

Moral Economies, Urban Subjectivities, and Contested Policies. An Intersectional Perspective on Privileges and Exclusion

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Abstract

This themed section focuses on the intersectional politics of the production of moral economies in urban contexts. It asks how public policies contribute to the moral normativities that affect how differently positioned actors live in urban space. Drawing on various empirical case studies, it questions public policies and their entanglements with processes of inclusion and exclusion in everyday urban life, along intersectional lines of gender, race, class and religion. Extending the work of Didier Fassin (2009, 1257), it assembles papers that explore a working definition of the moral economy as “the production, distribution, circulation, and use of moral sentiments, emotions and values, and norms and obligations in social space”. Three main salient axes are consequently addressed: violence and security issues; the framing of un/desirable subjects by public policies; the circulation and contextual appropriation of urban and gender policies in the context of globalisation. The contributions collected here analyse both how



these spatial differences are produced through policies, and how differently embodied subjects experience, navigate, and contest the urban moral regimes to which they are subjected. This collection aims thereby at integrating an analysis that is aware of intersections of gender, class, sexuality, migratory backgrounds and race in the making of un/desirable subjects.

Keywords

Moral economies, urban subjectivities, public policies, intersectionality

The themed section “Moral economies, urban subjectivities, and contested policies”, focuses on the intersectional politics of the production of moral economies in urban contexts. It asks how public policies contribute to the moral normativities that affect how differently positioned actors live in urban space. Drawing on various empirical case studies, it questions public policies and their entanglements with processes of inclusion and exclusion in everyday urban life, along intersectional lines of gender, race, class and religion (Mitchell and Staeheli 2006). Extending the work of Didier Fassin (2009, 1257), the articles explore a working definition of the moral economy as “the production, distribution, circulation, and use of moral sentiments, emotions and values, and norms and obligations in social space”. This definition deliberately focuses on the interplay between values, norms and affects, underlining how moral economies are embedded in situated contexts. Yet the papers collected here extend this definition to address not only how public policies contribute to configuring moral economies and the making of moral political subjects, but also crucially how these policies reinforce intersectionally raced, gendered, and classed forms of urban privilege, exclusion and belonging. The themed section analyses both how these spatial differences are produced through policies, and how differently embodied subjects experience, navigate, and contest the urban moral regimes to which they are subjected.

Policies shape moral urban economies in part by defining subjects along continua of belonging: some subjects are constructed as vulnerable, as objects of policies aimed at protecting or empowering them, such as women in public space (Lieber 2008), while other groups are categorised as ‘undesirable’ (Belina 2003), such as illegal street sellers, queer people, veiled women or sex workers, allowing for the enforcement of the morality of privileged citizens (Valverde 2012). Policing and security measures are designed to control and restrict access to space, and their social sorting mechanisms tend overall to reinforce multiple existing power relations (Hubbard 2000). At the same time, cities develop branding campaigns to market themselves to potential residents deemed ideal by urban developers; such ideal subjects include creative knowledge workers, entrepreneurs and highly skilled migrants, whose socio-spatial privileges relationally produce exclusionary processes and social othering of those less idealised (McLean 2014).

By deconstructing reified figures of moral spatial subjects, the themed section aims at a better understanding of the uneven making of urban subjectivities. Scrutinising public policies at various levels, it underlines how they contribute to re-entrenching a “politics of difference” (Young 1990), that is the coalescence and concretion of inequalities in various spatial settings. The contribution of the themed section to the literature is twofold. First, we aim to bridge studies from urban, migration and gender, and sexuality fields in order to question the intersecting power dynamics at stake. For instance, scholars have examined the inputs of cosmopolitan migration in urban multiculturalism (Lejeune et al. 2021); the heteronormativity of urban spaces (Hubbard 2000); and the gender dimension of urban practices (Kern 2010; van den Berg 2017). Our aim here is to open a dialogue between subfields of research that are attentive to the power dynamics of in-/ex-clusion embedded in public policies. The papers will point at the ambivalence of public policies in generating un/desirable subjects and pay particular attention at how

policies labelled as progressist contribute to the governance of bodies and subjectivities. This themed section therefore examines circulations between discourses, representations and practices of urban space, disseminated at the level of individuals or communities or at that of policy makers, at local or national levels, as well as the circulation of moral economy models at the global scale. Second, by bringing an intersectional perspective on moral economies, this themed section works toward a contestation of these economies from the point of view of the margins, be they classed, sexualised or racialised (hooks 1984). Indeed, while race is central to the genealogy of the concept of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1989), European research has had a tendency to marginalise and elude it (Hancock 2016; Mollet and Faria 2018). This is particularly topical in contemporary colour-blind France, where even the use of the concept of race to refer to discriminatory practices is challenged and accused of being anti-republican (Mazouz 2020). The papers will more specifically focus on what can be learned from the margins and question the framing of public policies. We choose to expand Bacchi's (1999) work, which has underlined how public policies, while attempting to resolve what are identified as problems, frame them as shared gendered "problems' representation" that structure modes of governmentality. Beyond gender, we highlight the crucial role of race, class and sexuality to further interrogate how the positionality of undesirable subjects reveals the ongoing process of the everyday making of boundaries (Lamont and Molnar 2002).

This collection aims thereby at integrating an analysis that is aware of the intersections of gender, class, sexuality, migratory backgrounds and race in the making of un/desirable subjects. It results from papers initially presented at a workshop organised at the University of Geneva in January 2018¹. This workshop has led to the constitution of an international research collective, INSPiRE (International Network on Space and Power Relations), which most recently met in December 2018 in Paris.² Framed as a collaborative space fostering multidisciplinary approaches as well as mentoring practices, this research collective connects 13 feminist scholars—urbanists, geographers, sociologists and political science researchers—around issues of place and space, public policies, and power dynamics, in search of better spatial justice.

Three main axes are addressed by the authors in this themed section and structure this collection around issues of moral economies, urban subjectivities and contested policies. First, violence and security issues constitute core themes in these contributions. The papers in the themed section show how public policies may also exert specific forms of violence on subjects, which can be either sudden or slow and subtle (Cahill and Pain 2019; Schmoll 2020). Furthermore, the threat of violence as a discursive and normative tool used to prevent specific spatial behaviours is key. Drawing on postcolonial critiques (Abu Lughod 2013; Kapur 2002), the papers unpack the issue of gender violence in order to produce a better understanding of how their policing at an institutional level contributes to the shaping of legitimate urban subjectivities. This addresses the definition of violence itself, and its fluidity and ongoing process in relation to positionality. While feminist activists have taken the risk of essence to objectify the materiality of gender violence, this themed section questions the consequences of the transposition of this strategic essentialism (Spivak 1988) into public policies. It shows notably how this movement from activism to public policies transforms emancipation strategies into disciplining tools—bodies, gender, sexualities, subjectivities—(see the papers by Le Bail and Lieber, and Tillous and Lachenal). This allows further understanding of the fluid and contextual nature of privilege and its internal hierarchies. Moreover, the

1 Space, policies and power relations. The spatial dimension of politics of difference. University of Geneva, 25-26 January 2018. Organised by Marylène Lieber and Karine Duplan and funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. With the presentations of: Marianne Blidon, Kath Browne, Karine Duplan, Muriel Froment-Meurice, Claire Hancock, Marylène Lieber, Ilse van der Liempt, Carina Listerborn, Camille Schmoll, Rachel Silvey and Marion Tillous; and the participation as discussant of: Milena Chimienti, Eleonore Lépinard, Noemi Michel, Lorena Parini and Jean François Staszak.

2 Espace, pouvoir et politiques publiques. Institut d'Etudes Avancées, 13-14 December 2018. Organised by Marylène Lieber, Karine Duplan and Camille Schmoll.

colonial nature of violence is highlighted, by looking at the way it shapes accessibility to the city and the definition of legitimacy and so-called appropriate- or inappropriate behaviours (see the paper by Hancock).

Second, the framing of an ideal desirable subject—along with a desirable city—also appears to be central to the design of public policies and their implementation. These ideal constructs contribute to the making of urban moral subjectivities embedded in neoliberal values of free mobilities and global consumption (Bell and Binnie 2000), such as the middle-class woman in feminist liberal policies (Kern 2010; van den Berg 2017) or the homonormative 'gaytrifier' (Blidon 2008; Giraud 2014) in queer liberal perspectives. A critical analysis of the making of this ideal subject renders visible the invisible, marginalised, silenced or discriminated of mainstream policies (see the paper by Tillous and Lachenal). Thinking from marginalised undesirable subjects' positionalities therefore highlights the implicit norms that support such policies. This collection works towards an unpacking of the ideal subject, drawing on both feminist approaches that integrate class and race (Skeggs 1997) and queer approaches that place sexualities at the core focus of research (Browne 2006). For instance, nation branding policies which pride themselves on their inclusiveness are also classist and normative (see the paper by Duplan); violence suffered by sex workers in the streets of Paris remains unchallenged by gendered and public space policies (see the paper by Le Bail and Lieber). Questioning the making of privileged subjects therefore highlights the everyday boundary making of urban policies.

Third, this themed section points at the circulation and standardisation of urban and gender policies in the context of globalisation. Different policies that aim at improving the liveability of city dwellers have been the focus of a critical analysis that points to their neoliberal exclusionary framing. In terms of urban models and their circulation, the entrepreneurial city model (Harvey 1998) and (some of) its variations (see for instance Catungal and Leslie 2009; McLean 2014; Parker 2008) have been linked with neoliberal ideology. Scholars have notably shown how gender mainstreaming policies, while targeting inclusivity, include some political subjects at the expense of others, who remain marginalised and silenced (Huning 2014; Sainsbury and Bergqvist 2009; Tummers and Wankiewicz 2020). While this scholarship increases understanding of the benefits of an intersectional analysis of these policies, the papers in the themed section address the transversal dynamics at play in their design and implementation, showing for instance how planning intersects with other policies, be they social, economic, or migratory. While these policies often refer to neoliberal global imaginaries and promote technological progress and circulation at the global scale in relation to cosmopolitan values of success (see the paper by Listerborn and Neergaard), they are contested and re-appropriated at different scales through marches and protests (see the paper by Hancock). Moreover, local variations in the implementation of policies contribute to the local deployment of moral economies through selective inclusiveness (see the paper by Duplan). The papers here finally point out the ambivalence of policies that discretely reaffirm and legitimise power relations, oscillating between the making of new normativities or the opening to forms of queerisation of neoliberal policies or models.

In the remainder of the editorial, we present in more detail how each paper relates to these crucial themes in order to engage with the new challenges at stake in the production of a (more) just city for all. By focusing on how sexual harassment in public space is problematised by public policies in Egypt, Marion Tillous and Perrine Lachenal unpack the moral economies that govern working class subjects. The authors argue that an intersectional analysis of sexual harassment in public space shows how stereotyped subjects are produced, both vulnerable and deviant: the vulnerable subject deserving of protection—embodied by the respectable middle-class woman—and implicitly thereby the working-class man, a deviant body which must be controlled and disciplined. The authors show how the denial of structural causes related to the patriarchal system emphasises the responsibility of individuals in a neoliberal frame of governance. Drawing on Kelly's (1987) concept of continuum of violence, they show

how sexual harassment is problematised through a heterosexual framework that helps to make salient chosen forms of (gender) violence while rendering others invisible. This policing of working-class masculinities turns to a depoliticization of gender relations as an “ideological hijacking” that the authors connect to an authoritarian context. However, beyond the Egyptian context, this paper shows how public policies and forms of governance—authoritarian or democratic—are framed for nationalist discourses, appropriating certain causes while perpetuating silenced forms—notably racist, classist and sexual—oppression (see for instance Haritaworn 2015). Who deserves protection and from whom? Gender policies target inclusivity for access to public space while reproducing other forms of violence and hierarchies. The authors' fieldwork in Cairo reveals that violence should be addressed from an intersectional perspective in order to minimise the security drifts and legitimate forms of institutional violence “in the name of women's rights”, which hide classist and femonationalist biases (Farris 2017). As such, this contribution highlights how the problematisation of sexual harassment is made through an articulation between security and morality. Defending respectable femininities while condemning immoral masculinities, this contributes to the shaping of national discourses of belonging.

Marylène Lieber and Hélène Le Bail also scrutinise the ambivalence of gendered policies, and the prioritisation of gendered- over other forms of— violence, notably eluding institutional- and structural violence. They examine demands for safety by sex workers in the streets of Paris, where the programme “Gender and public space”, is being implemented. The authors show how policies, supposedly inclusive for all women according to French national claims of universality, actually exclude some women while framing an idealised figure of urban woman deserving protection. The definition of deservedness is here particularly meaningful: it contributes to the forging of an idealised woman subject whose morality is exemplified and leads to the framing of desirable subjectivities through normative identification. The authors make evident how the ambivalence of such gendered public policies relies on a contested definition of what gender-based violence is. In a context where other regulations condemn activities of sex workers in the name of the same women's right to autonomy, prostitution remains framed in the French abolitionist context as a “violence against women *per se*”. The authors argue that in doing so these policies fail to take into consideration the various forms of gendered violence that sex workers suffer, denying them the very ability to define what they consider as violence. Such a denial of agency has to be understood in relation to their (amoral) professional activity, but also in relation to social class and race—most of them being migrant women. Moreover, the deservedness of protection for women in public space is also articulated with their (middle-) class position. Class therefore deserves specific attention since it could be framed in relation to consumption power and ease of mobility, which do not belong to all subjects and define specific forms of citizenships. The authors hence come to the question in their title: “aren't sex workers women?”, echoing Sojourner Truth's claim to be recognised as a legitimate woman in the context of racist exclusion of women in the segregationist context of US settler society. While a parallel between the two contexts might be perilous and exaggerated, they aim to question how certain women are silenced, their agency denied because they do not meet the classed definition of vulnerable female victim needing protection. Instead, they are framed as overly-aggressive, out of place figures who need policing for their non- respectable expression of femininity. Public policies contribute hence to the reification of female vulnerability while reproducing regimes of exclusion towards less privileged women subjects. As such, this paper highlights how moral economies are reproduced and maintained through the implementation of gendered safety policies.

Claire Hancock's paper relates also to the institutional forms of, amongst others, gendered and patriarchal violence. Articulating writings of Latin-American feminists denouncing how capitalism relies on the victimisation of women, she proposes an original analysis of the racial denial that exists and persists in France and more specifically in Paris, in the context of newly implemented public policies that are openly gender-equality oriented. Her main argument is twofold. First, from an empirical point of view, she analyses how the colonialism of gendered violence and the spatial dynamics of racism help

to cast light on the French situation. The author shows how specific events for non-white women intended to frame a safe space away from the white hegemonic gaze. Organised in the centre of Paris by grassroots peripheral intersectional afrofeminist collectives, these protests are policed or even banned by the municipality in the name of universalism. Second, this paper proposes epistemological reflections on the use of language and more broadly on the politics of citation that remain hindered by the androcentric, racist and colonial structure of power. Through the use of non-hegemonic literature, the author aims to make sense of nascent peripheral subjectivities in the context of French (feminist) protests. This leads her to claim a universalism from below, while questioning “the way in which ideas travel and gain universal currency”. The author highlights thus how moral economies are reinforced through the reproduction of a hegemonic politics of citationality, while maintaining silenced and invisible other forms of discourses, narratives and experiences that are articulated throughout scales from the urban to the nation and the global. By operating an “epistemological decentering”, this paper opens new reflections on citizenship and the way forms of citizenship are produced from below. Highlighting alternatives to hegemonic frameworks of analysis, this paper helps questioning the mainstreaming of specific discourses and visions, models of governance and public policies through their circulation and embeddedness at various scales that help to construct what is framed as an ineluctable global perspective.

In relation to the circulation and re-appropriation of discourses from an interscalar and intersectional perspective, Karine Duplan sheds light on this embeddedness and the articulation of the urban, nation and global scales by tracking down the assumptions that support the creative city narrative in its relation to national identity and project. Unpacking implicit normativities at stake, she shows how nation branding leverages neoliberal aims to attract ideal subjects and citizens, framing them as free-floating flexible hypermobile cosmopolitan talents, and shifting the boundaries of sexual in-/exclusion. Incorporating a queer perspective, the paper places sexuality in its intersectional dimension, facilitating further consideration of how sexual politics crafts the definition of new urban subjectivities that are strongly normative. As such, nation branding is shown to provide a heteronormative framing of sexual subjectivities and citizenships, related to the privileges of neoliberal politics and practices aligned with heterosexuality and class-permitted consumption. Duplan shows how the shaping of a desirable subject is a moral injunction to fit into the imaginary of the nation. At the same time, the queering of the sexual politics of nation branding opens up new opportunities to destabilise the sexual in globalisation-era neoliberal politics. More generally, the paper offers a nuanced understanding of how regimes of in-/exclusion have to be analysed in relation to specific times and places, while also underlining how attracting global talent to support economic growth might result in the enabling of the integration of certain sexual minorities to the national community and the positioning of national identity as a model of tolerance and openness through narratives of progress and modernity (see also Puar 2007). Nevertheless, by questioning what is missing in nation branding, Duplan also articulates forms of queer exclusion that echo Haritaworn's (2010) work. By drawing on neoliberal forms of multicultural citizenship, she argues that nation branding contributes to the reiteration of social inequalities through the production of specific subjectivities that are sexually normative. While claiming tolerance, inclusivity and protection for queer people and even incorporating some gay subjects in their communication, nation branding remains structured by power relations. She therefore shows how this neoliberal politics reinforces the regulatory function of heteronormativity in the constitution of new urban multicultural subjectivities beyond queer lives.

Carina Listerborn and Maya Neergaard also question the shaping of new urban subjectivities by turning their focus *into* the smart city. While feminist scholars have started to highlight how the smart city narratives contribute to the reproduction of exclusionary power relations, their paper questions directly the norms that implicitly frame the smart city vision in its early stages of planning and their circulation and unquestioned adoption by planners, politics and selected citizens. Through a dual case study, Toronto and Copenhagen, the authors dig into the grounded assumptions of smart city producers,

be they planners or politicians, revealed to be mostly men, highlighting the biases in the conceptualisation of projects that lead to some citizens being represented while others remain excluded from this future. Those citizens are represented as ideal figures to emulate, as perfect figures of self-accomplishment in the realm of a techno-global neoliberal vision. As such, the paper contributes also to the production of an epistemological critique that extends the technologist white male bias critique. Moreover, the authors argue that the intersectional analysis, by informing power relations that structure the smart city at various stages helps not only to excavate the silenced, marginalised and invisibilised voices but also to create a better understanding of the majority groups—as a means to point out their paradoxes and destabilise them. Finally, another key-point to be highlighted is represented by the effects of place and locality in the circulation and forms of institutionalisation of smart city norms and visions. While the techno-focus of the smart city orients this model to be the ideal solution for an equal and peaceful future, this paper interrogates the situatedness of the smart city discourse, which is (still) strongly within a white western valid heterosexual male body. Moreover, it helps to understand the role of locality in transnational uneven development, following Massey's insightful comment on how “whole new sets of relations between activities in different places, new spatial forms of social organisation, new dimension of inequality and new relations of dominance and dependence” are implemented (Massey 1995, 3).

By focusing on the intersection of power relations in the implementation of public policies and the shaping of (il)legitimate urban subjectivities, this themed section intends to highlight the various, sometimes contradictory, logics of the “politics of difference” (Young 1990), and the various shaping of urban privilege, exclusion and belonging. The research collected in this themed section questions how spatial differences are produced through policies, as well as what looks like the ideal subject experiences they refer to. It therefore asks how illegitimate subjects can navigate and contest the urban moral regimes they are subjected to. While the question of class has always been crucial to the understanding of urban policies and subjectivities (Mitchell and Staeheli 2006; Valverde 2012), the studies presented in this themed section highlight how both the framing of gender violence and the circulation and tensions between discourses at different scales—local, national, global—reinforce an ideal desirable subject from an upper-middle class perspective. As such, this work is a plea for intersectional critique, favouring an understanding of the forms of inclusion and exclusion that urban policies generate and their moral framing. By discussing power relations, privileges and discriminations, intersectionality allows *queer moralities*—placing the focus on groups that are too often marginalised, both socially and politically—to be classed, gendered and/or racialised. In addition, it reveals how processes of marginalisation are reinforced, but also how privileges can coexist with forms of precarity. Intersectionality is thus a social justice project: it provides tools to make visible groups whose interests and social experiences tend to be ignored or misrepresented.

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