



Gentrification and Vigilantism in Milan's Central Train Station

Manuel Mireanu

Independent Researcher

Abstract

What is the relationship between vigilantism on gentrification? As state and private capital actors begin to see urban areas in need of renewal, they also construct those areas as 'dangerous', and their inhabitants as 'criminals'. This gentrification-security nexus has, however, been analyzed mostly as a top-down process, in which it is agents endowed with high levels of political and economic capital that are able to steer urban renewal policies. This paper focuses on agents that emerge from 'the grassroots', and especially on vigilante groups. These groups have far-right or conservatory ideologies. As such, they enact exclusionary practices of security that enforce gentrification. I illustrate this with the case of the City Angels, a group that has contributed to the renewal of Milan's main train station. I show how this group combines security with social work, and at the same time maintains a coercive presence in the train station. The City Angels patrol, deter, denounce and pacify the marginalized people that live around the train station, and ultimately push them out of that area. Vigilantes operate in tandem with the state by creating an appearance of security in the area that they are patrolling. Within this stabilized and domesticated landscape, the state and the real estate developers can operate unhindered. The increased security raises the value of the city scape. It also eliminates or neutralizes those who seen as hindrances to gentrification.

Keywords

gentrification, security, vigilantism, Milan, train stations

Introduction

This paper interrogates the relationship between vigilantism and gentrification, contributing to the study of gentrification and its security dimension. Scholars have not been blind to the ways in which private and public actors label areas as 'insecure' before being gentrified (Smith, 1996: 207 – 13; Künkel, 2016: 2 – 3). Nor have they missed out on the

Manuel Mireanu holds a PhD from Central European University Budapest, and is currently conducting autonomous research somewhere in Eastern Europe.

Contact:
mireanu_manuel@alumni.ceu.edu

ways in which the same actors consider the people evicted out of these areas to be ‘dangerous’ and ‘criminals’ (Udvarhelyi, 2013). Gentrification is a process guided by a strong incentive to augment the ‘security’ of an urban area (Mireanu, 2018). Conversely, security mechanisms create ‘safe spaces for capital investment and gentrification’ (Maharawal, 2017: 340).

A good deal of the stories and studies that look at the gentrification–security nexus tend to place the emphasis on a top–down approach to security, whereby the state and its institutions design and implement policies that affect the population (Becker and Müller, 2013; Lipsitz, 2016). Security is a set of mechanisms, practices and discourses performed by actors with high levels of various types of capital and capabilities. Such actors have the agency to enact security measures because they have the position and capacity to direct resources and political power towards their ends. These actors are mostly part of the state apparatus, or they are part of the corporate elite that has access to the political power needed to instigate security mechanisms (Balzacq, 2011: 25 – 26). Thus, in the gentrification–security nexus, the surveillance, violence, control and disciplining that accompanies gentrification, emerges mostly from actors belonging to the political and economic elite (Lipsitz, 2016: 130 – 1).

However, several studies show that this is an incomplete picture. Actors situated outside the elite can also have agency in the processes of gentrification. Citizen–based initiatives often lead to increased police presence in some areas, and can even result in evictions (Eick, 2003). Local residents lamenting the insecurity of their neighborhood can opt for gentrification as a desirable political strategy (Newman, 2013). Conversely, residents can demand security from the authorities in order to pacify the neighborhood and raise the real estate value of their homes. Moreover, denunciations (complaints to police) from citizens or organized groups articulate security demands, signaling desire of cooperation with the authorities and the repression of marginalized groups (Künkel, 2016; Mireanu, 2019).

In this paper I pay close attention to a specific type of such grassroots actors, namely vigilantes. In Europe, vigilantism is currently a right-wing, and even far-right phenomenon, driven by conservative ideologies in which security plays a key role (Mireanu, 2015). By labeling various residents – Roma people, the homeless, queer people or ‘illegal’ immigrants – as dangerous, contemporary European vigilante groups are able to perform a set of security practices (patrolling, surveying, denouncing, harassing and even assaulting). These practices are parallel to the state and at the same time legitimated by it (Mireanu, 2015: 8 – 10; 16 – 21). However, it would be deceitful to believe that vigilantism is a mere appendage of the state’s repressive apparatus. Vigilantes typically have an ambiguous and at times tense relationship with the state, especially since very few democratically elected European politicians would risk openly endorsing vigilantism. Therefore, such groups have to adopt various strategies that allow them to perform security practices and at the same time survive within the legal context of the state (Pratten and Sen, 2008).

Here I show how vigilantism enforces gentrification. I do so by focusing on a group of vigilantes from Milan, Italy, called the City Angels. This group started its activity in the area around the main train station of Milan – the so-called *Milano Centrale*. I show how their practices of ‘security and solidarity’, as the group’s motto puts it, have contributed to the ‘re-

appropriation' of the *Centrale*, cleansing it of a cohort of people coded as dangerous and threatening. This process of securitizing the train station ran in parallel with Milan's preparations for the World Exhibition in 2015, a mega event that facilitated considerable infrastructural investment and urban upscaling.

This research was conducted between 2010 and 2014. Its initial phase was methodologically based upon proximity, which requires empirical immersion in the landscape in order to implement social change and emancipation.¹ I conducted participant observation in the *Milano Centrale* and its surroundings during two field trips, in 2010 and 2011. I also interviewed the leader of the City Angels and a man with a high position in the group's hierarchy.² I also studied Italian mass-media and legal documents issued between 2008 and 2014, in an effort to discursively reconstitute and analyze the relationship between the train station and the City Angels.

The paper proceeds by introducing the City Angels and its dual motto, 'solidarity and security.' The City Angels practice 'solidarity' through social work interventions with marginalized people in gentrifying areas. However, despite the vigilante group's insistence on their social work practices, I argue that security is its main concern and output, and I outline the ways in which security is a crucial part of the Angels' activities. Subsequently, I situate these security practices in the broader category of vigilantism, and I show my reasons for considering the City Angels to be a vigilante group. I then outline the Italian political context, and how urban security became a top priority after 2008. Finally, I argue that even their social work is a way of sanitizing the urban environment so that it appears less dangerous and more inviting to capital. If the initial ways to achieve urban security in Milan were mostly militaristic and repressive, after the change of local government, urban security became neighborhood revitalization, which meant a shift toward gentrification and social work over direct repressive intervention. After outlining the most important aspects of gentrification in Milan, I focus on the *Centrale* train station, and show how securitization by the City Angels transformed it from an urban space associated with decay to one that appeared to be a safer, reclaimed hub of transport and commerce. A consideration of their crucial role in this securitization leads the paper into a final reflection on the relationship between vigilantism and gentrification. The City Angels illustrate how citizen vigilante groups contribute to the exclusionary security practices that accompany gentrification.

¹ For clarifications of 'proximity', as well as a review on how various researchers have used the concept as a methodology, see Bueger and Mireanu, 2014.

² The choice to present only the perspective of the City Angels came because during the time of my research I was convinced that, generally speaking, actors that were perpetrating oppression were getting much less academic attention than those that were at the receiving end of that oppression. Moreover, I believe that radical research that serves militant purposes has inquiry methods that may at times end up enforcing oppression and exploitation. Such methods facilitate exposure, intrusion, publicity and rendering one vulnerable. These were precisely the practices that I prefer to direct at those that I consider to be my political antagonists, while sparing those that I sympathize from one more intrusive academic interrogation. .

1. The City Angels: 'solidarity and security'

The City Angels is a volunteer group concerned with security. Formed in 1994, it is currently among the biggest organizations of its kind in Italy, with more than 500 volunteers in over 18 cities. According to their Wikipedia page, '50,8 percent of them are women, 27 percent are immigrants'.³ Mario Furlan is the initiator and the leader of this group, a charismatic figure who is a journalist, a life coach and also a holder of a black-belt in karate. The slogan of the group is 'solidarity and security', and indeed their activities are best described as a blend of social interventions and patrolling.

Furlan has been careful to distance his project from any far-right or other political affiliation, and also to explicitly reject racist or xenophobic stances (Fazzo, 1995).⁴ In my interviews with one of its members, the point was also made that the City Angels does not have any religious affiliation: 'we don't have [any] religion, we don't ask the religion, the party, the race, we are all the same, we are independent.'⁵

Furlan's public statements on 'the security problem' have been intransigent. He has stressed that 'politics' should not intervene in this matter (Baldarelli, 2009). In 2010 he even declared that the City Angels have nothing to do with security, since they focus on social activities (Polchi, 2010). This apparent departure from security concerns was made in order to further distance the group from the politicized patrols of the far-right.⁶ According to Furlan, the latter, by centering on security, create enemies that become threats. The City Angels, on the other hand, have a softer approach: '*Mentre una ronda va in cerca di un nemico noi andiamo in cerca di persone da aiutare*' (Baldarelli, 2009).⁷ The *Deutsche Welle* quoted 'the seasoned patroller' Furlan saying: 'I'm afraid new groups won't have our humanitarian spirit. The classic vigilante is a person who goes on the streets to look for an enemy. We go on the streets to look for people to help' (Mitzman, 2009). However, security continued to be an integral part of the practices of City Angels, and its members insisted that solidarity and security were complementary for their actions. Security work has been visible in the way in which this group contributed to the gentrification of Milan's *Centrale* train station.

Luigi Agarossi, also known as Koala, is responsible for the City Angels' Tuesday night patrols in the *Centrale*. I interviewed him in the summer of 2010. Koala's world views were not what I had expected at the time: commonsensical and compassionate, Koala was far from being a cold-blooded man with a desire to restore justice in a lewd city. He seemed quite open minded in many regards, including when talking about the homeless people and

³ See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/City_Angels

⁴ This cautious approach towards being labeled 'far-right' is similar to that embraced by other Italian vigilante groups. See Ivasiuc, 2015: 56.

⁵ Author's interview with Luigi Agarossi ('Koala'), August, 2010, Milan

⁶ In 2008, the Italian government passed the so-called Maroni Law, which legalized the *ronda* – already existing citizens' patrols that aimed to enhance urban security. Several of these groups had far-right ideologies, and their practices included violence against Roma settlements. Furlan's reluctance to admit that the City Angels are equally concerned with security is therefore explained by his unwillingness to be associated with such acts of violence. Moreover, the Maroni Law stated that the *ronda* could not benefit from public funding. Thus, Furlan's group could only receive funding if they distanced their practices from those of the *ronda*, which were seen as practicing security. See Mireanu, 2015: 180 – 7; 219.

⁷ 'While a patrol is in search of an enemy, we are in search of people to help.'

undocumented immigrants at the train station. However, his answers shed an interesting light on the ways in which vigilante patrols fit into the security – gentrification nexus in Milan.

Koala insisted on the motto of the City Angels: ‘solidarity and security’. According to him, this combination is essential for the identity of the group, and it also defines its practices. Rather than doing either ‘security’ or ‘solidarity’, the group combines them, and in his words, ‘this is what makes us unique’. What he meant by this is that the two aspects are separate but complementary. However, I argue that the group’s social work – the ‘solidarity’ aspect – is in fact a tool for their security practices.

The security practices of the City Angels

By adopting the logic of security in their practices, the group inevitably attaches itself to a set of public discourses and positions that other actors articulate. One cannot separate the City Angels and their security practices from the dominant paradigm of increasing urban security through dealing with the issue of poverty and deviance. The City Angels explicitly and intentionally practice security. They do not use weapons. Yet they are able to perform a specific form of security that is both subtle and effective.

I argue that there are three ways in which they practice security. First, each prospective member has to undergo a period of three months training. This is what Furlan called ‘a very rigorous selection’.⁸ Crucially, it includes a crash course in martial arts, so that the future Angels would be able to defend themselves. The purpose of the training is to be ready to face violent situations: ‘We are trained to become City Angels; there is a course lasting three months with theoretical subjects; then you learn self-defense techniques. We are thus able to intervene if there are two people fighting, without calling the police – unless there are guns, then we stay away. Or if there is a woman we are able to protect her. We are able to give security, people feel comfortable with us’.⁹ When I pressed him about the self-defense trainings, Koala admitted that ‘it is *Krav-maga* – without weapons, just brains and hearts’. Therefore, the martial arts training develops a readiness for action that goes beyond merely reporting incidents to the police. The *Krav-maga* style is a street-fighting technique used by the Israeli army and bodyguards throughout the world, and which can be particularly rough and violent.¹⁰ The group seemed to be concerned about actively preventing what they saw as acts of crime, by engaging in violent and risky situations – despite their commitment to non-violent methods.¹¹

Second, the group wears uniforms. In Koala’s words, ‘We have the blue beret like the UN, it means peace, we are peaceful and we bring peace. Then the red color of the shirt means emergency, we are able and ready to help if there are some aggressions.’ The uniforms

⁸ Author’s interview with Mario Furlan, December 2010, Milan.

⁹ *Idem*.

¹⁰ In my research I have found that Hungarian vigilantes use the same combat style. See Mireanu, 2015: 114.

¹¹ Author: ‘But also if the people do some scandal...’ Koala: ‘then we intervene, yes.’ (Author’s interview with Luigi Agarossi (‘Koala’), August, 2010, Milan)

are the group's most contested feature. Its members attach great symbolic and practical significance to it, and it has become the brand of the group: 'when you wear a uniform then you are somebody, then you have to let people know what you wanna do. [...]. Normally they are related to ideology, parties, you know. You are a group of extreme left or extreme, I mean, right party, doing something wrong'.¹²

Third, the effectiveness of the uniform is given by what the City Angels call 'visual deterrence' (*deterrenza visiva*) (Furlan, 2017). Visual deterrence works through the symbolic power that the uniform has, and it aids the City Angels in their security work. Ivasiuc (2015: 57) similarly argues that the visual display of uniforms and logos by vigilante groups in Rome is 'part of the performance of security'. As Koala explained, 'Our main activity is what we call 'visual deterrence' – when they see us they refrain from doing something wrong, they trust us'.¹³

The idea that the uniform is able to facilitate intervention, and also offer some sort of legitimacy for those who might contest their authority¹⁴, brings the City Angels closer to vigilantism than its members might admit. Despite the fact that they are unarmed, the symbolic effect of 'deterrence' that they count on from their uniforms means that they hope to elicit certain reactions, such as fear of authority and constraint. The importance that the group attaches to the uniform is thus not only a matter of branding. It points to their concern that they be taken seriously as a group that can secure urban spaces.

2. The City Angels as a moderate vigilante group

Vigilantism is an activity performed by social groups that claim to enhance the security of their communities. It is a reaction to perceived social deviance. This perception is fueled by the lack of reaction from institutions of the state that are supposed to legitimately curb crime, such as the police, the judiciary system, border guards and so on. Vigilante groups operate on behalf of privileged classes, against groups they perceive as socially deviant (Oomen, 2004: 161). Vigilantes often perform 'street cleanings', targeting homeless people, sex workers, pan handlers and so on (Scheper-Hughes, 2006: 157). Thus, they attempt to enforce a strict extrajudicial code of social morality.

In the absence of social support from at least some segments of the population vigilantism would not be possible. The importance of this support and the participation of publics in decisions and practices of security has been increasing with the expansion of neoliberal modes of governance, which emphasize societal self-management and community empowerment. Security is one of the commodities that social groups increasingly have to provide for themselves, as the state loosens its grip on services, and privatizes many of its functions (Eick, 2003). In this way, community security groups, in the form of neighborhood

¹² Author's interview with Luigi Agarossi ('Koala'), August, 2010, Milan

¹³ *Idem*.

¹⁴ The relationships between the City Angels and other actors – local authorities, the police and the public – were not always smooth. See Mireanu, 2015: 218 – 223, for a review of these interactions.

watch groups and citizens' patrols have become encouraged as legitimate responses to the rolling back of the state.¹⁵

However, despite the fact that these groups start out and gain legitimacy through a discourse that places them in opposition to the ineffective and/or immoral state, they are nonetheless involved in authoritative performances of security and law enforcement. These performances render the boundary between vigilantes and the state porous and in a constant state of renegotiation (Buur and Jensen, 2004: 144).

Groups performing vigilantism often operate in tandem with the state, as perpetrators of violence that enforce the established order (Rosenbaum and Sederberg, 1974). As Jarman argues, there is no absolute gap between the state and those who challenge its monopoly on violence. They are all 'taking different routes to similar objectives' (Jarman, 2008: 336).

Members of the City Angels have predominantly shied away from referring to the group as a vigilante group. Moreover, Furlan has explicitly stated that his group has nothing to do with the security patrols, the so-called '*ronde*'.¹⁶ When the Maroni law legalized these patrols, Furlan became one of its fiercest critics (Trabucchi, 2008). He repeatedly underlined that the law is an aberration and that it serves no purpose. The people who intend to form groups and patrol the streets in search of drug dealers and immigrants are in his opinion 'fools' ('*balordi*') (Baldarelli, 2009). In 2008 he claimed that the *ronde* are not only useless, but also dangerous (Trabucchi, 2008). In my interview with him, he was thoroughly dismissive of the Maroni law, and declared that the *ronde* were useless and that they did not even exist anymore.¹⁷ In the same interview, Furlan added that Maroni is wrong to posit a security emergency, since the situation has not worsened.

However, I argue that their discourse regarding poverty, their security practices, as well as their relation to state actors actually bring the City Angels closer to vigilantism than they may be willing to admit. This is not in order to impose a predetermined label deriving from my research interests on this group. Certainly, there are considerable discrepancies between the City Angels and violent far-right groups such as the *Lega Nord*. Yet, the City Angels share a number of common characteristics with other vigilante groups. They are a grassroots organization that performs security. They seek to enhance the security of their community through patrols, control, deterrence and surveillance. They embrace a conservative narrative, whereby poverty and homelessness breed crime, violence and disorder. They target homeless people, immigrants, refugees and other marginalized people. They do this in a quasi-military manner, by adopting martial elements such as uniforms, training and patrolling. The social work practices of the City Angels are performed in settings such as the train station, which the group itself considers to be 'dangerous' and in need of securitizing. The group endorses and reinforces the narrative of the Italian state that poverty and social deviance are

¹⁵The boundary between these forms of security and vigilantism is highly ambiguous and could be perhaps established along the lines of the readiness for the use of force, which is, as Johnston (1996: 226) argues, one of the defining features of vigilantism. Nevertheless, what exactly constitutes 'force' is highly contingent on specific situations, and it can be argued that the intimidation effected by civil patrols amounts to a similarly 'forceful' agency as that of armed vigilantes.

¹⁶ This reluctance to be called '*ronde*' is common to vigilante groups in Rome as well (Ivasiuc, 2015: 56).

¹⁷ Interview with Mario Furlan, December 2010.

incompatible with a gentrified city. They also reinforce the neoliberal trope of individual responsibility for poverty and marginalization. In the next section I will show how the securitizing practices of the City Angels as a vigilante group fit in the political landscape of Italy and Milan's security preoccupations.

3. Sicurezza urbana: from military emergency to neighborhood revitalization

Securitization is defined in the literature as a set of practices and processes, discourses and technologies that interact in tandem in order to tackle a socially constructed threat. Scholars of security are divided over who can enact security. For some authors that focus on discourses and speech acts, the agents of securitization are mostly state officials and actors with high levels of securitizing capital, especially since it is the state that has the monopoly over the means of repression (Buzan et. al., 1998). Other scholars that have emphasized the sociological processes through which security practices are enacted point to security professionals, along with an array of daily routines and technologies that create a landscape of (in)security (CASE Collective, 2006: 459).¹⁸ On the other hand, more and more research highlights the role of actors with lower levels of securitizing capital, such as NGO's, the media, vigilantes and even snitches (denouncers), in setting the security agenda (Barthwal-Datta, 2009; Bourbeau, 2014: 192; Mireanu, 2019).

I consider security to be an umbrella term for a set of exclusionary, violent and oppressive practices. These include surveillance, control, dislocations, harassment and assault. Security practices are based on fear of the 'other' and on the firm belief that this 'other' is a threat that needs to be eliminated. In addition to this identity dimension, security also establishes boundaries based on race, class and place of origin. This said I fully recognize the potential of security as a concept to capture emancipatory practices, especially when these are aimed against systems of oppression that induce a constant sense of dread in communities (CASE Collective, 2006: 448; 455).

In 2008, the right-wing Italian government of Silvio Berlusconi made security one of its top national priorities. The key measure that it took was to adopt a so-called 'security package' that outlined the main threats and measures to be taken against them (Merlino, 2009: 5). This security package, initiated by the Interior Minister Roberto Maroni, focused primarily on illegal immigration, petty crimes and civil society protests. Its main concern was cities. The first section of the package, called '*sicurezza urbana*' ('urban security'), consists of three points: new powers to mayors, more cooperation between local police, the *carabinieri* and the army, along with a number of 'instruments for territorial protection' (Ministero dell'Interno, 2009a: 2). The declared aims of the section on urban security are to guarantee more safety for citizens, and to secure '*decoro urbano*', urban property.

¹⁸ For a discussion on these two 'logics' of security, and how they converge on an elitist vision that focuses mostly on actors on the top of the political hierarchy, see Bourbeau, 2014: 189 – 192; Mireanu, 2015: 31 – 42.

These were ‘urgent’ measures which concern public security. The augmentation of local powers took the form of giving mayors new powers in the domain of security.¹⁹ According to the 2008 security package, the mayors were able to promote ‘urgent regulations’ in the field of public and urban security. Thus, Italian cities became the main theatres of insecurity – ‘clandestine’ immigration, nomad camps, homeless people and petty criminals (Merlino, 2009: 6). The Italian government was often complicit in legitimizing xenophobia. Italian politicians tirelessly claimed that crime rates had soared out of control because of illegal immigration, and most of all because of the influx of ‘tens of thousands’ Roma people from Eastern Europe, who were ‘easily travelling to Italy and committing crimes’ (Merlino, 2009: 22). There were several instances of racist remarks coming from members of the government. In 2009, Roberto Calderoli, at the time the Minister for Legislative Simplification, sparked outrage as he commented on a row of recent rape cases, which were allegedly performed by ‘Gypsies from Romania’: ‘In some cases, I don’t believe that rehabilitation is possible. I think that chemical castration may be insufficient and that surgical castration is the only option left. Society has to protect itself’ (BBC News, 2009).

This xenophobia was not merely an issue of clashing cultures. It was never just about a fear of invasion by Easterners; it also had a pronounced class character. Roma immigrants living in camps were securitized and criminalized not only for being foreign but also for being poor. Securitization works at the intersection of race and class.

The problem of ‘urban insecurity’ laid out in the Maroni legal package contained provisions against ‘diffuse criminality’, meaning crimes committed by homeless people, by people under drug influence, petty crimes and pick pocketing. Moreover, in 2008 the government proclaimed a decree issuing a state of emergency in three regions, including Milan’s Lombardia (Merlino, 2009: 10). The decree stated that the emergency came from ‘nomad camps’ peopled by Roma and installed in cities. Due to their ‘extreme precarity’, these people caused ‘great alarm’ in terms of public order and security.²⁰ Here, poverty is a danger, an insecurity that demands emergency measures.

These measures included the deployment of the military in urban areas (Merlino, 2009: 7). Since 2008 the Italian state has continuously expanded the deployment of soldiers in cities. In 2011 there were already 600 soldiers deployed in Milan, in order to protect the train stations and other dangerous areas. The former defense minister, Ignazio La Russa, had been a fervent advocate of militarizing Italian cities in order to increase public security. In his view, street crime is the ‘weak spot’ of Italian big cities (Maccanico, 2012: 11). The army has been used extensively in Milan for patrolling and surveying risky areas..

With the change of local government in 2011, when left-wing Giuliano Pisapia was elected mayor, such measures were deemed too drastic. The new administration had a more nuanced view on urban security: ‘Milan is not Beirut, and it does not need [members of the]

¹⁹ For the ‘conflict of powers between the state and municipalities’ in terms of urban security, see a discussion in Recasens et. al., 2013: 371.

²⁰ The text of the decree, in Italian, can be found here: <http://www.regioni.it/news/2008/05/27/decreto-21-maggio-2008-dichiarazione-dello-stato-di-emergenza-in-relazione-agli-insediamenti-di-comunita-nomadi-nel-territorio-delle-regioni-campania-lazio-e-lombardia-gu-n-122-del-26-5-2008-14395/>

military in the streets. You obtain security in the city through prevention, by revitalizing its neighborhoods, not through repression.²¹ The implications of this for the discourse on urban security are twofold. On the one hand, the local government shifts the focus from brute force and emergency measures to social work and assistance, as illustrated in the activities of the City Angels. On the other hand, ‘revitalizing its neighborhoods’ is a direct reference to the need to gentrify the city’s insecure areas, such as the main train station. Before I show how the Milano Centrale was discursively constructed as an (in)secure space, I will outline some general aspects of gentrification in Milan.

4. Gentrification in Milan

Gentrification and security go hand in hand: the drive for uplifting and modernizing the city leads not only to the marginalization and exclusion of low-income groups, but also to their relegation to the category of threats. Securitization is performed through increased surveillance, policing and even through forms of architecture that are meant to deter certain categories of people from entering exclusive areas of the built environment (Davis, 1990).

Cities are not only arenas of financial and trade flows, but also ‘central agents in the many forms of violence brought about by capitalist imperialism’ (Graham, 2010: 11). Urban space becomes securitized as an effect of its vulnerability and need of special protection; on the other hand, security itself becomes urbanized, insofar as the agenda of possible threats and their solutions is increasingly connected to urban spaces (Coward, 2009).

Gentrification in Milan started in the 1980s, with the ‘discovery’ of the Ticinese district by groups of artists and left-wing activists (Smagacz, 2008: 119). As abandoned buildings were being re-occupied and renovated, cultural activities began to flourish around them. Soon, pubs, restaurants, art galleries and libraries appeared, attracting crowds of young people that had little in common with the original local residents of these districts. Thus, real estate companies snatched the opportunity, and started acquiring cheap property that could be resold for higher prices. The gentrification of Milan progressed with the expansion of middle class and business people into former working class districts (Smagacz, 2008: 104). The rents exploded, and the local residents were slowly forced out or replaced by those with higher social status.

By the end of the 2000s, the target areas for gentrification – now dubbed ‘urban development’ – were Milan’s large defunct industrial sites. Under the pretext of creating more ‘green areas’ and bicycle-friendly spaces, companies like Hines Italia planned over ‘150 urban redevelopment projects either at the design stage or in construction’, with estimated budgets of ‘€15 billion to €20 billion, or \$20.2 billion to \$27 billion’ (Galbraith, 2007). These projects have ‘turned Milan into the largest construction site in Europe’, but have also provided ‘above all, an opportunity for investors’ (Galbraith, 2007). Of course, these industrial areas were not empty, but were often hosting homeless people and social centers, which were soon evicted.

²¹ Mirko Mazzali, head of the Milan city council’s security commission, quoted in Maccanico, 2012: 10

The main driver of gentrification in Milan during the early 2010's was the World Exhibition of 2015. It gravitated around a green theme and had a truly ironic name: 'Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life'. The exhibition occupied 110 hectares of Milan's urban space (out of which 20000 square meters were for 'service and security areas') and aimed at the 'recreation in Milan of a hitherto unseen landscape of monumental lightness and natural beauty' (TEG Tema, 2012: 21).

The 'Expo' came about in a climate of exceptionality. Its main government-nominated coordinator was the incumbent (at the time of writing) mayor of Milan, Giuseppe Sala, who managed to bypass a number of existing environmental and labor laws. In 2016 he came under investigation for corruption regarding the 'Expo' (Danna, 2017: 907 – 8). The World Exhibition in Milan was a mega-event that reproduced the 'capitalist geoculture' of plundering public resources by private actors (Danna, 2017: 916). Several groups and actors bounded together in a so-called 'No-expo network' in order to resist the disastrous effects of this mega-event on the local population. The gentrification of Milan's neighborhoods was one of the main concerns; the No-expo movement pointed out the reshaping of Milan as a space of cultural production and consumption, where leisure and tourism become priorities for the local administration (Bertuzzi, 2017: 118 – 9).

In the following section, I will highlight one aspect of gentrification: the aesthetic of cleanliness and order. The derelict buildings of the 'bad' neighborhoods and slums are hotbeds of dirt, diseases and decadence. Crime and the decline of the built environment go hand in hand, in an apocalyptic imaginary of underground madness (Macek, 2006). This converges in the images of the homeless, the drug-addict and the 'immigrant'. The homeless evoke a mixture of fear, loathing and pity. They are associated with laziness, alcoholism, petty theft and dumpster scavenging. In Milan the area around the main train station was a space that evoked such images. My respondent from the City Angels repeatedly referred to the homeless people living around the train station as being at the same time dangerous, and in need of their help. This help entailed, in the long run, their exclusion from the securitized space of the *Centrale*.

5. The Milano Centrale: from 'terra di nessuno' to 'space reclaimed'

In this section I will briefly analyze the mainstream discourse that articulated the Milano Centrale as an insecure urban landscape between 2008 and 2014. Despite bearing a name that denotes centrality, this train station was perceived as a marginal space that had to be rescued and re-positioned within the city through active policies and practices. The media's preferred metaphor for this train station used to be '*terra di nessuno*' – 'no man's land' (De Riccardis, 2009; Galli, 2012).²² The train station was a space of abandonment and deviance.

²² Ana Ivasiuc found the exact same trope in the discourse surrounding the urban decay in areas of Rome where vigilante groups operate (Ivasiuc, 2015: 61).

In 2009, *La Repubblica* called it ‘*Il supermarket della droga*’ (De Riccardis, 2009)²³, and *Loreto Today* referred to the *Centrale* as ‘*il simbolo del degrado di Milano*’ (Piglia, 2009).²⁴

The metaphor of ‘*terra di nessuno*’ is a spatial metaphor. It points to the position that the *Centrale* has within the city of Milan: one of marginality, deviance and danger. However, it is also a metaphor that points to a sense of loss and abandonment. The station belongs to ‘nobody’, in that it has been abandoned by the authorities, and it has been lost for the city. This is a representation that borders anarchy and chaos. Since the station is ‘*terra di nessuno*’, it means that nobody is in charge of it, and that nobody intervenes when dangerous situations occur.

This metaphor engenders and legitimates a discursive need for re-appropriation. The local population ‘laments’ the loss of control and demands the restoration of security (Galli, 2012). In 2009, *Loreto Milano* published a statement from a Milanese local, who complained that the central train station is dangerous (Piglia, 2009). In the same year, an increase in police personnel in the station’s area was articulated as a response to demands for security coming from the local residents (Comune di Milano, 2009). The ‘degradation’ of the station is blamed on the Roma people and on alcohol abusers (Arsuffi, 2014). Most importantly, negative representations of the station generate a climate where women, children and families are unsafe. As Ivasiuc (2015: 60) illustrates, urban decay overlaps with insecurity.

Reclaiming and re-appropriating the *Centrale* is thus a matter of increasing security. Gaining back control means first and foremost guaranteeing a safe environment for the locals, against the people belonging to the deviant and degraded categories with which the station is associated. Hence, security becomes the main project, the most important way to transform the *Centrale* from a ‘*terra di nessuno*’ to an area fully integrated in the city of Milan. Security is what makes the station ‘central’ again.

The renewal of the train station started in 2008, and it had from the outset a strong security dimension. Defense minister La Russa himself greeted the first soldiers who arrived in the *Centrale* and its surroundings in August 2008 (Affaritaliani.it, 2008).²⁵ The modernisation of the *Centrale* went hand in hand with an increase in its security capabilities. In 2009, there were seventy CCTV surveillance cameras, twelve ‘SOS columns’, where the police could be called in case of danger, and four cameras in the pedestrian passages of the station. The presence of police forces in the station had also been intensified (Piglia, 2009).

Alongside these security forces and devices, the presence and work of the ‘security volunteers’ (*volontari della sicurezza*) became more visible in 2009. In May that year, the vice mayor Riccardo de Corato announced that the City Angels and other such groups had been involved in almost 1000 interventions in ‘risk areas’, among which a third were in the area around the train station. The work of these volunteers had been praised by de Corato for ‘preventing and countering the situation of decay’ that was present in such ‘risk areas’

²³ ‘the supermarket of drugs’

²⁴ ‘the symbol of Milan’s decay’

²⁵ For an account of the deployment of the army to securitize the streets of Milan, as well as the ensuing political battles that emerged thereafter, see Mireanu, 2015: 176 – 180.

(Comune di Milano, 2009). De Corato also flaunted the palpable results of this increase in security measures, claiming that there were no more cases of pickpocketing (Piglia, 2009).

According to De Corato, these security measures were precisely what the station needed to break out of its stigmatized image. Through surveillance technology, state security, and vigilante security, the station has been reincorporated into the gentrified city and given a new meaning. It has been re-appropriated and restored to the citizens, who can now use it calmly and safely, without fearing the deviant elements that were populating the premises prior to this operation.

During my visits to the train station in 2010 I observed the following security forces: national police, local (municipal) police, the railway police (*Polizia Ferroviaria*), the Gendarmerie, the military police, and vigilante groups – among which were the City Angels. All these agencies had troops stationed inside and all around the premises of *Milano Centrale*. Moreover, all of these agencies had their own uniforms and symbols of authority, and seemed to have well defined areas of authority and expertise. When I asked the members of the City Angels how they are interacting with the other security forces, they assured me that each agency knows its place, and nobody is stepping on anybody's toes.²⁶ These forces are indeed ubiquitous. The railway police patrol the spaces between the train lines and the platforms; the military police and the gendarmerie guard the entrances of the station; the national police patrol the main premises, and the local police alongside the vigilantes have the adjacent areas in the vicinity of the station.

Apart from this, the entire area of the *Centrale* was heavily equipped with surveillance cameras. At the time of my research, there had been 180 devices, and the plan was to increase their number to almost 300. These publicly-funded cameras were said to be in 'synergy with the private ones [that belong to] banks and commercial facilities' (Corriere della Sera, 2010).

Parallel to this, in 2009, the municipality developed a lighting project, whereby the station and its surroundings were equipped with lighting devices. The rationale was that darkness and crime go hand in hand. The local responsible at that time for public works and infrastructure, Bruno Simini, declared that 'light is a precious ally in our fight for security' (Milano Today, 2009). Light contributes to making the *Centrale* and the surrounding areas safer by facilitating surveillance and control. Symbolically, it also extends the reach of the authorities over this former '*terra di nessuno*', because light eliminates the subterranean darkness in which deviance and crime flourish.

Another facet of the renewal through security that the *Centrale* underwent was dealing with the former 'inhabitants' of the station. These are the people that had to be pushed away from this public space in order for it to be reclaimed and rescued: homeless, immigrants, drug users, sex workers and others who could be seen as a nuisance. Those who had criminal offences were arrested or sent to prisons. The municipality also destroyed all the improvised shelters that were built by homeless people and immigrants in front of the station. When I revisited the site in late 2012, the main *piazza* in front of the *Centrale* was a giant construction site, with no trace of its former inhabitants. Earlier that year, the mezzanine of the train

²⁶Author's interview with Mario Furlan, the head of the City Angels, December 2010.

station had been transformed into a shelter for homeless people. This was the result of a collaboration between the police, the local transport company, and several civilian groups, including the City Angels. The local government's coordinator for security and social cohesion at the time was Marco Granelli. In his opinion, the new shelter improved the security of the area, while contributing to solving the problem of homelessness around the station (Fare Milano, 2012).

During my research, the Angels regularly organized a soup-kitchen for the many homeless people who still managed to live around the station. Koala devoted a considerable amount of time to discussing the issue of homeless people during the interview that we had. He confessed that they can be dangerous: 'Sometimes even the police don't intervene because it's too dangerous, they can have a knife, or break a bottle of beer. Or they use the blade, in the mouth, it's incredible. Not all of them are friends. Sometimes you can't [anticipate] the reaction...why, because they belong to a different culture. There are homeless people that don't want to live off the streets, they refuse any kind of rules, they refuse the shelters, because they prefer...they are happy...you can't do anything, you try to convince, but they don't want to. Almost every year somebody dies in the winter. You feel bad. Many of them, they did have a choice. Some are drug or alcohol addicts. The worst drug is alcohol.' 'Now in the *Centrale* you see a lot of police, they try to clear the environment from homeless people. [...] In the past here in *Centrale* there were many here, now they moved. It is a bad image'.²⁷

The result of the securitization of the *Centrale* is that the space has been reclaimed: locals and tourists can finally transit and live safely in this area, protected from anybody who might ruin the orderly image of the site, or who might cause nuisance or fear. The space of the station has been rescued and is no longer marginal and abandoned. In 2014, the *Milano Centrale* entered a phase of restoration. Through a public-private partnership, the building and the adjacent area were included in a 50 million euro gentrification project (D'Amico, 2014).

6. Practicing security: the City Angels in the Milano Centrale

The presence of security volunteers who patrol the area, such as the City Angels, is a crucial element in the renewal of the *Milano Centrale*. As I mentioned, this renewal went hand in hand with increased citizens' patrols meant to generate a sense of safety and deter crime in the area. The City Angels are the biggest and most important group of volunteers in the *Centrale*. They have been regarded as the main group of citizens who contributed to the renewed securitization of the *Centrale*. They have been a crucial element of the reappropriation of the station for the city and the 'locals'. The Angels' activities in the train station area had been praised as early as 1995 (Fazzo, 1995). The group won numerous awards from the municipality of Milan for their work in and around the train station.

²⁷ Author's interview with Luigi Agarossi ('Koala'), August, 2010, Milan

For the group, social work is one of the tools for practicing security. On the one hand, the City Angels perform social work such as feeding the homeless and offering the people around the train station assistance; on the other hand, they do this with a clear goal of increasing the security of the train station's perimeter. For example, as early as in 1995, Furlan articulated a link between poverty and violence, claiming that there is a need for a firm approach to his social work. Social work must be combined with 'a determined attitude in the face of criminality' because of cases in which the inhabitants of the train station turned violent or aggressive. (Fazzo, 1995)

In 2009, Furlan described the 'two types of crime' that his group is fighting against, in the area of the *Centrale*. On the one hand, there are the 'cold' crimes such as pickpocketing and petty theft, and on the other hand, there are 'hot' crimes that relate to damage and harassment. Furlan claimed that the latter crimes are mostly performed by 'drunk homeless people' (Piglia, 2009). The City Angels patrol the *Milano Centrale* regularly, with an eye out for anything and anyone that might disturb the peace and security of the train station and its surroundings.²⁸ Their readiness to intervene in conflict situations is doubled by their training in martial arts and self defense, which are compulsory skills for all members (Zeni, 2016).

The City Angels are intimately connected to the *Milano Centrale*. The group started its existence here, and for many years it had been their nucleus. Their interest in the *Centrale* is closely associated with the urgency brought by the trope of '*terra di nessuno*'. The City Angels have often this discourse, and reinforced the idea that the station is a place that needed to be surveyed, made secure and saved for the citizens from the plethora of 'deviant' individuals residing in the area. In 1997 Furlan painted a grim image of the train station, similar to the one of decadence depicted by other journalists.²⁹ Twelve years later, he declared that despite the improvements in security standards, the *Centrale* area remained a hotspot of crime (Piglia, 2009). The City Angels were as convinced as the authorities that the area was problematic and in continuous need of intervention.

Yet such interventions could not enforce the further militarization of the *Centrale* as advocated by La Russa. For the sake of maintaining a civilized image, the train station had to be securitized through gentrification. In this way, the Angels' social work with the homeless and the immigrants fit in perfectly with the local administration's plans to 'revitalize' the area through a lighter approach, one that would also serve the interests of businesses, the tourism industry, and real estate developers.

²⁸ During my initial interview with Luigi Agarossi, I was invited to join him on one of these night patrols around the train station. Unfortunately for the ethnographical depth of this research, I declined, due to my ethical concerns regarding the participation in what I deemed to be an oppressive security practice.

²⁹ 'The contact is one of the most difficult moments. We must put on latex gloves and be careful with the syringes. This is our nightmare: AIDS is galloping here. But you have to expect even violent reactions. They can be armed with a knife or razor blade. The Nigerians hide them in the mouth, under the tongue. They pull it off in an instant, and they cut your face in two.' Mario Furlan quoted in Anfossi, 1998.

7. The relationship between vigilantism and gentrification

Vigilantism and its security practices pave the way and ensure the right circumstances for urban revitalization processes in areas initially deemed dangerous and abandoned. The Italian government did not promote the security package of 2008 explicitly for gentrification. However, the problems that it raised and the elements that it securitized were predominantly issues of urban (in)security. The nomad camps that were the main problem of the proclaimed state of emergency were seen as dangerous spots in Italian cities. In Milan, especially in the wake of the change in perspective in 2011 from a martial approach to a softer one focused on ‘social work’, gentrification became the way to tackle these dangerous spots. The local authorities evicted the camps, and in ‘unsafe’ areas such as the *Centrale* train station initiated costly processes of urban redevelopment. The culprits were those people whose lack of privilege situated them at the intersection of race and class exclusions. These people were seen as dangerous, and at the same time as being in need of help. Thus the solution was both security and solidarity – the two concepts that guide the City Angels.

The City Angels contributed to the feeling of security around the train station. The practices of the group reversed the image of the station as being ‘*terra di nessuno*’. In part due to its patrolling, the discourse around the *Centrale* shifted to one of regaining control and authority over urban space.³⁰ Vigilantes operate in tandem with the state by creating an appearance of security in the area that they are patrolling. Within this stabilized and domesticated landscape, the state and the real estate developers can operate unhindered. The increased security raises the value of the cityscape. It eliminates or neutralizes the social categories that are seen as hindrances to gentrification. As Ivasiuc (2015) shows, dirt and decay are seen as threats to the security of the urban landscape. The City Angels perform social work not only in tandem with security, but as a tool for security. Social work is a way of ‘cleaning’ the environment around the train station, so that it becomes less dangerous and more inviting to capital, whether this comes from tourists or real estate developers.

Conclusion

In contemporary Europe, vigilante groups are almost unanimously associated with far-right politics. Such groups use the trope of security to gain political and symbolic capital from the population, by peddling latent racism, xenophobia and class hatred. Vigilantes claim to provide ‘security’ to communities that are allegedly ‘under assault’ by Roma people, homeless and refugees. As such, vigilantes engage in various violent practices, which range from mere patrols and checks, as done by Milan’s City Angels, to outright beatings and killings. Such groups also play a key role in the rampant gentrification that is underway in most European cities. They act in tandem with the state’s repressive apparatuses and with private real-estate entrepreneurs in order to clear and pacify urban areas and pave the way for development.

³⁰ I am not suggesting that the City Angels were the main actors behind this shift of discourse and the gentrification of the train station.

Due to this dynamic, vigilante groups are an obstacle to housing struggles. As allies of gentrification, these groups are the political opponents of activists that fight against evictions and segregation. Moreover, as allies of the police, vigilante groups oppose activists fighting against the criminalization of the poor and against racist policing. The aim of this paper is to broaden the understanding of contemporary practices of urban repression. Repression does not come merely from the state or from private capital. It can also come from ‘concerned citizens’ who decide to ‘take matters in their own hands’. Because vigilantes often operate in the midst of our communities, the practices of vigilante groups require specific strategies for resistance.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my former doctoral supervisor Xymena Kurowska, who has been constantly providing me with inestimable academic support, and to Maria Gkresta who helped me with translations from Italian. Special thanks to Erin McElroy, to the three anonymous reviewers and to all the other comrades from the Radical Housing Journal. This paper is dedicated to Chiara Cavallazzi, my couchsurfing host in Milan from 2010.

References

- Affaritaliani.it (2008) ‘Arrivano i soldati. Nove postazioni fisse e tre pattuglie a piedi già in posizione’, August 4, 2008, <http://www.affaritaliani.it/milano/milanopattuglieMI050808.html>
- Anfossi, Francesco (1998) ‘Una notte con i volontari. Gli angeli sopra Milano’, *Famiglia Cristiana*, LXVII (52), 1998, <http://www.stpauls.it/fc97/5297fc/5297fc35.htm>
- Angeli, Federica (2007) ‘Roma, cittadini-giustizieri assaltano il campo rom’, *La Repubblica*, 21 September 2007, <https://roma.repubblica.it/dettaglio/roma-cittadini-giustizieri-assaltano-il-campo-rom/1370805>
- Arsuffi, Roberto (2014) ‘Zona Stazione Centrale - La porta d'ingresso a Milano’, *Urbanfile Milano*, February 11, 2014, <https://urbanfilemilano.blogspot.com/2014/02/zona-stazione-centrale-la-porta.html>
- Baldarelli, Lorenzo (2009) ‘Una ronda non fa sicurezza’, *poliziaedemocrazia.it*, June – July 2009, http://www.poliziaedemocrazia.it/live/index.php?domain=archivio&action=articolo&id_Articolo=2059
- Balzacq, Thierry (2011) ‘A Theory of Securitisation’, in T. Balzacq (ed.) *Securitization Theory: How Security Problems Emerge and Dissolve*, Abingdon: Routledge
- Barthwal-Datta, Monika. (2009) “Securitising Threats without the State: A Case Study of Misgovernance as a Security Threat in Bangladesh.” *Review of International Studies*, 35, (2): 277–300.
- BBC News (2009) ‘Rome to dismantle illegal camps’, BBC News, 16 February 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7893536.stm>
- Becker, A., and M. Müller (2013) ‘The Securitization of Urban Space and the “Rescue” of Downtown Mexico City’, *Latin American Perspectives*, 40 (2): 77–94.
- Bertuzzi, Niccolò (2017) ‘Urban Regimes and the Right to the City: An Analysis of the No Expo Network and its Protest Frames’, *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais*, 113: 107 – 128
- Bourbeau, Philippe (2014) ‘Moving Forward Together: Logics of the Securitisation Process’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 43(1): 187–206

- Bueger, Christian and Mireanu, Manuel (2014) 'Proximity' In: Aradau, Claudia, Huysmans, Jef, Neal, Andrew and Voelkner, Nadine eds., *Critical Security Methods: New frameworks for analysis*, New International Relations, London: Routledge, pp. 118-141.
- Buur, Lars and Jensen, Steffen, (2004) 'Vigilantism and the Policing of everyday life in South Africa', *African Studies*, 63 (2): 139 – 152
- Buzan, Barry. Waever, Ole. De Wilde, Jaap. (1998) '*Security: A New Framework for Analysis*.' Boulder, Colo: L. Rienner, 1998.
- C. a. s. e. Collective, (2006) "Critical Approaches to Security in Europe: A Networked Manifesto." *Security Dialogue* 37 (4): 443–87.
- Comune di Milano (2009) 'Via Mecenate, operazione sicurezza', May 21, 2009, https://web.comune.milano.it/wps/portal/news/archivio_2007-2011/attuazione_programma_sicurezza/SICUREZZA_via+mecenate
- Corriere della Sera (2007) 'Ronde anti-rom dopo le sevizie', *Corriere della Sera*, 1 November 2007, https://www.corriere.it/cronache/07_novembre_01/ronde_donna_seviziata.shtml
- Corriere della Sera (2010) 'Sicurezza, 180 telecamere in Centrale', *Corriere della Sera*, October 11, 2010, https://milano.corriere.it/milano/notizie/cronaca/10_ottobre_11/sicurezza-stazione-centrale-maroni-video-sorveglianza-telecamere-1703927739630.shtml
- Coward, Martin (2009) 'Network-Centric Violence, Critical Infrastructure and the Urbanization of Security', *Security Dialogue*, 40 (4-5): 399 – 418, 2009.
- Cox, Wendell (2011) 'The Evolving Urban Form: Milan', *New Geography*, 14 September 2011
- Cronaca Milano (2012a) 'Degrado zona Stazione Centrale Milano, piazza 4 Novembre, via Vitruvio e metropolitana, ennesima segnalazione di un lettore esasperato', cronacamilano.it, 4 September 2012, <http://tiny.cc/4uhh8y>
- Cronaca Milano (2012b) 'Rom e ubriachi Milano Stazione Centrale e ponte Rogoredo, ennesima protesta di una milanese: "Il biglietto da visita per i turisti sarebbero molestie, furti, puzza e ubriachi?"', <http://tiny.cc/brhh8y>
- D'Amico, Paola (2014) 'La nuova Centrale con moda e bistrot Restauri da 50 milioni di euro', *Corriere della sera*, November 29, 2014, https://milano.corriere.it/notizie/cronaca/14_novembre_29/nuova-centrale-moda-bistrot-restauri-50-milioni-euro-6373cf64-77a1-11e4-8006-31d326664f16.shtml?refresh_ce-cp
- Danna, Daniela (2017) 'Expo 2015 in Milan: the power of the Machine', *Journal of Political Ecology*, 24: 901 – 920
- Davis, Mike (1990) '*City of Quartz*', Verso, 1990
- De Riccardis, Sandro (2009) 'Stazione Centrale, terra di nessuno gli spacciatori assediano la piazza', *La Repubblica Milano*, July 3, 2009, <https://milano.repubblica.it/dettaglio/stazione-centrale-terra-di-nessuno-gli-spacciatori-assediano-la-piazza/1666599>
- Der Spiegel (2008) 'Roma Raids: Italy Cracks Down on Illegal Immigrants', *der Spiegel*, 16 May 2008, <https://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/roma-raids-italy-cracks-down-on-illegal-immigrants-a-553753.html>
- Di Feo, Gianluca (2014) 'Esercito e rifiuti, uno spreco da evitare', *la Repubblica*, 15 January 2014, <http://tiny.cc/0hog8y>
- Di Sabato, Italo (2009) 'Italy: The never ending emergency', *Statewatch Bulletin*, 19 (1), 2009
- Eick, Volker (2003) 'New Strategies of Policing The Poor: Berlin's Neoliberal Security System', *Policing and Society: An International Journal of Research and Policy*, 13(4): 365-379
- Fare Milano (2012) 'Senza Tetto Alla Stazione Centrale: Piano Anti Freddo A Milano', faremilano.wordpress.com, 30 January 2012, <https://faremilano.wordpress.com/2012/01/30/senza-tetto-alla-stazione-centrale-piano-anti-freddo-a-milano/>
- Fazzo, Lucca (1995) 'Milano, Notte Di Ronda Con i Guardian Angels', *La Repubblica*, 6 February 1995, <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/1995/02/06/milano-notte-di-ronda-con-guardian-angels.html>

- Furlan, Mario (2017) 'Interview with Carlo Infante', in "Il 'sistema' non è più in grado di provvedere a sé stesso, sta ai cittadini rimboccarsi le maniche e contribuire affinché la realtà cambi". Cento senz'altro a Lecce città', l'allarme dei City Angels: "La metà sono Italiani. Insufficienti, o del tutto mancanti, le strutture adeguate", *Lecce Cronaca*, 1 February 2017, <http://tiny.cc/j26h8y>
- Galbraith, Robert (2007) 'An urban renaissance is transforming Milan', *The New York Times*, July 10 2007, https://www.nytimes.com/2007/07/10/travel/10iht-remilan.1.6584771.html?_r=0
- Galli, Andrea (2012) 'Il sangue, le risse e i disperati nella terra di nessuno a Milano', *Corriere della Sera*, July 23, 2012, https://milano.corriere.it/milano/notizie/cronaca/12_giugno_23/sangue-risse-disperati-nella-terra-di-nessuno-andrea-galli-201727487884.shtml
- Graham, Stephen (2010) *Cities under siege: the new military urbanism*, London; New York: Verso.
- Human Rights Watch (2011a) 'Italy: Act Swiftly to End Racist Violence', *Human Rights Watch*, 21 March 2011, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2011/03/21/italy-act-swiftly-end-racist-violence>
- Human Rights Watch (2011b) 'Everyday Intolerance. Racist and Xenophobic Violence in Italy', *Human Rights Watch*, 2011, <https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/italy0311WebRevised.pdf>
- Ivasiuc, Ana (2015) 'Watching over the Neighbourhood: Vigilante Discourses and Practices in the Suburbs of Rome', *Etnofoor*, 27 (2): 53 – 72
- Jarman Neil, (2006) 'Peacebuilding and Policing – The Role of Community Based Initiatives', *Shared Space: a research journal on peace, conflict and community relations in Northern Ireland*, 2006
- Johnston, Les. (1996) "What Is Vigilantism?" *British Journal of Criminology* 36 (2): 220–36.
- Kington, Tom (2011) 'Silvio Berlusconi's mayor faces a shock defeat as Milan tilts to the left', *The Guardian*, 28 May 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/may/28/milan-mayor-moratti-pisapia-berlusconi>
- Künkel, Jenny (2016) 'Gentrification and the flexibilisation of spatial control: Policing sex work in Germany', *Urban Studies*, special issue, 2016.
- L'Unita (2009) 'La Legge Della Paura', L'Unita, 3 July 2009, https://archivio.unita.news/assets/derived/2009/07/03/issue_full.pdf
- Legame, Giacomo (2007) 'L'iniziativa è stata annunciata dal "Circolo delle Libertà-Roma Liberale" di via Nizza che da ieri ha aperto le iscrizioni alle "ronde delle libertà". Torcia e fotocamera, ecco la ronda antirom. Da ieri le prime squadre di volontari nelle strade buie', *il Giornale*, 2 November 2007, <http://tiny.cc/nasg8y>
- Lipsitz, George. 2016. 'Policing Place and Taxing Time on Skid Row.' In *Policing the Planet*, ed. Jordan T. Camp and Christina Heatherton. 123 – 140. Verso, London.
- Maccanico, Yasha (2008) 'Italy: Who should be scared of whom?', *Statewatch Bulletin*, 18 (3), 2008
- Maccanico, Yasha (2012) 'Italy: "Open-ended emergencies" three years on', *Statewatch Bulletin*, 22 (4), 2012
- Macek, Steve (2006) *Urban Nightmares: The Media, The Right, and the Moral Panic Over the City*, University of Minnesota Press, 2006
- Maharawal, Manissa M (2017) 'Black Lives Matter, gentrification and the security state in the San Francisco Bay Area', *Anthropological Theory*, 17(3): 338–364
- Merlino, Massimo (2009) 'The Italian (In)Security Package: Security vs. Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights in the EU', *Challenge. Liberty and Security*. Available at <http://www.libertysecurity.org/article2432.html>
- Milano Today (2009) 'Stazione Centrale, pronta la nuova illuminazione', *Milano Today*, November 11, 2009, <http://loreto.milanotoday.it/stazione-centrale/nuova-illuminazione-stazione-centrale.html>
- Ministero dell'Interno (2009a) 'Norme del Pacchetto Sicurezza e Collegati: sintesi per materia', https://www.meltingpot.org/IMG/pdf/0865_Norme_pacchetto_sicurezza_e_collegati.pdf

- Ministero dell'Interno (2009b) 'Legge 15 luglio 2009, n.94. Disposizioni in materia di sicurezza pubblica', *Gazzetta Ufficiale*, Serie Generale, 170, 24 July 2009, http://www1.interno.gov.it/mininterno/site/it/sezioni/servizi/old_servizi/legislazione/sicurezza/0979_2009_07_27_legge_sicurezza.html
- Mireanu, Manuel (2015) '*Vigilantism and security: State, violence and politics in Italy and Hungary*', Doctoral Thesis, Central European University, Budapest, www.etd.ceu.hu/2015/mireanu_manuel.pdf
- Mireanu, Manuel (2018) 'Security at the Nexus of Space and Class: Roma and Gentrification in Cluj, Romania', in *The Securitization of the Roma in Europe*, ed. Huub van Baar, Ana Ivasiuc and Regina Kreide. 115 – 136. Palgrave
- Mireanu, Manuel (2019) 'Denunciations as Civic Acts: The Romanian Middle Class and its Battles for Justice', *Sociolink*, 16 January, 2019, <http://www.sociolink.ro/denunciations-as-civic-acts-the-romanian-middle-class-and-its-battles-for-justice/>
- Mitzman, Dany (2009) 'Italy divided on citizen squads patrolling the streets', *Deutsche Welle*, 8 July 2009, <https://p.dw.com/p/Ijhi>
- Newman, Andrew (2013) 'Gatekeepers of the Urban Commons? Vigilant Citizenship and Neoliberal Space in Multiethnic Paris', *Antipode*, 45 (4): 947 – 964
- Oomen Barbara, (2004) 'Vigilantism or Alternative citizenship? The Rise of Mapogo a Mathamaga', *African Studies*, 2004, 63 (2)
- Piglia, Sarah (2009) 'La questione sicurezza in Stazione Centrale. Stazione Centrale, da agosto 2008 pattugliata 24 ore su 24 da militari e polizia', *Milano Today*, 27 November 2009, <http://loreto.milanotoday.it/stazione-centrale/sicurezza-in-stazione-centrale.html>
- Pisa, Nick (2009) 'Italy revives Mussolini's 'Blackshirt' vigilantes as fears of Fascism sparks investigation', *Mail Online*, 15 June 2009, <http://tiny.cc/qmpg8y>
- Polchi, Vladimiro (2010) 'Il flop delle ronde padane. Dopo un anno ce n'è una sola', *La Repubblica*, 12 September 2010, <http://tiny.cc/fipg8y>
- Pratten, David, and Atreyee Sen, (eds.) (2008) '*Global Vigilantes*', New York: Columbia University Press, 2008
- Recasens Amadeu, Carla Cardoso, Josefina Castro and Gian Guido Nobili (2013) 'Urban security in southern Europe', *European Journal of Criminology*, 10 (3): 368 – 382
- Rosenbaum, H. Jon, and Peter C. Sederberg. (1974) "Vigilantism: An Analysis of Establishment Violence." *Comparative Politics* 6(4)
- Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. (2006) 'Death Squads and Democracy in Northeast Brazil', in J. and J.Comaroff(eds.) *Law and Order in the Postcolony*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 150 – 187
- Smagacz, Marta (2008) '*The revitalization of urban space: social changes in Krakow's Kazimierz and the Ticinese District in Milan*', Pisa: Edizioni Plus, Pisa University Press, 2008.
- Smith, Neil (1996) '*The new urban frontier: gentrification and the revanchist city*', Routledge, 1996
- TEG Tema (2012) 'Expo Milano 2015 Theme Guide', Expo 2015 S.p.A. – Milano, September 2012, www.czexpo.com/2015/files/expo-milano-theme-guide.pdf
- Trabucchi, Marco (2008) 'Per i City Angels: le ronde sono inutili?', *02blog.it*, 23 April 2008, <https://www.02blog.it/post/2735/per-i-city-angels-le-ronde-sono-inutili>
- Udvarhelyi, Éva Tessa (2013) "If we don't push homeless people out, we will end up being pushed out by them": The Criminalization of Homelessness as State Strategy in Hungary', *Antipode*, 46 (3): 816 – 834
- Zeni, Simone (2016) 'Come diventare City Angels. A Milano un corso per volontari', mentelocale.it, January 11, 2016, <https://www.mentelocale.it/milano/articoli/68139-milano-come-diventare-city-angels-milano-corso-volontari.htm>