Special Issue Combining Safety and Equity in the Post-Covid City: New Trends between Local Policies and Bottom-Up Practices

FUORI LUOGO

Journal of Sociology of Territory, Tourism, Technology

Guest editors

Gabriele Manella
Madalena Corte-Real

Editor in chief: Fabio Corbisiero
Editorial manager: Carmine Urciuoli

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Gabriele Manella, Madalena Corte-Real

Combining Safety and Equity in the post-Covid City: New Trends between Local Policies and Bottom-Up Practices. An Introduction

All the data and the debate clearly show that we are living in an "urban time". That is true not only as the majority of the world population lives in the urban areas (UnHabitat, 2022) but also for the prominent impact of city in social, cultural, economic, political and environmental terms. Changes in the city are constant and fast. If we focus on them within the frame of neoliberal urbanism, the transition to fordism to post-fordism (Savage & Ward, 1993) and the one from managerialism to entrepreneurialism (Harvey, 1989) are two clear examples. Cities can more and more be seen as "growth machines" (Molotch & Logan, 1987), with an increasing orientation to attract investments as well as the "creative class" that make them profitable (Florida, 2003). The "tourism turn" that is occurring in many urban areas is one of the clearest indicators of this trend (Ashwort, 2012). On the other side, inequality and social exclusion seem to intensify with dramatic impacts on the urban realm (Short, 2018; Hagen & Elliott, 2021).

In terms of local management, however, we are also seeing an important increase of urban governance practices, with the rise of urban bottom-up social movements, both local and connected to broader ones (Blanco & Leon 2017). Several forms of civic engagement seem to be addressed to foster the right to the city in its multiple forms: affordable housing, against touristification, sustainability, public spaces, migrants and refugees, etc.

More recently, the Covid-19 pandemic affected in particular urban settings (Martinez & Short, 2021), and it has furtherly contributed to questioning the way in which urban government and planning are organized. This debate is still very vibrant, with some authors who point out that Covid-19 "just" accelerates trends that were already working in the city, and other ones who stress that the change is not so dramatic as it seemed to be until a couple of years ago. Again, tourism is clearly an example: the loss of arrival and overnights in 2020-2021 has been recovered in 2023 and almost all the problems connected to this sector are persisting.

All these elements suggested us to propose this monographic issue. The concrete opportunity, however, was given by the IV Midterm Conference of the European Sociological Association Research Network 37 - Urban Sociology, entitled *Seeing Like a City/Seeing the City Through* that took place at the Georg Simmel Center for Metropolitan Research of the Humboldt University Berlin from the 5th to the 7th of October 2022.

Nine presentations have been selected by the RN37 Board and proposed for a peer-review process. Some of them explicitly consider the Covid-19 pandemics, but other ones have been considered as well because they focus on some topics that are definitely part of urban debate today, both inside and outside of Europe. One of the contributions, moreover, is also focused on some extra-European cases, and the interview has been done, with an urban scholar who lives and works in the United States.

In *Local Authorities and Civic Actions Disentangled: Legibility and Scene Styles*, Sebastiano Citroni focuses on the collaboration between local authorities and bottom-up civic practices in the implementation of urban government. Given the growing involvement of civil society actors, the author gives a more nuanced understanding of these urban dynamics through the Civic Action approach. An ethnographic study in the Via Padova area of Milan aims to understand the reciprocal influence through a focus on the informal dimension of daily interactions and practices. This study highlights that charity funding causes new scenes in the daily life of the association that were absent before, and the requirements from the relation with local authorities favour certain styles of interaction to the detriment of others. In other words, the importance of "scene styles" in structuring civic actions emerges.

In *Endless displacement. Migration governance, containment strategies and segregation in Athens and Turin,* Erasmo Sossich combines the attention to migrants and refugees to the one about new patterns of residential segregation in Europe. Containment, dispersal, and concentration strategies contribute to the new geographies of mobility and immobility and to the reconfiguration of many urban spaces. Two case studies are considered: the "soft" eviction of Ex-Moi, a squat in the periphery of Turin and the "hard" eviction of Eleonas, a refugee camp in Athens. Through a participant observation, interviews, a document analysis and a research-action, the author suggests that Italian "widespread reception" and the ongoing process of "campization" in Greece might support diverging segregation patterns and settlement trajectories of migrants.
The side effects of tourism in some urban destinations, namely in the inner cities, is another prominent topic in the public agenda as well as in the academic debate. In *Unmasking the effects of Airbnb in Barcelona*, Sofia Galeas Ortiz, Oscar Mascarilla Miró and Montse Crespi Vallbona consider the local effects of touristification and the related interests involved in the Spanish city. Using secondary data from official sources and InsideAirbnb, along with interviews, the authors look at the impact of the increasing number of homestays in the historic and touristified centre of Barcelona (Ciutat Vella). The effects on local residents and immigration density are considered as well as the reaction produced in terms of local protests and political reactions. At the same time, the maintenance of heritage and community spirit is considered a critical variable for all the actors engaged in the process. The research points out the urgent need of public policies to balance the needs of tourists and residents, proposing measures such as stricter regulation of homestays, restrictions on the acquisition of properties by non-residents and investments in public transport and social housing.
Regarding access to public services, Francesco Calicchia considers the case study of Rione Sanità, a working-class neighbourhood in Naples marked by an increasing social and cultural diversity, namely gentrification and touristification processes. In *Social Capital and Health: New Frontiers and Old Problems in a Working-Class Neighbourhood in Naples. Testing a Reconsideration of Territorial Healthcare*, the authors considers a bottom-up development project connected to the local hospital and the ways through which this effort compensate and helps the lack of intervention from the local government. Based mainly on a participant observation and interviews, the impact of restructuring territorial healthcare is considered, addressing the relation between social capital and health regarding the local community struggle to defend the San Gennaro hospital. A community of care that involves all the private and public local stakeholders is proposed, in order to improve the impact of decisions made and develop a comprehensive care plan.
In the article *Safety, mobility and sociality in urban spaces during the health emergency in Italy*, Daniele Pulino, Sara Spanu and Antonietta Mazzette work with questionnaires and structured interviews to consider the shifts in perceptions of safety, trust, social relations, and the use of urban spaces in the most severe Covid-19 time (2020 and 2021). Their study, however, also raises concerns about the effective transformation of social policies and behaviours towards a more sustainable city. The pandemic has revealed the fragility of the urban development model, emphasizing the need to rethink the organization and distribution of financial and human resources in cities.
Following a look at the impact of the pandemic in terms of reality, perception and hopes, Ariela Mortara and Rosantonietta Scramaglia focus on the case of Milan and the search for a new economic and social normality in the context of urban rebirth. The authors highlight the resilience and adaptability of this city's residents and local actors during and after the pandemic that severely affected this territory, with attention to the gradual normalization of daily routines with the resurgence of cultural activities and a reassessment of the inherent adaptability of the urban environment. 100 semi-structured interviews with managers, owners and operators report a generally optimistic outlook despite the pandemic challenges faced and point out the importance of digitalization, community collaboration, and the need for structural, administrative reforms to effectively implement recovery and resilience plans addressing the significance of

urban regeneration, sustainable practices, and the potential for Milan to become a "15-minute city".
Also, regarding urban planning, current approaches are often not conducive to the full development of childhood. During the Covid-19 pandemic in Italy, a country with highly imposed restrictions, children were also particularly affected by lockdown measures. In this sense, Elena Pagliarino and Maria Letizia Montalbano use a multiple case study approach to explore the importance of urban spaces for their development, addressing their rights to independent mobility, to play, to have a contact with nature, to be educated in a safe and healthy environment, and to participate in decision-making. In other words, advocating a child-friendly approach is a fundamental step to have safer, healthier and more inclusive cities for everyone. Their study also highlights the need for collaboration among local government, schools, local community and children in order to make these experiences more systematic.
In the article *From the "reception trap" to the "denied reception". The tightening of migration policies and the centrality of informal settlements between segregation and resistance*, Omid Firouzi Tabar considers the case of a refugee settlement in Padua through the frame of the European policies over the past twenty years, where the management of borders and the governance migrant flows has been mostly influenced by security logic in which Covid-19 restrictions have been a further "excuse" for "de-humanitarianization" approach. In an ethnographic study with a direct engagement in various protests and mobilizations, the authors points out that, despite the presence of structural elements of suffering, discrimination and oppression, we are in an always open field marked by conflicts, negotiations, alliances and resistance where subjects are often not passive victims.
Raul Marino, Elkin Vargas, Maud Nys and Alejandra Riveros focus on *Public spaces transformations in Latin America during Covid-19: Community resilience and Tactical Urbanism in Bogota, Quito and Mexico City*. They start from the assumption that city-making in most Latin American cities has been a mixed process between formal and informal growth, and the communities that self-built their houses and neighborhoods have a social construction of their habitat. As a consequence, tactical actions and their execution are intimately related to the construction of collective identities in social movements. Through an online survey and a comparative analysis of Tactical Urbanism projects in these cities, the author observed the monitoring, functionality, feasibility, follow-up, and sense of belonging for caring and maintenance. The changes to access to streets, parks and other urban public spaces are stressed, as well as the resurgence of these spaces through participation, tactical urbanism, and citizen activism.
This publication also presents reviews of three recent books. The first, by João Pedro Silva Nunes, is about *The Routledge Handbook of Comparative Global Urban Studies* (2024), edited by Patrick Le Galès and Jennifer Robinson, offering an overview of key ideas and practices in the field, enhancing current debates with contributions from over 50 international scholars and practitioners. The book addresses the increasing interconnectedness of cities and urban areas as a consequence of globalization. The evolution of knowledge-building in urban studies is stressed as well, with attention to new comparative research strategies.
The second book, *Millenials Generation Z and the Future of the Tourism*, reviewed by Francesca Romana Ammaturo and edited by Fabio Corbisiero, Salvatore Monaco and Elisabetta Ruspini, considers the lifestyles, expectations and plans of these generations and they way in which they are redefining tourism. If the so-called tourism industry is supposed to enjoy future growth, the peculiar needs of these two generations are critical. The volume seeks to answer the following questions: What contribution can the new generations make to the future of tourism? How are technological advancements and social networks shaping future travel trends? Can a generational perspective be useful to help the tourism industry recover from the Covid-19 crisis?
The third book, *Migranti: la sfida dell'integrazione digitale. Innovazione e co-creation nel progetto H2020 MICADO*, reviewed by Emanuele Stochino, considers the outputs of the Horizon 2020 project MICADO (Migrant Interrogation Cockpits and Dashboard) that has been implemented in

four pilot cities: Antwerp, Hamburg, Madrid, and Bologna. The project's aim is the development and implementation of an app to simplify the interaction among migrants, public administration and the third sector; in other words, make the access to services easier. MICADO has been presented to end users which is equipped with a multilingual interface with an automatic translator to facilitate the search for information about public administration and social services rules and benefits. Despite some critical aspects (a very high turnover of managers on the project, users' difficulties due to limited knowledge of the language, an EU lack of political will to enact laws on the regulation of migrant status), the project has given ample proof that it is possible to use ITC tools to help, at least, some migrants.

This issue ends with an interview with Ray Hutchison, Professor of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. Several aspects of urban sociology and the impacts of Covid-19 on cities are considered, bringing about the fact that anticipated changes often do not materialize, drawing a parallel with the post-9/11. In this sense, for example, opportunities for rural areas remain to be seen in terms of significance and lasting trends. Vulnerabilities and increased inequalities in urban areas are highlighted, and the exacerbation of political polarization, especially in the US, is a critical factor in understanding the lack of consensus on the impacts of this crisis. The interviewer also explores the persistent relevance of the conceptual tools of the Chicago School and New Urban Sociology for interpreting recent urban changes.

In summary, this special issue aims to provide an overview of contemporary urban dynamics, highlighting challenges and opportunities to promote more inclusive and equitable cities through local policies and participatory practices. All the items contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of urban issues, stressing the importance of rethinking urban development in light of the lessons learned from the pandemic and the needs of diverse groups to promote fairer and more resilient cities.

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