

## **Living with Terror: Urban Fatalism and Care for Fellow Riders in the Moscow subway**

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In his paper on the present day mobility David Bissell reminds about the risks of “the over-animation” of the mobile subject: “Rather than thinking about figures that have the potential for movement, the ‘mobile subject’ is defined by movement and always-already on the move” (Bissell, 2010: 55). Following Bissell’s perspective, I would like to avoid “the over-animation” of the strategies dealing with terror in the city and to talk about “the life with terror” rather than “the fight against terror”.

Terror and the city are constituting each other (Graham, 2004). It has to be admitted that cities have had unequal experience of terror events. While in some metropolises terror is routinized and perceived as an inevitable part of everyday life, in others it is a rare or even imaginary experience. In this situation the micro perspective on the city life could be a valuable contribution to the studies of “terror and the city”, because of its sensitivity to the specificity of the events, actors, cities, their cultures and power hierarchies. Applying the micro perspective, I consider terror events and further reactions to them as emplaced situations and lived experiences.

In my presentation I focus on Moscow, where the (threads of) terror events have become “urban ordinariness” since middle 1990s. Most of terror events, mainly the bomb explosions, took place in the subway, the city’s main system of public transportation, which moves approximately 8 million passengers daily. Being one of the first terror events in Post-Soviet Russia, the explosions in the subway had “an echo effect” (Auge, 1995) and tremendously influenced both the policies of securitization and everyday practices of urban citizens changing the city scape and emotional atmosphere of Moscow and Russian cities. The presentation is based on the ethnographic research conducted in 2015-2016 in Moscow and included series of observations, interviews and ride alongs with subway riders.

The starting point of the further conceptualization is the everyday experiences of subway riders and their reactions to the policies and practices of securitization. I assume that one of the main consequences of the terror events in the Moscow subway was the emergence or strengthening of what I call “Urban Fatalism”. Urban fatalism is a belief that nothing can be done to prevent the terror events or some other urban dangers/undesirable experiences, therefore, they have to be accepted as a part of urban life. Urban fatalism admits that urbanites could be accidental victims.

Urban fatalism can be compared to “blasé attitude” (Simmel [1902], 2002) - the attitude created by and affecting the life of a modern city. As well as blasé attitude it is “the psychological foundation, upon which the metropolitan individuality is erected” (Simmel, 2002: 11). Though unlike blasé attitude urban fatalism does not lead to ignoring the multiplicity of urban life. On the contrary, it sharpens sensitivity to the differences, nuances, and details of the urban and social

environment. But being sensitive to them, urban citizens feel themselves unable to cope with these numerous dangers and, therefore, have to accept them.

Urban fatalism is shaped by numerous circumstances. Two of them have a special meaning for urban denizens. Firstly, the limited freedom of choice that results in inability of urban citizens to avoid some urban experiences. Thus, riding a subway in Moscow is unavoidable experience for the majority of its 12 million residents and numerous visitors, since it is the most extended, predictable and affordable system of public transportation. Secondly, urban fatalism is a consequence of institutional distrust and the lack of solidarity among fellow riders and urban citizens in general. The alienation of the institutions playing an important role in the city life such as a police and local authorities is still a common situation for Russian cities. This attitude of distrust affects the everyday life of urban citizens, who “do not believe that these institutions can promote interests other than their own” (Gudkov, 2012), and consequently have to rely mostly on themselves. The distrust changes only in critical situations and not for a long time. So far the individual strategies such as psychological protection including urban fatalism become the most successful ones allowing to deal with urban risks.

Urban fatalism – an unruffled acceptance of the situation of risks and dangers - is a widespread attitude among the Moscow subway users. At the same time, it is often mixed with anxiety or substituted by it in particular situations. Imposing by agents of power, the policy of anxiety and suspicion toward the fellow riders is one of the most efficient and routinized one. Though it has an unexpected potential for solidarity and mutual help. The policy of anxiety increases and sharpens the attention to other passengers, so it makes some critical situations such as robbery, illness, etc. more noticeable and therefore more manageable by the common activities of the riders. So, paradoxically the anxiety results in establishing solidarities (even though situational ones), which Moscow as many Russian cities is lacking so far.

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