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Security governance, harms and resistance: recalibrating security and redefining incivility through legitimacy concerns

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Abstract

Examining the harmful effects of some existing governance approaches to urban space and various types of resistance to them, we outline a new framework to develop and evaluate security approaches in the city – in particular, towards 'incivilities'. This framework relies on the redefinition of security, which we extended far beyond the realm of crime to include social security and concerns around vulnerability, sustainability, inclusion etc., and takes into account the critique of existing governance measures. Simultaneously, it relies on the rethinking of 'incivilities', which involves shifting the focus away from behaviour deemed 'anti-social' to the actions or inactions of those who decide what 'anti-social' is in the first place, and their harmful consequences. The framework we propose – that takes into account harms, people's broader sensitivities around public space and pro-social alternatives to current security approaches – should hopefully contribute to a more just and legitimate urban security governance.

Key words: security, harm, incivilities, legitimacy, resistance, governance

1. Introduction

The contemporary 'risk society' has been defined as a 'society increasingly preoccupied with the future which generates the notion of risk' (Giddens and Pierson, 1998: 209). To this, one might add its preoccupation with safety and security, evident in the prevalence of security discourse, which is an effective generator of hegemonic culture,

(post)modern political power and of feelings of belonging to one's community (Peršak, 2006). Post 9/11, security discourse has become the great narrative of contemporary human condition; one comes across 'security' everywhere, be it at airports, buses (seatbelts), streets (CCTV) or fitting rooms in a store, which are equipped with cameras 'for your security'. Security is secured by proscriptions, prescriptions and insurance. However, it regularly neglects to embrace the broader aspects of societal well-being. Security is not, or ought not to be, just about preventing crime but also about ensuring social stability, resilience and cohesion, reducing inequalities (Beck, 1992; Garland, 2001; Loader and Walker, 2007), ensuring human rights (Lazarus, 2017), and entailing possibilities for a safer, more just and inclusive society (Wood and Shearing, 2007).

The idea of security has its origins in the notion of 'social security', which lies at the heart of the concept of a social state and is intended to reduce risks and increase life expectancy and security of citizens. It was thus the state, in its social function, that was primarily responsible for reducing such risks (Castel, 2003). However, things have rather drastically changed in the last few decades. The terminology and ideas of security have moved, in a relatively short span of time, from being confined to domains such as international relations, war studies and political science, to taking central place in studies of crime control and policing (Jones, 2012: 768).[1] The shift of the axis within the concept of security has narrowed this term to primarily mean security *from crime* or from the undesirable Other, and to become less associated with social security than with private security agencies (Julkunen in Helne, 2007). This also entailed focussing on crime

[1] For key themes of recent debates about security and the changing ways in which it is conceptualised, see Jones (2012).

anticipation and activities aimed at reducing crime risks as well as placing increasing responsibility on the individuals to protect or secure themselves (Garland, 2001).

In the criminal justice area, this prevailing conception of security often tilts the balance away from the rights of criminal suspects and defendants, spurring a new way of thinking about rights: one where rights are conditional upon responsible behaviour (Hudson, 2003). In the criminal policy field, however, this logic draws heavily on the need to anticipate crime (Zedner, 2007) and upon Wilson and Kelling's (1982) 'broken windows thesis', which legitimises the state to punitively scrutinise already minor deviance and disorder, such as graffiti, 'hanging about', playing certain types of music and so forth, if it annoys, alarms, upsets or disturbs others – all under the assumption that minor disorder if left unattended will lead to bigger crime. Such law-and-order policy focuses a lot on (perceptions of) security and expands the realm of the prohibited conduct by including behaviour that has until yesterday been deemed (by some) socially unpleasant but not 'harmful'[2] as such and therefore as something to be tolerated in a modern, pluralist, urban society (Peršak, 2008, 2017a). Disorder arguably generated by such an undesirable behaviour is said to reduce feelings of safety and security of the better off, disintegrate 'community' and increase fear of crime, which in the eyes of law-

[2] Meaning that the conduct does not harm others in the sense of J.S. Mill's 'harm principle' (principle of liberty) – which is the only widely accepted, uncontested grounds for legitimate criminalisation in modern liberal society – but only upsets some people or violates social norms of good behaviour. Throughout this article, the notion of 'harm' (and consequently 'harmful') is used to denote all sorts of setbacks to interests over which one has a legitimate claim (cf. Feinberg, 1984; Peršak, 2007a; Simester and von Hirsch, 2011) that may or should have relevance for state regulation. This notion of harm, grounded originally in criminal law philosophy, leaves ample room for various individual and social harms not yet recognised (e.g., criminalised) by law – with the latter, zemiology or 'the social harms perspective' is particularly and justifiably concerned (see, e.g., Boukli and Kotzé, 2018; Canning and Tombs, 2021; Hillyard et al., 2004; Pemberton, 2007, 2015) – but also harms, individual and social, that are already acknowledged by various branches of law or regulation, including penal law and human rights law (i.e., criminalised harms and harms from human rights violations), as well as harms arising *out of* criminalisation in the widest sense.

and-order politics legitimises repressive regulation, be it penal or non-penal, direct and indirect or subtler in its approach.

The consequences of a 'zero tolerance' approach to minor infractions or deviations from 'the norm', however, do not merely affect its immediate targets-victims but also urban socialisation of city dwellers. Such an approach reduces public tolerance towards what is 'different' and legitimises public intolerance towards the Other, while at the same times serves to disguise a deeper crisis or identity fears of the state (Peršak, 2008). As noted by many, punitiveness and the emphasis on order are what weak(er) states rely upon, as the stronger the state, the lesser the need for social control and focus on order (Durkheim, 1973; Garland, 1996; Nietzsche, 2006 [1887]). Displays of punitiveness are a sign of weakness, 'an attempt to recover the state's eroded powers of sovereign command' (Sparks, 2000: 135).

Considering the negative consequences of many such repressive attempts and increasing discontents and resistance to such governance, there is clearly a need to rethink concepts like 'security' and 'incivilities' in the sense of what they mean and should mean, whom they protect, against whom (and what) they are used, and how they can be reformulated to increase the normative as well as perceived legitimacy of the authorities acting on their basis. Security measures should be, both, normatively legitimate and perceived as legitimate. 'Perceived legitimacy' (or perception-based legitimacy) is subjective in the sense that the audience's emotions, opinions, and trust in a certain authority (be it a person or an institution) determine whether this authority is (seen as) legitimate, which in turn affects people's compliance (e.g., Hough et al., 2010; Sparks et al., 1996; Tyler, 2003, 2009, 2012). Such legitimacy is 'the recognition of

the right to govern' (Coincaud, 2002: 10), the lack of which erodes the justification for this right and power that the governing authority holds, which, consequently, reflects in our trust towards it and our willingness to yield to its power. 'Normative legitimacy', in contrast, is derived more objectively from the inner quality, value or content of some normative (i.e., value-laden) action or from 'the internal characteristics of the object studied' (Peršak, 2016: 755). For example, legitimacy of a piece of legislation or of judiciary is derived from the quality of the (legislative) norms and (judicial) work performed and is therefore something that can be evaluated against a standard or a rule, independently from the views or trust of the audience it addresses (Peršak and Štrus, 2014). In the case of urban governance, its normative legitimacy can be derived, for example, from the quality of municipal regulation and its impact (beneficial or harmful) on its addressees. Our assessment of security measures will take into consideration both of these facets of legitimacy.

The article, first, examines the existing security-related approach to urban space in many Western countries and to its sensory disorder, and highlights some of its problems, such as the harmful and discriminatory (even if not always necessarily intended) effects of certain governance measures, which affect specifically the 'normative legitimacy' of governance measures. Next, we inspect the various types of resistance to the existing security approaches, which are relevant for the social, 'perceived legitimacy' of such governance. We then propose to redefine 'security' or 'secure urban environment' in a manner that it is connected with the 'liveability' of the most vulnerable and the wellbeing of the broader ecosystem, and that takes into account critiques, people's sensitivities and resistance to existing security approaches. This new framework relies also on the rethinking of 'incivilities' and their legitimate regulation (focusing particularly

on the harmful consequences of actions and omissions of authorities), and on taking into account pro-social alternatives to existing governance solutions, which could ensure the minimum security to all while maintaining sufficient flexibility towards the diversity of urban lifestyles and activities.

2. Harms of contemporary security governance and regulation of disorder

The existing security-related approaches to urban space and its sensory (or senses-related) disorder stimulate a series of socially detrimental consequences that threaten the normative or objective legitimacy of such security approaches. Our previous work on incivilities (e.g., on homelessness, smell-related incivilities, sex work and eco-justice protests) demonstrates the harmful and discriminatory effects of many governance measures aimed at addressing this socially undesirable issue. While urban governance ranges from more evident or blatant use of repressive power that includes criminalisation (including criminalisation 'through the back door' (Peršak, 2017a) via civil and administrative-penal law) to more 'subtle', 'soft' or indirect approaches to regulating (dis)order,[3] the end result is often very similar. Such a result involves the exclusion of some people from, or the introduction of limits to the use of, public space, or the criminalisation of certain practices that deviate from the mainstream, even if they cause no harm to others.

[3] It is to be noted that in several Western European democracies the adoption of these security approaches at the local level has often been encouraged by the central state, including through the spur of developing multi-actor partnerships in the area of community safety and security. The latter have also been encouraged through, for example, the signing of contracts and pacts between key institutional actors (for an analysis of the outcomes of such contracts and pacts, see e.g. Calaresu and Triventi, 2019).

Homelessness, for example, is tackled by formal social control such as regulatory offences (violations, administrative-penal infractions), mostly in the shape of fines or imprisonment, or both (Peršak, 2017a; Podoletz, 2017). Zoning and banning orders are widely used for such purposes as well, which often target the homeless and youth in particular, excluding certain citizens from a major part of public life (von Hirsch and Shearing, 2000). Homelessness is, however, also the object of softer control approaches, such as architectural design interventions that pursue the similar goal. The so-called defensive or hostile architecture shapes public space and its objects (such as park benches, railings, window sills, bus stop benches), slanting, dividing, narrowing them in a way to make it impossible or very difficult and uncomfortable to sleep on or sit on for a longer period of time or in an unusual way, i.e., beyond the temporary and partial use that is 'the norm'. Public benches, this 'often-overlooked aspect of everyday infrastructure that tends to our bodily comfort, and our need to pause' (Dawney and Brothwell, 2023: 242), are often the only available resting place above the ground for the homeless. Hostile design sends the message that some people or bodies are not welcome, targeting mostly the homeless and youth (e.g., skateboarders, especially when skateboarder studs are added to surfaces and objects in public spaces), but affecting also the unusually shaped, pregnant or obese, for example, owing to bench dividers limiting the seating space (Peršak, 2021).

Among the subtler expressions of power, there are also sensory and affective nudges that are engineered to mould individual behaviour in the 'smart' city, such as those that make people feel relaxed and hence more prone to consuming.[4] An example is offered

[4] On 'smart city' research and some of its criminological implications see, for example, Hayward (2020), Mora et al. (2017), Pali and Schuilenburg (2020).

by Schuilenburg and Peeters (2018), who critically analysed the 'De-escalate project' implemented in the 'smart' inner-city entertainment district of the Dutch city of Eindhoven: through the use of smart lighting technology, smell and sound design, the project aimed to reduce (among others) aggression, anti-social behaviour and noise nuisance, making the area pleasant for everyone and thus conducive to consumption. Designed-in sensory and affective nudges encouraging consumption are also enrolled in other contemporary consumer environments, such as shopping malls, casinos, other gambling facilities, etc. In all such 'persuasion architectures', as Kindynis (2021: 5) calls them, design strategies 'induce physiological and psychological dispositions conducive to consumption', thus unbridling consumption from any limitations, no matter how harmful and pathological consequences this brings (e.g., triggering impulsive, insatiable, compulsive consumption, and leading to offences such as impulsive shoplifting, binge drinking and problem gambling).

Indeed, designed-in sensory and affective nudges can subtly affect human perception and behaviour in all consumption-focused spaces – be they semi-private and semi-closed spaces like shopping malls or public (although, at times, semi-private) 'open air' spaces like city centres. Among other smart technologies shaping individual perceptions and behaviour, sound design is especially pernicious: for example, through exposing consumers to certain types of music, designers seek to shape consumption choices and even the choice of the product to be purchased.[5] Sound also plays an important role in the governance of public space. In particular, the subjectivity of 'sound' allows discretion in terms of distinction between what constitutes 'sound' and what constitutes 'noise'.

[5] 'Hearing a specific genre of music (e.g., classical) activates related concepts in memory (e.g., expensive, sophisticated, formal, educated), which influences the memory for, perception of, and choice of products' (North et al., 2016: 83).

Noise pollution (e.g., by vehicles in the city, living close to highways, long-term exposure to sound of high decibels or displeasing sound etc.) can have negative consequences on human health and the environment; however, how a distinction is made between 'sound' and 'noise' in certain cases, who draws the line between the two to regulate the latter, and who disproportionately falls victim to it, raise concerns. Such concerns relate to ethnic, racial and socio-economic inequalities of spatial distribution of noise pollution as well as to power differentials in the exercise of municipal power that regulates what should count as 'noise' (Brisman et al., 2021). Sound can also be a tool of 'aural' gentrification, used as a weapon in the arsenal of police when policing public protest (e.g., through the use of long-range acoustic devices to disperse crowds) as well as an instrument of resistance to police power (Brisman et al., 2021).

However, the governance of public (dis)order to please the eyes, nose and ears of the better-off and safeguard economic interests and encourage consumption in urban centres, also employs more explicit measures such as regulations that penalise 'incivilities' through bans and fines. Incivilities are 'believed to upset members of the public when undertaking the "respectable" activity of shopping' (Bannister et al., 2006: 922) and this includes, for example, sound-emitting 'nuisance' produced by protesters and buskers, although 'incivility' may also be imputed to the latter by the mere fact of not performing on the right location. Prospective buskers on the London Underground, as Millie (2017: 7) notes, must undergo 'an X Factor style audition. Anyone not permitted, or performing in the wrong location, is likely to be regarded as an incivility to be moved on'. The municipal tolerance may, however, vary also in relation to the types of sounds and the cultural, national, ethnic etc. familiarity with them. In the Western world, Black music subcultures have tended to attract much more repressive stances

than perceived ‘white music’ or ‘white people’s music’, and discriminatory suppression of UK grime, UK drill and Brazilian baile funk, three subgenres of contemporary rap music, are no exception. Without downplaying the existence of offensive and oppressive rap lyrics in general, Fatsis demonstrates how the disproportionate singling out of such rap lyrics for police attention ‘without adequately interrogating the violence or the racial, gender and sexual politics that are excused in more respectable forms of creative expression’ is driven by prejudices embedded in the white mainstream culture (Fatsis, 2021: 30-31).

In relation to smell’s role in the determination of incivilities, our previous work pointed out how smelly rubbish in the historical centre of Rome is considered ‘out of place’ and as defacing the beauty of the ‘eternal’ city, which incurs heavy fines (Di Ronco and Peršak, 2021), while elsewhere, i.e., outside of the city centre, it does not attract such attention and is not considered such a problem. Modern city authorities are oriented towards maintaining the odourlessness of the city or, at least, to keeping unfamiliar odours away, and they do so not only by displacing odours underground but also by punitively sanctioning those responsible for bad smell. As ‘unfamiliarity’ of the smell is context-specific (including having cultural dimensions), the subjective ‘unpleasantness’ related to it, however, is prone to xenophobic prejudice. Some may consider the smell of fried food ‘olfactory harassment’, while others may find it pleasant, inviting and perhaps even patriotic, e.g., to Belgians whose national dish (or one of them) is Belgian fries that can be purchased in restaurants as well as little fries shops (called ‘frituur’ or ‘friterie’ in the Flemish Region) situated across the country (Di Ronco and Peršak, 2021).

Similar judgements are also applied to the visibility of certain activities, for example, street-based sex work. The sight of sex workers, particularly those working on the street in urban centres, is often considered offensive by people in power positions and affluent middle-class city dwellers, and is therefore penalised for its offensiveness (Di Ronco, 2020, 2021; Peršak and Vermeulen, 2014). However, street-based sex workers in other city areas are often not considered a 'nuisance' but rather seen as victims of sex trafficking and exploitation by organised crime networks; as such, they tend to be helped and supported, rather than penalised (Di Ronco, 2020, 2021). Cultural diversity, unfamiliarity and various prejudices related thereto come here into play as well: in Ghent, Belgium, for example, the change in the nationality of sex workers, particularly the influx of African and Eastern-European migrants,[6] affected the perception of 'nuisance' (incivilities, anti-social behaviour) in the area, with residents expressing the view that the area has become 'tougher (more nuisance and less safe)' since their arrival (Boels and Verhage, 2016: 49).

The above-described cases demonstrate that 'offensiveness' of such regulated conduct is often time- and place-specific and dependent on its visibility, its deviation from the mainstream or prevalent cultural and taste norms as well as, ultimately, on who the power-holders are, on their tastes, preferences and expectations from the city, including capitalist orientations. The harms resulting from such governance encompass harmful consequences resulting from the punitive sanctions such as fines and imprisonment and reduction of liberties (e.g., freedoms of expression and assembly), exclusion from public places, further marginalisation and stigmatisation of the vulnerable, as well as more

[6] Migrants or immigrants are often particularly targeted by punitive governance approaches. For an insight into the impact of national governance approaches on migrants in Italy, see, for example, Crocitti and Selmini (2017).

general brutalisation of the city (e.g., by making it a harsher, rougher place for all through the use of hostile architecture). The existing, prevailing definitions of security, which focus on law-and-order and security 'from' (e.g. from crime, antisocial behaviour, undesirable Others, deviance from the norm), neglect these harms that arise out of punitive governance or criminalisation in the broadest sense, and thereby contribute to the further infliction of individual and social harm.

In liberal democratic systems, however, the longevity of such security or anti-incivility measures depends on their legitimacy – normative (impacted by the harms addressed above) as well as perceived legitimacy. Regarding the latter, whether the above-mentioned objective harms are recognised or not, people's perceptions affect perceived justifiedness of the governance and acceptability of its power, and, consequently, people's compliance. The majority, who is not commonly on the receiving end of such policies, however, seldom objects to such governance measures, at least from the outset, as the majority population is not the one significantly affected by such policies, which ordinarily target the more marginalised. Moreover, many are quickly convinced of the necessity of such security measures (or even demand them themselves),[7] as the rhetoric of security plays into our fears (Peršak, 2007b, 2017b), resentments (Bottoms, 2006) and general anxiety (Bauman, 2000). Nevertheless, with the growing number of those 'on the margins', such as those in (more or less permanent) job precariousness, and with increased awareness of the adverse human impact on nature and pending environmental dangers, there has also been a perceptible increase in civil society mobilisation, public protests and acts of disobedience against governmental measures.

[7] Even more so when they are coupled with aesthetic considerations – as in the case of gentrification (e.g., Peršak and Di Ronco, 2018).

The very idea of ‘resistance’ has become appealing in times when one’s life is increasingly controlled, monitored and manipulated – by the state, social media giants, media providers, tech companies, AI and so forth. Such acts, highlighting the importance of the subjective, perception-based legitimacy concerns, will be inspected next.

3. Resistance to existing security measures from various segments of the population

There are many ways in which the control systems mentioned above, be they ‘softer’ or more explicit, can be and are resisted or even subverted through everyday practices by people such as urban interventionists, artists, the people directly targeted by security measures, or even the general public. In line with Ferrell’s (2022) conceptualisation, ‘resistance’ is in this paper understood as everyday acts that – even if just fleetingly or lacking an expressed political intention – challenge the established unjust social order. To be noted here is that this broad idea of ‘resistance’ is not, however, unanimously embraced and upheld by the criminological literature, with some authors, for example, dismissing micro-level resistance for its often not-so-clear political intent (Hayward and Schuilenburg, 2014) and others associating ‘resistance’ only with organised and institutionalised political leadership (Winlow et al., 2015). Following Ferrell (2022), we take the view that immediate, everyday acts of resistance are ‘proper’ resistance, even when the political intent of those who engage in these acts is not clear to the spectator, and regardless of their organisation (see also Dickinson et al., 2022; Millie, 2019; Naegler, 2022).

We acknowledge, however, that not all urbanites may have equal access to strategies or tools of resistance, or even time to engage in it. A menial worker holding three jobs to survive is less likely to have the time (or even inclination) to engage in street interventions or protests, let alone to protest for causes (e.g., climate change) that may seem far removed from their immediate, everyday existential concerns. However, even if many cases of current resistance seem a preoccupation of the sufficiently privileged, middle-class folk, they are not to be dismissed; in fact, as Lovell (2009) demonstrates, it is often the privileged white middle class that – due to their sense of empowerment and access to resources, among others – engages in protest, demanding changes for other, less privileged sections of society. Nevertheless, resistance clearly extends well beyond street protesting and also includes acts of resistance by the less privileged, some of which we address below.

Urban resistance has not been ignored by critical and cultural criminologists, who have studied a number of visual and performative micro-level practices through which individuals, groups, activists etc. contravene dominant expectations and ultimately disrupt normative (aesthetic, sensory and social) orders, while offering fresh new ways of looking at, feeling and experiencing, the city. Playful, enjoyable, thrill-seeking and risk-taking urban interventionist practices include the impromptu and ephemeral work of graffiti artists, street performers, flash mobbers, parkour runners, street skateboarders, critical mass cyclists, guerrilla gardeners, guerrilla knitters, people who put up guerrilla stickers and engage in 'brandalism' etc. (see, e.g., Brisman and South, 2013, 2014; Millie, 2017, 2019, 2022). The activities of these people (many of which are penalised, especially in consumption-focused urban spaces) often challenge dominant expectations and the aesthetic order of the city, suggesting alternative functions of

spaces and visions of urban order, while also beautifying and adding vitality, spontaneity and dynamicity to city living.

Urban interventionists can specifically target street furniture – including the hostile/defensive one – and colour it to make it appear less 'dull' (Millie, 2017) or embellish it with colourful woollen/knitted items (McGovern, 2019; Millie, 2019). Although these practices do not manage to change the essential design features of the object (which may still exclude/discriminate against certain people), they are often successful in changing the look and feel of the urban space within which they are situated – its atmosphere – making it more welcoming and enjoyable, especially for those who enjoy a little unpredictability in the urban landscape. Some interventions, however, include dismantling the hostile element (e.g., armrests), also through providing instructions to others on how they may go about doing the same, thereby disabling the 'hostility' or reintroducing the welcoming character of said objects.[8]

In addition to urban interventionists, artists can also point out the insidious effects of defensive architecture and social control more generally. An example is offered by the public art installation by the German designer Fabian Brunsing, titled 'Pay & Sit – The Private Bench', which consists of a bench with sharp metal spikes that only disappear for a given amount of time when the user inserts a EUR 0.50 coin in a small money box underneath the bench.[9] The installation problematised the commercialisation of

[8] In a Reddit community r/MildlyVandalised, for example, one could find (until recently) instructions on how to easily remove the metallic armrests on certain benches in order to allow the homeless to sleep on them (https://www.reddit.com/r/MildlyVandalised/comments/bpb5ud/wholesome_vandalism/). The post, which attracted many supporters as well as commenters pointing out that this meant breaking the law, has been later removed.

[9] See http://www.fabianbrunsing.de/.

modern life, including privatisation of public space, and was meant to make people reflect on capitalism, where one of the dominant mantras is that time is money and money can buy you anything, including the time when (and the place where) to rest.

Other times, it is users against whom a security measure is unjustly or inappropriately (and thus uncivilly) used that resist against it, promoting alternative functional and aesthetic understandings of and sensory and affective engagements with the city space. Street skateboarders, for example, often resist the passing of local bylaws banning them from skating in specific urban areas as well as the installation of skate-stoppers in their favourite skate spots. As Dickinson and colleagues (2022: 9) argued in their research on skateboarding in Manchester (UK), not only did skateboarders continue to skate in their favourite spots in spite of the local ban and skate-stoppers, but they also started a campaign to maintain 'free and open-to-all skate spots' and sensitise the public to the benefits of skateboarding. Even more interestingly for our purposes, many skateboarders in Manchester started to view skate-stoppers in skate spots as an 'extra challenge' that motivated, rather than dissuaded, their skateboarding.

Similar to skateboarders who decide to continue skateboarding in spite of local bans and skate-stoppers, activists and demonstrators can intentionally ignore regulations limiting their protesting and, for example, stage a protest despite being cautioned against doing so. This has recently happened in the UK at King Charles III coronation, which involved the sending of 'intimidatory' warning letters to anti-monarchist and environmental groups by the Home Office's Police Power Unit ahead of the event to announce newly introduced police powers – and the police intention to use them to keep public order at the coronation (Quinn et al., 2023). This has not, however, prevented activists from

going ahead with their (often authorised/agreed upon) protest activities, and eventually resulted in the arrest of around fifty activists who were unfoundedly suspected of carrying objects (such as rape alarms, placards, string and luggage straps) aimed to cause public nuisance (Boffey and Slawson, 2023). Eco-justice groups in Italian cities have often done the same – i.e., they have ignored police regulations which prevented them from protesting in urban centres and staged unauthorised (yet peaceful) protests. Through chanting, music and the use of loudspeakers at such unauthorised protests, eco-justice activists sought to convey important messages and even radical imaginaries for the city of the future – an imagined future city that was often presented as more sustainable and less harmful to humans and the broader ecosystem surrounding us (Di Ronco, 2023).

Resistance can also target gentrification – and hence the changes that, at different degrees, affect the built environment and the socio-economic composition of the people who live in specific (gentrified or gentrifying) areas of the city. Gentrification as a tool of social control and spatial governmentality can be distilled in the coupling of gentrification processes with rebranding campaigns and punitive strategies towards incivilities in an effort to change the image of the city into, for example, 'safe' cities and make them thus more attractive to young professionals, families and tourists (Bannister et al., 2006; Belina and Helms, 2003; Peršak and Di Ronco, 2018). Gentrification-related social control measures ensure that while some people are 'designed in' and effectively included in the newly designed spaces of the wealthier, others are 'designed out' and excluded in different ways (Pali and Schuilenburg, 2020). Such ways include, for example, displacement (whether direct and short-term or indirect and long-term; see Elliott-Cooper et al., 2020), defensive architecture, and anti-incivility regulations and measures. Gentrification and its exclusionary effects are, however, not inevitable: they

can actively be resisted by people, as the examples of Berlin Tempelhof and Ljubljana Metelkova City (Peršak and Di Ronco, 2018) or the example of San Berillo district in Catania (Di Ronco, 2020, 2021; Di Ronco et al., 2021) demonstrate. In the former example, urbanites resisted these spaces (of oppression during the past totalitarian regimes) being turned into spaces of profit, advocating them rather as spaces of spontaneous, bottom-up and creative endeavours. In the latter example, efforts of local authorities to 'cleanse' the area from sex work have encountered sex workers' protests against repression and reclaiming efforts to be involved in discussions on area revitalisation.

4. Redefinitions of security and incivility in view of legitimacy concerns

Taking into account the above critique of, and resistance to, existing security or governance approaches that often target the most vulnerable and affect the objective-normative and subjective-perceived legitimacy of such methods, we propose: (i) a redefinition of 'security' or 'secure urban environment' in a manner that it is connected with the 'liveability' of the most vulnerable and ideally also the wellbeing of the broader ecosystem, and (ii) a rethinking or redefinition of 'incivilities', in line with the redefinition of security – which should have consequences for the legitimacy of the regulation of incivilities.

Redefinition of security

Before expounding our proposed conception of security, we would like to acknowledge the many problems and justified critiques around the (over)use of the notion of security, e.g., those relating to the securitisation of social problems (e.g., King and Sharp, 2006; Loader, 2004; Rodger, 2008) or 'governance through security' (Simon, 2007). However, we also believe that such problems are mostly due to 'security' being used in a narrow, crime control-related sense. As we argue for the broader notion of security or its 'return' to the original, social security-related conception, we find the concept still valid and useful, and hence prefer to redefine or recalibrate it, rather than eliminate it altogether.

The redefined security ought therefore to centre around the notion of 'habitability-for-all' or, better yet, 'liveability', as this is not referring only to housing but also to enjoying public spaces, and to a certain level of 'quality of life' more generally. This 'security' ought to be at least the 'minimal level' of security, allowing all to survive without too much struggle, but ideally a bit more – the level that enables decent living, a quality of life beyond the fulfilment of mere material, physical and psychological security human needs.

Such redefinition ought to accommodate concerns regarding vulnerability, inclusion, sustainability and suggest more legitimate ways of regulation that do not lead to harmful effects or perpetuation of exclusion, marginalisation and stigmatisation. This implies not only conducting impact assessments prior to any security-based regulation but also that regular monitoring of effects – once regulation is implemented – should be carried out, and that the findings of the latter ought to provide grounds for further (de)regulation, aimed at reducing negative impacts.

While some ‘minimal level’ or ‘basic’ security may be binary or dichotomous (one either has it or does not have it), security beyond this minimal level can be quantified and increased (for example, more locks, more lighting, more security cameras, removal of potentially risky people from the neighbourhood and so forth can increase security, and even more so the sense of security). This, however, means that significant increases in security of some segments of (urban) population require monitoring for potential negative impact on security of other people. As mentioned, the well-off minorities in gentrified city centres may feel their security increased (and even ‘real’ – as opposed to perceived – security from crime and disorder may be realistically increased) if certain destitute people are removed from urban centres by zoning ordinances or otherwise; however, removal and placement of such people, of the ‘undesirables’, to other parts of the city can entail the reduction in their security, which is likely to be already minimal or precarious – below the minimal levels.

Lastly, environmental protesters alert us also to the fact that many individuals are very concerned with the environment, the eco-systems surrounding them and with the future survival of our planet more generally. This implies that, for some people, security has a broader and more inclusive meaning, that is, involving not only human well-being but also the well-being of other living entities around us, seeing all these lives interconnected and interdependent. Security is connected to nature also in the case of urban guerrilla gardening projects. Through fun-seeking and beautifying interventions, guerrilla gardeners emphasise the importance of green spaces and agriculture (fresh fruits and vegetables for all) in the city, in this way building up communities, fostering connections and care towards each other and the (urban and natural) environment (Millie, 2022; see also Brisman and South, 2014). When they target neglected urban

spaces often perceived as ‘dangerous’, guerrilla gardening projects can also help improve perceptions of safety and security, attracting people and activities back to them and hence increasing social control as well as place attachment (Millie, 2022). Finally, guerrilla gardening activities can also help improve the psychological wellbeing of people – especially of those who live in small flats with little to no access to green spaces, whose mental health may greatly benefit even just from the sight (and smell) of greenery in their surroundings.

Redefinition of incivilities

The redefined notion of incivilities or of ‘uncivil’, ‘anti-social’ or ‘disorderly’ ought to include also what the decision-making power holders (be they municipal authorities or the state or private corporations) do that inappropriately or unjustly worsens the living situation of the vulnerable or the broader environment/ecosystem. This may include punitive and non-punitive yet harmful interventions as well as omissions to tackle social and environmental problems when it is in their power and mandate to do something about them.

Among the latter, for example, omissions to address pressing environmental issues, such as air pollution or construction endangering clean drinking water, with sufficient urgency, transparency and seriousness, can be found. This category could host also cases of city resources not being (sufficiently) allocated to addressing problems such as, for example, homelessness, urban poverty, the lack of ramps and other accommodating

public amenities for wheelchair users, while they are generously spent on less needed, luxury items and city beautifying projects.

Harmful non-punitive interventions include, for example, many instances of gentrification, including those that result in the squeezing out of the poor(er), who can no longer afford to live in the city centre, and putting the 'right' class or socio-economic (and ethnic) group of people (back) in, thereby transforming the inner city into a disorder-free space or at least generating the perception of disorder-free space. Such measures are not only 'co-existing' with social control but are, in fact, another social control response – a seemingly non-punitive response but nonetheless an anti-incivilities measure (Peršak and Di Ronco, 2018).

Examples of punitive interventions include various bans, for example, on begging, rough sleeping, skating in certain areas etc., and penalisation or criminalisation of certain conduct, such as activities of eco-justice demonstrators seeking to alert people and politicians to dangers of climate change. Penalising these activities is 'uncivil' or 'anti-social' in itself, and should as such be replaced with more positive, pro-social alternatives.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we addressed the harmful and discriminatory effects of security governance approaches adopted in many Western countries, specifically targeting minor deviance and disorder, and the resistance to them. We have argued that the

legitimacy of such truly anti-social security measures is doubly challenged, that is, both in its normative and perceived/social dimensions. To increase the legitimacy of security approaches and of the authorities enacting or implementing them, we proposed to redefine 'security' or 'secure urban environment' in a manner that it is connected with the 'liveability' of the most vulnerable and the wellbeing of the broader ecosystem, and that takes into account the critique of, and resistance to, existing security or governance approaches in order to rethink 'incivilities' and their legitimate regulation accordingly. The proposed framework aims to contribute to a more just and legitimate urban security governance.

How can urban governance benefit from our proposed redefinition of 'security' and 'incivility' in practice? On the one hand, our argument points to the problematic (uncivil, unsecure) governance practices of those in power that ought to be accounted for in assessing urban security and legitimacy of measures taken in its name. On the other hand, it points to more positive alternatives, which exist and are based, both, on the guarantee of minimum security for all and on better tolerance of people and their 'different' activities and lifestyles – and hence of 'different' sounds, smells, sights and modes of engagement with the city. This can be accomplished by accepting, even treasuring, the presence of everybody in public spaces, including the less fortunate ones who cannot contribute much to the culture of consumption permeating our urban centres, protesters fighting for social and eco-justice, artists, performers and, in general, everyone who experiences and thinks of the city in somewhat different ways than the 'dominant' ones.

Being exposed to alternative visions of social and aesthetic order (and modes of understanding and sensing or experiencing urban space) can help reveal state failure and harm, leading to mobilisations often emboldening the already existing resistance efforts. It can also add texture, dynamism, creativity, and spontaneity to city living, in this way contributing to building more inclusive and 'liveable' spaces for all. This should be valorised, rather than ostracised and penalised (Dickinson et al., 2022; Millie, 2017; Peršak and Di Ronco, 2018). At times, the creation of such inclusive spaces can be facilitated by designers and architects, who can design spaces with features, objects or elements that encourage multiple uses by the public and foster inclusion, participation and change (Sendra and Sennett, 2020). However, as Popovski and Young (2022) remind us, many features of the urban landscape, including the easily overlooked ones such as steps, are often already creatively (and often also illicitly) adapted by people to meet their specific (unmet) needs, in ways that challenge their usual, proscribed function.

Allowing such adaptive uses and 'alternative', creative or even political engagements with city spaces seems crucial to the constitution of a tolerant, inclusive, 'liveable' city, which prioritises the needs and lived realities of all its dwellers over contrived forms of social control protecting the interests of the few. Moreover, they should be considered a valuable reminder to the municipal authorities that certain urban needs are insufficiently catered for, and as such serve as an educational moment, a free policy suggestion for future, better governance of urban public space.

While some such pro-social measures may be easy to implement quickly (for example, the opening up of restricted city spaces or abolishing prohibitions on certain usage of street furniture), other urban problems would require social security measures that

address the root causes of poverty, homelessness and similar – measures that guarantee the material subsistence, included in the notion of 'basic security' and 'liveability', which on our account, espoused above, presents the key concept around which 'secure urban environment' should be conceived. Pro-social alternatives form part of the new outlined framework and they should be integrated into urban security governance as priority solutions to urban problems on the ground.

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