*, <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/transportation/article/158497>, accessed 7 August 2013.

After Garcetti was elected mayor, L.A. bike advocate and LACBC board member Ted Rogers published an op-ed about the significance of Garcetti's win, commenting that, 'L.A. has made great progress on bicycling and transportation issues in recent years. Hopefully, that will continue under the new leadership, and the City of Angels will proudly take its place as the world-class city it can and should be. It's our job to work with them to make sure it does'.¹² This comment defines bike advocacy as a project of building political will. The association of transportation infrastructure with progress is not new, and Rogers' stated goal of making L.A. a 'world-class city' echoes an earlier era in transportation development when city elites fought to redesign streets for automotive traffic (Bottles 1987).

In a 1922 report, the Automobile Club of Southern California predicted that with a traffic plan designed to prioritize private cars, 'the City of Los Angeles will be enabled to fulfil its destiny as a great world metropolis' (quoted in Bottles 1987:100-101). The streetcar network was a roadblock to progress, and, crucially, so was L.A.'s cultural diversity. In 1926, the *Examiner* newspaper asked that, 'if there is ever to be a union station...let it at least not be located between Chinatown and Little Mexico'. Which would the public prefer, the paper asked, a 'depot in [the] Chinese district, or no more grade crossings?' (quoted in Bottles 1987:151). Traffic congestion was preferable to infrastructure located near places inhabited by undesirable groups. The decades that followed, when L.A. became the world-class car city it is known as today, did not challenge this spatialized racism; it had the effect of making people who could not afford to drive into social pariahs (Hutchinson 2000). It is worth considering whether the emphasis on global competitiveness will lead to improved quality of life for the multiethnic communities who inhabit central Los Angeles.

Tellingly, in February 2012 the CicLAvia organization won a 'downtowners of distinction' award, which the *Los Angeles Downtown News* gives to projects seen as improving the business climate of the area; it is clear that the downtown development community sees CicLAvia as a tool to bring consumers into an urban core that has been undergoing large-scale urban renewal projects since the mid twentieth century.¹³ L.A. politicians argue that only permanent infrastructure will make the city bike-friendly. This invokes community action such as CicLAvia as positive, but a mere precursor to the more important business of developing the built environment.

Although politicians and advocates increasingly share a vision of bicycle infrastructure as

¹² 'What Does Yesterday's Election Mean for L.A. Transportation Issues?', published online in the *Los Angeles Streetsblog* (22 May 2013) <http://la.streetsblog.org/2013/05/22/what-does-yesterdays-election-mean-for-l-a-transportation-issues/>, accessed 7 August 2013.

¹³ "Downtowners of Distinction Awards Honor Arts District Condo Complex." published online in the *Los Angeles Downtown News* (24 February 2012) http://www.ladowntownnews.com/news/downtowners-of-distinction-awards-honor-arts-district-condo-complex/article_56bb27ce-5f3d-11e1-84ec-0019bb2963f4.html, accessed 7 August 2013.

a viable form of urban transportation, the Long Beach case detailed earlier in this article showed that neighbourhood residents have not always been in favour of such projects for reasons that go beyond the practice of bicycling itself. In the context of the ‘world-class’ vision of bicycling that politicians and advocates share, residents who argue against bicycle facilities can be dismissed as backward thinkers, out of touch with today’s transportation lifestyles. Our narrative moves now to Minneapolis, where bicycle infrastructure’s potential to catalyse neighbourhood change has been taken on as a city project.

Case Study 2: Mission Accomplished in Minneapolis

This case study presents evidence that bike advocates and policymakers see rewards in bicycle infrastructure beyond the promotion of environmentally-friendly lifestyles. Minneapolis, like L.A., is relatively new to the collection of U.S. cities committed to building ‘world-class’ transportation infrastructure. Because it has in recent years devoted considerable resources to bicycle infrastructure (Friedman 2011), Minneapolis shows what some of the bicycle discourses budding in L.A. might look like in full bloom. In this section, we set an interview with Minneapolis’ mayor, R.T. Rybak alongside an analysis of how a bicycle project has changed social life in the space it occupies in order to question whether displacement resulting from bike infrastructure is an unintended effect. The language used by Minneapolis bicycle advocates and city officials, including Rybak, echoes almost exactly the bicycle discourses articulated by officials in Los Angeles. We see this miming not as a coincidence, but rather as an indication that city governments’ support for bicycle projects is a nationwide trend that will bring up questions of transportation justice in bicycle policy and planning.

Being a bicyclist in Minneapolis is relatively easy. The city has posted bicycle route signage that encourages and directs bicyclists to ride on streets with bike lanes, or on the bicycle boulevards to be found in some neighbourhoods. Between April and October, people can opt to rent a bicycle from a city-wide bike share program, Nice Ride.¹⁴ Bicycle advocates and city officials are constantly proposing new bicycle infrastructure plans, which are tracked and promoted by the volunteer-run Minneapolis Bicycle Coalition. Many bike commuters view the Midtown Greenway as the centrepiece of Minneapolis’s alternative transit accomplishments.

Located south of the Mississippi River, the Greenway system is a 5.5 mile network of off-street bike paths that runs parallel to major city streets and sits in a former railroad corridor. The Greenway is impressive in quality and efficiency, not least because few U.S. cities have bike paths that allow one to travel for miles in high-density areas without the need to interact with

¹⁴ When Nice Ride launched, the primary locations were downtown and in the Uptown neighbourhood. Uptown is predominantly upwardly mobile and already with an active bicycle culture. Residents in North Minneapolis, an area of the city with the highest unemployment rate and concentration of people of colour, had to pressure Nice Ride to install stations in their neighbourhoods (Williams 2010). Nice Ride and Mayor Rybak both cited funding issues for the initial lack of stations in North Minneapolis.

vehicle traffic. On any given day, a diverse collection of Greenway users fill the space; diversity that includes ethnicity, class, and chosen type of mobility (i.e. jogging, walking or bicycling). Because of its range of users, the Greenway appears to be a welcoming zone for diverse groups rather than an obvious attempt at environmental gentrification. However, bicycle paths such as the Greenway have the potential to ‘clean up’ blighted areas of a city by attracting desirable users and improving the physical conditions through mechanisms such as community gardens and murals.

The Greenway project introduced significant changes to a space that had been used primarily by marginal figures. Longtime Minneapolis resident and avid bicyclist Spencer Haugh recalled the scene peopling the corridor before the Greenway construction as composed of ‘urchins and hooligans. And graffiti writers. And awesomeness. I like the Greenway, but it makes me sad. It was a five mile long art gallery’ (personal communication, July 11, 2011). The tall brick walls and overgrown bushes created a hideaway and an autonomous space on the now-removed train tracks.¹⁵ Accessing the corridor was easy, and it connected with poorer areas of town. However, the space was not used in ways that would be sanctioned by a city government or by all city residents. On their website, the Midtown Greenway Coalition describes the corridor as a once ‘trash-filled trench that was a disgrace to our city’.¹⁶ While the marginal inhabitants were largely left alone, a plan was taking place that would quickly oust them.

In 2009, two years after the Greenway was completed, the Minneapolis police had a visible presence along the secluded path as the city focused on removing criminal elements from the space. Participant-observation undertaken there in 2009 and 2010 showed that police officers tended to target Greenway users who fit a particular racial and class profile. The police could be seen talking to men, usually American Indians, who spent time relaxing under the bridges along the Greenway. Though these men sometimes openly drank alcohol, they kept to themselves and did not harass other Greenway users. The adjacent Phillips neighbourhood had a vibrant American Indian community including a Native community centre and art gallery. Sometime after the police intervention, these American Indian men disappeared from the Greenway. These men's bicycles indicated that they were using the Greenway for transportation, ostensibly an appropriate way to inhabit the space. It would seem, however, that through construction of the Greenway the city laid claim to communal space that had been inhabited by marginal populations and cleared for use by a more ‘civil’ group of citizens. It was a ‘disgrace to the city’ for some, but a place to sleep and socialize for others. Marked for removal, people who used to hang out on the tracks learned they were no longer going to be left alone.

Far from leaving aside the question of who would use the Greenway, the city policed

¹⁵ Perhaps ironically, the public transportation system in Minneapolis is now talking with community members about putting in a streetcar system on the Greenway (Midtown Corridor Alternatives Analysis, <http://www.metrotransit.org/midtown-corridor>).

¹⁶ Midtown Greenway Coalition website, midtowngreenway.org, accessed 3 September 2013.

what users would be present. This was not incidental displacement; it was a strategic construction of a space designed to be used by a specific group. There is more at stake than cleaning up a blighted area for community use; the City of Minneapolis wants the creative class and their disposable incomes to make a home in this urban space, and they are using bicycle infrastructure as an attractor. The use of the Greenway by low-income residents detracts from the effectiveness of this strategy.

The selective interest in particular bicycling bodies the city displayed through policing the Midtown Greenway is echoed through Mayor Rybak's vision of the city's bicycle culture. Like Mayor Villaraigosa in Los Angeles, Rybak has recently garnered popular support for his commitment to bicycling. Rybak was responsible for creating a bicycle coordinator position in the city government, something he has portrayed as an anomaly.¹⁷ He also rallied to bring the Nice Ride bike share program to Minneapolis, and serves on that organization's board of directors. Bike share programs are popular in Europe but were not present in the U.S. on a large scale until Nice Ride. This rather hip mayor has openly portrayed Minneapolis's bicycle culture as a recruitment tool for the creative class, explaining that, 'our very public bike culture has been an enormous asset in attracting talented people here. Not just in the bike fields but in advertising, in financial services, the arts, politics'.¹⁸ Rybak also located economic potential in bike infrastructure, proclaiming Minneapolis to be a frontrunner in re-envisioning the cityscape. In his own words said, 'It's completely clear to me that we're in a midst of a total revolution in the way we get around. Most public governments haven't quite gotten anywhere nearly where the public is at on this. We [the city government] have. So, I recognize that congestion is up, global warming, gas prices, all add to the fact that we're reinventing the American city that's going to be much more pedestrian and bike-oriented'.

Here Rybak seamlessly conflates the need to foster sustainable transportation with a drive to compete with other city governments, and speaks proudly about his administration keeping up with public demand for a less car-centric city. For example, Minneapolis now consistently ranks as a top bicycling city in America (Friedman 2011). Rybak also echoes Villaraigosa's 'transportation renaissance' vision when he remarks that we are in midst of a 'total revolution' in moving through the city. These sentiments also reflect that 'sustainability' messaging can be a convenient shield to deflect criticism about utilizing bicycle infrastructure to promote economic growth in specific industries. This sustainability messaging is successful in part because of the threat climate change has on large cities and the political identity connected to the concern. Florida argues that the 'Creative Age' has ushered in new respect for livable and sustainable cities because 'the quest for clean and green is powered by the same underlying ethos that drives

¹⁷ This job position created controversy in Minneapolis because Rybak had recently laid off ten firefighters, citing budget issues (Roper 2011).

¹⁸ All quotes from R.T. Rybak come from personal communication with Melody Hoffmann on May 20, 2012.

the Creative Economy' (2012: x). Both agendas value conserving resources, whether they are natural or human.

Rybak is invested in bicycle infrastructure because making it easy to use this 'clean and green' form of mobility is desirable to the creative class. He said, 'The key to economic growth is attracting talent. Especially in the creative field, talent is very mobile. [Our bicycle infrastructure] has attracted this wide swath of people to get something they can't find in a freeway-oriented place like Houston. Even in a city with a great reputation like Austin, for attracting cutting edge talent, they are not even in the same league as Minneapolis on bike culture. That gives us a huge competitive advantage'.

Rybak made a direct link between building bicycle infrastructure and competing with other U.S. cities for creative talent. The 'total revolution' in sustainable city living is connected to economic competition with other U.S. cities; if the goal is to be the most 'green' city, then Minneapolis is certainly in the running. Rybak's support for bicycle infrastructure allows him to build up his environmental credentials and simultaneously use these credentials as a sales pitch for why Minneapolis is hip and eco-friendly, and thus a great place for the creative class.

Through urban developments such as the Greenway and the luxury apartment buildings cropping up along the bicycle path, Minneapolis appears to be emerging as the blueprint in recruiting the creative class, and the interview with Rybak echoed many of Florida's pitches about the creative class lifestyle. For example, Florida discussed what he calls 'horizontal hypermobility', meaning that the creative class workers hop around to different companies and cities in search of what they want, often dismissing potential for promotions within a company. Florida (2002) cites Austin, Texas as an example of a city that has recruited a lot of creative talent via strategic recruitment. And Rybak sees Austin as a rival but believes Minneapolis is in a different 'league' in attracting creative people, thus beating out Austin in recruitment. Meanwhile, the reality of gentrification looms. For example, Debra Stone of the volunteer-run Twin Cities Greenways board warned of the gentrification potential of a new greenway in North Minneapolis, a part of the city with a high percentage of underemployed people of colour:

We see the gentrification happening right now. I mean North Minneapolis is very close, it's an ideal situation for downtown Minneapolis so it definitely is a concern for residents up in the North side and I think rightly so... research shows that with bikes and Greenways, neighbourhoods become safer. They certainly would become more appealing, especially as being so close to downtown. [But] who has the jobs downtowns? Not people of colour.¹⁹

The placement of bicycle infrastructure and the economic benefits that are predicted to

¹⁹ To be clear, there are plenty of people of colour who *do* work downtown—as janitors, food workers at the stadiums, construction workers, and bus drivers. But interestingly Debra's comment suggests that these workers are not the ones coveted by the supporters of the North Minneapolis Greenway project. Here Debra seems to be referring to the creative class sector of labour that is largely void of people of colour.

follow make a case that bicycling in the U.S. deserves more critical attention and analysis.²⁰

Conclusion

Our research findings in both L.A. and Minneapolis suggest that city politicians and bicycle advocates increasingly see eye to eye on bicycle infrastructure. At first glance, this relationship does not challenge the promise of bicycle mobility; working through public infrastructure to expand bicycling to more people would seem ideal. However, in Minneapolis we saw how politicians have turned their support for bicycle advocacy into a strategy to recruit the creative class. In Los Angeles, bicycle projects are being endowed with a ‘world-class’ symbolism that has a troubling history.

City officials speak to the need for infrastructure such as bicycle paths in order to increase the number of bicyclists, while also claiming that these projects can encourage job growth in the creative industries, increase property values, and make the city a desirable place to live for the creative class. These messages are tailored to those with capital to invest, those with the social mobility to relocate to a city or neighbourhood based on its street design, and those who agree that public investment should spur private development. In none of these categories can we locate the existing inhabitants of urban neighbourhoods who will be impacted by street changes. Bike advocates, arguing that bike projects will increase property values, set their sights on converting sticklers like the Long Beach homeowners. People of colour who do not commute to jobs in downtown Minneapolis do not need to be enrolled in the project. The future vision of a ‘world class’ bike city erases the current and potential bike users who do not fit into this economic development model for bike infrastructure.

Increasingly, politicians are dismissing opposition to bike infrastructure as backward thinking, giving power to the world-class discourse presented by bicycle advocates. At a panel on bikes and economics held in July 2013 at the Portland Art Museum, U.S. Congressman Earl Blumenauer, long praised by the bike movement for leadership on bicycle issues, emphasized that bike infrastructure is a property amenity. Following that line of thinking, people like the Long Beach homeowners were seemingly confused about the purpose of bike infrastructure, getting too caught up in their race and class-based vision of bicycling to see the larger shift toward bike infrastructure as a symbol of the good life. Their fears are unfounded, according to journalist Jeff Mapes (2009), who reported a rise in property values in Davis, California the U.S. city that has done the most to normalize cycling. According to Mapes, potential residents noted this infrastructure as a reason for moving to Davis, which would seem to confirm Richard Florida’s assertion that bike infrastructure can be an attractor. Does making bike infrastructure profitable increase bicycle mobility? In recent years, bicycling in Davis has decreased at the

²⁰ In some cases, the outcome has already been measured. A study done by the Center for Transportation Studies (CTS) at the University of Minnesota found that Nice Ride users in Minneapolis spend an average of \$150,000 at businesses near Nice Ride stations over one season (CTS, July 2012).

same time that property values have gone up, Mapes reported.

What about opposition to bike infrastructure that comes not from politically empowered homeowners in a historic district, but from communities of colour concerned about a new era in urban renewal? Will their concerns be dismissed as backwards as well? The unstated necessity of global competitiveness implied by the drive to develop ‘world-class’ bicycle networks, an L.A. theme echoed at that Portland panel, has less to do with the bike as a cheap mode of transport than with its recognized ability to ‘attract talent, the best and the brightest’, as Blumenauer put it. Similarly, advocates from Indianapolis at the League of American Bicyclists' National Bike Summit in D.C. in March 2013 talked about using bike infrastructure to attract ‘creative’ workers. These words imply that public infrastructure does more than address the mobility problems of existing inhabitants.

It is significant that the vehicle now considered world-class is the bicycle rather than the private car, but will a bicycle infrastructure network prove to be more equitable than the highway system has been? Given its embeddedness in neoliberal urbanism, it is likely that bicycle infrastructure intended as sustainability marketing will be a gain for some and a loss for others—likely a loss for people of colour and the working class. In Minneapolis, we saw these populations being sidelined in two ways: one, bicycle facilities such as the Midtown Greenway clearing a previously marginal space of homeless and nomadic people; and two, advocates discussing bicycle infrastructure plans as intended economic stimuli, *not* to support people interested in bicycling. Under these conditions, the bicycle becomes a rolling signifier of environmental friendliness and bourgeois leisure, doing economic work that has little to do with progressive bicycle politics such as increased mobility for *all* people regardless of class position. As geographer John Stehlin (2013) has argued, it is the image of Copenhagen in particular that motivates the adoption of European bike infrastructure designs in U.S. cities. It is not the actual practice that matters, but rather the image of the practice as a commodity, as Mapes (2009) saw in Davis. The use of bike infrastructure is no longer the driving force in its political adoption; even an unused bike lane can produce value for property owners and developers. The thousands of bodies at CicLAvia may be a step forward not for bicycle advocacy but for downtown development, if condo conversions and bike lanes continue to go hand in hand.

When figures such as Blumenauer and Rybak portray talent as some self-evident good that generates value, they obscure the fact that as policymakers they decide what spaces should and should not see public investment. Cycling may produce cultural capital through its association with the imagined creative class, but a capitalist class mobilizes this into economic development. Those who embrace environmental gentrification predict a space where only those who plan to capitalize on urban property have a right to the city. Using bike infrastructure to attract desirable people to cities hungry for consumer-driven revitalization frames existing urban residents as undesirable, unproductive, even as those residents must be kept around as service workers.

Finally, the ‘world-class’ transportation infrastructure discourse implies that bicycling is limited to particular spaces. While bicyclists may see bicycle infrastructure as a populist good because shared streets are dominated by motorists, the creative class strategy may not secure greater access to bicycle mobility for all. If lobbying for bike infrastructure continues to be justified through the ‘world-class’ discourse, people biking out of economic necessity will continue to be marginal within the bike movement while low-income families will be driven farther and farther from eco-chic districts. Bike advocates should be aware of the unjust implications of selling cycling. Bicycling’s potential to make change is surely greater than its potential for profit.

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REVIEW ARTICLE

Public Space Between Politics and Society

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Angeli by Domenico Ciruzzi – short film – Italy, 1996 – Runtime 13 mins, English subtitles.

In 1996, Domenico Ciruzzi, a Neapolitan criminal lawyer with some relevant experience in theatre, cinema and television, directed a short film with English subtitles, and titled it *Angeli* (literally, Angels).

This work was recently debated in a public meeting attended by the author and held by the Suor Orsola Benincasa University in Naples, as part of an interfaculty cycle of seminars on ‘Cinema/architettura/identità: La città come istituzione’ (Cinema/architecture/identity: The City as an Institution). This discussion brought to mind Pardo and Prato’s intimation that ‘in a democracy, political authority is not established and maintained through the domination and the recognition of its legitimacy determines the strength of rulers’ authority on “legal and moral grounds”’ (Pardo and Prato 2010: 12). Furthermore, this debate gives me the opportunity to deal with some of the key-aspects shown by the relationship between citizenship and local cultural policies, when the use of public spaces is at stake.

Angeli is set in the main square of Naples, Piazza del Plebiscito, which had just been set free of parked cars, thus becoming an icon for the renaissance of the city. The new mayor, Antonio Bassolino, had just been elected and could count on a large majority in the City Council.

Three artists impersonate the main characters – a female trapezist and two male musicians, playing a flute and a drum. They talk to each other while floating in the empty space above the square. Their conversation takes place in supposedly elegant Italian, in fact revealing the expressive and aesthetic effort by people who usually talk in a different, more familiar language – Neapolitan.

The scene starts with a dolly shot on the night skyline of Naples, showing the Royal Palace façade and the Jolly Hotel tower, the latter symbolising the urban sprawl of the 1950s. Some images include the Vesuvius and Mount Somma, framed between the Royal Palace, on one side, and the Prefecture on the other, under a full moon glimpsing through clouds dotting and overall clear night sky. The wind blows and yet the main characters, played by three remarkable actors (Antonella Stefanucci, Riccardo Zinna and Tonino Taiuti), look steady set on an imaginary trapeze, engaged in a conversation that develops a thread of memory at times broken by the rhythm of music. They recall a time when they were headliners in the theatre scene, performing a show with music and acrobatics; a time when they were at the centre of an imaginary stage shaped by the fantasy of the audience against the natural background of the square. Yet, that memorable night something went wrong; perhaps because one of the two

musicians had forgotten to fasten the security hooks or because someone played a wrong tune at a key moment. So, what at first looks as a reflection, turns into a harsh everyday quarrel.

As time flows, the lives of the three main characters slip to the background, and at the end of the film they leave the square limping, while on the opposite side the camera moves behind and gets lost in a growing hum of screams and noises buzzing through the colonnade that borders one side of the semi-circular piazza. Then, the camera enters the closed space of a church, its doors are shut on the square, thus secluding it from the public space; a space, that is, other than ours.

This short film met a discrete success, especially from the critics. It was selected for Nanni Moretti's *Sacher Festival* and for the *N.I.C.E. Festival* (New Italian Cinema Events) held in New York and San Francisco. It won first prize at the 1996 *Fano Film Festival*.

Its main characters are only summarily portrayed. The acrobat is 'the most beautiful trapezist woman in the world' and, though the two musicians, Antonio and Riccardo, use the 'lei' courtesy form, they keep teasing and blaming each other for what happened; the real facts are never completely cleared up. 'How beautiful, how thrilling was that evening', the three characters say nostalgically, moving away from the square. We do not know whether they are dead or simply crippled by the fall on the fatal evening. Yet, other than the individual fate of the characters, the strongest visible element is the square, which provides the frame for the whole story and a mirror for the lack of integration between citizens and the public space. So Piazza del Plebiscito is not just the place where the story is set; it is, rather, a symbolic and visual magnet to which the whole cinematographic structure conceived by Ciruzzi refers.

This square has historically been used as a place for rejoicing, for encounters between the upper and lower classes, and for questioning the existing social structures and then redefining them in the ephemeral frenzy of popular shows and celebrations. Thus, the square has come to encapsulate key social dynamics, and has been used politically by the ruling powers. Contemporary art installations and New Year's Day celebrations have been regularly hosted in the Piazza del Plebiscito, and have been used by the city government to gather political consent. Ciruzzi's short film predicts this trend, which the city would then actually experience up to the beginning of the third millennium, when the financial crisis of the local governments and the failure of the most recent art installations, contributed to put an end this tradition.

In Ciruzzi's movie, the Piazza del Plebiscito, either empty or packed with acrobats, looks as a gem, set in the civic network, the latter perceiving the square as something alien. Indeed, at the end of the film, the church door is closed on the piazza, while the rest of the city lies inside, unchanged, without being explicitly represented.

In several newspaper interviews, Ciruzzi has stated that his work was aimed at saving the square from the temptation of a new kind of rhetoric. Naples's rulers were oriented to lingering in the fenced space of the Piazza del Plebiscito, forgetting the other parts of the city, such as the deprived outskirts or the popular *Quartieri Spagnoli* (Spanish Quarters), a few steps away from the square.

Ciruzzi was motivated by a deep love for his city, and by a strong enthusiasm for the so-called 'new renaissance' that Naples was experiencing in those days. Yet, the film aimed at

emphasizing the importance of the middle-class – office workers, teachers, librarians, artists, and people who were, perhaps still are, at once Naples' backbone and beating heart. They strive to preserve their dignity and to protect it, even when they are pushed to the outskirts of the city or harassed by a pervasive urban violence.

This film has recently been rediscovered and is the object of fresh interest. Renewed attention was sparked by the work of Patrizia La Trecchia, an Italian researcher transplanted in the United States, who focused on Ciruzzi's film in some meaningful pages of her recent book on Naples (La Trecchia 2013). In studying this movie, she identified the same polemic thread that can be traced in the more celebrated, and universally known, film by Francesco Rosi, *Le mani sulla città* (Hands over the city). Released in 1963, *Le mani sulla città* launched the harshest attack ever against a political class that let the city be assaulted by wild building speculation. Notably, into his film *Angeli*, Ciruzzi included voices of protest from the soundtrack of *Le mani sulla città*, and used clips of a crowded Piazza del Plebiscito from Vittorio De Sica's *Il giudizio universale* (The Universal Judgment, 1961).

Angeli must be praised for having issued a vibrant warning on the possible side effects of a specific style of public-space management. This kind of management is marked by a strong form of *dirigisme* enforced by local administrations unwilling to contemplate viable alternative, especially those favoured by artists and intellectuals who were a minority at the time the film was shot. So *Angeli* shared its fate with other works on Naples (for instance, *Il grande progetto* – the great project – a docufilm by Vincenzo Marra about the urban transformation of the former Bagnoli industrial area, at the western outskirts of Naples); it was removed from the mainstream cultural landscape, because it did not fit the imperative of contributing to build consent for the ruling local government. On the whole, the years of the 'Neapolitan Renaissance' were marked by a celebrative pragmatism, sometimes yielding good artistic results, while failing to producing significant change in the city. Above all, the élite in power failed in what they saw as their pedagogical positive/progressive task of 'educating' the weakest social groups (Pardo 2012). Not surprisingly, the end of the great installations in the Piazza del Plebiscito coincided with the great waste crisis of the mid-2000s. Once again, this piazza was an icon for the whole city. For example, one of the most astonishing demonstrations during the hardest phase of the waste crisis took place in November 2010, when trash bags were hung between the columns of the Piazza del Plebiscito hemicycle. The black bags were also stacked in front of the Prefecture (located on one side of the piazza) in order to prompt the local authorities to come to grips with a crisis that was undermining the civil life of the city. Through that counter-installation Neapolitan citizens brought the square back to the tough reality, thus dissolving the dreamy imagination created by the artistic installations of the previous fifteen years.

The last artistic installation in the Piazza del Plebiscito, set up just before Christmas 2009, was composed of three enormous lighted balloons filled with helium created by the German artist Carsten Nicolai. This work of art, titled *Pioneer*, was quickly removed from the piazza. The local government argued that the installation was dangerous as it was exposed to atmospheric agents. Apparently, one of the balloons had burned after it was hit by a rocket

lunched by unidentified thugs – something similar had happened some years earlier to an installation by the German artist Rebecca Horn, whose little bronze skulls were partly stolen.

Using a highly poetic language, *Angels* anticipated the ‘air disaster’ of Carsten Nicolai’s balloon and invited us to think about the need to find a truly balanced relationship among different parts of the city; for instance, between the centre and the periphery, between the everyday harsh reality of life among ordinary Neapolitans and the widely flaunted artistic representations that, however appealing, made no-one forget the city’s long-running problems. Interestingly, only a few isolated voices, among them Italo Pardo’s (2001; 2012: 67-8), expressed heavy scepticism about using public spaces for artistic installations that could only provide some superficial, time-limited aesthetic satisfaction; weak surrogates for the much-needed and long overdue substantial improvement in the quality of urban life, that aimed at implementing the distorted pedagogical task of a ruling élite and self-appointed judge of who was a good or a bad citizen.

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RESEARCH REPORTS

European Cities and Temporary Protection Statuses: A Multi-sited Ethnography of Housing Practices in Turin and Berlin

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Research in Progress

Introduction

European societies are currently witnessing an increase of legal statuses that are temporarily limited, among which there are those related to asylum rights.

The existence of such statuses represents a theoretical challenge to the notion of citizenship as the background against which migration has been read so far: in terms of rights, holding such statuses is still understood as being ‘less than a citizen’. Consequently this leads to unequal access to the city, both in terms of rights and resources. Also, inclusion of newcomers in western societies has been traditionally based on the notion of citizenship and because such notion is being challenged by the ongoing social transformations triggered by changes in the labour market and the welfare system it appears to be relevant to explore such concept through the category of migrants, which best represents the area where tensions on citizenship are being displayed (Mezzadra 2001). Building on the interpretation of citizenship as a practice, rather than only as a set of rights or a sense of belonging (Bosniak 2000, 2006), it is important to look at this category of people in Europe, particularly because temporary protection statuses can be interpreted as an example of the fraying edges of citizenship.

In order to elaborate on the challenges confronting the concept of citizenship, I aim to explain why people holding a temporary protection status face such inequality in access to the city, and why this inequality is being reiterated: why a status that should be a guarantee of protection and allow access to rights is turned into something that produces instead marginality and exclusion. How do individuals face such inequality?

The Urban Scale

The growth in the number of temporarily protected individuals living in European cities and the difficulties that they face is leading to an emerging interest in studies that focus on the experiences of displacement in urban settings. In literature these people are commonly referred to as ‘urban refugees’. Unlike refugees living in internationally managed camps, they live in self-contained urban settlements and rely much more on domestic rights legislation.

Although their rights should be converted into effective access to services by the hosting State, very often the translation of these rights into real entitlements is missing, and urban refugees become a marginalized category among the urban poor.

Methodological Aspects and Research Settings

I am currently involved in a multisite ethnographic research on the housing practices of people with a temporary protection status in two European cities, namely Turin and Berlin. I have chosen to focus on the housing issue for two main reasons. First, because the notion of *home* is a crucial one, particularly when considering individuals that have fled their country and are in the process of getting acquainted with the local society. Second, because I am considering housing as an important means through which citizenship is concretely lived in everyday life. Therefore, I am looking at the notion of citizenship from its edges; that is, from the point of view of persons who are not citizens of the country they are living in, though being entitled to a set of rights that should allow them to participate in the social life of the local society. In both cities access to the field was achieved through associations that work with refugees. In Turin, the precarious living conditions have led about 600 people with temporary protection status to live in squats. These forms of housing thus play a relevant role in my fieldwork, which currently includes some shadowing activity in order to better understand the everyday life of temporary protected individuals in relation to urban space.

The choice of the cities to carry out my research did not happen *ex-ante* but was the result of a preliminary fieldwork. Starting from Turin, a city in north-west Italy, where previous research had been carried out on asylum seekers coming from Libya during 2011, two main questions emerged that lead me to develop my current research project. I asked, what happens once a protection status is granted to a person? How is it implemented? What does it actually give access to?

Indeed, much has been written about asylum seekers as persons who are experiencing an existence 'in between' legal statuses, and about how this affects their lives in terms of severe psychological stress and social marginalization. This topic has been addressed from different perspectives, among which the policy perspective is very strong (ECRE and UNHCR Reports, Houle 2000). What still appears to be underexplored (and undertheorized) is the individual perspective combined with a wider look across European countries¹ and especially the relation between people having obtained a temporary protection status and the implementation of rights (Morris 2003).

Because the right to asylum in Europe is still implemented according to national criteria, it is important to ask about the differences in accessing basic rights for temporarily protected persons in European cities. It is also important to assess the ways and extent to which their mobility challenges the functioning of the nation bound asylum systems. Since this topic appears to be underexplored, my research has an explorative connotation and preliminary fieldwork was very useful to develop the research questions. The focus on Turin and Berlin allows not only a deeper understanding about how rights for temporarily protected individuals are implemented in Italy and Germany, but also puts the two countries in a dialogic relation because of the intra-European mobility of temporarily protected people that connects these two cities. Berlin is the destination of many people holding a temporary

¹ Korac's work (2005, 2009) on the networks of refugees in Amsterdam and Rome is an exception.

protection status issued in Italy. They have named themselves the ‘Lampedusa in Berlin’² and have started asking recognition of their rights, especially their right to stay.

Preliminary Findings

Given the qualitative nature of my study, the following considerations are bound to the cases I have observed and cannot be generalized. Nevertheless, although mine is still a work in progress, some aspects are emerging that, if confirmed by further ethnographic evidence and analysis, could raise questions about certain assumptions that are usually made about refugees. Two special assumptions can be addressed so far; namely, the so often assumed lack of resources among refugees and their being more bound to a national setting than other migrants. In very general terms, what is emerging is the relevance of intra-European mobility in refugees’ attempt to build a livelihood. In Italy, refugees are experiencing severe discrimination and exploitation in the labour market alongside extremely precarious housing conditions. For this reason, many decide to move to other countries with the expectation of finding better living conditions. Therefore, as for other migrants, there is an important link between spatial mobility and social mobility; movement across national borders turns into a strategy to improve one’s life condition. It also has strong implications in terms of housing, as it requires the establishment of, or the reliance on, a network of individuals living in different European cities. Moreover, such mobility is most likely to become structural, as it is bound to the need of renewing the documents; the time span depends on the status that a person is legally entitled to and can vary between one, three or five years.

I am currently spending my fourth month doing ethnographic fieldwork in Turin. It will be followed by ethnographic fieldwork in Berlin beginning in June 2014

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² Lampedusa is the southernmost Italian island where large numbers of immigrants arrive by boat.

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On the Sectarian Dynamics of Law in South Lebanon: A Research Report

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This three-year project under the 'Rita Levi Montalcini Programme' (Formerly known as the 'Comeback of the Italian Brains Programme') departs from existing lines of research, appreciating the role of socio-cultural influences in explaining political strategies, responses and behaviours. The main aim is to develop a better understanding of this phenomenon, looking at the close relationship between religion and the socio-cultural. More specifically, the aim is to identify these factors, with reference to the dynamic link between identity constructions, the socio-cultural and religion, with an emphasis on the interconnections between identity representation and property law in the proposed *loci*.

Intensive theoretical and region-specific readings related to the research topic were undertaken first at the Department of Political Science of the University of Pisa and, then, at a number of research institutions, including a month at the Saint Paul Institute of Philosophy and Theology in Harissa, Lebanon. Fieldwork was conducted in two settings, the Christian quarter of the city of Tyre and the Southern Christian Lebanese village of Alma el-Chaab on the Israeli border.

Interviews were carried out with political and religious leaders and representatives of the South Lebanese Christian community groups (Maronites, Greek Orthodox, Greek Catholics and Protestants), among focus groups (Steward and Shamdasani 1990, Greenbaum 1997, Barbour and Kitzinger 1999) and with cultural organizations. These interviews were carefully aimed at addressing the core theoretical *foci* of the project and were based on previously agreed-upon questions and areas of interest. The information thus collected was finally categorized and analysed in order to assess continuities and discontinuities in the attitudes toward communal identity and land transactions and to place the resulting analysis in the project's theoretical framework and research objectives.

The relationship between land, property, and culture has been widely investigated (Firth, 1939, Macpherson 1962, Gluckman 1965, Bloch 1975, Ryan 1984, Hann 1993, De Soto and Anderson 1993, Pardo 1996, Ziff and Rao 1997, Dewar and Bright 1998, Kalinoe and Leach 2000), including in the specific regional area (Gilsenan, 1996, Shamir 1996, Pottage and Mundy 2004, Chatty 2006, Mundy and Smith 2007) and with reference to the formation of the different Lebanese identities over time (Longrigg 1958, Zamir 1985 and 2000, Salibi 1988, Khazen 1991 and 2000, Braude and Lewis 1992 and above all Spagnolo 1971 and 1977). In the literature on nationalism there has been a significant tendency to conflate religion and ethno-nationalism (Durkheim, [1893]1984, Zulaika 1988, Zubaida 1989, Kellas 1991, Turner 1991, Hastings 1997, Dingley 2007). While I recognize that there are structural problems in the wider Middle East scenario, including Lebanon, I do not aim to address this issue directly. My research aims to look specifically at the use of land in divided communities, considering that the motivation to act comes from the social-cultural environment of the individual and his or her group (Dingley and Mollica 2007). This environment structures the individuals, giving them identity and a set of values that defies Western norms as it leads them to place group interest over individual interest.

In my work I refer to Durkheim's use of the concept of religion as a representation of society-nation, so that it becomes the legitimate role of religion to sanction relations (Durkheim [1893]1984, Dingley 2007 and 2010). In this, I follow Gellner's use of Durkheim's sociology (Gellner 1983 and 1994). However, the relation between socio-economic factors is common to most early social theorists; see, for example, Weber's thesis on capitalism and Protestantism (Weber [1905] 1976). Specifically, this research suggests that we should be looking at the socio-political dynamics that impel individual activists. A primary concern, among them, is to involve the home audience in the struggle at a symbolic level, which implies a kind of communal impetus that Westerners find difficult to comprehend.

This research project addresses highly contentious issues in Middle Eastern communities. Special attention is paid, here, to the Christian minorities of South Lebanon, who live in areas where they see themselves and are seen by others as demographically insignificant. However, as demographics change, disputes arise over what should be a fair distribution of representation. This lack of social bonding is reflected in property sales and the flouting of formal law via local social norms. I am investigating how this is acted out every day in the way land transactions are controlled not through state-administered legal processes but through local mechanisms of social control, which give legal sanction to community-level actions. Thus I will critically engage with a major paradigm of democratic consociational models (Lijphart 1968 and 1999, Kerr 2005, O'Leary 2009).

This goes to the heart of the institutionalized tension and contradictory multi-cultural nature of many Lebanese mixed areas. What may look like a way to unite a country (Lebanon) at the national level may well have the opposite effect at the local level, which in turn weakens the national fabric by maintaining inter-religious divisions. This process prevents the formation of a 'collective consciousness' capable of uniting a people; the

formation, that is of an inclusive nation. Under such circumstances, the state may exist as a set of institutions but it is meaningless in terms of people's daily lives.

This continuing research will examine how each community develops a sense of religious affiliation with the land, so that it becomes part of a communal heritage that traditionally precludes the sale of land to others. Both inter-community and trans-national networks are thus often mediated by the religious authorities, which are seen as the legitimate recognized authority (Mollica 2006, 2008 and 2010). Land control, which has become an extension of religious calling in each ethno-religious group, is the unifying factor that provides coherence for the individual at the expense of any inclusive identity in people's daily lives.

Finally, this research aims to produce new knowledge on ethno-religious conflicts and to develop inter-disciplinary material on ethnic tensions in the Middle East, particularly on the issue of religious divisions as reflected in property law in divided communities. Findings resulting from this research are being used for teaching purposes at the University of Pisa. The research findings will be presented on 23 May 2014 at an International Conference on Divided Societies organized in Pisa under the auspices of the 'Rita Levi Montalcini Programme'. A dedicated website will later be established.

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COMPLETED DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS

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Our Bikes in the Middle of the Street: Community-building, Racism and Gentrification in Urban Bicycle Advocacy

It is no surprise to people living in U.S. urban spaces that bicycling continues its ascent into popularity. Neighbourhoods and cities across the country are now committed to making their spaces welcoming to bicyclists which include bicycling events, bicycle lanes, and businesses that cater to cyclists. In my time as an urban bicycle commuter, I have noticed that a particular bicyclist is being hailed by neighbourhoods and cities—one that has both racial and class privilege. Through my ethnographic research in three U.S. cities I have confirmed my suspicion that the bicycle signifies different values and meanings to different bicycling demographics. In this dissertation I ultimately argue that the ‘rolling signification’ of the bicycle contributes to its ability to build community, influence gentrifying urban planning, and reify and obscure systemic race and class barriers. I begin my dissertation with a case study on the Riverwest 24, a 24-hour bicycle race, and how its organizers and participants build community but I complicate this understanding of community building by exploring the neighbourhood’s long history of activism and its spatial connection to a major segregation line. The importance of a neighbourhood’s history as it intersects with bicycle advocacy is made clear in my second case study in Portland, Oregon where neighbours clashed, along racial lines, about renovating a specific bicycle lane. And thus I argue that the Black residents and history rooted in Black culture in Portland’s Albina neighbourhood produce a haunting (Gordon, 1997) within the reconstruction of that bicycle lane. In my final case study I explore whether the theory that bicycle lanes can lead to gentrification holds any merit. In Minneapolis I have found evidence that the local government is coopting bicycle infrastructure to recruit educated, upwardly mobile people—with little regard to its impact on residents who fall outside of that demographic. This cooptation is wrapped up in power relations that allow the city government and ‘creative class’ to define what a sustainable and livable city looks like. This dissertation makes a rather large intervention in Communication Studies as it illustrates the importance of rich description, spatial analysis, and ethnography in our scholarship.

Dr Melody Lynn Hoffmann is a professor and researcher in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She obtained her PhD in Communication Studies at the University Minnesota. Her research focuses on community responses to bicycle advocacy in urban U.S. spaces. She works closely with local transportation organizations to develop new research and best practices in regards to equitable bicycle infrastructure

planning. In the classroom, Dr. Hoffmann teaches topics including social movements, community-based research, and critical race and class theory.

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Development in Europe: Ideas, Discourses and Strategies of European Cohesion Policy

The aim of this dissertation was to conduct an analysis of the degree of autonomy given to the Regions of Southern Italy in accordance to development programs financed by European Cohesion Policy. The central issue concerns how Regions belonging to Southern Italy have adapted to EU Cohesion Policies and to the multilevel governance model they imply. The hypothesis advanced is that such Regions, during the periods of the budget cycles of structural funds (2000-2006 and 2007-2013), have suffered a reduction of institutional autonomy, and this has had a significant influence on the development strategies later adopted.

The dissertation argues that the Regional Policy carried out by the EU has brought about a growing normative homogenization at the expense of territorial peculiarities and locally usable resources. From this perspective, then, the close examination of the strategy adopted by the EU to support the growth process of regional institutions, which partially started in Italy during the Nineties thanks to a series of political and administrative reforms, becomes crucial. In fact, the theme of the growth process has not been yet scientifically examined and, within the growth process itself, the wish to incentivise the autonomy of regions – through principles and practices linked to a public policy endogenous approach – looks to have weakened the real propensity to verify results. In conclusion, the analysis is empirically based on the documents produced at regional level to define long-term development strategies, namely Regional Operative Plans. In essence, these documents should testify to the actual capacity of the regions of southern Italy for rethinking their development-related self-governance by respecting the economic and social complexity peculiar to the territories. Moreover, other useful data have been collected through in-depth interviews with privileged witnesses who are involved, at different levels, with the conceptualization and the execution of the cohesion policy.

Dr Enrico Sacco obtained his Laurea degree in Sociology and then a PhD in Sociology and Social Research at the University of Naples Federico II. His chief research interests are in Sociology of Economic Development in a comparative perspective. He has completed his PhD thesis on European Cohesion Policy and has revised various publications concerning territorial development processes and policies. Among his recent publications are 'Under the Messina Bridge: Conflict, Governance and Participation' published in the *Urbanities* (2013, with I. Scotti), and 'The crisis and entrepreneurs' (in P. De Vivo ed., *Settori di specializzazione del territorio della Provincia di Napoli*. 2014).

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Objects of Worship: Material Culture in the Production of Shamanic Rituals in South Korea

This dissertation shows how contemporary Korean shamanism (*musok*) continues to flourish in a hyper technological society, thanks to various adjustments and innovations in the material culture that supports this religious practice.

It was often thought that with the advent of technology and modernity mystic experiences and animistic practices would become extinct while giving way to scientific approaches to life. However, in contemporary South Korea, fast technological progress co-exists with traditions of direct communication with multitudes of gods and spirits. Such communication is enabled by several hundred thousands of professional mediators, mostly women called *manshin*, who perform possession-trance techniques.

In the process of mediating between people and supernatural entities many objects are deemed indispensable. Costly offerings of food, drink, animals, and decoration are displayed on elaborate altars, and *manshin*'s bodies attract spirits and gods to possess them by wearing symbolic outfits. In *musok* worldviews, not only humans enjoy beautiful artifacts, tasty meals, and festive dance and song. *Manshin* are therefore engaged in a reciprocal relationship in which they provide respectful and amusing rituals and in return receive supernatural help in divining the future, healing the sick, and preventing misfortunes.

This investigation of the material aspects of *musok* is based on a year of fieldwork and analysis of historical photographs. During the research, interviews and participant observations of *musok* practitioners, artists, art dealers, museum curators, collectors, media people and scholars were conducted in order to review the topic from a holistic perspective. The findings unfolds a wealth of information on how commodification, the penetration of digital media, and a national need for indigenous culture displays are the main processes that drive the production, use, circulation, and exhibition of *musok* artifacts in South Korea. The various chapters discuss specific rituals and entities, representations of the supernatural in artifacts, and recontextualization of *musok* in museums, collections, and digital media.

This research suggests that *musok* material culture is designed and used in discursive contexts where cultural identities, meanings, and values are created, maintained, and manipulated by various agencies and people who work to mediate between humans, objects, and supernatural entities.

Dr Liora Sarfati teaches at the Department of East Asian Studies of Tel Aviv University. Her ethnographic research explores the production of shamanic rituals in contemporary South Korea and pilgrimage in Israel. Her book manuscript *From Ritual to the World Wide Web: Mediums of Representation in Korean Shamanism* discusses shamanism in rituals, museums, films, television and the Internet. In this monograph she analyses new forms of reproducing knowledge and practice in mediated manners that add new contexts to rituals that reach back to pre-modern Korea. Her methodology includes participant observation, depth interviews, and text analysis. Performance studies and phenomenological ethnography are the main paradigms that guide her work on the roles of religion and spirituality in post-industrial urban societies.

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Reconstructing Solidarity: Communicative Action in Fair Trade Organizations

This thesis proposes an original analysis on the corporate communication process. Starting on the assumption, widely credited in the scientific literature, that subjects involved in the organizational life of corporates cooperate thanks to the sharing values, norms and interests (social solidarity) constructed in communication processes, this study focused on organizational changes in a kind of enterprise where ethical values are a fundamental aspect. Using communication action theory as a framework for analysis, this study focused on the communicative practices and mediation-construction process of social solidarity in the fair trade organization 'e' pappece' of Naples (Italy) where ethic principals constitute a fundamental aspect of their economic action. This research stressed the ambiguity in internal communication processes, particularly regarding organization changes to face market constraints and requested, and legislative obligations. All these pressures created stress in the internal solidarity that required a response. Communicative processes were used to reduce the stress and reconstruct solidarity among corporate members. However, as the study shows, it seems that for an organization in which ethical values are particularly fundamental, it is difficult to reconstruct solidarity without compromising the stability of the group. This is the reason why organizations instead of solving these kinds of problems, often prefer not to completely solve conflicts between the original (ethical) corporate mission and the pressures of market and legislative constraints to its organization actions.

Dr Ivano Scotti is Research fellow at the Department of Social Sciences, University of Naples 'Federico II' (Italy), where he obtained his PhD in 2009 and currently, he is assistant teacher in sociology of corporate communication at the same Department. He adopted some key concepts of Habermas' theory as analytic framework. Recently, adapting that theoretical perspective, his researches are focused on energy issues, particularly on energy sustainable transition linked to social acceptance / social innovation processes at local level.

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The House That Miss Ruby Built: Conceptions of Identity, Value and Social Relationships in Limited Equity Cooperatives

My dissertation examines a specific form of low-income homeownership in New York City known as limited equity cooperatives (LECs). I investigate conceptions of property relations among low-income urban people of colour as they transition to homeownership in these housing cooperatives, as well as the role of the Urban Homesteading Assistance Board (UHAB), an organization in New York City that assists renters in their transformation into cooperative homeowners. Using an LEC located in the Harlem/Washington Heights area as a case study, I explore how residents negotiate their new roles as collective owners, not renters, and argue that these new economic practices transform their subjectivities and social relationships, highlighting the inextricable (and mutually constitutive) links binding race, ethnicity, gender and class. My research uses an immersion-based ethnographic approach conducted over two-and-a-half years that includes participant observation, semi-structured interviews and life histories with various actors in the affordable housing landscape, along with document analysis, as well as content and discourse analysis. I illuminate the larger issues of urban poverty, gentrification, housing/homeownership as a cultural expectation, and the links between urbanization and capitalist logics of accumulation and social organization.

My research uses heterotopia as part of its overarching theoretical framework. Foucault introduced the term heterotopia to refer to spaces outside of everyday life that construct their own rules and maintain insider/outsider delineations. Because of the collective nature of LECs, they have the ability to engage in contradictory modes of value by both subverting and upholding neoliberal ideology. These co-ops offer the potential for urban activism as ‘pockets of resistance’ against social injustice and housing inequality. By blurring the private/public boundary, LECs shed light on the intersection between public policy and individual experience, and offer a model for how these contradictory forces can be balanced. Additionally, I analyze why the American Dream of homeownership remains entrenched in the collective psyche despite overwhelming proof of its economic, political and social costs, focusing on how certain non-commodified housing forms have the potential to make this dream less risky.

Jill Siegel is a Ph.D. candidate in anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania who will receive her degree in May 2014. Her research interests include urban anthropology, the anthropology of space, property, value, race and gender.

BOOK REVIEWS

Flavia Cangià (2013). *Performing the Buraku: Narratives on Cultures and Everyday Life In Contemporary Japan*, Lit Verlag

Another volume about minorities in Japan might seem a bit much at the present time, as the field has been well covered in recent years, and there is a large collection of rather detailed anthropological and ethnographic studies available for perusal. This book picks one of the less well covered peoples among those available, however, and the title is intriguing, for those who have been described as *burakumin*, or people of the *buraku*, have rather been portrayed as seeking to hide from, or politically to eliminate their classification as such. The introduction bodes well, then, for it offers a refreshing approach, suggesting a series of ways in which people who have been subjected to discrimination for their status are now finding a pride in the activities which characterize them, and moreover, are working hard to 'perform them' and convince others of their value. To explain further who these people are would go against the author's plea to complicate their definition, and allow their efforts to integrate themselves into the multiplicity of narratives of Japanese cultures, to be demonstrated through objects, images and the engagement of spaces of performance. I will pick instead then some characteristics of the book to describe.

First, the author does set out to introduce herself as an ethnographer in the field. This is a strength of the book, and it starts early on and continues through to the end, though sometimes in rather frustratingly short bursts. It includes personal accounts of the interactions she has with the main characters of the narratives, records in some detail important meetings and discussions they have, and describes activities which succeed in bringing the reader right into their lives. In fact the best ethnography comes in the last chapter, and it is worth waiting for, or cutting through to, for it portrays the lives of monkey trainers and leather tanning workers in a way that offers the most new and interesting part of the volume. Before that, it almost seems as though the writer is still nervous that she hasn't made enough reference to everyone else who has written things relevant to her discourse, and I felt that this sometimes detracted from the value of her own first-hand research.

For example, the second thing that the book does then is to provide very comprehensive coverage of previous work on every subject that seems to be related. This could be seen as a strength too for a reader who is coming to this field for the first time, and perhaps it will prove a stalwart volume for teaching about minority issues in Japan, but I found it a bit tedious. Since there is so much work already published about the history and political activities of those known as the *burakumin*, it seemed slightly to go against the initial aims of the book to rehearse them all again in quite so much detail. The

second part of the book is headed 'whose history, whose tradition?' and it also offers a good insight into the way in which the people with whom Cangia worked see themselves, and seek to portray their own traditions, eventually picking from some of the abundant historical accounts those that allow people to present their own lives and their importance for Japanese society generally. Here is where the real value of this section lies.

The third aspect of the book which must, I suppose, be mentioned, is that there is little related theory that has been left out. Quite a lot of this comes in the first section which is headed 'setting off into the field' and again, I found it distracted from what I personally wanted to read. For a thesis, this awareness of theory is a must, of course, and had it only been a demonstration of awareness, it could still have been carried forward, but I felt that the book could have happily cut down on the degree of reiteration of each of the theories recounted. Again, this could be seen as a strength, and again, it could perhaps be a teaching tool, for the theory is not, as far as I can tell, misrepresented, but it is tiresome for a reader coming at it for the umpteenth time.

This book has much to recommend it, then, and I enjoyed some parts of it immensely. Indeed, I hope that the writer will eventually build up the confidence to present her own work in the same appealing way that her closest informants are performing and presenting to the world at large the enormous importance of what they do

for the Japanese society of which they form a part.

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Brigit Obrist, Veit Arit and Elísio Macamo (eds) (2013). *Living The City In Africa. Processes of Invention and Intervention*. Zürich: Lit Verlag

This book is based on papers presented at a conference of the Europe African Group of Interdisciplinary Studies AEGIS held in October 2010 with an emphasis on the "...creative tension at the interface of processes of intervention and invention in the rapidly growing African cities." (p.6). The book consists of an Introduction, fourteen different chapters (covering a variety of topics pertaining to cities in southern, East and West Africa) and a Conclusion. There are twenty-nine contributors representing different theoretical and disciplinary perspectives addressing the characteristics of living the city in contemporary Africa and how to explain them.

The chapters are arranged around four major themes namely, urban politics, transnational urbanism, urban moves and urban creativity.

Urban politics:- Jo Beall examines urbanisation trends in Africa, the drivers and nature of African cities, the challenges to urban governance due to these dynamics and how to accommodate the existence, competition and collusion of multiple institutions in African cities so as to

determine the conditions giving rise to the institutional arrangements that can be aligned with the inventiveness of Africa's urbanites. Through individual agency and collective organisation, inclusive and effective institutions can be formalised as has happened in Durban (South Africa). Tom Goodfellow analyses the way of and motivation for government intervention in urban planning in two fairly similar East African countries (Rwanda and Uganda) and how the underlying political dynamics (political actors, incentives) and not the technical or formal governance arrangements, lead to the implementation or undermining of formal urban plans. Rasheed Olaniyi explores how the colonial segregation policy contributed to over-urbanisation characterised by overcrowding, poor sanitation, spreading of infectious diseases, unemployment, an overstressed social infrastructure and a very high crime rate in Sabongari (part of Kano) and how community leaders, accomplished merchants and residents, in pursuing their own vested interests in the city, thwarted the efforts of the colonial government to create the "healthy city". In contrast, African urban dwellers had their imagined ideal of an "African city" and by creating new social spaces based on rural/traditional and urban characteristics invented their own "city" in Sabongari. Joschka Philipps looks at how youth gangs in the axis (a strip of neighbourhoods in Conakry) actively responded to that specific urban context. Their political actions are strongly influenced by contextual factors

depending on the extent to which gangs actively relate to them. Thus, urban contexts provide certain resources and conditions which actors may employ, oppose and creatively reinterpret and do not cause or determine action mechanically. The urban youth gangs shape the meaning of their context while, at the same time, the context is influencing them.

Translocal urbanism:- Ola Söderström *et al.* look at the role of decentralised co-operation in recent strategies of the municipal administration in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) and how translocal urbanism reshaped the city. Ercüment Çelik addresses how urban life in an African city is affected by strategic urban projects linked to a "mega-event" (FIFA 2010 World Cup) in Durban (South Africa). The modernist vision of the ideal post-industrialised city has led to an exclusionary approach towards the informal sector economic activities with a negative effect on the livelihoods of the urban poor. The reaction from local street traders was "reclaiming livelihoods" in a vision of "World Class Cities" indicating the importance of inclusive urban planning. Ulf Vierke and Nadine Siegert, looking at the representation of the city, analyse art as cultural practice in the urban life of Nairobi and Luanda where urban space and its imagination form a constitutive part of the local art worlds going beyond the art production itself. Political ideologies are engraved in the cultural memory of both countries and art is regarded as an essential part in a

process of 're-membering', linking the past, present and an unknown future.

Urban moves:- Jan Gerold gives prominence to the mobility patterns of first generation elderly people living the city in Dar es Salaam. 'Being on the move' involves physical mobility (actual travel), mediated mobility (virtual connectivity) and immaterial mobility (imagination) and all three are inter-linked and also extend to outside the city boundaries (even trans-nationally) whereby unanticipated possibilities can be taken advantage of and perceived vulnerability be counteracted. Ambivalence in their experience exists in that the village (real or imagined) is the place of belonging and not the rapidly changing city. Silje Erøy Sollien *et al.* analyse 'home space' (act of and physical space of dwelling) in Maputo to indicate how the concept of home is affected by and affects the physical environment in which people are dwelling. To understand home space means understanding the physical, social, economic, cultural and temporal sides of urban change in view of the new forms of urbanism that are emerging. Material aspects of home are results of social and cultural processes that are acting upon the site and architects require flexible interventions that involve the life worlds in places to be able to make relevant and sustainable interventions. Sandra Manuel focuses on middle-class and cosmopolitan young adults in Maputo to describe and explore the fluidness of gender identities and non-normative heterosexuality influenced by post-colonial notions of personhood.

Individual identities are constantly reshaped, however, masculine and feminine still remain strong principles that inform people's view of themselves as gendered. Valérie Liebs *et al.* describe how the work of herbalists is formed by Kinshasa and its urban context. The chances and constraints that they have to face as well as the strategies used by some in that context, leading to some herbalists dissociating their work from "traditional" herbalists (leaning towards biomedicine) whereas others associate their knowledge with "tradition" for the legitimisation of their skills and status enhancement of their work. Practices, spaces and objects from different contexts are borrowed to signify competence.

Urban creativity:- For Till Förster urbanity can take many forms and the visions that people may have about cities in Africa are therefore as manifold as urban life itself - inhabitants are influenced in ambiguous ways. In what way then do cities in Africa shape the inhabitants or the inhabitants shape the cities? Urban practices are regarded as to be still emerging while creativity does not necessarily blossom everywhere and in all cities in Africa, because creativity does not result from the heterogeneity of the urban but on the ability of the actors (agency and social practice). Fiona Siegenthaler focuses on artists who, through their own bodies and capacities of interaction, engage with the city of Johannesburg (South Africa). There is an interplay of the visible and invisible of social imaging and performance interventions play a specific role in the

analysis of, reflection on and influence on urban imaginaries. Joseph Hellweg and Sory Koutouma look at African urbanity by reading N'ko (an alphabet to write a mother tongue and a social formation) as an urban creativity that created 'social and cultural spaces that did not exist before'. N'ko being a means of discursive production that was meant to assist Africans in regulating the dynamics of encounter and distancing prevalent in African cities in the colonial and post-colonial contexts. N'ko practice gave rise to schools, bookstores and pharmacies with an alternative system of healing.

The book provides an interesting description of how people make sense of and adapt to the ambiguous urban environments that they find themselves in - often with much ingenuity and bearing in mind that the urban environments in Africa are quite variable. What is interesting is that in the process of adaptation there is often a fall-back to the "traditional" or known worlds for ideas and means and the way in which this knowledge is adapted to the new environment. As some of the contributors rightfully recommend this fusion of ideas and experiences should be used in planning or the reworking of urban spaces. It makes a highly readable contribution to the knowledge of urbanisation, urbanism and urbanity.

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Kokot, Waltraud (ed.) (2012) *Living and Working in Sofia: Ethnographies of Agency, Social Relations and Livelihood Strategies in the Capital of Bulgaria*. Münster: Lit.

Living and working in Sofia is the outcome of a University of Hamburg project led by Waltraud Kokot. Based on short-term fieldwork in the Bulgarian capital, these papers aim to contribute to the relatively neglected topic of urban anthropology in Bulgaria in order 'to add further aspects to the overall picture of Sofia's urban culture(s)' (p. 18) with an emphasis on 'diaspora and migration, post-socialist transformation, urban social networks and everyday economic strategies' (pp. 18-19). Indeed, this volume is one of the very few recent publications on Bulgaria which treat the urban space analytically (see Zlatkova 2012, Duizings 2013).

Kokot's Introduction to the volume provides a brief historical sketch of Sofia as an urban centre since Roman times and the Ottoman period, covering especially the 20th century's industrialisation and population rise through migration from the country's rural areas, the architectural development of residential districts during socialist times and the privatisation of formerly public space during the postsocialist period. Kokot also provides an interesting discussion of the methodology of this project, its educational character and its limitations. One has to take into account that the volume is the work of undergraduate students involved in a project intended to introduce them to fieldwork methods

in anthropology. After a preparatory academic year in Hamburg, where students studied urban anthropology, Bulgarian literature and basic Bulgarian language skills, they conducted six weeks of fieldwork in Sofia. Along with qualitative research for each individual project, the authors gathered information on urban social networks and demography. The papers in the volume focus on social networks related to a profession (Kern, Harms, Wewer) or to specific workplaces (Kunze, Kleinknecht) and activities (Höpfner, Raduychev). The chapters focus mainly on practices related to Sofia's young generation; especially professionals and artists who had attended university. While Sofia's working class and older generations are less discussed in the volume, the economic insecurities and survival strategies of the young educated generation of the Bulgarian capital are portrayed in most of the ethnographies (Kern, Kleinknecht, Harms, Wewer).

Three papers address different communities of artists. Kern describes Russian-speaking dancers and explores their relationships with the Russian diaspora in Sofia and with a broader community of dancers in the city and their economic strategies in the face of economic insecurity and unemployment, and suggests that inter-ethnic relationships with colleagues are more important than those with fellow Russians. Harm's vivid ethnography explores the art scene in the city by following the spatial paths that artists take, such as the areas where they have their studios and the cafes that they

patronise. She further focuses on the artists' livelihood strategies and draws connections between their economic precariousness and the difficulties of contemporary art production. Wewer's paper describes artists of a different sort, street musicians, who often are Roma and whose activities have been controlled by the state since socialist times. Wewer explores the ways in which musicians relate to public space and to their audiences, as well as their relationships with the state and the fact that they often are stigmatised.

The experience of work is the focus of Kleinknecht's comparative research in two cafes, approached as places of work and socialising. One is a small, neighbourhood cafe run by a family at the outskirts of Sofia, the other is a larger one in the city centre. Kleinknecht explores differences between these different businesses and their daily rhythms and work routines, focusing on the division of labour, the relationships and hierarchies among workers, the ways in which workers spend their daily time and organise their schedule and their relationships with clients and regulars.

New forms of political participation are discussed in the papers on a women's NGO (Kunze) and on environmental activists belonging to various organisations (Höpfner). Kunze's interesting ethnography explores the resources that support the operation of the NGO and describes the history of the organisation, the participants' role and the role of friendship and relationships among the employees. Höpfner's presents an

overview of environmental activism in Bulgaria exploring the notion of trust and the role of social networks in the development of these organisations.

Raduychiev's paper on a yoga group analyses people's participation in the activity and their relationships as they become core group members, less regular members and sporadic members. Raduychiev describes how those who move closer to the core group establish relationships with other members, with whom they share spiritual experiences and lifestyles, while often their relationships with those outside the group get weaker.

All the chapters focus on the ways people with a common activity or group membership relate to each other and on how urban networks are developed and maintained. It would have been helpful for the reader to have more information about the methodology used to study those networks. Moreover, while most papers present a variety of interesting qualitative data, there is also a tendency to go beyond what the data will support, and indulge in unwarranted generalisation and quantification. Finally, although each paper discusses the methods used, it would have been interesting to know more on the experience of doing fieldwork, which would help other young researchers who are preparing their projects.

What one misses in this collection on urban life in Sofia is a discussion of the permeability of the boundary between urban and rural life in Bulgaria and the different economic strategies that are common and interconnected in each realm (Creed 1998, Dichev 2005,

Kaneff 2002). People's links with the countryside did not disappear during socialist times, and often they became stronger after the 1990s. Although Kokot discusses rural migration to the city, such links are not pursued in this collection even though they are commonly important for understanding urban life.

Living and working in Sofia is a collection of ethnographies about changing social networks and peoples' daily strategies in relation to employment, art, activism and leisure in an urban context. The volume is the result of a students' team project with common themes, methods and approaches that speak to each other. The project has been a success, for, as Kokot mentions, many of the authors are going back for more fieldwork in Bulgaria.

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Astrid Wonneberger (ed.). 2011. *Cultural Contrasts in Dublin: A Montage of Ethnographic Studies*. Germany: Lit Verlag

A rich anthropology of the island of Ireland exists. However, much of this earlier anthropological work was produced in the context of a rural, sometimes 'exoticised' Ireland. *Cultural Contrasts in Dublin: A Montage of Ethnographic Studies* edited by Astrid Wonneberger is a delightful collection of essays which challenges a number of the extant tropes in erstwhile ethnographies of Ireland. What makes this book all the more interesting is its origination in a Masters level fieldwork assignment, where students make an annual trip to conduct anthropological fieldwork on the island of Ireland. Striking about this study is the careful methodological apparatus deployed alongside such beautiful crafting of the student's ethnographic encounters. This collection is firmly embedded in an urban anthropology, one which seeks to evince the depth of the anthropological encounter in contexts as varied as the

Polish Catholic Church, the Hindu community, the Homeless community, and Irish pagans. Most of the research is set in Dublin in 2006, where the Celtic Tiger wrought great change. It is a book that sets about making a contribution to a new anthropology of Ireland, one which follows Curtin, Donnan, and Wilson's (1993) call for a critical engagement with urban culture on the island of Ireland.

Since the global economic recession in 2008, change and loss has figured large in the Irish imaginary. With widespread unemployment, emigration, an increase in crime and a decline in mental health statistics, Ireland as a country in crisis has become deeply anchored in discourses of loss, failure and indeed, nostalgia. Published in 2011, just after the economic recession had set in, this book shines a lens on how urban culture in Ireland has been so subject to the vagaries of economic change. While a general sense of disenchantment and malaise is also part of the current zeitgeist, anchored in a broader crisis of faith, identity, and community, this book shows how during the period of the Celtic Tiger inward migration and new religious dynamics played an important part in the shaping of Irish society. This project ultimately focuses on the potentialities of acknowledging urban socio-cultural shifts as a productive force in society more broadly.

The introduction to the text sets out both the history of Dublin, the Celtic Tiger as well as the story of how an anthropology of urban Ireland has

started to gain momentum. The book flags many interesting studies on urban Ireland in order to mark out this important terrain. While all of the studies merit mention, the book, however, does not connect to the reach body of anthropological work which has emerged on urban spaces from anthropology departments like Queens University Belfast and NUI Maynooth. Given the focus on both migration and homelessness in a Dublin context, mention of studies by Mark Maguire on migration in Dublin and Jamie Saris on urban poverty and drug addiction in Dublin are noticeably absent. What the book cannot capture since it was published in 2011, are the advancements in the use of anthropology in industry contexts in Ireland. Currently, we are seeing much wider acknowledgement of the use of anthropology within business and user design contexts, yet another shift for an anthropology of Ireland. Nonetheless, the collection provides an important snapshot of a very interesting moment in both Irish history and more broadly, the anthropology of Ireland.

Divided into an introductory section and four chapters, this short book offers an interesting level of diversity for the reader. The first chapter by Angela Pohlmann entitled 'Polish Spaces in Polish Irish Places: The Polish Dominican Community in Dublin,' documents the rise of Polish of migration in Ireland and the issue of transnationalism through the lens of the Polish Catholic church in Dublin. Well written and researched, it is an important examination of Polish social

spaces in Irish society. While much has been written about the Polish diaspora in Ireland, this essay is driven by a nuanced reading of how transnational practices are in fact situationally shaped. Anna Eisenberg brings us from Polish migrants to the Hindu religious community in Dublin in a chapter entitled, 'Diaspora and Religion: Hindus in Dublin City.' This innovative and evocative piece draws our attention to the history and development of the Hindu community in Dublin (of which there is a dearth of scholarly work), alongside an attempt to theorise whether Hindus in Dublin can truly be considered a diasporic community. Eisenberg achieves both of her objectives in an impressive unpacking of how the Hindu community is constituted. From the Hindu community, we move to a subtle and poignant piece on homelessness in Dublin during Celtic Tiger Ireland by Katja Wilkneit. Entitled, 'Breaking the Day up: Homeless Peoples Strategies to Adopt Urban Public Space,' Wilkneit engages with the notion of cultural knowledge in the lives of Dublin's homeless population. This is a much welcome study in an age where great disparity emerged in Irish society. With the focus on a fast-moving economy, Ireland's most vulnerable citizens were often ignored; this piece convinces us of the need to do more, particularly in the context of the economic crash. The final essay by Kerstin Kuster entitled, 'Walking between Worlds: Irish Paganism in Dublin'" brings fresh analysis to bear on the religious dynamics of Irish society. It is an

interesting, ethnographically engaged piece, which offers real insight into the world of Irish paganism in a post-Catholic context. Together, through an ethnographic engagement with the lived experience of urban change during the Celtic Tiger, the essays impress upon us how the intersections of migration, religious dynamism, and economic disparity created a new Ireland.

This collection of essays came about after what are comparably short stints of fieldwork. What is most welcome then about these essays is the ethnographic depth and intellectual insights they offer up. *Cultural Contrasts in Dublin* is not alone a lovely read, but is, undoubtedly, a book which makes an important contribution to a now radically different anthropology of Ireland.

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Sharon Zukin, *Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places* (Oxford University Press, 2010)

Sharon Zukin is a professor of sociology at Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York. Her latest book, *Naked City*, is the result of a series of works devoted to the culture of cities (Zukin 1982 [1989], 1991, 1995 and 2004). In *Naked City*, she develops a conversation with Jane Jacobs' (1916-2006) seminal work *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961). This book was highly critical of urban policies of wholesale

slum clearance and highway development. Jacobs sought to preserve the simple qualities of diverse local urban life, especially for pedestrians. Zukin agrees with Jacobs' intellectual and environmental sensibilities and suggests that the city has 'lost its soul'. In the present day, reinvestment in cities is taking place, suburbanites are returning to spaces they had abandoned, and industrial buildings are being retrofitted for residential uses. These economic dynamics also have a powerful cultural dimension.

Zukin links this urban transformation to the emergence of middle-class gentrifiers who seek authenticity by sinking their roots into particular, culturally rich, neighborhoods. She explored this broad issue by focusing on the concept of authenticity, which raises some questions: Is the idea of authenticity only a tool preserving a city's élite cultures? Can it be used to ensure everyone has right to stay in the place where they live and work? What do educated urbanities see as 'authentic' in urban life? — aging buildings, art galleries, small boutiques, upscale food markets, neighbourhood old-timers, funky ethnic restaurants, old family owned shops? The sense of a place's authenticity is contrasted to the bland standardization of the suburbs and exurbs. But this demand for space also led to a rise in real estate prices and, consequently, the eviction of the social groups that made the 'authentic' atmosphere of the neighbourhood: immigrants, working-class residents, and artists. Like Jacobs, Zukin looks at

what gives neighbourhoods a sense of place, but argues that over time, neighbourhood distinctiveness has become a tool used by economic elites to drive up real estate values. The result is that the neighbourhood 'characters' that Jacobs so evocatively idealized are pushed out. She also examines the role of local government in providing security for the authentic city. From the privatization of public spaces (such as Union Square Park and the new Harlem renaissance) these operations attract the white middle-classes into onetime ghettos, thereby redefining many once marginal New York City neighbourhoods.

Zukin examined authenticity in New York City in six chapters, six stories: Williamsburg (Brooklyn), Harlem, the East Village, Union Square, Red Hook (Brooklyn), and a community garden in East New York. In each chapter Zukin describes the feeling of the neighbourhood, gives historical context to the place, and then portrays the place as real, not abstract, with a history, and as active and changing places of interest. Zukin portrays a sociological tour of New York; a story of gentrification through the collective memory of the city. Thus, she raises the question of the history of the transformation of cities as reported by residents, businesses and governments. These snapshots of the city touch on the ways various neighbourhoods change: such as the role of artists and media in defining areas as 'cool'. She underlines the impact of digital media, food, and shopping. Zukin notes that many bloggers reside in Brooklyn

neighbourhoods that have experienced the most transformations in recent years. She underlines the role of food culture (healthy and tasty). She describes restaurants and stores which people prefer to patronize. According to Zukin, 'Authenticity' is the main thread running through all her observations in the city. Consumption is also elevated over everything else in terms of how we interact with the city. But authenticity may not be the solution to urban transformations that privilege some groups over others.

For a Parisian sociologist, the narrative that Sharon Zukin offers presents interesting similarities with New York. Indeed, as noted by Simmel (1900), an urbanite is *par excellence* foreign, rootless and without strong attachments. As shown thirty years later by the Chicago School of sociology and anthropology, no urban district is exempt from the phenomena of invasion or succession of people who change local society. Paris is no exception to this rule and we have neighbourhoods that have become 'gritty' with restaurants serving 'nouvelle cuisine', old rehabilitated buildings, terraces and pedestrian streets, and increasingly higher real estate prices. However, we cannot uncritically translate American urban analyses to the French situation. For example, in the Goutte d'Or Parisian popular neighbourhood I studied, gentrification has not evolved on a landlocked urban desert: there are jobs, businesses and governments that have not been erased from the common scene. A large part of the local population belongs to the working class,

and it still has a large number of foreign nationals. One reason for this resistance to gentrification is the social housing built by the city of Paris. The other major reason is that even when residential gentrification takes place, there is strong resistance to commercial gentrification because the non-gentrifiers who live in the neighbourhood continue to frequent the local shops. Thus, on the one hand in gentrifying neighbourhoods we see the influx of wide variety of middle class residents experiencing the flexibility of employment, teachers, artists, as well as heirs of wealthy families. On the other hand, we observe how the poorest resist, and try to stay in the core of the city. What Zukin shows as to gentrification in New York City has much in common with the Parisian scene. Thanks to her insightful work, it is possible to make a comparative study of gentrification, and consolidate the scholarship on how cities are being transformed in XXI century. For this enterprise Sharon Zukin's *Naked City* is fundamental.

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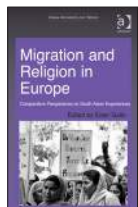
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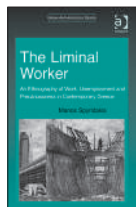
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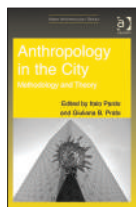
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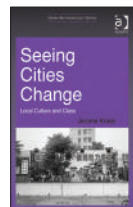
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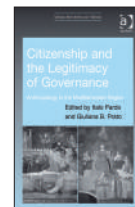
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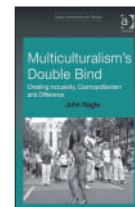
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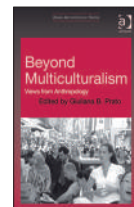
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