

Walls for Freedom? Had, as a general objective, an examination the role of specific urban environments in relation to cultural values and identities. More precisely the objective was to consider the ways in which urban elements, in this case walls, located in particular urban contexts are able to produce, mediate and project outwards a system of belief and cultural practices that validate and in turn legitimise the socio-political official decisions to intervene in the urban landscape. This validation is of a paradoxical nature since it aims to provoke concrete measures of control and practical segregation, while at the same time socio-political discourse proclaims urban multiculturalism and the global movements of populations.

The project began on May 1st 2008 and ended on April 30th 2010. During this period the research focused on a familiarisation with the specificities of the case studies: Berlin, Belfast, Padua, Ceuta and Melilla. Secondary research was carried out for each of these cases; primary field-work research stages were undertaken in Berlin and Belfast. In the course of this research I established a wide range of contacts, collaborations and networks with researchers working on the theme of urban conflicts and segregation in the UK, Europe and Latin America. The following activities illustrate this active engagement:

PAPERS PRESENTED IN CONFERENCES:

1. "Did all the walls come down? Contemporary b/ordering walls in Europe" presented at the panel Walls, Borders and Boundaries at the German Studies Association Conference. Washington DC, October 2009.
2. "Urban development flanked by religion and politics: Reflections from Belfast" presented at the 10th Roundtables on Transnationality, Irmgard Coninx Foundation - WZB essay competition on Urban governance: Innovation, insecurity and the power of religion. Berlin, March 2009.
3. "Whose city, whose rights: Questioning the boundaries of the urban" presented at the ESF-LiU Conference The right to the city: New challenges, new issues. Vadstena, October 2008.
4. "Are you unhappy with the promises of democracy? Call the government customer' service" presented at the TG4 on Sociology of risk and Uncertainty, at the First ISA Forum Sociological research and public debate. Barcelona, September 2008.
5. "Divided cities in the global age: Observing the prevalence of urban walls in Europe", presented at the RC 21 on Regional and Urban Development, at the First ISA Forum Sociological research and public debate. Barcelona, September 2008.
6. "Urban planet, walled world: Questioning the nature of the urban bond" paper presented at the 8th Roundtables on Transnationality, Irmgard Coninx Foundation - WZB essay competition on Urban planet: collective identities, governance and empowerment in megacities. Berlin, June 2008.

INVITED LECTURES:

1. "Do we really aim to put down all walls? B/ordering walls in contemporary Europe" presented at the City Seminar Series at the CRASSH, University of Cambridge, April 2010.
2. "Democracy and urban segmentation in the Southern Cone" presented at the Latin America Series 2010, Department of Politics, University of Glasgow, January 2010.
3. "Speaking through walls: Memory, belonging and politics in Belfast" presented at the Symposium Networks, Architecture and City Space in Britain, 1850-2000, SHCA, University of Edinburgh, November 2009.
4. "When the line that traces the divide is hard. Looking at walls as reinforcement of (in)formality in Europe" Invited paper presented at the Irmgard Coninx Foundation in workshop Urban In-Formality. Berlin, June 2009.

My participation in the 10th Roundtable on Transnationality at the Irmgard Coninx Foundation (see above) was awarded an essay competition prize. The prize consisted on a grant to pursue 3 months research at the prestigious WZB in Berlin.

The training results and academic products expected from this research period have been satisfactorily accomplished. In terms of training I did strengthen my researcher profile in conceptual, multi-disciplinary and methodological terms. Specifically, this multi-stranded project reinforced my trans-national comparative analytical capacities by means of exposing me to five different urban/national contexts, the scale of their complexities, and the variety of disciplines that inform debates and perspectives regarding the current presence of walls in these cities.

TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE

I co-organised and co-convened the *Postgraduate Professional Skills Seminar* in the School of History, Classics & Archaeology, University of Edinburgh (2009-10). Furthermore, my administrative skills were enhanced by the organization of one International Conference and two panels on two different international events:

1. *Enclaving Identity, Remaking Borders: The Politics of Symbolic Differentiation in the Circum Mediterranea*, International Conference held at the Robert Shuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, Florence in May 2009.
2. Between us and them, do we hold something in common? Daily modes of conviviality in border - marked cities, panel to be held at the *International Sociological Association - RC21 International Conference "Inequality, inclusion and sense of belonging"* in São Paulo, August 2009.
3. Walls and the city, main session (M17) to be held at the *European Association of Urban History Conference "City and society in European History"* in Ghent, September 2010.

This last event is being co-organised with my mentor in this project, Prof. Richard Rodger, and we expect to be able to produce a publishable edited volume on the issue after the conference. Indeed, I have managed to transform a number of the papers and work done for the conferences in which I participated and panels I organised for publications:

1. "Did the walls really come down? Contemporary bordering walls in Europe" in M. Silberman, K. Tilly and J. Ward *Walls Borders, Boundaries: Strategies of surveillance and Survival* (Berghahn Books, forthcoming 2011).
2. "Walling borders: an achievement or sign of failure?" in *TRIALOG. A journal for planning and building in the third world*, special issue on Borders and Migration (December 2009)
3. "Speaking through walls: Memory, belonging and politics in Belfast" (submitted to *International Journal of Urban Studies*)
4. "Whose City, what rights? Questioning borders within the urban fabric" Introduction to a symposium issue entitled "Between us and them, do we hold something in common? Daily modes of conviviality in contested urban terrains" proposed to the journal *Urban Studies* (under revision).
5. "Urban development flanked by religion and politics: Reflections from Belfast" (in preparation to be submitted to *Space and Polity*)

Last, but not least, I have been appointed Assistant Professor at the recently launched Leiden University College, The Hague. I have joined a newly formed team to teach and continue my research as part of the program in "Global Challenges". **Walls for Freedom?** will certainly work as a source of inspiration.

Dr. Daniela Vicherat Mattar

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