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### **Governing through security? Institutional discourse, practices, and policies in the metropolitan city of Milan**

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## **Governing through security? Institutional discourse, practices, and policies in the metropolitan city of Milan**

Fabio Quassoli, Monica Colombo, Andrea Molteni

### **Abstract**

*In our paper, we aim at pointing out the way the most relevant institutional actors currently define the security agenda for the Milanese metropolitan area, which kind of goals they try to pursue, upon which instruments and resources they can rely, which division of labour and forms of cooperation they try to putting into practices. We draw from an analyses of both official documents by the main public institutions involved in the governance of security in Milan and semi-structured interviews to all the members of the Comitato provinciale per l'ordine pubblico e la sicurezza – a board that gather the president of the province, the mayor of the province capital (plus mayors of other cities and towns of the province who can be involved on an ad hoc basis), the representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Prefetto), the District Attorney and the chiefs of all the national police forces – as well as to politicians, civil servants and commissioners of the local police of the city of Milan. We illustrate how discourses and practices of in/security have contributed to the construction of the city as place exposed to a multiplicity of risks that local authorities and police forces are expected to manage. Furthermore, we highlight how the diffusion and legitimization of an 'ideology of safety' has turned the demand to live in safe communities into an attempt to legitimize exclusionary practices insofar as discourses on security were strictly interconnected with discourses on cultural identity and, focusing on both the (imagined) community repertoire and the us/them opposition, ended up legitimizing a racialized urban governance of inclusion and exclusion. Finally, we try to show that a recent attempt, by the new centre-left government, to modify such an approach is generating ambiguous and controversial results and is paradoxically promoting an even stronger securitization of urban policies, spaces and life through more democratically oriented governmental practices.*

## Introduction

In this paper we intend to illustrate the role that security issues have played in the last two decades with respect to the overall governance of the city of Milan. We want to show how the very possibility of imagining the governance of Milan depends, among other things, on a shared definition of what security is or should be. In addition, we will focus on how the main institutional actors currently shape the security agenda of Milan, looking at the type of goals they pursue and the normative provisions and resources they have, along with the division of labour and the forms of cooperation they seek to implement. Our study is based on original research conducted between 2013 and 2015, in which we examined the most relevant institutional documents produced on this issue by the main public actors, and carried out semi-structured interviews (between November 2014 and May 2015) both with members of the Provincial Committee for Public Order and Security - which includes the president of the province, the mayor of the provincial capital (and other mayors convened *ad hoc*), the Chief of Police and the local heads of all police forces (*Polizia*, *Carabinieri* and *Guardia di Finanza*) - and with a number of officials and executives from Milan's local police force. Special attention was paid to three main thematic areas: a) definitions of urban security; b) the main actors and their functions, competences and responsibilities; c) continuity and changes in the governance of urban security in the Milanese context.

### I. Securitization of urban governance

Security has always been a major concern of governments and citizens in Western societies. From its origin, the modern state has prioritised the protection of citizen's safety and their rights to individual property. The prioritisation of safety and private property are seen as a set of "goods" which Castel (2003) defines as "civil security". During the 20th Century, this primary form of protection was progressively

supplemented by a broader protective function, linked to the effective exercise of social rights through universal access to a set of goods and services essential for full participation in social life. Castel argues that it is precisely in this combination of civil security and social security that we saw the establishment of the pact between governors and citizens that characterised Western liberal-democracies in their so-called *trente glorieuses*.

This order progressively deteriorated during the 1980s – although in Italy only starting in the 1990s - to the extent that, even in those states that are still the safest on the planet (Garland 2001),<sup>1</sup> the concern for the “civil” dimension of security gradually started to impose itself as a salient theme in public debate, alongside the growing erosion of social rights. In Italy in the nineties there was much social alarm around security issues and there was an increase in forms of citizen protest - sometimes spontaneous, much more often organized (Della Porta 2004) - in response to the “decay of neighborhoods”, the “spread of petty crime” and the presence of social groups (the homeless, irregular migrants, drug addicts, prostitutes, etc.) who were perceived to be dangerous (Maneri 2001). For at least two decades, the defense of neighbourhood decorum and the protection of the security of urban spaces have been the main reasons used to call for, and justify, the greater presence of police forces, the installation of devices to control public space (video surveillance), and the implementation of forms of situational prevention. All this is in the name of a local version of the North American brand of a ‘zero tolerance policy’ (De Giorgi 2000).

Furthermore, the public debate on security was deeply shaped by the internal logic of the political framework and the relationship with the mass media, in a way largely independent of the emergence of

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<sup>1</sup> This process started well before concerns about the threats coming from international terrorist networks monopolised the attention of public opinion and the security apparatus.

“objective” risks. In fact, in the ‘90s and the 2000s, empirical evidence from crime statistics painted a highly controversial picture, calling into question any correlation between trends in crime rates and the centrality of the issue of insecurity within public debate (ISTAT 2008; European Security Observatory 2009).

This discrepancy was so evident that a crucial distinction between real and perceived insecurity has rapidly emerged both in the political and in the scientific sphere, allowing a partial redefinition of the functions of various levels of government and identifying the local administration as the political-institutional actor that must take responsibility for citizens’ sense of insecurity (Barbagli, 1999).

It is in such a climate that security has transformed from being “public” - i.e. the prerogative of central institutions and the exclusive domain of national police forces - to being “urbanized”, thus quickly becoming a central issue on the city government’s agenda under the rubric of “urban security”. Politicians and administrators begin to enhance their electoral credibility by making promises to do everything in their power, once elected, to “cleanse” urban spaces from all threats to citizens, and to base their government action on policies that openly tackle the issue of security in the city (Palidda 1997; 2000).

The process of the recontextualization of security - which from being “public” has become “urban” - is therefore accompanied by a reconfiguration of urban policies through the widening of the range of risks - i.e. of morally unacceptable and/or criminal behaviour, and of subjects considered to be dangerous - which have to be addressed through security instruments. Grounding the definition of issues pertaining to city governance on the identification of specific threats, behaviours, situations or ethnic groups that supposedly represent a risk justifies the request for urgently implemented exceptional measures. These measures, when implemented through administrative acts such as ordinances against windscreen washers, commercial abuse, begging,

the sale of alcohol at night, or campaigns against illegal residential settlements, “Roma camps”, and so on, mark the complete *securitization* of the city’s public administration (Buzan, Waever and Wilde 1998). This is precisely how, during the 1990s and the 2000s, many crucial issues such as traffic, immigration, crime, the suburbs, freedom of religious expression, etc. were gradually brought into the semantic field of urban security (Procacci 2013; Marchetti and Molteni 2013, 48).<sup>2</sup>

A striking example of the “securitising” of a complex and delicate social issue can be seen in the policies of Milan’s centre-right city councils between 1993 and 2011 in response to a fundamental transformation of the urban fabric triggered by the growing presence of foreign citizens in the city. For more than fifteen years, the municipal administration, unlike in many other large European cities, had no policies aimed at fostering the socio-economic integration of migrants, the promotion of their languages and cultures of origin, intercultural dialogue or the economic valorisation of cultural diversity in the city (Caponio 2004). On the contrary, all efforts were concentrated on creating policies for the “protection of the citizenry” (or rather of Milan’s “native” residents and *city users*) from threats by certain social groups, among which migrants stood out (a group which Bauman described as foreigners *ante portas*<sup>3</sup>). The typical pattern, replicated in many areas of the city, was that the newcomers triggered in the old

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<sup>2</sup> These factors, grouped under the semantic umbrella of urban security, create, according to the mayors of Italian cities, great social alarm (Anci-Cittalia 2012) and are often associated with the behaviour, or mere presence, of marginalised social groups: beggars, people with mental distress, prostitutes, squatters, drug and alcohol users and, in particular, nomads and migrants. Moreover, within this framework urban security, redefined in terms of legitimate needs and rights of the citizenry, has increasingly become a politically neutral issue, as summed up by the slogan: “Security is neither right-wing nor left-wing” (Zedner 2009).

<sup>3</sup> See Bauman 1997.

residents the feeling of being an encircled minority. This feeling elicited defensive reactions, which led to the formation of neighbourhood committees against degradation and petty crime. Protests of organized residents, fuelled by “moral entrepreneurs”, the media and public administrators, legitimised an interpretation of the conflict over the use of public spaces as a non-negotiable opposition between “us” and “them” (Marzorati 2010; Quassoli 2004). Instead of mitigating widespread anxieties and fears by bringing them within the scope of “reasonableness”, politicians and administrators often gave in to these reactions, leading them to either adopt or call for security policies focused exclusively on the penal-repressive dimension (e.g. orders against multiple forms of anti-social behaviour, large-scale patrolling of public spaces, evictions of illegal settlements, etc.).<sup>4</sup>

For example, between 2008 and 2009, eight ordinances were issued in relation to street prostitution, damage to public and private property, alcohol consumption and begging, as well as on the trade and use of drugs. In 2010, seven other ordinances were issued which regulated the opening hours of certain shops (kebab shops and *phone centres*) in certain areas because they were considered to be high-risk (via Padova, via Imbonati, and the Comasina and Corvetto areas).<sup>5</sup> In the same years, “Operazione strade sicure” (Operation ‘Safe Streets’) was launched with the 2008 “Security Package” and is still ongoing. It led to the increase and intensification of patrols of the city - although with mixed results. This has led to the creation of mixed patrols composed of police

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<sup>4</sup> For a similar example related to a city administered by the centre-left, see Bellinva 2013.

<sup>5</sup> For a very accurate reconstruction of the “season” of the ordinances, see Cittalia 2012; for an analysis of the relationship between organised citizens’ protests and police practice, see Germain, Poletti 2007. For an analyses of the complexity, impasses and ambivalences concerning the use of ordinances as a governmental device, see. Cammarata and Monteleone 2013, Maggioni 2017.

officers and Italian military personnel. As far as illegal settlements are concerned, we need only recall how in February 2011 Riccardo De Corato, the councillor formerly responsible for security in the last centre-right administration, celebrated the 500<sup>th</sup> eviction carried out by the local police.<sup>6</sup>

However, these interventions not only failed to address the causes of social hardship, but further fuelled it: on the one hand, they reinforced the perception that the city was actually unsafe, resulting in an increase, rather than a decrease, in a “feeling of insecurity”; on the other hand, they helped to reclassify security as a selective good, surreptitiously or explicitly proposing a notion of citizenship that excluded a significant share of its real citizens, i.e. the poor, the homeless, drug addicts, prostitutes, and migrants, whose citizenship rights were effectively reduced and who were thus disempowered. In this phase, the Milan case seemed to be coherent with a neo-liberal interpretation of the recent transformations in urban governance on a global scale, particularly in terms of the proliferation of local regulations and policies targeting the poor and the informal economy, the strengthening of the role of the police in maintaining order, and the re-emergence of a racialised discourse about the poor that is closely connected to their criminalization.<sup>7</sup> The only aspect that does not fit this interpretation is the strengthening of the role of public institutions traditionally operating in the field of security and the virtual absence of any form of deregulation.

On the contrary, the dual process of the “urbanisation” of security and the “securitisation” of urban governance has led to new forms of

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<sup>6</sup> See :

[http://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2011/04/27/news/rom\\_de\\_corato\\_festeggia\\_i\\_cinqucento\\_sgomber-15419177/](http://milano.repubblica.it/cronaca/2011/04/27/news/rom_de_corato_festeggia_i_cinqucento_sgomber-15419177/)

<sup>7</sup> See Amster, 2003; Caldeira, 2000; Herbert and Brown, 2006; Robins, 2002; Samara, 2010; Wacquant, 2009.

cooperation - as well as new opportunities for friction - (Pavarini 2006) between public authorities operating at the central and local levels. For example, the Minister of Home Affairs established in a special decree (5 August 2008) that urban security should be understood as “a public good to be protected through activities in local communities aimed at fostering compliance with the norms governing civil life, in order to improve living conditions in urban centres, civil coexistence and social cohesion”- a definition consistent with the dominant public discourse (Selmini 2004), which potentially extends the scope of security to encompass every aspect of city government.

Moreover, the growing importance given to the governance of urban security, and the consequent attribution of an increasingly important role to local governments in this specific policy field, have favoured a shift in decision-making powers from national to local authorities (Menichelli 2015).<sup>8</sup>

On the one hand, city mayors, their coordination and representation bodies (the ANCI and the Italian Forum for Urban Security) and, in some cases, *ad hoc* coalitions (the Parma Charter), have put forward demands for greater autonomy in the security domain, for greater powers and more resources, as well as for greater involvement in the management of security and of the phenomenon of “urban degradation and disorder”.

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<sup>8</sup> Urbanization of security, together with the territorial reorganization of public powers and the emergence of the local/urban as the reference point for policies are perfectly in line with a broader trend of territorialisation that affected, in the same years, many areas of public intervention in Italy (Bifulco 2016) and that involved a rescaling of statehood (Brenner 2004; Gualini 2006), a reframing of public action in terms of resources, targets and actors (Governa and Salone 2004), as well as a cooperation between public authorities, third sector associations and private actors in both policies’ design and implementation.

On the other hand, the responsibilities and territorial distribution of powers in the field of public order and security management have gradually been redefined. In 2006, “Local Security Pacts” were agreed between the Ministry of Home Affairs and municipal administrations, with the aim of improving the involvement of local communities in the creation of urban policies through participatory forms of producing the public good. In the case of the province of Milan, the pacts were then converted into formal agreements between the *prefetto* and the local mayors aimed at strengthening cooperation between national police forces, local police, third sector associations and private individuals, through the promotion of projects aimed at increasing the sense of security in urban areas, improving the quality of life in the city, and encouraging civic participation (Colombo and Quassoli 2016).

In 2008, following the adoption of the “Security Package” (Legislative Decree 92 of 23 May 2008), this process reached its final stage with an amendment to the law on local administration, which broadened the prerogatives of Italian mayors, authorising them, as government officials, to adopt “necessary and urgent” measures to prevent and address “serious dangers threatening public safety and urban security”.<sup>9</sup>

In the 2000s the work of the Provincial Committees for Security and Public Order (established by Law 121/1981)<sup>10</sup> gained more visibility and relevance. The Provincial Committees established themselves as an inter-institutional platform facilitating dialogue, coordination, and the

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<sup>9</sup> At the local level, the 2008 “Security Package” had a primarily symbolic objective, as the realization of a sort of securitarian devolution, with all the emphasis placed, in the political and public debate, on autonomy and on the role of local government (Marchetti and Molteni 2013, 54-56).

<sup>10</sup> Participation in the committee has also been extended to include mayors of non-capital cities whenever matters relating to the territories they govern are discussed.

circulation of information and knowledge between all actors with jobs and responsibilities in the field of security within a given area.

## **II. Urban governance, discourses and security practices in Milan**

In light of what has been outlined above, we shall now turn to the salient elements of security governance in Milan that emerged from the fieldwork, with particular reference to the construction of a shared security framework, the relationships between institutional actors operating in the field of security, and the dispositifs that were put into place.

### **2.1. Security: Different nuances, shared premises**

A key issue, which relates to the processes of securitisation discussed in the first part and which emerges clearly from the analysis of the interviews, concerns the scope of the application of the concept of security and the degree of consensus over its definition among actors participating in the committee. Two remarks can be made in this regard.

1) Each actor tends to propose a definition of security that is consistent with the functions that the institution they represent is supposed to perform: there is a shift from a “restricted” notion of security which focuses on activities of a preventive and repressive nature conducted by the national police force - advanced by those who have a “technical” role – to a broader notion of security - held by managers and officials of the municipal police (as well as by some administrators) - which includes aspects related to the degradation of neighbourhoods, to a diverse range of deviant behaviour, to the quality of life in the city and, in one case, to a purely political stance that conceives of security in terms which suggest an ideal of good city governance.

“The concept of urban security is very broad and not always well-defined, and it affects all aspects of society. When we talk about urban security, we refer to the problem of the suburbs, where there are no efficient services, all the way down to security connected to large- and small-scale crime.” (*Head of Cabinet, Local Police of Milan*)

“In a general sense, security is to ensure peace in the city (...). A city is safe when there is no crime, no degradation, when the city is a “paradise”. It is clear that this isn't the case in Milan, the larger the city, the harder or more unattainable the dream of having a safe city is.” (*Chairman of the Committee on Security and Social Cohesion*)

Local governments now commonly invoke security concerns, with some paradoxical effects. On the one hand, politicians and administrators seem to have aligned with many sociologists and criminologists in criticising the notion of security as being confined to the criminal and the deviant. As many analysts have stated (Bauman 1997; Palidda 2016; Stefanizzi 2014), the concept of security should be understood in a multidimensional way, and security issues should encompass social issues. In this sense, the institutional actors' frame of reference is quite different from that which characterised the seventeen years of the centre-right administrations (1993-2011). On the other hand, however, with an increase in the number of issues falling under the umbrella of security (including the constant change in the socio-demographic composition of the population, the transformations undergone by the economic and productive fabric of the city, the conflicts between different groups that compete for the use of public space), the process of securitisation gains momentum (Balzacq 2010).

“For sure one of the most difficult issues is that of small-scale crime, even if the numbers are down; it is a crime that affects people personally (...) Another aspect of degradation is noise and civil coexistence, as the nightlife in Milan has expanded, leading to the presence of drunken

youths and numerous acts of vandalism throughout the year. Another pressing problem in the Milan area is begging, which has been addressed by introducing a policy that provides for an increase in the number of shelters. We have also closed down several Roma camps.” (*Municipal councillor for security of the City of Milan*)

“Milan has some security problems which are typical of metropolitan areas, the problems have increased over time and involve the redevelopment and renewal of peripheral areas that appear less privileged, of neighbourhoods on the outskirts of Milan which demand their fair share of attention, this is a common theme in all great metropolitan areas.” (*Provincial commander of the Carabinieri*)

A heterogeneous set of phenomena are, therefore, redefined as generalised forms of risk, thus reinforcing what Rose described as “risk thinking” (2000, 332), a line of thought which is increasingly widespread in Western societies.<sup>11</sup>

“Never underestimate anything, this is the right approach. You must be aware of everything and not overlook situations that may be irrelevant at the time but that may escalate. A Prefect needs to be able to identify a problem before it turns into one: signs of potential escalation, so as to act on the risk, not the danger. Anticipating risky situations and carrying out prevention activities to avoid them escalating into a public order emergency”. (*Prefect of Milan*)

Narratives of this kind tend to feed a real “security frustration” (Castel 2003) and contribute to creating a generalised anxiety about “security”, a term that ends up encompassing a wide and varied combination of urban problems and governance practices.

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<sup>11</sup> On risk as a cultural category see Douglas and Wildavsky 1982; on social/securitarian dialectics see Bigo 2006; 4-59; on fear as a central element of political debate and government action see Furedi 2008; Simon 2007.

2) According to our respondents, the distinction between objective and perceived security is crucial and is used to qualify the securitisation process. In a city like Milan, which all respondents depict as very safe compared to other large European cities, local administrators seek to improve the perception of security even where real security (understood as the likelihood of being subjected to a crime) cannot possibly be increased.

“Certain types of crime have decreased, while predatory crime, which bothers people most, is a bit on the increase. The reason behind robberies and looting is linked to the economic crisis. I believe that in recent years safety has neither increased nor diminished, despite the opposition trying to paint the city of Milan as the Wild West. (...) Then, but this is well known, it is necessary to distinguish between real and perceived safety, which is equally important. Especially for those in government, the problem that must be tackled is also to ensure perceived safety, i.e. the one citizens regard more subjectively, rather than objectively.”  
*(Chairman of the Committee on Security and Social Cohesion)*

Although statistical data indicate a steady and gradual decline in crime, citizens’ perception of high insecurity - which is taken as a fact - is traced back to the urban and social transformations that have characterized Milan in recent decades, and is invoked to legitimise heavy-handed and extensive interventions by city administrations aimed at ensuring urban security.

Let us consider, for example, the growing spread of the concept of “participatory security”, which entails the active involvement of citizens in the activities of protecting the local area and which is at the heart of the project “Neighbourhood Watch Officers” (*vigili di quartiere*), promoted by the centre-left municipal administration and

officially launched on 3<sup>rd</sup> April, 2012.<sup>12</sup> Each of the 84 city districts were assigned four neighbourhood watch officers who are deployed at the gates of primary schools, in markets, at neighbourhood events and at crossroads, under the supervision of local officials and assisted by police patrols. They travel by bicycle, are in contact with a coordination centre that can be reached by phone or internet by anyone, and are trained to establish dialogue with citizens in order to become familiar with the daily problems of the city and take timely action to resolve them. The intervention model on which the project was based is characterised as “proactive”, that is, “centred on knowledge of the area and on interaction with the inhabitants”. In the official website of the project, the “mission” of the neighbourhood watch officers was defined as follows: “A figure who ‘cares for’ the neighbourhood and who specialises in ‘urban well-being’, which is not simply about enforcing the rules, but also about sharing critical issues and seeking solutions for a safe and supportive community. For a participatory urban security practiced in everyday life ‘together’ with the citizenry. For active listening aimed at obtaining credibility, as well as the trust of those living in the neighbourhood”.

The main goal of the project is to bring the institutions closer to the citizens, in order to better understand their needs and to identify, with the active participation of stakeholders, the most appropriate shared solutions. The administration regards the project’s implementation as a turning point in public security policies, because officers no longer perform only the administrative functions of the municipal police, but are now called upon to contribute to decreasing levels of perceived insecurity. In the discourse of our interviewees, “citizens” are seen as being some of the main agents in the production of security. A

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<sup>12</sup> For a description of the project see:

[http://www.comune.milano.it/wps/portal/ist/it/servizi/poliziale/vigili\\_of\\_the\\_neighborhoods](http://www.comune.milano.it/wps/portal/ist/it/servizi/poliziale/vigili_of_the_neighborhoods)

fundamental aspect of the cooperation between citizens and the police is the early identification of all factors that can contribute to increasing citizens' (subjective) sense of insecurity. The key point thus becomes the constant monitoring of the demand for security by citizens who are discursively positioned as *prosumers* of security as a good. Their main duty is reporting, and it is through this activity that they contribute individually to reducing/limiting urban degradation. The model requires citizens to report everything that might pose a threat to the system, conceived of as "their own community". Citizens' participation can also be organised in the form of neighbourhood associations and committees working together to retain control of the area and to maintain public order.

The explicit reference to the concept of community reinforces the idea of a homogeneous in-group, the "Milanesi", who share certain values and a common belonging. The city (the territory), is qualified as "our own". The "citizens" are given an active role in the production of security, which consists, in particular, in reporting to the police cases of urban degradation and "suspects", i.e. people who pose a potential threat to security. In the discourse of the interviewees it is the community ("the citizenry") who perceives these individuals as potentially dangerous, and the presence of the (undifferentiated) 'Other' comes to be seen "almost naturally" as a source of threat.

## **2.2. Actors, inter-organisational relations, and instruments**

All of the interviewees stressed the quality of the collaboration established in Milan between the different institutions and police forces that participate in the committee meetings.

"The Prefect plans the public security strategies throughout the province and has coordinating powers in matters of public safety over Prefects of the provinces which are part of the region. The Chief of Police, on the other hand, exercises authority in security matters but on

a technical level: he makes the most appropriate decisions to manage an event from a technical perspective. The Prefect gives the basic guidelines on how to handle an event.” (*Prefect of Milan*)

This collaboration foresees a division of labour between national and local police forces and the different institutional actors involved (Chief of Police, police commissioner, mayors), alongside specific forms of cooperation on particularly complex and relevant issues, which the committee regularly includes in the agenda. It also benefits from broad agreement on the priorities and forms of intervention aimed at ensuring the safety of the city. It hinges around methods for controlling each urban area and the people who live in it and/or use it.

“Following the appointment of the new Prefect in August 2013, we have enlarged and reviewed the Committee on Public Safety turning it into a body that meets every week and in which the municipality participates regularly, not only when invited by the Prefect as before. Inside the committee there is greater sharing of strategies, tasks and objectives and this collaboration between local police and law enforcement agencies has allowed us to review progress on strategic situations and to have common lines of approach.” (*Municipal Councillor for Security*)

The city territory is divided into different areas: nine for the local police, corresponding to the administrative decentralised zones of the municipality; and four for the *carabinieri* and the state police (with the latter having a greater presence). This creates a spatial distribution of resources aimed at making control total, the presence of law enforcement visible, the allocation of resources optimal, and the coordination work between forces efficient.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The subdivision of the territory, however, does not fully correspond to a decentralisation of functions, given that some, in particular those of the coordination of the patrols of rapid intervention entrusted to the operative

A very sensitive aspect of the relationship between state police and local police concerns the latter's prerogatives. Broadly speaking, the tasks undertaken by the local police are not only those competences attributed to them by law but also those acquired on the ground during the fight against crime. Over the past two decades, the local police have formed specialist investigation teams that have earned them growing appreciation by the Public Prosecutor's Office in a series of investigations into serious criminal phenomena. The greater prominence given to this area in the first decade of the 21st Century, however, has been to the detriment of other equally important functions that were traditionally the prerogative of the local police, such as consumer protection, worker safety, illegal trade and construction, and environmental crimes (Palidda 2016). With the change in administration in 2011, this transformation has suffered a setback and today the Milanese local police seem more focused on improving their specific skills in the domain of transport policing (in urban areas) and in administrative policing. However, in our interviews with officials there was a clear desire to continue to also work in the fight against crime by virtue of a presumed greater knowledge of the territory, acquired thanks to the constant dialogue with citizens.

“The local police do exactly what it's supposed to do under the rules and codes, and therefore it has a wide remit: we are directly responsible for administrative and traffic police duties. There are differences between the tasks of the Local Police, the Judicial police and the *carabinieri*, but let's say, it's not so much a legal issue as a question of competence and trust between us and the local administration. As a rule we deal with small-scale crime, while for large-scale crime and more specific issues that require certain skills, the exclusive action of other law enforcement agencies is requested. (...) today the Local Police is

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centres, remain centralised (or have been re-centralised in recent years, as in the case of the local police in Milan), which is also due to the potential and efficiency of the electronic technologies employed.

used to solve problems that were previously assigned to the police and the *carabinieri*.” (*Head of Cabinet, Local Police of Milan*)

The local police have been particularly eager to take on this new role in relation to operations characterised by high public and media visibility, such as major operations to combat crime in some districts, large events, street demonstrations, evictions, etc. These operations have led to the establishment of thematic working groups, convened *ad hoc* on the occasion of particular events, as well as territorial working groups for coordination between forces, which reproduce, in areas of administrative decentralisation and at an immediately operational level, the collaborative methods practiced at the provincial (now metropolitan) level by the Provincial Committee for Order and Public Security.

“At the behest of Chief of Police (...) for about two years now, every month, at our station we have been calling a so-called multi-police meeting, to tackle problems that are a bit more complex than ordinary ones. It is attended by the local police and the various heads of the area's police stations, the *Carabinieri* and the *Guardia di Finanza*. At this meeting, which usually takes place once a month, we discuss certain, somewhat more serious issues (...). There have also been several occasions when, in order to deal with specific problems, similar meetings have been set up, other than the monthly multi-police coordination meetings, which involve the Councillor, the citizens' committees and representatives of law enforcement agencies in the area, just to understand and agree on the necessary measures to solve a problem.” (*Local Police - area 8 Station*)

Action in the field of security is embodied in some *dispositifs* which, according to Foucault (1977), are to be understood as systems of relations between heterogeneous objects (discourses, practices, artefacts, texts, standards, institutions, administrative measures, quantifications, etc.) which reflect a political urgency or an emergency

and constitute the space within which a discourse acquires meaning and produces effects. One of these effects is to give visibility to particular objects, places, situations, behaviours and social groups, in order to control, regulate and govern them (Rabinow 2003). We can identify three fundamental *dispositifs* for the control of the territory of Milan which allow the collection, quantifying, mapping, distribution and making visible of events for which priorities and plans are subsequently defined - ordinances, video surveillance, and risk maps.

As far as ordinances are concerned, which were the main instrument of Milan's political and administrative governance in the domain of urban security in the first decade of the 2000s, it is apparent that the Pisapia administration (2011-2016) marked a strong discontinuity with the past. In fact, the use of ordinances was greatly reduced, avoiding the bending of extraordinary measures to everyday tasks and limiting their use to situations characterised by urgency, unpredictability and temporariness.

Strong continuity, however, has emerged with regard to the massive and widespread use of video surveillance activities, which did not decrease with the establishment of the centre-left administration. Not only has the number of cameras increased, but video surveillance has maintained a central place in public discourse about security governance in the city.

“The number of CCTV cameras has grown substantially and they perform the function of increasing perceived safety, though they are no deterrent.” (*Chairman of Committee on Security and Social Cohesion*)

In the answers of our interviewees, security cameras - with their visibility and materiality - seem to have a primarily communicative function, that of reassuring citizens, responding to their anxieties of security and their supposed perception of insecurity. In more general terms, however, the use of cameras - the choice of where and how to place them and direct them according to events and occasions - is an expression of governmental rationality.

“Another very important element is the cameras, we have about 1,700 cameras in the city connected with our operation units, we have defined a protocol with the prefecture and with all law enforcement agencies and we have connected the system so that our cameras are viewed and can be operated simultaneously by all law enforcement agencies and the prefecture. This means that it is a system everyone can benefit from, and, in fact, it has improved the effectiveness of our work. These cameras do not work as early warning signals but are critical to investigate crimes and because citizens just need to see the cameras and they somehow feel more secure and protected by the institutions.”  
*(Municipal Councillor for Security)*

The cameras do not only perform the communicative function of reassuring citizens, or serve only as tools for investigation, repression and punishment through ensuring the identification of those who commit acts that are deemed unlawful. The strategies that support and justify their use, in fact, are based on processes and mechanisms of classification that guide and organise the collection and management of information (Cole 2001; Harcourt 2007; Simon 2007), helping to identify specific social groups and situations to be subjected to particular control regardless of their actual behaviour, as well as to define, in every place in the city and in every situation in urban life, “who should be present, where and when, who is ‘out of place’ and who it is appropriate to see” (Lyon 2007, 94).

Another instrument at the disposal of the police forces, which is widely used in the planning of security governance in the city, are “risk maps”, a sort of representation of criminal life in Milan which, through the analysis and visualisation of georeferenced data, detects criminal hot-spots and subdivides the territory on the basis of the presumed dangerousness of an equally presumed greater risk, whether general or specific (relative, that is, to a particular type of crime). The sharing of the recorded data and the analyses carried out, presented in the meetings of the provincial committee, end up constituting the technical artifacts

whereby decisions on the protection of urban security are made and through which preventive police interventions on the ground are planned.

“We have our own, formalized risk map, we have analyzed a series of filtered data in very specific contexts in order to get, as a local Police, a clear picture of the Milan area which can provide useful guidance for immediate action by the police forces. It is constantly updated on the basis of our information. Through the use of data, images and video a specific situation can take shape and this allows us to divide the city into sectors so as to position the various law enforcement agencies based on their specific responsibilities. Once a problem has been identified, the effort of the police forces is intensified and, after a short time, we can determine whether the problem has been dealt with positively. This, in all cases, has proven to be highly effective, from dealing with urban security, to managing Roma camps, in (facing) conflicts and tensions.” (*Head of cabinet, Local police of Milan*)

In general, these risk assessment tools are based on situational prevention models, depend on the ability to collect and act upon information analysed with actuarial instruments, and are aimed at the examination and probabilistic identification of criminal behaviours and places with the highest risk of victimisation (Braga and Bond 2008; National Institute of Justice 2005; Yang 2010). These technological tools make clear how the actuarial approach (Harcourt 2007) based on the notion of risk has become crucial in the governance of cities and constitutes “an effort to depoliticise public issues, to suggest technical solutions to often complex phenomena” (Borraz and Le Galès 2010, 26). Finally, it is evident how the attribution of risk profiles - in other words, different levels of criminal probability - to subjects and social groups (Castel 1991; Rabinow 2007; Rose 2007) through the use of technologies and instruments geared towards the identification, classification and governing of individuals, groups, situations and places means obliterating any consideration of the social causes of

crime and ends up reinforcing negative stereotypes about particular social groups and urban areas.

### **III. Expo 2015**

In the course of this research, safety management for the Universal Exposition, which was held in Milan in 2015, has repeatedly emerged as a major issue.

The organisation of the security system for Expo 2015 - which was on the agenda of the meetings of the provincial committee over several months - was long and complex, and was based on an attempt to carry out “total planning” - as it was defined by the provincial commander of the carabinieri - that would not overlook any possible risk.

Expo played an important role in the reorganisation of the system and forms of security governance in the Milan metropolitan area in at least three ways: first, the planning and transformations of the concepts, organisational forms and instruments of security governance in the territory; secondly, the resulting long-term transformations; thirdly, the practical consequences and impact on the local security system. In this context, we would particularly like to make a few remarks on the first aspect. As explained by the Milan Chief of Police, the thematic working groups tasked to implement the safety management system at Expo 2015 under his coordination in the months preceding the Expo, prepared, imagined and examined, “all possible critical scenarios and management strategies to address them”. On that occasion, “possible” scenarios were projected on the basis of experience gained in local security governance, comparison with the experience of other countries in managing major events, and the specific local situation.

For the London Olympics in 2012, the Rand Corporation developed a model for planning security systems that is particularly relevant in this

respect. The model was based on projecting “all possible future scenarios” of security risk, on the assumption that, given the intrinsic indeterminacy of these future scenarios, the organisation of security “must be developed under conditions of great uncertainty”. The local authorities whom we interviewed who participated in the Provincial Committee for Security and Public Order said that they were also aware of the fact that “anything could happen” and that therefore absolute planning was impossible. What was needed, then, was the organisation of a system based on the ability to imagine anything that might happen - even without an accurate assessment of the probability of each scenario - and, at the same time, capable of taking action even when faced with the unpredictable. This represents a “style of thought” (Fleck 1979; Rose 2007) based on an overabundant construction of scenarios and the unpredictability of threats to security, and marks a shift from a logic of prevention to a logic of precaution, in which “security risks proliferate and exceed the ability of authorities to fully manage them, or even to detect them, with the consequence that maintaining the appearance of absolute security becomes an urgent task” (Boyle and Haggerty 2009, 262). Indeed, the focus was on the development of “government technologies” (Rose and Miller 1992) capable of ensuring the objective of managing all those security problems that could not be predicted or prevented, and upon which it was essential, according to the Milan Chief of Police, to intervene quickly and decisively, avoiding any confusion of roles while ensuring effective decision-making and coordination.

The organisation of the management of emergencies that could have undermined the safety of Expo 2015 (in the exhibition site, but also in the city in general) involved setting up two coordination centres: the Joint Operations Centre, a joint control body, and the Emergency Coordination Centre, an operations body tasked with coordinating the

interventions of all of the operators involved and with taking immediate action if needed.

So Expo 2015 ended up becoming, in the words of the Chief of Police, a laboratory for experimenting with new approaches to urban security management. The types and means of cooperation between public actors and police forces involved in security management in the metropolitan city have consequences that extend “well beyond what occurs on the days of any individual happening. Mega-events foster a legacy of knowledge, networks and habits that have a bearing on the lives of considerably more individuals than those in attendance” (Boyle and Haggerty 2009, 265). Together with allowing for the setting up of new tools and for experimenting with different forms of joint coordination, Expo 2015 it has been a testing ground for new models of safety management. The emphasis placed on the ability to construct multiple scenarios - virtually all of those imaginable - that would enable a response to any threat, identified not so much in terms of their probability as in terms of their mere possibility, sustained the production of new instruments for the coordination and governance of urban security, based on the ability to intervene and manage, if not foresee and prevent, any situation of danger or disturbance to public order, even extremely unlikely ones. This desire for protection from the unpredictable obviously echoes with the fear that has gripped Western cities and societies since 9/11, and unveils the dream of an ideal city that, if it cannot be purified of every risk or threat, can at least be put perfectly under control.

### **Concluding remarks**

We have tried to illustrate the most recent transformations in urban security policies in Milan, and their continuity/discontinuity with those

adopted by previous administrations. The essential elements that emerge from our analysis on the evolution of the discourse and on the policies on security in Milan can be summarised as follows.

Firstly, in line with what has happened in other large European cities over the last two decades, many of the major issues on the city's governing agenda have been placed under the "semantic umbrella" of urban security. This has triggered the profound reconfiguration of a heterogeneous complex of practices, institutions and devices aimed at identifying and governing new forms of generalised risk, together with the redistribution of responsibilities among national and local institutions operating in the field of security. The increasing securitisation of urban life has also led to a shift - both in emphasis and resources - from a concept of city government focused on the need to address a range of social problems to one focused on situational prevention and the criminalisation of problems, conflicts and groups. If, on the one hand, the centre-left administrations in office since 2011 have tried to distance themselves from what happened in the previous fifteen years - during which problems and policies traditionally understood from a social perspective were approached as security issues - on the other hand, securitisation remains a crucial framework for the government of the city. A double question could be raised concerning this point: the first and more immediate one is to which extent can we conceive the securitization of some core urban issues as an established crucial framework for city governance also in other European cities; the second one stems from the fact that if securitization constitutes a shared element between center-left and center-right coalitions, then the only distinctive elements of the center-left governments seem to be a definition of security that combine criminal and social issues, together with a greater capacity to provide a policy response, in terms of output, effectiveness, and ability to manage the relationships between central and local public institutions.

Secondly, the dominant public discourse on security has definitely embraced the distinction between objective risks and subjective perception, in order both to promote local government as the main political-institutional actor that must take charge of citizens' sense of insecurity, and to strengthen the powers of (national and local) police forces against the (objective and/or perceived) threats that endanger public security in urban contexts. Moreover, the emergence of a *risk thinking* mindset, together with the importance attached to the perception of insecurity and the involvement of citizens in practices of a governmental nature (McIlvenny, Zhukova Klausen and Bang Lindegaard 2016), continues to entail the serious risk of the selective exclusion of social groups which are seen as problematic. If during the centre-right governments, for example, the issue of the presence of foreign people was directly and explicitly presented as a threat to security, without any attempt to hide the racist undertones and the discriminatory effects of such a discourse, with the centre-left administrations the tone has become milder, although the presence in public spaces of individuals or groups considered as a problem by - and for - the citizenry continues to be associated with the perception of insecurity.<sup>14</sup>

Thirdly, the traits that had marked the city's governance in a neo-liberal sense in the previous fifteen years have diminished markedly. If, on the one hand, the direct and explicit criminalisation of marginal and "problematic" social groups has disappeared, on the other hand, the partial securitisation of urban governance has represented an opportunity to further revive the role of public institutions which, despite new forms of division of labour between local and national

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<sup>14</sup> The same applies to the presence of nomad camps, which are mostly identified as both an actual threat and a significant element in the growth of the perception of insecurity and the disturbance of order and decorum in the neighbourhoods where they are set up.

institutions, maintain a substantial monopoly in the field of urban security.<sup>15</sup>

Finally, the shift from a logic of prediction to a logic of precaution that has become clear in the organization of security for EXPO 2015 has involved a blurring of the boundaries between policing, which concern public order and security in civil contexts, and a more military approach according to which: “if we cannot know with certainty, the prudent thing to do is to prepare for the worst” (Amoore and de Goede 2008, Bourne 2013). It is reasonable to imagine that such an approach, which has increasingly marked internal and external security policies in Western countries after 9/11, has become more and more relevant also at the level of urban policies in light of the terrorist attacks that hit some of the most important European cities over the last three years (Paris, Manchester, London, Nice, Berlin, Barcelona, to name only the most relevant), making even more blurred the boundaries between police functions and those performed by the army that is increasingly deployed in urban spaces.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, if global events/threats are both a lab and a turning point for a concerted security governance of the big cities and if do they stimulate an approach based on a logic of precaution we can ask to what extent the latter is reshaping also more ordinary security practices and arrangements in Europe.

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<sup>15</sup> For an interesting attempt to delimit and qualify the explanatory scope of the neo-liberal paradigm, see Le Galès (2016).

<sup>16</sup> On this point, see Amoore and de Goede (2008) and de Goede (2011). As for Milan, we cannot yet provide convincing empirical evidence, as we are carrying on a follow-up right on this aspect.

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