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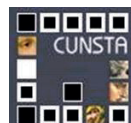
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# The Cultural Capital City as a Shared State of Mind. The Italian “Cucchi Case”

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## *Abstract*

Street art may be seen as a practice of spontaneous urban appropriation, expressed through a shared state of mind. In this context, street artworks are both the agents and the results of an “emotional right” to the city, conveyed through the creation of shared symbols and icons. The basis of this concept has been developed through an expanded approach to the theoretical perspective of Lefebvre’s 1968 work *The Right to the City*. This is intertwined with a detailed case study on a street mural in Naples, Italy, depicting Ilaria Cucchi, an activist against police brutality following the polarising death of her brother, Stefano Cucchi, in police custody, painted by Italian artist Jorit Agoch. It is through this mural that images, public space, politics, and state action intersect, demonstrating a facet of the

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city's cultural capital as a shared state of mind. Our point of departure is the ethnographic experience, examining what it can tell us about how urban space, and with it all the city, becomes a shared state of mind. By elaborating upon our ethnography within the city of Naples, Italy, through Ilaria Cucchi's mural, we infer that the city's cultural capital provides a unique interpretative experience through which to understand this shared state of mind.

La street art può essere vista come una pratica di appropriazione urbana spontanea, espressa attraverso uno stato mentale condiviso. In questo contesto, le opere d'arte di strada consentono alla città di dare forma a un "diritto emotivo", veicolato attraverso la creazione condivisa di simboli e icone.

In questo lavoro, la struttura concettuale di tale paradigma è stata sviluppata attraverso un approccio teso ad amplificare la prospettiva teorica dell'opera di Lefebvre del 1968 *Il diritto alla città*. La trattazione è stata poi particolarizzata ad un caso di studio relativo ad un murales di strada a Napoli, in Italia, raffigurante Ilaria Cucchi, un'attivista schierata contro la brutalità delle Forze dell'Ordine in seguito alla morte di suo fratello Stefano Cucchi avvenuta in una caserma dei Carabinieri. È attraverso il murales di Ilaria Cucchi, dipinto dall'artista italiano Jorit Agoch, che immagini, spazio pubblico, politica e azione dello Stato si intersecano, dimostrando un aspetto del capitale culturale della città relativo ad uno stato mentale condiviso.

La ricerca si è basata su un'esperienza etnografica condotta nel luogo del murales di Ilaria Cucchi finalizzata a comprendere come lo spazio urbano, e con esso tutta la città, diventi espressione di uno stato mentale condiviso.

## 1. *Introduction*

In "The City," an essay on urban sociology written by Robert Park and other authors in 1915, the city is defined as more than a congeries of individual men and social services, such as streets, buildings, street lamps, and tramlines; it is also something more than a simple constellation of institutions and administrative tools, such as courts, hospitals, schools, police, and officials of various kinds. The city is rather a state of mind, a body of customs and traditions, attitudes, and feelings organised within these customs and transmitted through this tradition.

But there is another form that emerges, one that is disruptive to the others; when such an event as the one addressed here occurs, it is that of the desire for redemption. In these circumstances, images are not just documentary sources, but real visual notes or containers of collective emotions (Gillian 2007; Hansen 2018). The emotional nature of the city is expressed in its art and sometimes reflects local or national events that impact the consciousness of the city. At certain times this shared emotional nature of the city may become even stronger, and sometimes it happens that the different elements of a theory become the pieces of a mosaic that takes concrete form.

A moment like this in Italy's history, and one that was especially visible in Italian cities, was the tragedy of the death of a young man, Stefano Cucchi, in

2009. This event, and the resulting media and public “buzz,” is referred to in this contribution as the “Cucchi case.” The framework is the personal story of a 31-year-old Roman who was arrested and killed in prison by a group of *Carabinieri*<sup>1</sup> on 22 October 2009. The Cucchi case then intersects with the work of a street artist, Jorit, whose murals provide the inspiration for this discussion of the city’s role as an expression of collective sentiment. It is emblematic that Jorit inaugurated this work nine years after Stefano Cucchi’s death. It is representative of the fact that the memory of this event is still vivid and able to produce symbols. However, the artist does not paint the victim, but his sister Ilaria. Another piece in this mosaic of meanings is the role of women in the dispute for a right of denied justice.

In our ethnographic experience, we have tried to live, through a transcalar perspective, a specific urban dimension of the city of Naples, Italy, starting from this case that has become of national dimension in the public domain. The relationship of scale was possible thanks to Jorit, who painted works all over the world and who chose Naples as the location of his work about the Cucchi case.

The following were the steps of our ethnographic approach. Personal sensitivity, even before academic interest, was the spark to deepen the topic. Then several other sparks occurred, apparently unrelated to each other, but indeed pieces of a mosaic: public art; the role of women, in particular Stefano Cucchi’s sister; and the instrumental function of the city in relation to the right of citizens to express their opinion on this case.

For about two months, we went every afternoon to the neighbourhood where Jorit’s mural relating to the Cucchi case was painted to assimilate as a citizen among the citizens even before being a researcher, the feeling of the people standing on in face of this mural.

As portrayed in the Italian media, Stefano Cucchi was a good man from a middle-class family who had fallen into bad company and had been linked to the world of drugs despite the high moral values of his family members. Yet, he was still considered a young man who deserved to be brought back on the right path. Rather than returning to society, he instead met his death while in custody. The public’s trust was lost as his killers were figures of law and order, men from whom defence is expected.

The case had a lot of media emphasis through TV and newspapers, and in the common sentiment, Stefano represented a bit of the “every citizen” who

<sup>1</sup> In Italy, there is a difference between the police and the Carabinieri. The police are a civil body that directly depends on the Ministry of the Interior. At the same time, the Carabinieri is an armed force that depends on the Ministry of Defense. In addition to exercising civilian functions, it can carry out operations in foreign countries and the Army. It is also part of the Italian armed forces, composed in four sectors: the Army (land), the Navy, the Air Force, and the Arma dei Carabinieri (gendarmery corps with military police functions competing in the integrated defense of the national territory).

saw themselves in this person, someone who could easily make mistakes and yet who should maintain a certain right of moral redemption. After Cucchi's death, this individual right was felt in the country as a collective right. Thus, the collective right of redemption and the public's resistance to the state found their form of expression through the city. Therefore, an expanded approach to Lefebvre may be recognised, in which it is no longer the citizen who aspires to behold the right to the city, but it is the city that, through street art, bestows an emotional right to the citizen.

The Cucchi case spread like wildfire through the media and was frequently mentioned on social media channels. This could be considered the passive approach to the case. Interestingly, street art became an active approach to the case, adding value to the creation of emotions. Indeed, as Jupiterfab (2020, 195) argues, "even in today's technological age, art still has the power to touch people's emotions and, together with other disciplines, can inspire people to change the way they look at themselves and the world." This reflection expands upon Rancière's philosophy (2004). Once operating with few rights concerning the fates of their works, street artists now have alternative forms of action. Now, they visibly express the thoughts of the citizens; in the Cucchi case, this is contrasted against a resistant state position.

This article explores the theme of a relationship between urban space and art. This concept is addressed through the viewpoint of the Cucchi case and, antithetically, through the creation of street art in which space is consumed and not produced. Then, Lefebvre's thoughts are viewed through an expanded proposal, using the Cucchi case as a catalyst for the mural of Cucchi's sister, Ilaria, which is found in a central rather than a suburban neighbourhood in Naples. The universality of the city's shared state of mind is found in the Cucchi case, transcending the urban-suburban dichotomy. This shared experience is the main object of street art. Jones (2011, 437) suggested that "political art can offer new vocabularies and voices challenging the aesthetics that underpin views of the slum."

## 2. *Methodology*

### 2.1. *The relationship between art and urban space*

In technological, economic, sociological, and other theories, there is always a profound difference between the set of parts that make up a system and the system itself, meant as a unicum in which the parts are elements linked to each other by interdependent functions. The Cucchi case may be considered in terms of a system whose components are urban space and art. The components, in this case, are cohesive and give expression to a right of collective justice. This

is a right that the city may give to its citizens through artistic means of public expression located in public spaces. In fact, there is a large framework on the *right to the city* in the literature. Marcuse (2010, 194), for example, speaks of the *right to the city*, while referring to particular historical periods, such as the crises of 1929, 1968, and 1990, in these terms: "the claim is a claim to a totality, to something whole and something wholly different from the existing city, the existing society."

Indeed, there are several iterations of "the right" – a right to art, a right to the city, and the right to justice ("against the silence of the state") – but there is also a right to "moral redemption," which is not only the individual, but the collective right, and it is also "emotional." Furthermore, it seems that this right is not merely "legal" (or not at all, in contrast to the cited Peter Marcuse), but also "emotional." Therefore, the meaning of the right analysed in this work in relation to the Cucchi case is the right to truth. But the latter transcends the truth of the single Cucchi case and becomes the universal paradigm of every denied truth. In this sense, Cucchi is the projection of many individuals whose right has been denied. Jorit's mural thus becomes the sounding board of each person. The ethnographic experience we lived near Jorit's mural confirmed our early assumption.

Similarly, the Cucchi case also reveals a society ready to evolve, where the state is both right and a symbol of justice. The Cucchi case began with a specific event, but its resonance in the public's expectations of justice goes beyond the boundaries of time and space. Above all, it overcomes the individual dimension and becomes an example of a shared state of mind. Marcuse (2010, 193) is still relevant in this context, even if this "right for justice" is seen through a judicial framework: "It is a moral claim, founded on fundamental principles of justice, of ethics, of morality, of virtue, of the good. 'Right' is not meant as a legal claim enforceable through a judicial process today (although that may be part of the claim as a step in the direction of realizing the Right to the City)."

To understand the system, one must start from its parts: the city and the art. As noted by Hannigan (2003) and Whybrow (2011), the city has always been a privileged place to produce and consume art and culture. Art is experienced through community symbols, evocative or commemorative installations, or even spaces designed for rehabilitation and social inclusion. The term "public art" is generally used to indicate temporary and permanent works created for, and even in, publicly accessible places, that is to say, places that are outside of conventional spaces used for art like galleries or museums (Miles 1997; Perelli 2006; Zebracki 2010; Zukin 1995). However, public art is a notion that is both geographically and historically dynamic, and its meaning changes depending on the time period and location in consideration (Sacco 2006, 285).

There are three types of art traditionally considered as "public" (Bignami 2000): the celebratory sculpture for public buildings, the monument destined

for urban spaces, and the mural painting or relief designed to complete a work of architecture. Starting in the 1980s, another description of “public art” has incrementally emerged as a tool for developing the city. This concept is part of a more general reorientation of urban policies, one that makes culture and creativity the decisive factors in promoting an urban transition to post-Fordism practices, urban redevelopment, and regeneration.

Public art is distinguished by a public-centred objective that is institutionally guaranteed, commissioned, and financed; this is enough to legitimise it or make it recognisable and acceptable within urban contexts. On the other hand, independent public art refers to those informal and non-commissioned artistic practices, which with a clear aesthetic, political, or social intention act upon urban public space. These dissent and creative resistance forms operate on two levels. They implement a new appropriation of urban public space, and they claim a more significant democratic nature by their artistic and cultural production and fruition processes. What distinguishes a form of public art that is independent of public direction is that, although each may arise in the same space, one was not commissioned, recruited, or funded by institutions, whereas the other depends on these variables. Considered to be the expression of a subculture subverting public order and urban decorum, street art has long been read, in fact, as a manifestation of vandalism. This explains why it has established itself as an illegal and clandestine practice, prompted by radicalisation, in some cases, in its form as a real guerrilla art (Iovino 2019). From an alternative and niche phenomenon, street art acquired growing popularity, eventually becoming a global mass phenomenon by the end of the 1990s.

Many recent studies have described this shift in street art from a marginal subculture that uses public space to one that produces public space (Costa 2007; Silva 2015; Snelders 2012; Tavares 2011). Moving beyond these aligned perspectives, one must recognise that there is a risk of the mystification of street works. In the Cucchi case, the fragmentation of objective reality in light of procedural truth became a kaleidoscopic composition of perceived truth in the concrete form of a mural. In the physical phenomenon of refraction, monochromatic light passes through a prism, thus generating a diffusion of many-coloured rays at different frequencies. In the phenomenon of a shared state of mind arising from the Cucchi case, Stefano Cucchi underwent iconisation in the public mind. This resulted in a mural of his sister Ilaria, duly depicted as a symbol in the fight for justice. Over 10 years after Stefano Cucchi’s death, civil justice is being served, as some of the accused have been found guilty, even those from high government levels who have been suspected of covering up the crime.

The assessment of value in street art may be tied to one’s approach, and realism in the Cucchi case is one such way forward. Realist ontology suggests an external reality, independent of the representations created by the street artist.



This is a reality that can be described in an imprecise way, subject as it is to the fallacy of the senses, yet it can in no way be considered as "only" frgment of the imagination, as the actions that are created within it are real. And there is nothing more real than death.

The realist approach has some significant support in the history of philosophy, and it is also present in theoretical reflections about geography. Sayer's (1993) position, for example, represents this point of view in a way that does not conflict with assumptions often found in postmodern thought, for example, within the criticism of the totalising claims found in Marxism or recognition of the social and linguistic character of knowledge. With this in mind, this realistic analytical perspective allows the "objects" of street representation to be described and distinguished according to at least three classes: 1) the class of natural objects, which exist in space and time independently of the subjects; 2) the class of social objects, which exist in space and time depending on the subjects; and 3) the class of ideal objects, which exist outside of space and time, independently of the other depictions.

There is an objective difficulty inherent in the artist's process when choosing a place, such as a city, for an artwork. Even before triggering a shared state-of-mind phenomenon, one must deal with the complexity and criticalities of territoriality. Over the last 15 years, the literature has hosted a fuelled debate about the nature of contemporary territoriality becoming the content and container of street art. In particular, Doreen Massey and her colleagues at the Open University (Allen et al. 1998), Ash Amin (2002, 2004), and others (Amin et al. 2003; Bathelt 2006) have made many efforts to change a view of ontology that considers places as closed containers. In place of this view, they want to adopt a relational perspective that can read spatiality through non-linear and non-Euclidean metrics.

To summarise a complex and not entirely organic position (Jonas 2012), it is possible to outline relational thinking in a critique of the interpretations of space understood as the sum of distinct and encapsulated territorial blocks existing one inside the other. This outline favours concepts such as openness and connectivity, founded by elements such as trans-territorial relations, flows, and networks. The relational opposition to scalar visions of space is motivated by two main arguments (Amin 2004). The first insists that cities are increasingly immersed in organisational and social networks. Thus, the new emergent order is defined through network topologies consisting of extremely dynamic, contingent, and variegated actors in their spatial extensions (Amin 2002). The second argument concerns the very existence of new images, such as networks and flows, which can effectively describe the unique spatiality of the relationship. This perspective's concrete meaning is clear: cities must not and cannot be represented as organic entities characterised by cohesive territorial properties, but should instead be read as a sum of the effects of broader spatial connections based on flows, juxtapositions, relational porosity, and

connectivity. A variation of this perspective is the expressive value of popular sentiment, which is emphasised in this contribution, revealing itself in one's ability to see the city as an active subject capable of amplifying this popular sentiment through the networks it encompasses.

## 2.2. *An expanded perspective of Lefebvre's thought*

In 1968, the Editions Anthropos in Paris published an essay by Henri Lefebvre: *Le droit à la ville*. It was a text that, despite its brevity, defined urban studies. In the 50 years since its publication, things have changed, but the text's political tension is still valid, enriching the scientific debate with new perspectives. Here, an expanded perspective is proposed, in which the city becomes the expression of a right. In the Cucchi case, it is the right to know the truth regarding the death in state custody of a man in his prime.

Lefebvre (2003a/1990, 250) says that modern citizenship takes the form of a contract between the state and the citizenry that specifies, among other things, the rights of citizens. But the current contract and its associated rights have remained much the same since their inception in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Lefebvre argues the necessity to extend and deepen the contract radically, articulate a new and augmented set of rights, and struggle to achieve those rights. He lists many different rights, including rights to information, difference, self-management, and the city. This paradigm regards an approach "in the city," while the Cucchi case reveals the need for an approach "through the city."

In 1970, over 50 years ago, Lefebvre wrote that the revolution would be urban, or it would not exist. For Lefebvre, space, specifically urban space, is a means to transform society and a test for change through its ability to transform spatial relationships. Lefebvre is often referenced in many interpretations of social revolutions, emphasising the necessarily urban character of revolutionary events (Lipietz and Lopes de Souza 2012; Lopes de Souza and Lipietz 2011), the performativity of space (Gregory 2013), or the change of life through the "change of space" (Kanna 2012). Also, the conceptualisation proposed by Harvey can easily be harmonised with Lefebvre's. Harvey (2006, 133) proposes a speculative leap in which we place the threefold division of absolute, relative, and relational space-time up against the tripartite division of experienced, conceptualised, and lived space identified by Lefebvre. Harvey (1973, 13) argues that, in a dialectic conception, "space is neither absolute, [nor] relative [n]or relational in itself, but it can become one or all simultaneously depending on the circumstances" and on human practice. He goes on to note that the problem of the proper conceptualisation of space is resolved through human practice with respect to it. In other words, there are no philosophical answers to philosophical questions that arise over the nature of space – the answers lie in human practice (Harvey 1973, 13).

Urban space is therefore seen as an enactment of forms, including political action that is not necessarily urban-oriented, but which uses the city and its spaces to build, strengthen, and affirm more general political claims. Thus, a conflict assumes an integral value in malleable and contested urban spaces (Brenner et al. 2012). Urban space is the space of politics (Magnusson 2014), and public spaces re-emerge within it as symbolic places with renewed political and social vitality (Rabbat 2012; Salama 2013). Spaces that were weakly linked to the public transform into ones that are strongly identified as public as they become politically vital. These public spaces are then reinvented as spaces of socio-political contestation by renewing and regenerating past protests (Lopes de Souza and Lipietz 2011, 621). As Swyngedouw (2001, 3) writes, "politics appears as a practice of spatial reorganization under the aegis of equality; [it] emerges where it is not supposed to be, in public space."

Lefebvre does not oppose industrialisation and urbanisation against the possibility of the birth of urban society: industrialisation and urbanisation are forces that determine the city's transformation in terms of both its size and functionality. But for the birth and development of urban society to be possible, these forces must be subject to political control. The solution that Lefebvre, an orthodox Marxist of his time, suggests is the control of the working class. Although marginalised in the proper sense of being placed on the margins of the city (the suburbs), this class must build an alternative, urban society that exalts the value of use of the city.

In this context, it is paramount to question political control that is no longer tied to industrialisation and urbanisation and seek the truth of wrongs committed under this control. As such, a man was arrested and killed in a Carabinieri military barracks on 22 October 2009, and the truth of what happened there is still hidden. In this case, according to Lefebvre's right to the city approach, the city must then become an element of fruition, or elements of action, revenge, and expression of popular will, that aims to overcome the people's anger through a spirit of solidarity and collaboration. Therefore, the right to the city becomes a right of expression for anger at a stymied truth. However, it is not easy to give concrete form to this ideology: as Amin states (2008, 22), "linking public space to civic ideas requires a good measure of hope without certitude from urban actors."

In the Cucchi case, the concrete action that allowed for this paradigmatic shift was offered by Jorit, a street artist who, with his murals, channels popular feeling and makes it tangible in the urban space, giving it to the community. This concept of the gift in street art is also present in several authors' works. For example, regarding legal problems relating to the property of street art, Hansen (2018, 295) states that "paradoxically, perhaps it is the very perception of street art in socio-moral terms, as a gift, rather than an art object proper, that may enable the subversion of the legal strictures currently prohibiting the recognition of the moral rights of street artists."

Indeed, here the value of street art is considered in terms of a particular case, brought about by Jorit's consideration and derived action referencing Stefano Cucchi. It is thematically different from the following perspectives. Concerning the theme of leisure time, Lefebvre (2003) wrote that space is not pure *a priori*, as is found in the Kantian illusion. Instead, it is the place where it is possible to create value through relationships and the management of free time in everyday life. Dickens (2010, 78) confronts the theme of democratic access to art, stating, "Banksy and Lazarides' intention to use POW (Pictures On Walls) as a means to produce finely crafted but affordable and accessible reproductions of street art, reflects an explicitly democratic attempt to counter the elite market for original art." This theme regarding novel intercultural and commercial relationships in the inner city was approached by many authors (Hutton 2004 2009; Lorenzen and Scott 2008; Pratt 2002, 2004, 2009).

The perspective highlighted here concerns the need for bottom-up-driven expression, which starts from the citizens' need to oppose the state through the city and with the city. To fully understand this specific circumstance, it is necessary to understand the destabilisation that the Cucchi case caused in Italy and abroad, generating a common conception around it. It should be noted that a territorialisation of "common sense" exists regardless of street art, which certainly amplifies and enhances its value. In fact, already in the mid-1990s, common sense geography (CSG) was mentioned in an essay by Max Egenhofer and David Mark (1995, 4) entitled "Naive Geography," in which the authors define CSG as "the body of knowledge that people have about the surrounding geo-graphic world". Several studies on the interrelationships between space and common sense have followed this concept (Fogliaroni and Hober, 2015; Gold 1985).

This reflection is directed by two questions. First, how did the Cucchi case become a shared state of mind? The main lever was that of a crime within the state's walls, particularly by the Arma dei Carabinieri, a police force historically famous for its prestige, honour, loyalty, and availability towards citizens. The judicial process in the Cucchi case revealed accusations of citizens working for the state, police, and doctors. Those directly involved, and even their superior officers, obscured truth; a desire for justice resulted among the public. This feeling was so strong that even newspaper and TV features could not quell the need for popular expression, even if the media were a third party in this collective non-partisan phenomenon, because the space reserved by media to the case was not enough for popular expression. Jorit's work transformed the city into a place where the right to justice is represented in the public domain. The right to the city no longer demanded only the use of the city, but also the freedom to use urban spaces and services and a right for justice. This must be made evident by the city and within the city. This is an expansion of the Lefebvre paradigm. Furthermore, we would suggest that such a re-appropriation of public space through public, militant art is in line with Lefebvre's definition of lived space.

Secondly, how can a city in its physical dimension of urban space become an instrument of redemption and amplification of a shared state of mind? In this regard, an oxymoron is recognisable. This dynamic recalls a classic *modus operandi* of the Italian Renaissance, where public representation became an instrument of criticism towards the state<sup>2</sup>. Jorit's mural based on the Cucchi case creates a great discontinuity with the past by placing the city at the disposal of street art. No longer is street art at the service of the city. This is a conceptual and cultural fracture that could generate further reflection in the scientific debate through practical implications of street artists' awareness.

Reflections on the role and modification of urban space in relation to anti-state protest movements are already present in similar cases, such as the protests against the police attitude toward African-American citizens in many American cities. In the Cucchi case, the role assumed by Naples through Jorit's mural is different from other instances of anti-state movements. In Hong Kong, for example, citizens covered flyovers with messages supporting the protests and encouraging people to register to vote in local district council elections. There are no active protest movements in Naples, but, through Jorit's work, the city became capable of capturing a common feeling, and a common tension spread in the air. A shared state of mind is, therefore, something invisible but real. This idea is in full convergence with Chen and Barber (2020, 231) when they stated that "Beyond merely being spaces of hope and despair, cities are where urban subjects and spaces co-evolve, pitted in topological battles against complex, sometimes invisible forces."

In Hong Kong, the thirst for freedom and democracy has been a home-grown product over three decades of rallies and vigils. The Cucchi case does not represent the same type of citizen goal, but it reflects a shared state of mind catalysed by a specific event that revealed a city's expressive power and ability to intercept and deal with an intangible state. Thus, a city's potential transcends the specific case and becomes an instrument of expression for any eventual topic in which the state and citizens are opposed.

However, the positive interpretation of physical space production as representative of a shared state of mind may be contrasted. An opposing perspective sees street art as an act of public space consumption that may have better uses. In this context, street art may result in a message of mystifying and subversive ideology towards the state. Finding the "right" perspective is not the point of this analysis. However, one must acknowledge that the Cucchi case led to a series of antithetical cultural positions.

<sup>2</sup> An emblematic icon of this is a 14th-century altarpiece in Siena by the artist Ambrogio Lorenzetti, titled *Allegory of Bad and Good Government*.

### 3. *Case Study: Naples as a City Becomes a Shared State of Mind*

In Naples, street art boasts a long tradition, dating back to the late 1960s, which affected the outskirts of the city to highlight and overcome local physical and social barriers and marginalisation. Jorit Agoch, a rising star of Italian street art with an international presence, was born in Naples to an Italian father and a Dutch mother. He is known for his “branded” faces: faces of ordinary, famous, or local people (e.g., san Gennaro, Maradona, Eduardo De Filippo, Marek Hamšík, Ilaria Alpi, Pierpaolo Pasolini, Massimo Troisi). These figures are portrayed with two red stripes on their cheeks.

The stripes are a reference to African tribal rituals that the artist had witnessed. They are also a symbolic element that contains an egalitarian message: the aspiration towards a world without social hierarchies, in which all people are part of the same human tribe.

The growing attention to these artistic practices, often demonstrating mature aesthetic abilities, has set new energy in motion and activated new local planning projects. These include the promotion of alternative tourist itineraries aimed at discovering artistic creations throughout the city. These are still niche paths, but ones that contribute to launching Naples’s image as a creative city while also stimulating pride and respect for the place where the local community lives. This explains Jorit’s choice of the city of Naples to represent the nationally followed Cucchi case.

#### 3.1. *Site description*

The neighbourhood in which Jorit chose to place his work is an interesting factor. To understand the geography of the place, Figure 1 shows a map of Naples in which the marginality of some neighbourhoods is noted, according to a study conducted by the Italian Institute of Statistics<sup>3</sup>, corresponding to the peripheral areas north, east, and west of the city. The central districts, including the Arenella district in the hilly area where the Jorit mural is located, are the wealthiest zones and are characterised by a huge middle-class presence (figg. 2 and 3). In other words, the distinctive feature of the phenomenon analysed here refers to a use of street art that is not inherent in the concept of marginality, as often happens. The urban geography of the city of Naples, as evident from several studies by Fabio Amato (2015, 2018), sees other neighbourhoods as symbolic neighbourhoods of marginality, such as those of the train station

<sup>3</sup> Index elaborated using a multivariate analysis technique in the 2017 annual report of the Italian Institute of Statistics (ISTAT). This macro-index is obtained as a weighted linear combination of sub-indices.

area and the Spanish neighbourhoods. The location choice indicates that there was a clear will to protest against a local marginality, but with hope for an ability to act as a universal representation of the popular will in its efforts to pursue justice for the Cucchi case and others.

### 3.2. *Ethnographic approach*

Research was conducted using the participatory observation method, including detailed field notes and semi-structured interviews during the final period of field research. Fieldwork lasted from 21 May to 21 July 2019, with roughly 60 hours of participatory observation. Interviews were carried out near Jorit's mural of Ilaria Cucchi. The shortest interview lasted 13 minutes, while the longest lasted 1 hour. A group of interviewers, beside the authors, was comprised of two volunteers (PhD students), one female and one male. A total of 143 people were interviewed. All participants in the research were guaranteed anonymity; each respondent has been provided with a pseudonym.

In the months following the creation of the graffiti, there were intense flows of visitors. The observation of their reactions took place in two steps, one spontaneous and one through an interview. In the first part, any spontaneous comments from visitors were listened to, and the most pronounced keywords were marked on a paper register. Figure 4 presents the histogram of occurrences relating to the keywords. The second step was to identify the types of visitors, by age (fig. 5) (in three groups: under 30, between 30 and 60, and over 60), gender (fig. 6), and residence (whether in the neighbourhood or outside) (fig. 7). The most mentioned word is "justice," and the prevalence of visitors is female of either low or high age and coming from outside the neighbourhood where the work is located.

So, what are the ethnographic data of the two months spent in the neighbourhood in contact with the people stopping by the mural, the traders in the area, and the inhabitants of the nearby buildings? First, we need to understand Jorit's motivations. The biggest international newspapers like *The Guardian*, *BBC*, *Middle East Eye*, *Euronews* wrote about him.

Jorit began to make himself known in 2005 through a series of graffiti executed in Naples, in the northern outskirts of the city. His first works, while expressing elements of stylistic originality, were closely linked to the typical expression of traditional Graffiti. In this early period, Jorit made numerous paintings illegally on trains wall and frequented the Yard, train depots where writers from many European countries usually paint illegally on them. This aspect is important in relation to the choice of a central district for the work about the Cucchi case. In the early years, Jorit's pictorial activity was flanked by a constant political militancy that led him to come into contact with the no-global movements and the demand for social rights.

Since 2005, Jorit's works began to get closer and closer to a figurative style. Over time, while never completely abandoning graffiti art, Jorit began to focus on the realistic depiction of the human face (Jorit 2020). In fact, the artist prefers individuals to phenomena. That is, he presents strong characters, leaving to the spectators (i.e., the users of his work) the ability to synthesise with ongoing phenomena. In fact, he painted faces of charismatic persons. In Naples, for example, he painted Maradona and San Gennaro, the famous saint of the city of Naples known throughout the world for his miracle of the melting blood and for having stopped the eruption of the Vesuvius volcano several times.

In 2017 Jorit made a portrait in Buenos Aires of Santiago Maldonado, an Argentine activist for the rights of the Mapuche people who died following clashes with the National Gendarmerie. On the same days in which he made the work, he participated in anti-government protests in demand of rights of the Mapuche people and against the dismantling of the welfare state of the South American country. In the same year, he painted a woman with typical local costumes in the city of Cochabamba in Bolivia, and the wording "Agua Santa" on his Facebook page explains the connection of the work with the enormously popular mobilisation that took place in 2000 in the same city following the privatisation of water, struggles that brought the control of the water supply back into public hands with a return of prices to sustainable levels.

In the Cucchi case, there is a link with all of Jorit's past. The building where the mural is painted is a public housing, and in particular it is a closed building that has been waiting for funds to be restored for a long time. In Figures 8, 9, and 10 are seen the protest signs of the citizens of the neighbourhood calling for the renovation and opening of the house.

The theme of popular rights for a public space becomes eschatological and an expression of the rights of all citizens who ask for the right to truth and justice for the Cucchi case. During the two months of stay in the neighbourhood, people's discussions often converged on the statement, "It's all an injustice, both for this man at the hands of the state and for us at the hands of the state that denies us this council house!" Therefore, the mural is soaked with a transcalar value. In our conversations with women, a further aspect emerged of the rights denied too often to women redeemed by a strong figure such as Ilaria Cucchi. The municipal officials of the district have allowed the mural but still have not solved the specific problem of the renovation of the people's house on which the mural is painted. There remains, therefore, a certain contradictory and compromise dynamic with the local authorities.

The mural, in fact, depicts Ilaria and not Stefano Cucchi, that is, an activist and not the victim. Jorit placed himself in the temporal dimension of active redemption and not of passive suffering. His choice, as evidenced by his interviews and comments on his social profile, is dictated by the desire to highlight the strength of a normally weak icon in society, the woman, who in this case is



the strong part. The typical signs on the face that Jorit draws for the warriors and that he also drew for Ilaria Cucchi prove to this (fig. 11).

We then did a check in other districts of the city to see how well known Ilaria Cucchi's mural was. Obviously, the Cucchi case is known to everyone, as all the newspapers and TV talked about it, but we wanted to verify the power of the mural placed in the central bourgeois district of the city. Indeed, the mural is known everywhere and is even known in all the other districts. This confirms the transversal nature of the work's value and manifests it even more strongly. It would have been equally transversal if made in a peripheral area and also known in the central districts, but the involvement would have been less. Jorit thus has planted a seed of popular redemption in a bourgeois neighbourhood, with the grip of public housing granted for use to the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, generally less prone to redemption and protest dynamics and made it close, albeit geographically distant, to all the suburbs that every day experience a sense of redemption.

This story has created a rift between citizens and the state. In the squares, bars, cinemas, and any urban meeting place, the need to express dissent has been felt. In this sense, the words of Amin (2008, 9) ring true: "the street that is largely confined to ambling and transit, but becomes the center of public protest; the bar that regularly changes from being a place for huddled conversation to one of deafening noise and crushed bodies."

This led to a paradigm: the inversion of the common feeling in relation to the perception of urban space. The right for justice no longer seems to be a passive element to which one is entitled; it is rather an animated and dynamic reality that allows for the expression of common thought: the city as a means and right of expression. Everywhere, these sentiments have been written against the state, praising Stefano Cucchi. It is a Lefebvrian paradox: from the right to the city as an element of the state, to citizens' free and angry feelings against the state.

Exactly nine years after the death of Stefano Cucchi, Jorit dedicated this work to his sister, Ilaria Cucchi. "Not to forget to make everyone understand that even the life of the last counts!" were his words. During the making of the mural, Jorit was intimidated by an exponent of the extreme right, who had threatened the artist in order to stop the work. Jorit's defendants were the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, intervening by sending the man away before the verbal violence escalated. "Stefano was killed not only by violence, but also by indifference. Today many things have changed and the wave of solidarity is now unstoppable. I will find peace only when the whole truth about what happened to my brother will be revealed," declared Ilaria Cucchi, present at the inauguration ceremony. The ethnographic framework gives vigour to the idea of an identification in the character of Ilaria Cucchi as a heroine of redemption against injustice — a woman capable of restoring denied justice.

The Cucchi case represents in terms of transcalarity a projection on a national scale of dynamics often present at the municipal level. For example, Aru et al. (2017) talk about feeling “neglected” as a recurrent theme that appears in the informants’ descriptions of a district they analysed. First and foremost, the authors refer to the fact that dwellers lament the municipality’s lack of attention to problems, including the lack of public services, the closure of meeting centres, and the constant decay of common spaces. In the Cucchi case, the lack is not that of services, but of justice on the part of the state.

The mural (fig. 11) shows all the citizens’ expressive power by physically overlapping an urban space built according to a state logic. It is an urban planning, something profoundly correct in that moment, an icon of their thought. The city’s expressive thought occupies the urban space and fills the urban gaps with messages about the state’s unfair actions. While the Cucchi trial continues to unfold and more and more Carabinieri at the operational and managerial levels are being investigated, the mural is there to witness how the city proves to be an active part of the process. The right of the city, and no longer the right to the city, is now raised in importance.

There is a paroxysm in all this, of course, as a handful of people from the state made a mistake (if it was wrong, as will be shown as the legal trials progress), so the state as a whole must not be blamed. But when it is the state, albeit a very small part of it, which clearly covered up the truth, it generates a surge of revolt that takes fruition in the emergence of freedom of expression. When the threshold of popular trust is betrayed, then songs, films, and documentaries are not enough to appease the public. These are mainly the prerogative of single collectors in the community. Rather, even in this age in which digital spaces seem to be prevalent, the only disruptive way to express collective thought is to occupy the public space with a mural, as Jorit did. In this sense, as Purcell (2013, 145) notes, the criticism of the state is consistent with Lefebvre’s thought – “he is particularly inspired by Marx’s critique of the state” – and it is that critique, along with Lenin’s *The State and Revolution*, that forms the basis of Lefebvre’s argument against the state (Lefebvre 1976, 1977, 1978, 2009 [see esp. Chap. 2]).

Evermore extended and complex, but also interrelated and connected, cities will be the theatres of coexistence, but also theatres of conflicts over the use of resources, access to essential services, social equity, and the enlargement of citizenship. They are places in rapid evolution where humanity will increasingly gather, experiment with ways to live together, and use their space and systems of relations between the environment and resources. In this sense, it seems important to note an experience of democratisation, to rethink the expression of citizenship in terms of social cohesion on public issues like those found in the Cucchi case, and to encourage creative practices related to participation, including policies based on street art (Grundy and Boudreau 2008).

As stated by Iveson (2010), urban authorities have increasingly declared "war" on graffiti. Yet often, especially in Italy, the population has been relatively indifferent towards such repressive actions by institutions. The Cucchi case, with Jorit's graffiti depicting Ilaria Cucchi as a warrior in search of truth, has created a watershed involving the urban population without distinctive niches, such as young people from social centres, artists, and journalists who usually are more inclined to defend street art. Reactions against Jorit's work by local politicians belonging to extreme right forces have been weak and disproportionate to the public's wave of solidarity.

Iveson (2010) noted several cases in which the contrast between the state and graffiti artists is clear: In Western Australia, the state government launched a "Goodbye Graffiti" campaign, which involved sending a pamphlet to all residents in the cities, informing them about graffiti and the role they could play in defeating graffiti artists. In the UK, the Home Office established a "Name That Tag" poster campaign, offering £500 rewards for information on prolific taggers' identity.

The characteristic element on which this work intended to shed light concerned the Cucchi case in Italy. However, this is no longer just a contrast between the state and graffiti artists, but a duality between the state and the population. The citizens have remained cohesive against the state as they were represented by street graffiti that displayed their search for truth. In the circumstances that then arose, through *pietas* ("pity" in Latin), street art may represent the city's ability to empathise with a universally felt event.

This has happened in Italy, a country that, unlike America, is not so culturally inclined towards popular movements linked to graffiti. Still, all Italians have felt the impact of the Cucchi case. It has led to a disruptive break from the past, and Naples has found that it may amplify its expression on the subject. Everything can be summarised in a new paradigm: the right of the city to express itself, which is truly the right of citizens.

#### 4. Conclusions

In a way, this work continues to give life to the Cucchi case, catalysed by a tragic event in 2009. The general public perceived Stefano Cucchi as a Roman from a respectable, middle-class family who fell into the world of drugs and was arrested and subsequently killed while in prison after being beaten by the Carabinieri who had arrested him. The truth of the event was initially obscured by a fog of silence from the government and the complicity of the high-level military officials working where the episode took place. Through years of trials, Cucchi's sister, Ilaria Cucchi, has pursued the justice that exposed the coverup by some military officials.

The national resonance of the Cucchi case was enormous, precisely because it was an injustice perpetrated by those who must defend justice, that is, the state. In this framework, different elements have alternated, from a critical opposition to the state that has taken the form of a shared state of mind, to street art exemplified in Jorit's mural in Naples depicting Ilaria Cucchi in the form of a warrior, and the urban space. Therefore, the present contribution proposed a reflection that sees these elements not as disjointed from one another, but arranged in a mosaic that reveals truth and justice as desired by all citizens.

This perspective adds a discussion of the osmosis of all these elements in the Cucchi case. In particular, although there are many different cultural positions considering street art as an act of public space consumption or as ideological mystification, a new approach to urban space was proposed. The determinism of causality so far observed in the dynamics of state–citizen opposition was also proposed in a sequential pattern of conflict due to the absence of democracy, popular rebellion, and modification of the urban space.

In the Cucchi case, determinism must be understood in another way, as a specific episode of state–citizen contrast, the formation of an immaterial shared state of mind that was perceptible in the media and common discourse without any action using physical material force. The genesis of a form of material expression depicts a “common sense” sentiment in the city. The central feature of common sense is that it concerns the consensus of an epistemic collective or community. “Thus ‘common’ is not only to be understood as ‘lower’ (vs. ‘professional’ or ‘higher’) but also as ‘shared’ knowledge” (Klaus and Martin 2012, 5). And it is precisely this shared knowledge that is generated around the character of Ilaria Cucchi through the mural and through the city. The city makes its spaces available to artists. Finally, a possible iteration of the mechanism is awareness of this instrument's power for similar future dynamics.

Operating as “aesthetic saboteurs” (Bird 2009), street artists transform the city's visible appearance. This result is in line with classical theories according to which graffiti and street art are urban practices that produce and do not consume new public spaces (Brighenti 2007; Ley and Cybriwsky 1974). This territorialising action historically represents in all respects a form of claim in a twofold sense: It is an artistic claim, as a request for a “right to art,” that is to say, for the recognition of street expression as a form of spontaneous and public art endowed with aesthetic value. And it is a political claim, as an affirmation of a “right to the city” (Harvey 2012; Lefebvre 1970), understood as the legitimisation of the presence and participation of artists in the “production” of public space.

These values have historical relevance, and another must be added, representing this proposed expanded perspective of Lefebvre's ideas. It regards the city's right to be capable of expressing itself in a collective form, one repre-

senting a common feeling, even if it is in contrast to the actions of the state. Let it be added that in addition to a highlighted spatial form, the expanded paradigm, as proposed, also presents a temporal dimension. At a moment in which an expressive phenomenon is in progress, for example in the penal trial for the Cucchi case, Jorit's mural appears as a flag of vigilant solidarity in the course of events. If and when the truth comes to the fore, it will represent an emblematic icon of the past, able to revitalise new events that will deserve the same collective support and the same solidarity.

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## Appendix

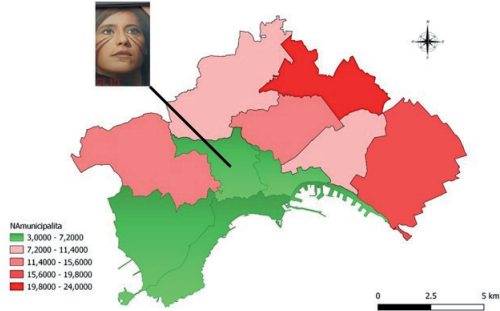


Fig. 1. Map of the neighbourhoods in Naples (source: author's elaboration of Istat data)



Fig. 2-3. The neighbourhood where Ilaria Cucchi's mural is located (source: photo taken by the author in June 2019)

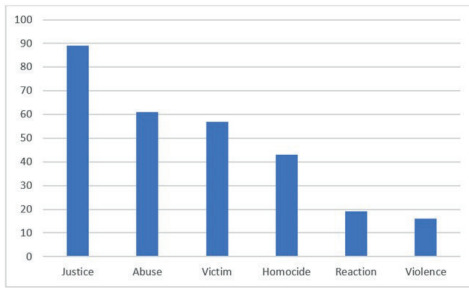


Fig. 4. Absolute occurrences of most pronounced keywords

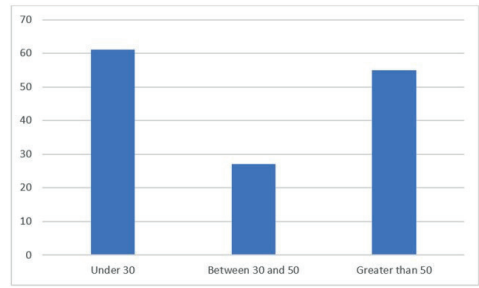


Fig. 5. Absolute occurrences of visitors by age

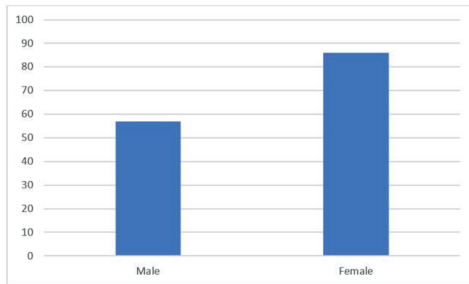


Fig. 6. Absolute occurrences of visitors by sex

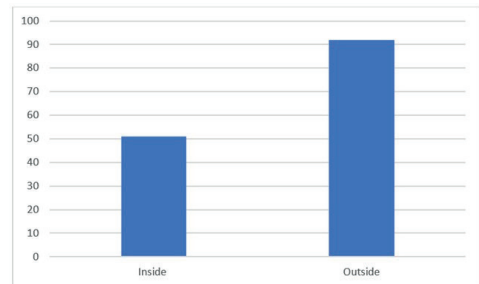


Fig. 7. Absolute occurrences of visitors by residence



Fig. 8. Protest signs of the citizens of the neighbourhood calling for the renovation and opening of the people's house (source: photo taken by the author in June 2019)

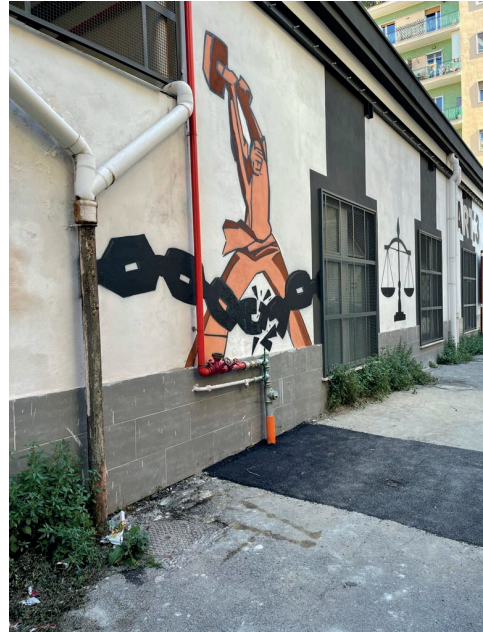


Fig. 9. Protest signs of the citizens of the neighbourhood calling for the renovation and opening of the people's house (source: photo taken by the author in June 2019)

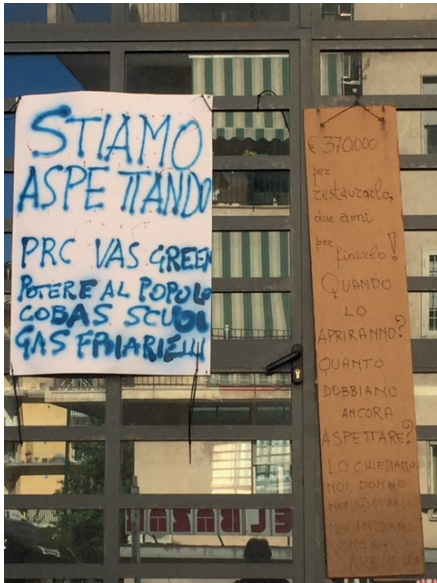


Fig. 10 (above). Protest signs of the citizens of the neighbourhood calling for the renovation and opening of the people's house (source: photo taken by the author in June 2019)



Fig. 11 (right). Jorit's mural of Ilaria Cucchi (source: photo taken by the author in June 2019)

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