Out, Damned Spot: Socio-economic Hygienic Practices of Business Improvement Districts

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Abstract

In this paper, we propose and develop the concept of "socio-economic hygiene" to denote the ways in which neoliberal Western urban space is spatially regulated and re-oriented towards consumption in a way that reinforces social exclusion. By connecting genocide literature with that of urban sociology, we parallel "socio-economic hygiene" with "racial hygiene" in order to highlight similar sociological motivations and spatial tactics within both regimes. This includes the enforcement of a binary within which dominant and subordinate identities are constructed; the naturalization of the "Other" either through biology (in the case of racial hygiene) or place (in the case of socio-economic hygiene); and the micro-political enforcement of ideological genocidal/ neoliberal tenets "on the ground," translating ideology into practical social cues. We conclude by tracking how sociological strategies of "hygiene" have moved from racial and biological features to features of place and socio-economic status, and how BIDs, resembling genocidal states in certain ways, use these strategies to continually justify their own existence.

Keywords: spatial regulation, socio-economic hygiene, urban inequality

Résumé

Dans ce document, nous proposons et développons le concept de "l'économie de l'hygiène" pour démontrer les façons dont l'espace urbain en Occident est réorienté vers la consommation, spatialement réglementée, et renforce l'exclusion sociale. En faisant le lien avec la littérature de génocide et la sociologie urbaine, nous faisons le parallèle entre "l'économie de l'hygiène" et "l'hygiène raciale" afin de souligner les tactiques sociologiques similaires au sein des deux régimes. Ceci comprend l'application d'un binaire au sein duquel des identités, dominante et subordonnée, sont construites; la naturalisation de "l'Autre" soit par la biologie (dans le cas de l'hygiène raciale) ou le lieu (dans le cas de l'économie de l'hygiène); et l'application micro politique de principes idéologiques génocidaires/néolibéraux "sur place," traduisant l'idéologie en signaux sociaux utiles. Nous concluons en démontrant comment les tactiques sociologiques de "l'hygiène" sont passées de caractéristiques raciales et biologiques à des caractéristiques de quartier et de statut socio-économique. Ce faisant, nous pouvons définir une nouvelle espace théorique dans laquelle des tactiques urbaines néo-libérales légitimes d'inégalité seront discutées.

Mots clès: régulation spatiale, l'économie de l'hygiène, l'inégalité urbaine

Introduction

Henry Giroux (2008), developing a new vocabulary with which to describe the new neoliberal order, describes the new corporate regime as "proto-fascist"—its "iron fist" has come down over recent decades, reshaping physical and political space to fit ideals of profitability and wealth accumulation. This "reshaping" of political and physical space revolves primarily around *consumption* (Jayne 2006). For those of us fortunate to have sufficient economic resources to consume both material goods and culture, the neoliberal city becomes an oyster, offering several avenues of building identity. For the others who are not so fortunate, it is a different story. "Pseudo-private" spaces, like Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), cast those who are unable to consume as obstacles to consumption that must be removed in some way (Bookman and Woolford 2013). The exercise of citizenship under the new neoliberal project of *citizen-consumer*, namely, market participation and consumer identities, is bound up with social exclusion against which such participation and identities may be constructed (Newman 2013; Good-Gingrich 2003). Such processes, further, are bound up with urban place (Blomley 2004).

Drawing on the work of well-known scholars of urban life such as Bauman (1989, 1998), Brenner and Theodore (2002), Lippert (2012), and Duneier (2001), we wish to begin a theoretical discussion within which current and future studies of BIDs may be imagined in new ways. Extending Giroux's analogy of neoliberalism as "proto-fascist" rule to the work of these scholars, we work to better understand the micro-political enforcement of wider neoliberal strategies "on the ground," which are not ahistorical but rather borne from the same "rare, yet significant and reliable, test of the hidden possibilities of modern society" as previous social programmes of exclusion and genocide (Bauman 1989, 12). We develop and propose the term *socio-economic hygiene* to capture the ways in which the goals of BIDs—to provide "clean and safe" spaces—are couched in similar sociological mechanisms as genocidal regimes; namely, the motivators of greed and fear, the organization of individuals into a binary of civil consumers and uncivil non-consumers, and the centrality of constructing sub-human individuals to the regime's existence (both genocidal and urban). The idea of a socio-economic *hygiene* specifically centres on this last idea—that in order to render urban space *clean* through the removal of non-consumers, they first must be constructed as *dirty*. Rather than conceiving of BIDs as simply "cleaning up" the economically ravaged cores of cities, BIDs clean up a "mess" they themselves create, much like how genocidal regimes *both* construct and exterminate impure genetics from the population. While programs of genocide and racial hygiene are based on particular configurations of genetics, BIDs, as a roughly defined spatial urban area, draw on the features of *place* to regulate particular configurations of consumptive ability. The concept of socio-economic hygiene serves as a link to contemporary urban studies of BIDs from more familiar conversations around programs of racial hygiene, and understands the former not as *ipso facto* contemporary social phenomena, but contemporary *configurations* of much older sociological mechanisms. In addition, it helps us to understand BIDs not as simple extensions of an omnipotent neoliberalism, but as the inheritors of particular ways of using urban space and place premised on these older, hygienically-motivated mechanisms to perpetually justify their own existence.

To accomplish this, we first discuss the sociological commonalities between programs of racial and socio-economic hygiene with a particular focus on binary categorization and the civilizing process. Second, we clarify the role that "neoliberalism" plays in our conceptualization of urban spatial regulation. Third, we outline the features of place as an institution that BIDs tap into in order to accomplish the millennia-old goals of de-humanization and exclusion from social life in the contemporary city. Last, we examine socio-economic hygiene in practice, drawing on empirical literature.

Importantly, we recognize the need to "temper our grammars" (DeVerteuil 2012, 879). In no way do we claim the practices involved in programs of *socio-economic hygiene* are as horrific as the nature of genocide or the regimes under which genocide is carried out. Geoff DeVerteuil (2012, also see DeVerteuil and Wilton 2009) has illustrated the ways in which the "punitive" is often intertwined with, and predicated on, the "supportive" in urban spaces. Shelters, drop-ins, and other forms of community support often act as spaces of safety and care, on which municipal governments depend. Our goal here is not to argue that contemporary BIDs parallel genocidal regimes, but to point out similar tactics and sociological mechanisms underpinning the two, including how power relations in programs of racial hygiene maintain similarities to those of socio-economic hygiene in constructing "unwanted populations" (DeVerteuil 2012, 881). Genocide studies are therefore useful in helping to uncover some of the mechanisms by which non-consumers are dehumanized, devictimized, marginalized, and blamed for their own exclusion—not to directly compare the level of atrocity between the two social phenomena. As such, we proceed by unpacking some of the social features that are common to both genocidal regimes and BIDs.

Hygiene, the 'Civil', and Consumption

According to Dabag (2005, 52), programs of racial hygiene—and genocide more generally—possess two central mechanisms with respect to identity. The first is that, for victims of racial hygienic mechanisms, the trauma of having one's identity destroyed is cross-generational. The erosion of identity is an elongated process and is difficult to recover either in part or in full by subsequent generations. Second, plans of extermination, and the physical elimination of the subordinated, carve out social and cultural space for a dominant identity in relation to a lesser, subordinate, identity of a persecuted group (ibid). In order for "racial hygiene" to fulfill its function of strengthening the identity of the perpetrating group, there *must* be a system of categorization by which individuals *are* or *are not* part of a victim group. As such, the above are predicated on a binary system in which individuals are sorted as either part of a group slated for elimination, or a dominant group entitled to a world free of the subordinated. Specifically, groups are separated based on some arbitrary criteria to create the dominant self (both individual and collective) as well as an "impure" and subordinate Other; this begets conditions that create a "quest for purity" (Jones 2011, 388). This separation manifests a "fear of impurity," a historically observed feature of the human condition and societies, that has motivated ancient and contemporary genocides alike (ibid, 391). As Jones (2011) suggests, collective greed in addition to fear serves to construct and execute a system of categorization. This applies to both material and nonmaterial resources. Being a member of a dominant group can bring with it power and prestige that can be valued on its own face, in addition to material wealth at the expense of an oppressed group.

Freeman (1995, 222) suggests that "the historical-sociological study of genocide reveals important structural and motivational similarities throughout millennia of social change." One important similarity throughout is that of the *civilizing process*—a process through which the state and its bureaucracies categorize and organize social groups along particular axes of power. These processes are, to various degrees, couched in the above binary dynamics, between a "perpetrator-people" and a "victim-people" (ibid, 217). Through the categorizing mechanisms of state bureaucracy, coupled with monopolistic violence, the latter are constructed as an enemy and *external* to civilization and civil society juxtaposed to the *ipso facto* superiority of those self-defined as "civilized" (Santos 1980; Neocleous 2011). The schematic of what exactly constitutes the latter, and therefore what constitutes *humanity*, is determined and carried out through categorizing mechanisms of the state and those who command them. Equally as important in the constitution of a civil category is an *uncivil* category, or the constitution of a failure woven into the social fabrics of "civilization" and "humanity."

Freeman (1995, 208) also suggests that genocidal regimes come to fruition when the leaders of state bureaucracies are "emancipated from social constraints." We do not carelessly suggest here that BIDs have transcended law, or that the contemporary neo-liberal organization of urban space constitutes genocidal practices. Instead, we argue that linking studies of genocidal regimes and contemporary practices of BIDs as places can result in new ways of understanding the latter. By contextualizing the BID as a contemporary manifestation of older sociological mechanisms (such as those found in genocidal societies), we contribute an understanding of how BIDs constantly create the conditions for, and hence perpetually justify, their own necessity. Hence, BIDs are not simply a solution to an already economically destitute city. Rather, they constitute the very genesis of the blights on the urban fabric they claim to seek out and remove.

Our starting point is that citizens of what Bauman (2007, 6) calls a *society of consumers* (which increasingly characterizes Western nation-states) are interpellated not as individuals with a set of duties, obligations, and entitlements to the state and one another, but as commodities struggling to "promote and sell *themselves*" as attractive to one another and the labour market. This demands perpetual self-fabrication through consumption. More specifically, Bauman (2007) suggests two features of the "society of consumers" that make BIDs particularly ripe for analysis through the hygienic lens. The first is that space is "annexed" and "colonized" by consumer markets through linking consumers together via the singular activity of consumption. In this way it both unites and separates consumers by categorizing them on the basis of their ability to consume, including the brands they are able to purchase, and the extent of their ability to construct the "inner truth of the self" through shopping choices (ibid, 15). In a society of consumers, the latter not only allows one to construct self-identity, but is the exercise through which one's "inner truth" can be fully expressed and actualized.

The second and related feature is that those who lack the ability to consume, and therefore make oneself in accordance with the world, are subjected to a form of "Promethean *shame*" by consumers and themselves. In other words, the constant fear and avoidance of becoming *sub-human* is why "being a member of the society of

consumers is a daunting task, a never-ending and uphill struggle" (ibid, 60). Ranasinghe's (2011) examination of how squeegeeing and panhandling in Toronto illustrates the ways in which that consumption, community, and civility are discursively bound in order to categorize those who engage in these practices as uncivilized. Municipal officials drew on discourses that take for granted consumption as an *ipso facto* marker of civility, rendering squeegee persons and panhandlers as modern-day, *uncivilized* plebeians. Because consumption becomes the stuff of civility within a society of consumers, the uncivilized are constructed as needing to be "cleaned" from the urban social fabric (ibid, 1933). Our central argument is that this ideology underpinning a society of consumers should be connected to those supporting racially hygienic societies, in order to uncover the social patterns of dehumanization and exclusion shared by both.

Indeed, the very notion of *citizen* is increasingly predicated on the ability to consume in multiple realms—healthcare, education, old age care, and so forth—such that we see discussion of the rising *citizen-consumer* (e.g. White 1999; Tonkens 2012; Newman 2013). As Giroux (2008) suggests, a "democracy of goods" has overtaken any sort of critical democracy, making *purchasing power* the prime qualifier in social life. A program of socio-economic hygiene, including this consumptive binary, is underpinned by similar sociological mechanisms as racial hygiene. When applied to BIDs, we see the ways in which they colonize urban space to intensify this binary, construct an enemy—primarily the poor and the homeless—and then subsequently exclude them from particular spaces based on this construction. Much like the genocidal state, then, BIDs perpetually justify the conditions necessary for their own existence through (1) categorizing mechanisms, (2) the construction of the Other through fear and dominance, and (3) the subsequent removal of the subordinated (often through extermination in the case of states, and spatial boundaries in the case of BIDs). We claim BIDs perpetuate themselves through *neoliberal* practices. In the next section, we do some legwork in clarifying what we mean by "neoliberalism" and how it characterizes the activities of BIDs.

BIDs: The Pinnacle of Urban Neoliberalism

"Neoliberalism" is a fundamentally debated and often poorly understood term in the social sciences (Dean 2014). Nonetheless, it is crucial to try and make sense of it, since it guides much of how BIDs operate. While defining what neoliberalism is (or *does*) is a task beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth noting that scholars have used the term in describing certain types of *ideology*, *policy*, and *governmentality* (Larner 2000; also see Giroux 2008, Carroll and Shaw 2001, and Dean 2014 for respective examples of this tripartite usage). Without essentializing the concept, strategy, or tactic of "neoliberalism," it is generally recognized as a renewed interest in emphasis on the individual in these three sociological domains, or the *individualization* of social problems and solutions to those problems (cf. Jenson and Phillips 2001, Olsen 2002, Brodie 2008). Making the definition of neoliberalism even more complicated to pin down is the recognition by scholars that neoliberalism may not be simply be synonymous with "right wing." Instead, the oft-labelled "New Right" contains components of neoliberalism, such as faith in unfettered markets, which are compatible with other elements of ideological camps such as neo-conservatism; for example, the use of state power to achieve morally desirable ends (Brown 2006; also see Wacquant's [2009] discussion of the "centaur state"). The result is a complicated tangle of theory, policy, and governmentality which makes "neoliberalism" as an explanatory concept difficult to navigate.

In order to understand how socio-economic hygiene manifests in urban governance, we begin by bringing whatever is encapsulated within "neoliberalism" to "ground level." This means, like John Myles (2015, 3), we are "not happy…with accounts that begin and end by assigning causal primacy to the spread of neoliberal ideology… [i]deas have to have 'carriers' and 'implementers' to have consequence. Ideas need to be attached to political actors and become embedded in institutions." Other scholars have also expressed this sentiment. Mirowski (2013) and Dean (2014), for example, discuss the *neoliberal thought collective* as an origin point for the neoliberal school of thought—that a renewed interest and advancement of a classical liberal doctrine by scholars such as Hayek was (and continues to be) supported by the financial and intellectual resources of business interests which benefit from such doctrines. Creating a safe intellectual space for such ideas has allowed several germinations, contradictions, and mutations of the idea to be supported. The important take-away from these discussions of neoliberalism in particular is that neoliberal ideology did not suddenly appear and automatically displace other ways of thinking and talking about social and economic policy. Neoliberal ideas had specific origins, specific victories through social actors, and become expressed concretely through specific policies.

Therefore, we also agree with Myles (2015) when he states that neoliberal "ideas" must become embedded within institutions. The idea of an *actually existing neoliberalism*, advanced by Brenner and Theodore (2002), has provided scholars with a framework within which they can understand how the wider "spread" of neoliberal ideology manifests in specific locales, often in contradictory ways. The idea has been used to ground empirical urban studies (e.g. May, Cloke and Johnsen 2005; Ruming 2005; Rice 2009; Hearne 2014) as well as other research areas like environmental studies and public health (Edwards 2015; Carter 2015). These works take for granted that the conceptual chimera of "neoliberalism," whether it is treated as an ideology, policy, or governmentality, has varying concrete outputs depending on how states and other levels of governance come together to render urban "territories and places as forces of production" (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 355).

This may include certain policies and institutional behaviours that do not readily fit within a framework of neoliberal ideology. For example, Damien Cahill (2010, 2013) adopts a lens of actually existing neoliberalism to examine the Howard Coalition government in Australia, arguing that an exclusive focus on neoliberal *ideas* would ignore how social expenditures actually increased under their time in power, despite their general arc of neoliberal policies. The idea of actually existing neoliberalism is particularly useful for our purposes here because it encourages a focus on "legacies of inherited institutional frameworks, policy regimes, regulatory practices, and political struggles" (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 351). While we attempt to sidestep any grand definition of neoliberalism here, we understand it as a renewed emphasis on the centrality of the *individual* to their own well-being, and that this centrality is echoed in particular and potentially contradictory ways through various social actors and institutions. Importantly, neoliberalism as "actually existing" encourages a focus on neoliberalism not as a universal cause but as a variegated effect.

Drawing on this more sophisticated frame of actually existing neoliberalism, we now turn to a detailed discussion of socio-economic hygiene and how it is bound up with BID governance, situating it at the intersection of the two theoretical corollaries in our discussion thus far. The first is understanding socio-economic hygiene as a regulator of how BIDs "inherit" particular *strategies* (de Certeau 1984) to construct and subsequently contour the movement of consumers and non-consumers. While BIDs do deal with these populations in varied ways, many display similarities such as the use of "clean and safe" discourses, a point we examine further below. BIDs, we argue, inherit these strategies from a long line "structural and motivational similarities," manifesting across time as programs of both racial and socio-economic hygiene (Freeman 1995). Rather than categorizing individuals and including/excluding them on the basis of only race, however, BIDs assign criteria on the basis of consumptive ability, with exclusionary features of urban space manifesting through *place*.

The second corollary is our interest in treating *place*[1], as an *institution in its own right*, as a "carrier" and an "implementer" of neoliberalism in ways that make the latter "actually exist" in urban space. If actually existing neoliberalism brings analyses of neoliberalism to "ground level" figuratively, we wish to do so literally, by emphasizing how BIDs tap into the features of place in in order to self-enforce their existence. Specifically, the ability to organize individuals according to a binary, leads to the possibility of phenomena such as "signal crimes." This line of thinking is supported by scholars like Rob Shields (1991, 35), who have noted that the actions of individuals within particular spaces are regulated by a "physical layout [that] provides exactly the durable system of contexts which provide cues for action." Bauman (1998, 78) notes that global cities, in their competition to attract mobile capital, must contain many careful constructions of "attractions and temptations" which serve to bring in consumers while turning away those who cannot consume. Specifically, we are interested in how urban *places* provide, and come to provide, "cues" that scrub the urban fabric of undesirable and modern-day "plebeians," that are constructed by actors and institutions as inherently and permanently foreign to urban life (Ranasinghe 2011).

The next section looks at social architecture of BIDs that draw on the features of *place* to provide such cues, rendering BIDs as places of socio-economic hygiene. Afterward, we turn to empirical literature to better understand how socio-economic hygiene operates across and within BIDs. We conclude the paper with some reflections on how the concept of socio-economic hygiene gives us a tool through which we can view the neoliberal activities of BIDs as self-sustaining, continuously and repeatedly creating blights on the urban fabric they subsequently try to scrub out.

BIDs as Places of Socio-economic Hygiene

BIDs emerged as the answer to a social problem shared by contemporary urban regimes and historical genocidal ones: what to do with those "left over" after the removal of "counter-selective forces" (see Barondess [1998] for programs of racial hygiene). In the latter, this typically means either mass expulsion, or in many cases, mass execution. Neoliberal governance through BIDs approaches the solution in the same way superficially—a "problem" of expelling "undesirables," while attracting "the right sort" of people (i.e. consumers). This particular problem requires more than simply excluding/ridding of a subordinate group, however; it needed to do so while maintaining profitability and ongoing construction of the civilized consumer identity. BIDs grew as tools to accomplish both tasks by the business community, in the face of wide-scale deindustrialization that emptied the core of cities, and rising crime rates as a result of unemployment and poverty (Rowthorn and Ramaswamy 1999; Hernandez and Jones 2008).

As such, BIDs operate on a philosophy of privatism—the notion that cities exist for the sole purpose of accumulating wealth and that private businesses should lead social development (Morçol and Zimmermann 2008, 35). An essential part of "social development" within this philosophy is the exclusion and removal of those who do not contribute to the accumulation of wealth (Coleman 2003). BIDs are particularly well-equipped to carry out this function precisely because place, through its ability to render its own social construction invisible, can physically manifest particular ideological principles. The fact that places are *static*, as Tim Cresswell (1996) explains, naturalizes relations within them—things "are the way they are" for individuals in all sorts of categories (wealthy, poor, civilized, uncivilized) because places themselves do not physically change, at least not abruptly. In this respect, someone lacking the ability to purchase particular kinds of goods simply does not belong in a "well-kept" area; likewise, a panhandler or homeless individual often knows the exact boundaries of where a BID is located, and often simply avoids entering because they "know better" (Bookman and Woolford 2013). Socio-economic hygiene is particularly concerned with the ways in which place is used to simultaneously construct *and* repel a "common enemy"—across history, this has included "Jews, communists, gays, feminists, and a variety of youth subcultures" (Cresswell 1996, 153). Indeed, this is not a new feature of place, for geographical classification of social agents "is constantly constructed in relation to the unacceptable, the other, the dirty" (ibid, 149). Increasingly, it includes the poor and homeless as those who often do not have access even to the impression management of consumption; they must be (and indeed are) excluded from spaces in which dominant identities are built. Place, as a conduit of identity for both subordinate and dominant identities, must be kept aligned for the construction of both.

Discerning the actions of marginal(ized) groups in society as 'out of place' entails the definition of 'normality' as a framed geographical assumptions about who and what belongs where (Cresswell 1996, 27). Such places are marked by the removal of "blemishes" that may impede the ability to consume within their boundaries. As Coleman (2003, 24) notes, the task of marketing cities belongs to a "set of 'new primary definers'" including investment capital, business, police, and the tourism sector, which all "[attempt] to build a 'hegemony of vision'." However, these primary definers not only physically alter places, they also draw on their naturalizing qualities. The physical removal of panhandlers and other non-consumers, installing of CCTV cameras, neighbourhood patrols, signs that tell consumers to not feed the homeless, and other forms of "class-based revanchism" "sanitize" public areas, and with such sanitation, they reconfigure the very representation of space and spatial practices ongoing within those areas (Blomley 2004, 31) .

In addition to the naturalization of social relations, BIDs draw on another feature of place—the inherent reactions of the subordinate to the efforts of the dominant to colonize it. Here, de Certeau (1984) usefully addresses the *strategies* of everyday places, in which the models imposed by city planners, architects and engineers—which on the surface appear simple, transparent and efficient for citizen-consumers—instantly yield deviant and delinquent responses. In other words, no sooner is a strategy imposed than it meets with "tactics" (de Certeau 1984, 37). The relationship between 'the system' and human agency—or between strategy and tactics—is significant to consider in terms of BID and spatial regulation, as such tactics and 'surviving practices' (de Certeau 1984; Mitchell 2007) subvert planners' intentions, and resist the appropriated space used to construct and operate BIDs. Strategies are the actions of the powerful, and these actions emerge where institutions—in our case, BIDs—seeks to establish a "panoptic position" within its spatial coordinates (Mitchell 2007, 99).

Tactics are the actions of the weak and of the 'Other' (de Certeau 1984, 37). Tactics are also opportunistic and spontaneous—the product of "contingency rather than design" (Mitchell 2007, 99). Indeed, while BID

codes regulate and "serve to enforce the laws of place, something else moves along the interstices of the codes and opens or creates a space that undoes and displaces their order" (Andermatt Conley 2012, 37). However, as we will explain below, the idea of socio-economic hygiene draws attention to the fact that the tactics of the weak and the other are just as vital to the life of BIDs as the neoliberal strategies that compose them. This is because, for all of their efforts to eradicate non-consumers through mechanisms of place, BIDs still rely on non-consumers—the vagabonds—to legitimate their own existence and render the "tourists."

On the ground, surveillance and physical control are the two primary mechanisms through which place is perpetually aligned with a hygienic program (Walby and Hier 2013; Lippert and Walby 2013). Motivated by "class hatred," they serve to "squeeze out" those who occupy parks and streets that are reserved for consumption (Blomley 2004, 31). Discourses such as "zero-tolerance" and "compassion fatigue" (ibid) serve to exacerbate and reinforce the consumer/non-consumer binary, regulating the economic identities of those who come near or within the boundaries of the BID. This regulation is an *ongoing* process, since socio-economic hygiene is based on place, rather than permanent and essential biological features, and must be maintained in order to preserve the stability of the binary. Police, and the rising private security services that operate in places like BIDs, can be re-imagined as a protective interface between the two categories of the consumer/non-consumer binary.

The intensification and enforcement of this binary can help explain why developments in security and policing such as "reassurance policing" are necessary despite falling crime rates in the West (Crawford 2006). "Signal crimes," which are "disorders" interpreted as warning signals, interfere with the financial successes of BIDs and other places of consumption (ibid). Such "signal crimes" might be interpreted as the "leaking" of one category of social actors (non-consumers) into the other (consumers). A key neoliberal strategy in enforcing this binary on the ground is drawing on the naturalizing qualities of place to facilitate the replacing of "disorder" with white, middle-class notions of "civility" (Huey, Ericson, and Haggerty 2005, 143). The aforementioned categorizing mechanism of *fear* is therefore also a pillar of socio-economic hygiene like that of racial hygiene; the idea of "signal crimes" helps to bring this fact to light. One "unacceptable" action can lead to an entire area being seen as "criminal" or "dangerous" (Crawford 2006). Since binaries are constructed in opposition, they cannot be blended; an effective protective interface ensures such a profit-friendly binary remains perpetually constructed. What we contribute through the establishment of a socio-economic hygiene, however, is the ways in which signal crimes are not only policed but *constructed* by BIDs. That is, BIDs do not simply "squeeze out" pre-existing undesirables; they themselves dirty the very cloth of the urban fabric so that by cleaning up their own "mess," they create an ever-cleaner (but yet always dirtied) spatial environment designed in the image of the consumer. In other words, they tease out the "tactics" of those who squeegee and panhandle by creating an environment in which surveillance and control are perpetually needed and called upon to harbour the consumer from non-consumers. Like Lady Macbeth, BIDs will never get that damned spot out, because *they cause the spillage* by problematizing the tactics of the Other.

What is brought to light in these processes through a discussion of *socio-economic hygiene*, however, is not the reflective relationship between "tourists" and "vagabonds" (Bauman 1998), or consumers and non-consumers, nor the methods of its regulation. Rather, it is the "actually existing" neoliberal practices in spatial regularity enacted by those at the helm of BIDs, who draw on the features of place to perpetually justify their own positionality. This is not unlike those who have historically constructed "common enemies" out of particular genes, and those enemies are linked to the contemporary urban enemy. This is the non-consumer, in his or her myriad forms: the homeless, the panhandler, and the squeegee person. In other words, socio-economic hygiene, like a place-based version of a Foucauldian "Sexuality" (Foucault 1990), illustrates the neoliberal evocation of the features of *place*, which are "shattered" among individual BIDs. While BIDs each have their own sort of governance, as we explain in the final section, they all collectively construct the "neoliberal city" by channelling social hygienic practices through place to continuously justify their own existence.

Put simply, the "inherited institutional frameworks" of urban spaces are put and kept on varied paths of neoliberal strategy through the platform of socio-economic hygiene. This implies that despite the differentiated and unique ways in which the consumer/non-consumer binary is enforced by local BIDs, place itself deserves recognition as an institution because of the commonalities which act as a linchpin in the variety of enforcement. Recognizing place as an institution with these commonalities further identifies its connection with historical regimes of exclusion, such as racial hygiene. Socio-economic hygiene is not a *new* regulator of exclusionary strategies, but a historically grounded regulator of such strategies that also employs biology as a form of regulation.

A "shattering" of neoliberal governance within individual BIDs has warranted a rich empirical literature of BIDs, which will now be used to illustrate socio-economic hygiene in Canada and elsewhere, as well as describe its contributions to current BID conceptualizations.

Socio-economic Hygiene in Practice

Considerable qualitative ethnographic and exploratory work has been done on BIDs worldwide, including in Toronto (Hernandez and Jones 2005; Anderson, Chakrapani and Hernandez 2009), New York (Gross 2013), Hamburg (Eick 2012) and Paris (Rabbiosi 2015). Therefore, this section focuses on the ways in which socio-economic hygiene underpins and carries out the categorizing and civilizing processes through BIDs. As suggested previously, socio-economic hygiene has a polyvalent quality, conceptually linking these different BIDs together while simultaneously allowing for variegated *strategies* by business communities.

In Canada and elsewhere, we see the prevalence of what Randy Lippert calls a "clean and safe" rationality which acts as a guiding framework for the purification functions of BIDs (Lippert 2010, 2012; also see Sleiman and Lippert 2010; Lippert and Walby 2013; Walby and Lippert 2014 for Canadian commentary; for elsewhere, see Mitchell and Staeheli 2006; Meek and Hubler 2006; Hoyt 2008; Marquardt and Fuller 2012). "Clean and safe" rationalities work to ensure "a consumption environment free of refuse and risk for consumers to pass through unscathed" (Lippert 2012, 169). In other words, the "clean and safe" rationality guides the decisions of stakeholders in and around BIDs such that the consumer/non-consumer binary is, in some way, managed through a securitized interface. A "clean and safe" rationality is vital for BID impression management, since it "legitimate[s] actors regulating public space" (Marquardt and Fuller 2012, 157). Investigations of North American and European BIDs have uncovered the commonalities in BID literature, interviews with key personnel, and advertisements in which constant work occurs to simultaneously regulate and reflect clean and safe rationalities. Rather than simply eliminate or exterminate the subordinate, non-consuming group, BIDs harvest the "shine of bright tourist suns" in order to construct the "dark vagrant moons" against which consumer identities are perpetually constructed (Bauman 1998, 92).

While a "clean and safe" rationality presents itself in empirical BID literature as a mode of governance to allow unfettered, unscathed consumption, we argue that literature exposing this rationality is really discussing the "front stage" for BIDs. The concept of "socio-economic hygiene," which reaches both latitudinally (across individual BIDs) and longitudinally (to previous programs of hygiene) opens up a new program of study, a sort of "backstage" rationality to BIDs, through which the "hidden possibilities" of everyday urban life can be explored (Bauman 1989). Ranasinghe's (2013) examination of the "back region" of Vancouver and Toronto BIDs examines the ways in which BIDs act as a mediating mechanism for a potentially fragmented and disunited business community, communicating concerns of public safety and that the dangers of the non-consumer are ubiquitous. A program of socio-economic hygiene could draw on such useful work to understand the ways in which BIDs act as a mediating mechanism, but also act as a mechanism of *eliciting* and constructing blemishes and signal crimes so that it perpetually construct itself as a harbinger of urban safety and solace.

In order to provide a detailed look at how socio-economic hygiene puts into place mechanisms of categorization and purification, and how BIDs recursively create their own necessity, we can examine Mitchell Duneier's (2001) *Sidewalk*, seminal text of the informal economy in downtown New York City. Despite its age, it showcases the intensification of socio-economic hygiene through downtown BIDs. Duneier shows that prior to the implementation of laws restricting street vending, the informal economic network acted as a mechanism through which street persons knit themselves into the social fabric. Specifically, their participation in the informal economy, especially street vendors, allows them to construct an *entrepreneurial identity* that bestows them with a vocabulary of self-respect and independence (Duneier 2001, 168). Duneier notes that many vendors like "Ishmael," one central participant in his study, sleep on the street not because they *have* to, but because he is there "first and foremost to work, and, through that work, to live his life" (ibid, 169).

Despite this quest for independence through the informal economy, many of his participants were still characterized as uncivilized based on their inability to consume. Duneier's characterization of urination and defecation in the street as a form of bodily politics is particularly indicative of this. One participant in particular, Ron, expressed frustration at how local businesses defined a "customer"—that is, one that can *perpetually* consume. This was in contrast to how Ron himself defined "customer" as having ever purchased something from the

business in question (ibid, 184-185). On the basis of the businesses' definition, Ron found himself being turned away from bathrooms, but also rejected a squalid public bathroom a few blocks over characterized as lacking basic mechanisms of privacy. The consumption-based gatekeeping of bathrooms meant that Ron instead chose to urinate in a cup or between parked cars to defy the characterization as 'uncivilized' by passersby. The threat that Ron represents—that of the dangerous, uncivilized Promethean—is made particularly clear in Duneier's interview with a nearby condo dweller: "[t]he fact that a *human* would have to use the street is [disturbing to me]" (ibid, 173, emphasis added). It appears that whether or not Ron can behave like a "human" is subject to his ability to consume, since consumption allows him access to a suitable bathroom.

However, the question of whether or not street people could ever be civilized was ultimately answered for residents by two BIDs included in Duneier's study. To frame the perspective from which the BIDs approached governing consumers and non-consumers, Duneier includes a quote from their legal counsel that characterizes their work as

> [flying] in the face of what a lot of academics, especially sociologists, have to say…I've taken to calling them believers in grit. They believe that anomic stuff that happens on the street is good and healthy and organic…[t]hey're people who believe that graffiti is a valuable cultural expression. That's not what we're about. (ibid, 234)

Perhaps even more important is the fact that this same individual characterized street vendors as not having "[looked] like they've made a capital investment in what they are doing. They are not selling high-quality goods… there is an implication that the goods are stolen. It's not clear that they are part of the social fabric" (ibid). This perspective, as we present it here, is a specific manifestation of socio-economic hygiene. This perspective provided the ideological groundwork for neoliberalism to manifest "on the ground," that is, to actually exist through the "institutional features" of place. It provided the necessary dirt for the initiation of constant scrubbing.

This scrubbing commenced in New York with the passing of Local Law 45, lobbied by the BIDs and their counsel to the municipal government, which eliminated and constrained the physical space within which vendors could operate. This had a number of effects on the informal economic network that once served as a mechanism of identity. It rendered the relationship between vendors, and between vendors and "spot-savers" (those who slept in spots to reserve them for vendors), violent and abrasive. Duneier documents the increasing verbal and physical altercations between vendors who, formerly able to peacefully co-exist on in the same space, now had to compete for resources. While fighting did happen before, there was an "overriding code" that prevented outright violence. The way we view this narrative, the BIDs in question not only limited (in many cases, stripped) the entrepreneurial identity from street vendors, but also bred the necessary conditions for a spike in signal crimes that served to create fear and concern, justifying vendors' physical removal (ibid, 250). The law itself was not simply a way for the city to more tightly govern the activity of street vendors; by breeding violence as part of the latter's "surviving practices," it casted them, as well as all others on the non-consuming side of the binary, as uncivilized "anti-citizens" to be relegated to circuits of exclusion where they belong (Rose 2000). In other words, the binary of consumer and non-consumer was intensified. Socio-economic hygiene helps us to better understand the way that these "strategies" (de Certeau 1984) are not only disciplinary, but also insidious, co-opting the emergent and resistant tactics that once allowed street vendors to exist as part of the urban fabric. Although street vendors did face problems before these strategies were enacted, their being casted as dangerous, and thus the need for their discipline, were taken to new heights under the strategies of the BIDs in question.

In some respects, the mainstream account of the purpose of BIDs is problematized through this lens. They are not simply a solution to an already economically destitute city; rather, the problems faced by BIDs, namely the dirty and the unsafe, are crucial to their survival. As such, BIDs will continue working to construct and remove them. Grounding BIDs in a more concrete discussion of neoliberalism simultaneously respects the fact that while all BIDs securitize space in varying ways, they all work to "scrub the urban fabric." The city, which must be clean in order to be dirty, and vice versa, is not simply a neutral space that can be molded by privatism and profit motives. Instead, it features as a "carrier" of neoliberal ideology that is pivotal in BIDs' dual purpose to construct and remove blemishes.

Conclusion

Like programs of racial hygiene, socio-economic hygiene helps us to understand the *necessary* reduction and categorization of urban life on an axis of consumption. Indeed, the case we make here is that the two are fundamentally connected through millennia-old sociological mechanisms of fear, construction of the Other, and the mutually reinforcing identities of those with and without consumptive ability. The necessity of this reduction and categorization in urban space is established by the BID itself, borne of the carving out of downtowns with the erosion of Fordist and Keynesian regimes. With the removal of these "counter-selective" forces such as a comprehensive welfare state, BIDs echo, in a less horrific yet similarly exclusionary way, programs of racial hygiene by squeezing out an "enemy" from the social fabric to justify its perpetual quest for purity (Bauman 1989; Freeman 1995). They do this through the naturalizing and strategizing features of place as an institution in and of itself, as a "carrier" of neoliberal ideology.

The purpose of our analysis here is not to liken BIDs to genocidal regimes, or to imply that neoliberal cities are as horrific as places of genocide. To accomplish such a task would be quite the feat. Rather, we wish to understand how sociological forces underpin various programs of hygiene, then work to paradoxically both separate *and* connect dominant and subordinate identities, which now revolve around consumption. A program of research could build on much of the present work around consumption, understanding the ways in which undesirable behaviours are not only identified and removed by BIDs, but *teased out* through strategies drawing on the qualities of place. The scrubbing of the urban fabric, as we have illustrated by drawing on Duneier's pivotal ethnography, does not begin with the implementation of physical surveillance or physical control, though the latter are important to the upkeep of the consumer binary. Rather, they begin by constructing signal crimes, urban "filth," and the discourse perpetuated by BIDs of such dangers being "constant" and "all over the place" (Ranasinghe 2013, 252). The BID itself, as an installer of actually existing, place-based neoliberal practices, is not just a conveyer of discourse but a constructor (and cleaner) of blemishes.

We hope that, by introducing the concept of socio-economic hygiene, and by characterizing the neoliberal practices of BIDs as hygienic, we draw attention to the insidious ways in which BIDs create work for themselves and the very problems they claim to solve. We also hope that these can be elucidated further in future research. While popular discourses cast genocidal and "hygienic" practices as a moral hiccup in the forward-facing progress of humanity, we have worked here to point out how many of their underlying sociological mechanisms manifest in everyday urban life in a much blunter capacity. Fear, greed, civility, and their connection with consumption mark the link between practices of racial and socio-economic hygiene. Such discussions may further lead to other fruitful avenues of scholarly attention such as how to disrupt such practices. However, the pervasiveness of neoliberal urban policy suggests that BIDs are here to stay for the time being. As long as BIDs compose part of the urban picture, the Sisyphean tasks of creating and identifying "damned spots," only to remove them, will remain.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1]   At this point, it is important to note that there is a significant distinction between place and space. Namely, "place" denotes the socio-spatial bounding of ideology with space, resulting in particular regularities and orders (Creswell 1996, 27). As we discuss below, the ability of place to develop an ideologically-informed regularity along an axis of consumption is central to the concept of socio-economic hygiene.

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