



SPECIAL SECTION EXPERIENTIAL LANDSCAPES OF TERROR

Introduction

Experiential Landscapes of Terror

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■ **ABSTRACT:** This special section addresses how the spatiality of terrorism and security responses mobilize and impact the realm of experience. The articles presented here expose how terrorism is encountered as a felt experience by urban residents in Europe through an analysis that encompasses several realms including the body, the intimate, the domestic, and the urban public space. These works develop existing scholarship on the European urban geographies of terrorism, by looking beyond established approaches to normative range of actors and infrastructures that underlie terrorism and counter-terror security responses, and by exploring the fine-grained connections between felt experience, urban space, and global politics. Moreover, in focusing on the experiential landscapes of terror, we start exploring geographies where healing, trust, and societal reconnection can be imagined in the wake of terror.

■ **KEYWORDS:** affect, cities, counterterror, experience, terror

The articles in this special section emerge from a double session organized by the editors at The Royal Geographical Society (with the Institute of British Geographers)- RGS-IBG Annual International Conference in Cardiff in 2018 titled “Changing Landscapes / Changing the Landscapes of Terror and Threat: Materialities, Bodies, Ambiances, Elements.” The session focused on geographies of terror and terror threat beyond representational and state-centered framings. It asked how conceptual and methodological approaches concerned with affect, atmosphere, and experience can advance our understanding of the impact of terror and terror threat on the everyday life of cities. Since then, our initial endeavor has developed into a series of new projects and collaborations, all centered around studying systematically, in-depth, and focused on specific case-studies, the affective and atmospheric dimensions of terrorism and security in twenty-first-century urban Europe. Sunčana Laketa is the Principal Investigator on the *Ambizione* grant Terrorism and the City: Affect, Space and Violence in Urban Europe, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation¹ (2019–2023). After the inception of this special issue,



Sara Fregonese and Damien Masson—together with colleagues at Institut Paris Region and the Universities of Jena and Plymouth—became Principal Investigators on the new research project *Atmospheres of (Counter)Terrorism in European Cities*² funded by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), France's Agence Nationale de la Recherche (ANR), and Germany's Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft/German Research Foundation under the 6th Open Research Area (ORA).

Discourses and practices of terrorism and the associated security responses have been the focus of much sophisticated analysis of varying impacts of terror and perceived terror threat. While terror attacks continue to be less frequent in Western Europe compared to other regions of the planet, nevertheless the discourses on terrorist threats and the ever-increasing security measures are thoroughly sutured in everyday life and everyday spaces of European cities. In recent years, we have witnessed an upsurge in technologies and practices of urban security governance in the face of terrorism in urban Europe and the accompanying discourses of radicalization (Fadil et al. 2019), urban resilience (Monstadt and Schmidt 2019), and preparedness (Krasmann and Hentschel 2019). When addressing the spatialities of terrorism and security in urban Europe, these involve, we argue, much more than interventions on the physical infrastructures of cities (Coaffee 2017) and extend further than surveillance (Adey et al. 2013) and governing emergency (Adey, Anderson, and Graham 2015). Rather, they mobilize an experiential realm that is seemingly ephemeral, yet crucial for uncovering how terrorism and security practices and discourses resonate and are experienced by urban populations.

This special section addresses how the spatialities of terrorism and the security responses to it mobilize, impact, and rely on the experiential realm. The articles presented here expose the European experiential landscapes of terrorism through an analysis that addresses the sites of the intimate, the domestic, the embodied, the affective and the atmospheric. Urban terror and the security responses to it are thus theorized as lived, felt, and experienced realities. The special section thus strengthens and furthers the displacement of globalized top-down visions of security (Pain 2009) that overlook the everyday agencies and experiences of the terrorized/securitized spaces. These different spatialities of (in)security then extend the field of possibility for addressing issues of healing, trust, and reconnection in communities affected by terrorism, terror threat, and the violent geographies of its security responses.

The geographies of terror and security portrayed in this special section highlight the level of experience as a central yet neglected domain for understanding discourses and practices of terrorism and counterterrorism. The literature on geopolitics, conflict, warfare, and security has recently been shifting toward embodied (Fluri 2011; Ochs 2011; Wilcox 2015), performative (Katz 2007; Martin 2010; Mustafa et al. 2013), emotional (Johansen 2018; Pauschinger 2019; Skidmore 2003), affective (Anderson and Adey 2011; Gökarıksel and Secor 2018; Laketa 2016), and atmospheric (Adey et al. 2013; Fregonese 2017; Klauser 2010) approaches. We build on these approaches and apply them to the study of terrorism. We acknowledge here the legal/normative definitions of terrorism as the use of violence to intimidate and provoke fear among the wider public and generally to disrupt law and order for the purpose of influencing or disrupting a government in the pursuit of political or ideological aim.³ However, for the purpose and aim of the special section focusing on terrorism as a felt experience, we want to expand these normative views into two directions. First, we recognize the role of the state in the terrorism/security nexus by often being the instigator of terror in conflict zones (Graham 2009; Sluka 1999) and by employing counterterror security measures that also provoke a degree of intimidation, fear, or even physical harm among specific publics—notably in the case of counterterror raids and house searches (Hergon, this issue; Fregonese, this issue). Second, we consider the unfinished, diffuse, and experiential ramifications of terror that propagate beyond the event of

an attack: often such events lack an immediately given meaning “even if some group immediately claims responsibility for them, and they consequently leave room for debates and conflicts of interpretation that amplify their social impact” (Truc 2019: 5). The special section, therefore, aims to inquire beyond those normative legal framings of terrorism and explore its wider resonances, from the mundane and banal to the exceptional and spectacular (Sluka 1999)—and its unequal impacts on different places, people and communities (Mbembe 2010).

The articles presented here attend to different aspects of these experiential geographies, as they take place alongside, in opposition to, and together with state narratives and global discourses. They address and analyze experience through a range of theoretical concepts, emphasizing affective atmospheres, intimacies, emotions, and sensoria that compose the experiential landscapes of terror. Rather than individualized sentiments, these approaches stress the relational, social, and indeed political dimensions of the experiential. Asking the question of how terrorism and security operate through experience implies deploying methodologies that allow us to embrace a wide range of themes: space and materialities, sensitive phenomena, affects, and bodily practices. These multiple articulations imply theoretical and methodological upheavals. Building on long-standing feminist political commitment to explore intersections between the geopolitical and the everyday (Pain 2014; Sjöberg 2009; Wilcox 2015), the approaches to the experiential landscapes of terror in this special section also move beyond the global and state scales of terrorism and highlight instead the multiscale and unequal impact of terrorism and counterterrorism on the spaces of the body, the home, the sensory, and the city.

Besides being deeply unequal, the impacts of terrorism and counterterrorism are also entangled with existing contexts of racialization, economic disinvestment in public infrastructures, and growing nationalism. An approach to terrorism, terror threat, and counterterrorism that centers on its experiential aspects ought to attend to the politics that reside “in determining who is subject to sovereign protection or sovereign violence” (Ingram and Dodds 2011: 95). In this endeavor, the authors in this special section move beyond existing accounts of atmospheric violence as the blatant (and often spectacular) weaponizations of air, for example, to quell major civil unrest (Feigenbaum and Kanngieser 2015; Nieuwenhuis 2018). The authors here, instead, account for how terrorism and its security responses within urban Europe rip through the intimate, somatic, and visceral dimensions of human experience—from everyday anxieties, to sonic recollections of trauma, to the violence of house searches and pre-dawn terror raids. These experiential effects of counterterrorism in European cities also bear overarching connections with settings of conflict, militarism and counterinsurgency, as highlighted by Sara Fregonese (this issue). Tracing these affective dispositions, resonances, and (violent) perturbations outlines new political topographies of terror in urban Europe that ground and show the visceral implications of what are often universalized and generalized categories as “terror,” “fear,” and “threat” (Pain 2009). In exposing these uneven geographies, the articles here open up further space to consider practices of healing, reconnection, intimate peace, and antiviolence.

Developing such geographies implies the use of differentiated theoretical and methodological reference frames. On a theoretical level, non-representational methods (Vannini 2015) and the ones stemming from affective atmospheres (Sumartojo and Pink 2020) could offer such a reference frame. However, very few works based on these approaches address terrorism, with the exception of a few who examine the commemoration of terrorist attacks from the angle of affective responses and the creation of feeling of community formed in particular by the sensory sharing of the memory of such events (Closs Stephens, Coward et al. 2017; Closs Stephens, Hughes et al. 2020). In this sense, the autoethnographic approach deployed by Sarah Gensburger (2019) proposes original research that makes it possible to fill in these gaps by taking account life, from the intimate to the urban, after the terrorist attacks of 13 November 2015 in

Paris. The stakes are multiple: to document, to make memory, to shake up the codes of academic literature, and to play a cathartic role for the authors.

Among the works that question the sensory dimension of ordinary experiences, those that come from the francophone field of ambiances and in particular those of ethnomethodological and praxeological inspiration (Amphoux et al. 2004) contribute to the setting up of research protocols that articulate the sensitive, social, and material dimensions of the lived experience. They give primacy to subjective and intersubjective apprehensions of the world, make the body a privileged medium for access to ambiances and affects, and do not focus attention on the representational. These works, though, rarely take the socio-political implications of situations into account, preferring to leave them in the historical and cultural background of the phenomena being questioned (Masson and Thomas 2020). In this sense, the empirical contributions in this section innovate thematically and contribute to activating methods—drawing beyond the anglophone academy—that enable us to get to the bottom of the experiences lived by everyone, whether they refer to the everyday or to an event. In so doing, they not only allow the exploration of a diversity of situations, memories, affects, and experiences but also provide answers on the methodological ways for understanding three complementary dimensions: the intimate, the embedded, the embodied; vivid emotions such as anxiety, fear, depression, injury, trauma; and finally, the multiple temporalities of the ordinary, historical (by historicizing the event and its responses), event-driven, and long-lasting (after the event). To do this, the authors use both discursive and non-discursive approaches. They question the banal and the embodied through ethnography and participatory observation. On the other hand, access to the intimate, the familiar, the repressed mobilizes conversation, free exchange in confidence, sometimes almost confining to therapeutic analysis. They show in-depth to what extent the weaving of a special relationship between researchers and respondents, but also the establishment of a “supportive atmosphere” (Duncan 1996) are necessary for the production of a speech in a similar register to that which Gensburger (2019) was able to deploy, yet through a self-centered exercise.

The section opens with Sunčana Laketa’s detailed theoretical overview of the different concepts that have been used to understand the intimacies of (counter)terrorism. Specifically, Laketa addresses three conceptual frameworks: first, the concepts of the body and embodiment; second, the concepts of affect, emotions, and atmospheres; and third, the literatures on intimate peace and antiviolence that seek to reframe the dominant terms of debate onto geopolitical violence, security, and terrorism. Laketa’s work draws on insights from feminist geopolitics, and feminist, queer, and postcolonial engagements with violence and terror to argue for an embodied approach to terrorism as way to strengthen the ethical commitments of academic research onto these phenomena.

Sara Fregonese’s article focuses on the atmosphere as an epistemological lens that connects the everyday experience of terror and threat in two seemingly incomparable urban contexts: deeply contested “conflict cities” and cities deemed ordinary or peaceful. Drawing on comparative approaches in urban conflict literature (Rokem 2016) and relying on atmosphere’s non-representational, “more than textual, multisensual worlds” (Vannini 2020: 3) and capacity to propagate beyond the site where it emerged (Sumartojo and Pink 2019), Fregonese’s writing aims to transcend representational categorizations of urban spaces and create new connections via felt experiences and ambiances. This allows tracking of the unequal groundings of universalized and normalized notions—for example, military urbanism—by tending to the unequal propagations of their atmospheric aspects.

Flora Hergon’s article draws attention to the impact on the state of emergency in France on Muslim subjects targeted as suspects after the terrorist attacks of 13 November 2015. She takes the event of the home search and house arrest to which these individuals and communities have

been subjected as an example of policing and state security practice that violently disrupts and re-arranges the boundaries between the private and public, the intimate and the geopolitical. Tracing the postcolonial entanglements of France's state of emergency, Hergon addresses this exceptional political system as an example of a traumatic process that reconstitutes religious subjectivities, communities and spaces deemed suspect.

Luis Velasco-Pufleau's article addresses the recollections of the Bataclan terrorist attack in Paris by interrogating their sonic dimension. Drawing on nine accounts by survivors of the attack, he examines the construction of the memory of this event through the re-engagement of sound memory, on the one hand, and the evolution of the practice of musical listening, on the other hand, among the victims who have in common that they were attacked in the middle of a concert. In doing so, Velasco-Pufleau constructs an acoustemology of the survivors, that aims at the production of meaning through the exploration of sound sensitivity. His approach not only allows us to explore the entanglements between sound, space, and affect, but also contributes to reflection on the means of production of sensitive and sensory testimonies, less focused on the description of the event than on understanding its pathic and somatic implications.

Amy Batley takes David Lynch's idea of urban spatial imagination and its entanglement with the anticipatory logics of counterterror training and preparedness and the way these logics have moved beyond their institutional frameworks of formal training and advice, and have become engrained in the everyday urban experience, especially through an accent on constant awareness and recalibration of one's spatial awareness. These neurotic imaginaries of futurity and anticipation, argues Batley, risk normalizing an image (and a politics) of the city as a geometric and abstract space to secure rather than as "a lived space of bodies, relations, felt qualities and everyday practices" (Batley, this issue).

To conclude, bridging a conceptual and methodological gap between terrorism studies, geographies of affect and emotion, and feminist geopolitics, the issue extends the scholarly agenda by taking account of the experiential mechanisms as relevant for questions of urban governance and affective life in situations of violence, terrorism, and geopolitical conflict. The section benefits from scholarly engagement from different disciplines and national contexts, spanning geography, urban studies, sociology, musicology, and psychology, and encompassing francophone and anglophone scholarly approaches, for a productive exploration of the contemporary lived politics and landscapes of terror in Europe.

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■ **DAMIEN MASSON** is an Associate Professor in Urban Studies at CY Cergy Paris University, researcher at the MRTE laboratory, France, and co-director of the International Ambiances Network. His research concern relationship between ambiances and mobility on the one hand, and the ambient dimensions of security and safety policies in urban areas on the other hand. He is currently investigating the atmospheres of "post-terror" in European

cities. This involves developing new research methods that aim at crossing micro-spatial approach, social encounters and sensory phenomena in order to articulate infra-political everyday dimensions of urban spaces to the sensory and the ambient.

■ **SARA FREGONESE** is Senior Lecturer in political geography at the University of Birmingham, UK. Her research focuses on the relations between geopolitics, conflict, security and urban space and, since 2002, has included residential fieldwork in Lebanon, Northern Ireland, Germany, the Netherlands and Italy. She is the author of numerous academic papers and two books: *War and The City. Urban Geopolitics in Lebanon* (Bloomsbury 2019) and *The Radicals' City. Urban environment, polarisation, cohesion* (Routledge 2016). Her current research focuses on the felt experience of terrorism and counterterrorism across diverse urban publics and the implication for urban public space, encounter and coexistence.

■ NOTES

1. P3 Research Database. "Terrorism and the City: Affect, Space and Violence in Urban Europe." *Swiss National Science Foundation*. <http://p3.snf.ch/project-179943> (accessed 15 June 2021).
2. Sara Fregonese and Paul Simpson "Atmospheres of (Counter)Terrorism in European Cities." ES/V01353X/1 <https://gtr.ukri.org/projects?ref=ES%2FV01353X%2F1> (accessed 15 June 2021); Damien Masson. "Ambiances du (contre)terrorisme dans les Villes Européennes – ACT-EU (EST0110171)." <https://anr.fr/Projet-ANR-20-ORAR-0006> (accessed 2 July 2021); Simon Runkel. "Atmospheres of (counter)terrorism in European cities" <https://gepris.dfg.de/gepris/projekt/440838216?context=projekt&task=showDetail&id=440838216&> (accessed 2 July 2021).
3. While the international community has not yet adopted a common definition of terrorism, here we have referred to official/legal definitions of terrorism in a number of European countries (including France, the UK, and Germany) and the definition used by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (2008).

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