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Non-state space: the strategic ejection of dangerous and high maintenance urban space

Rowland Atkinson^a , Simon Parker^b  and Emma Regina Morales^c 

ABSTRACT

Non-state space: the strategic ejection of dangerous and high maintenance urban space. *Territory, Politics, Governance*. Some commentators have characterized so-called ‘no-go’ areas as sites in which the exercise of authority is prevented. Here we suggest that many such spaces are produced by state, policing and citizen repertoires that aim to minimize the costs and risks of engaging, supporting and servicing such spaces and their populations. In this article, we locate strategies of public spending, policing and political action that offer a governing logic in which neighbourhoods are essentially subtracted from the constitution of the city. During such designations, the assurances of citizenship, vitality of civic institutions and presence of policing may be partially or wholly suspended. We present a framework for the identification of such strategies in which these forms of social, political and spatial exiting are described as being *autotomic* in nature – spaces that are ejected in order to avoid losses or further damage to the body politic of the city in ways akin to the response of certain animals that protect themselves from predation by shedding a limb or body part. This term adds force and depth to assessments of the ways both temporary and more sustained exits by policing, management and state servicing are designed in order to avoid responsibility over or engagement with spaces deemed a threat in order to maintain the integrity of the remaining, included city.

KEYWORDS

Urban governance, territory, social control, policing, neighbourhoods, urban policy, urban security, anti-social behaviour


摘要

非国家空间：危险与高维护成本的城市空间的策略性驱逐。 *Territory, Politics, Governance*。部分评论员将“不得前往”的地区刻画为主权施作受到阻碍的场域。我们于此主张，诸多这些空间是由国家、警备与公民的集体施作所生产，旨在最小化涉入、支持和服务这些地方及人口的成本与风险。我们于本文中，定位公共支出、警备和政治行动的策略，这些策略提供了实质上将邻里从城市组成中去除的治理逻辑。透过此般指定，公民权的确保，公民机构的活力，以及警备的存在，或可部分或完全中止。我们呈现指认此般策略的架构，其中这些社会、政治与空间存在的形式，被描绘成本质上是“自主不受控制”的——为了避免对城市的身體政治带来损失或进一步伤害，以近似若干动物脱除肢翼或身体的一部分以保护自身


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免于猎杀的反应进行驱逐的空间。此一概念，增加了力量与深度来评估当代及更为持续的警备、管理与国家服务退出，以避免负责或涉入被视为威胁的地区来维系剩馀包含的城市之完整性的方式。

关键词

城市治理, 领土, 社会控制, 警备, 邻里, 城市政策, 城市安全, 反社会行为

RÉSUMÉ

L'espace non-étatique: l'expulsion stratégique du dangereux espace urbain dont le niveau de besoins est très élevé. *Territory, Politics, Governance*. Certains observateurs ont caractérisé des 'zones d'accès interdit' comme des sites où l'exercice du pouvoir est entravé. Cet article laisse supposer que beaucoup de ces espaces sont délimités par des répertoires de l'État, du maintien de l'ordre et des citoyens qui cherchent à minimiser les coûts et les risques d'engager et de soutenir de tels espaces et leurs habitants et de fournir des services. Cet article cherche des stratégies relatives aux dépenses publiques, au maintien de l'ordre et à l'action politique qui présentent une logique constitutive à partir duquel les voisinages sont en principe soustraits de l'établissement de la ville. Pendant de telles désignations, l'assurance de la citoyenneté, de la vitalité des institutions civiques et de la présence du maintien de l'ordre peuvent être partiellement ou totalement suspendues. On présente un cadre pour identifier de telles stratégies où on décrit les façons sociale, politique et spatiale de sortir comme *autotomique* – des espaces qui sont expulsés pour éviter des pertes ou des dégâts supplémentaires au tissu politique de la ville d'une manière qui ressemble à la réponse de certains animaux qui se défendent des prédateurs en perdant un membre ou une partie du corps. Cette expression renforce et approfondit les évaluations des moyens par lesquels on dessine les sorties à la fois temporaires et plus soutenues à partir du maintien de l'ordre, de la gestion et des services de l'État pour éviter la responsabilité ou l'engagement envers les espaces, considérés comme une menace afin d'assurer l'intégrité de la ville incluse restante.

MOTS-CLÉS

gouvernance urbaine, territoire, contrôle social, maintien de l'ordre, voisinages, politique urbaine, sécurité urbaine, comportement antisocial

RESUMEN

Espacio no estatal: La expulsión estratégica de espacio urbano peligroso y con alto mantenimiento. *Territory, Politics, Governance*. Algunos comentaristas han definido las denominadas áreas restringidas como lugares en los que se previene el ejercicio de autoridad. Aquí sugerimos que muchos de estos espacios son producidos por repertorios estatales, policiales y ciudadanos que tienen como objetivo minimizar los costes y riesgos de participar en tales espacios y sus poblaciones, y apoyar y prestarles servicios. En este artículo ubicamos las estrategias del gasto público y las acciones policiales y políticas que ofrecen una lógica gubernamental en la que prácticamente se extraen los vecindarios de la constitución urbana. Durante estas designaciones pueden suspenderse parcial o totalmente la garantía de ciudadanía, la vitalidad de las instituciones cívicas y la presencia de policía. Presentamos una estructura para identificar tales estrategias en la que estas formas de salidas sociales, políticas y espaciales se describen como *autotómicas* en su naturaleza: espacios que son expulsados para evitar pérdidas o más daños a la política principal de la ciudad, similar a la respuesta de ciertos animales que se protegen contra la depredación al desprenderse de un miembro o parte corporal. Este término añade fuerza y profundidad a las valoraciones de las maneras en las que se diseñan las salidas temporales y más sostenidas por parte de los servicios policiales, estatales y de gestión con el objetivo de evitar responsabilidades o la participación en estos espacios, que se consideran una amenaza para mantener la integridad del resto de la ciudad incluida.

PALABRAS CLAVES

gobernanza urbana, territorio, control social, policía, vecindarios, política urbana, seguridad urbana, comportamiento antisocial

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INTRODUCTION

Urban studies has long been preoccupied with changes in the form and management of public space, particularly the way its increasing regulation appears to offer insight into social fears focused on disorder (Gurr, 1968; Pearson, 1987; Sampson & Raudenbush, 1999) and the increasing alignment of public space with market imperatives (Gottdiener, 2000). A number of themes can be identified in this body of work. First, the emergence of forms of privatization of the management and ownership of public spaces (Davis, 1992), which suggest that its rules of entry have changed the character of what were ordinarily deemed spaces open to all. Second, an emphasis on consumption is understood to have diminished the role of public spaces as sites of political contestation, participation and social spectacle that in some cases have also been more aggressively policed (Low & Smith, 2006; Minton, 2010). Third, urban and community safety agendas have become increasingly enmeshed with policy objectives focused on reducing disorder and promoting the economic and physical renewal of neighbourhoods and public spaces (Atkinson & Helms, 2007). Here regimes of social control and policing are connected to economic well-being and a need to combat the visibility of crimes that might threaten disinvestment or foster social anxiety.

Taken as a whole, these various frameworks have tended to emphasize themes of social control and access as contested aspects of public space and urban governance strategies, alongside ongoing concerns about participation and exclusion. Building on this context, we reverse these perspectives to ask whether many areas of profound social exclusion and damaged cohesion receive harsher and more exclusionary strategies by stretched or antagonistic political and policy machineries. Going further, might not the ceding of controls, reductions to core social services and permitted disorder be adopted as *de facto* methods for the management of what are deemed to be ungovernable populations and declining spaces?

In this article, we suggest that withdrawal, avoidance, defunding and ‘managed decline’ have become latent policies in some jurisdictions; our aim here is to offer a framework for analysing these processes. Our main argument is that strategies of disinvestment and rejection can be identified in many aspects of urban management, policing, citizen disengagement and the corporate de-servicing of sensitive and excluded neighbourhoods. These themes have generated increasing scholarly interest in recent years, such as the examination by Mukhija and Mason (2013) of the non/de-annexation of poorer areas adjacent to existing incorporated cities in the US and work on the unserved areas of Manila (Shatkin, 2004). These political makings and un-makings of delineations concerning that which is in or outside geographical control have long been a feature of urban governance and citizen attitudes to particular spaces but have accelerated following the market orientations of much of urban governance from the 1970s onwards (Castells, 1997). Through such operations, socially stressed spaces are informally ejected from the responsibilities of the body of civic authority – a form of unacknowledged de-annexation that forms the focus of this article.

The location of autotomic strategies, a metaphor that underlies the key contribution of this paper, appears to offer a promising framework for understanding how unruly space and abject or stigmatized urban environments are controlled. Such strategies may take the form of an elective unburdening of state sovereignty and capital withdrawal that operates over varying scales and timeframes. As we discuss here, the denial of particular spaces as sites of engagement, participation or control appears to be embraced at times when such tactics may better maintain the order and coherence of the remaining city. Thus, citizenship may be accorded a kind of conditional status, fracturing more coherent understandings of the local/city state where designations of no-go space (such as restrictions on policing, insurance provisions or services such as taxis and postal or food deliveries) or reduced maintenance (the defunding public housing or public services) are embraced on the understanding that the residents or users of that space have foregone rights to inclusion and

personal safety; this paradoxical thesis of control through abandonment forms the basis of the analysis we now present.

HISTORICAL STRATEGIES OF INCORPORATION AND EJECTION

Views of the state as a hermetically sealed ‘power container’ have remained dominant in social and political theory for many years (Mann, 1986; Tilly, 1990). Models of state power tend to privilege the territorial deployment of force, often disregarding more subtle methods of discipline and control that go beyond the raw play of force and violence (Foucault, 2008). However, instead of arguing that an analysis of force by government is simply misplaced in the urban context, we suggest that there is value in appreciating methods of military-style containment found in expeditionary, colonial and counter-insurgency conflicts (Graham, 2010) now used in many urban contexts globally.

Military commanders with limited forces at their disposal, large territories to control, and an indeterminate and resourceful enemy closely monitor the costs and benefits of entering and occupying particularly dangerous spaces. For example, the military ‘cordon sanitaire’, intended by Woodrow Wilson to create a democratic ‘no-man’s land’ between East and West Europe, was later elaborated by the US during the Cold War to achieve the wider aim of containing potentially aggressive forces (Stråth, 2002). The origins of the phrase can be traced to the French medical term for a quarantine zone aimed at isolating the sick or contagious public from its healthy counterparts. One of the most famous examples of such practices is the English village of Eyam in Derbyshire, which agreed to seal itself off from the surrounding population during the Great Plague of 1666 until the pestilence had passed. Only one quarter of the residents survived, but the plague did not spread to the surrounding villages, confirming the utility of population quarantine in epidemic disease control (Byrne, 2008, p. 136).

If we examine institutions of containment and control associated with refugee camps and reservations, we find that both derive from the military state’s strategic desire to confine not only enemy combatants, but more importantly, entire populations from which insurgent threats are believed to stem. Thus, the forcible imprisonments of Afrikaner and native African men, women and children within the first large-scale ‘concentration camps’ by the British army during the Boer War¹ were forerunners of the ‘protected villages’ strategy adopted first by the British military in Malaya (the Briggs plan) (Mockaitis, 1990) and subsequently, by the US military in Vietnam (the Agroville or Strategic Hamlet programme), where entire communities were held prisoner by government forces in order to prevent the infiltration and recruitment of villages and to deny the enemy shelter.

The use of reserves, reservations and other compulsory settlements as techniques of ethnic concentration and cleansing dates back to the colonial occupation of aboriginal lands in present day North and South America, Southern Africa, South Asia and Oceania. In South Africa, where the institution of Bantustans was intended to legitimate an Apartheid system through the institution of ‘native self-government’, these reservations evolved into pseudo-sovereign areas around which the systematic oppression of the majority Black African population could be more effectively organized (Evans, 2012). Similarly, in the European context, the emergence of the Ghetto in 16th-century Venice established an early form of biopolitical control (Wacquant, 2008). The revival of the ghetto by the Nazi state as a compulsory geography of abjection seems at odds with the appropriation of the term in the American context as a kind of elective ethnic community. However, the transformation of the American Ghetto as a space of escape and relative freedom for southern blacks into the hyperghetto of declining economic opportunity, prejudice and social divestment established an increasing de facto spatial apartheid (Massey & Denton, 1998) that is of course also relevant to our analysis here. In the face of middle-class and white flight, official

intervention in these spaces was muted at best, and they more often saw significant flight of services by both governments and populations.

Under both repressive and more liberal state apparatuses, it is possible to identify strategies of containment and displays of symbolic force against potentially resistant bodies, whether through the criminal justice system, mental health jurisdictions (Foucault, 2012) or morally inflected programmes targeting drug users (McCann, 2008). Rancière discussed this ‘police’ function of the state in order to achieve a ‘society [that] is a totality comprised of groups performing specific functions and occupying determined spaces’ (2000, p. 123). He argues that those who seek to move from these positions are deemed to present a challenge to social order and the hegemony of the state. For the field of bourgeois or elite politics, the claims of populations labelled as insurgent or threatening can subsequently be combatted or managed by their apparent unwillingness to be assimilated into conventional society.

Notions of the ‘policeable’ city thus contrast with more dangerous territories that must be partitioned and controlled. The state’s interpretation of dissent is often built around the sense of a symbolic challenge to its authority that cannot be countenanced due to its necessary claim to be able to claim sovereign control over all spaces within its jurisdiction. This interpretation can generate one of two outcomes. First, the functions of policy and policing can be amplified to enforce the subjection of spaces and their resident bodies, or second, as we argue here, a similarly powerful response lies in devising autotomic strategies in which spaces are avoided or abandoned to reinforce control over a more circumscribed area while demonizing and portraying calls for support by the population of areas ejected as illegitimate.

To illustrate this first type of autotomic response in more detail, we use examples of ‘no-go neighbourhoods’ in Northern Ireland around the time of the ‘Bloody Sunday’ events in the early 1970s, and in the second, the more recent history of ‘dangerous’ neighbourhoods in the historic centre of Mexico City. In the first case, we examine how military evolved practices of containment and armed intervention were used against so-called hostile civilian communities in the wake of the failure of ordinary police deployments. The choice of Northern Ireland is intended to be illustrative rather than a limited case. Had space permitted, we might have included equally relevant examples of militarized ‘retreat and surge’ style tactics that have been adopted by the police and national guard in prolonged periods of urban unrest in jurisdictions such as the US from the Watts riots in California of 1965 to the more recent events of Ferguson, Missouri and the wider #blacklivesmatter protests across urban America. Northern Ireland during the era of the Troubles thus serves here a heuristic device or prototype of the normalization of exceptional state violence and what writers such as Graham (2009) and Weizman (2007) have termed the emergence of ‘killing space’ or ‘kill space’ where no necessary distinction is to be made between enemy combatants and the surrounding civilian population.

Our choice of Mexico City aims at highlighting another aspect of autotomy that relates to the strategic segregation of the policed/policeable city from the unpoliced/unpoliceable city according to Rancière’s formulation. As we shall see in the case of *La Merced* district, here ejection takes the form of strategic divestment and abandonment through the inadequate provision of public services and infrastructure and weak/selective law enforcement. At the same time, this marginal space close to the formal political and commercial centre of Mexico City remains potentially incorporable through state-led gentrification and exceptional state interventions against the informal land holding economy that sustains this complex semi-licit economy. These liminal spaces, many of which exist in the rapidly growing metropolises of the Global South, thus have a vitality and dynamism that is simultaneously the product of an underground economy and a transient population, which both challenges the formal economy and political power while offering the potential for profitable incorporation and absorption.

Our case studies are thereby intended to offer insights into why and how no-go spaces are demarcated, and critically, how strategies of ejection may give rise to powerful methods of

governance, despite their paradoxical implementation by apparently sovereign powers. In order to situate the practice of autotomy within a broader understanding of the strategic control of *sui generis* 'state space', we begin with a brief discussion of public space before moving to our two case examples.

INCLUDED, EXCLUDED AND REJECTED SPACES

Defining public space is problematic, as it is generally accepted to be space not necessarily publicly owned, but which is publicly accessible. Such notions are inherent in the policies and practice statements in countries like the UK, where public space management is now intimately connected with approaches to liveability, economic development, and particularly to crime control (Atkinson & Helms, 2007). For Low and Smith (2006), public space is a historically complex and contested phenomenon 'bound up with the contrast between public and private space' (p. 4). They then turn to debates about civil society, state, market and the difficulties associated with complex forms of public and private micro management and ownership implemented in many public spaces. Like other commentators, they argue that fundamental collective rights to protest and dissent are unthinkable without public space. However, the legal basis of many public spaces has changed via leasing to private developers in numerous cities, including Melbourne, Sydney, Los Angeles, New York, London, Birmingham and Sheffield (Minton, 2010). In many cities, what was once public has been ceded to private control by resident and developer/management bodies. Even where many streets and squares remain in public ownership, innovations like Business Improvement Districts in the US and UK or the use of Street Wardens have blurred the traditional boundaries of management. Security is also provided privately in many public areas, so that safety has become less of a public right (Zedner, 2003), and in some cases access to security is becoming a kind of club good, brokered by the ability to afford entry to bubbles of safety in predictable and secured spaces (Hope, 2000). Despite public space appearing to be an open and shared asset, our social backgrounds offer particular vantage points from which avoidance behaviours (of particular neighbourhoods) and security measures are implemented (San-Juan, Vozmediano, & Vergara, 2012).

Assimilationist techniques appear more likely to be attempted and to succeed where counter-public space is adjacent to or at least within strategic range of 'policeable society'. Where assimilation and integration may seem impossible to sustain, too costly to implement in terms of redevelopment or policing, or unlikely to yield a planning gain in terms of tax receipts or land-value appreciation, we argue that the resultant containment strategy is more likely to take the form of the ghetto-camp, where a suspension of norms and rules is tolerated alongside violent periodic police interdictions aimed at restoring the authority and dignity of the state. We acknowledge that these themes are long-standing but suggest that debates about the nature of contemporary public space have tended to stress either the punitive control and pacification of space (Allen, 2006; Smith, 1996) or its ongoing role as a site of cosmopolitanism and encounter (Anderson, 2000; Bannister, Fyfe, & Kearns, 2006). Widely shared understandings of public space as ungovernable, dangerous and which prohibit the presence of outsiders may instead drive responses of formal ejection, rather than more expensive methods of control or the deployment of lengthy programmes with the objective of achieving some form of social inclusion (though we acknowledge the ambitious nature of such programmes in certain jurisdictions). Daily policy decisions, particularly at the level of local governments, policing departments or forces and by other citizens may take the form of defunding of capital projects and services, curfews, the withdrawal of policing actions (Keith, 1991; Lea, 2002) or everyday voluntary decisions to avoid such spaces by non-residents.

The resulting patchwork of included and rejected spaces recalls the kinds of spatial injunctions and legal frameworks of Agamben's (1998, pp. 104–105) notion of the ban in the customs and

laws of German antiquity. We can extend Agamben's notion of peaceless (*friedlos*) spaces, whereby state institutions produce new forms of encampment subtracted from the socio-political formation of the city and in which residents are subjected to extra-legal forms of policing or its suspension. Such designations exist in the portrayal of the slums that emerges in cinematic treatments like *Elite Squad* or *Bus 174*, in which residents are deemed compliant with drug dealers and available as collateral damage by paramilitary police units – a practice confirmed in more recent sociological studies of marginal urban spaces in São Paulo (Feltran, 2011). In other words, peaceless, ejected space exists as a hidden element of the broader 'matrix and *nomos* [law] of the political space' (Agamben, 1998, 166).

Camp-like spaces constitute exceptional sites where inhabitants are afforded only the status of 'bare life' in which the normal operation of law, regulation and social support is suspended (Agamben, 1998). Yet such impositions are never complete or enduring. This is because strategies of encampment – from the management of prisons and detention centres to the policing of ghettos, slums and unruly areas – are highly labour and capital intensive and prone to failure and crisis. Similarly, the counter-publics and insurgent spaces identified by local governments, citizens and service providers can never be entirely excluded – by police crackdowns, housing policies and so on. Therefore, we suggest that intense, constant and forceful interventions in 'hard to police' unruly public spaces give rise to an identifiable and opposing logic based on a process of rejection in which state, policy and policing interventions are absented from such spaces. Such autotomic strategies are made manifest in temporary or sustained de-policing, the withdrawal of private services (taxis, insurance services) and the wider avoidance of areas by the respectable citizenry outside such 'no-go' areas. It is to the concrete manifestation of such spaces that we now turn.

MODES OF ENCLOSURE, ANNEXATION AND AUTOTOMY

Autotomic practices and discursive formations tend to build on longer-running narratives surrounding the idea of ungovernable and deviant no-go spaces and populations, which are often 'ruled' by dangerous groups. In the UK, this kind of reaction can be traced back to the early 1970s, when the question of Republican enclaves in Northern Ireland was the source of much anxious discussion in Westminster. References to no-go areas were then picked up again by the press and parliament in the early 1980s in relation to the question of the inner cities, policing and the series of significant 'disturbances' in Bristol and Brixton, London. In these contexts, the very idea of a space where agents of state control could not be sent other than en masse and of ungovernable populations was seen as an untenable threat to the functions and dignity of government and the law (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, & Roberts, 2013). These and other states of emergency that generate declarations of autotomic reactions to dangerous spaces and counter-publics (most recently, the temporary drawback of policing in the immediate aftermath of the 2011 riots, *The Guardian/LSE*, 2011, pp. 18–20) provide a rich space to develop ideas about the nature, limits and priorities of urban studies.

Discursive responses that underlie processes of autotomy can be located in media and political actors' descriptions of decaying public spaces, neighbourhoods and streets being 'taken over' by the deviant, in the extensive street presence of the poor, the disorderly or criminal. At times, the boundaries of these social and economic barriers between the city and its other are literally made concrete, such as the construction of the notorious Cutteslowe Walls in 1930s Oxford, separating an existing council housing estate from a new, exclusive, private development using a two metre high spike-topped wall (Collison, 1963). The enforced abjection of spaces may be further underwritten by the way welfare sees spatially targeted reductions and by the kind of incarcerating spaces appended to these strategies (Wacquant, 2008). In this deeper processing of spaces and populations, a much broader sense of ejection from the polity is achieved by the retrenchment of welfare programmes, concentrated areas of public housing provision and enormously restrictive

conditions for those most in need. In other words, autotomic spaces can also be identified via the spatial operations of the stripped-down welfare state promoted under conditions of neoliberalism. Public housing is an important part of this process since it contains and maintains a population that incites fear, but in spaces that are maintained on increasingly minimal revenue (Macek, 2006). In the following two case studies, we examine these practices in more detail, first in an analysis of ‘no-go areas’ in Northern Ireland around the time of the events of ‘Bloody Sunday’, and second, in an examination of two informal market districts in the historic centre of Mexico City.

Case study 1: ‘Free Derry’ and Bloody Sunday

The Northern Ireland conflict, known colloquially as ‘the Troubles’, has a long and bitter history rooted in the legacy of colonialism, religious divisions and armed violence on the part of state and paramilitary organizations. As the Saville Report of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry into the events of 30 January 1972, in Londonderry/Derry found, the majority nationalist population in Northern Ireland’s second largest city had been on the front line of an increasingly violent conflict between the police and the security forces since the riots of October 1968 and the subsequent launch of the civil rights movement and the creation of the Derry Citizens’ Defence Association in 1969. However, police–community relations within the nationalist community had been identified as a problem even before the civil rights movement came into being. As one author writes:

The Catholic community had an ambivalent attitude towards policing. [...] Three months before the first Derry civil rights march, the Foyle Hill II tenants’ association was campaigning for regular police patrols of the estate. Six days after the march, over a hundred people gathered outside the Guildhall to protest against police brutality. (Prince, 2007, pp. 163–164)

The maiden speech of the civil rights activist Bernadette Devlin, elected at the age of 21 as an Independent Unity candidate for Mid-Ulster, during a by-election in April 1969 put into stark relief the challenge facing the Stormont government and the British government that would eventually be forced to replace it:

Short of producing miracles such as factories overnight in Derry and homes overnight in practically every area of Northern Ireland, what can we do? If British troops are sent in I should not like to be either the mother or sister of an unfortunate soldier stationed there. (cited in Coogan, 1995, p. 74)

By August, Devlin was leading ‘the Bogside’s’ resistance in the main war-zone area of Rossville Street’ from whose high-rise flats young Catholics pelted the police with petrol bombs while the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) responded with CS gas. For the next 48 hours, the rioting continued with such intensity that Prime Minister Harold Wilson and his Home Secretary James Callaghan agreed to allow the deployment of troops across the province where in cities such as Belfast, the situation was closer to a violent uprising (Coogan, 1995, pp. 76–77)

By January 1972, the situation in Derry/Londonderry had become even more serious. By this stage, the Nationalist community had largely turned against the British military, originally deployed to protect local Catholics from Loyalist attacks; many believed the Army as well as the RUC were agents of an oppressive foreign government they refused to recognize. Parts of the city to the west of the Foyle lay damaged by street battles between the security forces and groups of rioting youths, some of whom were volunteers of the IRA or its junior wing, the Fianna (known to soldiers and some others as the ‘Derry Young Hooligans’). A large part of the nationalist area of the city (especially the Bogside, dominated by the IRA) became a ‘no go’ area where ordinary policing could not be conducted and where even the Army ventured only by deploying large numbers of soldiers (Saville, 2010, p. 49). As Hennessey writes, ‘[t]he process that led to the

deployment of 1 PARA in Derry on 30 January 1972 began with the State's frustration that, by late 1971, Londonderry had virtually seceded from its authority' (2007, p. 231).

In the year preceding Bloody Sunday, Reverend Ian Paisley, the leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, wrote an editorial in the *Daily Telegraph* on 23 March that claimed:

The so-called 'no go' areas can be entered by the police with heavy military escorts and the Army can drive through them at high speed. For the rest, however, they are free from interference by the representatives of public power. Every writ that is successfully served, every distraint that is successfully carried out and every arrest that is made is nowadays carefully totted up to be paraded as proof that police authority has been restored. But the fact remains that crime flourishes within these fortresses.²

Lord Balniel for the government rejected Ian Paisley's claim that so-called 'no go' areas existed in Northern Ireland (Figure 1):

I can only repeat the assurance which has been given repeatedly that there are absolutely no areas where the security forces do not go at their will, on foot or in vehicles, for as long as they wish, by day or by night. Of course, as the hon. Member for Antrim, North and my hon. Friend the Member for Surbiton (Mr. Fisher) mentioned, there are in certain areas, particularly in parts of Belfast, extreme difficulties in keeping order. That is because there is only limited co-operation from the local residents. If we follow the right policies and win the co-operation of the local residents, and if gradually they come to look on the police as being their natural protectors, difficulties of restoring order in these areas will be overcome.³

In reply to the Ulster Unionist MP, James Kilfedder's charge that 'there are areas in Northern Ireland today which are no-go areas', Prime Minister Edward Heath was rather more circumspect:

The question of the no-go areas is rather wider than the matters Lord Widgery was dealing with. He sets out very clearly what his terms of reference were, how he interpreted them and how he explained them to all



Figure 1. Scenes around Free Derry Corner before it became a freestanding monument, late summer 1971.

Source: CAIN, University of Ulster.

those who were concerned in Londonderry and all those who gave evidence. It is desirable that in every part of the United Kingdom it should be possible for the police to patrol peaceably and maintain law and order and the freedom of our citizens.⁴

The Widgery Report was as widely welcomed by Conservative and Unionists politicians as it was condemned by Nationalist politicians and the bereaved families of the 13 victims of Bloody Sunday for finding that the army had behaved proportionately, lawfully and according to its own rules of engagement in the face of hostile enemy fire. Edward Heath's insistence that the territorial sovereignty of the whole of the UK should be reasserted, if necessary, by lethal force in its Irish Republican enclaves sought to establish a narrative of 'normalcy' between the securitization of insurgent space and the 'policed' community where clearly none existed. As a soldier who took part in the events of Bloody Sunday told the Saville Enquiry:

There was concern about the containment line following the lines of the barricades. We believed there would be a reaction out of the IRA because we would be 'invading their turf' when going in for the arrest operation. We therefore had an expectation of IRA activity. There was a large 'no go' area and I can recall seeing maps with the so called containment line marked on them. Beyond those lines the security forces simply did not go. It was known that firefights were common in Londonderry as they were in Belfast. If I remember rightly a policeman had been shot on the Thursday before we went in. (Saville, 2010, p. 458)

The decision to deploy the First Parachute Regiment on the streets of the Bogside against an unarmed, peaceful, civil rights demonstration as an 'arrest squad' was palpably not a policing operation as the Irish Government drily noted:

The actions of 1 Para itself, the degree of force employed (as measured in terms of civilians dead and wounded), the absence of any injury to security force personnel, and the description of what happened as presented by highly credible eye witnesses contrast so starkly with Lord Widgery's assertion that 1 Para was deployed as an arrest force that it now simply lacks credibility. (Republic of Ireland/Department of the Taoiseach, 1997, p. 59)

The existence of 'Free Derry' and the accumulation of months of hostile headlines and parliamentary questions pointing to the alarming rise of no-go spaces in Londonderry/Derry, Belfast and many other parts of the Province called forth an exceptional militarized urban security operation that had previously only been instigated at the time of the first Irish Republican risings in 1916, and subsequently, in a range of colonial counter-insurgency campaigns in South and East Asia, the Middle East and Cyprus.

The existence of officially denied no-go spaces leads inexorably to the erection of walls and barriers designed to keep hostile publics apart, but these so-called 'peace walls' inevitably follow state containment strategies that seek to separate the policed from the unpoliced and the public from the counter-public, memorably captured in the photography of Olley and Brett (2007) as castles along a frontline of defence and enclosure. Various studies have found that such interface communities suffer social and economic disadvantage, including long-term unemployment, low educational achievement and poor health, lower levels of car ownership and social mobility. Securitized interface areas are also characterized by the presence of bricked up or derelict buildings, empty ground or wasteland, graffiti and vandalism – a pattern of environmental and social blight that can be found around other forms of state enclosure from Palestine to the US–Mexico border (Brown, 2010).

It is therefore unsurprising that the most socially deprived and exclusively Catholic/Republican and Protestant/Loyalist neighbourhoods in Belfast's frontier zones where security barriers and walls have been erected (ostensibly to protect the two communities from one another) also

experienced the highest rates of civilian casualties during the Troubles. In fact, the vast majority of fatalities in Belfast during the conflict occurred within segregated communities composed of over 90% Catholics or Protestants, within areas of high deprivation as measured by the Robson index and close to peacelines (Mesev, Shirlow, & Downs, 2009; see also Smyth & Hamilton, 2003, pp. 30–31).

Of course, it is possible to argue that high levels of concentrated deprivation existed prior to the Troubles, but this signifies a longer-running issue of religious discrimination and social disadvantage that first gave rise to the Civil Rights Movement and out of which emerged the paramilitary conflict. However, it would be a mistake to reduce the Northern Ireland conflict to an issue of 'violent sectarianism' in the context of a centuries-long strategy of control and containment where both the state and organized capital have been instrumental. Indeed, despite the Good Friday Agreement and the subsequent ceasefire by Republican and Loyalist paramilitary forces, effective policies to tackle the segregation and abandonment of highly deprived communities failed to win support among political leaders in Westminster and Stormont because highly spatialized inter-communal enmity continues to generate significant political capital for all the principal players (McDonald, 2011; Parker, 2011).

Case study 2: avoiding and excluding dangerous space in the historic centre of Mexico city

Mexico City is a place of contrasts that is facing a rise of crime and violence alongside increasing socio-economic inequality. The chaotic urban development has contributed to the emergence of dangerous neighbourhoods in the city edges that are not very well known by most citizens because they are distant. However, there are other types of no-go areas that remain within areas of economic, tourist and social activities. The historic centre has two of the most notorious 'no-go' areas for outsiders: *Tepito* 'the fierce neighbourhood', and *La Merced*, the largest traditional food market area in the country. *Tepito* has a worldwide reputation for commercializing stolen goods, counterfeit products, drugs, arms or even hit men for hire. Despite its problems, there is a strong sense of community and pride among its residents, who have kept the neighbourhood out of the authorities' control and have resisted state intervention for decades. On the other hand, *La Merced*, an area for traditional food market distribution, has gained a 'no-go' status in recent past decades. The area has been in clear decline since a new food distribution centre was built in 1982; the area was affected during the 1985 earthquake, and a fire in the late 1980s killed dozens of merchants.

La Merced has also become more dangerous due to a combination of changes in social and economic dynamics in the city and the increase of organized crime presence, which contributed to depopulation of the area. Yet we argue that the fundamental factor in these changes has been the effective abandonment of the state's investment in infrastructure, security and maintenance of the public market buildings, the public space, and social and cultural facilities, over a period of years. Since the 1980s, there have been 'patterns of withdrawal, avoidance and defunding' in *La Merced*. However, its location in the middle of the city still attracts over 100,000 visitors daily. The economic dynamism of this area can be contrasted with serious problems such as drug and human trafficking, unsanitary conditions for a large population of prostitutes, and increasing rates of violence, crime and homelessness.

These problems increased in the 2000s after the implementation of an ambitious regeneration strategy promoted by Mexico City's government, in combination with the private sector, which expelled street vendors, homeless and others out of the touristic area of the historic Centre. A significant number of them found space in *La Merced*. According to Davis, in early 2002, a group of 'powerful local businessmen hired former New York mayor Rudolph Giuliani as a consultant' (2013, p. 54). The result of his evaluation of Mexico City's security problems was a strategy of 'zero tolerance' akin to New York's earlier experiments, which meant small crimes would become

a priority. The local government welcomed the report with 146 recommendations. Critics of the proposals saw this strategy as a way to criminalize poverty by removing street vending, prostitution, drug dealers, 'franeleros' (people who watch parked cars), the homeless and many other actors that would affect the image of the city and real estate development interests. One of the main beneficiaries of the strategy was Carlos Slim, the telecommunications millionaire with a significant number of properties in the area. The displacement strategy proved successful in terms of revalorization of the touristic perimeter of the city centre, but increased tensions in other areas like *La Merced*.

The importance of *La Merced* as a commercial site existed since pre-Hispanic times (Castillo-Berthier, 1983). However, the modern marketplace originated as a *Mercado popular* (market for the people) in the ruins of the convent of the Order of Our Lady of Mercy in 1861. Since its origins, the commercial success was accompanied by congestion problems for not having enough space for all merchants. There have been three important interventions: in the late 19th century, the marketplace was relocated in order to receive more merchants; in 1957, as part of an ambitious public market policy, a new modern building opened; and in the 1980s and 1990s, new commercial 'plazas' or shopping malls were built in the area to bring street vendors inside. However, this last effort was not successful; most of these *plazas* are used as storage units, and most of the merchants work in the streets where customers pass by.

The complexity of *La Merced* as a shopping area includes several public and semi-public buildings offering different products from fruits and vegetables to herbal medicine or plastic flowers, surrounded by tower blocks, abandoned buildings, and low-quality housing where illicit activities happen. The process of regeneration of the touristic part of the historic centre has arguably contributed to the increase of street vendors in *La Merced*, creating a barricaded area where most mobility is now done by metro, buses and walking. The impenetrability of the area is partly due to the presence of semi-fixed metal stalls that block access to cars. The blockade increased after a huge fire consumed 1000 stalls inside the *Nave Mayor* in 2013, the main public market building in the area. Merchants had to be relocated in tents placed in the adjacent streets. The fire exacerbated the tensions between different groups and conflicts increased. Although *Tepito* and *La Merced* are some of the most dangerous areas in the City Centre, actions to combat crime have been limited. There have been a few raids in *Tepito* to combat drug trafficking and to confiscate pirate CDs and DVDs, but little that might more effectively challenge such trades. In *La Merced*, since the construction of the *plazas* in the 1990s, there has been a progressive decrease in state presence to deal with insecurity, maintain public markets or combat organized crime.

After the 2013 fire in *Nave Mayor*, *La Merced*, a 'Master Plan to rescue *La Merced*' was announced, and experts in academic, private, social and public sectors were invited to take part. Unfortunately, the plan was never published and the overall intentions to improve the conditions of those who live and work there have not materialized. Those involved in the process of building the master plan share the frustration over how things were conducted. For starters, the state had abandoned the area for such a long time that residents and vendors were strongly predisposed against this type of regeneration project (particularly those who had seen the displacement and gentrification of the first regeneration strategy). Second, local authorities did not recognize the immediate needs of stakeholders after the fire, which only fostered distrust and rumours of displacement and destruction. One of the urban planners involved in the project considers that the rescue plan had a bad start because it was based on ideas defined on the comfort of a desk, rather than listening to the real demands that merchants and residents shared during the visits and consultation meetings, such as bad lighting in streets, insufficient policing, deficient waste management, insufficient sewage capacity, irregular running water provision, insufficient health and safety conditions, and improvised electrical connections. On the contrary, according to this interviewee who attended all seven public consultation sessions, there was a patronizing attitude of bringing experts who told the local community what they needed instead of listening to their needs and concerns.

Another interviewee who was in charge of one of the data gathering teams expressed that most of the people she encountered during fieldwork felt that the local government had abandoned them for such a long time, they had to survive on their own terms. The 'rescue' project in their eyes was an excuse to clean streets from informal vendors but also to expel them from the established marketplaces. The slow response to reconstruct the burned-down area of over two years has confirmed their fears. People in the area have taken control of their own problems. Churches look after the homeless, local cultural initiatives like *La Carpa* and *Keren-tá* are looking after the young-st population, and merchants have united to fight crime in the area, negotiating with delinquents. The withdrawal of the master plan not only shows the incapacity of the local government to connect with the community, but also the power behind the illegal activities that exist, particularly one that no one wants to talk about: human trafficking. It seems like there cannot be a 'rescue' unless the state recognizes that it abandoned (Angotti, Becker, & Müller, 2013) the area some time ago and that this has now created a more sustained threat to the sovereignty of the city government, as the area has learned to survive apart from the wider body politic.

CONCLUSION

Autotomy refers to the ability of some animals to amputate limbs when threatened by predators in order to affect escape under such emergency conditions. In this article, we have sought to develop understandings of public space and city/neighbourhood governance using this metaphor of ejection as a kind of strategic reflex action by threatened governments, citizens and private service providers. Neighbourhoods are ejected in more or less stringent and modulating ways through the actions and designations of policing agencies, national and local governments, citizens and private service providers. The idea of autotomic space thus offers a potentially fruitful means of locating strategic and temporary cessations of control, patterns of under-spending and policing avoidance, as well as the process of suspending assurances of citizenship in order to counter the fiscal costs of maintaining control that are more subtle than the designation of simple no-go areas. One advantage of this perspective is that it assists our understanding of how territorial disengagement can be used as a weapon in the armoury of neoliberal states faced with the growing costs of maintaining order and social control in 'unruly spaces'. Such strategies also appear to legitimate state withdrawal via resulting spatial stigma, while helping privatize and secure the more protected 'policed community'.

We have used the idea of autotomic space to identify the socio-spatial expulsion of neighbourhoods and other locales, conducted as a form of triage governance, in order to maintain the health of the wider urban body politic – ensuring its fiscal vitality and safety by cutting off the costs of maintaining high poverty and unruly districts. This strand of control through policing absences, fiscal foreclosures and citizen avoidances is paradoxical since it stands in contrast to public pronouncements of police/state sovereignty and other assurances of the full and extensive power of the state and its agencies. The resulting combination of a divestment of public assets, reductions in public service provisions, disrespectful street-level bureaucrats, police no-go designations, uninsurable property, low security, little or no public transport and withdrawals of private services (such as pizza and other deliveries, private postal services and so on) has created decaying spaces in which residents feel a sense of shame or indignity and where surplus populations are warehoused in order to minimize the fiscal 'overhead' they represent to the state. These points are in line with recent arguments about the systemic production of forms of citizen expulsion that emerge via the kind of privatization, financial and land appropriation appearing under advanced neoliberalism. As we move further into the greater recognition of modes of paradoxical citizenship/spatial abandonment, the lines of crossover between notions of such expulsion and the idea of autotomic space appear to be fruitful.

Through our two illustrative case studies, we have sought to elaborate the concept of autotomic space, arguing that such spatial and social designations are often temporary or shifting in nature – the no-go areas created by riots may flare up for a day or two, the no-go estate may be de-policed for months or more, an insurgent province or region cordoned off for several years. Critically, because of their delegitimizing force in public discourse and discriminatory power, such patterns are invariably denied by state actors, local authorities, policing agencies and private service providers. Our case examples, the historic no-go areas of Northern Ireland and the strategic abandonment and failed attempt to reclaim informal commercial and illicit space in Mexico City usefully illustrate the shifting patterns of engagement, withdrawal and disbaring that form the basis of powerful autotomic logics in which areas and populations are subject to emergency conditions of control operating to subtract segments of the body politic from the city. The no-go area thus exemplifies not only resistance to authority as is commonly understood, but also the deployment of a kind of power that stems from disregard.

The colonization of public space requires an intense and ongoing collaboration of the state with its policing agents, but this can never be a totalizing or complete solution to disorderly publics or apparently unruly spaces. Social and territorial domination rely on the capacity to respond with no response – with a cessation of policing, with ghettoizing forms of housing provision and a willingness to deny citizens their rights. These strategies seem to be applied more often and with greater vigour in societies and cities characterized by more intense material inequalities and strains on fiscal sustainability. Within a wider social politics that has generated social animosity between groups in increasingly unequal cities, a search for security by the affluent also appears to aid the energies of the polity, directed at attempts to neutralize, defund, withdraw or otherwise eject common spaces in order to pacify and remove possible threats. At the same time, the inhabitants of stigmatized and defamed neighbourhoods often manifest a strong opposition to state–capital re-incorporation strategies designed to erase existing oppositional cultural and political identities and/or the livelihoods of workers and their dependents in the informal and illicit economy.

Through governmentalities of social sorting and highly stigmatizing media narratives of self-induced poverty and moral failure, marginal populations have been woven into narratives of abject spaces with little capacity to challenge such descriptions. Autotomic space thus satisfies a broader process of socio-political and economic triage (lose/abandon space to take better control of what is left) while at the same time serving the ideological purpose of disparaging the victims as agents, deserving their fate. The kinds of spatial containment produced by such strategies engage scripts of capital–state encampment and revanchist controls, as unruly publics and spaces become increasingly withdrawn from membership of the polity and the promise of any tangible right to the city.


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NOTES

1. According to War Office data, by the summer of 1901, some 93,940 whites and 24,457 blacks were interned by British forces in ‘camps of refuge’ in South Africa, where poor nutrition and epidemic disease resulted in annual death rates of over 6%. The Fawcett Report led to improvements in camp conditions and lower death rates, but

stopped short of calling for an immediate end to the practice of internment. [Parliamentary Papers, 1901, XLVII, Cd. 608, Cd. 694], extracts available at <http://www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/ssrg/africa/cd608.html> accessed 23 April 2016.

2. Hansard, House of Commons Debates, vol 815, 6 April 1971, c354–5.
3. Ibid., c371.
4. Hansard, HC Deb, 19 April 1972, vol 835, c528.

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