

“Dangerous heterotopias”: coffeehouses, vigilance politics and the emergence of distrust in the city

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This paper intends to look on how the counterterrorism and anti-radicalization discourse talks about, or transplants, what it calls “incubators of radicalization” into the security narrative. I will look on how these “incubators”, such as “mosques, coffeehouses, marketplace, universities”, constitutive of the very habermassian “public sphere”, have been submitted to politics of surveillance and suspicion through diverse programs that have emerged after 9.11. These incubators, otherwise known, in foucauldian vein, as “heterotopias” have been the spaces of resistance, the areas of counter-culture and as such they have played a role not only in the emergence of modernity, but also as spaces of gathering where non-conformity organizes itself. How these programs and these counter-terrorism policies, while producing a knowledge of vigilance, affect trust? How the distrust that is embedded into the counter-terrorist discourse regarding these spaces does, in turn, change the nature of the city, by changing important constitutive elements of it? In a way, this paper intends to deal with how, security issues that have emerged (or intensified) after 9/11, while being put forward with the objective of saving lives, they change, metamorphose and transform the very life of the subjects of the City. To do this I will fist do a historical survey of how some of these sites of assembly (ex. coffeehouses) have played a role of counter-culture in the premier and modern space and how they have often been submitted to significant control by authoritarian regimes . While doing this I will treat theoretically the importance of these sites as sites of assembly and heterotopias in the emergence of modernity and in the very functioning of democracy, that are located at the heart of the city. Then I will look at how in the literature regarding (islamic) radicalization - NYPD programs, FBI and PREVENT antiradicalization programs – sees and foresees these sites as sites concealing potential danger and how these influential programs have been translated in practice through surveillance, informants etc. in these “incubators”. I will finally look at how this, directly affects trust in these sites of the city, how they actually create an atmosphere of distrust regarding these sites otherwise characterized by the very trust relationships that they otherwise provide/d.

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