

Atlas

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Acknowledgements

We are thrilled to present the 20th volume of Atlas, the DU Geographical Society's annual publication showcasing the best of Trinity's geography students. Established in 1967, our academic journal has become an integral part of the society's tradition and we are delighted that it has grown in strength since its revival in 2015. In acknowledgement of a great deal of hard work, we would like to express our thanks to all those who made this edition happen.

We would like to thank the TCD Association and Trust and the Alumni who contribute to the fund. Without their support, the publication of Atlas would not be possible. We would also like to thank Keava Connolly, our treasurer, for communicating and liaising so seamlessly with the trust.

We thank our Honorary President, Philip Lawton, for his support and a wonderful foreword to kick off this edition. We also extend our immense gratitude to our fantastic chairperson, Hannah McCloskey. Not only has she been crucial to the success of Atlas; she has been an outstanding leader for the Geographical Society through a turmoil-filled year and has remained dedicated throughout.

We thank everyone who submitted their work to Atlas this year, and we are extremely grateful to our sub-editors Kylie Seward, Gloria Svistal, Rory Mockler and Robyn Ni Chaoimh, who chose exceptional essays for you to read in this volume.

The works presented in this edition of Atlas are a testament to the breadth of geographical thought and research.

From the most primitive mapping of Ireland and the emergence of queer geographies in Dublin to questioning environmental governance and neoliberalism, our edition has something to excite everyone.

We are so proud to have edited Atlas 2022. It has been a privilege to bring the academic endeavours of our society to life and we welcome you to join us in celebrating our members' successes through this publication. We look forward to adding this edition to the Atlas collection and to many more volumes to come.

Sophie Cantwell-Kelly & Eve Smyth

Head Editors

Atlas # 20

President's forward

As we begin to reach the end of the academic year 2021-2022, we can reflect in a positive light on our return to campus and a gradual return to the continued use of the spaces that we associate with Geography at Trinity College Dublin. The last number of years have presented significant challenges for students of geography at Trinity College, and as the cohort of authors and editors complete this edition, the world outside continues to present challenges for the future. Never-the-less, in as much as we have been able to welcome back to students from different years in Geography, it becomes possible to once again appreciate the energy and life that you bring to this University. A University is fundamentally about student learning. Over the last few years, through your absence, it has been possible to reflect on how much this energy is missing from the life of the University, both in terms of in-class learning and the use of informal spaces of The Museum Building and surrounds. The forms of everyday interaction that are only possible through the presence of students cannot be replaced. The tacit exchange of knowledge and ideas is of crucial importance. As a teacher, it is important that we also seek to learn from students, through both formal and informal forms of discussion and debate, including where we make a misstep. The delivery of a course is not only about imparting knowledge to students, but about a collective approach to thinking about the world from a geographical perspective. While perhaps less often stated, as lecturers we learn from all of you, and your unique way of looking at the world.

Once again, as staff members, we are extremely proud of the work put in by the DU Geographical Society. Working under circumstances that remain challenging, the contributors and

editors of Atlas have once again outdone themselves in completing another edition of the journal. As geographers, when we think of traditions, we imply the connections between people and place. The tradition of the Atlas journal is one that embodies the connections between students of Geography over the years, with each generation passing on the traditions and approaches to the journal to another group to take over. This is a journal that is of TCD geography, that reflects your time here and the connections you make both within your class cohorts and across the spectrum of the different years. It is something that we hope you will look back on with pride.

As befitting a journal to emerge within TCD geography, the contents of this year's Atlas contain topics that push the boundaries of geographical research to new levels. This includes critical analyses of the neoliberalization of space, both through the connections between urban injustices and Queer Geographies as well as the lens of environmental racism and the Flint water crisis; the mapping of Ireland by Strabo and Ptolemy; the challenges of sustainable development goals for Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC); and the analysis of developing an urban public space for all. When taken together, the papers thus offer a rich diversity of themes and approaches and do so in a manner that opens up new lines of inquiry and brings debates forward to a new level.

Philip Lawton

Honorary President 2021-22

Chairperson's greeting

I am proud to introduce the 20th Volume of the Geographical Society's *Atlas* publication! *Atlas* is a snapshot of the talent and academic ability of Trinity's geography students, which extends far beyond the few essays selected within this journal.

I'd like to thank my colleagues Sophie Cantwell-Kelly & Eve Smyth for their help in producing the journal, and Juliet O'Flaherty for her beautiful cover design. Thank you to *Atlas*' sub-editors, whose efforts greatly contributed to the continuation of this important GeogSoc tradition. I'd also like to thank our Honorary President, Dr Philip Lawton for his assistance and guidance over the past year. I am honoured to have worked alongside such a supportive and reliable group of colleagues and friends.

For many years, the Geography Society has been a focal point for the social lives of students in, around and outside of the Trinity Campus. Countless volunteers have joined the society and the committee, working together to create a welcoming, exciting and warm environment. In September 2021, it seemed like an enormous task to fill the shoes of the past committee. However, I am so proud of the successes we have achieved together and of how well our committee has responded to the obstacles we've faced in a challenging year. I am particularly delighted to see those who had never before set foot on campus getting involved. It has been so rewarding to watch each committee member offer support when needed and they make me even more proud to be a part of this team.

Despite Covid restrictions looming in the background of all our planning, we have still had some great events this year. We successfully organised our ‘Howth Head Walk’, ‘Black & White Night’ and a ‘BinGeo’ evening, as well as our ‘Out of this World Mystery Night’ held in Drogheda (possibly the only way I could convince GeogSoc to visit my beloved hometown!). We also enjoyed getting dressed up for our ‘Spaceship Earth Ball’, paying homage to the first-year module we will always remember.

My favourite memories from this year are our weekly coffee hours. While planning events and keeping up with the daily running of the society, coffee hours created a space for us to meet up, share great memories and enjoy being part of the GeogSoc family over tea and biscuits. I would like to thank everyone who came to our coffee hours each week, you made it something to look forward to in the midst of college work.

In my time as chairperson of GeogSoc, the most fulfilling part of the role has been observing and encouraging new friendships. I have loved watching students meet at our events and seeing the friendships which bloom as a result throughout the year. I will be forever thankful for the friends that I’ve made through GeogSoc and I hope this continues to be one of the most important aspects of the society moving forward.

Geog On-
Hannah McCloskey
Chairperson 2021/2022

Strabo and Ptolemy: Maps of Ireland

Conor Shenton

The island of Ireland, known as Hibernian or Iernē by Roman and Greek scholars, was a largely unstudied and unmapped area of land in the early period of the Julian calendar. Writings on the geography of the island were done before Strabo by the likes of Caesar and Pytheas, who commented on the rough size and location of the island but failed in capturing a true sense of the environment and cultures of the island. Strabo changed this when he described the Irish people; these writings are some of the earliest references to the ethnography of Ireland (Freeman, 2001). Years later Ptolemy provided a more limited and mathematical scope of Ireland, with his work primarily focusing on locating Ireland on a grid framework known today as longitudes and latitudes. A limited number of geographical writings survived from this period due to the collapse of the Roman Empire. Therefore, Strabo and Ptolemy's writings provide us with a unique snapshot of life in 'The Oikoumene' or inhabited world at this time. This essay will look at the nature of Strabo and Ptolemy's representation of Ireland, how their writings were influenced by prior literature and cultural preconceptions as well as the differences and similarities between the two scholars.

Strabo was born into an educated family in the region of Pontus in present-day Turkey. He adopted the Stoic philosophy and used geography as a way of adding to his practical knowledge and contributing to a virtuous life (Lasserre, 1998). To examine his representation of Ireland, I will first discuss his estimates on the relative location and size of the island. Although Strabo took a holistic approach to geography, the fundamentals, such as the perceived size of the island, play a part in understanding the

overall representation of Ireland at that time. Prior to his writings on Ireland, there was little information in terms of the location and size for him to go on. The first Roman writer to mention Ireland was Julius Caesar around the period of the Gallic Wars, where he stated Ireland was two-thirds the size of Britain and it was separated from Britain a similar distance as Britain is to Gaul (Hibernia Romana? Ireland & the Roman empire, 1996). Strabo describes the location and measurements of a large island called Iernē, writing that it “stretches parallel to Britain on the north, its breadth being greater than its length” (Jones, 1923: 259). Although inaccurate, it is important to note that this information was passed down over decades, often from Gaulish and British sailors; therefore, there was a high possibility of information getting corrupted as the stories passed through many hands and languages. The reason for Strabo placing Ireland to the north of Britain is unknown. However, Freeman (2001) theorises that he assumed this to fit his “theoretical framework” on the limits of the inhabitable world, after he disregarded the existence of the island of Thule. As in much of Strabo’s work he took a critical view of many past writings. In this case, he disregards Pytheas of Massalia’s writings on Thule due to none of his sources speaking of it. Multiple writers remain critical of Pytheas’ evidence. Tiernay (1976) argues ‘Thule’ was likely central Norway or Iceland and that although there is no evidence of him visiting Ireland, it is quite likely he obtained at least second-hand accounts of the island. The Greek historian Polybius wrote of his journey and that he at least visited Britain. Despite lacking substantial evidence, Pytheas was still the first known geographer to write about Ireland and contributed to Strabo’s work (Garlinghouse, 2017; Hibernia Romana? Ireland & the Roman empire, 1996).

In contrast to Strabo’s holistic approach towards geography, Ptolemy focused more on pinpointing locations on the

surface of the earth; therefore, had a more methodological approach towards mapping Ireland. To better understand Ptolemy's representation of Ireland, we must examine his first references to it and how past literature shaped his perceptions. Ptolemy first referenced Ireland in his astronomical manual the *Almagest* where he refers to Ireland as "Mikra Brettania" or little Britain. Here he places Ireland on the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth parallel of his systematic grid, which aimed to divide the surface of the known world into twenty-six fields (Freeman, 2001; Raftery, 1994). Freeman comments on his placement of Ireland at a latitude of 58 and 61 degrees as inaccurate and too far north, however, it is more precise than Strabo's estimates. Toner (2000) and Raftery agree on the consensus that Ptolemy based his early information on the writings of Marinus of Tyre who in turn derived his information from the writings of Philemon. As with Strabo, Ptolemy employed a critical approach towards past literature and likely carefully scrutinised writings on the topic he was studying before deriving his own conclusions. Most of these early measurements were gathered from merchants and traders who visited Ireland, an often unreliable source that was likely corrupted over time. A source of measurement for Ptolemy was a statement Philemon had acquired from merchants who had visited Ireland, stating it took "20 days from east to west" to travel (Freeman, 2001: 66). This figure was disputed by Ptolemy and Marinus with Ptolemy eventually halving this estimate. However, both Freeman and Tiernay (1976) agree that Philemon's figures are likely accurate when you take into account the possible detours from the straight line and obstacles they may have faced.

Strabo's approach to geography often involved studying all aspects of a region to truly understand it as a whole. He referred to his geography as a *kolossourgia* or "A colossal statue of work" stating "just as, in colossal statues, we do not seek detail

in each individual part but rather pay attention to general aspects in deciding whether the whole is finely done” (Dueck, Lindsay and Potthecary, 2011: 5). Although his references to Ireland are meagre and often without solid evidence, the integrated approach he takes does help in painting a picture of Ireland beyond just coordinates and measurements. Strabo’s description of the people of Hibernia was an unfavourable one. He states that the people are “more savage than the Britons” with cannibalism and incest being commonplace. These dramatic preconceptions of Ireland seem to lack evidence, and he explains he obtains no direct witnesses of this activity. Although we can’t exactly identify where these cultural pre-conceptions came from Raftery (1994) argues it likely originates from ‘garbled’ stories from sailors and adventurers as well as prior stereotypes of similar remote countries. Strabo’s comments on the climate of Ireland are sparse; however, he portrays Ireland as the northern limit of the inhabited world and that the lives of people on the island are miserable due to the cold. Furthermore, remote islands of this nature would offer no advantages to the Romans as “they can neither injure nor benefit us in any way because of their isolation” (Strabo, 1917: 445). This shows some of the practical implications of Strabo’s work and the fact he writes little on Ireland could be due to the lack of use the island had for Roman officers who would frequently use his studies.

Ptolemy’s coordinates identifying many promontories, river mouths, settlements and tribes in Ireland have been reconstructed to form a physical map; this map is frequently cited as the oldest known geographical account of Ireland (Darcy and Flynn, 2008). Crucially, it provides us with a view of how Ireland was seen geographically at the time and how Ptolemy viewed it. In book two of Ptolemy’s *Geography*, he describes Ireland first as he considers it the westernmost part of Europe. For the

prologue of this book, he explains that the maps were not complete and that he welcomed future research (Freeman, 2001). This shows us how Ptolemy was aware of the possible inaccuracies of the reports he received from merchants, sailors, the Roman military or the previous writings of Marinus of Tyre. Despite this his estimates are frequently accurate, Freeman points to several place names and coordinates that likely match modern-day features such as the mouth of the river Widwa and the River Foyle. When examining Ptolemy's place names some of the meanings can be understood and traced back through the Irish language whilst for others the meaning of the names is unknown and there is little to no references to them in later Irish literature. Darcy and Flynn (2008) propose this is due to textual corruption or the relocation of tribes that were often named the same as the towns. Toner (2000) makes a similar point that the tribes likely disappeared or became unimportant to the point of not being included in place names. This makes validating the place names on Ptolemy's map difficult at times and shows that most modern-day Irish place names came from Gaelic, Norse or English origin (Mac Giolla Easpaig, 2009) rather than from Ptolemy or similar scholars of that period.

The writings of Strabo and Ptolemy provide us with an insightful representation of Ireland during that time. It is important to say, however, that the information on Ireland compares poorly to that of other areas. Here I will review some reasons that made the information on Ireland lacklustre in comparison to more well-researched areas. As I touched on previously, it is important to consider what the work of Strabo and Ptolemy was used for and the primary purpose of their writings. Both Strabo and Ptolemy were citizens of the Roman Empire, where geography was seen as a highly practical discipline that could be used by officers in the Empire. With

writings from Pomponius Mela labelling the inhabitants as savages and Caesar noting the land was “barely inhabitable on account of the cold” it’s unsurprising that the Romans saw no potential in Ireland to expand their empire at that time. (*Hibernia Romana? Ireland & the Roman empire*, 1996: 1). Considering Strabo and Ptolemy wrote about Ireland in moderate detail shows it was somewhat relevant at the time. Darcy and Flynn (2008) argue the Romans may have had settlements here, with coins and a Roman beachhead providing archaeological proof of some Roman involvement. However, for Strabo and Ptolemy, their time would be better suited to exploring more suitable or nearby locations for the empire such as modern-day Spain. The inaccuracies in their descriptions of Ireland are also due to the lack of first-hand experiences, as mentioned prior neither Strabo nor Ptolemy likely visited Ireland and the information they received was frequently from poor sources with a high risk of corruption. This contrasts to some of the accurate descriptions in Strabo’s narrative that have given scholars the assumption of a first-hand experience, these include his writings on the road from Euphrates to Ephesus which he has thought to have travelled (Pothecary, 2016) or to places he visited and lived in such as Corinth which he accurately describes (Weller, 1906). Pothecary remains critical, however, and although it may seem like a first-hand account, the information may be simply taken from other writers.

Studying these two ancient geographers gives us a geographical snapshot of how Ireland was represented thousands of years ago. Both writers take different approaches to their work. Strabo opts for an integrated approach, considering multiple aspects of a location such as size, relative position, culture, climate and evolution, although his representation of Ireland is lacking in this in-depth detail. Ptolemy, on the other hand,

focused more on the exact maths of where places are on the surface of the earth, using a grid framework to achieve this. These varying approaches give us an insight into the different philosophies of geography at the time and inevitably may have influenced the direction geography as a discipline has taken today. Delving into where both writers sourced their information on Ireland presents us with a picture of how information was passed down through the years, how cultural preconceptions may arise and the importance of being critical of past work. In general, studying both writers' work on Ireland provides a fascinating insight into the discipline of geography in its early stages.

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Spaces of Injustice and Resistance: Understanding Urban Inequality through the Lens of Queer Geographies and Critiques of the Neoliberal City

Sadhbh Nevins

Though dynamic spaces, urban environments are relentlessly overwhelmed with inequalities that unevenly impact our experiences in the city. Critiques of the neoliberal city and queer geographies are two frameworks used to identify the nature and cause of such urban inequalities. Rooted in different conceptual backgrounds, the former highlights the importance of class, power, and capital in structuring urban injustices while the latter focuses on sexuality, gender, and the body. This essay will start by outlining the concepts before comparing the different forms of urban inequality they identify. This will be achieved by examining the production of space and the exclusionary nature of such produced spaces. Finally, the value of coupling critiques of the neoliberal city with queer geographies is emphasised. Pairing these two approaches not only highlights the intersecting inequalities facing marginalised urban communities but also reveals the importance of urban space as a site of rebellion against profound class-, gender-, race-, and sexuality-based injustices.

Outlining the concepts

1. Critiques of the neoliberal city

Rooted in the political economy approach, critique of the neoliberal city is a well-established discourse that investigates the role of capital, class, and power in neoliberal urban development and the subsequent inequalities it produces. Though often a ‘catch-all’ term, neoliberalism is the ideological underpinning of the contemporary capitalist economy and is devoted to the

deregulation of markets and the culling of welfare regimes (Brenner & Theodore, 2002). As such, neoliberalism's proponents champion the efficiency of the free market and its ability to distribute resources in an unbiased manner (Attuyer, 2015). Current neoliberalist ideology dates back to the 1970s where Keynesian welfare policies and the Fordist model of mass production experienced numerous crises, including wide-spread deindustrialisation, unemployment, and rise of international competition (Brenner & Theodore, 2002). To overcome such crises, governments have engaged in a process of creative destruction, destroying institutional arrangements that impede capital accumulation in favour of newly created pro-growth policies (Brenner & Theodore, 2002). It is important to note, however, that 'actually existing neoliberalism' is an ever-evolving process that materialises differently depending on a location's history and institutional context. For instance, Kitchin *et al* (2012) demonstrate that neoliberalism has unfolded in Ireland in a fragmentary and concealed manner given the nation's post-colonial institutional setting. Common to all manifestations of neoliberalism, however, is the use of urban space as a vehicle for capital growth. Harvey (1989) maintains that cities have entered a phase of entrepreneurialism where cash-strapped local authorities create business-friendly urban policies to attract private investment, such as place rebranding, tax incentives, and public private partnerships (Attuyer, 2015). Importantly, critical geographers emphasise that the neoliberal city is an inherently unequal class project that allows the privileged elites to structure space according to their economic and political interests at the expense of marginalised, less-affluent classes (Harvey, 2007).

2. *Queer geographies*

Social difference, in contrast, approaches urban injustice by examining the unequal ways cities are experienced. Emerging from the cultural and feminist turn in geography, social difference brings to light the intersecting categories that shape our interactions in the city, such as sexuality, gender, and race. These identifiers of social difference are deeply embedded in unjust power relations that organise urban space in favour of certain identities, predominately the white, straight, cis-gendered male (Jonas, McCann & Thomas, 2015). As part of this approach, critical urban geographers have engaged with queer theory to emphasise the significant role sexuality plays in shaping our (unequal) urban experiences (Hubbard, 2008). Falling under the rubric of ‘geographies of sexualities’, urban researchers in the 1970s explored the oppression of LGBTQ+ sexualities via the spatial reproduction of heterosexuality in the city (Nash, 2010). Early literature also focused on the formation of (primarily) gay and (less frequently) lesbian neighbourhoods in major Global North cities, such as the Castro in San Francisco and Soho in London (Brown, 2008). However, geographies of sexuality have since been critiqued for reproducing the rigid categories of heterosexual/homosexual space, gay/lesbian identity, and male/female binary. In response, queer and trans geographies have emerged as productive tools for challenging urban inequalities that exist both outside and within LGBTQ+ neighbourhoods by critically examining such spaces in terms of gender, sexuality, and the body (Nash, 2010). Beyond raising new lines of geographic enquiry, urban researchers engaging with queer geographies often employ auto-ethnographic methodologies to explore their subjective experiences of social difference in the city. For instance, Petra Doan (2010) draws on her fraught experiences as trans woman to explore the tyranny of

gender in public space while Heather McLean (2016) reflects on her experiences as a drag king artist to investigate the commercialisation of queer and feminist artistic space. Such personal accounts reiterate the idea that social difference, particularly sexuality, is deeply subjective while remaining inherently social and spatial (Jonas, McCann & Thomas, 2015).

Comparing the concepts

The ensuing section will compare critiques of neoliberal city and queer geographies by, first examining the production of space and, second exploring the different forms of urban inequality that emerge from such spaces.

1. Production of space

As aforementioned, the onset of neoliberalism in the 1970s is linked to the restructuring of urban space where the city is mobilised as a site for capital accumulation (Harvey, 2007). As such, critical geographers note that the neoliberalist restructuring of the political economy and the city is grounded in the production of space (Brenner & Theodore, 2002). Burdened with repeated crises of overaccumulation, capitalism has designated the city as its latest ‘spatial fix’ where excess capital can be invested in and profit can be generated (Di Felicianantonio, 2016). To do so, various actors, such as property developers, local authorities, and private investors, strategically produce devalued spaces in disadvantaged parts of the city to free up land that can be transformed into lucrative spaces of affluent consumption (Weber, 2002; Smith, 1982). This is done physically by letting older buildings turn to decay (Weber, 2002) and symbolically through policy discourse that denounces these devalued spaces as ‘ghettos’, ‘unproductive’, and ridden with ‘blight’ (Wilson, 2002). Consequently, the destruction of devalued spaces in favour

of more competitive uses is justified by private actors and local authorities looking to exploit the city as a site for capital accumulation. As will be discussed, these practices are imbued with power imbalances that result in profound class-based inequalities.

Akin to critiques of the neoliberal city, queer geographies begin with the production of space to identify different forms of urban injustices. As hegemonic heterosexual values are reproduced spatially (Hubbard, 2008), the production of safe spaces for the LGBTQ+ community is of upmost importance. To overcome the oppression of LGBTQ+ sexual identities, queer communities congregate in certain parts of the city to produce 'gaybourhoods' (Knee, 2019). Claiming and creating safe spaces within the city allows non-heterosexual identities to be outwardly celebrated, improving community solidarity through queer-focused leisure activities, health facilities, and political meetings (Mattson, 2015). While the production of safe spaces may be encouraging, recent queer literature aligns with the critiques of the neoliberal city to highlight that space production is often an exclusionary project. Drawing on homonormativity literature, Knee (2019) notes that queer identities and spaces have been depoliticised and homogenised following widespread acceptance into society. As a result, the white, cosmopolitan, middle-class gay man is identified as the only 'respectable' queer identity (Binnie & Skeggs, 2004). Comparable to the devaluing of disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the neoliberal city, queer neighbourhoods are re-made into exclusionary spaces that favour 'acceptable' white gay identities while ostracising 'non-acceptable', or devalued, lesbian, trans, and non-binary people of colour (POC) (Rosenburg, 2017). In contrast to the neoliberal city, queer geographies emphasise that the production of

exclusionary space is based the racialisation and gendering of queer POC's bodies rather than class alone (Rosenburg, 2017).

2. *Forms of inequality*

Though critiques of the neoliberal city and queer geographies deal with the production of space, different forms of inequalities are identified within such spaces. The former approach argues that while gender, sexuality, and race are crucial sources of inequality, uneven class relations are the foundation of urban injustice and social polarisation (Harvey, 1989). By replacing devalued spaces with profitable commercialised uses, neoliberal urban agendas exclude and displace lower-income residents who cannot afford such affluent forms of consumption (Ley, 2003). As such, the neoliberal city is spatially and socially divided, where affluent spaces are created, valued, and celebrated while simultaneously marginalising lower-income classes (Harvey, 2007). Unlike less affluent classes, elite classes can transfer their extensive economic resources into political power to ensure their interests are upheld in the neoliberal development of the city. For instance, property developers during Ireland's Celtic Tiger era secured business-friendly development plans by maintaining close professional and personal relationships with planners and by donating to key political parties (Kitchin *et al*, 2012). Accordingly, the power of wealthy classes is detrimental to community-based resistance to neoliberal urban projects. This is evident in Attuyer's (2015) study of the HARP inner-city rejuvenation plan in Dublin, where local authorities prioritised market and profit interests above community needs despite extensive dissatisfaction among inner-city residents. Analysing space in terms of capital and power, critiques of the neoliberal

city emphasises that urban injustices are intrinsically based on uneven class relations.

Queer geography scholars, however, critique this class-based approach to urban inequality for overlooking the everyday experience of social difference in the city (Gorman-Murray & Nash, 2017). As aforementioned, LGBTQ+ neighbourhoods have transformed into homonormative spaces of exclusion where non-conforming queer POC are marginalised and excluded from predominately white cis-male, gay spaces. Hence, Knee (2019) emphasises that structural and intersectional inequality is legitimised and reproduced in exclusionary LGBTQ+ spaces. Rosenberg (2017) offers Boystown, Chicago's most renowned gay village, as an exemplar of such inequality. Created by the village's extensive white gay population, the 'Take Back Boystown' movement called for amplified policing of trans youth and queer POC in public space via increased police presence, security cameras, and anti-loitering signs. The policing of queer POC not only racialised and gendered their bodies but explicitly branded their sexual identity as unwelcomed and unsuitable for Chicago's leading gay village (Rosenberg, 2017). Whilst absent in the neoliberal approach, queer geographies underscore the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality in urban inequalities by engaging with the everyday experiences of social difference.

A dual approach

Though both concepts are valuable for identifying various forms of urban injustices, new and challenging lines of geographic enquiry are opened when queer geographies and critiques of the neoliberal city are used in conjunction. Urban researchers approaching the city through both lenses have uncovered the intersecting class-, sexuality-, race-, and gender-based inequalities facing LGBTQ+ communities in the neoliberal city.

For instance, Gorman-Murray and Nash (2017) critique the commercialisation of Toronto's gay village, maintaining that city officials are exploiting LGBTQ+ spaces as a marketing tool to rebrand the city as an inclusive place ripe for private investment. By cancelling the Village's longstanding 'Fetish Fair', city officials were critiqued for "the 'desexifying' of the Village" and for depoliticising queer space in favour of profit (Gorman-Murray & Nash, 2017, p.797). Similar trends are unfolding in Manchester, where LGBTQ+ spaces are being commercialised by city and private actors to rebrand the Village as a site of cosmopolitan consumption for affluent, straight individuals (Binnie & Skeggs, 2004). Likewise, in critiquing the 1990 documentary *Paris is Burning*, bell hooks (1992, p.152) contends that drag, as a distinct part of queer black culture, has been transformed into a "spectacle for the entertainment" and consumption of the patriarchal, white capitalist economy. While uncovering intersecting forms of discrimination, the two concepts have also been used to examine spaces of queer rebellion against neoliberal urban agendas. To illustrate, Grady, Marquez, and McLaren (2012) assert that voguing balls and performance exhibitions have become spaces of resistance within the queer POC community. As an expressive and community-centred dance, voguing allows queer POC to express pride and autonomy in the face of neoliberal policies that seek to commodify and absorb LGBTQ+ space and culture into the capitalist economy (Grady, Marquez & McLaren, 2012). In a similar vein, drag king cabaret in Toronto serves as a space of defiance where performers can push back against misogyny and neoliberal ideologies that ostracise queer identities and expression (McLean, 2017). Evidently, the dual lens of queer geographies and neoliberal critiques enables a more sensitive understanding of intersecting

urban injustices along with the spaces of resistance that challenge such inequalities.

To conclude, cities are fraught with intersecting class-, gender-, race-, and sexuality-based inequalities. Critiques of the neoliberal city and queer geographies serve as two distinct approaches to understanding urban inequality. Though different, the concepts start with production of unequal urban space as a gateway into analysing injustice in the city. On one hand, critiques of the neoliberal city emphasise the role of capital and power in creating class-based disparities. Queer geographies, however, understands LGBTQ+ urban discrimination in terms of gender, sexuality, and the body. It is argued that the most fruitful critical research is produced when the city and its inequalities are approached using both queer geographies and critiques of the neoliberal city. With low-income classes, non-conforming queer communities, and POC overwhelmingly burdened with these injustices, it is crucial that the spatial and social nature of urban inequalities are critically unpacked and thus, resisted.

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The Flint Water Crisis: The Neo-Liberal Agenda and (Environmental) Racism

Eve Smyth

Introduction

In April of 2014, the residents in the city of Flint, Michigan turned on their taps in their homes and businesses and were met with discoloured and foul-smelling water. This came after state officials and financial emergency managers came to the decision to switch the city's water supply to cut social spending and alleviate Flint of its financial crisis (Pulido, 2016; Mohai, 2018). From that date onwards began one of the worst environmental and health crises seen in the United States, sparking a national outcry from activists and politicians, with many academics and activists making the claim that this water crisis is an example of the racist structures that are in place in governing and economic bodies, with some referring to it as 'environmental racism'. On top of this claim, many academics, such as Pulido (2016), Stanley (2016) and Mohai (2018) argue that this crisis sheds a light on the neo-liberal policies that have become popular to implement across urban spaces today. One example of this policy type is the privatization of public, or state-owned goods and services, such as the provision of water (Larner, 2003).

In this essay, I will be contextualizing the events and social actors that led to the contamination of Flint's water supply, and the demise of its water infrastructure, which includes the role of the automobile industry in Flint and the role of the 2008 financial crisis. I will frame my essay in terms of the social structure of racism, mainly drawing upon American perspectives of this structure, arguing that this crisis is not merely an isolated event, but is in fact a part of the overall power structure in American institutions and governing bodies. I will also be

framing this essay in terms of economic and financial values, as briefly mentioned above, and arguing that this crisis sheds a light on how governing bodies and other social actors place monetary value on essential goods that people need to survive, leading to these social actors to value maximizing profit and making the city of Flint ‘financially efficient’ (Stanley, 2016) over securing the health and well-being of its people. Lastly, I will discuss the effects that this crisis had on the people of Flint and talk about the various community and activist groups that formed as a direct result of this crisis, including the role they played in attracting international coverage of this crisis.

What is Environmental Racism?

As is the case with any critical analysis of a case study, it is important that I define the key theoretical framework, that being environmental racism, in order to do so. Environmental racism is defined as “*any policy, practice, or directive that differentially affects or disadvantages (whether intended or unintended) individuals, groups, or communities based on race or colour*” (Bullard, 1993, p. 1037). Bullard argues that this is another facet of the power structure of racism, in which institutions and other power structures actively work against and disproportionately affect people of colour, particularly Black people in America, to uphold the privileges and values of the White ruling class (Coyners, 2002).

Some academics argue that communities with a majority population made up of racial minorities are disproportionately exposed to environmental hazards. Godsil (1991) referenced a study in her paper in which she critically analyzed the concept of environmental racism, in which it was found that race was the most significant determinant of the location of hazardous waste

facilities, which release toxic chemicals and pollutants that are both harmful to the environment and to people's health. She frames her argument in the context of housing policies, in the American context this being the racial segregation housing policies, to illustrate why companies and other social actors choose to place these hazardous facilities close to predominantly Black communities. On one hand, because America is argued to be a White supremacist state, as mentioned before, a community that is home to a majority Black population generally have less political power and agency compared to White people, meaning their concerns surrounding the proximity of these facilities to their communities will not be heard by powerful actors. However, as I delve into this case study of Flint, communities of colour have agency when it comes to their exposure to systemic oppression and exposure to environmental hazards.

1.The Context: Social and Financial History of Flint, Michigan

In order to understand the events that led to the commodification and contamination of Flint's water supply, it is important to understand the historical context of the city, and the various social problems that stemmed from these events, on top of the historical structures of racism, which I briefly defined above.

During the early 20th century, Flint emerged as a leading automobile manufacturer, with General Motors (GM) employing a significant portion of the residents at its peak (Pulido, 2016). However, amidst economic and financial crises, and growing competition due to globalization during the 1980s, the GM began to outsource in search of cheaper labour in Global South countries. Mass unemployment followed suit in the city for years

after the downsize, as well as depopulation and what Pulido referred to as ‘White flight’, in which much of the once majority White population left the city, while most of the Black residents stayed. Once the financial crisis in 2008 came around, Flint was already a city in despair. It had a poverty rate of 38.8 per cent (US Census Bureau, 2019), which is well above the national average of 10.5 per cent (US Census Bureau, 2020). Eventually, in 2010, Rick Snyder, a self-proclaimed non-nonsense, value-neutral technocrat, was elected the Governor of Michigan (Stanley, 2016). Like much of the economic policies implemented during one of the worst financial crises in recent history, Snyder implemented a string of austerity measures and neoliberal policies, in a bid to get Flint out of its dire financial crisis (Pulido, 2016; Stanley, 2016; Mohai, 2018). One of Snyder’s most infamous governing decisions was the decision to replace the democratically elected city councils and mayors with Emergency Financial Managers (EFM), in cities where the residents were seen as incapable of voting for officials that were suited for the job (Stanley, 2016). These EFMs were positioned as apolitical ‘financial experts’, according to the paper written by Stanley (2016), who delves into this particular financial decision, which he positioned as one rooted in racism. Lee et al. (2016), in their study, found that, while African Americans comprised 14.4 percent of Michigan’s population, 51 percent of African Americans in the state were under financial management at some point during 2008-2013. Meanwhile, of the majority White population in the state, only 2.4 per cent of White people were under financial management during the same time period.

Stanley (2016) pays attention to the discourse surrounding the situations in cities such as Flint, which to Snyder justified the dissolution of legitimate democratic processes. The dire economic situation in Flint was due to years of neglect and

shrinking social security funds, which many academics believe to be the result of systemic racism. However, Snyder painted this situation as a ‘financial emergency’, which was because of value-oriented politicians (Stanley, 2016). So, in 2011, he placed Flint under the control of an emergency manager, a value-neutral ‘financial expert’ whose job was to cut social spending and make the city of Flint solvent (Pulido, 2016). It was at this moment in time that the EFM made the decision to switch the city’s water supply.

2. The Switch: Public Good to a Commodity

In this section I will be examining the switching of Flint’s water supply and the controversy surrounding this switch. I will argue that this decision was purely based on economics and cost-cutting measures which I will do by expanding on Stanley’s (2016) argument surrounding the control of discourse by the governing bodies.

Before the switch, Flint was provided water by the Detroit Water Department (DWD), which sourced the water from the Detroit River and Lake Huron (Ranganathan, 2016). When the EFM in Flint was appointed, they deemed this to be too expensive for the city and made the decision to switch the city’s water supply to the Flint River (Mohai, 2018; Pulido, 2016; Ranganathan, 2016; Stanley, 2016). This switch, on the surface, seems like a viable solution to the financial crisis, however, two problems arose from this switch. Firstly, GM have been releasing the toxic chemicals and pollutants produced during the manufacturing process for years beforehand, which meant that the water was polluted with corrosive chemicals that are toxic (Pulido, 2016). Secondly, the water infrastructure in Flint, i.e., the pipes that transported the water from the source to households and

businesses had faced years of neglect and many pipes were coated with lead, which again, is deemed unsafe for human consumption, especially for the likes of children. When this decision was made, residents and other social actors alike were skeptical, as it was well known in the area that the Flint River was highly polluted (ACLU of Michigan, 2016), but these concerns were not listened to, and the switch went ahead as planned.

This decision highlights several different issues that are rooted in historical contexts and current social and economic values. Firstly, this switch not only highlighted the physical switch of water supply to the area, but also the switch from water being perceived as a public good, a product or service that is non-excludable (Ingham, 2010), to a commodified good that has monetary value and has the ability to become a profit making ‘business’ and has the ability to exclude people from accessing it (Stanley, 2016). This highlights the neoliberal nature of this decision; by putting value on a public good, especially one that is as vital as water, governing bodies show that they value maximizing profit over the health and well-being of their citizens that they took an oath to serve. This can be seen as ironic since Snyder and these EFMs position themselves as ‘apolitical’ and non-value-oriented figures. This notion of valuing capital over (Black) people was made clearer when GM asked state officials in Michigan if they could switch back to the Detroit River water supply, as they claimed that water from the Flint River was corroding car parts (Pulido, 2016). The company was granted permission to switch back to the Detroit River water system, ensuring their goal of maximizing profit margins, while the rest of Flint were to continue receiving their water from the Flint River.

Secondly, the water crisis of Flint highlights the historical and structural mechanisms of racism, as Pulido (2016) argues that infrastructure is an indication of past wealth and capital and how the status infrastructure once held is presently eroding, signifying a politics of abandonment, which disproportionately affects Black communities. Even the concept of economic liberalism is rooted in terms of race; Ranganathan (2016) argues that racism cannot be separated from capitalism, and critiques the argument that the contamination of Flint's water supply was an act of overt racism, as the concept of race has always been intertwined with capitalist exploitation, dating back to the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, the argued dawn of capitalist society. This crisis not only highlights the structural mechanisms of environmental racism, but also how capitalist notions of society are rooted within this context (Ranganathan, 2016).

Thirdly, the crisis sheds light on current decision-making processes occurring in contemporary society, and how those in power take agency away from those most vulnerable in society, in this case Black people. Stanley (2016) cites work carried out by Vesla Weaver, in which she described the concept of 'frontlash', which is rooted in racist ideology. She argues that entrepreneurs, in this case state officials in Michigan, seek to create a monopoly on the understanding of a particular issue, in this case the financial crisis in Flint, while invalidating other social and economic contexts that led to the issue (Weaver, 2007). By making the claim that the financial situation in Flint was due to value-oriented politicians, who were voted in by resident's, this invalidates the real cause of the financial situation, that being structural and historical racism. This was perpetuated by the delegitimization of democratic processes in Flint, which not only led to the distribution of contaminated water, but also led to

agency being taken away from resident's, as their concerns were turned down by these so-called 'financial experts'.

3. The Aftermath: Health Issues, Inaction and Taking Back Agency

The consequences of this switch, and the subsequent inaction by government officials to even acknowledge this environmental and health disaster, was felt city-wide. Health issues associated with exposure to contaminants soared during this time period; many people were being treated for rashes, burning eyes and Legionnaires' disease, a lung infection caused by bacteria that can travel through droplets of water (Health Service Executive, 2020). In some cases, the effects of the contaminated water had fatal consequences (The Guardian, 2021) Tests that were carried out to determine the levels of lead in the water found some samples to be seven times over the US national limit that is deemed safe for human consumption, while other samples came were found to be almost 10,000 time over the national limit (Pulido, 2016). High levels of lead are especially unsafe for the likes of children, in which high consumption can cause children to be developmentally stunted and have permanent neurological issues (World Health Organisation, 2019).

Residents immediately made their concerns known to state officials but had very little political power in enacting change due to their democratic rights being taken away from them. State officials denied that the water supply was contaminated (Pulido, 2016), even though they had given GM permission to switch their water supply. Due to mounting pressure from residents, they had considered adding anti-corrosive agents to the water, however, this was shot down by the EFM at the time, deeming it to be 'too expensive', and the

possible solution was quickly scrapped. This inaction and inability to even acknowledge there was a problem for more than 18 months after the switch (Clark, 2018), showed where state officials' priorities lay, that being financial solvency over (Black) lives (Mohai, 2018; Pulido, 2016).

Even with the attempt to take resident's political agency away from them (Mohai, 2018; Stanley, 2016), resident's and social activists in the city banded together and sparked a campaign that sought to seek justice for the apparent poisoning of their water. This campaign reached national and international headlines in the media, with activists highlighting the racial aspect of this environmental crisis, due to the city being home to majority Black people. Activists eventually caught the attention of the federal state officials, including the US President at the time, Barack Obama, who had invited local activists to Washington D.C., the seat of the national government, to share their grievances. After months of mounting local and national scrutiny, state officials eventually acknowledged the problem. However, state officials were slow to help their constituents, and this was largely left up to activists, yet again, who helped organize national campaigns, 'sit-ins' at state buildings, and helped distribute water bottles to those who did not have access to clean water (Clark, 2018). The crisis ended in 2019, when officials began to renovate pipelines and follow proper water treatment procedures and was eventually deemed safe by testers (Mahaskey, 2020). However, many people in the area to this day still exclusively drink bottled water because much of the community have lost faith in their government representatives and experts, and in turn, have become distrusting of the water provided to them.

Conclusion

This environmental and health crisis not only shed light on the mechanisms of environmental racism but shed light on the structural mechanisms of racism, including historical and social contexts. This included the foundational structure of capitalist ideals, which are inherently racist, and the various austerity measures put in place that helped in commodifying water and value profit maximization over maintaining the livelihoods of Black lives (Mohai, 2018). This crisis also highlighted the attempt to control the discourse around Flint's financial situation, turning a blind eye on the structures of racism, by taking away legitimate democratic processes and replacing them with 'experts.' Lastly, this crisis resulted in an increase in health problems associated with contaminated water, some cases turning out to be fatal, and sparked a national campaign that forced state officials to act and face consequences for their profit-making venture.

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An Analysis of Copenhagen's Smart and Eco-City Agenda

Oonagh Fleming

Introduction

Copenhagen, in 2014, became the European Green Capital (Krähmer, 2020); the city also has plans to become carbon neutral by 2025 (CPH 2025 Climate Plan, 2012). However, like many other urban cities, it faces several urban sustainability issues; in particular, rising sea levels and high congestion rates threaten the city's population. The City of Copenhagen has collaborated with public and private bodies to produce smart city technology and eco-city agendas to overcome these issues. While strides have been made, some improvements could be made, and questions should be asked.

Key Urban Sustainability Issues

Two of the most pressing challenges to the City of Copenhagen are the threat of rising sea levels and storms and high levels of emissions. Copenhagen, located near the sea and with relatively flat topography, is under significant threat of rising sea levels. Much of Denmark is made of reclaimed land, marshes, and raised seafloor making it increasingly susceptible to this threat. (Fenger et al., 2008). The projection of a 1m sea-level rise in the next 100 years by the Danish Meteorological Institute is significant and endangers peoples' homes, health, and livelihood (Alkhani, 2020).

Levels of emissions is another area of great concern for the city of Copenhagen. The levels of emission in Copenhagen have a severe effect on the populations' health and well-being, being the cause of 122 premature deaths in 2014, 11pc of all premature deaths in Copenhagen (Jensen et al., 2018). Within the study conducted at Aarhus University, traffic congestion was one

of the most significant contributors to emission levels, particularly cars travelling at slow speeds on busy streets. Cars contributed 48% to the levels of NO₂, and heavy trucks and buses 33%. The contribution made by buses and trucks is significant considering they make up only 5% of the traffic. The city of Copenhagen has begun to implement several smart city initiatives and eco-city ideas to overcome these urban sustainability issues.

Smart and Eco City Agenda

Copenhagen has a wide range of smart city initiatives and eco-city agendas employed in the city. Air pollution sensors have been developed by a start-up company with funding from an EU project. These sensors are mobile and facilitate the measurements from various parts of the city. This allows for detailed planning of new builds and an understanding of which areas within the city need the most attention (Copenhagen Solutions Lab, 2020). Smart parking sensors are another element of Copenhagen's smart city agenda. These parking sensors allow drivers to anticipate their parking space before driving to the city. This decreases the time spent driving looking for parking and reduces congestion in the city, reducing emissions from personal cars (Smart City, 2020). To overcome the high levels of emissions caused by heavy vehicles, Banke Electromotive has developed a heavy goods waste disposal bin Electromotive which produces zero CO₂ emissions and runs at a lower cost than waste collection bins running on fossil fuels. In addition, Copenhagen plans on having an entire fleet of renewable energy buses by 2031 (Smart Cities, 2018).

In addition to these smart initiatives, reducing the prevalence of cars in the city as part of the eco-city agenda has also been a priority for the City of Copenhagen. Cycling and pedestrians are given priority in many areas of the city to

encourage citizens to use alternative means of transport to the car (CPH 2025 Climate Plan, 2012). However, as reducing the significance of cars within any city is difficult, measurements to enhance traffic flow have been taken. A new project in the North Harbour of Copenhagen is home to a diverse array of smart city and eco-city initiatives. One element of this project is constructing a new ring road and an underground tunnel to reduce traffic congestion (Ramboll, 2020). While it can be seen that such initiatives are not enough and may even encourage the use of cars, the emissions created by slow, busy streets speak towards the effectiveness of traffic flow measures.

As part of the North Harbour project, the solutions lab, Nordhaven, is a hub of smart technologies. Private companies play a significant role in Copenhagen's sustainable agenda, and the Nordhaven lab is a crucial area that incentivises investment (Alkhani, 2020). The Lab has 12 partners conducting research and holding presentations there (Smart City, 2020). A wide range of smart technologies are developed and developing here; renewable energy and smart heating are among the fore. Using the grid, the Lab controls energy distribution, understanding when best to use renewable sources, such as peak times (Energy Lab Nordhavn, 2020). Within the North Harbour project 35, 000 new homes will be created (The Local DK, 2018), and an array of smart heating technologies and energy sources will be used in these homes.

Solution and Questions

As Register said the concept of a smart city agenda has to be well established and supported (Register, 1987). This is very prevalent in Copenhagen as they have clear goals, initiatives, and means of investment. As demonstrated, private-public partnerships and private investment play a significant role in Copenhagen's smart city agenda; this is one area that raises questions.

Ecological modernisation wishes to encompass the desires of economic development while also protecting the environment. In this sense, this concept encourages the involvement of private companies (Whitehead, 2007). Whitehead describes that a clean, green environment is attractive for businesses as it signifies conservation, a lack of waste, and productivity. For this reason, many city initiatives aim to attract investment. Ecological modernisation sees investment as the only feasible way to develop in contemporary society; however, many are critical of this perspective. Hajer is one critic of this approach. In his view, under the premise of ecological modernisation, environment driven initiatives are diminished under capital gain (1997). While understanding the need for investment, it can be difficult as a citizen not to question the true nature of private partnerships. If a smart city agenda is produced as a product for investment, what areas have been glossed over, and does the initiative genuinely aim to help the sustainability goals of a city for its population, or is profit at the heart of particular agendas.

Krähmer questions the smart city agenda of Copenhagen, pointing out that the emission figures used by the city are only local measures. External, nearby emissions are not counted (2020). While this may be deemed acceptable as one primary concern for the city is local level emissions, emissions beyond the local context must be examined if the city is to tackle sea-level rise and more frequent storms. A significant bone of contention is the values held within capitalist ideologies. While some may accept that private investment is the only feasible way smart city agendas may be achieved, the concept of sustainability alone threatens capitalist values (Whitehead, 2007). While smart city agendas appear green and beautiful in western societies, the same cannot be said in developing parts of the world. The hope that the developing world will reach the stage of Western societies has

dwindled (Adams, 2008). For us, in the Western world, it may seem that privately funded smart city initiatives are helping environmental issues. While, in many regards, this is true, the underlying crux of the issue still lies with consumer behaviour. Those facilitating the world of fast fashion in the developing world are the ones who will suffer most from environmental threats and those who often do not receive funding for smart city agendas. Krähmer is one proponent of degrowth strategies, arguing that the socio-economic system needs to be changed to tackle local and global environmental issues seriously; otherwise, "green fixes" allow continued consumption, which will have serious consequences. Issues such as emission levels can be tackled by local level agendas, while sea-level rise is a global issue, and city initiatives must think beyond the local level.

Another issue surrounds the eco-city agenda of the city feature in Copenhagen. The North Harbour project aims to deliver 35,000 homes, of which the city has designated 25pc for social housing (Free, 2018). So far, 100 social homes have been delivered. Alkhani notes the challenges of producing social housing within urban areas that become of such high value quickly (2020). The project is not designated to finish until 2060, so the promise may still be delivered. However, in these new developments, such deliveries are often not realised, and swathes of the population are priced out of the market. As Jacobs discusses, public spaces should be kept safe not by police alone but by a city's atmosphere and inclusive dynamics (2016). Within projects such as the North Harbour development, swathes of the population are often priced out of the market. This leads to the exclusion of many and often leads to unsafe and threatening elements in the city. Valentine notes that tolerance is dangerous; minority or disenfranchised groups must be accepted and respected (2008). The practices of a city should lead to feelings

of inclusivity and acceptance to create an attractive social dynamic. For Fincher and Iverson, public libraries are one space that should be given more significant consideration within cities as they allow access to all and conversation between users (2008). This facility could be given more significant consideration to increase inclusivity.

Cars play a significant role in cities and subsequently affect emission levels. For Register, the automobile is "the most destructive agent of social disintegration" (1987, p.8). Similar to consumerist practices, personal transport behaviour is challenging to change. However, Register contends that the role of cars within cities needs to be reduced. This will include dealing with the cause of emissions and planning the city so that public transport, as one example, becomes more user-friendly. Angelidou et al., propose one effortless action; storage lockers near public transport (Angelidou et al., 2020). Small changes such as these will impact the behaviour of transport users and hopefully lead to changes in the use of cars. While the autonomous car causes some controversy, their inclusion in the city would significantly change our behaviour as transport users. Concerns surrounding driverless cars are valid, particularly following the painful death caused by an automated Uber in Arizona in 2018. However, such cars are in development, and the gradual inclusion of autonomous cars will allow parking spaces to become spaces for green areas, cyclists, pedestrians (Cugurullo, 2020). A study conducted by Cugurullo et al. in Dublin on automated cars found that while residents have concerns regarding the safety of these vehicles, they would be open to using them in the future (2020). Similar attitudes were found when driverless buses were implemented in Trikala, Greece. Initially, citizens were concerned about the driverless buses or frustrated with city planners for decreasing road space

(Papadima et al., 2020). However, as the project continued, public opinion changed, with many accepting such vehicles as the future. Time and co-creation played a role in the acceptance of this project. Involving the citizens was found to enhance city planners' and citizens' experiences. This, combined with the benefits of less congestion and lower emission, to name just two, it is apparent that automated vehicles will play a role in smart city agendas in the future (Angelidou et al., 2020). These changes will be slow, but their impact will be far-reaching, beyond traffic flow measures.

Conclusion

Copenhagen has an extensive smart, eco-city agenda, of which this paper has only grazed the surface. However, it is apparent that to overcome issues such as high emissions, the threat of rising sea levels, and increasingly aggressive storms, more has to be done. Small changes such as lockers in metro stations and increased library facilities can help tackle these threats. However, behavioural change may be required to make a significant difference. Many of the questions raised in this paper do not have simple solutions. Citizens to challenge the smart and eco-city agendas of a city for themselves at a local level and for the wider population and future climate issues.

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Out of the closet and into the fire: Will the Sustainable Development Goals push SOGIESC minorities behind?

Kevin Dowling

Introduction

In her 2018 study, *Push No One Behind*, Diane Elson argues that modern ideas of development are too often founded on utilitarian ethics, placing an excessive focus on economic growth (Elson, 2018). In reference to the Leave No One Behind principal central to the United Nation's (UN) 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Elson goes a step beyond the concept of *being left behind* and analyses the ways in which people can often be left *worse off* by destructive impacts of development practices. This harm can be caused by a wide range of processes, including "land enclosure and appropriation in the name of improving productivity and infrastructure (and sometimes in the name of mitigating climate change); by development-induced climate change; by pollution; by poorly designed and implemented trade liberalization." (Elson, 2018, p. 1)

In this way, there are often winners and losers in development activity. The success of a policy or practice is typically assessed on whether those who experience economic growth gain enough to compensate for the losses incurred by others. Unfortunately, however, this compensation is often not enough to account for the losses - for example, monetary payments for lives lost - or worse still, it never materializes at all. Elson effectively outlines how those with lower economic, social

and political power are most at risk of being *pushed behind* by those with more power (Elson, 2018).

Under this lens, we will examine the 2015 framework and people whose *sexual orientation, gender identity and expression or sexual characteristics (SOGIESC)* differ from societal norms, ie ‘SOGIESC’ minorities. With these minorities being some of the most marginalized members of society in terms of economic, social and political power, has their lack of representation within the SDGs left them worse-off than at the onset of this new development era?

Exclusion in the pre-SDG era

The Leave No One Behind approach that is central to the SDG’s was praised for its ambitions to promote the development of peace and prosperity for all (Ongsupankul, 2019). As a philosophy, this appeared to be a fundamental step forward for SOGIESC minorities in their struggles to achieve substantive equality. Up until the unveiling of the SDGs, UN mandates have historically failed such minorities. When the UN’s General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948, it recognized that “the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world’ (United Nations General Assembly, 1948). Yet social exclusion, discrimination and violence have remained synonymous with these communities across the globe (Ongsupankul, 2019). The UN’s recognition of the entitlement of equal rights for all humans has failed to manifest into reality for SOGIESC minorities, lending itself to the question, is membership of this “human family” an exclusive ticket? If all people are equal, how have governments continued

to breach fundamental human rights for SOGIESC minorities, even after the signing of the UDHR? The truth is, the validity of the principal that SOGIESC-related discrimination is a human rights issue is polarizing within UN operations and, as such, the concept of the “human family” has been shrouded in vagueness and uncertainty.

The UN’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) similarly did little to advance development for SOGIESC minorities. The MDGs were widely regarded as too narrow and shallow to bring about substantive change in most areas of development practice. Having been designed in a non-participatory fashion by a designated UN taskforce, the goals focused on the alleviation of extreme poverty through increased provision of basic needs (Cornwall and Rivas, 2015; Fukuda-Parr, 2016; Razavi, 2016; Stuart and Woodroffe, 2016). Touted by some as the “minimum development goals” (Harcourt, 2015, p.1), the 8 goals and 21 targets represented a modest concept of development that failed to recognize the intersectional relationship between such poverty and a plethora of other environmental, social and economic factors (Logie, 2021). As such, representation of SOGIESC minorities was inevitably out of focus.

When the 2030 Agenda was ushered in by the SDGs, the newly adopted framework contrasted with the MDGs in design, concept and scope. The design phase took place over three years and marked a major scale-up of participation from governments, civil society groups, academics, business groups and UN agencies around the world (Norton and Stuart, 2014; Cornwall and Rivas, 2015; Fukuda-Parr, 2016). What resulted was a set of 17 goals and 169 targets which covered a much more expansive idea of development. At its core was the principle that all goals connected

to each other and reaching any given goal will require careful consideration of this intersectionality. In addition, while the MDGs targeted the advancement of developing countries, the SDGs were lauded for their global applicability and relevance in all countries. The framework proposed that to effectively promote poverty alleviation and sustainable development, all aspects of inequality and marginalization must be addressed, including through an increased emphasis on environmental wellbeing (Cornwall and Rivas, 2015; Fukuda-Parr, 2016; Razavi, 2016; Stuart and Woodroffe, 2016). In doing so, the SDGs provided a much more realistic and hopeful opportunity for substantive change, not just for SOGIESC minorities, but for all (Logie, 2021).

SOGIESC minorities and the 2030 Agenda

Despite the promise of a more inclusive development agenda, the SDGs were quickly met with criticism for failing to make explicit reference to SOGIESC minorities (Mills, 2015; Poku, Esom and Armstrong, 2017; Vaast and Mills, 2018; Sciortino, 2020; Logie, 2021). This appeared to be a glaring omission, particularly when contextualized against the political climate at the time. Between 2013 and 2015, as key deliberations for the 2030 Agenda were taking place, various high-profile political affairs were occurring on the world stage that were in direct breach of the human rights of SOGIESC minorities. In 2013, legislation criminalizing the distribution of LGBTQI+ information to children was passed into Russian law, coinciding with a dramatic surge in reports of vigilante groups and hate crimes throughout the country (Guardian News and Media, 2013). In Africa, on the other hand, Uganda's Anti-Homosexuality Act of 2014, dubbed by the media as the 'Kill the Gays Bill', was passed into law the same year that

the Nigerian parliament passed legislation prohibiting same-sex marriage and public displays of relationships (Equal Rights Trust, 2014; Human Rights Watch, 2014). With such stark examples of human rights violations occurring across the globe, the failure to mention SOGIESC minorities appeared particularly imprudent. The UN is, however, a highly political body with representation from 193 member states, and if consensus is to be reached amid vast differences in opinions, cultures and political agendas, compromises must often be made (Poku, Esom and Armstrong, 2017; Sciortino, 2020; Logie, 2021). Naturally, as such, deliberations on global issues often require officials to ‘pick their battles’. No doubt, the geo-political climate stymied direct reference to SOGIESC minorities within the 2030 Agenda, despite the extensive efforts of civil society organizations and development actors for a more visible representation within the framework (Mills, 2015).

To ensure that SOGIESC minorities are not *left behind* or *pushed behind* under the 2030 Agenda, development actors have conscientiously interpreted the language of the framework to make meaning of the goals for such individuals (Mills, 2015). As Stonewall International suggests, though “the SDGs could have gone further by explicitly calling for LGBT equality” there is “potential to advance equality for all” (Stonewall International, 2016, p. 1). In accordance with the Leave No One Behind approach, various all-inclusive terms have been used throughout the framework’s wording and have been valued as a means of inclusion for such minorities (Mills, 2015). For example, how can we “end poverty in *all its forms*” (Goal 1) or achieve “*universal* health coverage” (Goal 3) or “justice *for all*” (Goal 16) if SOGIESC minorities are excluded from the discourse? The inclusion of “*other status*” in Goal 10 (‘Reduce inequalities’) holds particular importance after having been strategically

advocated for by individuals and organizations with intentions of SOGIESC equity (Mills, 2015; Poku, Esom and Armstrong, 2017). Both the universal and specific needs and rights of SOGIESC minorities must be included in development activity if the target to “empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion *of all*, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or *other status*” is to be achieved (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2021). These examples outline just some of the openings into the SDGs that can and should be used to ensure that Leave No One Behind translates into inclusive practice and policy for SOGIESC minorities (Mills, 2015). Will these openings be enough for substantive development? Or will these communities be *left* or *pushed behind*?

Push or pull?

By Elson’s definition, being *pushed behind* involves people being left in worse conditions from development activities aimed to benefit others (Elson, 2018). With scant literature suggesting this might be the case for SOGIESC minorities, one might reach an initial conclusion that these groups will be more likely to be *left behind*. The two key mechanisms by which individuals or groups get *left behind* by society - social exclusion and discrimination - continue to devastate SOGIESC minorities throughout the SDG-era. Take, for example, the ‘gay purges’ of Chechnya in 2017 (Steinmetz, 2019), or the reverse of two county-level bans on so-called ‘conversion therapy’ in Florida, USA, in 2020 (The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), 2020). In Ecuador in 2020, the central government vetoed a code which would have increased protection against this same pseudo-therapy for SOGIESC non-conforming

youth (ILGA, 2020). In Hungary, the ‘anti-LGBT law’ passed in 2021 prohibits the sharing of information considered to be in promotion of homosexuality or gender reassignment with minors, as well as banning content relating to SOGIESC minorities from daytime television or company solidarity campaigns (Guardian News and Media, 2021). While each of these events have left the affected people in situations devastatingly worse than before, they did not occur as a direct result of development practice - rather a lack of it. By failing to include and support SOGIESC minorities within the SDG framework, their equitable development is hindered, and they will continue to be left behind in this way by unspecific or non-inclusive policies and practices.

The inevitability of SOGIESC minorities being *left behind* by their invisibility within the SDGs is outlined in a 2015 report by The Institute of Development Studies (Mills, 2015). Upon carrying out a meta-analysis on 18 empirical literature reviews relating to gender, sexuality and development, the overarching thematic findings identified the key “mechanism of exclusion” that have repeatedly left SOGIESC minorities behind by development policies and practices. By mapping these mechanisms against the SDGs, thematic overlap was identified across 12 of the 17 goals, including in relation to poverty, health, education, gender equality, economic growth, human settlements and justice and accountability. Thus, the widespread potential for SOGIESC minorities to be excluded from this development era is evident. The researchers concluded that without deliberate, SOGIESC-specific action, the social exclusion and discrimination experienced by SOGIESC minorities will remain a fundamental threat and they will be *left behind* once again (Mills, 2015).

Though the literature does not directly suggest that SOGIESC minorities will be *pushed behind* by 2030 Agenda development practices, it is important to address the significant shortcomings in the evidence-base. Comprehensive data pertaining to the intersection between development practice and SOGIESC minorities is lacking across the globe, particularly in developing countries. Repeatedly, researchers quote insufficient data as a limitation to their ability to draw robust conclusions from their studies (Semugoma, Nemande and Baral, 2012; Mills, 2015; Park, 2016; Poku, Esom and Armstrong, 2017). In *The Irony of Homophobia in Africa*, Semugoma *et al.* outline how the lack of SOGIESC visibility in society directly perpetuates the lack of funding and research that is required to improve the livelihoods of such communities - “it is difficult to research a closeted, hidden population of pariahs who are subject to arrest and other legal sanctions” (Semugoma, Nemande and Baral, 2012). In addition to these logistical obstacles, SOGIESC-disaggregated data has been a relatively untapped source of information in demographic research worldwide. While collecting data on someone’s SOGIESC has traditionally been seen as inappropriate, irrelevant or insensitive, its value is now being recognized more widely (Stonewall International, 2019). SOGIESC minorities must be visibly accounted for in demographic data so that the true impacts of societal exclusion and discrimination can be identified and then addressed (Park, 2016).

With these data-related limitations in mind, there is a case to be answered for as to whether SOGIESC minorities are in fact being *pushed behind*, but their lack of representation in research and policies means that the effect is not as easily identified. If, as Elson outlined, low economic, social and political power are the key determinants of one’s vulnerability to being *pushed behind*,

this would suggest that SOGIESC minorities are some of the most at-risk groups in society. The heteronormative and cisnormative hegemonies upon which societies are built pave the way for violence and exclusion for those who do not conform, thereby limiting their security and power. In turn, this discrimination has adverse impacts on participation in, or access to, fundamental needs and rights, including education, healthcare, safe settlements, economic stability and political and civic participation (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), 2018). As a result, the rates of poverty, homelessness and food insecurity are significantly higher among SOGIESC minorities across the globe (Mills, 2015; OHCHR, 2018, Fraser *et al.*, 2019). In Canada, for example, research suggests that these minorities account for as high as 25%-45% of all homeless youth (Quilty and Norris, 2020). The criminalization of SOGIESC non-conformity is another dire mechanism by which these minorities are left marginalized and lacking power. The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association's (ILGA) *State-Sponsored Homophobia Report 2020* highlights, for example, that there are still 67 UN member states criminalizing same-sex relations, 6 of which can legally punish by death penalty (ILGA, 2020). On the other hand, less than a third of all member states have legal provisions in place to protect against discrimination based on sexual orientation. Only about a tenth have protection against discrimination based on gender identity (OHCHR, 2018; ILGA, 2020). In a vicious cycle, these shortcomings in law serve to reinforce social stigmas around SOGIESC minorities, thereby stymying progression toward just legal systems (OHCHR, 2018).

The societal and legal mechanisms of exclusion that work against SOGIESC communities strengthen the argument that they will be *pushed behind*. It is well-accepted in the development

arena that the most marginalized and poverty-stricken members of society are the most vulnerable to external destructive forces, such as pollution or land appropriation. What is under-represented in the literature, however, is the specific ways in which these apply to SOGIESC minorities. For example, while the intersection between climate change and gender inequality of women has been widely studied (UNDP, 2013), there is little research into the increased susceptibility of SOGIESC minorities to harmful climate impacts. This heightened threat is a reality, however. To start, the higher rates of homelessness and poverty among such groups increases their vulnerability to natural disasters. In addition, discrimination in crisis relief activities has also been evident. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, for example, reports were repeatedly made of transgender individuals being refused entry into emergency shelters. Similarly, SOGIESC minorities are generally reported to have more difficulty seeking asylum in response to disaster (Randall, 2020). When development practice plays a contributory role in the destructive climate events that leave SOGIESC minorities less stable, the conditions of Elson's definition of '*pushed behind*' are met. Without any reference to this intersectional relationship within the SDGs, it seems inevitable that these groups will be *pushed* as such. Unfortunately, the response to climate change is only one mechanism by which development can adversely impact those with low social, economic and political power. The *queering of poverty* and the invisibility of SOGIESC minorities in the SDG framework suggests that these groups will be subject to other mechanisms by which the marginalized tend to be *pushed behind*. Further research is required to identify the correlations between SOGIESC minorities, and the various mechanisms outlined by Elson, including land enclosure and appropriation, pollution, trade liberalization and hazardous working conditions (Elson,

2018). Without this disaggregated data, it is disturbing to think of the invisibility with which so many of these minorities might be *pushed behind* by the end of the 2030 Agenda.

Conclusion

In 2015, the establishment of the UN's SDGs ushered in a more hopeful development era for SOGIESC minorities across the world. Progressing from uncertainties and vagueness surrounding the UDHR and the MDGs, the new 2030 Agenda was celebrated by many for the undebatable universality of the language of 'all'. However, although the language of the framework allows various entry points for more inclusive development, whether SOGIESC minorities get *left behind* or *pushed behind* will depend on how development actors decide to interpret it (Mills, 2015; Ongsupankul, 2019; Izugbara *et al.*, 2021; Logie, 2021;). Due to the lack of explicit reference to the needs and rights of SOGIESC minorities, however, we have already seen ways in which members of these communities have been *left behind* by the SDGs. Even more concerning is that because these minorities are often some of the most lacking members of society in terms of social, economic and political power, there is reason to believe that this will go a step further and they will, in fact, be *pushed behind* in their struggle toward equity. Increased SOGIESC-disaggregated data and research into the destructive impacts of development on these minorities is required if more inclusive development policies and practices are to be implemented. It is time now to start pulling.

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A Selection of photos from throughout the year

Howth Head Walk



Black and White Night



Out of This World Mystery Tour, Drogheda



Out of This World Mystery Tour, Drogheda



Spaceship Earth Ball 2022











