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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

From "territories" to city centers: The ambivalent management of women's safety and gentrification

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Abstract Recent mobilizations against street harassment, targeting a well-known problem, have recently received a positive response from local governments. Taking Paris as an example, this article will develop an analysis of the various ways in which women's safety in public places has been conceptualized during recent decades and the changes in the way this problem has been defined. It emphasizes the fact that women's safety, which for a long time was both invisible and taken for granted, is now part of a renewed paradigm in public space and is considered to be an element of a city's quality and value where the mobility of "respectable" women becomes a measure of well-being and in turn favors the process of gentrification.

Keywords Women · Public space · Safety · Gender violence · Street harassment · Sexism · Gentrification · Paris

Today, women's insecurity in public spaces is an obvious issue for most social actors, and while it was considered natural and inevitable for a long time, it has recently become the subject of numerous debates and controversies, claims, and even public policies. For example, in November 2015 the French Secretariat for Women's Rights launched a joint campaign with the Paris public transport operator (RATP) to denounce the harassment of women on public transportation and more generally

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sexist harassment and sexual abuse.[1] In addition, in November 2016 the City of Paris initiated a campaign against "street harassment"[2] following the publication of a guide for thinking about gender and public space in Paris.[3] While one cannot but welcome the opening up of discussion on this issue and the fact that the free movement of women in public spaces is now considered an essential standard of equality, it remains important to shed light on the various understandings of the process at play, and especially the different interpretations of violence and safety underlying these actions and public policies (Bacchi 1999) in order to make sense of the various competing framings and what they imply.

Some of the existing research invites us to question the contrasting ways in which the categories, causes, and consequences of violence are defined and consider the actions aiming at improving women's safety in public spaces. For example, in contrast to dominant representations in which they are depicted as victims of acts of violence perpetrated by men from their own community, Muslim women report a higher incidence of cases of violence in affluent urban neighborhoods, where they are frequently insulted and attacked because of their headscarves (Hancock 2013; Listerborn 2015), while street prostitutes denounce violence and harassment from police more than from their clients (Mathieu 2002; Agustin 2007; Lebail 2015). These alternative definitions of violence reflect current controversies and strong divisions among feminists in France about how to define violence against women, and in particular violence against veiled women and female sex workers. Some of these debates are about patriarchal violence (men who force women to cover their heads or prostitution considered as violence inflicted upon women), while others are about racist and institutional violence (attacks on veiled women on the grounds of their religion and police harassment of prostitutes).

It is thus the definition and the limits of what is considered as (in)tolerable violence which is debated. The ways in which safety and violence are defined in public action help to establish a preference for the behavior of some women, while marginalizing the experiences of other female users of the city. This perspective is also confirmed in the work of those who consider that claims and media coverage of street harassment perpetuate racist and class-oriented views. In June 2014, Alix van Buuren on the *Rue 89*[4] Web site, followed by Clemmie Wonder[5] in September 2014 in her blog, both outlined the fact that the dominant representations of street harassment first and foremost target men of a foreign background while remaining silent on the practices of upper-class white men, who are also sexist and who may also be the perpetrators of abuse. In the same vein, they add that aggressions against victims who are socially privileged tend to cause more indignation. According to

[1] http://services.ratp.fr/fr/ratp/v_139610/contre-le-harcelement-des-femmes-dans-les-transports-la-ratp-agit/. Accessed 29 Aug 2017.

[2] http://www.paris.fr/actualites/stop-au-harcelement-de-rue-4276. Accessed 29 Aug 2017.

[3] http://www.paris.fr/actualites/la-ville-de-paris-devoile-le-premier-guide-referentiel-sur-le-genre-l-espace-public-4138.

[4] http://rue89.nouvelobs.com/2014/06/26/harcelement-rue-feminisme-bourgeois-253208. Accessed 14 Sep 2016.

[5] http://clemmiewonder.tumblr.com/post/98134059269/du-caractère-polymorphe-et-multicolore-du-relou-en. Accessed 14 Sep 2016.

both bloggers, these same representations also contribute to the categorization of racialized, underprivileged men as undesirable persons.

Such examples invite us to reflect on the definitions of risks and the feeling of safety, and especially to note the strongly situated aspect of definitions of causes and consequences of violence in public spaces, which too often establish a link between poverty, migration, and insecurity. They also invite us to further consider the consequences of claims about gender and to focus on how these notions are used in public policies. By implementing campaigns against street harassment, do the Parisian city authorities also contribute to a class-oriented and racist view? Do they help to establish certain types of populations as undesirable, thus favoring the perspective of privileged population categories? Do claims about women's safety have similar effects to those resulting from claims by gays against violence in public space in Los Angeles and New York City which, while they enabled the recognition of gays, at the same time contributed to the gentrification of certain neighborhoods, favoring a population of white, middle-class men (Hanhardt 2013)?

Inclusion and exclusion processes based on gender, sexual orientation, race, class, or handicap are a major question in research on public space and urban policies (Mitchell and Staeheli 2006) and research on urban regulations and public policies shows that they are generally in favor of the morality of privileged classes of the population (Valverde 2012), treating some groups of people as "undesirable," for example homeless people, street sellers, and prostitutes (Belina 2003). In addition, research on gentrification processes shows that the eviction of working-class populations from city centers may, in some cases, form an integral part of local "urban renewal" strategies (Smith 2003), or be caused by a well-meaning elite advocating social diversity (Tissot 2011). In Paris, although it came later and in a less obvious manner, gentrification was reinforced by public space planning programs and cultural initiatives supported by the Left, which aim to smarten up downtowns in order to make them more attractive (Clerval and Fleury 2009). Various policies contributed indirectly to the eviction of "undesirable" populations, by encouraging the lifestyles of the privileged categories of population (*ibidem*). In that sense, one may wonder whether and how the work on gender promoted by the Paris city authorities has also contributed to this process of gentrification.

This article revisits (Burawoy 2003) field work undertaken between 2000 and 2004, which was about the inclusion of a gendered perspective in Parisian safety policies and the consideration of violence against women in public spaces (Lieber 2008a). It is based on 34 semi-structured interviews of elected officials, administrators, and delegates of organizations involved in the definition of public policies concerning women in public space, 22 of which were carried out between 2000 and 2004 and the remaining 12 between 2014 and today. This corpus is complemented by observations between 2000 and 2003 in local Paris security contract commissions and the Paris *département*'s sub-commission on violence against women, as well as four new participatory observations. These were carried out between 2015 and 2016 during meetings held at Paris City Hall, which aimed at designing gender-aware policies for public space. Documents and session minutes produced by Paris's city administration and relevant organizations, speeches of elected officials, and arguments on the Internet and in newspapers are also used to

understand which rationales have remained and which have undergone changes between my initial and current field work.

The first part of this article makes a distinction between three time frames that characterize public action in terms of programs to tackle violence against women in public space in Paris. These represent three different definitions of violence and safety, with varied impacts depending on social categories. The second part deals with the consequences of these processes and how they redefine and frame the issue (Gusfield 1981; Bacchi 1999), in order to highlight the way the issue of women's safety, as it is now defined, is included in a renewed paradigm of public space that conveys a specific view of femininity, in which only the free movement of "respectable" women (Skeggs 1997) becomes an element for measuring well-being and in return encourages the gentrification process (Clerval and Fleury 2009; Smith 2003; Van der Berg 2012; Kern 2013).

Three concepts of women's safety in public space

Safety and common interest: on the invisibility of gender violence

The question of women's safety in public spaces was long considered to be an individual problem that was not of common interest and did not fall within the scope of public policy or urban planning. The dangerousness of public spaces for women was considered natural and taken for granted, and security policies showed very little interest in this question, focusing first and foremost on public disturbance and the repression of persons deemed undesirable, with a particular focus on male juvenile crime (Body-Gendrot and Duprez 2001; Lieber 2008a).

The association between public spaces, femininity, and danger has long been (and still often is) based on a dominant representation of the greater vulnerability of women—against which it is not possible to do anything, it being considered as a part of the very nature of women (Stanko 1990; Pain 1997). In this context, public policies targeting gender violence focused more on the domestic and private sphere. Indeed, policies on violence against women mainly focus on families and couples, because of the extent and severity of the problem of intimate violence (Dobash and Dobash 1998; Brown and Maillochon 2002; Jaspard et al. 2003; Hamel et al. 2016). Until recently, no consideration was given to the paradox according to which the association of the private sphere with the idea of safety was challenged by the prevalence of violence against women within their own home and in intimate relationships. On the contrary, this paradox made it possible in return not to consider the danger faced by women in public spaces, even if the sense of insecurity as a central issue in security policies (Roché 2002).

This long-standing naturalization of gender violence in public spaces was first called into question with the election of Bertrand Delanoë as Mayor of Paris in 2001 in the midst of the debate on gender parity. After sending a strong message by the appointment of both an equal number of men and women in his executive team and a woman, Anne Hidalgo, as First Deputy Mayor of Paris in charge of gender equality, the new Mayor of Paris consistently displayed the desire to pursue a gender-aware policy in his city. He imported from Canada a program in which feminists, the Action

Committee for Women and Urban Security (CAFSU[6]), designed a toolkit[7] with concrete policy suggestions and proposals on the urban environment in order to reflect on women's safety in cities (Lieber 2008b; Biarrotte 2012).

Following this experience, he encouraged his district mayors to include commissions on women's safety[8] in the "*contrats locaux de sécurité*" (local security contracts called in Paris "*contrats de sécurité d'arrondissement*" (CSA), or district security contracts), which were implemented at the time in France to encourage concerted local security policies (IHESI 1998).

The First Deputy Mayor's Chief of Staff then advocated a new vision of women's safety, in which the problem of women's mobility became a political issue, including the discrimination that they faced in public spaces. This entirely new perspective was not very fruitful and was resisted in some districts, which ignored the issue or who privileged the idea of "vulnerable" women asking for protection (Lieber 2008b). In most cases, women's social experiences of safety continued not to be considered as a priority domain of public action in the central districts, thus contributing to their naturalization, at least until 2010, when violence against women was systematically included in the CSA, at the instigation of the City of Paris Observatory of Gender Equality.

Territorialization of violence and racialization of sexism

In the early 2000s, when the issue of "women's safety" was not considered to be a legitimate public issue in city centers, violence against women in public spaces nonetheless became an object of attention for the media and public authorities in other geographical territories. In the global post-September 11 context, which marked a turning point in the debate over the purported clash of civilization (Huntington 1996; Melandri 2003), and as the *Fédération nationale des Maisons des potes* (national federation of anti-racist centers) continued its fight against racism, denouncing the "ghettoization" of underprivileged suburbs, the voice of women from the "*quartiers*" (suburban neighborhoods) found a large echo with the "*Ni putes, ni soumises!*" ("Neither Whores, nor Submissive!") petition. They highlighted the decline in the application of principles of equality in suburban areas that had been left behind, and the difficulties women had in moving around in these places. Starting in 2001, these women mobilized and organized "Local general assemblies of women from the *quartiers*," followed by the "General assembly of women from the *quartiers*" at the Sorbonne University in January 2002 (Orain 2003), and a White Paper (Fédération Nationale des Maisons des Potes 2002).

While the name of the movement referred both to effective inequalities and the violence suffered by women, as well as to the supposed passivity women from ethnic–racial minorities are associated with, their claims were to have an unexpected impact in the specific context of the 2000. In contrast to their original

[6] French acronym for *"Comité d'action pour la sécurité urbaine"*.

[7] http://bv.cdeacf.ca/bvdoc.php?no=2005_04_0526&col=EA&format=htm&ver=old. Accessed 13 June 2017.

[8] "Securité au féminin".

intent, they contributed to the legitimation of the association made between women's safety in public spaces and the peripheral, suburban spaces of the *quartiers.* The testimonies collected in the *Livre blanc des femmes des quartiers*[9] and the account of specific acts of violence and hideous crimes were featured on several occasions in 2002 and 2003 in the national press, including *Le Monde,* and the highest levels of government supported the approach. Thus, on March 8, 2003, the Women's March Against Ghettos and for Equality (*Marche des femmes contre les ghettos et pour l'égalité*), which started in Vitry in February 2003 following the violent death of a young woman named Sohane Benziane, arrived at the National Assembly. On July 14, Bastille Day, the front columns of the National Assembly building were used to display 14 portraits of women from immigrant backgrounds depicted as *Marianne*, the national symbol of the French Republic. These symbolic elements, which marked the advent of a new public issue—the violence suffered by racialized women in public space (Thiéblemont-Dollet 2003)—may certainly be understood as an acknowledgement of the voice of women from immigrant backgrounds, but they also helped to reaffirm the values of the Republic on its territory and population, whatever the origin, and at the same time legitimized a distinction between (supposedly modern) French values and the (supposedly backward) values of the "cultures" of the *quartiers.* In a larger context where urban issues are not thought of anymore in terms of the unequal distribution of resources but in ethnic terms in which migrant populations are a threat to the national body (Tissot 2007), these claims for women's safety tended to reinforce and legitimize the exclusion of racialized groups.

This new "geography of sexism" (Delphy and Tissot 2009), though it was largely denounced by social science researchers for its reception favoring the exclusion of racialized populations (Coutras 1996; Lieber 2003; Guénif-Souilamas and Macé 2004; Mucchielli 2005), or even the "racialization of sexism" (Hamel 2005), encouraged various public policies on women's safety in urban spaces. Urban policies continue, to this day, to localize inequalities between men and women in peripheral and underprivileged places (Hancock 2014a, b). Urban development policies and the *Grand projet de rénovation urbaine* (GPRU) program were used as experimental tools to promote equality between men and women, and safety audits, which were initially used in central neighborhoods of Paris to reaffirm the place of women in public space (Lieber 2008a), became a tool of urban renovation and development policies in 2012. Consequently, such policies reinforced the idea that women's insecurity is linked to territory, and is solely confined to the "*quartiers*," just like violence against them—these territories overlapping with migrant categories, on the lowest rungs of the social ladder, and construed as a threat (Tissot and Poupeau 2005; Tissot 2007). This idea also stands out in the June 2014 report of the High Council on Gender Equality, "Fighting against gender, social and territorial inequalities in the urban development policy neighborhoods and fragile rural territories today," which, by rightly emphasizing inequalities in access to resources and public equipment, also suggested a geographical specificity of gender

[9] "White Paper of the Women from Suburban Neighborhoods" in English.

inequalities and violence. These problems, though, concern all social classes and have no spatial limits (Hancock 2014b; Hancock and Lieber 2017).

Gender and the city: women as an indicator of the quality of space

Beginning in 2012–2014, the issue of the masculine dimension of public spaces was increasingly denounced and taken into account by public authorities in city centers. Influenced by the work of sociologists and geographers (Hancock 2002; Denèfle 2004; Lieber 2008a, b; Raibaud 2015) and the European context which values "fair shared cities" (Sanchez de Madariaga, Roberts 2013), many initiatives on gender and the city challenged the association between femininity, danger, and public space. This theme was appropriated by certain public bodies, which questioned the implicitly masculine norms of the city and tried to integrate gendered experiences, beyond just the "*quartiers*."

In Paris, following long-term awareness-raising work targeting the various services in charge of public spaces, urban planning and development, the department in charge of equality, integration, and inclusion[10] began to work on gender and public space by "addressing the impact of gender on the city."[11] Resulting from a process initiated in the early 2000s to consider gender issues in public policies, the current thinking on gender and public space is presented as an answer to the "demands of Parisian women, who denounce street harassment,"[12] and underlines that this issue, which was until relatively recently overlooked in city centers, became a public issue which seems to garner consensus (Lieber 2016).

These renewed views on gender and women's safety fit with the context of the importance placed on public spaces, which are now considered to be a major aspect of the city's image, showcasing its quality of life, and promoting its power of attraction. Public spaces are thus promoted and conceived of as a place of entertainment, leisure, and consumption which must be made more attractive, like scenery for the wealthiest residents (Mitchell 1997; Fleury and Froment Meurice 2014). These perspectives encourage a preference for participatory citizenship, emphasizing the necessity to "make the city together."[13] The objective is to deconstruct policies that are claimed to be "gender-neutral" and to come up with adaptations, actions, and developments that make it possible to take a new look at the city "together," including not only how it is seen by women, but also by the elderly, children, people with disabilities, and even visible minorities.

In this view of developing an *inclusive* city, the gendered perspective is conceptualized as a way to promote diversity and equality between citizens. Taking into account the experience of women as a baseline is indeed often considered to be a factor that promotes diversity making it possible to deconstruct a mistakenly universalist vision and take a different look at the city. Similarly, women's experience is seen as a catalyst for equality between citizens, since it allows

[10] *Service égalité, intégration, inclusion (SEII).*

[11] Program of the "Genre et espace public" ("gender and public spaces") seminar, October 13, 2015, Pavillon de l'Arsenal, Paris.

[12] Notes taken during October 13, 2015 "Genre et espace public" seminar.

[13] Minutes of the October 13, 2015 "Genre et espace public" seminar, p. 3.

thinking about everyone's right to the city: both women and men. The right to the city is thus thought of in terms of diversity and participation, to encourage "the primacy of uses and services for the users", and in terms of safety, since the presence of women appears as "a marker of the quality of public space."[14]

Comforted by what now appears to be a consensus (or at least a mandatory view) on the need to value the presence of *women* in public spaces in renewed, inclusive cities, the City of Paris—with support from the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor in charge of gender equality, the fight against discrimination, and human rights—designed a guide entitled "Gender and Public Space" in 2016 which offers indicators for "urban planners and stakeholders involved in the development, planning, organization, animation, and regulation of public space."[15] In the same spirit, the city launched a poster campaign against "street harassment," with the aim of "reducing harassers' sense of impunity, and freeing victims of their guilt," by specifying that street harassment is punishable by law and that the fight against this phenomenon will make it possible to "make public space a place of well-being, of 'living together' and freedom for all."[16]

Women's safety as a driver of gentrification?

Is the question of women's safety in the city better addressed now? Have feminist claims denouncing gender violence received appropriate responses from public authorities, and been properly taken into account in public spaces? The renewed debate on women's safety in public spaces would seem to suggest so. On the one hand, this bears witness to the exposure of the issue of violence against women in public spaces. On the other hand, the issue seems not to be considered only when in the "*quartiers*", but to question the city as a whole. The cross-sectional nature of gender violence, which was evidenced in large quantitative studies (Jaspard et al. 2003; Cavalin 2016), now seems to be recognized.

Which definition of violence and safety?

This observation, however, needs to be nuanced. Policies to fight inequalities continue to be territorialized. Thus, safety audits are mostly organized in urban areas which are considered "sensitive" in the capital and its periphery (Hancock 2014a) and political rhetoric carries on construing peripheral spaces as lawless zones for women[17] (Hancock and Lieber 2017). But above all, it is racialized men who continue to be seen as the main troublemakers, the same ones who are

[14] Notes taken during October 13, 2015 "Genre et espace public" seminar.

[15] http://www.paris.fr/actualites/la-ville-de-paris-devoile-le-premier-guide-referentiel-sur-le-genre-l-espace-public-4138. Accessed December 6, 2016.

[16] http://www.paris.fr/actualites/stop-au-harcelement-de-rue-4276. Accessed December 6, 2016.

[17] In an opinion column, the Deputy Mayor in charge of gender equality, the fight against discrimination, and human rights defined women's access to public space as one of the priority domains of action, "in particular in the outskirts of cities, including Paris, which were designed on the basis of male views." December 12, 2014, see (online). http://blogs.mediapart.fr/helene-bidard/blog/121214/osons-repenser-lespace-public-pour-legalite-paris. Accessed 30 Aug 2017.

constantly equated with their culture and religion, and who are considered to be a disorder, or even a pathology in the city (Creswell 1992; Séchet 2016). Prevention campaigns, such as the "*sans relou*[18]" zones, specific areas where annoying men are not allowed, or the "T'es bonne, donne ton 06…"[19] posters, implicitly often refer to the wording of specific categories of the population. In doing so, they suggest that harassment is mostly perpetrated by men from modest backgrounds or racialized men, even though sexist attacks occur in all sorts of public spaces, such as universities for example (Metha and Bondi 1999; Béréni et al. 2003; Hamel 2003) and are also perpetrated by men from privileged categories who would certainly not use this type of vocabulary, but who nevertheless can be harassers.

Contrasting definitions of the problem emerge from behind the apparent consensus on the necessary prevention of violence against women in public spaces. The questioning of the problems in terms of women's rights to the city, where public space is thought to reveal forms of sexism and violence which are present in all spheres of life (Brown and Maillochon 2002), is now challenged by a class-based, racialized representation of the problem that, by indirectly designating a specific population, actually legitimizes the qualification of certain men from working-class backgrounds as undesirables in city centers (Walkowitz 1998). The promotion of public spaces as places favoring "quality of life" creates a specific context that includes forms of categorization of acceptable uses of these renewed space and the targeting of some persons seen as "undesirables" (Froment Meurice 2016).

As observed elsewhere, the concern for women's safety is sometimes used to justify hostile policies and reduce visible poverty (Glasbeek 2006), to promote the construction of closed, private, and secure spaces (Kern 2010), or to intensify the marginalization and displacement of persons considered as undesirable (Van der Berg 2012). One may legitimately question whether women's claims for the right to the city are increasingly heard and recognized today because they also make it easier to denounce the behavior of men from working-class (often racialized) backgrounds, denying them the opportunity of coming and staying in central city districts.

The dissemination of the concept of "street" harassment as a category of public action, which focuses on one precise idea of public space, to the detriment of others, and relates to the socio-cultural practices of specific categories of men, often from working-class backgrounds, would seem to encourage this assumption. This could, however, be easily avoided by speaking of sexism in public spaces, in order to include spaces open to all, and those where we are involved in public or professional relations (such as banks, soccer stadiums), places where sexism and gender violence are common. This would highlight the fact that sexual harassment is not perpetrated only by men of working-class backgrounds, as shown by quantitative studies (Jaspard et al. 2003; Défenseur des droits 2014) and stressed in a certain number of blogs, which denounce the sexist practices of politicians, elected officials, and public figures.[20]

[18] *"relou"* is French verlan (with inverted syllables) slang word for "annoying, unsubtle person".

[19] "You're hot, what's your number?".

Gender and moral boundaries

The concern for women's safety, which legitimizes the rejection of practices of working-class men who are deemed intolerable, also highlights forms of moral distinctions between women (Walkowitz 1998). It is in this framework that the intrinsic limits of the perspective on gender and the city are reached since, paradoxically, in the context of promoting safe and pleasant public spaces for all, the concern for the safety of some women leads to the idea that the practices of other women are unacceptable and that they must be evicted to guarantee the value of the spaces at stake. Indeed, prostitutes and street sellers, respectively, in Paris's Belleville and Goutte d'Or neighborhoods, all women who are forced to work in the survival economy, are not thought of as city users who are able to participate in the process of "making the city together."[21] On the contrary, they are categorized as undesirable, annoying, invasive, unwelcome, and responsible for insecurity, and some consider that their presence reduces the value of public spaces.

Campaigns again street harassment do not target the violence faced for example by street prostitutes, who instead are considered more as a cause of insecurity. According to a local elected official interviewed in 2016, the presence of prostitutes, and the "*related crime brought by this activity*," increases the problem of harassment. "*This creates a strong male presence in the public space, people who are not very elegant, we could say, and who may sometimes whistle, look, and be pushy with women in public space, even without saying a word.*" In some neighborhoods, elected officials have heated debates over the presence of prostitutes on the streets, and many claim that they want to prevent the "*institutionalization of prostitution*"[22] in areas such as the 10th, 19th, and 20th *arrondissements* of Paris, whose value is to be increased, and practices are increasingly policed. In these districts, prostitutes denounce police harassment[23] and demand in vain to be acknowledged as rightful users of their neighborhood (Lebail 2015).

Even if the distinction between "respectable" women and "women of ill-repute" already existed when violence against women in public spaces was considered natural or taken for granted—"respectable" women were the ones who did not go outside the home alone or who stayed home where they were supposedly not exposed to any risk (Madriz 1997)—it appears clearly that taking into account the experience of women and the fight against sexism in public spaces does not in any way challenge the existence of this distinction. On the contrary, the various practices of women, their different experiences as victims, are rendered invisible. What is valued is only the interests of people whose use of the street conforms to the new paradigm of urban space as places that need to be attractive to encourage

[20] See for example: Zs://chaircollaboratrice.com. Accessed 6 Dec 2016.

[21] Paris guide "Genre et espace public", p. 6.

[22] Excerpt from the report of June 15, 2015 meeting of the District Council of the 10th arrondissement.

[23] *Ibidem.* Chinese prostitutes, organized in the *Roses d'Acier* (Iron Roses) association, wrote to the elected officials to ask for more protection from the police, rather than the increased repression they say they are subjected to. This is also included in the report of the June 18, 2015, meeting of the District Council of the 19th arrondissement of Paris.

consumption and leisure, in other terms privileged categories of people. It is even in the name of the prevention of violence against women that a distinction is made between the fight against street harassment and that against the so-called "institutionalization"[24] of prostitution (Mathieu 2016)—as if prostitution existed only because of the visible presence of street sex workers. In this setup, denouncing gender violence leads to favoring the presence of respectable women, while at the same time rejecting prostitutes, considered as undesirable and a sign of the growing insecurity in public space and the related disorders.

The intrinsic limit of the perspective that values the smartening-up of public space is that it can only promote the interests of the most privileged, while rejecting the "undesirable" categories of the population. In this context, the proposed gender-aware perspective, although claiming to represent *all* women, homogenizes and renders invisible the diversity of their experiences in favor of higher categories and thus contributes indirectly to gentrification (Clerval and Fleury 2009). The definition of users thus also covers a relatively narrow definition, which shares the characteristics of false universalism and at the same time limits the gender category to a descriptive, acritical category.

Women, classes, and upgraded public space

The idea here is obviously not to give a stereotypical image of prostitution, nor to deny the violence to which the women who derive income from this activity are subjected, but to emphasize the fact that their experience of violence is not limited to that of their clients or pimps, but also involves institutional mistreatment (Mathieu 2002). In addition, making a sociological analysis of two populations of women that are generally categorized and studied separately—"sex workers" studies versus "women's studies"—all in one calls into question the constitutive moral distinction of gender relations ("the mother and the whore"[25]), as well as the limited scope that such a distinction may imply for public policies that advocate a gender-based perspective.

On the contrary, thinking about *the ambivalent management of women's safety in public spaces* reveals and allows thinking about the distinctions that are made and naturalized, and also the forms of differentiation at play. This sheds light on which types of women are valued and which practices are considered acceptable. In short, this underlines the legitimate social uses of public spaces. According to the ideal of these spaces as being spaces of "well-being" and "living together,"[26] women are authorized to circulate, to consume, and to have leisure or motherhood activities, but they are not allowed to stay, work, or disturb "residents" (for a critique of the usage of the French word "*riverain*" corresponding to this term, see Fassin et al. 2014; Froment Meurice 2016).

[24] Excerpt from the report of the June 15, 2015, meeting of the 10th arrondissement District Council.

[25] Title of the famous Jean Eustache film (1973).

[26] Minutes of the October 13, 2015 day on "Genre et espace public", p. 20, and Paris guide "Genre et espace public", p. 6.

The geography of English-speaking countries has shown how mobilizations and reactions of other users of (the most visible) street prostitution locations have justified the control, repression, and marginalization of these activities, thus favoring gentrification processes in central districts (Hubbard 2004; Séchet 2016). Poncela (2010) stressed, in France, the greater criminalization of behaviors considered undesirable in public space in relation to the development of security rhetoric, which targets some specific practices and restricts people's occupation of the streets (Clerval 2011).

In this regard, and even though this was not the original intention, current measures to encourage the presence of women in public spaces and to fight the forms of violence they may be subjected to also help to reaffirm moral and class-based distinctions (Valverde 2012; Hanhardt 2013). This is all more so in that young men from the suburbs continue to be perceived as a threat to women's safety and are also not considered as users of the city, with expectations that must be met. The claims of feminist groups and the work of elected officials sympathetic to the cause of women are therefore limited by the forms of exclusion that they involve. The Paris example shows how the issue of diversity and gender, because it is not addressed in an intersectional or critical manner, becomes a catalyst of the gentrification process, reinforces certain social and moral boundaries, and maintains exclusion.

Conclusion

Women's safety is now the subject of numerous debates. This represents progress for the cause of women that must be welcomed. However, adopting a gender-aware perspective requires thinking about contexts and the ways of framing a problem in order to understand the forms of repossession and—sometimes pragmatic—framing of feminist mobilization and claims (Bacchi 1999).

While feminist research has denounced the trivialization of violence against women in public spaces (Stanko 1990; Metha and Bondi 1999) as in all spheres of life and while feminists have advocated cities which are actually open to all, this perspective has been reused to favor a framing in geo-spatial terms, which initially focused mainly on the *quartiers* as lawless zones ("look at how they treat their women in the suburbs"), and now partly extends to central districts, supporting a renewed paradigm of public space according to which city centers have to be clean, pleasant, and welcoming, and favor leisure and well-being (of the privileged categories).

In the first case, women's safety is considered as a form of liberty which aims to favor mobility and autonomy, and is a denunciation of the violence that all women face. According to this vision, it is a definition around the diverse experiences of women of all social categories as victims of harassment that prevails. In the latter case, on the contrary, the focus is more on the harassers, who are considered to be working-class men of foreign origin, as well as on the experiences of women from privileged categories whose morality, and capacity to think for themselves, is never questioned (unlike, in too many cases, the figures of veiled women and prostitutes).

Thinking about gender requires us to adopt a critical perspective that needs to be challenged at every step of the implementation of public policy by bearing in mind the diversity of populations involved. In this regard, talking about safety should lead us to think of "desirable social control," combining social and gender diversity, that would not reproduce other forms of exclusion. While campaigns and debates remain necessary on this issue, in order to avoid the perpetuation of a gender-based division of space, it is important to think of gender violence in public spaces not as a phenomenon related to class or race relations, but rather to gender relations, in other words as an issue of power relations based on the gendered dimension of any society. All of these perspectives require thinking not only about the fact that claims for women's safety, however legitimate and necessary they may be, should not contribute to distinctions being made between women along the lines of adequacy with the respectable forms of femininity (Skeggs 1997), but also that the notions of violence and safety cover diverse realities that need to be taken into account.

It goes without saying that thinking about gender and space in public action as social constructs adds to the complexity of public policies, which after all always remain the questionable, temporary result of politico-administrative negotiations which are never fully satisfactory. While thinking about gender in its critical dimension requires thinking about processes and power relations at all stages of the implementation of public policy (Huning 2014), it is now important to consider the new hierarchies produced by the "Gender and public space" paradigm, which nevertheless represents a positive attempt at addressing a long-standing social demand of women from all social categories.

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