

# TERRITORIAL STIGMA & YOUTH IN EUROPE'S STEEL CITIES: SHEFFIELD & DUISBURG IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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## 1. CONTEXT

*"Ghetto in the United States, banlieue in France, quartieri periferici (or degradati) in Italy, problemområde in Sweden, favela in Brazil and villa miseria in Argentina: the societies of North America, Western Europe and South America all have at their disposal in their topographic lexicon a special term for designating those stigmatized neighbourhoods situated at the very bottom of the hierarchical system of places that compose the metropolis."* - Loïc Wacquant (2007, p.1)

- By wedding Erving Goffman's (1963) work on stigma to Pierre Bourdieu's (1991) ideas about symbolic power, sociologist Loïc Wacquant forged the concept of *territorial stigma* to describe the 'symbolic defamation of particular urban places' (Slater, forthcoming).
- The study of territorial stigma within its own right is still relatively new, and there is an urgent need for empirical work to question the **symbolic dimensions of marginality**.
- Within stigmatised places, it is often the youth who are blamed for an area's negative reputation (Garbin and Millington, 2012). Only three studies have looked at territorial stigma and youth, all of which are based on experiences within the school environment and focus on the relationship between territorial and racial stigma.

## 2. RATIONALE

Why study territorial stigma?

- "The manner in which tower blocks, estates, quarters and neighbourhoods are described... [is] central to a debate about their future" (Keith, 2005, p.65)
- Territorial stigma has profound implications for residents of defamed areas, which are still not fully understood;
- Territorial stigma is often activated in order to justify regeneration and/or gentrification (Kallin and Slater, 2014), which can result in the displacement of existing residents;
- Territorial stigma is activated in the media and in politics to label certain places as 'vectors of social disintegration', which has implications for policy and public attitudes;
- There are debates within the literature on territorial stigmatisation that require further empirical evidence, e.g. the question of internalisation vs. resistance.

## SHEFFIELD, UK



Photo: Nick, 2012 (<https://goo.gl/AK9M5y>)

## 3. OBJECTIVES

The specific aim of this study is:

**To further understand the dynamics and effects of territorial stigma 'on the ground' from a youth perspective in postindustrial European cities.**

Additional aims:

- To respond to Link and Phelan's (2001) critique of research that focuses on stigma itself, rather than the **discursive and social elements surrounding stigma**, by paying particular attention to how young people understand the *production* of territorial stigma.
- To explore **inter-generational** questions of territorial stigma, and look specifically at what territorial stigma might mean for young people's **political opinions and mobilisations**, as well as the **futures of individuals and communities**.
- To question more broadly the **trajectory of the postindustrial metropolis**, with regards to spatial inequalities, welfare state futures, housing tenure frameworks, local and national governance, planning policies, political rhetoric, media misinformation, and public attitudes.

## 4. QUESTIONS

### 1. Identification

- How can a stigmatised area be identified in the media/in policy/'on the ground'?
- What are the key stigmatising factors?
- Are there spatial patterns to where stigmatised areas are found in the case study cities?

### 2. Representations

- Do local statistics support stigmatising representations? (E.g. Crime, Unemployment, etc.)
- How do young people understand the production of territorial stigma?
- How do young people respond to stigmatising representations of their area?

### 3. Experiences

- In what ways do young people experience territorial stigma?
- Does territorial stigma influence young people's ideas about politics/society/social justice?
- Do young people's experiences of territorial stigma differ from the previous generation?

### 4. Futures

- How does territorial stigma affect the future plans of young people?
- How do young people imagine the future of their area and the people in it?
- Is there any evidence of territorial stigma being activated for particular means?

## DUISBURG, GERMANY



Photo: Katrin Gems, 2011 (<https://goo.gl/lb1ecN>)

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## 5. METHODS

Blokland (2012) identified a growing gap between critical urban theory and qualitative studies of everyday lives. Calling for a **'relational approach to marginalisation'**, she argues that in order for macro-theories (e.g. 'neoliberalism', 'revanchism') not to be hollowed out, they must be supported by empirical work examining social realities. This project aims to bridge the gap through a **comparative case study** by:

- Using **Critical Discourse Analysis, Secondary Statistical Analysis, and Primary Survey Data** to identify where stigmatised areas are located in the two case study cities (Sheffield and Duisburg);
- Spending 3 months full-time conducting **Ethnographic Observation** in a stigmatised neighbourhood in each city, whilst being based in a youth or community organisation;
- Developing research relationships with young people (aged 16-24) and other relevant people in the area. **Participatory Visual Methods, Walkabouts, Semi-structured Interviews, and Focus Groups** will be used to gather information relating to the research questions;
- Conducting some **Structured Interviews** and **Covert Interviews** with outsiders, depending on whether evidence is found of territorial stigma being activated in the area (question 4c).