# The Metropolis and its Social Life

## Conviviality, Urban Studies, and Thoughts on Thugs

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## Abstract

This paper explores the question of why urban studies of conviviality have paid so little attention to hate and fear in urban social life. It summarizes two main or mainstream insights on conviviality in urban studies and its spatiality: its focus on walkable neighbourhoods, and the idea that further public space is anonymous – and violence is always elsewhere and external. The paper shows that the "thug" has long been known as the figure of *The Hate U Give*, as in the novel of Angie Thomas or the tattoo of the rapper Tupac – just not in urban conviviality writings. It suggests that this may have its causes in the idea of the anonymous city life versus the parochial neighbourhood community, a contrast that underplays hate and fear and fails to include the workings of violence on various scales. We may create conviviality on the neighbourhood level, yet the thug emerges from the hate we give, emulated by narratives of denunciation which are not at all new – but still relevant.

**Keywords: urban studies | public space | conviviality | encounters**

## About the Author

Talja Blokland received her PhD in 1998 from the University of Amsterdam. Since 2009, she has been professor of urban sociology at Humboldt University Berlin, where she also directed the Georg Simmel Center for Urban Studies. Blokland is an urban sociologist whose work focuses on urban inequalities and how life in cities fosters social and spatial segregation. She explores how trust, safety, and shared understandings of urban life emerge, and has written extensively on themes related to conviviality, including public familiarity, community as urban practice, and urban comfort zones. She is the author of *Community as Urban Practice* (Polity Press, 2017), among other books.

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# 1.	Introduction

The attack on the Kibbutz Be'eri on 7 October 2023 made clear, once more, that the militarization of space (Davis 2011) will always fail.[1] On that day, Hamas fighters murdered Vivian Silver. She had spent her life working for peace and human rights for Palestinians. She was one of thousands of people who died in the attacks of Hamas and the genocide that followed. She was a human rights activist who worked vigorously on peaceful conviviality including recognition of Palestinian entitlements. Entering the Kibbutz required crossing a secured border that ghettoized Gaza, into a gated community secured with walls with barbed wire, high tech gates and camera-surveillance. The devices did not keep people safe. Israeli citizens and Palestinians have lived for decades with violence, and risks thereof. The massacre of Be'eri showed that higher walls, more fences, more securitizing technology and more arms lead nowhere but into deeper darkness. That the course of events left me speechless reflects the privileged position from which I have learnt to think about the social world. The urban studies literature on conviviality does not address the possibility of violence or the potential of hate.

The dehumanization necessary to kill the people of Gaza did not begin only after the attack. The attack followed failed attempts to ghettoise and structurally exclude Palestinians and was followed by destroying those humans and livelihoods which had withstood failed attempts to contain and oppress. These attempts themselves must be framed geopolitically and require another expertise than mine. The recurrent attacks of Hamas and Hezbollah on Israel, year after year, fed into what conflict studies calls a "conflict ethos". In 2017, a representative survey among Israeli and Palestinians showed that "ongoing violence engenders more violence through a vicious circle of violence by increasing the psychological distress of the civilian population and magnifying threat perceptions of particularly of collective threat, leading to increased support for the ethos of conflict, and decreased support for political compromise" (Canetti et al. 2017: 100). The authors called for new ways of conflict resolution. They warned that the dominant ethos of conflict was taking a destructive course. Enduring peace required social and psychological changes on both sides.

Human rights violations and subtler forms of marginalization act on and produce hate, a social product of a narrative nature. Paul Gilroy remarked in the context of the "war on terror" that "the figure of the […] terrorist has emerged to hold hands with

the other well-known icon representation of immanent racial chaos and disorder: the street criminal" (Gilroy 2006: 43) – or thug. Veena Das (1998) analysed violence against Sikhs in the resettlement colonies in Delhi in 1984 after Gandhi's murder and concluded: "images of hate between social groups may take a volatile form when the social order is threatened by a critical event and so transform the world that the worst becomes not only possible but also probable" (Das 1998: 126). Scholarship on urban encounters, defined as everyday negotiations and interactions or conviviality (Mecila 2017: 7–8), may not be taking seriously enough the hate engendered by marginalization, including the emulation of disregard through story-telling (Tilly 1998) that forges hate symbolically. Marginalization, the dynamics of oppression, exploitation and opportunity hoarding produces socio-economic and cultural closure with spatial markers of territorial stigmatization (Wacquant 2007, 2008, 2009) as it is rooted in long histories of states disrespecting human rights, which can co-exist with support for state violence, as Teresa Caldeira discusses for Brazil (Caldeira 2002). Fortification fails us, humans, as it violates human rights – and it backfires. This is neither surprising nor new to other discussions in urban studies which focus directly on urban militarization (Davis 2011; Wacquant 2008; Graham 2009, 2012).

Yet hate also belongs to the realm of the ordinary (Ahmed 2007). The anthropologist and conflict mediator Beth Roy described processes of hate in *Some Trouble With Cows* (1994), a study of conflict in Bangladesh where "a cow ate some plants, and many people fought each other: on the surface a simple story […] easy to dismiss". But "the trouble is", Roy continued, that "it is a story so often repeated in so many languages that we can dismiss it only at great peril":

> Even when […] stereotypes of the others' behaviour did grave injustice to reality, nonetheless their complaints – "*they* beat our children", "*they* threw away food we had touched", "*they* won't hire us to work within their homes" – all contained elements of truth more profound and important than the misconceptions. Their grievances deserved redress. When new forces took power on the state level and failed to right the wrongs most deeply felt on the local level, people took matters into their own hands (Roy 1994: 185–186).

But violence tends to be discussed in other circles of urban studies than in the writings on conviviality. Alongside to two decades of contributions from urban studies in the *Journal of Intercultural Studies* (Noble 2006, 2013; Wessendorf 2014; Wise 2016), Mecila's working papers archive contains an impressive collection of papers that address negotiations and conflicts over inequalities and difference, historically and in literature. But Mecila has done less work so far on the spatiality of such conflicts, or the spatio-temporal events that constitute places (Massey 2005: 130) through interactions "from the immensely global to the intimately tiny" in a sphere of coexisting

heterogeneity where "different trajectories exist" (Massey 2005: 9). Urban conviviality and diversity scholars have worked from the assumptions that neighbourly interactions create a parochial realm of conviviality (Lofland 1998). Parochial realms are free of conflicts. But they do rely on a basic premise of a potential peaceful coexistence, and trust as a possibility to be built. Sometimes we paid attention to structural violence and marginalization (Back and Shamser 2016), but not all the time. Much of what we have published in urban studies on conviviality has analysed settings without violence or did not make violence visible. Simultaneously a collective narrative of urban fear grew and urban residents indicate in surveys that lifestyle differences make them feel unsafe (Blokland 2009; Benz 2014). And in a parallel discussion, Southern urban theory and research in cities of walls like São Paulo thematized the fragmentation of urban space (Caldeira 2002; Villarreal 2021). Work bridging these two debates is rare, but scholars such as Tilmann Heil and Sérgio Costa have emphasized the need to incorporate power into conviviality studies (Heil 2019; Costa 2019).[2] In a special issue in the journal *City*, Anna Gawlewicz and Oren Yiftachel have pointed to the necessity to analyse "hostile environments" which they believed to be "of great concern to the reshaping of urban societies" (Gawlewicz and Yiftachel 2022: 346). Yet those studying conviviality (sometimes in other terms) in Amsterdam, London, Berlin or Geneva, Montreal or Sydney, seemed to just plough through.[3] Our work has not paid attention to the thought that the legal scholar Yishai Blank put to me when I gave a talk on public familiarity and urban trust at the Hebrew University only three months before 7 October: What about hate?[4]

I do not have a definitive answer, and there is certainly more than one possible answer. This paper merely explores the question: Why have we paid so little attention to hate and fear in urban social life?[5] Section two summarizes the main or mainstream insights on conviviality in urban studies and its spatiality, which tend to focus on a concept of neighbourhood where the "entanglement of power with convivial social interactions remains under-explored" as Hart (2002: 684) criticized in his study of Jaffa. These writings generally assume an absence of the figure of "thugs". In section three, I show

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2   Achille Mbembe's point that power is inherent to conviviality reflects in for example Costa's proposal to study the inequality-conviviality nexus, and Heil's use of the concept in his work on Rio (Mbembe 1992; Heil 2019; Costa 2019).

3   To name a few of such studies: On Amsterdam: Huijbens 2023; Antwerp: Blommaert 2014; Birmingham: Karner and Parker 2011; Berlin: Blokland and Schultze 2018; Geneva: Felder 2020; London: among others Wessendorf 2011, Back and Shamser 2016, Bates 2018 and Wilson 2013; Manchester: Hudson et al. 2009; Montreal: Radice 2016; Sydney: among others Wise and Velayutham 2009, 2013.

4   I am thankful to the organizers of the conference *Who Owns the City?* at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem on 19-21 April 19-21, 2023, which helped me to start to think about this issue.

5   Obviously, one could simply say "it is Eurocentrism that's done it" but then the question remains: how?

that the THUG has long been known as what the novelist Angie Thomas (2018) aptly expresses as the figure of "The Hate U Give" – just not in urban conviviality writings (Thomas 2018). The fourth section discusses why this may be so – I discuss the idea of the anonymous city life versus the parochial neighbourhood community. This contrast underplays hate and fear and fails to include the workings of violence on various scales. I then conclude that however much conviviality we may create on the neighbourhood level, the thug comes from the hate we give, and that by cocooning in conviviality in secured comfort zones, we allow state institutions to remove certain bodies and certain lives from presence. Narratives of denunciation emulate these processes, which are not at all new – but are still relevant.

## 2.    Conviviality in Urban Studies

This section discusses the absence of the thug in mainstream conviviality studies. It argues that this absence is connected to a specific understanding of public space which is either seen as parochial, or as empty or irrelevant.

### 2.1    Conviviality as Not-Always-Nice-But-Still-Harmless

Conviviality as a concept was introduced by Catholic priest and philosopher Ivan Illich (1973), as Magdalena Nowicka and Tilmann Heil traced, to address the possibilities of institutions to foster togetherness in urban industrial societies (Illich 2001 [1973]; Nowicka and Heil 2016). It described an ideal of human engagement against technocratic and capitalist developments of his time. Extensive literature overviews, such as Linda Lapiņa's, show Gilroy's influence, who described conviviality as "a social pattern in which different metropolitan groups dwell in close proximity but where their racial, linguistic and religious particularities do not […] add up to discontinuities of experience or insuperable problems of communication" (Gilroy 2006: 40). Gilroy used conviviality to write about urban spaces where people continuously lived together daily, and differences were not essentialized. Gilroy applied it for describing a "small (local), counter-narrative to dominant radicalizing discourses, spontaneously occurring and descriptive rather than normative" (Lapina 2016: 35). The critical perspective on the nation and nationhood was powerful but also reinforced community development arguments known to not always be progressive (Blokland 2017). As Lapiņa noted:

> an emphasis on conviviality, or mundane everyday (or even 'successful') […] getting along reflects political and politicized research agendas – on one hand, countering dominant narratives of segregated neighbourhoods […] and on the other hand falling in line with interventions that aim to facilitate social cohesion (Lapina 2016: 33).

Urban studies journals also address conviviality to acknowledge that difference and inequality define urban life as an ongoing practice (Semi et al. 2009). This has long been obvious to Latin American urban scholars. The Brazilian geographer Milton Santos, for example, discussed urban polarization as spatial expression of economic dynamics (Santos 2021). Flávia Feitosa et al. demonstrated that economic growth and decreasing inequalities did not translate into less segregation in the São Paulo metropolitan region (Feitosa et al. 2021: 522). Urban segregation continues to structure people's networks in São Paulo or Santiago de Chile, and also the production of public space (Marques 2012; Link 2014). Caldeira explains that São Paulo has become a "city of walls" which severed the "maintain[ing of] the principles of open and free circulation which have been the most significant organizing values of modern cities" (Caldeira 1996: 303) and sees this as a "new" segregation which developed in the 1990s. Residential and social segregation produce a spatiality of conviviality.

Many studies on conviviality have contributed to our understanding of how we use everyday encounters for urban belonging under conditions of diversity (Wise and Velayutham 2013; Lapina 2016). Suzanna Hall does so for a London shopping street, Martha Radice for Montreal's commercial venues, Sarah Neal et al. for leisure space and parks in London, Milton Keynes and Leicester in the UK, Vincent et al. for elementary schools in London, and Hannah Jones et al. for franchise coffee shops, in the same British cities (Hall 2012; Radice 2016; Neal et al. 2013, Neal et al. 2015; Vincent et al. 2017; Jones et al. 2015). Darya Malyutina provides an empirical example with her study of friendships of young Russian migrants through the lens of conviviality in a London bar (Malyutina 2018). Megha Amrith discusses friendly and convivial relations existing alongside competition and distancing practices among migrants in São Paulo (Amrith 2018).[6] Overall, conviviality in the literature applies to interactions that fit the idea of successful encounters of difference which nevertheless require "constant labour" (Noble 2013; Nowicka and Vertovec 2014; Nowicka and Heil 2016; Back and Shamser 2016).

Such studies, first, tend to expect non-violent interactions between residents, often in dense neighbourhoods or in neighbourhood sites like schools and school yards, parks, coffee houses, playgrounds, kindergartens, shopping streets, and the like. These reflect ideas around "third places", which Ray Oldenburg believed to provide a "sense of wholeness and distinctiveness" outside the duties of home life and work where people primarily enjoy each other's company (Oldenburg 1999: 265). They resonate with Georg Simmel's idea of sociability as play (Simmel 1949 [1910]) and remind us of the very first sociology paper ever published in the *American Journal of Sociology*,

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6   Other examples include Alicia Izharuddin's work on Malay women and Andrew Webb et al.'s work on multi-culture and conviviality in Chilean schools, but these works do not discuss urban dimensions (Izharuddin 2023; Webb et al. 2023).

which addressed the fleeting sociability of the saloon (Moore 1897). Heike Hanhörster and Sabine Weck discuss such sites as micro-publics (Hanhoerster and Weck 2020) following Ash Amin: "settings where engagement with strangers in a common activity disrupts easy labelling of the stranger as enemy and initiates new attachments" (Amin 2002: 969). In most of urban writing on conviviality, little attention is paid to fear and if so, it tends to be seen as a deficit in multicultural competences, a racist attitude, simplicity of mind of certain individuals (and not the author). Helen Wilson and Jonathan Darling summarize encounters where others are made into strangers (Wilson and Darling 2016: 4).[7] Deborah Lupton found in an Australian study that participants constructed the "unpredictable stranger" as a threat. What was familiar provided ontological security: doing boundary work of stranger-making has regularly been addressed as "work to maintain the borders of subjectivity and social order" (Lupton 1999: 14). We are socialized into a "cultural mythology" of the home as safe and public places as "highly dangerous in terms of abduction or attacks from strangers":

> Mythologized places of danger, thus, are seen to be dangerous particularly because they are associated with people from deviant and marginalized social groups […] for those who fear such places, media representations of such places, notions circulating in gossip networks and lack of personal experience with them contribute to their views of these places as dangerous (Lupton 1999: 10).

I find it unsettling that such interpretations show the governmentality of fear but also suggest that one should not fear. Noble critiques such an individualized notion of fear but maintains that the habituation of urban living implies "a practical orientation in which engaging with people and goods from other cultures in daily practice allows people to open themselves to a broader humanity beyond local, racial and national affiliations" (Noble 2013: 177; he does not mention social class). Habituation is developed through responses to unexpected situations in which we form practices of ethics. Yet again, this assumes a baseline. Conviviality draws on a normalcy of non-violence and deliberation that is, situationally or normatively (Misztal 2001), to be expected and conviviality is to be found in such normalcy where we engage with each other without robbing, beating or killing. It analyses the urban world as if criminal (or any other) violence is something external (e.g. Rodney Stark in his "ecology of crime" (Stark 1987)), and its perpetuators excluded from local communities, although we know that they are not (Blokland 2008a; Feltran 2020). In the small city where I did my ethnographic work for "Facing Violence: Everyday Risks in an American Housing Project", all my interlocutors knew that the distinction between "the thugs" (or hoodlums, in Elijah Anderson's (2013) words)

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7   Following Engin F. Isin, Wilson and Darling also refer to the less-researched relevance of encounters for citizen claims of visibility and voice (Isin 2002; Wilson and Darling 2016: 7).

and decent folks was not strict (Blokland 2008a). The elected president of the official Resident Council of the Public Housing Authority had sons active in the drug trade, and more than one had been shot. The better people's knowledge of the organization of crime, the deeper their understanding of the risks of violence in the neighbourhood is. All apparent conviviality still bore somehow a relation to the violence. Men who made money with violence donated sodas, burgers, and hotdogs to community cook-outs.

## 2.2   Violence as the Threat from Outside

Urban studies tend to reduce the relevance of non-civil behaviour as an outside threat to conviviality. Conviviality evokes a scene of enjoyable diversity in presence for those skilled, politically enlightened or robust enough to not be bothered, or not pay attention to it altogether within its temporality (Kern 2016). And although urban fear became a collective narrative, certain urban middle classes continued to organize neighbourhood activities from the assumption that, if "we" – and that often includes us, academics – do community in our blocks of streets, we can live together nicely. In our gentrified village-like neighbourhood, carefully protected by the sociability of farmers' markets, street art events, we slowly push the urban frontiers, preferably with leftist activism for the vulnerable neighbours (Kern 2016). We plant bushes and trees with women in a community garden, but not with their sons and cousins, whom policy makers, community activists and police alike categorize as "outside" the community (Blokland 2008b). And yet, as the picture below shows, the outsiders may be literally in our face, where the men wait for their narcotics customers while community activists do the planning. Had I studied the community garden project in isolation, I would never have guessed who else was in the picture (Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Coexistence of Illicit and Civic Activity in a Shared Urban Space**



Source: Photo by the author.

London, Berlin, New York, Montreal and Amsterdam – all sites of studies of conviviality – are "adopting walls, separations and policing of boundaries" (Caldeira 2002) to maintain social segregation as cities like São Paulo do, only in subtler ways. Roger Keil has warned for the bias in our scholarship to study certain urban neighbourhoods while a majority retreats to the suburbs (Keil 2013). Students of urban public life (with some exceptions) continue to turn to sites of interactions in high density, lively streets and urban venues as if their cities look like Jane Jacobs' Greenwich Village. Often, quite a few of the visitors to Berlin admire its walkability, dense infrastructure, and high diversity, but tend to walk in neighbourhoods inside the "urban rail ring" – and like tourists, urban scholars pay little attention to what life is like for the approximately 70% of residents living outside those neighbourhoods (Kraetzer 2019). In earlier work, I have argued that middle and upper middle classes are not only "padding their bunkers" (Atkinson 2006). When they do not, they still socially segregate in urban institutions like schools (Giustozzi et al. 2016), a point also made in other studies on gentrification or social mix (Bridge et al. 2013). Margaret Kohn connects the idea that proximity may "breed defensiveness", a mild analysis of the inequality consequence of segregation in conviviality to how:

> [s]egregation itself makes it difficult for members of privileged groups to recognize the existence of injustice. It makes the reality of deprivation invisible for those who do not live in the zones of danger. Without exposure to deprivation or even difference, the privileged become unable to recognize their own advantages and unlikely to question the system that produces systematic disadvantages (Kohn 2004: 8).

Encounters, Gill Valentine noted, are meetings with "antagonism or opposition at heart" (Valentine 2008: 326). As *Black in White Space* (Anderson 2023) showed, for BPOC citizens, encounters in gentrified diverse neighbourhoods are situated in dominant whiteness: bodies entering an urban setting are predefined by the expectation of whiteness (Ahmed 2007). Overall, many urban studies of conviviality only locate citizens in neighbourhoods but omit thugs as full urban citizens in the urban fabric and leave the study of these agents to other parts of the field of urban studies and criminology.

## 3.   Nothing New: Urban Marginalization, Fear and Securitization

How are members of marginalized groups then expected to adhere to such practices of ethics while at the same time witnessing the symbolic violence implied in hate (if not other forms of denunciation)? Of course, marginalized people organize in urban resistance in "grey spaces" (Yiftachel 2009), collectively move and quietly encroach

(Bayat 2012), sometimes revolutionarily, and through acts as small as killing the cats in a 18th century Parisian workshop or "popular culture" (Darnton 2009). As Michel de Certeau wrote, with informality scarcely being regulated and eliminated by a panoptic concept city, all sort of stuff happens (Certeau 1984: 96). While urban studies colleagues have been arguing that urban fortresses destroy urban public life (Davis 2011), a good part of contemporary urban scholarship, my own work included, has written about the urban world while bracketing out violence, and another corner of the discipline sees radical resistance just about everywhere (Lancione 2016). A sociology of hate has also boomed with the increase of hate speech in social media and the rise of hate crime but tends to view such hate as the individual expression of deviant attitudes. Public interpersonal violence working on various scales may bridge some of these literatures.[8]

## 3.1 "Safe Neighbourhoods"

After 9 pm, the most common figures on the residential streets directly around my middle-class condominium in São Paulo are working-class men who provide service to those who live inside: opening and closing doors and parking house gates, driving people to places or waiting for them to board taxis or hired cars, delivering food and other orders by motorbikes. The drivers and deliverymen sometimes engage in small talk with doormen; some deliverymen park their motorbikes in a small street where they await orders. The streets are covered in cameras, watched by men whom one does not see from the street, but they see you (as a resident, the gate opens for you before you ring). We walk these streets not anonymously, but in constant view of others. The streets may appear empty with "nobody" walking at night, but they are not. Men are *paid to pay attention* to the danger constructed as coming from other men. What this paying to pay attention means to create spaces where violence does not happen remains an empirical question, that Susana Durão has researched in her extensive ethnography of what she calls "security hospitality", defined as "a form of protection created in and for elite and middle-class spaces, fundamental for understanding social life, and the reproduction of inequalities and infrastructure in urban areas", that creates a racialized landscape that reinforces whiteness as elite through its "moral topography" (Durão 2023: 3, 22) by the employment of low-paid, low-educated precarious employees, which in itself, Durão argues, perpetuates violence against marginalized groups. Maybe violence may be deterred by the presence of the watchful eyes of others rather than by the security installations themselves. Or maybe it only appears as such on the surface of the "hospitality" that those who pay for such security get to really see.

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8   Violence that takes place either outside of interpersonal relations within the home (so including police violence inside the home but excluding domestic violence taking place inside the home),

A first field to analyse violence and conviviality expectations of exposure to violence draws attention to the neighbourhoods mixed in social class or inhabited by predominantly middle-class residents where they have sought to retreat behind gates and fences, and which in the public imagination and sometimes in crime statistics are considered "safe".

Maybe such neighbourhoods attract poverty-driven crime like robberies and theft that is a bit more organized: Citizens in these areas being likely to have valuables may make this rational. I hypothesize that in addition, the distance to the person harmed is large enough to preclude having to cope with sympathy. The hate we, as societies, give through structural racism and exclusions, including their spatiality in urban infrastructures, may move from society's scale to the individual victim, who has no personhood. For Brazilian cities, Loïc Wacquant argued that:

> ramifying criminal violence (fed by extreme inequality and mass poverty), class and colour discrimination in judicial processing, unchecked police brutality, and the catastrophic condition and chaotic operation of the carceral system combine to make the aggressive deployment of the penal apparatus in Brazil a surefire recipe for further disorder and disrespect for the law at the bottom of the urban hierarchy and steers the country into an institutional impasse (Wacquant 2008: 56).

On a Saturday afternoon, I walked home from the park. There is a short street with a rather non-descript stretch of about 300 meters, walled on both sides, with many lanes for cars converging at the highway entrance. I am always attentive walking there. I know that the man with his brown blanket will stand talking to himself, or sleep on the pavement, and a somewhat younger man without shoes may either sleep or have the energy of his high. Sometimes the two sit a block away, chatting with others on a concrete bench. I know that on school days, the school bus drivers spend the hours between their tours here, watching videos on their phones and eating snacks. I know there is other life in the middle of the night from signs of recently charred trash. A man on a bike came from behind, passed me, turned around, and passed again. I was on alert. He disappeared around the corner. I relaxed. A man on a mountain-bike came towards me, with a delivery bag on his back. In passing, his face came very close to mine, he strongly pushed against my upper chest and very quickly pulled back. I screamed and saw something dangling in his hand as he regained his balance. On his bike only then I realized: my necklace. He entered the park. I then learned the mythology of camera security and guards. The guards at that gate could have warned the guards at the other gates, but they did not. They went through moves of recognition of my concern, they reported it on WhatsApp, typed some more on their phones. I left wondering whether there had been a problem at all. A *gringa* had her necklace stolen.

Nobody got hurt. It was a sunny afternoon. The security guard told the people not to bike on the pedestrian path.

I went to the police and the policeman who was watching videos on his phone believed that Brazil's president was to blame and wanted to know if the sociologists think that a robber should be part of society. He shared his biography spontaneously when I answered that robbers are not born robbing. He was raised by a single mother and came from the periphery, yet did not rob. The park's police said they would drive around and have a look and God should bless me. Nobody believed that the cameras did anything to help find a perpetuator, ever. They do not deter theft, and they do not solve problems. They are part of a mythology of security and the job of the security services is to keep that mythology at a level that we may half-way believe that it "works". Durão's work supports this thought: her review of the literature shows that security tends to be seen as "a moral good" and not simply a commercially paid service, and traces the presence of the guards who are to keep security on place in cultural representations, as TV series, songs and (also historical) paintings (Durão 2023: 18–19).

The officer that I had chatted to is not a single individual with mistaken ideas in his head, and once more, relational analyses are needed. In Salvador, Bahia, police officers admitted in interviews that trainings make officers, especially among the military police, think all Black people are suspects, and definitely all Black men, and none of this comes as surprise to people familiar with the subject of police violence in Brazil (Alves and Evanson 2011; Rocha 2012).

After this, I became fearful. I was not scared that something would happen to me again. But I had been taken by surprise and misread an everyday urban situation. It was not that I now thought every man on a bike with a delivery bag would try to rob me. This disguise aroused anger as if I had been betrayed. My stereotypes had not worked. My body, in my heart rate, my muscles – all went on alert when I walked that same street again. In the first few days, I reacted with a light panic when someone approached me ahead of me, and I did a lot of scanning. I had also lost the brisk pace of my walk and my upright body posture. I had turned into an elderly woman walking alone in the street, where I used to be an urban ethnographer approaching the world with a confident curiosity. But as it affected my interactions in public space – I am more convinced than before this experience that the urban study of conviviality needs to do a little more with fear and violence than it has so far. And that fear is more complicated than a misplaced middle-class repulsion felt in the presence of the out-of-place "underbelly of the society" (Lupton 1999: 13).

Such violence enacted by states and privatized security in neoliberal regimes which follows from the militarization is historically connected with colonialism. The challenge

is to understand its downscaling to individual interpersonal hate that, as noted in the introduction, feeds the support for the ethics of conflict. For Mary Louise Pratt, urban space is "a social space where cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetric relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world" (Pratt 1991: 34).[9] She highlights how marginalized groups "select and invent from materials transmitted by a dominant metropolitan culture" and shows that such contact zones are not to be understood as settings of encounters of cooperation and sharing rules of what "is" in "place": "we may sometimes be playing the same game" (Pratt 1991: 38) but often we are not, and some agents exert authority that others do (not) question.[10]

## 3.2 "Dangerous Places"

The second analysis of violence is to be differentiated from others in relation to conviviality of the exposure to violence in dangerous places of highly segregated cities, where a badly fired bullet or a violation of the morals of violence and crime may happen. Behind this lies a theory of place-making that while relevant, cannot be discussed in this paper. In the context of organized crime, as in São Paulo or Rio, the governance of security may mean both a fear of violence and a sense of safety ambiguously at the same time (Suarez et al. 2021; Hoelscher and Norheim-Martinsen 2014). A lot of wonderful work has been done on the challenges and resilience of living in stigmatized urban spaces under militarized urban conditions: Silvia Pasquetti analyses the everyday life of Palestinians living under surveillance regimes in Lydda/Lod, Israel and shows both the adaptation to its stigmatization and moments of care (Pasquetti 2019). In the work of Åsne Håndlykken-Luz, such experiences of radicalized policing of favela residents in Rio stand in focus (Håndlykken-Luz 2020). Henry Giroux discussed US American zero-tolerance policies as a war against urban youth (Giroux 2003). We do not lack accounts of the everyday consequences of securitization. Most works address state violence and privatized security. Fewer works discuss interpersonal public violence, which tends to be left to the psychologists and criminologists.

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9   Before the popularity of conviviality and its criticisms, Pratt made her arguments in the quite similar debate on the usefulness (or its absence) of the notion of community, and closer to a critical assessment of Benedict Anderson's work on imagined communities, she argued against the common underlying assumptions in academia about language, communication, and culture in the community concept.

10  That such questioning or not questioning is not fixed can also be well discussed in the film *7 prisioneiros* (Moratto 2021).

### 3.3   "The Hate U Give"

The focus of conviviality is always on interactions that happen, so that where convivial connections are not made, we assume the absence of any "we". Violence requires the absence of a "we", and hate requires organization, as Ahmed argues. Interestingly, besides analyses of digital hate expressions, the study of hate has been left to psychologists. Aaron T. Beck, for example, applies principles of cognitive psychology to acts of hate, and upscales them to collective levels (Beck 1999). Robert J. Sternberg and Karin Sternberg write in *The Nature of Hate* about the necessary combination of psychological processes of self-assessments, the bi-directional relation between violence and hate and discuss various theories of hate (Sternberg and Sternberg 2008). I refrain from a full discussion of the analysis of hate, as my aim is to explain the absence of hate and violence in the urban studies concerned with conviviality. But that absence is the absence of an imaginary figure, especially also in studies on neighbourhood collective efficacy in relation to conviviality, namely the criminal, the "youth hanging around", the "deviant" – often a male figure, often a young person, and racialized. W. E. B. DuBois noted as early as 1926 that fear is hate and hate is fear – and the fear was the fear of white US America to not be able to keep the Black men down (DuBois 1926). Anderson's *Black in White Spaces* shows that Blacks, especially men, always must watch out when they enter white spaces (Anderson 2023).

The Black Lives Matter movement and other movements against racialized police violence have demanded (renewed) attention for the marginalization and criminalization of Black men. This literature shows the ordinariness of the emotion of hate, and its apparent "entitlement" to a place in the everydayness of conviviality. Ahmed writes that hate is not just a bad mindset or attitude in an individual's head, to be challenged by a few more encounters in conviviality; instead, hate:

> works to animate the ordinary subject […] by constituting the ordinary as in crisis, and the ordinary person as the *real victim*. The ordinary becomes that which is *already* under threat by the imagined others whose proximity becomes a crime against person as well as place. Hate is *distributed* in such narratives across various figures […] all of which come to embody the danger of impurity […]. They threaten to violate the pure bodies; such bodies can only be imagined as pure by the perpetual restaging of this fantasy of violation. Given this, hate cannot be found in one figure, but works to create the very outline of different figures or objects of hate, a creation that crucially aligns the figures together, and constitutes them as a "common" threat. Importantly, then, hate does not *reside* in a given subject or object. Hate is economic; it circulates between signifiers in relationships of difference and displacement (Ahmed 2001: 358, emphasis in the original).

Besides extensive work on the marginalization and violation of human rights of Black men and other persons in peripheries and inner-city neighbourhoods (Collins 1998; Garfield 2010), or of racialization of policing of migrant minority youth in cities (Body-Gendrot 2001; Sandercock 2017), the militarization of urban space and the fortification of urban neighbourhoods is extensively and critically discussed in urban studies (Calonge-Reillo 2023; Anderson 2013; Atkinson and Blandy 2007).[11]

There is an abundance of knowledge that supports the idea that the term "thug" should be understood as an acronym for "The Hate U Give", an expression from the novel by Angie Thomas (2018). In this novel, 16-year-old Starr is in the car when her friend Khalil is killed by a police officer in a routine check. Most of the novel deals with her fight for justice for Khalil. In the film that followed the book, the main characters in Khalil's car where he recalls "The Hate U Give" as a notion from the rapper Tupac Shakur, who had "THUG LIFE" tattooed in capital letters on his torso. Tupac Shakur, better known as 2pac, turned Thug Life into an acronym, which stood for The Hate U Give Little Infants F*cks Everybody. As acronym for a lifestyle that one lives where men like him, a Black man from East Harlem, succeed against all odds, it stood for gangster rap, certain dress codes and consumption styles. In an interview, Tupac Shakur (who was killed 27 years ago in a drive-by shooting) clarified that the thug life had to be understood as the result of systematic symbolic and physical violence – and of hate that comes back if you socialize a child by hate. While media demonized his work as inviting violence, for example after two white boys shot at their fellow students and teachers at a schoolyard in Arkansas in 1998 and one turned out to be a fan. The racist dimension of this becomes clear in the simple comparison made by Barry Glassner, that nobody would check if a white guy who killed someone had listened to Johnny Cash. This life experience of knowing that "he lived in a society that still didn't view him as human" which he had to "either battle or embrace" (Glassner 1999:126) resonates with Spike Lee's films, such as his *Do The Right Thing* (1989) in which what seems joyful conviviality at first with many encounters in which difference is negotiated, turns into the burning down of a pizza restaurant, a police killing and a major riot in the streets of a New York neighbourhood. The film provokes the thought that conviviality under conditions of structural racism and economic conditions (such as housing market pressures and gentrification) may not be understood well when analysed.[12]

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11 See also my own work with urban youth in Den Haag or Berlin (Binken and Blokland 2012; Blokland and Serbedzija 2020).

12 Countless reviews and discussions of this film have been published, see for example Reid (1997).

## 3.4   Why the Absences?

Why is all this knowledge from other parts of social sciences not more influential in works on conviviality? The brief answer: because it focuses on neighbourhoods and neighbourhood institutions which do not fully include all users as agents and sees public space as void when researchers do not see obvious meaningful interactions. This omission follows from two core ideas in urban studies which we may all appreciate greatly but nevertheless pose challenges.

## 3.5   Functional Diversity and Fear

One thesis on which much of such urban thinking in US America and Europe has been built, and that has, as Bianca Tavolari demonstrated, also influenced for example urban planner in a place like São Paulo, is Jane Jacobs' *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Tavolari 2019). Tavolari praises Jacobs' work for its recognition of "pedestrian knowledge" and her fight against the "destruction of urban vitality" of "the streets as the quintessential public space" (Tavolari 2019: 19, 20). I agree with Tavolari that as a critique on planning, the book is hugely important. Yet I believe that one of its theses also had a flaw.

The New York architect and resident of Greenwich Village in the 1960s argued against redevelopment plans for a highway that would wipe out the Village as what is now promoted as a walkable city. One of Jacobs's arguments was that such urban design brings eyes on the street. She believed that watching each other live our lives would generate informal social control.[13] Functional diversity and social diversity would go hand-in-hand to produce positive sociability and good neighbourhood life. But how (through what social mechanism) and under which conditions (e.g. in which contexts) does the throwntogetherness of people who happen to be in the same spot mean that people actually pay attention (Schilling et al. 2019) in a way that produces care and not hate? She had not fully considered that proximity is both a requirement to maintain social hierarchies and a precondition to challenge them. As Herbert J. Gans noted in an early critique, Jacobs conflated the visible functional diversity and diversity of use of infrastructure with social diversity, especially across class boundaries (Gans 1994 [1968]).

Empirically testing the thesis that eyes on the street produce a non-violent and attentive conviviality in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, the issue of how we move from eyes on the street to eyes for each other turned out to be much more complicated (Blokland 2009). I found that insecurities in streets and squares were not determined by local networks

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13 Today we say informal local care arrangements as we think social control cannot be a critical concept.

nor by the functional diversity itself. Fearfulness was also not directly linked to the experience of diversity. Instead, residents of four disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Rotterdam talked about fear in relation to a feeling of disengagement, exclusion and boundary work. The experience of diversity related directly to fear when public familiarity was absent. People with low practical neighbourhood use were less likely to live in a public familiarity context, they were therefore less likely to know what to expect from others, and this, then, impacted their sense of safety. This qualified the idea that functional diversity will by definition create a setting used by a diversity of people who will engage with each other, without any further mechanisms, and hence contribute to safety. Urban design of diversity can be a supportive, but not a sufficient condition to "place" conviviality. Such repeated intersections affect expectations of the behaviour of others, as Noble discussed (Noble 2013). But the throwntogetherness does not preclude that we beat each other up:

> [W]hat is special about place is precisely that throwntogetherness, the unavoidable challenge of negotiating here-and-now (itself drawing on a history and a geography of thens and theres) and a negotiation which must take place within and between both humans and non-humans […] this is the event of place (Massey 2005: 129).

Diverse places can thus also carry fear. Reactions of established residents to the arrival of migrants in an Australian urban neighbourhood that Noble studied were not civil inattention, but "uncivil attention": residents talked about newcomers in "a language of discomfort". Noble's research participants expressed a need of a sense of stability, achieved by "techniques of composure", and the need of such a "'fit [...] in relation to the spaces we inhabit and the practices we perform" (Noble 2006: 114).

Fear is a response to danger, which, as Green argued, "penetrates social memory" and works its way into relationships through ambiguities, gossip and suspicion (Green 1994). Frank Furedi sees a societal shift from fear as reply to expected danger to fear of the unknown, so we socialize each other into a belief in safe rooms, safe spaces and a reduction of risk-taking – in vain, as we have seen (Furedi 2018). Lupton, discussed above, argued that fear is a localized circuit of knowledge and a cultural mythology of what is (not) safe (Lupton 1999). The mythology of securitization through walls and cameras is now clear to us all. But I hesitate to assume that difference is simply the basis for fear, reminded of the equivalence that Mary Douglas observed between contemporary "modern" perceptions of danger and witches:

> witches are the social equivalents of beetles and spiders who live in the cracks of the walls […]. They attract the fears and dislikes which other ambiguities and contradictions attract in other thought structures, and the kind of powers

attributed to them symbolize their ambiguous, inarticulate status (Douglas 1966: 127).

Fear builds primarily on learning by socialization and not by experience (D. M. Smith 1999).

## 3.6   Urban Space as Impersonal Void

Fear assumes an "out there" public space, void of care and trust by virtue of anonymity, which results from the urban way of life epitomized in the figure of the blasé. This is the second core idea implicit in conviviality. The focus of urban studies on neighbourhoods and neighbourhood institutions reflects the contrast of inward and outward orientation that Richard Sennett discussed in *The Conscience of the Eye* (Sennett 1990). The Christian city of the European Middle Ages had the parish grounds as the "zone of immunity that protected people from the city" (Sennett 1990: 18–19). That we think of the refuge, from the parish ground to the privacy of the home, as being culturally "away from the neutrality of city streets" developed historically in the Global North. Cities built by colonial powers in Latin America, which Felipe Fernández-Armesto discussed, shared some of these features (Fernández-Armesto 2013). Homes versus streets, villages versus cities, and neighbours versus large crowds: over the course of urban life's cultural history, we have developed an understanding of a refuge where we are our true selves and find ourselves, and it is not in public. In the 19th century, empty streets became the sign that "masses were successfully kept out" (Sennett 1990: 31) and a clean and cleared city became a legible city (Sennett 1990: 37).[14] This neutrality also works as an instrument of power, as "neutral space becomes an act of dominating others" (Sennett 1990: 54–55). Sennett's analyses resonate with the domestication of respectability that affected middle class (and then all) women's lives as illustrated in Christine Stansell's historical study:

> Enclosed, protected, and privatized, the home and the patterns of family life on which it was based thus represented to middle-class women and men a crucial institution of civilization […] [A] particular geography of social life – the engagement of the poor in street life rather than in the enclave of the home – became in itself evidence of parental neglect, family disintegration, and a pervasive urban social pathology (Stansell 1982: 311).

Making urban space legible and defining order as the absence of masses contrasts to some extent with a (later) concern of the impoverishment of public life. Decrease in organized civic life, for which the bowling league was exemplary in Robert D. Putnam's

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14 It is striking how strongly this idea currently guides the ideas of Berlin's mayor on how to approach the city's increasing expressions of poverty and housing crisis in public space.

*Bowling Alone*, threatened the public life of social capital (Putnam 2000). Putnam assumed that neighbourhoods are or should be sites for face-to-face interactions and network ties. Since then, urban citizens have been scaled down to neighbours and community has been diminished to a shell of small-scale goodness on the local level. As I have argued together with Doug Rae, we can trace historical reasons for this empirical process (Blokland and Rae 2008). Many public discussions and initiatives now conceptualize community as a stable construct, formed through network ties with kin, friends or neighbours – at the expense of thinking about public cultures.

Sennett discusses Baudelaire to show that, by the end of the 19th century, "the life in common of the city is inferior to a real life happening inside each person in the crowd" (Sennett 1990: 126). The experience of the city was an experience of difference, to be sure, but of an "individual spirit struggling with impersonal collective form" (Sennett 1990: 126; Amin 2002). For the Chicago School that followed, Sennett continues (Sennett 1990: 126–127), the idea that anyone different could not be as different if it was not for the city granting the liberty developed into the idea that no moral order dominates in a city. Therefore, the metropolis can be a mosaic of social worlds. This continues the distinction between an inner and an outer life, with parochial realms of neighbourhoods where we care, interact and live in convivial co-existence with the idea of indifference towards difference and disengagement that Simmel wrote about.

> Simmel described metropolitan life as expression of modernity, as distant, isolated and reserved, rational and calculating, offering a tolerance to live one's life freely (Simmel 1950: 423). Urban dwellers adapted and adjusted to urban rhythms and forms and become urban themselves – following the diagnosis common in sociology at the end of the 19th century that the meaningfulness of social ties became lost with urbanization. The city dweller was rational in his relationships as was the currency which defined his transactions, money. Simmel theorized that urbanites pass each other indifferently, because absorbing all the impulses of streets exhausted their mental capacities.

But one could also argue that remaining blasé should be seen as only performance, including Simmel's other idea of the partial nature of sociability as a form of play, enabling temporary, located conviviality. Maybe other banalities – of violence, fear, and care in fluid urban encounters – were not so pressing from the standpoint of an intellectual man as they may have been "from the standpoint of women" (D. E. Smith 1999: 13). One banality of everyday life is the denial of the right for women to take urban risks that Khan Phadke et al. discusses from Mumbai (Phadke et al. 2011).[15] The

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15 Loitering, with its dictionary definition of standing around doing "nothing", obviously needs unpacking — but not within these 10,000 words. Timur and Bagli (2006) raise initial questions, drawing on the perspective of an outsider looking at the "no loitering" signs in US cities.

gendered, classed, and radicalized inequalities in public space are now well-known. The metropolis has a public life, as it historically had. Women do pay attention, and they are not alone: LGBTQi persons, Jewish and Muslim citizens, BIPOC citizens, as well as the homeless, unhoused, mentally ill or people living with disabilities must keep a watchful eye. To think that citizens in general can walk blasé rests on an overly atomistic understanding of the individual agent, which is surprising given the high quality of Simmel's relational analysis in other parts of his work. A focus on mental life instead of social life fails to see that in public space categorical boundaries are drawn and emulated, and violations do happen. Sometimes it takes us by surprise. Sometimes we all think similarly about what to expect. In high-crime areas in Berlin and Rotterdam alike, to the question "what do you think people in this area would do when an old woman collapsed in the street", 94% to 98% of the interviewees answered: "People will help". 69% of the respondents in the Berlin survey still expected this even if the person was visibly under the influence of alcohol or drugs.[16] This confirms that the everydayness of hate and fear matter to the study of care and conviviality.

There is a lot to like in Simmel's essay. But Simmel did not force us to see that navigating urban space includes a symbolic use of the space for identification and appropriations that make places, even when we simply pass through the city.[17] From the standpoint of women, the freedom to be blasé follows from familiarization, not anonymity.[18] A standpoint of women could have helped to see that the hate a society gives comes back in public space, and that we can only be blasé as long as others do not violate us. And perhaps our socialization into a blasé attitude in public urban space contributes to the idea of an impersonal void. Such a void, in turn, is a political neutralization that opens up possibilities for violence, imposed by security regimes as part of marginalization.

## 4.    Conclusion

Violence and subtler forms of marginalization act on and produce hate. Hate – not just my hating of you, which I could deny, but your hating of me, or our hating of them, which of course is absent, but their hating of us – is ordinary and so is violence.[19] But as we have seen, scholarship on conviviality in urban studies has not thought about it

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16 These statistics are discussed in Blokland 2009: 159 and Blokland 2021: 74–75.

17 Recently, public transport has even been discussed for its potentials in public life (Sheller 2023).

18 And freedom also has limits in contexts so familiar that they become the sites of performance of proper gender roles.

19 This dynamic is dealt with in *Parasite* (2019), the Oscar-winning South Korean film directed by Bong Joon-ho. In this film, the son of a family struggling with poverty and unemployment gets a chance to work as tutor for a wealthy family, and devises a plan to get his entire family employed under false pretenses. As they gradually manipulate their way into various positions within the family, things go terribly differently than planned. The film ends with bloody killings at a birthday party.

much. I have discussed that much of the work on conviviality in urban studies locates it at the neighbourhood level or in neighbourhood institutions. It contributes little to an understanding of the city (and, I would now like to add, urban citizenship), whereas the scale of urban violence as acted out in militarization and ghettoization of urban space isolates neighbourhoods. I have also argued that urban studies on conviviality ignore or overlook everyday interpersonal violence and does so through an exclusion of the figure of the thug. *The Hate U Give* stands for the violence coming from the hate we, as society, give in marginalization and exclusion processes.

I have found answers in two influential ideas, namely the idea that diversity on the neighbourhood level will produce convivial relations but not violence (derived from Jane Jacobs), and the idea that outside of parochial realms of neighbourhoods and neighbourhood institutions, public space is an impersonal void. I agree with Oren Yiftachel, an Israeli scholar and activist, that the "thrown apartness" that our states and politicians move us into needs to be challenged and urban studies has a role to play (Gawlewicz and Yiftachel 2022).

Baldwin's writing in *The Fire Next Time* (1963) (citied in Sennett 1990: 145–148) showed that the hate we give does not have to be received. The potential transgression of encounters lies in the possibility that difference is overruled or pushed back by the sharing of "not becoming otherwise", but of becoming similar, as "similarity and difference are negotiated in the moment" (Wilson 2016: 455). Structural inequalities create interpersonal interactions that may instil fear. Fearfulness creates withdrawal; stories told about reasons to be fearful create places that are unsafe, and the vicious cycle that follows takes life out of urban space. Often, in gentrification areas for example, who gets to appropriate a relational setting as a public place is an expression of and contributor to opportunity hoarding as a mechanism of durable inequality. Two processes help sustain such inequality, according to Charles Tilly: emulation and adaptation. Emulation is "the copying of established categorically based organizational models and/or the transplanting of existing social relations from one setting to another" (Tilly 1998: 174). The sociological concept of a thug, therefore, is not a matter of the morals of an individual doing something to another individual. Yet, where people rub shoulders with unknown others in public space, there is much more going on than the civil inattention (Goffman 1963) and a blasé ballet in which nobody pays attention.

In urban studies, we may therefore want to think about what we can and should expect, not from micro-publics, but from a public "bigger" than that, in terms of geographical scope beyond the neighbourhood and in terms of politics. An idea of a much wider understanding of "public" from the point of view of doing politics (more than sociability) can be found in Ann Mische and Matthew J. Chandler, who refer to Mische's study of the Brazilian Black students' movement (Mische and Chandler 2019). She learnt that

students organized through sharing less rather than more of their identities. Publics are "sites positioned 'in between' more segmented networks marked by homophily, hierarchy, and specialization". They call such publics essential "wherever participants from segmented groups seek to build commonality,"[20] while engaging their identities "selectively", sometimes "suppressing other affiliations" to achieve commonality (Mische and Chandler 2019: 479). Unlike writings on conviviality, such publics do not assume localness. Perhaps more empirical case studies of third places and practices of small-scale conviviality stand in the way of thinking bigger.

But a dominant ethos of conflict, to repeat what Daphna Canetti et al. concluded, increases also individually our fear (Canetti et al. 2017). Vivian Silver "believed that an eye for an eye will leave the whole world blind", as she is cited in a text in her memory by her friend a co-director of the Arab Jewish Centre for Equality, Empowerment and Cooperation, a women's activist organization that worked for peace and human rights for years, Amal Elsana Alh'jooj writes:

> Beneath our identities lies our essence. This essence with one voice and one face. This essence called 'humanity'. Vivian, your smile will always shine, reminding all of us who have dedicated their lives to advocating for a shared society on that piece of land, all of us who feel lost, all of us who don't know what to do, to still believe in humanity (Alh'jooj 2023).

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20 I thank Eduardo Marques for pointing me to the work of Ann Mische.

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