Performing the City

Urban Discourses and the Representation of Italian Cities in the Music Videos of Italian rapper Capo Plaza

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Despite the recent increase of attention given to popular culture, music videos are not often seen as valuable or possibly insightful art forms or products, instead being dismissed as mere promotional and thus commercial devices for musicians to increase their visibility and earnings (Railton and Watson 1). With some exceptions, like Vernallis' exploration of the medium's formal characteristics and cultural relevance, or Tamburri's semiotic approach to Italian-American video clips, not a great deal of work has been done on the medium. This article, then, aims to show the relevance of music videos as well as explore the potential of such an analysis in the light of urban studies debates. The representation of the urban environment in music videos is an untapped source with regards to the popular imagination of the city.[1] McQuire's book on the media city, for instance, does not deal with music videos at all, even though the urban is quite present in this medium.

In this article, I will focus exclusively on the Italian city. This is, in a way, to counteract the preferential treatment of leading world cities like New York and Paris. In addition, the Italian city has a certain allure to non-Italians that is quite prominent in the popular imagination. The city is also a popular and common element in many Italian video clips. It is ubiquitous in the classically urban genre of hip hop, but also appears in other genres. Liberato, for example, is a Neapolitan artist who has made a contemporary Romeo and Juliet story set in Naples, where a girl from the rich neighbourhood of Vomero and a boy from the impoverished Scampia neighbourhood fall in love. Other examples include Calcutta's depiction of the Roman periphery through the eyes of an immigrant child ('Cosa mi manchi a fare') and Ketama126's vision of Rome ('Dolcevita' and 'Giovane e Selvaggio').

In this article, I will present a case-study of the video clips of Capo Plaza, a hip hop artist from Salerno. His video clips are filmed both in Salerno and Milan and contain a multitude of urban imagery. I will analyze how the urban is represented in his music videos, relating it to a number of discourses that are prevalent in urban studies like the post-modern city, the modern metropolis and the

marketing of cities for tourists. I argue that the use and mixing of multiple discourses, as well as the usage of specific formal techniques like camera choice and editing, leads to the undermining and nuancing of prevalent urban discourses. The goal is not only to trace how academic discourses are found in his work but also how it questions and nuances those discourses. As the discussion will include both Salerno, a small Southern city, and Milan, a bustling metropolis, it will also revolve around how elements like scale and international prestige tie into the representation of the urban. By doing so, this article hopes to provide an exploration of a new medium for urban studies and turn it into a new, valuable area of research, as well as shine a spotlight on different cities and urban phenomena.

This article opens with a discussion of the most prominent visual elements of Capo Plaza's videos, relating them to discourses that are prominent in urban studies debates. Then I will move on to an analysis of the formal techniques used and how they relate to the content discussed in the previous section, followed by a comparison of the portrayal of Salerno and Milan. The last section is a discussion of the interpretations suggested in the previous sections, as well as a reflection on the use of the music video in urban studies.

Urban performances: the visual language of Capo Plaza videos
Capo Plaza (Luca D'Orso's stage name) is an Italian musician from Salerno, working mainly in the genres of hip hop, rap, and trap. He has been dabbling in music since 2014, released official singles and music videos in 2016, and his first solo album "20" in 2018. What stands out in his work is the importance of the city and his immediate environment both in his visual and lyrical work. Lots of his lyrics deal with his difficult youth, the hardships of growing up in Salerno's periphery, life on the streets as a drug dealer, etc. The lyrics in his biggest hit 'Giovane Fuoriclasse' are indicative of the weight the city carries in his work. The song opens and closes with the same line: "si, 'sto blocco mi ha fatto così (yes, this hood has made me the way I am)". His chosen pseudonym is another indication since it is derived from the mafioso term *capo piazza*, literally the boss of a square, but meaning someone who oversees the drugs network of a certain section of the city.

In what follows I will discuss six video clips where Capo is the main artist. Four take place in Salerno: 'Nisida' and 'Non si ferma' from 2016, 'Allenamento 1' and 'Allenamento 3' from 2017, as well as two video clips set in Milan: 'Giovane

Fuoriclasse' (2017) and 'Non cambiero mai' (2018). All video clips are set in an urban environment, with the city in a prominent role.[2] The videos do not have clear narratives. Instead, they are characterized by a quick succession of seemingly unrelated short clips showcasing different places, people and activities, without integrating them into an overarching story line. However, there are certain recurring elements and prominent signs that, when taken together across multiple videos, certainly have something to say.

1. Cars, trains, construction sites

There is a set of images that recurs in variations throughout Capo Plaza's visual work, I call them his 'core images'. One of them is the car, or most often, cars, shot from a bird's-eye view meandering through the city ('Nisida') or driving on motorways, like ants around their colony. Another core image is the train, either just the train tracks ('Non si ferma', 'Allenamento 1') or as a moving train ('Giovane Fuoriclasse'). The closing image of this trinity is the large construction site, most often including a massive crane ('Allenamento 3', 'Giovane Fuoriclasse', see figure 1).

Fig. 1. Construction site with a crane in Capo Plaza, *Giovane Fuoriclasse* (1:57)

These images relate to the omnipresent discourse of the modern metropolis resulting from rapid industrialization and modernization processes. The metropolis is characterized by high-rise buildings, lit up skylines, broad boulevards and busy streets where one is merely a face in the crowd. These visual characteristics are often linked with a uniquely metropolitan lifestyle: daily life increasingly shaped by rationalization, impersonality, and bureaucracy (Gold 155), as well as a blasé attitude, developed as a protective measure against the sheer volume of superficial interactions and stimuli encountered in the city, combined with a greater personal freedom (Simmel 48-56, GUST 1999). The city is also seen as the place where 'it' happens: fashion trends, but also new currents in art, music, culinary innovations, etc. are born in the city. Culture is considered to be synonymous with metropolitan life (Chambers 17). This imagery is still extremely popular today, even in these times of suburbanization, urban sprawl and the internet increasingly taking over the city's claim to cultural innovation (see GUST 1999). Just google "city" and the image results show that the popular image of the city still heavily relies on the modern metropolis.

Capo Plaza's use of the metropolitan discourse, however, seems limited to those images that function as a synecdoche for modernity's dream of progress and innovation. The car, the train, and massive construction projects are all strong symbols of the modernization process. The rational side of modernity predominates, which is further underlined by the image of high story office buildings (in 'Giovane Fuoriclasse' and 'Non cambierò mai', see figure 2). To Capo, it seems, the modern metropolis is bureaucracy and rationalization. The other aspects of the metropolitan experience, that is to say, the crowds, the unique lifestyle and the city as the origin of creative processes is completely absent. In the parts of his video clips that play on the metropolitan trope, impersonality reigns. There are no people, only images of material symbols of modernity.

Fig. 2. Office bulding in Capo Plaza, *Giovane Fuoriclasse* (0:03)

2. Peripheries and non-places

While Capo Plaza's videos are exclusively set in cities, time is mostly spent in the periphery of those cities. The car, that I interpreted above as being a shiny symbol of modernity, can also symbolize the surge in automobility and the accompanying suburbanization and proliferation of urban sprawl. Most of Capo's videos seem to be located in those anonymous, grey, concrete parts of the city. Non-places, i.e. places that are anonymous spaces without a particular identity or local history, seem to dominate: "once inside a shopping mall, or on a motorway interchange, one could be almost anywhere in the world," (Savage and Warde 74).

In his videos, Capo seems to live in those places, it is often impossible to tell where he is, or what the portrayed space is supposed to represent. In 'Nisida' (see figure 3), for example, he is shot squatting on rooftops, but we are only shown his face and torso against a roof or an anonymous sky. All identity is lost in these shots, the Adidas logo on his shirt is the only remaining signifier. It is impossible to tell whether he is still in Salerno, it could be any other city in the world. As suggested, the places are anonymous, meaningless, with only brands left as signifiers. This is another element that surfaces often in his work – the glorification of consumption. In 'Nisida', the video is interspersed with images of Capo Plaza himself, dressed in prominently-branded clothing, rapping while walking next to a shiny, white and expensive looking BMW. The car acquires a third possible meaning, as a symbol of (hyper)consumption in a post-modern world and returns in this shape in later videos ('Allenamento 3', 'Non cambierò mai').

In fact, all the above elements are closely related to the post-modern urban discourse, which is, of course, an ambiguous notion. My own definition encompasses tendencies of suburbanization and what has been dubbed as the *città diffusa* or *zwischenstadt* (see Sieverts), as well as more 'traditional', qualitative characteristics of post-modern urbanity, like fragmentation and placelessness, but also processes of globalization and de-industrialization. I believe that all these elements move beyond the image of the traditional modern metropolis.

Fig. 3. Placelessness in Capo Plaza, *Nisida* (1:11)

Fig. 4. Sunset in the bay of Salemo in Capo
Plaza, *Allenamento 3* (1:31)

3. La Dolce Vita

Although the majority of the music videos take place in peripheries and non-signifying places, city centres and identifiable places are not entirely absent. In 'Nisida', Capo walks the streets of the historic centre, while the camera shows the sunset over the bay of Salerno, as well as quick snapshots of a picturesque church against the backdrop of lush green hills. In 'Allenamento 1' and '3' the bay at sunset returns, as well as wide-angle shots of the lights illuminating the sea and the city (see figure 4). 'Allenamento 3' even spells out the place and time: "Salerno 19 ore (7 pm)", anchoring his visuals in a specific time and place. These images relate to what I alluded to in the introduction regarding Italian cities, namely that they have a certain allure beyond the borders of Italy that is quite prominent in the popular imagination. They are 'cozy' and 'charming', brimming with authenticity and historicity. Historic centres are full of picturesque squares lined with olive and citrus trees, ancient monuments, churches, and UNESCO heritage sites. The city is turned into a map dotted with landmarks that one 'simply has to see'. Via clever marketing strategies, tourists are presented with a coherent and highly stylized symbolic commodity (Parker 140).

However, the space covered by the lenses of the tourists is far less than that of the post-modern urban discourse. Indeed, this discourse is more conspicuous through its absence. The way Salerno is portrayed diverges dramatically from the 'postcard Italian city' as we know it. There is no *duomo*, no *lungomare*, no cute *piazza* and no locals indulging in *la dolce vita*. Salerno is nestled on the Amalfi coast - a prime honeymoon destination known for its picturesque towns, rocky coastline, and abundant lemon trees. However, none of that is shown in Capo Plaza's videos. He even raps: "credi qua tutto è bello, ma c'è niente di buono (you think everything is beautiful here, but there is nothing good)" ('Non si ferma'). By not portraying the images of Salerno considered to be 'picture perfect Italy', and by erasing any genius loci from his visual material, Capo seems to contest the popular, phantasmagoric imaging of Italian cities.

4. Doing laundry, groceries and drugs

Apart from the big stories of (post)modernization and the influx of tourism, Capo Plaza's videos are also packed with imagery relating to ordinary, daily life. Particularly favoured by him is the detailed image of laundry hanging out of windows, drying in the sun (see, for example, 'Nisida'). The focus on a white sheet, blowing softly in the wind, evokes a feeling of day-to-day life and the sense of the city as a place where ordinary people live, build a home and carve out relationships of community and belonging (see figure 5). Other examples of

infra-ordinary scenes consist of people buying fruit and children playing on the streets (Allenamento 3).

Fig. 5. Laundry hanging from windows in
Capo Plaza, *Allenamento 3* (1:52)

This representation of the city that foregrounds the ordinary, daily, banal urban experience relates to what I would call the infra-ordinary city discourse. The term was coined by Georges Perec, who dedicated a great deal of work to the study of the mundane, particularly in the context of the city. The infra-ordinary approach to the city is often propagated by writers who have first stipulated that the contemporary city has become a capitalist phantasmagoria or an embodiment of the society of the spectacle.[3] An approach that foregrounds the infra-ordinary can thus be conceptually used to map experiences that otherwise remain in the shadows. Like historians who have started to focus on ordinary people, forgotten urban stories, testimonies and even places themselves can be be brought back to the surface by a focus on the ordinary (Highmore 1-5).

Similarly, Capo's videos also show the 'other side' of the city – one that does not see or is not supposed to see, daylight very often. His video clips also feature many scenes suggesting illicit activities, mostly relating to the selling and smoking of Marijuana. This theme is dealt with extensively in the lyrical part of his work. The title of the song 'Nisida' already says a lot, as Nisida is a small island off the coast of Naples that houses a juvenile detention facility, just like his name referring to a mafioso term. He brings into focus a shadowy side of the city, an aspect of urban life that more idealized representations (especially the one for tourists) suppress. Both the infra-ordinary and 'criminal' images question those discourses on the city, showcasing a Salerno far-removed from stereotypical depictions.

In 'Non si ferma', for example, most of the video consists of an exposition of what seems to be an ordinary night in Salerno for Capo and his friends. The main part of the video is shot on an anonymous street, with the Salernitana youth having fun: they are dancing, singing, smoking and performing stunts with their motorbikes. They use public space, claiming their place in the city as Capo Plaza raps about the hardship of his youth in Salerno's periphery. This representation of a banal night in Salerno can be read as an attempt to reclaim the city, to strip the city of its other discourses and demand a piece of it, while recounting the struggle of growing up in that city: "urla per una città che non sente" ("he screams for a city that doesn't hear"), as an Italian blog put it (Rochira).

Formal techniques: melancholy montage & the language of consumption
The contrast I sketched above between phantasmagoric urban discourses and the infra-ordinary can also be perceived in the cinematic techniques employed in the video clips, specifically in terms of the choice of shots and editing. A substantial

amount of screen time of every video I discuss is filled with both long, and extremely long shots. Most of those seem to be filmed with drone cameras, showing the expanse of the city and creating a distance between the viewer and the subject matter. The images portrayed by this cinematic language are not arbitrary and nearly always belong to the set of what I called Capo's core images: the city at night, cars moving along city streets or motorways and massive construction sites, but also the few touristic images of landscapes and a church are filmed in this way. Most of the images evoke modernity, hankering back to the early 20th-century city symphony that also portrayed the modern metropolis.

The other cinematic language puts its feet back on the ground, presenting a view from below, mainly making use of medium shots and close-ups and relaying infra-ordinary subject matter, like the shots of laundry hanging out to dry in the summer breeze. 'Allenamento 3' in particular makes extensive use of this discourse, showing snapshots of children playing on a square and between graffiti-clad apartment buildings, people visiting the local fruit vendor and young boys running away from police officers (see figure 6). Often these images are transmitted via close-ups which hone in on details like the wind rattling the fence of a playground or focusing on human faces. Those close-ups, in stark contrast with the distancing drone images, seem very personal and affectively laden. This is particularly so for the close-ups of children's faces, as they linger on them for longer than most other images in the video clips, and also especially in light of the lyrics he raps over it: "questa città è piena d'odio, non mi da un cazzo (this city is full of hate, it doesn't give *a shit* about me)".

Editing is another cinematic technique that Capo Plaza's visual work engages in to elaborate on the contrast and interplay between the representations of modernity and tourism, and the wide array of images suggesting infra-ordinary life. 'Allenamento 1' is a video shot in black and white, consisting mostly of Capo walking through a deserted, nocturnal Salerno. The vibe and images are reminiscent of the *noir city* (see Prakash). On the one hand, the city is portrayed as a fascinating metropolis (minus the crowds), with a lit-up skyline and alluring neon advertising promising a quick way to riches. On the other hand, however, just like the traditional noir crime story which attempts to puncture the ideal of the modern metropolis, Capo juxtaposes these images with a rougher representation of Salerno.

Fig. 6. Elderly woman with her laundry
in Capo Plaza, *Allenamento 3* (1:42)

Fig. 7. Image of neon lighting and image of a
homeless man sleeping on the street, both in Capo
Plaza, *Allenamento 1* (1:34) and (0:42)

For example, phantasmagoric shots are followed in quick succession by images of a homeless man sleeping on the streets (see figure 7). This editing carries a distinctly melancholic tone. Whereas the previously-discussed 'Non si ferma' shines in boisterous self-assertion, 'Allenamento 1' is coloured by a threatening dreariness, mirrored by the lyrics: "Il mio quartiere è questo [...] sempre quelle stesse facce/sono passati gli anni e sono ancora nella trappola" (this is my hood [...] always the same faces/the years have slid by and I'm still trapped)". The lyrics and the editing choices express a melancholy portrait of a city where hopelessness reigns and a different, improved future seems unimaginable. In doing so, the common discourse of both the metropolis and Salerno as a tourist paradise are subverted.

'Allenamento 3' employs the same technique of editing to undermine different discourses. The video opens with a close-up of rubbish on a playground, and the hint of a corner of a football goal, only to be promptly alternated with the drone images of the bay of Salerno "at 7 pm at night" (written on screen). The constant switching between these two cinematic languages dominates the video, with the editing emphasizing the contrasts. A shot of a construction site, flanked by enormous cranes, is immediately followed by a close-up of a hole in a building in an area that seems to be the periphery. Likewise, images of automobility and a nocturnal Salerno are interspersed with those of an elderly lady hanging out her laundry and children playing in a rundown playground. The editing here is less desolate compared to the previous video but is still very suggestive. The visual language of the modern metropolis is being questioned through the insistence of a banal, infra-ordinary life in Salerno. In between the overwhelming, extreme long shots of Salerno, a small space is found for what seems to be a sense of community.

However, this binary opposition is not as simple as it seems. The two series of images, which can be interpreted as polar opposites or mirror-images, are complicated by another central thread in the video clip, namely the more post-modern oriented discourse. Capo is filmed on the passenger seat of a shiny luxury car or rapping right in front of it. This series of images is nearly as prominent as the other ones, making the fancy car an ambiguous symbol (see figure 8). It could be interpreted as a vindication of the story of his background as portrayed in this and other videos, or as a symbol for the American dream, or as the embodiment of the hyper-consumption in the post-modern city. It is striking that the images closely related to the urban post-modern are the ones in which Capo himself most often appears. Because of his successful music career, he has

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been able to leave behind the hardships of his youth, however, now that has been achieved, there does not seem to be much else to do. He often raps that all he wants is *soldi* (money). Even though the videos seem to undermine phantasmagoric images of the city as a modern metropolis or tourist paradise, and he successfully questions modernity's dream of progress by juxtaposing its symbols with images portraying the 'other side', and can thus be called critical, he nevertheless also seems unable to provide an alternative to late capitalism's glorification of consumption. The celebration of infra-ordinary life, Salerno's invisible citizens and a sense - or at least a possibility - of a community stand in stark contrast to the post-modern images. The critique apparent in the videos is written in the same language as the criticized content. This ambiguous role of the use of the post-modern discourse is only amplified in his later videos.

Fig. 8. Capo Plaza in front of a luxury car in
Capo Plaza, *Allenamento 3* (0:32)

From Salerno to Milan

After four videos filmed in Capo Plaza's hometown Salerno, the next two clips are set in Milan. The difference between those two cities is apparent. One is nestled in a bay in southern Italy, with only around 130,000 inhabitants, the other lies at the foot of the Alps and houses well over one million people. Salerno is known, indeed if known at all, for its position on the popular Amalfi coast, whereas Milan is synonymous with fashion, design, business and the rich north of Italy. Keeping these differences in mind and the way Salerno has been portrayed, it is interesting to see how a city like Milan is depicted. Due to the difference in scale, one would expect the metropolitan imagery to be more prominent, even more so considering Milan's reputation as a hip and fashionable city. Similarly, as Milan is a prime 'city trip' destination, one would also expect tourist landmarks. If we repeat the earlier exercise and take a Google image search as an indication for the collective imagination, Milan's primary symbol seems to be the *duomo,* as the gothic cathedral is by far the most prevalent image.

The first Milanese video clip opens as expected, repeating in an exaggerated way the metropolitan imagery that has already been encountered in the Salerno videos, again relaying it in the familiar language of the drone images. The first image is of a humongous glass office building, its lights contrasting with the dark evening outside, strongly suggesting the city as the place where things happen and where working towards the future never ceases, while also highlighting the bureaucracy and rat-race aspect of the metropolis. This image is followed by a typical image of a nocturnal big city: high-rise buildings, myriad lights, and, in this instance, also a threatening blood moon completing the picture. After that, the typical car images that also appeared in the Salerno videos make a comeback. What follows, however, defies expectations. Neither hip, fashionable and contemporary Milan, nor historical 'postcard' Milan makes an appearance. Instead, after showing images of Milan as a modern metropolis, the camera swings out of the centre to showcase high towers, residential blocks under construction and factories. Finally, the camera reaches ground level with Capo and his gang coming into view - the only people that populate this video. The metropolitan imagery of the start is followed by strong post-modern elements. The camera shows deserted warehouses, urban sprawl, empty industrial sites with a definitive sense of anonymity. The images of Capo against an undisclosed building or just with the sky as background, as in 'Nisida', return. Nothing really betrays the fact that they are in Milan. In this way, the vision of Milan as a metropolitan hub is being undermined.

'Non cambierò mai' elaborates on the image of Milan as a post-modern city. The video opens with a nocturnal Milan, although it is once again not clear that it is Milan at all. There are lights and warehouses and Capo driving in an ostentatious car, driving alongside fences in what looks like the periphery of Milan. In other shots he is out of the car, rapping next to a motorway, electricity cables prominent in the shot, trucks rushing past in the background (see figure 9). The post-modern imagery also includes a spiral underground parking space, a nightclub filled with Capo and friends dressed in extravagant designer clothing, as well as expensive cars. About halfway through the video, a massive, square-shaped apartment block with a big inner courtyard takes centre stage. Capo Plaza is standing in the middle of it, the camera turning around him in circles, and then the visuals proceed to the surveying drone images. The video also ends with him, wearing rather obnoxious designer glasses, in the middle of the residential block.

Fig. 9. Capo Plaza, a car, a truck, an apartment
block in peripheral Milan in Capo Plaza, *Non
Cambierò Mai* (0:29)

The Milan portrayed in this video clip is the post-modern urban environment driven to the extreme. The city lacks any local identity, consisting only of anonymous concrete shapes that appear everywhere in the world (GUST 1999). In tandem with that, the video focuses exclusively on the periphery, except perhaps the fancy nightclub, which is, however, portrayed without revealing any links to a specific place. The locations chosen are highways and apartment blocks. There are no people, only cars and trucks. The expensive car as a symbol, already encountered in 'Allenamento 3', appears here too, becoming the only signifier in a deserted, desolate and completely impersonal city.

The Milan that emerges in Capo Plaza's two videos set in the city is void of both the infra-ordinary and tourist city discourse. The feeling of a sense of community - or at least the possibility of it - is completely lacking in his representation of Milan. Likewise, imagery of the modern metropolis is subverted by the insistent focus on the urban periphery. The absence of a historic centre, or indeed any kind of centre, for tourists and locals alike, can be read as a protest of this widespread imagining of the city, that, phantasmagoric in nature, pushes out other aspects of the city. By drawing attention to other sides of the city, Capo at least manages to expand the popular image of the/a city. It could also be read as that he - or youth in general – can no longer find a home in the city.[4] The Milan that remains is a post-modern, desolate landscape, made up of motorways, concrete apartment blocks, and automobility. In this Milan there are no people, only cars. This city has no identity, no history, no memory. The only signifiers left are cars and designer clothing - status symbols. The city is no longer a palimpsest of multiple stories, it is merely a collection of commodities. Whereas in the Salerno videos the phantasmagoric discourses were used in contrast with the daily life of impoverished inhabitants, thus highlighting the possibility of an alternative, what remains in Milan is only the Society of the Spectacle.

Discussion
1. Performing the urban
This analysis of Capo Plaza's visual language, formal techniques and a concrete comparison between the representation of two different cities has shown, first and foremost, that the representation of a city is not clear-cut. Capo Plaza's videos contain a wide variety of urban settings, characters and events. Images of luxury cars are interwoven with images of grandmothers living in run-down apartment flats, postcard shots of the bay of Salerno and huge, ugly construction sites. A wide variety of often clashing discourses is readily available and used, with formal techniques employed to enhance the discord, as demonstrated above.

Representing a city is thus achieved by always making choices. Every representation of a city or urban environment is necessarily a selection, a cumulation of choices of what to show and what to ignore in a city and is thus fundamentally incomplete. Hence, a particular representation can be very meaningful. In this light, a video clip can be seen as a performance. In the video, the city is performed as a set of backgrounds, characters and events. These performances often follow certain blueprints, sets of images and a certain language that are popular and often used to fall back on to express the city. I have traced (at least) four of those performances in Capo Plaza's work: the touristic postcard town, the modern metropolis, the post-modern/post-industrial wasteland and the 'infra-ordinary city'.

Most of these discourses can be deemed 'phantasmagoric'. The term originally denoted a nineteenth-century form of entertainment; it was a kind of lantern that enabled figures to be projected onto the wall, which was used as a framework for performances (Keunen e.a.). Marx, and later Benjamin, used the term metaphorically to interpret the fantastical and illusory elements of the commodity (ibidem). Benjamin especially broadened the concept and showed that the modern metropolis was, like a commodity, alluring: in the arcades, Haussmann boulevards and warehouses of Paris, Benjamin discovered a phantasmagoria of modernization and progress (Moore 62). The modern metropolis was no longer a mere material manifestation but also housed dreams of modernity and progress.

The Benjaminian phantasmagoria has been mainly linked to the modern metropolis. My interpretation, however, of a phantasmagoric approach to the representation of the urban, is a gaze on the city that has its roots in a dream image, leading to an idealized and stylized portrait of a city. The phantasmagoric aspect of the metropolis, for example, lies in its yearning for modernization and change. However, I do not think that is the only possible application of a phantasmagoric approach. For instance, the tourist city discussed earlier also departs from an idealized image of the city as a tourist paradise (see also Urry). Multiple stylized discourses of a city are possible: the city as a metropolitan hub, the city as a tourist postcard, the city as a hotbed of tech-innovation, the "green" city, the tolerant city, the global and hyper-connected city... the list is almost endless.

What all those discourses share, however, is that they are necessarily a limited
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representation of the city and can thus be used to contest, nuance, aggravate each other. Capo Plaza's music videos mix and contrast multiple urban discourses to undermine widespread conceptions of (Italian) cities. The prevalent image of a city, that is to say the Modern Metropolis, is contested through an insistent representation of the urban periphery. The phantasmagoria of the modern city and the image of the Italian city as a tourist paradise, are undermined through the portrayal of the 'other side' of the city. In general, the phantasmagoric discourses are questioned through the continuous attention to the banal, infra-ordinary details of city life. The use of formal techniques like the choice of camera and editing enhances these tendencies. The prevalence of the post-modern discourse introduces some ambiguity, however. In Salerno, a sense of community and an alternative still seem possible, whereas Milan is portrayed as a desolate, post-modern city.

2. Music videos as research object

As stated in the introduction, the music video is not often used as an object of research, especially not in urban studies. This is surprising, given how much attention is paid to the city symphony, the early twentieth-century genre depicting the visual phenomena of the industrial, modern metropolis and its effect on inhabitants' mental life (Skvirsky 426, see also Simmel). Films like Joris Ivens' 'Regen' (1929) or Ruttmann's Berlin Symphony (1927) showcased the rhythms and motions of an ordinary day in the big city, as well as invoking hallmark symbols of modernity such as high-rise buildings, machines, people working in well-organized, big offices and factories - evoking both the dream of modernization and the critique of its rational organization and bureaucracy.

In my opinion, the recent medium of the music video clip portraying a city can be seen as a descendant of the genre and should receive as much attention as its historical counterpart. Just like the city symphonies, music videos are short films consisting mostly of vignettes and short clips, usually non-narrative in nature (Vernallis 3-4). Instead, as in the city symphony, in a music video, the emphasis is put on images of visual phenomena. Just like the city symphony, music videos can be very meaningful in showing how the city lives in the imagination, and even more so because they reside in the sphere of pop culture.

The aim of this article was to explore the possibilities of this medium of music video, especially in the light of urban studies, and has shown that an in-depth analysis of the various elements of a video clip such as the subject matter, lyrics, camerawork, and editing, can lead to new insights. As video clips are firmly

rooted in popular culture, they are particularly interesting in terms of analyzing the vision of the city in the popular imagination. This article - because it was explorative - was limited to one artist, but an expansion to more artists or indeed across national boundaries, could prove very fruitful. Interesting results could also be produced by focussing on one particular place and then collecting as many videos and artists as possible. To conclude, music videos are unjustifiably overlooked when in fact they could be stimulating additions to urban studies debates.

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[1] For example, recently certain works in the field of literary urban or spatial studies (Westphal, Finch) have emphasized the need to include sources beyond literature in the analyses of the imagination of places, like city advertisements and traveller guides. I think music videos could also be a stimulating addition.

[2] I have excluded video clips where he is only a featuring artist, 'Allenamento 2', which is filmed in a studio and thus not relevant for this article, as well as 'Tesla', which features two other rappers and focuses more on these guest appearances, even though the city is still quite prominent. He has also made two video clips in New York, but as my focus lies here on Italian cities, those videos are beyond the scope of this article.

[3] See Guy Debord and the Situationists, for example, who emphasized daily experience in the city with their technique of the dérive. Henri Lefebvre also wrote extensively on the link between the ordinary and the urban. To him, a focus on the mundane enables a revelation about how space is used, whom it belongs to and how this can be contested (Tambling 3, Harvey X).

[4] In the 2017 film 'Gli Asteroidi' (Maccioni), for example, the main characters live in the urban sprawl on the periphery of Bologna, a desolate, post-industrial wasteland with high unemployment rates. At the end of the film, the nineteen-year-old main character Pietro is given the option of moving to Milan, something that he vehemently protests against and refuses to do. Compare this to the most popular Italian 'city movie' of recent years, 'La Grande Bellezza' (Sorrentino), where, during the entire film, no young people seem to live in Rome. Perhaps the metropolitan, touristic Italian cities are no places for the young anymore.