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Atmospheric geographies of (counter)terrorism

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Abstract

How are terror threats and counterterrorism measures experienced in everyday urban spaces? We argue that thinking atmospherically about the spaces of urban encounters with (counter)terrorism is important, firstly, to identify and question feelings and dispositions shaped by discourses, practices, and infrastructures of (counter)terrorism; secondly, to contribute spatial perspectives of felt experience to literatures on security and (counter)terrorism in geography and beyond; thirdly, to connect official understandings of (counter) terrorism with its everyday felt experiences and materialities. We highlight two conceptual and empirical arenas – the crowd and the question of difference – where atmospheric approaches to urban (counter) terrorism can be developed.

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I. Introduction

How does (counter)terrorism register in the shared experience of cities? What atmospheres are shaped when diverse urban publics encounter urban landscapes shaped by terror threat and by consequent counterterrorism measures? This paper joins literatures in human geography, security and terrorism studies, and International Relations (IR) to develop an atmospheric approach to studying everyday urban spaces of (counter)terrorism. We think with cities in Western Europe, but draw on and project towards other urban spaces and histories. Terror attacks are less frequent in Western Europe compared to other regions, and spaces and histories of (counter)terrorism involving urban securitization and militarization are not the sole preserve of the Global North.[1] However, in Western Europe, (counter)terrorism has translated into a particularly articulate and professionalized array of counterterrorism measures including defense and deterrence, policing, surveillance, and public awareness and sensibilisation. This articulation is part of at least three spatial dynamics. Firstly, cities in Western Europe are nodes in political and infrastructural networks that facilitate the transnational mobility of terror organizations and individuals (Aydinli, 2006), whether 'home-grown' or based abroad. Secondly, cities in Western Europe and especially in the EU have increasingly coordinated and shared efforts and knowledge in the name of 'collective securitization' (Kaunert and Léonard, 2019). Thirdly, this coordination responds to global changes in terrorist *modus operandi* and targets choices. With lone actors becoming 'primary perpetrators of violent extremist and terrorist attacks in Europe' (EU Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation, 2021), and using unsophisticated and easily sourced weaponry and techniques,[2] the spatiality of attacks in Western Europe has changed from high-profile sites (financially significant buildings, or transport networks) to so-called 'soft targets' (Davis, 2007). These are publicly accessible ordinary spaces (pavements, business premises, squares) that are difficult to protect. Due to their mundane nature often tightly embedded in the urban fabric, it has been argued that the protection of soft targets cannot always be achieved via perimeter and infrastructure hardening without also altering what would be deemed as an acceptable experience of public space (Coaffee, 2017). For example, the suite of physical security measures that, in the UK, go under the banner of *Hostile Vehicle Mitigation* include relatively transparent interventions like bollards, turnstiles, blocking planters, and crowd guards. Despite their transparency, however, these are obdurate objects that, even if carefully designed and placed, are hard to remove and shift, thus becoming threaded into a socio-material network of justification and maintenance (De Goede et al., 2014; Trandberg Jensen and Jensen, 2021).

What remains to be known, however, is: *how* do these understandings of and actions upon soft targets change how cities are experienced in everyday life by their diverse publics in the long term? More critically, it remains to be known what atmospheric politics are entailed by such responses, in terms of what affective dispositions are being shaped by security officials, whose dispositions to these landscapes matter more or less, and – importantly – what embodied and felt experiences are produced in cities where threat is understood to be ubiquitous. How do we make sense of the landscapes that we are left with in the aftermath of and in response to (the threat of) terrorist attacks? How will this sense-making differ amongst diverse publics that are both together and/or set apart within these landscapes in their everyday, visceral, and spatial experience? What conceptual tools do we need to think through these everyday landscapes and ecologies? While there is abundant design-oriented and representational literature on urban securitization, military urbanism (Coaffee, 2022; Graham, 2004), and framings of threat (Jarvis and Lister, 2013; Oldra, 2021; Stevens and Vaughan-Williams, 2016), the *experiential* aspects of

(counter)terrorism remains underexplored of late (though see Adey, 2014; Adey et al., 2013; Anderson, 2015). There is more to know about how urban public spaces change in terms of the shared and individualized – and often even contradictory and contested – affective resonances that they become part of in the context of changing terrorism threat and counterterrorism responses.

We define atmosphere as the spatial expression of collective felt and affective experiences comprising human and non-human agencies. Broadly, atmosphere refers to a processual, immersive, and shared felt quality of a situation which emerges from, and is shaped by, a host of human and non-human agencies (Anderson, 2009). Atmospheres are increasingly becoming the 'object target' of various powers (Anderson, 2014), from commercial marketing to policing (Adey, 2014; Wall, 2019), and so constitute an important part of attempts to shape behaviour in different contexts, including counterterrorism.

The terms terrorism[3] and counterterrorism – henceforth (counter)terrorism – are as contested as they are closely linked. Flint (2003:161) identified several areas where geographers should explore the 'spatial manifestations of power that intertwine to cause contexts of action and reaction, and the means to commit terrorism and enact counterterrorism'. These include spatialities meshing different geographical scales of analysis. In more recent political geography work, different but related points of emphases in the areas of (counter)terrorism have flourished, including critiques of the impact of the war on terror on sovereignty practices and regimes (Mountz, 2013); the hegemony of US spatial imaginations of terror threat and responses (Pain, 2009); and geo-historical accounts of local (in)securities and their ties with multiple other scalings (Pain, 2014; Sidaway, 2009; Ó Tuathail, 2009). These, however, constitute mainly discursive approaches centred around construction of meanings of (counter)terrorism (although see Pain, 2009), and have been more recently accompanied by a number of scholarly developments, including around affective governance of emergencies, the impact on the built form, and historical accounts of geopolitical atmospheres/atmospherics. These present openings and opportunities for developing accounts of how felt everyday experiences of (counter)terrorism are spatalized in cities.

In the next sections, we first critically review literature from political geography, IR, and security and terrorism studies around the presence and role (or lack thereof) of lived experience in scholarship on (counter)terrorism. We then consider the questions of how atmospheres are produced, and what diverse and shifting agencies are involved in that production. Subsequently, we turn to two concerns – urban crowds and difference – as thematic areas where atmospheric approaches into everyday experiences of (counter)terrorism can be fruitfully pursued. We argue that developing an atmospheric geography of urban (counter)terrorism is important for three reasons. First, it allows us to question the background implications of the manifest 'fabrics' (discourses, practices, and infrastructures) of counterterrorism – implications occurring at the limit of detectability: the invisible/unspeakable sensoriums of (in)security they can bring about. Second, it offers conceptual and methodological orientations in studying the diverse attunements and felt experiences that take place between the exceptionality of terrorist attacks and the 'business as usual' mantras of urban resilience agendas. Third, it allows us to explore the connections between understandings, mappings, and calibrations of experiences of public space by official actors; the diffuse and everyday responses and felt experiences by users; and the material agency of (counter)terrorism in cities.

II. (Counter)Terrorism scholarship and the realm of felt experience

A gap in accounting for emotions and felt experience has long been acknowledged and conceptualized by critical IR (Crawford 2000). Here, established scholarship has often downgraded emotions as 'contrary to reason and rationality, and […] relegated to the private, feminine sphere, or seen as some kind of bodily aberration that needs to be subdued or overcome' (Crawford, 2000, cited in Åhäll and Gregory, 2015: 2). When emotions are considered in IR, they have tended to be 'stuck in the brain' (Åhäll and Gregory, 2015: XIX), limited to

neuroscientific methods exploring cerebral mechanisms in political decision-making and voting attitudes. Additionally, there has been a tendency to adopt social psychology approaches conceiving emotions as distinct containers of experience or stateled institutional discourses (Head, 2016; Zevnik, 2021). This translates into recent studies employing text- and image-based psychological and cognitive tests to measure emotional responses to exposure to terrorist threat and correlate perceptions of terrorist events (Baucum and John, 2020; Quirin et al., 2021; Vasilopoulos and Brouard, 2020). Albeit more rarely, and inspired by feminist debates on the cultural politics of emotions (Ahmed, 2000; Butler, 2009), IR have also called for deeper reflection around strategies for researching emotions (Åhäll and Gregory, 2013). These voices focus on the political landscapes of war, peace, danger and threat, militarism, and political violence as something that a focus on everyday emotions and away from constructivist approaches around the discourse of the War on Terror (Brown and Penttinen, 2013; Hall and Ross, 2015) can bring more clearly into view.

In political geography, early feminist approaches (Dowler and Sharp, 2001; Hyndman, 2001; Smith, 2001; Staeheli et al., 2004) have developed into a more recent and diverse critical scholarship into the reproductions of geopolitics in the realms of the everyday, affective (Militz and Schurr, 2016; Woon, 2013), corporeal (Fluri, 2011), and intimate (Barabantseva et al., 2021; Laketa and Fregonese, 2022). There has also been substantial engagement with emotions in relation to global politics (Dodds and Kirby, 2013; Pain and Smith, 2008; Woon, 2013). Ó Tuathail (2003: 858-859) argues that the 'affective tsunami' of the War on Terror (WoT) 'mixes the cultural into the corporeal' and turns emotions into factors in the diplomatic discourses, performances, calculations, and actions underpinning the invasion of Iraq. This point is reinforced by Saurette, (2005), who argues that feelings of, and responses to, humiliation underpin the US counterterrorism strategy after 9/11. What Ó Tuathail (2003: 868) distinctively highlights, however, is the corporeal and everyday economy undergirding the emotions surrounding WoT decision-making – an economy, he argues, made of 'burgeoning new contracts in "homeland security," military supplies, and "reconstruction"' that impact materially on lives on ground. While drawing attention on emotions, the above contributions remain grounded in social constructivism, textual analyses, and studies of 'the mind and its operations as a precondition for action' (Vannini, 2015: 8), rather than focussing on practices, performances, actions, and intuitions.

Rejecting disembodied and universalist views of fear, Pain (2009: 484) called for embodying, grounding, and locating geopolitical processes to identify how the global/geopolitical and the intimate/quotidian intersect and to capture how emotions 'stimulate action and affect the practices, progress and shape of politics at different scales' (Pain, 2009: 487). Similarly, Åhäll and Gregory (2013: 118) have later argued for 'mov[ing] beyond emotions as feelings and focus instead on how emotions are producing discernible effects' and politics through their performative power (Butler 2009). Additionally, while valuable research has begun to explore the embodied experiences of armed conflict and accounting for the exceptional trauma of war and terrorism, including the atmospherics and affective dimensions of geopolitical conflict and military technology (Ruppert, 2022; Slesinger, 2022), work remains to be done when it comes to ordinary contexts outside warzones, which are also affectively and materially shaped by national security considerations, geopolitical threats, and security responses. We argue that research is needed to bring into view these ordinary felt experiences among urban residents and their daily encounters with (counter)terrorism in public space. Setting the conceptual stage for this, we identify three openings that appear from bringing into proximity interdisciplinary literature around the themes of (1) elite, exceptional, and everyday standpoints; (2) techno-centrism and feeling bodies; and (3) diffuse and bounded approaches. Here, we develop these openings critically, to offer an account of urban (counter)terrorism that foregrounds ordinary felt experiences and intensities.

Elite, exceptionality, and the everyday

The study of (counter)terrorism in geography and beyond has grappled with the issue of representation on two related levels. First, a body of work has

critiqued established scholarship based on its philosophical attachment to constructivist ideas of 'securitisation'. Here, the critique relates to the framing of particular issues as threats through understanding them as speech-acts (Wæver, 2011), and to the focus on official discourses and knowledges and their binary logics of 'us v. them' (see also Ó Tuathail, 1996; Ó Tuathail and Agnew, 1992). Second, drawing on interpretive methods such as the analysis of a range of academic, popular, policy, and media discourses, and discussions with implicated communities, research has studied the politics and impacts of counterterrorism responses that include framing specific communities as suspect or susceptible to violent extremism (Fadil et al., 2019; Hickman et al., 2012; Hillyard, 1993; Nguyen, 2019), and the racialized and gendered impacts of counterterrorism operations and campaigns on individuals and communities (Awan, 2018; Geisser et al., 2017; Isakjee, 2016; Isakjee and Allen, 2013).

On both levels, there have been calls to bridge representational gaps by both going beyond elite (and state-centred) discursive understandings of (counter)terrorism, and by engaging the everyday. For example, drawing on focus groups with diverse publics as well as a large-scale questionnaire, Stevens and Vaughan-Williams (2016: 1) argue that national security policies have not 'engage[d] the views and experiences of diverse publics in the assessment and prioritisation of issues presented as security threats and risks' and a consequent 'citizens gap' has been produced in (UK) national security policy. There is little knowledge of how diverse publics experience security in their lives, and it is argued that 'a more consultative approach' is needed by governments to engage local publics and bring 'marginalised voices into national debates around security' (Stevens and Vaughan-Williams, 2016: 165-166; see also Jarvis and Lister, 2013).

While valuable, these calls not only miss out aspects of the diversity of publics that (counter)terrorism involve, but also risk reifying or even moralizing distinctions between elite/lay and official/ordinary. Moreover, they risk normalizing and universalising 'the everyday' as an ordinary experience that is the same for all, purging it of the unequal spatial politics of (counter)terrorism (Laketa and Fregonese, 2022; Pain, 2009, 2014). While more ethnographic and participatory methods have recently tackled everyday interpretations of threat (Gillespie and O'Loughlin, 2009), these again adopt (media) texts as research objects and a primarily interpretative approach, resulting in the grounded 'everyday life of security' remaining underexplored (Nyman, 2021).

Another strand of literature concerns how the governing of terrorist threat by the State is embodied, sensed, and performed in practice. This literature shifts the focus from banality and routinization to the wider range of sensible experiences enrolled in counterterror preparedness among police forces, security guards, and in counterterrorism trainings. This includes the employment of situational awareness to train affective labourers to detect threats (Ritchie, 2015). These approaches often bear racialized tones in that they train sections of the public to 'experienc[e] certain bodies as out of place, so as to encourage state action to police or detain them' (Ritchie, 2015: 193; see also Krasmann and Hentschel, 2019). Despite the affective economies of state-led governing preparedness being recognized by geographic scholarship as profoundly unequal (Anderson, 2016a, 2016b), we echo Leff (2021: 5) in recognizing that, while government counterterrorism agendas 'impact the day-to-day experiences of people, the actual mechanism by which it enters these spaces and the materiality of this phenomenon are often neglected'. More research is needed in gauging how different dispositions to and experiences of (counter)terrorism threats and measures coexist amidst diverse urban publics in Western Europe.

Infrastructures and lived perspectives

Anglophone geography and planning literatures have extensively analysed the infrastructures, technologies, and governing of urban securitization (Coaffee, 2022; Graham, 2004; Graham and Wood, 2003). Urban geopolitics as the study of the 'intersections of urbanism, terrorism, and warfare' (Graham, 2004: 191) have heavily influenced these debates. However, this approach has been critiqued for its limiting triple focus on (1) the technological

aspects of late-modern warfare and terrorism; (2) a limited array of case studies within the global north and Israel/Palestine; and (3) areas of open armed conflict.

This is where the second opening appears: a techno-centric focus, while engaging a substantive aspect of securitisation, lacks accounts of the ordinary, embodied, and sentient aspects of counterterrorism (Fregonese and Laketa, 2022). This conceptual and methodological gap parallels calls to study 'the significance of place to individual and collective emotional topographies' of geopolitical events (Pain, 2009: 17), and how militarisation and political change are 'experienced and made present to the lives that live them' (Adey, 2013: 52-53; see also Fregonese, 2017). Recent work has partly addressed these concerns by considering the material-affective aspects of surveillance in public urban space (Adey et al., 2013), the governance of terrorism emergencies (Anderson, 2016a), and the intimate and experiential implications of terrorism threat and counterterrorism (Laketa et al., 2021). This work becomes important when considering how present counterterrorism physical measures respond to the shift of terrorist acts towards everyday spaces and so-called 'soft targets'. Protective measures around ordinary public space such as markets, pavements, squares, or restaurants terraces, can even intensify and reinforce perceptions of siege or vulnerability, heightening a sense of anticipation of danger (Ciax and Runkel, 2024; Grosskopf, 2006). In response, security suppliers have become concerned with the aesthetic and attractiveness (or not) of such measures.[4] The governance of urban security is also increasingly splintered and decentred from the state and its anticipatory logics of prevention towards community resilience and collective vigilance (Coaffee, 2013). Users of public space are considered as 'alive and moving cameras' (Castagnino, 2016: 49) that would report any suspicious activity in a logic of 'participatory surveillance' (Larsen and Piché, 2009: 188). Similarly, in the French counterterror emergency plan *Vigipirate* and the UK's *ACT* campaign, we witness the enrolment of individual 'good reflexes' and feelings in a shared struggle against terror (Fregonese and Laketa, 2022).

Bounded/diffused approaches

Terrorism's emotional effects are felt diffusely over time and through space, influencing communities' everyday dispositions, political attitudes, and their resistance to state-driven resilience agendas (Clément, 2021) well beyond the distinct terrorist event. This is where a third opening shows itself. Despite calls for an epistemological shift in terrorism studies towards the (non-state) affective workings of (counter)terrorism, and despite ideas around atmosphere – which we discuss in more detail in the next section – informing this research, engagement with (counter)terrorism remains circumscribed in terms of the bounded space-times considered. This includes sensory and atmospheric explorations of various confined and enclosed (often interior) spaces connected to political elites, or specific spatial categories like public transport (Kazig and Masson, 2015; Power et al., 2016; Shaker, 2021). Conversely, work has emerged in critical geopolitics with regards to the daily 'atmospheric doings' of global politics and diplomacy (Jones, 2020a, 2020b; McConnell, 2020), international summits (Legg, 2020), and other events where international relations are shaped by both meteorological/elemental atmospherics and affective atmospheres. Often derived from historical work 'to tease out the more-than-human from the archive' (Legg, 2020: 789), the focus here is on the circulations between material and human agencies and on the production of affective atmospheres in and through diplomatic environments and decision-making (Dittmer, 2016; Lin, 2021), and on how these atmospheres are 'experienced in different ways according to cultural attitudes, values, and personal life stories and backgrounds' (Jones, 2020b: 1383). This scholarship remains mainly elite- and state-centred, accounting for atmosphere as a staging of international politics through the lens of official events in bounded spaces.

However, we want to build on this third opening, and link geographical literature on atmosphere with critical terrorism studies, to develop an atmospheric approach to studying (counter)terrorism. This

approach goes beyond specific terror events, bounded sites, or specific counterterrorism measures (be it discursive or material) and instead studies (counter) terrorism as a wider array of 'practices and experiences of envelopment' beyond a distinct event (McCormack, 2018: 4). We consider the diffuse, felt distributions and modulations that, while relating to a terrorist event or counterterror measure, 'exceed [its] category of entity' and become sensed differentially, but not discontinuously from that event (McCormack, 2018: 12). We argue for an atmospheric approach to counterterrorism that accounts for, but is not limited to, attack and commemoration (Bazin, 2018; Closs Stephens et al., 2017; Gensburger, 2017; Meroueh, 2020), but that instead follows the envelopments and everyday dispositions diffused across space and time and affecting diverse urban communities in the long run. In so doing, we attempt to bring into view the felt experiences of (counterterrorism) away from the bounded and elite, and into the diffuse and quotidian. We ask, echoing Pain (2009: 471): who claims counterterrorism? 'Who actually feels it? How is it experienced, and what do people do with it? How is it shaped and differentiated by varied lives, communities and places?'

III. Atmospheric thinking and the composition of lived experience

In arguing for an atmospheric approach that navigates these openings and foregrounds the lived, diffuse, and everyday realities of (counter)terrorism, it is important to clarify what we mean by 'atmosphere'. Studies of shared felt experiences include varied conceptual underpinnings and points of emphasis. Such differences are influenced by varied national traditions of European thought spanning aesthetics (Böhme, 2018; Griffero, 2019), architectural theory (DeMatteis, 2019), phenomenology (Anderson, 2009; Di Croce, 2020; Schmitz, 2014; Thibaud, 2015), and affective/new materialisms (McCormack, 2008; Philippopoulos-Mihalopolous 2016). Notably, the anglophone turn towards atmospheres emerged out of conceptual work on affect and emotions, in response to the question of how we think about shared experiences (Trigg, 2022). It is also shaped by French and German traditions in philosophy and aesthetics on atmospheres and architecture (Böhme, 1993), and by a longstanding tradition of work on architectural and urban *ambiances (*Augoyard, 1995; Thibaud, 2002). Thibaud (2011: 203) defines an ambiance as 'a space-time qualified from a sensory perspective', meaning that ambiance research 'involves a socio-aesthetic approach that attunes the researcher to everyday urban atmospheres'. Here, ordinary urban experiences are considered by emphasizing the relationship between social interaction, material environment, and sensory phenomena (Amphoux et al., 2004).

Atmosphere is commonly used to name an immersive and shared felt quality of a situation which emerges from, and is shaped by, the agency of a host of human and non-human participants (Anderson, 2009). Atmospheres can be relative ubiquitous backdrops to daily life. They can, though, be interrupted or perturbed by the taking place of particular encounters or events given there is a contingency and dynamism to atmospheres. Some have attributed such atmospheres specific spatial forms, particularly considering Sloterdijk's (2011, 2014, 2016) influential discussions of spheres (see Ernste, 2018; Klauser, 2010). However, for many geographers writing about atmospheres, atmospheres are not understood to have clearly identifiable spatial or temporal forms or limits, nor do they exist in a distinct, mosaic-like spatiality. Rather, 'Ambiances and atmospheres seem to radiate from things and collectives … as a kind of "voluminosity"' (Adey et al., 2013: 304). Different encounters and events, the shifting constituent elements of the situation of those atmospheres and those interacting with them, and the atmospheres' ephemeral nature leave the spatial limits of atmospheres blurry and overlapping (Anderson and Ash, 2015). Atmospheres are, then, 'diffused spatially and grasped affectively' (Trigg, 2020: 4) as everyday life plays out. As such, we consider atmosphere as a polyvalent sensitizing concept that expands how feelings in the face of terrorist threats or counterterrorism measures might be thought and understood across a range of urban environments and spatio-temporal scales.

Rather than proposing a unified conception of atmosphere to reconcile these diverse academic traditions from which the notion emerged, we use a praxeological approach (Thibaud, 2004), a 'knowing-through' atmospheres (Sumartojo and Pink, 2019). In doing so, we use the full heuristic potential of atmosphere, which is at the same time the object of study, a holistic approach useful for understanding, and a tool for analysis (Kazig and Masson, 2015). In developing this, we focus on two lines of enquiry in thinking about the diffuse everyday life of (counter)terrorism. These are: how atmospheres are produced, and how these atmospheres are registered, negotiated, or even resisted on the ground.

Producing atmospheres

A central scholarly concern has been how atmospheres might be deliberately produced or become an 'object-target' for various forms of manipulation or shaping (Anderson, 2014). A diverse terminology has developed to consider such atmospheric production. Architectural and urban scholarship has focused on the production of atmospheres in terms of design and staging (Adey et al., 2013; Kraftl and Adey, 2008; Wigley, 1998). This includes research on the staging and designing of atmospheres (Bille et al., 2015; Edensor and Sumartojo, 2015), including in (semi-) enclosed spaces of leisure (Escher et al., 2016; Wilhelm, 2020), consumption (Brighenti and Kärrholm, 2018), and mobility (Adey et al., 2013; Bissell, 2010; Urry et al., 2016). It has been shown how the 'background' character of such spaces – subtle manipulations of a space's temperature, soundscape, lighting, layout, furnishing, and so on – as well as their physical organization, can be worked with to produce a certain 'feel' (Adey et al., 2013; Edensor, 2012; Griffero, 2021). Equally, work here has also engaged with less obviously enclosed spaces such as urban markets and squares (Degen and Lewis, 2020; Kazig, 2008), waterfront areas (Yu, 2019), tourist districts (Paiva and Sanchez-Fuarros, 2021), and centres of urban night life and entertainment (Di Croce et al., 2022; Duff and Moore, 2015).

Such findings have also raised concern with how these design agendas, often aimed at the production of particularly 'comfortable' environments, can lull populations into passive dispositions (Philippopoulos-Mihalopolous, 2016; Runkel, 2016). For example, Adey et al. (2013) show how those responsible for security operations in Gare du Nord, Paris, try to set such a comfortable tone in the station environment with their public information materials which suggest measures such as CCTV are intended to produce a collective mood of tranquility amongst users. This does, though, appear to be at odds with the at times aggressive practices of armed police seen not far away outside the station building; their demeanor and the materialities of their uniforms and accompanying equipment radiate very different tonalities. As Adey et al. (2013: 304) note, 'Such events…and force-filled materialities sit in tension with the previously mentioned ambition for tranquility through security and surveillance'. A similar dynamic was noted by Katz (2007: 349) who, walking through New York's public space in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, reflected on the 'inappropriate bodies' of the National Guard in the streets: 'Why would dressing for Desert Storm in the midst of New York City reassure residents and visitors of their safety?'. Questions can be asked, then, about the agendas and politics present in efforts to bring about certain atmospheres and limit others. Who are these atmospheres for and who will comfortably attune to them? Whose interests are advanced through these atmospheric productions and who loses out through the exertion of such 'ambient powers' (Allen, 2006)? How will ways of attuning be maintained and harnessed amidst different publics by those governing counterterrorism?

It is important, though, to also recognize that such efforts to produce specific atmospheres should not devolve into dystopian visions of populations becoming passive recipients of atmospheric designs. Scholars are asking critical questions about the efforts to shape everyday experiences of secured spaces, and showing that contestations and counter-atmospheres can be sought and/or produced when it comes to security and surveillance practices. For example, Kaplan (2020: 51) has shown how drones can be a part of 'the complex politics of atmospheric

governance as areal systems that can participate in protest as well as policing, civil as well as state observation' (also see Schnepf, 2019). Relatedly, Wall (2019: 158) highlights the potential for a 'counter-archive of protest atmotechnics' disrupting the affective techniques used by policing to manage and modulate protest crowds. Further, more generally 'an atmosphere is a contingent and potentially provisional achievement' (Simpson, 2021: 96). In emphasizing that the production of an atmosphere is not a straightforward, foreclosed process, we need to also consider the unintended outcomes of such attempts at production. It may be that the intended atmosphere simply isn't produced, and such engineering efforts are unsuccessful (Ash, 2010). But, it is also possible that inadvertent 'collateral' atmospheres might overspill from such efforts (Paiva and Sánchez-Fuarros, 2021), leading to the production of something quite different beyond the targeted space.

There are evident parallels here when it comes to such a concern with both the material realities of urban environments and their role in securing people and institutions from the threat of terrorism, and the host of practices of policing and securing that seek to set a certain tone amongst this. Counterterrorism is replete with examples of specific policing and practices acting 'beyond the realm of the observable' and becoming embodied at the everyday level (Drongiti and Masson, 2022) that warrant consideration here for their atmospheric aspects and impacts. As such, recently there have been calls to further nuance these considerations of atmospheric production beyond a focus on 'designing out terrorism' and infrastructural matters and into the mundane, collective, and unintended consequences and opportunities that such counterterrorism designs entail (Trandberg Jensen and Jensen, 2021). How then might different atmospheres come into being through the performance of variously expressive activities amongst such materialities?

Atmospheric compositions

The more-than-human agency in the composition of atmospheres raises a second theme in recent literature: a tension between the status of the human in considerations of atmospheres and the extent of their role in such atmospheres' existence. A significant starting point for geographic engagements with atmosphere comes from a German body of literature in aesthetics, architectural theory, and human geography, that *mostly* departs from (subject-oriented) phenomenology and understands atmospheres based on the experiential realm of the lived body (*Leib*) (Anderson, 2009; Böhme, 2018; Runkel, 2018; Schmitz, 2014). In this, atmospheres form a 'quasi-object' (*Halb-Ding*) in that they are neither objective nor subjective in nature; they sit awkwardly between such categories, forming more a 'medium of perception' (Böhme, 2013; Riedel, 2019; Thibault and Halliday, 2006; Wilhelm, 2020). Further scholarly developments emphasize the more-than human, material-affective dimensions of atmospheres and the multitude of other 'things' that find themselves entangled with humans in atmospheric compositions (Philippopoulos-Mihalopolous, 2016). This has led to efforts to make 'explicit the materiality of air and atmosphere' (McCormack, 2009: 38). That includes concerns with more literal senses of atmospheres and their 'always already entangled nature' when it comes to everyday and artistic practices (Verlie, 2019: 1; Engelmann, 2015; Engelmann and McCormack, 2018; McCormack, 2015; Simpson, 2019), as well as atmospheres that are not-fully-tangible (Verlie, 2019), or which unfold entirely beyond the threshold of human perception while nonetheless impacting on those practices (Ash, 2013). The emphasis here is on the coming together of both material and 'immaterial' surroundings as part of something that might be felt by bodies but also remain diffuse or 'in the air' (McCormack, 2008; Tixier et al., 2011).

In the context of (counter)terrorism, this interest in the more-than human, relational-material-affective dimension of the atmospheric has been discussed in terms of 'atmoterrorism' and an attention to the air as a medium which can be conditioned in various ways, but one which is also inherently intertwined with the bodies that move through it. As Nieuwenhuis (2016: 510) suggests in discussing less than lethal technologies like tear gas, 'Atmoterrorism entails not a mere attack on the materiality of the body, but more fundamentally assaults its immersed psychological and physiological relationship to the air'. Such a concern with 'negative air conditioning' draws attention to the susceptibility and vulnerability of bodies and bodily incapacities in the face of

various atmospheric technologies. The atmospheric bases of this concern span geographical and political contexts. For example, Drongiti and Masson (2022) highlight the French authorities' post-2015 limitation in public space of potentially 'anxiogenic' devices such as two-tone sirens from various emergency services that can affect the susceptibility of individual bodies as well as crowds. In the more extreme case of a conflict zone, discussing the use of atmospheric weapons like 'Skunk Water' and tear gas by the state of Israel against the Palestinian population, Joronen (2023) shows the complex relationships between bodies that cannot not breathe and the material-affective compositions of these weapons that come to emerge in dwelling in air. While such atmospheric materialities can act to govern through the weaponization of the air itself – showing what Joronen calls 'pneumatological vulnerability' – they also bring about 'long-term spheric attunements to aerial configurations' which 'become markers of everyday day like in certain site-spheres of dwelling' (Joronen, 2023: 6-7). Equally, Feigenbaum and Weismann (2016: 496) show the flipside of this in terms of how such bodily vulnerability has been used at security expos to justify the advancement of the use of such weapons to ensure the safety of security forces in an 'atmosphere of constantly evolving threats', again showing the mutual co-implication of the felt and material senses of atmosphere.

Such more-than- or post-humanist approaches to atmosphere have led to something of a humanist backlash, with arguments for a need to focus on the human experience of atmospheres more clearly, re-centring the analysis around socially and historically situated human experiences (Bille and Simonsen, 2019; Brown et al., 2019; Degen and Lewis, 2020). We find such efforts to 'ground' atmospheres in an experiencing subject troubling for how they could be read to rein in something meant to be, by its very nature, unbounded and elusive. However, these are potentially productive points of tension to be worked between. For example, drawing on feminist scholarship on affect and emotions, Leff (2021: 7, citing Ahmed) calls for a clearer attention to our 'angles of arrival' into atmospheres and so the differences in how humans encounter and attune to atmospheres. This then necessitates an 'attunement to difference' which explores how 'we live in atmospheres unevenly'. We share the view that '[t]he affective interactions of encountering atmospheres … create relationalities of irreducible complexity that demands constant attunement to differences in power, history, and lived experiences' (Leff, 2021: 7). That said, there is a difference between being attuned to such matters and presuming their determinative status. We also argue that an attention to the non-human means other senses and interpretations of difference might also be constructively brought into such attunements. While there are clear and established identity politics in terms of discourses around who may or may not be perceived as a potential terrorist or produce collective feelings of concern amongst certain publics, from the suspect community literature (Awan, 2012; Hillyard, 1992; Ragazzi, 2016) to wider reflections on racialised and gendered dynamics in counterterrorism (Groothuis, 2020), this literature remains representational and discourse-based. There is, therefore, potential for more differentiated accounts of terror threat and counterterrorism responses here, given the full range of human and non-human actors tied up in such atmospheric compositions and the registers upon which this takes effect.

We argue that it is important to remain open when it comes to tracing the agents that may (or may not) have a significant role in (re)shaping these atmospheres, in playing a part in their ongoing composition. So, while it is important in thinking about the atmospheres that circulate around (counter)terrorism in cities to attend to how those atmospheres are experienced, it is also important to consider the diverse and shifting agencies at play in the ongoing unfolding of those atmospheres. Taken together, existing scholarship helps us to think about how sensory and emotional experience might be felt by multiple bodies present in a situation, be communicated between these (more-than human) bodies, and be 'worked upon' through various forms of human and non-human intervention.

IV. An atmospheric approach to urban (counter)terrorism

The scholarship discussed here shows how thinking atmospherically allows us to question the discourses, practices, and infrastructures of urban (counter)terrorism representing the concerns of

public and private actors, and focus instead on the less studied realm of the everyday felt experiences of these spaces. We find it useful to think with what Sloterdijk (2009) and Wall (2019: 5) call 'atmotechnics', that is, 'techniques that aim to create, manage or change affective atmospheres'. These techniques include a concern for the material design of urban spaces, the staging of such spaces for (specific) use, and the practices of both emotional and/or affective labour undertaken by the actors that come to inhabit these spaces. We would, though, extend the senses of the term used by Sloterdijk (2009) and Wall (2019) to suggest that such techniques are not just the preserve of those in power or with elite knowledges and are not deployed in a determinative fashion. These techniques also unfold as part of the more-than-human ensemble of actors whose agencies and impacts are not known in advance of their (ongoing) taking place. That said, systematic and comparative research remains to be done around how forms and politics of state 'atmospheric governance' can be understood as mobilized and experienced differently by different bodies and what 'sensitive potentials' of individuals and collectives might evolve within such urban contexts (Kazig and Masson, 2015). Working with atmospheres in this way allows us to be concerned with diffuse practices of security and securing urban spaces and the sorts of atmospheres that emerge from and come to exist around them.

We now focus on two potentially contrasting elements that we see as constitutive for developing an atmospheric approach for studying everyday urban experiences of (counter)terrorism – the crowd and question of difference. This approach allows us to connect understandings, mappings, and calibrations of experiences of urban spaces by official state actors towards specific target publics without losing sight of the diffuse, quotidian, and often unpredictable responses and felt experiences among the users of those spaces. This approach connects the atmotechnics of counterterrorism and the 'power with which political actors may actively invest emotions' (Clément, 2021: 255) to govern urban populations, with the differential effects that these atmotechnics may result in across very diverse urban subjectivities and materialities (Paiva and Sanchez-Fuarros, 2021).

Crowds, governance, publics

Crowd control and management emerged in seventeenth century European scholarly reasoning as a material and spatial manifestation of the body politic. In the nineteenth century, crowds became viewed as pathological entities (Borch, 2009, 2012) for their 'impulsiveness, irritability, incapacity to reason, the absence of judgement of the critical spirit, the exaggeration of sentiment' (Le Bon, 1895: 15). Crowds emerged as a logistical issue within colonial enterprises (Kerr, 1994), from military campaigns to transatlantic slave trade and, in the 20th century, as part of Europe's world war and Nazism's destructive expulsions of population (Adey, 2020). Additionally, the festive crowds of organized games and religious festivals have also been objects of affective managements (Picaud, 2020), including the affective atmospheres of fascist crowd-arousing (Borch, 2012, 194; Griffero, 2019). Currently, the governance and study of crowds has diversified and specialized. Their governance builds on a wide range of techniques to control, shape, evacuate, engage, disrupt, or manipulate crowds such as deploying force, social engineering, and techno-ambiental interventions (Runkel, 2018). These have been the object of human geographical enquiry including mobility (Bissell, 2010), public health (McFarlane, 2020; Joiner et al., 2024), urban politics (Chowdhury 2019), evacuation (Adey, 2020), and protest (Feigenbaum, 2013; Nieuwenhuis, 2016; Wall, 2019).

Crowds are conceived at once as a threat for sociopolitical order and as a hallmark of liberal democracy needing to be secured and protected. This constitutes a challenging operational dialectic between the management of crowds amidst (counter)terrorism. Indeed, in the past decade, crowd behaviour and crowded places have been central to (counter)terrorism in cities. For example, the European project 'Safer Space for Safer Cities' (SafeCi, 2019–2021) has highlighted that 'the primary attack targets are "soft targets" such as crowds' (SafeCi, 2021: 10). As part of this concern

with crowds in the UK, a principle of proportionality whereby 'the level of restriction is commensurate with need and that the public are not unduly restricted in accessing important amenities' (Home Office, 2012: 17) has been the operational response to the conundrum of keeping public spaces safe yet looking *and feeling* open for the crowds frequenting them. As part of this, the National Counter Terrorism and Security Office (Home Office, 2012) issued design and technical guidance on the protection of crowded places. The two guiding principles were, firstly, 'blending in' counterterrorism protective measures into the urban design of crowded places 'in an imaginative and considered way; (Home Office, 2012: 3) and, secondly, focussing on seamless and unobstructed ingress and egress of crowds. This can be seen in the case of hostile vehicle mitigation (HVM) in that we see cities populated with varieties of protective barriers in public spaces. These physical measures are increasingly made to recede into banal everydayness, often by being beautified, rather than presenting overt fortification and defensiveness (Allen, 2006; Coaffee, 2017; Ilum, 2022).

Crowded places became integrated into counterterrorism by building on rational approaches in crowd psychology. These approaches tend to represent crowds as a generic and depoliticized 'singular' entity (Aradau, 2015: 166) following accepted views of what constitutes normal behaviour. Governing crowds, according to Aradau (2015: 157), means calibrating different psychological and social constructivist knowledges to rein in what are slippery and potentially contradictory collective-and-bodily conglomerations of '[n]either populations nor people' whose governing 'depends upon different modalities of psychosocial knowledge about collective behaviour and its affective economies'.

Crowds are indeed not totally malleable monoliths, neither formed of 'singular and terrorial' subjects (Adey, 2020: 371). This becomes particularly clear in emergencies like terrorist attacks, where crowds have been found to have autonomies and spontaneities, or 'promiscuities', as Adey (2020) defines them, that not only make crowds hard to govern and predict, but that also challenge wider assumptions around orderliness and morality. Importantly for our argument, crowd governance in (terror) emergencies often disguises micro-scale and intimate spatialities that complicate the linear geography of ingress/egress with material and affective dynamics that are central to the unfolding of emergencies because, among other things, they slow down movement. In his study of the evacuation of the Twin Towers in New York during the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Adey (2020) shows how the crowd evacuation from the World Trade Center was complicated and made slower by acts of solidarity, altruism and waiting for others, and annexed embodied practices and materialities, like swapping or removing shoes.

Today, in urban Western Europe especially, considerations around crowds and their collective affects are relevant within a policy context grappling with low-sophistication terror attacks in everyday public spaces (Home Office, 2022) and citizens-based responses towards identifying suspicious behaviours by potential attackers (SGDSN, 2017). The Protect Duty Consultation in the United Kingdom is a case in point. In 2021, it surveyed views and desires from the public and private sector on the nature, extent, and type of legal requirement to implement antiterrorism measures in the spaces they manage. Within the consultation, publicly accessible locations where 'large gatherings' occur were most frequently considered spaces requiring a legal duty to embed counterterror training and measures in their operations (Home Office, 2022). While the previous *Guidance on Crowded Places* focused on events with a delimited time-space of crowd ingress/egress at specific events, the Protect Duty, by contrast, encompasses a diffused space-time – and annexed materialities – including public squares, parks, markets, beaches, pubs, and so on, and a timeline of protection that extends beyond specific events.

A tension arises here. On the one hand, the crowd (and the thresholds at which spaces becomes crowded) is the measure by which a space falls under an obligation to be secured; crowds here are, therefore, bearers of significant future developments in urban counterterrorism. On the other hand, here crowds are predominantly understood as unproblematic and relatively bound entities, whereas counterterrorism – spanning defensive urban design, barriers, situational awareness, and vigilance – is

becoming increasingly diffuse, sense-ful and everyday presence in urban public spaces. An atmospheric approach is therefore useful here to make sense of both the significance and impact of protecting crowds in cities where the contemporary terrorist threat – and its response – is spatially diffuse and temporally unbounded. Wall (2019: 158) already noted how there is an 'atmospheric praxis' developed by British policing, in using 'the force of affective techniques' to modulate crowd behaviour 'through atmotechnic interventions'. While Wall's analysis is targeted at crowds at political gatherings, like protests, how are crowds modulated when there isn't a single event or a single purpose to manage? How are the crowds that are part and parcel of everyday urban life to be protected? An example of this point is that of the UK's Project Servator, a type of police operations aimed at disrupting hostile reconnaissance for the preparation of terrorist acts. It is done by patrols of both overt and covert officers – aided by non-human surveillance like CCTV – in crowded public urban spaces that might be targeted by terrorists. Servator patrols focus on disrupting hostile activity by augmenting anxieties in potential hostiles amidst a crowd, thus amplifying suspicious behaviours and therefore aiding their detection. This has evident implications around whose attunements are particularly targeted or considered problematic by this atmospheric kind of policing, and how different bodily and emotional reactions by individuals as part of the everyday crowd become (or not) suspicious.

Difference and differential attunement to (counter)terrorism

This last section tackles such questions of difference in attunement to (counter)terrorism atmospheres and returns to the broader issue of whom these atmospheres are for and who will comfortably attune to them (or not). This allows us to address the question of how the sense-making of (counter)terrorism urban landscapes differs amongst diverse publics who find themselves together and/or set apart within those affective ecologies.

While terrorism acts indiscriminately, terrorism and counterterrorism are neither known and experienced and *felt* identically by all (Campbell, 2019). And yet, authorities tend to approach what terror threat and protection from terrorism means, feels like, and becomes manifest as a universalized status of citizens or populations made knowable through metrics or as a mass feelings (Anderson, 2012). Within the logic of counterterrorism, even producing protection for vulnerable groups becomes part of maintaining a diverse but unified (and thus still exclusionary) body politic (Puar, 2018). Specific to urban areas in the global north, literature has also considered, by analysing policy discourses, how counterterrorism and the transposing of military approaches to security onto very diverse urban public spaces (Saberi, 2019) intersects with issues such as the limitation of civil liberties and the increase of existential insecurity (Marcuse, 2006). Scholarship focused on corporeality and materiality has critiqued – via historiographical analysis of policy documents – the evolution in logics of suspiciousness and attention to what constitutes anomaly (Pawlowski, 2023; see also Krassman and Hentschel, 2019) amidst a terrorism threat. Other approaches have utilized visual and textual materials, together with interpretive methods like interviews and questionnaires, to observe dynamics of resistance against (Burns et al., 2021), and trust towards (Dalgaard-Nielsen et al., 2016) physical counterterrorism measures.

Atmospheres scholarship in cultural geography may be a surprising lens to adopt when it comes to placing emphasis on the differences with which (counter)terrorism is perceived, received, and felt on the urban ground. Gandy (2017: 368, 369) argues that scholarship on atmospheres, particularly that drawing on notions of affect and new materialisms, lacks historicity in analysis and that the bodies that occupy such atmospheres are often 'devoid of gender or any other kind of social difference, or indeed any clear sense of historical or geographical context'. This echoes critiques calling for a clear (er) focus on the place of socio-historically situated human experience in discussions of atmosphere (Bille and Simonsen, 2019; Brown et al., 2019; Degen and Lewis, 2020) and, as noted by Gandy (2017: 369), the 'different forms and scales of atmospheric politics'. Following Cockayne et al.'s (2017: 590) call for geographers to explicitly consider how difference

is conceptualized, here we seek to 'to experiment with thinking about difference differently'. We suggest that an attention to atmosphere opens up ways for thinking about such differences, given how atmospheres about and around (counter)terrorism are spatialized, composed, and unfolding politically on the urban ground. It leads us to ask: how do differences aggregate or coalesce in a given atmospheric circumstance and what does that do for those who feel them?

Massumi's (2015) notion of *differential attunement* is useful here to overcome the view of the socially constructed or emotionally charged crowd as the measure for securitizing public place, and reflect instead on the potential for engaging difference and the urban politics therein. According to Massumi (2015: 55), a collective event is one that distributes across the bodies composing a crowd as it becomes 'shocked in concert' responding to the same cue. However, Massumi (2015: 56) also recognizes the bodily and material complexity of a crowd and argues that 'there is no guarantee that [those bodies] will act in unison even if they are cued in concert [as] they will have been attuned – differentially – to the same interruptive commotion'.

Massumi conceives of affect as a distribution of difference that we find is particularly suited to analyse the collective and shared situations and experiences that are the object of our atmospheric heuristics. We see echoes of Ahmed's 'angle of arrival' here, but there is also a greater sense of the open-ended outcomes of these encounters. These shared situations might be understood to be part of and primed by the same event, but also contain vast variability within. Where the politics reside here, according to Massumi, is in the 'art' (by governing authorities) of bringing together coherently that variability of attunements – to streamline the 'different ways of being interpellated by the same event' within the same broader *'affective environment'* with its expectations and procedures. Massumi (2015: 57) takes the example of the fire alarm: the trigger is the same, and there might be widely different responses to an alarm – from mild panic and rushed escapes to more composed reactions – but the people who respond inhabit the same affective milieu and are all 'attuned to the threat event, one way or another'.

The notion of differential attunement leads to reflections around (counter)terrorism and how this is made present to diverse everyday lives. (Counter) terrorism produces extremely different realities for different people. Sometimes this is not intended but rather a product of the different capacities that bodies have to affect and be affected. As Feigenbaum and Kanngieser (2015: 82) note, the political question here lies precisely in the differential between 'what standardized measurements predict and what actually takes place'. At the extreme end, the impacts of less-than lethal atmospheric technologies like tear gas assume both an average (fit male) body when it comes to the measure of their anticipated impact and certain ideal environmental circumstances for their deployment. Such parameters rarely match on to the reality of the circumstances of their deployment, meaning the extent and depth of their effects and affects unfold in unpredictable ways for those caught up in them. Equally, though, the effects of state policies can be differential by design. As Anderson (2012) notes, when governments pursue security policies they are engaging in a biopolitical project of population-building that both disciplines and enables. They are *meant* to be discriminatory, because terrorism justifies extreme policy reactions that produce exceptional circumstances, and because there is a politics to the goal of producing generalized security that weighs the interests of some above others.

The production of security from terrorism through unequal means shows that what counts as security in the public domain is far from impartial, always differential. Affective phenomena, including and exceeding feelings and emotions, both operate beyond self-contained persons and are inherently tied up with the openness of individuals' bodies to affect and be affected (Deleuze, 1988). The workings of these affects break down distinctions between rational, conscious subjects, the pre-subjective and unconscious, and individuals and the assemblages they live within. But this is not to equate shared affects with equal experience. For example, residents caught up in the same counterterrorism operation in the same city are likely to experience, feel, and even behave in public space differently. The November 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris are a case in point here. Here Fregonese (2021) has shown how the

atmospherics (noise, lights, fumes) from the early morning counterterrorism raid by the French police on the neighbourhood of St Denis in the wake of the attacks left the local population shocked. Due to the use of explosives, some buildings became uninhabitable and some people were injured. Differently from the subdued and solemn atmosphere of central Paris's candle-lit vigils commemorating the victims of the attacks, in St Denis 'the diffuse experience of the neighbourhood and the values attributed to the locality – in terms of reputation, community cohesion, and mutual trust' were impacted negatively in the long term (Fregonese, 2021: 33). This can be seen further in Hergon's (2021) work on the embodied and intimate experiences of house searches and house arrests against Muslim or 'considered-to-be-Muslim' residents in Paris after these attacks. Furthermore, Abbas (2019) has shown more broadly, ahead of terror attacks, fractures can develop even *within* the same community, where a differential attunement to fear fosters a climate of double suspiciousness, between those coopted into prevention of radicalization and those suspected to be extremists.

That said, and following Massumi (2015), it shouldn't be assumed that those aggregated into the same categories of identity and difference will necessarily be disposed or attuned to these situations in the same way. The reality of these situations is far more circumstantial and often contexts are not fully shared despite social, historical, or geographic proximity. Aggregations of difference may well as much be an unintended outcome as part of the design-practices of counterterrorism and policy. For example, Ciax and Runkel (2024) highlight the politics and differential effects of the 'atmospheric fortification' of urban squares in Berlin. In these locales, '[n]ew perceptions of everyday life are constituted […]' that, contrary to views of atmosphere as an envelopment exceeding individual perceptions and instead 'producing a hierarchy of desired/undesired bodies at the square' (2024:11).

In sum, studying (counter)terrorism starting with difference highlights the diverse responses and practices that individuals adopt when they encounter the discourses and materialities of counterterrorism agendas. This foregrounds the experience of counterterrorism in cities not just as the top-down purview of the state, but also as an important component of everyday routines, individual fears, and decision-making, embedded so deeply as to often become. Laying emphasis on these experiences at the threshold of detectability is important in bringing into view an atmospheric political geography of (counter) terrorism, as 'it is the quietest fears, with little political capital but more immediate materiality, which have the sharpest impact' (Pain, 2009: 473).

V. Conclusion

This paper has joined interdisciplinary literature to foreground the spatialised lived experiences – atmospheres – of (counter)terrorism in urban spaces in Western Europe. This allowed us to explore the understandings of experiences of urban public spaces amongst official actors in relation specific target publics. We did so, though, without losing sight of the diffuse, quotidian, differential, and often unpredictable felt experiences of the diverse users of those spaces. While this does not aim to be an exhaustive review of the literature, it raises three avenues for further enquiry.

Firstly, we have articulated a need to attend to *diffusion*. Terrorism is eventful: it produces spectacle and rupture that are extraordinary, and exceptional in the responses to it, often at international and global levels. However, it is important to follow the atmospheric dispositions around (counter)terrorism as they become distributed and diffuse across urban public spaces. This atmospheric urban geography of (counter)terrorism appreciates the reverberations of events – as felt qualities or tendencies stemming and diffusing from events (Massumi, 2015) – in ways that are not confined in time and space to single terrorist events or to their commemoration, but that instead shape everyday urban experiences for the long term. As such, then, we need to carefully consider the place of atmosphere (Paiva and Sánchez-Fuarros, 2021) in the threads of everyday urban experiences, which requires an open-ended spatial and temporal imagination around terror threats and counterterrorism responses.

Secondly, our approach emphasizes a specific and expanded conception of *materiality*. We directly

address the material things of (counter)terrorism with which we are left with by official agendas in urban public space, and whose agency and relations contribute to the production of atmospheres. This goes beyond techno-centric approaches and instead both advocates a concern with the material-affective aspects of such measures, and demands a form of material imagination that recognizes that atmospheres exist as quasi-objects, being diffuse in and emanating through space. This materiality mixes an attention to: what non-human agencies are enrolled in efforts to produce specific collective feelings; the ways such atmospheres are experienced by the publics present in these spaces; and how counterterrorism agendas are not always easily aligned with specific atmospheric outcomes, given the complexity of agencies involved in their ongoing and circumstantial occurrence.

Thirdly, central to this is a sensitivity to *difference*. Urban encounters both shape and are shaped by intersectionality: one's experiences, social position, attachments to different groups, communities and neighbourhoods, personal memories, and collective histories (Paddison and McCann, 2014). Nevertheless, much research on urban encounters focuses on identity as the primary expression of difference (Watson, 2006). While race, gender, class, and sexual orientation undoubtedly shape the way people are perceived by others and experience public space (Ahmed, 2000), there is a wealth of individual and collective spatialized experience that influences how people interact with the material and social landscapes of the city which complicates structural conceptions of identity and difference. How, then, is (counter)terrorism experienced by diverse urban publics, and how do these different dispositions coexist (or become contested) in cities? It is important to unpack the 'we' of atmosphere, the shared nature, that collective presumption that the urban crowd that much of counterterrorism theory and practice is trying to protect, is one and attuned as one to threat and shock. Atmospheric geographies of counterterrorism, therefore, are inherently diverse, contested, and open to collateral, alter- and counter-atmospheres that coexist, become latent, sometimes are never registered, but – as Massumi, (2015) would have it – constitute potential nonetheless.

Working with atmospheres this way makes us concerned with the diverse and slippery entanglement of social encounters in public urban everyday life, practices and materialities of security and securing, narratives and discourses around terror and threat, moments of tension and the associated identity politics present therein, and the sorts of atmospheres that emerge from and come to exist around them. This presents methodological challenges, given the diverse range of agencies at play here, and so demands a particular sort of response. Echoing recent calls for methodological development in human geography in the light of various practice-based, sensory, experiential, more-than-textual, and more-than-human geographies (see Boyd, 2022; Dewsbury, 2010; Dowling et al., 2016, 2017, 2018; Dwyer and Davies, 2010; Lorimer, 2010; Simpson, 2021), a particular sort of methodological 'style' is required here (Ash and Simpson, 2019; Vannini, 2015; also see Thomas, 2010; Tixier, 2002). This does not necessarily mean developing new 'experimental' methods or discount the sort of discursive methods that have dominated in existing scholarship on terrorism in geography and cognate disciplines (see Dewsbury, 2010; Hitchings, 2012). It does, though, ask us to question the sorts of 'proceduralism' that have characterized certain visions of qualitative research where 'data' is something 'waiting in the "field" to be merely "plucked"' (Megoran, 2006: 626), and where the research somehow 'captures' the thing being studied to then be analysed away from its happening (Boyd, 2022; also see Dewsbury and Naylor, 2002; Simpson, 2015). The challenge lies not so much in the ability to increase generality through methodological experimentation, as in the fact of being able to apprehend the atmospheric dimensions of urban environments that are being reconfigured materially, symbolically, and practically (Masson, 2024), here by terror threat and counterterrorism measures, in ways that are potentially more-than-phenomenal, more-than-sensitive, and more-than-discursive. Approaching the complexity of atmospheres suggested here demands that we recognize the entangled nature of the research process itself and so to think carefully about *how* we use methods, how we attend to the diverse array of matters we are concerned with here, and how we seek to write about them given such atmospheres are always

encountered from a specific, differentiated point of view.

By foregrounding its felt experience and the way it is sensed in space, this paper opens epistemological perspectives onto diffuse, more-than-human, and differential approaches to researching (counter)terrorism. *Doing* atmospheric geographies of (counter) terrorism, in sum, grounds, embodies, and places dynamics that are spatially diffuse yet experientially visceral, as they involve a vast array of everyday urban public spaces and social interactions therein. In this viscerality of experience, an atmospheric approach foregrounds difference and intersectionality in experiencing, attuning to, and being impacted by (counter)terrorism threats and measures An atmospheric research praxis of (counter)terrorism, therefore, reclaims the agentive, embodied, eventful, quotidian, more-than-human and felt qualities of the connections between the global politics and localized violences that underpin terrorism and governmental responses to it. It contributes to making (counter) terrorism 'situated, materializing through combinations of subjects, places, infrastructure and economies' (Lorimer, 2015: 182), and takes beyond discourse a host of dynamics until recently dominated by representational approaches.

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Notes

1. For example, see Colak and Pearce (2015) on shifting models of urban security in Colombia; Fawaz et al. (2012) on security zones in Beirut; and Boyle (2020) on the postcolonial genealogies of counterterrorism in Indonesia.
2. Bladed weapons, vehicles, and Improvised Incendiary or Explosive Devices constituted the majority of methodologies in jihadi, rightwing, and leftwing/anarchist completed and foiled attacks in the EU. Locations included commuter trains and restaurant terraces, small scale events, urban power grids, and communication infrastructure.
3. The Dictionary of Human Geography broadly defines terrorism as 'organized violence that deliberately targets civilians and that is intended to sow fear among a population for political purposes' (Gregory, 2009: 747).
4. For example, Crowdguard stresses the importance for its products to be 'aesthetically pleasing' and allow 'pedestrians [to] walk though […] easily, without feeling caged in' (https://www.crowdguard.co.uk/what-we-offer/). Similarly, at Christmas markets in Denmark Mobile Gate Security installed 'attractive and inexpensive' temporary barriers gift-wrapped in festive bows (https://mobilegatesecurity.com/products/commercial-barrier-barrier-with-advertising-potential/).

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