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# SECURITY AND THE CITY. IN SEARCH OF A NEW MODEL OF URBAN RESILIEN- CE ON VIOLENT NON-STATE ACTORS (VNSAS)

Seguridad y la ciudad.  
En busca de un nuevo modelo de resiliencia  
urbana para los actores violentos  
no-estatales (VNSAs)

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## Abstract

*This paper aims to offer a contribution to the debate on urban security starting from the assumption – developed in the Introduction – that the fall of the communist regimes, the end of the Cold War, and the ongoing globalization processes produced a rescaling of authorities, bringing cities back to the centre of the political universe, and to the fore in the competition for the control of coercive resources. In other terms, cities return to be the privileged spaces of mediation between actors that are main players both at the local level and in the globalization processes; and, as a consequence, inside cities, violence turns out to be a fundamental mediator. This evolution is offering violent non-state actors (VNSAs) unprecedented opportunities to compete for the control of the territory, dictating to social sciences a redefinition of the very concept of urban security. The first section of the paper draws on the “foam theory” to outline a model of analysis of the urban spaces; the second section debates the securitization strategies conceived in the past decades, starting from the USA; the third section is intended to attune foam theory with the concept of urban resilience to violence. Finally, the Conclusion adumbrates the advent of a campus architecture, capable of planning spaces suitable for new and alternative forms of urban sociality.*

**Keywords:** Urban security, urban resilience, gated communities, geography, globalization, organized crime, violent non-state actors.

## Resumen

*Este trabajo tiene como objetivo ofrecer una contribución al debate sobre la seguridad urbana que parte de la asunción - desarrollado en la introducción - que la caída de los regímenes comunistas, el fin de la Guerra Fría, y los procesos de globalización en curso, produjo un cambio de escala de las autoridades, trayendo a las ciudades de nuevo al centro del universo político, y en primer plano, en la competencia por el control de los recursos coercitivos. En otros términos, las ciudades vuelvan a ser los espacios privilegiados de mediación entre los actores principales, tanto a nivel local y en los procesos de globalización; y, como consecuencia, dentro de las ciudades, la violencia resulta ser un mediador fundamental. Esta evolución está ofreciendo los actores violentos no estatales (VNSAs) oportunidades sin precedentes para competir por el control del territorio, dictando a las ciencias sociales una redefinición del concepto de seguridad urbana. La primera sección del documento se basa en la “teoría de la espuma” para delinear un modelo de análisis de los espacios urbanos; la segunda sección discute las estrategias concebidas para brindar seguridad en las últimas décadas, iniciando por los EE.UU.; la tercera sección, se pretende armonizar la teoría de la espuma con el concepto de resiliencia urbana a la violencia. Por último, la Conclusión presagia el advenimiento de una arquitectura del campus, capaz de planear espacios adecuados y brindar nuevas formas alternativas de sociabilidad urbana.*

**Palabras clave:** Seguridad urbana, resiliencia urbana, barrios cerrados (comunidades cerradas), geografía, globalización, crimen organizado, actores violentos no estatales.

## Introduction. The city as a space of mediation

Defining urban security means to trace the semantic borders – before the spatial ones – of the reality that we intend to represent. In the perspective of social sciences, the first question to ask regards the meaning of security. Security of whom and of what? From whom and from what? Of the individual or the community? Beyond that, it would also be necessary to investigate the nature of threat: physical, economic, environmental or even existential – the concept of security may plausibly imply a psychological dimension. In the twentieth century, political scientists typically correlated security with the state. In fact, this is where we believed the main threats to peace came from: at the domestic level, from authoritarianism and civil wars, and at the international level, from the ever-impending risk of inter-state wars – finally, after the appearance of thermonuclear weapons, of the whole holocaust of humanity. But the state was also attributed the task of guaranteeing security through the monopoly of coercive power: police and armed forces were given the role of maintaining domestic and international order respectively.

The year 1989 may be assumed as marking a cleavage with the past. From the political point of view, the fall of the communist regimes and the end of the Cold War dramatically redesigned international system geographies, allowing democracy to become the most widespread form of government in the world. From the economic point of view, the fall of the Berlin Wall marked the triumph of capitalism, finally free to expand throughout the ex-Soviet bloc, up until then governed by state economies, and even in China. This is an undertaking that obscures all the former and yet telling achievements capitalism had fulfilled throughout centuries. This cleavage incidentally produced the retreat of the state (Strange, 1996), increasingly eager to reduce the burdens associated to welfare and to privatise public sectors (including institutions holding the monopoly of the legitimate use of force). It also fostered an increase in civil conflicts and an unprecedented proliferation of VNSAs (terrorists, gangs, warlords and contractors); and a constant growth in social inequalities, both within individual countries and at the global level – a data in outright contradiction with the increase in the number of democracies (Somaini, 2009). Above all, however, 1989 produced a rescaling of authorities, bringing cities back to the centre of the political universe (Sassen, 2007; Brenner, 2004).

This renewed political protagonism of the city, introduces the second preliminary question about what does it mean, today, to talk about *urban* security. Going back to history, it is easy to note how cities have always been a favoured target of wars: from the sieges of ancient times and the medieval world, to the terrorist bombings of World War II (Graham, 2004; Coward, 2009). The fate of both war and guerrilla warfare is linked to the conquest of the capital city and its locations of political and financial power, as well as the fate of the *coups d'état*. We could remember the entrance of the Vietcong in Saigon on April 30 1975, or of the Sandinista troops in Managua on July 19 1979; the attack on the Palacio de la Moneda in Santiago by Chilean military leaders on September 11 1973, or the repeated occupation of the Casa Rosada in Buenos Aires by Argentinian armed forces. In times of peace, the city has had to defend itself from an endless series of threats: from street crime, to social disorder and terrorist attacks (Moser, 2004; Agostini, Chianese, French, Sandhu, 2010).

In the long process of state- and nation-building, from the sixteenth century on, the state enclosed the main role of guaranteeing the security of its citizens monopolizing the legitimate use of force, while the city, curtailed in its political prerogatives, was entrusted with the main task of the accumulation of the capital (Ti-

lly, 1975 and 1990). What changes with 1989, and with the following rescaling of authorities, is that the city turns out to be more and more frequently a place where VNSAs compete and conflict among themselves and with the state for the control of the territory – and not only in the Global South of the world. Until now, social sciences have devoted most of their attention, on one side, to the abstractions of the globalization processes, on the other, to the empirical evidences of violence, on the contrary relegating to the background the role of the territory as such, and the triggering of the competition for its control. It seems that researchers forgot that the nation-state itself was born from a similar competition for the control of the territory won at first, and not by chance, by the sedentary bandits over the nomadic ones; and later, among the sedentary bandits, by those capable to gain a higher “protection rent” and, as a consequence, to reinforce their sources of legitimacy (Olson, 2000; Lane, 1979).

This paper aims to reconsider the debate on urban security starting with the assumption that the changes described until now – in extreme summary, the processes induced by the cleavage of 1989 and which involve the political dimension as well as the economic one – have contributed to generating new territorialities. We assume that: a) societies are forced to maintain relations with the space, their given “original prison”; b) space is a mental construction, a concept that cannot be defined absolutely or permanently, that is constantly questioned, and evolving and changing over time; c) this construction is the result of a complex game of relationships between the actors in the territory (Raffestin, 2012: 122). Cities, in particular, become the privileged spaces of mediation between actors that are main players both at the local level and in the globalization processes. But, beside that, violence more than money turns out to be one of the main instruments for mediation in the urban context. Violence, more precisely, works as both a direct mediator, conforming the territory, tracing the new borders; as well as an indirect mediator, contributing to the creation of jobs (the many professionals of violence) and further money (for example, through extortion and illegal trafficking).

The first section of the paper outlines a model of analysis that starts from the assumption that sovereignty is going through a process of growing clustering, to come to the conclusion that the “foam theory” (Sloterdijk, 2014) is the most original and useful approach, capable of offering a sufficiently complex representation (and therefore one which is closer to reality) of urban space. The second section focuses on the securitization strategies of urban spaces conceived in the last decades and which, often beyond the intentions of their advocates, prove to be completely congruent with foam theory. As we will see, however, the limit of the foam theory is that of conceiving defensible spaces against external agents/enemies and to ignore the risks – today prevalent, we believe – that come from their inside. The third section of the paper, as a consequence, is intended to attune foam theory with the concept of urban resilience that, on the contrary, builds on the chronic violence already underway in the urban spaces to propose cogent strategies of containment of its manifestations. Finally, the conclusion adumbrates the necessity to go beyond *foam architecture*, envisioning the advent of a *campus architecture*, capable of planning spaces suitable for new and alternative forms of urban sociality.

## 1. Spheres of (in)security

The traditional state-centric perspective prevented social science scholars from fully grasping the great transformations in the security domain, notably after the end of the Cold War (Davis D. E., 2003). In a world where the state is no longer the only possible political and social benchmark, the first problem is tracing the borders of the various “imagined communities”, of each of the old and new political spheres of

allegiance and reciprocity (Davis D. E., 2009). The head of a government, the leader of a group of rebels or a gang, the boss of a mafia clan or a cartel of drug traffickers all aim at gaining loyalty (or at least compliance) of the individuals living in their territory; but the identities that they grant to their subjects are different, as are the forms and shares of coercion that they use, and the welfare models that they are able to propose.

Since the nineteenth century, the idea of nation proved to be the best way to convey the sense of belonging to a social community. This idea allowed us to clearly draw the borders between the *internal space* of legitimacy of a sovereign authority and the *external space* occupied by other states. The war was, typically, the time when these borders were crossed; while peace intervened to re-establish order, redesigning the hierarchies of power or restoring the previous status quo. The proliferation of imagined communities, and the correlated privatization of organized violence generate a much more fluid territoriality and, with it, a relentless proliferation of *contended spaces* and *no-man's land*, both among states and within them. Sovereignty is no more exclusively organized on a state-by-state basis; it ceases to be an absolute prerogative of the state, to become a shared and divided resource within specific regions (sometimes trans-border) or even in the suburbs: "effective sovereignty is not necessarily predicated on and defined by the strict and fixed territorial boundaries of individual states" (Agnew, 2009: 438; Brown, 2010).

Probably, the best examples of these new territorialities are the Israeli settlements in the West Bank. In this case, in fact, two states still do not even exist; and the security fence encircling some Palestinian towns is intended to include and secure different areas of Israeli communities. The Israeli West Bank barrier is the outcome of a decades long (and sometimes contradictory) strategy of all Israeli political parties which ruled the country. This strategy implied the subcontracting to the Israeli settlers of the relationships with the Palestinians, including the power of armed self-defence, with the effect to nurture the autonomy and the radicalism of these communities, and to jeopardize the security of Israel as a state (Zertal, Eldar, 2007). Another example is that of the partition of Bosnia, grossly sketched by the international community, eager to put a quick end to war in former Yugoslavia (Bose, 2002).

This same model may be recreated, on a smaller scale, within the urban perimeters of megalopolises, and not only in Global South. In cities, mafias and gangs transform some neighborhoods into junctures of strategic importance, as much from the political perspective of the effective exercise of coercive power and the maintaining of a certain degree of social cohesion, as from the economic point of view of the management of the traffic of illegal goods. Even more than the state-level dimension, the urban sphere also highlights a second aspect of these new imagined communities: their transnational character. Terrorists, mafia and gang members follow the migratory flows created by globalization, projecting themselves from the peripheries (developing countries) toward the centers of the world capitalist economy (developed countries), and maintaining their identity and their sense of belonging to the group. Their first task is to subjugate the members of their own community of origin, and shape the new environment to serve their own needs (Armao, 2000 and 2014).

In fact, each of these groups – political if and when it proves to be capable of effectively competing for the monopoly of coercion in a certain territory, however limited – increasingly tends to operate like a company within a cluster, developing systemic relationships with other companies operating in its area of settlement (Porter, 1990; Fujita, Krugman, Venables, 1999). And just as some industrial clusters branch out beyond the national borders, some of these new political clusters cooperate and compete on the global level, proposing in fact a further challenge to the traditional prerogatives of the state (Wixted, 2009;

Pitelis, Sugden, Wilson, 2006). Going on with this analogy, it is easy to ascertain how, within a specific geographical space, different clusters of sovereignty may be forced to cohabit, and sometimes conflict. In terms of physical, military, control of a particular territory, the traditional state often becomes just one of many clusters laying claim to a portion of the coercive power exercised by all the violent actors present in a given area (and the state may not even represent the most successful of these contenders). This is true both for the so-called failed states, in which the government in charge in the capital competes with ethnic clans, liberation movements, warlords or simple criminals in a daily struggle for the control of territory; and for those democratic regimes that are incapable of guaranteeing the minimum requirements of citizenship in various zones, large and small, of their own national territory.

The picture sketched so far finds an interesting corroboration in the so-called “foam theory”. Adopting the perspective of urban environment development, foam theory describes a process of growing fragmentation of the urban territory into cellular clusters: “packaged landscapes made up of customized and carefully protected corporate, consumption, research, transit, exchange, domestic and even health care spaces” (Graham, Marvin, 2001:5); in other terms, landscapes characterized by the proliferation of “privatized spatial entities” that are ruled by surveillance and securitization strategies, thanks to the contribution of modern video-surveillance technologies (Klauser, 2010: 328). The most important assumptions of this theory, that explicitly draws inspiration from the grand trilogy on spheres of the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk, are: a) the need to put spatiality at the top of the theoretical agenda; b) the idea that being-in-spheres constitutes the basic condition of human existence – spheres provide the people who live in them meaning (shared ideas and values), protection (a sort of immunity to the extra-spherical world), but can also be endangered by external factors; c) the fact that, in our current age, the globe has undergone an implosion producing a plurality of minor spherical worlds that Sloterdijk defines as “foam.” The foam is a “co-isolated association” of bubbles, singular cells separated by thin walls and, therefore, subject to a state of co-fragility. Foam is characterized by spontaneous generation, is disordered and has no centre (Borch, 2008: 549-552).

In the eyes of a political scientist, foam theory resounds (and, in some way, exacerbates) some organic elements that were also peculiar to the system theory (Easton, 1965; Luhmann, 1995). The idea that the cell produces immunity for its interior life also from the risks of poisoning of the surrounding air – Sloterdijk proposes a transformation of sociology in a general theory of “air conditioning” or of the atmospheres (Borch, 2008: 552) – could also cast some doubt. The fact is, however, that this assumption finds daily confirmation in the way of conceiving architectural space, with the apartment, the shopping mall or the gated community aimed at shaping these cells (and also the fears that inhabit them). Sloterdijk’s theory, in other words, conveys an explicit architectural dimension and prefigures an urban environment of more or less purified interiors and more or less dangerous exteriors (Klauser, 2010: 332).

## 2. Strategies of crime containment

The idea of planning urban spaces that can be defended against crime, for instance in a country like the USA, dates back to the beginning of the 1970s (Paulsen, 2013). The Defensible Space Programs which were elaborated from that time are based on two closely linked principles. The first is that of self-help,



or rather the idea that the direct involvement of residents can contribute to the reduction of crime more than any intervention by the government – also depending on the political priorities and the available resources. The second principle is that the physical layout of residential environment should allow residents easier control of the areas surrounding their homes (Newman, 1996: 9). The research on public housing revealed that two physical variables influence crime. The first is the project size: the larger the concentration of low-income families, the more residents feel isolated from and stigmatized by the rest of society. Stigmatization feeds the apathy of the residents, and the neglect by housing management and by municipal agencies. This offers VNSAs (primarily, gangs and mafia clans) the opportunity to contaminate public spaces with their illegal trafficking activities. The second variable is the number of apartments sharing common entries: the larger is the number of the units, the more difficult is to distinguish other residents from intruders, and to agree with the other residents on the methods to care and control common areas (Newman, 1996: 28).

The same idea of conceiving defensible spaces nourished the phenomenon of gated communities – relevant both in terms of urban planning and for its speculative-real estate implications. These controlled-access residential areas, often bordered by walls or fences, protected by sophisticated video-surveillance systems and by private police, and supplied with all services (shops, gyms, schools, hospitals), are necessarily reserved for a high-income population (Atkinson, Blandy, 2006; Bagaeen, Uduku, 2010). From gated communities we have then passed, more recently, onto planning and building true ideal cities – such as Masdar City in the United Arab Emirates and Song Do in South Korea – which unite with the benefit of physical security the even more ambitious one of environmental security guaranteed by their complete eco-sustainability. But the most radical urban project so far is that of charter cities, proposed in the “turnkey” formula to developing countries: cities that are entirely to be planned and built in virgin areas, characterized by a wide autonomy of government and privileged also by the fact of having been conceived as special reform areas, free trade zones not subject to any taxation (Fuller, Romer, 2012). Probably the attractiveness of a charter city lies in the fact that it seems to solve at its roots the harsh contrast, particularly evident in the megalopolises of the Global South, between the small, secure enclaves of the gated communities and the informal and engulfing architecture of slums (Davis M., 2006). But which are the ethical, normative and economic implications, this is still to debate.

The most common and widespread method to confront with the problem of urban security is that of investing in strategies of urban policing, in particular exploiting the immense new opportunities created by the development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). In a recent report by the UNODC – conceived as an handbook for law enforcement policymakers, front-line officers, urban planners and other city authorities, especially in low- and middle-income countries – is stated that the use of innovative analytical techniques based on advanced crime-mapping systems and the ability of incorporating the collected data into crime control efforts have proved particularly effective in cities in the richest countries (UNODC, 2011: 2-3). Recent statistical data from the United Nations seem to confirm a tendential decrease in the rate of homicides in these countries between 2003 and 2008 (<http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/homicide.html>). In fact, as always, the situation is much more complex and differentiated than this data shows: entire areas, such as Central America and the Caribbean, are afflicted by a dramatic increase in mortality caused by the spread of VNSAs; homicide rates are extremely variable in the various districts of the same city; and so on (ICPC, 2010). Beside that, the same



data may be interpreted in various ways (Levitt, 2004), or even manipulated or proved to be unreliable – just because, for example, the methods of intervention of the police sometimes discourage citizens from reporting suffered crimes (Eterno, Silverman, 2012).

Even the most critical authors, in any case, agree on the fact that technology may play a highly important role in the strategies of urban security, especially when aimed at fostering a more efficient organization of the police forces. The most cited successful case is named Compstat, a program introduced in New York in 1994 and then adopted by many other cities. This program is based on the main assumption that prosecuting even the most common offenses discourages new crimes being committed (broken window theory); and combines extremely strict procedures of weekly meetings (on a district level for the updating of information, and on a command level for the strategic coordination of actions) to the use of computerized data archives and crime mapping technologies (Hoover, 2013). Generally speaking, a greater capability in monitoring the territory thanks also to the capillary distribution of video-surveillance systems, together with the availability of data gathering software has engendered a new “geography of crime”, devoted to the spatial and scalar analysis of crimes (Leitner, 2013; Lippert, Walby, 2013; Manning, 2008).

It is worth noting, however, that any strategy aimed at securing a certain territory – similarly to the strategies that support the proliferation of gated communities – is based on the preliminary but not declared assumption that the criminal is an agent from the *external world* (from the dangerous outsides of our spheres of cohabitation, to go back to Sloterdijk) and that, consequently, it may be sufficient to keep him at a distance or close him in that other particular securitized space which is prison. Since September 11 2001, the terrorist embodied at best the role of the external enemy, and the countries under attack mainly handled this threat by means of a growing militarization of cities (Graham, 2010; Savitch, 2015), or even abusing civil liberties (Marcuse, 2006). As a consequence, we also saw a growing militarization of the police, in particular through the creation of units that emulate in their training and armaments the special corps of the armed forces. In the USA, for example, the Police Paramilitary Units (PPU) or Special Weapons and Tactics Teams (SWAT), which emulate the Navy Seals, have spread strongly in the last decades: in 1995, 89% of the police departments of cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants had at least one of these units, double the number of 1980 (Kraska, 2001). But similar units also arose in European countries such as Germany and Italy in the 1970s, mainly with anti-terrorism functions. In more recent times, the adoption of military control strategies of urban spaces has been more and more frequently the answer to turmoil provoked by the social and economic crisis, such as in the case of the Paris *banlieues* (Dikeç, 2006); as well as to the uncontrolled growth of slums, with the consequent and indiscriminate marginalization of all its residents, perceived by now as enemies of the entire nation (Wacquant, 2008). The problem is that even the most sophisticated strategies of urban securitization leave the problem of the *inside enemy* completely unresolved.

### 3. Urban resilience to VNSAs

A conceiving of only external threats has, until today, been the main limit of Sloterdijk's theory of spheres. It has been observed, for example, that the analysis should be broadened by investigating the complex relationships between the “spheres of protection” and the “spheres of insecurity”: “A more de-

tailed account of the functioning and experiences of the urban ‘spheres of insecurity’ — often termed as problem zones or no-go areas — could also provide greater insight into the spatial struggles between opposing interests and actors whose spheres of influence deform, restrict, and fight against one another (as with police and criminal gangs, for instance)” (Klauser, 2010: 338). Similarly, we should pay more attention to the phenomenon of the deliberate destruction of the spheres of protection of those who are identified as enemies, as for example is explicitly theorized by the US military’s Shock and Awe doctrine (Klauser, 2010: 338). But, above all, we might wonder how foam theory could confront the danger of internal impurities; in fact, “Sloterdijk is mainly interested in immunity strategies that protect the cells against the external world, whereas possible internal impurities are left unexplored. But how do cells maintain immunity to selfgenerated dangers?” (Borch, 2008: 567).

This is exactly the main question, in particular with regard to the cities dominated by the mafia or by gangs. This sort of VNSAs, in fact, act like parasites inside the urban space, extorting money, and growing rich with illegal trafficking. At the same time, however, they build up symbiotic relationships with the surrounding environment, polluting its atmosphere irreparably. Thanks to the availability of huge resources of money and violence they step forward, successfully, as social mediators: dissuading or killing whoever interferes with their business, or corrupting politicians and entrepreneurs willing to compromise. Most of these criminal groups are also capable of fostering their basis of consent offering, for example, welfare payments to their members and their families, or even patronising the population in their sphere (Armao, 2000).

These peculiarities make any military strategy particularly ineffective. This is demonstrated by the repeated failures of wars on mafia and narcotraffickers periodically launched by national governments and international institutions. These wars, faced with extremely high economic costs, always produce a dramatic increase in the death toll (especially in defenceless victims), and most times a re-localization of these same groups in areas that had until then been uncontaminated. War on drugs have to add also the environmental costs, the pollution that is anything but metaphorical of the territories flooded with chemical defoliators for the destruction of coca or opium poppies plantations.

What counts more here, however, is that the mere existence of VNSAs represents a real stress test for the foam theory, which can thus be proved only by adding two corollaries. The first is that the co-isolated associations which make up the foam may respond to a crime logic, and that from this (certainly alarming) fact we must begin to rethink our strategies of urban planning. Just to make an example, the urban plan of Palermo, the capital city of Sicilian mafia – where the main streets of high bourgeoisie intersect with a tangled web of degraded alleyways – may appear to most as incomprehensible and ungovernable. On the contrary, it suddenly assumes a true visible coherence if we read it in terms of spheres of mafia protection. It is not by chance, therefore, that the Sicilian mafia is organized from the very beginning by districts. Mafia bosses demonstrate to possess a much better knowledge of, and a higher interest for, the territory than urban planners – which, if anything, should be held responsible for having supported the partition of Palermo among different clans with their acquiescence.

The second corollary asserts that the spheres may develop forms of resilience against the internal impurities and even prefigure a genuine immunization strategy. The concept of resilience refers to the struggle to adapt within complex systems in order to survive or thrive. As a consequence, “resilience is a process rather than a subjective or objective ‘thing’. As such, the study of resilience in the urban is the stu-

dy of interplay between different forms of thinking, doing and acting to understand the process of change in space and place over time” (Rogers, 2012: 5). A resilient community is, by definition, a community that is able to resist, absorb, accommodate to, and recover from the effects of a hazard promptly and efficiently, retaining the same basic structures and providing the same services (WORLD BANK, 2013: 10). Until now, such a concept was mainly applied to the prevention of natural disasters or, once again, terrorism (Coaffee, 2009; Coaffee, Murakami Wood, Rogers, 2009). The most interesting and compelling challenge, nonetheless, today consists in elaborating strategies of urban resilience to the chronic violence produced by VNSAs.

Urban resilience is for sure a widely accepted, as well as debated and even criticized concept. However, a recent report had the double merit to tweak the definition of resilience, and to apply it to the specific problem of chronic violence generated by the spreading of VNSAs. In this report, resilience is defined as: “those acts intended to restore or create effectively functioning community-level activities, institutions, and spaces in which the perpetrators of violence are marginalized and perhaps even eliminated”. Beside that, the concept is disaggregated in “positive, negative, and equilibrium resilience, depending on whether coping or adaptation strategies will strengthen, weaken, or stabilize the existent forces and conditions of violence”. Positive resilience, finally, is furtherly specified as implying proactive efforts – a form of *resistance* – on the part of communities confronting the daily threats generated by VNSAs, even assuming the nuance of an indicator measuring “individual or communities’ capacities to *resist* against the perpetrators of violence through strategies that help them establish relatively *autonomous control* over the activities, spaces, and social or economic forces and conditions that comprise their *daily lives*” (Davis D. E., 2012: 32, 35, and 36).

Building on this tweaked definition of resilience, a renewed foam theory mainly conceived to develop immunization strategies to selfgenerated dangers should be based on three main hypothesis:

1. assuming that societies are forced to maintain relations with the space, that cities become the privileged spaces of mediation between actors playing both at the local and global level, and that violence turns out to be one of the main instruments for mediation in the urban context, *it is necessary to focus on the spaces in which violence thrives, more than on the perpetrators* (Davis D. E., 2012: 98);
2. every city, as has been observed, “interacts with and to some extent depends on an ever-present form of commitment-maintaining connection: the trust network” (Tilly, 2010: 271). Trust is a relation in which, when one individual places his/her values, enterprises, or even his/her very survival at risk to the malfeasances or violence of another individual, he/she can make appeal to the other members of the trust network for aid, just because of this shared membership. Hence, to produce positive resilience within the urban spaces – forms of resistance on the part of the communities involved – *it is necessary to foster the creation of trust networks of resilience capable of opposing the offer of social mediation (money and violence) on behalf of VNSAs*;
3. there is no lacking of studies regarding the contribution that modern computer technology is able to offer for better control of electoral processes (UNDP, 2012) or, even more specifically, on the role that ICTs can play in favouring collective action in areas

of limited statehood through methods of networked governance (Livingston, Walter-Drop, 2012). In particular, crowdmapping techniques that serve as platforms for the gathering and interactive geolocalization of information, such as UShAHIDI (<http://www.ushahidi.com>), already proved to be an extremely effective support also for the monitoring of organized violence on specific areas (<http://legacy.ushahidi.com>). To foster positive resilience, *it is necessary to make ICTs available to trust networks, mainly aiming on those useful in favouring a sharing of knowledge and information, rather than allowing the mere securitization of the spaces involved* (Calhoun, 1998).

## Conclusion. Campus architecture

If the city comes back to the centre of the political and economic universe and is the space where, increasingly, VNSAs contend the state growing shares in the arena of coercive power, it is from a detailed and daily analysis of the urban environment that we should start to guarantee the security of the citizens. Moreover, the built space is inside the city and, consequently, it is important to consider also the way in which the city has been planned. Once again it is, paradoxically, the story of the mafias that confirms this assumption: in Tokyo, since the reconstruction after the devastations of the terroristic bombings of World War II; in Palermo during the urban sack of 1962; just like in Moscow in the years immediately following the fall of Communism or, more recently, in Peking and Shanghai, mafias continue to invest in (and to speculate on) the city, following its development step by step, and in each single phase: from planning to realization.

Architects and urban planners should flank social scientists in redefining the concept of urban security, and in elaborating strategies of positive resilience, empowering the idea of defensible space with new architectural design. Another intriguing and liminal debate about the city developed in the years following the end of the Cold War and the triumph of capitalism, about the impact of neoliberal policies on the urban environment – involving authors both on the side of ethical-political discourse on the “right to the city” (Harvey, 2008), and on the side of critical urban geography devoted to spatial justice (Soja, 2010). The shared assumption of these scholars is that global capitalism induced a neoliberal restructuring of cities all around the world.

This “neoliberal urbanism” – it has been asserted – reverberated in a new wave of enclosures, consisting of three main acts: 1) *privatization*, or the process of fencing off, of building material and immaterial borders to separate those who have the rights to own, access and use some properties, and those who do not have such rights; 2) *dispossession*, of those who are on the wrong side of the enclosure lines; 3) *capitalist subjectification*, or the encapturing of people and spaces within the dehumanizing process of capitalist accumulation. “The only way to contest the new urban enclosures – this is the main point – is through the production and reproduction of *urban commons*” defined as “alternative forms of sociality that protect us against enclosure and market forces, enabling us to survive independently or with degrees of independence from wage labour” (Hodkinson, 2012: 516).

If we agree on the opportunity, if not the necessity, to practice these alternative forms of sociality, then it should also be evident that we have to conceive and plan new spaces of sociality. We should be able –

to go back to the foam theory previously delineated – to contrast the image of co-isolated association of bubbles, which seems to entrust the immunity of the individual bubble to the ability to protect its thin walls (*foam architecture*), with the image of fused bubbles, with broad areas in common, delimited by the intersections among these same bubbles. The model, provocatively, could be that of the American university *campus architecture* which – unlike the most ancient European universities, created in monastery type structures, to also denote a solipsistic (and elitist) conception of intellectual work – is planned like an independent and coherent village; aimed at harbour a strongly connoted and coherent community, at the same time available to meet with outside people and to confront with their ideas and projects (Dober, 2000; Coulson, Roberts, Taylor, 2011; Stern, 2010).

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