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# City of Exception: The Dutch Revanchist City and the Urban *Homo Sacer*

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**Abstract:** Agamben's figure of the *homo sacer* is much discussed and applied in various social sciences. This article discusses the limits of Agamben's perspective and illustrates the value of an amended version by a discussion of urban policy practices in the Netherlands that operate on the basis of a distinct logic of exception and create urban *homines sacri*. A discussion of the case of the policy practice of the Rotterdam "Intervention Teams" provides an account of how the city becomes a city of exception, and the development of such policies and of the discourses that legitimate them. We illustrate the ways in which the selection of urban zones of exception is heavily dependent both on ethnicity and on income.

**Keywords:** homo sacer, revanchist urbanism, urban policy, spatial exclusion, Rotterdam

## **Introduction: Locating *Homo Sacer***

In recent years, the work of Giorgio Agamben has gained significant attention not only in philosophy, where it is situated, but also in the social sciences. Specifically, much attention has been devoted to Giorgio Agamben's thesis that the exceptional structure of the "camp" is the *nomos* of today's juridico-political order, and that this entails the creation of a new *homo sacer*, reduced to "bare life" (Agamben 1998). With respect to the modern political world, Agamben signals two developments. First, political life increasingly depends on the *exception*, on bare life that is included only through exclusion and on the simultaneous invocation of the state of exception. That is why Agamben (1998:176, 181; compare Agamben 2005:86) designates the exceptional structure of the "camp" as the organizing principle (*nomos*) of the Western (bio)political order. Second, the modern age involves a progressive incorporation of "bare life" (*zoè*) into the political community (*bios*), a biopolitical entanglement between the natural body

and the techniques of power. The “nation-state” hence means “a State that makes nativity or birth (*nascita*) (that is, naked human life) the foundation of its own sovereignty” (Agamben 1996:162).

However, the terms in which Agamben describes these developments are chosen in such a way that it is not at all clear how general their applicability is. His concepts are very much “pure” concepts that appear to leave little room for empirical variation. Accordingly, when applications of Agamben’s work are considered closely, these either consist of loose, generalizing statements or of cases, indeed, of “life and death” (cf Cadman 2009). In this contribution we argue that Agamben’s conceptual framework can provide an important focus in social and political geography but that it needs to be treated as less “pure” than it is presented in Agamben’s political philosophical conception and it needs to be seen as an addition to a Foucauldian analysis present in work on governmentality. We apply Agamben’s notion of the *homo sacer* to exceptional measures taken against a contemporary version of “the urban crisis” in the Netherlands. Contemporary Dutch urban policies are shaped as a variation on the theme of “urban revanchism” (Smith 1996). Yet these imply the selective targeting of specific urban regions as rhetorical “combat zones” and the accompanying exceptional juridical status of inhabitants—specifically poor and “non-western allochtones”—of these regions. Specifically, we focus on a policy practice involving “Intervention Teams” operating in so-called “Hotspot zones” in Rotterdam and we discuss the emergence of the *urban homo sacer*.

### **The State of Exception and the *Homo Sacer***

As a political philosopher, Agamben is mainly occupied with questions concerning sovereignty and the state of exception. Agamben radicalizes the consequences of Schmitt’s definition of the sovereign as “he who decides on the state of exception” (Agamben 2005; Schmitt 1996). In *State of Exception*, Agamben notes how “the state of exception tends increasingly to appear as the dominant paradigm of government in contemporary politics” (Agamben 2005:2). He notes how government by decree became, especially after World War I, an accepted practice that could also be used for instance in case of economic recession (Agamben 2005:13). And he argues that government by exception has gradually become routine within democratic government (Agamben 2005:16).

In his main work on this topic, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (1998), Agamben connects the notion of the exception to that of the sovereign. The “paradox of sovereignty” has reference to the position of the sovereign who, from outside the realm of law,

declares that there is no realm outside the law (Agamben 1998:15). Between the sovereign position and that of the *homo sacer*, Agamben therefore sees a parallel. The ancient figure of the *homo sacer* designates a person banned from society, a “sacred” person exempt from law who can be killed but not sacrificed (Agamben 1998:71–74, 82; 1993:86–87). Agamben illustrates how the Greeks knew two concepts of “life”: *zoè* and *bios* (Agamben 1998:1–12, 127). The first has reference to what he calls, with Benjamin, “bare life”. This refers to the natural life of the body before the *polis* turns it into a person. On the other hand, *bios* stood for the life form of a specific individual or group or the life within a community. The *homo sacer* designates the space where *zoè* and *bios* constitute one another by means of a mutual in- and exclusion (Agamben 1998:90). They are included in each other, since *zoè* is the *physis* transformed by *nomos*, and since *zoè*, the excluded, is excluded only on the basis of—or, more precisely, *in*—a prior relationship (Agamben 1998:29). It is exactly the “including exclusion” of the *homo sacer* that founds the political community (Agamben 1998:21, 82). Whence the awe for and the sacredness (*sacratio*) of *homo sacer*.

Constitutive for political life is not simply natural life, but death, signified by the exceptional figure of *homo sacer* (Agamben 1998:85, 88, 183–184). For *homo sacer* exists, so to speak, at the bottom of the *polis*, in a position similar to the sovereign at the top. A significant structural analogy thus exists between the Hobbesian sovereign and the banned *homo sacer* (Agamben 1998:35, 67). Both occupy an exceptional place outside the law, whilst at the same time, through their exclusion, founding the space demarcated by the law. The *homo sacer* has recently been identified as the prisoner of the concentration camp (Agamben 1993:87), as the detainee at Guantánamo Bay (Agamben 2005:3–4), as Palestinian women dubbed “humanitarian cases” (Long 2006), as the so-called “illegal migrant” detained without trial (Schinkel 2009) and the migrant in *zones d’attentes* at airports (Agamben 1998:174) and as the neomort and the comatose patient (Agamben 1998; Norris 2000). However, one can doubt the consistency in the use of the exceptional figure in all those cases. One might say, for instance, that the irregular migrant in a detention centre is deprived of various citizenship rights and is reduced to the bare life to which *human* rights apply, but this is never purely the case. Irregular migrants in such detention facilities are always endowed with some rights under various national forms of law. Certainly, it is difficult to see their detention as part of “a zone of indistinction between sacrifice and homicide” (Agamben 1998:83). In practice, the categories that Agamben operates with are messier than his philosophical framework appears to allow for (cf Ong 2006:23; Pratt 2005).

## Degrees of Exception: Notes on Taking Agamben into the Field

### *Locating the Exception*

For Agamben, the exception is at once localized and unlocalizable. It equals the “dislocalizing localization” that the law requires (Agamben 1998:175). As Belcher et al state, the exception functions as a “principle of territorialization” (Belcher et al 2008:500). Indeed, it is defined by Agamben as a Schmittian *Ortung* or localization (or orientation) of the law but only in the form of a “threshold” (Agamben 1998:19). This threshold or “limit figure” is “the place of sovereignty” (Agamben 1998:27). The camp, which Agamben sees as a “topological figure”, does not coincide with any topographical space. Topological spaces are something different from geometric spaces, although they always do involve geometric spaces. Mathematically, topology can be defined as “the study of collections of objects that possess a mathematical structure” (Mendelson 1990:1). Or alternatively it can be described as “the study of properties of figures that endure when the figures are subjected to continuous transformations” (Henle 1979:1, 32; compare Banagl 2009; Sklar 1976:51–54; Weeks 2002). If the camp is taken to be a topological space, that means it has a metric structure, but one that follows a logic—one that is, in this case, legal—and whose logic, instead of its metric shape, defines its invariance. With respect to every metric “incarnation” or territorialization of the camp, then, Agamben is able to state that “the camp is a hybrid of law and fact in which the two terms have become indistinguishable” (Agamben 1998:170). This is a perspective that can be valuable in geography, which deals not only with (geo)metric spaces (Harvey 2006). The structure of spaces of exception, that is, the criteria of their definition, are more relevant than the geometric features of such temporally fleeting spaces. The law’s *Ortung* or localization is necessary yet topological: it is temporal and changes shape according to certain structuring principles.

### *Agamben’s “Pure” Concepts*

Yet Agamben gives his core concepts a “purity” that makes their empirical application difficult. The examples of the *homo sacer* provided by Agamben are mentioned in passing and are hardly elaborated. Agamben’s example, which he leaves unillustrated, of the *homo sacer* in “certain outskirts of our cities” (Agamben 1998:175), is questionable. It might be conceived as the ghetto or the spaces where irregular migrants live in slum dwellings, but neither case involves a form of government by decree or an explicitly legal suspension of rights formerly granted. Similar questions can be asked with respect to the parallel between the concentration camp and the *zones d’attentes* at airports (Agamben

1998:174) or the detention centers housing “illegal migrants”. Perhaps this vagueness is due to the absoluteness with which his concepts are defined. When he for instance states that “bare life remains included in politics in the form of the exception, that is, as something that is included *solely* through an exclusion” (Agamben 1998:11; italics added), he leaves little room for intermediate positions. In a sense, the sacred and the sovereign position *are* the only intermediate positions, but their intermediacy is defined by their inclusion through exclusion. It is the *total* suspension of rights that enables the *homo sacer* to be included *solely* through exclusion. Likewise, the only way sovereignty can mark a *limit* (Agamben 1998:15) is by the fact that the only *legal* aspect to its position is that of a *legal suspension* of the validity of the law (Agamben 1998:15). The very topological homology between sovereign and *homo sacer* is possible only on the basis of the “purity” of these two forms. For the “limit sphere of human action that is only ever maintained in a relation of exception” which is “that of the sovereign decision” can *only* be “connected” or “be shown to illuminate each other” (Agamben 1998:83) because both are characterized by a liminal inclusion, an inclusion characterized by a near-total exclusion. This exclusion, in turn, can never be total because it remains a *legal* exclusion and is hence always a threshold, a liminal inclusion. Agamben’s conceptualization thus involves the inability to conceive of a *partial homo sacer* or of *degrees of exception*.

In order for them to be of real interpretative value in social scientific work, his core concepts first of all need to be adjusted or nuanced (Pratt 2005). Empirical specification of Agamben’s work leads to the identification of *different ways* of “legal abandonment” (Pratt 2005:1055). While Žižek (2000) has argued against “watering down” Agamben’s conceptual schema of inclusion/exclusion, we believe that it is possible and relevant to show how this schema is active not only in an absolute sense, but also in various *intermediary forms* in which aspects of the exclusive inclusion of bare life into the community are actualized. As Aihwa Ong has argued, Agamben’s “rigid binary opposition” between bare life and the rights-bearing life “would miss the rich complexity” of reality and “seems to preclude the possibility of non-rights mediation or complex distinctions that can buttress claims for moral protection and legitimacy” (Ong 2006:23).

### *Foucault and Agamben on Biopolitics*

It is helpful to regard Agamben’s work as an extension of Foucault’s work on biopolitics and governmentality. The difference between their conceptualizations of biopower lies in the place accorded by each to sovereignty. For Foucault, biopower signals the regularization and optimization of life through techniques such as statistics, architecture,

epidemiology etc. It consists of the disciplines of the body (anatomopolitics) and the regulatory controls (biopolitics) (Foucault 1976:183; 1997:216), but both are defined vis-à-vis sovereign power. Sovereign power, as the power to take life, is superseded by biopower, as the power to make life. In *Naissance de la Biopolitique*, Foucault accordingly describes “biopolitics” as “the attempt, starting from the eighteenth century, to rationalize the problems posed to governmental practice by phenomena characteristic of a set of living beings forming a population: health, hygiene, birth rate, life expectancy, race...” (Foucault 2004a:323). Yet what sets Agamben’s perspective apart from Foucault’s and other perspectives on biopower (cf Esposito 2008; Hardt and Negri 2000) is the intricate connection Agamben preserves with sovereign power, that is, with the state, a focus he shares not only with Schmitt but also with Walter Benjamin and Hannah Arendt. This, we argue, is what makes Agamben’s perspective applicable in an analysis of state-led policy practices that sort populations (Lyon 2003) on the basis of spatial differentiation. In Foucault’s work on governmentality, sovereignty is indistinguishable from discipline and government.

By governmentality, Foucault described “the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principal form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security” (Foucault 1991:102). It involves a form of power directed towards the individual as a member of a biological species, that is, towards population control (Foucault 2004a, 2004b). In Foucault’s later work, he therefore analysed various forms of policies aimed at social hygiene, among which are urban politics (Foucault 2004a). A focus on governmentality first of all means emphasizing political rationalities or mentalities of rule, along with the appending techniques, such as urban policy practices (cf Dean 1999; Miller and Rose 2008; Rose, O’Malley and Valverde 2006). Rather than solely focusing on formal legal and sovereign statuses, it means emphasizing the *practices* through which biopolitics is effectuated. This is where a governmentality perspective can add to Agamben’s work. But that work can also add to governmentality studies. Recently Donzelot and Gordon have argued that governmentality studies should by now take sovereignty and citizenship more into account (Donzelot and Gordon 2008). This is precisely where Agamben’s conceptualization of biopolitics, which is wholly centered on issues of sovereignty and citizenship, can offer a productive impetus. In the context of urban politics in which we here put Agamben’s concepts to work, exceptionalism is one element of a governmental ensemble of techniques, and as we show, it is articulated in discourses of emergency.

To summarize, what Agamben draws attention to are the juridico-political assemblages of elements on three planes: biological life, that is, the bare life that is the object of either total exclusion or governmental melioration; legal exceptionalism, that is, the *legal* suspension of the law in various degrees of severity; and the dislocating localization that the law requires. Next, we illustrate these points in a discussion of the production of the urban *homo sacer* in exceptional urban policy measures.

### **The Practice of *Ultima Ratio* in Urban Policy: “Intervention Teams” in Rotterdam**

Our case is Rotterdam, the second largest Dutch city, chosen for four reasons. First, of the large cities in the Netherlands, Rotterdam is the poorest and at the same time the most ethnically diverse city. More than half the population consists of non-native Dutch citizens. Both characteristics are considered fundamental problems, for which many solutions have been devised. Most notably here is that Rotterdam aspires to become an attractive city for middle class inhabitants and actively recruits new groups to “mix” with the current population (van der Horst 2003). This means it is a highly interesting city to study with respect to the spatial intersections of class and ethnicity. Second, Rotterdam city officials have traveled to New York City to be inspired by its “zero tolerance policies”, and Rotterdam is hence an example of a European translation of US models of governance (Wacquant 2008; compare Fyfe 2004; Uitermark and Duyvendak 2008). Third, Rotterdam is known as a “policy laboratory” (a title co-opted by the municipality itself) that stands out for its “innovative” approaches to such varying issues as crime, poverty and segregation (Noordegraaf 2008). Fourth, the specific case of the “Intervention Teams” in Rotterdam is especially salient as it exemplifies the construction of an exceptional status of urban citizens in the Netherlands. For these reasons Rotterdam can be considered a critical case (Flyvbjerg 2006) to research innovative forms of urban policy and spatial effects. As data we make use of policy documents, policy practice protocols, as well as of elaborate descriptions of the practice of the Rotterdam “Intervention Teams” by the Rotterdam Ombudsman and by inhabitants of Rotterdam in public media.

In 2009, the “Intervention Teams” visited 22,500 homes in Rotterdam (which has close to 600,000 inhabitants) (van der Meer 2009). The practice finds its origins in 2001, when a team of street-level bureaucrats of the municipality, the city’s housing bureau, the local social service agency, the public housing agency, the local tax authority and the police united in the first team to jointly visit houses in the “Strevelsweg”, a street in the south of Rotterdam. The team was put in place by the Rotterdam administration to find a solution to the perceived deterioration

of this particular street, but also to find “innovative” ways of fighting urban decline in general. The “Strevelsweg” is located in “Bloemhof”, one of the poorest neighborhoods of the city. Built in the beginning of the 1900s, many houses were (and still are to a certain extent) inhabited by recent immigrants (both with and without legal status) and poorly maintained. According to the municipalities’ information<sup>1</sup>, the “Intervention Team” visited 700 houses during a period of 5 months.<sup>2</sup> Various forms of behavior, forms of housing and inhabitants themselves deemed deviant were targeted. It was an ambitious project to enhance the livability of the city of Rotterdam, soon to be followed by forms of physical restructuring. Currently, the street is one of the “spots” where the municipality is hoping to establish a form of “state-led gentrification” (Uitermark, Duyvendak and Kleinhans 2007).<sup>3</sup>

The perceived “success” of what was then called the “Strevelsweg method” led to the implementation of “Intervention Teams” throughout Rotterdam, in so-called “Hotspot zones” or “Hotspot areas”. This implementation and expansion of the practice became possible under the new administration of Pim Fortuyn’s rightwing populist party “Leefbaar Rotterdam” from 2002 through 2006. The “Hotspot areas” are areas that are designated by the municipality for specific safety measures. They are thereby part of a spatialized safety policy (the “area-specific approach”; *gebiedsgerichte aanpak*) that also includes “Neighborhood Security Areas” (*wijkveiligheidsgebieden*) and “Neighborhood Security Attention Areas”. Neighbourhood Security Areas are subjected to specific policy measures to enhance safety, such as preventive body searching, not implemented in the rest of Rotterdam. Moreover, regular safety measures are intensified in such areas. “Hotspot areas” are more specifically designated and allow for even more intensified measures. One of these is the practice of the “Intervention Teams” as inspired by the results of the early “Strevelsweg method”. Although these teams are not necessarily bound by the confines of “Hotspot zones”, they are specifically deployed there. Figure 1 offers an overview of the city of Rotterdam and its neighborhood security areas as well as its current “Hotspots”.<sup>4</sup>

The Rotterdam administration defines “Hotspots” as one or more streets characterized by “a cumulation of problems relating to physical environment, houses and public space. In the social environment, social structures and healthy potential for individual and group development are lacking and, moreover, crime and nuisance are present” (Rotterdam City Council 2005:73; 2008:56). The administration selects “Hotspots” on the basis of the “Rotterdam Safety Index”, a quantitative tool combining subjective and objective measures of “safety” with context variables, one of which pertains to the number of non-native Dutch residing in an area (Noordegraaf 2008; Rotterdam City Council 2007). All eight “Hotspots” are located in neighborhoods where a relatively



**Figure 1:** Rotterdam: Neighborhood security areas and Hotspot areas

large percentage of the housing stock was built before the Second World War, most even before the 1930s (for example, Bloemhof: 68% houses built in 1906–1930; Hillesluis: 69% built in 1906–1930).<sup>5</sup> Most of these buildings are in tact, are three or four stories high and divided into relatively small dwellings. The string of “Hotspots” on the south side of the city may be tentatively related to the age of the housing stock.

The methods of the “Intervention Teams” have changed somewhat over time. However, the core has remained the same: addresses are selected on the basis of a selection of “unsafe” neighborhoods, as defined by the “Safety Index”. In the “Hotspots” thus selected, the “Intervention Teams” visit all dwellings. Once the team (of up to six or seven officials) has entered the apartment or house, they investigate a wide range of things: whether or not the house is fireproof, if the inhabitants have legal status, how many inhabitants there are and how many there should be according to the city’s administration, which inhabitants are entitled to public benefit and which should be fined for tax fraud. Also, the teams search for criminal practices, illegal prostitutes and hemp plants. The people deemed responsible for these practices face police actions. The list of items is much longer, because the teams explicitly declare that they do not focus on specific problems, but employ an “integral approach”. This also entails that the officials write down whatever they

find important. As one team member said: “we come for everything, really” (cited in Rotterdam Ombudsman 2007:101). The cooperation of police with various public and private officials makes the “Intervention Teams” a prime example of what Jones and Newburn (2006) have called “plural policing”, which involves forms of governance that link regular policing with private policing and other hybrid forms.

The executive bureau that was founded by the municipality especially for this policy practice, Bureau Frontline, identifies five goals of the “Intervention Teams”:

1. The tracing and ending of illegal letting of rooms;
2. The control and ending of nuisance from (drugs) buildings;
3. Helping inhabitants on their way to paid work or social services;
4. Activating the so-called care-network;
5. Ending fraud with income support [translation authors].<sup>6</sup>

It is the combination of enforcement and care that is considered “innovative”, “integral” and necessary for the inhabitants of these specific areas by politicians and some academics (Cornelissen and Brandsen 2007). In no other places in Dutch cities or the boroughs of Rotterdam does the state approach citizens in such a manner. It is legitimized on the basis of the “emergency state” of the “Hotspots”.

Inhabitants of the “Hotspots” are led to believe that they are obliged to open up their homes to the inspection of the “Intervention Teams”. A complicated set of practices and legitimizations of the practices make it difficult even for law experts to know exactly what the legal basis of the “house visits” is (to use the euphemism often used by the municipality). To illustrate how confusing the practice of the “Intervention Teams” can be for the inhabitants, an article by the Dutch columnist Carrie Jansen, visited by an Intervention Team herself, offers a good example of contestation. Expecting government officials for an entirely different matter, Jansen was not aware that she was letting an “Intervention Team” enter her house in a Rotterdam “Hotspot”. Once inside, the officials explained that they were not the officials Jansen was expecting, but were instead there to “‘look at everything, for example whether or not you grow hemp in your house or if you house illegal immigrants.’ In my underwear drawer?” (2008:16), Jansen asks in her essay, because as the official was explaining his mission to her, his colleague was going through her personal items in the bedroom. Each member of the “Intervention Team” gave her a different reason for their visit: from having too many doorbells to living in a “Hotspot area”. And every member was working for a different institution: from the housing agencies to the police. When Jansen asked for the legal basis of their visit, they all gave different answers. “That is in the law,” was the simple, though not satisfactory, answer of the official from the urban planning

bureau (ds + V) of Rotterdam, and the employee of the electricity company declared that Jansen did not have the right to refuse their entering, because this company had the “right” to check the meter (Jansen 2008).

In general, the teams employ two legal bases. First, a local bureaucrat (as a member of the team) tells people dependent on income support,<sup>7</sup> that their monthly income can be withdrawn if they do not let the “Intervention Team” enter. Second, all other inhabitants are told by other members of the “Intervention Team” (for example, from the above-mentioned urban planning bureau) that they have to open the door because the municipality has the right to check if the people in the house are actually registered residents.<sup>8</sup> Rather than the problems in the approach of citizens and the rather rude way in which the “Intervention Teams” do their work (see Jansen 2008; Rotterdam Ombudsman 2007), what is important is that they legally bluff their way into the homes of marginal groups. Even when the city official checking on income support fraud or the city’s administration *does* have actual authority to enter the houses, that does not give permission or legal grounds for the five, six or more *other* officials to do so. However, the “Intervention Teams” take the nodding of the inhabitant or the short conversation at the door to be an “informed consent” for all to enter, as became clear in the account of Jansen, but also in the Ombudsman’s report on the practices.

This illustrates the complex practical realities hiding behind the notion of sovereignty. First, the “Exception Law” allows for the possibility of exempting, on a spatial basis, citizens’ rights. But the actual exception is *enacted* in the policy practice and in its *performance* by policy workers that, taking advantage of the blurriness of their mandate, rhetorically overpower citizens and enter their homes. It is common that “street-level executives” bend rules (Lipsky 1980), but it is just as possible that the exception is only at that level truly enacted. Alongside an analysis of political rationalities, a focus on the practice of techniques as advocated by governmentality studies (Donzelot and Gordon 2008:58; Foucault 2004b:38; compare Miller and Rose 2008:32ff) is therefore crucial. That does not mean that any “exception” made at the executive level is an exception in Agamben’s sense. Rather, our case illustrates the complex layers that *supplement* each other in performing the exception. First, there is an exceptional mandate granted to executives. Second, the practical enactment on the basis of that mandate in actual situations (“house visits”) creates an exception that, precisely *because of* the existence of an exceptional mandate, never visibly appears as a second exceptional step.

The implementation of “Intervention Teams” is to some extent publicly contested in the Netherlands, for example in the above-mentioned article by Carrie Jansen. The most important contestation was

the report by the Rotterdam Ombudsman in 2007. However, this did not lead to much public debate, in part because the Ombudsman, in his fierce critique, equated the practices to those of the Nazis in World War II. This made it possible for the spokespersons of the practices (employees of Bureau Frontlijn and the alderwoman) to dismiss the critique and continue the practices without seriously responding. Moreover, most political parties in Rotterdam (as well as national parties) support the practices of the “Intervention Teams”. In fact many other such practices have been implemented in the Netherlands since 2007 (van der Meer 2009).

## **The Rotterdam “Intervention Teams” and the Urban *Homo Sacer***

### *The Urban Homo Sacer*

The gist of Agamben’s notions of the state of exception and *homo sacer* thus remains highly relevant and highlights hitherto relatively unnoticed aspects of urban policy practices. Specifically, three elements can be discerned: the spatial management of certain inner-city populations by means of legal exceptions; a form of government that has the characteristics of government by decree; the construction of an urban *homo sacer*, living in zones of exception.

The instrument of urban “Hotspot zones” allows for specific urban areas to be identified in which governmental techniques are deployed: homes are visited, people and cars are searched (which is otherwise impossible without a warrant in the Netherlands). Next to the activities of the “Intervention Teams” in such zones, the “Rotterdam Law”, officially named the “Umbrella and Exception Law” (2005), allows for the spatial management and, to some extent, the “physical displacement” of the urban population. The “Rotterdam Law”, which came after the “Strevelsweg method” and which was initially set up as a bylaw maximizing inhabitation in problematized quarters of the city by certain “ethnic groups”. When this proved legally untenable because it was discriminatory, the discriminatory provision was changed into a “120 per cent norm”, which had the effect of an only indirect discrimination, since it excluded those people whose income was less than 120% of the established Dutch standard minimum wage (ECRI 2008). In 2005, the “Rotterdam Law” was transformed from local bylaw to national law.

Dutch urban policy cannot be regarded as a state of exception in the pure sense, yet for at least two reasons it displays some of the defining characteristics thereof. First, it provides executive officials with a discretion that is in effect equal to a form of government by decree. The selection of urban zones to which exceptional measures apply is under

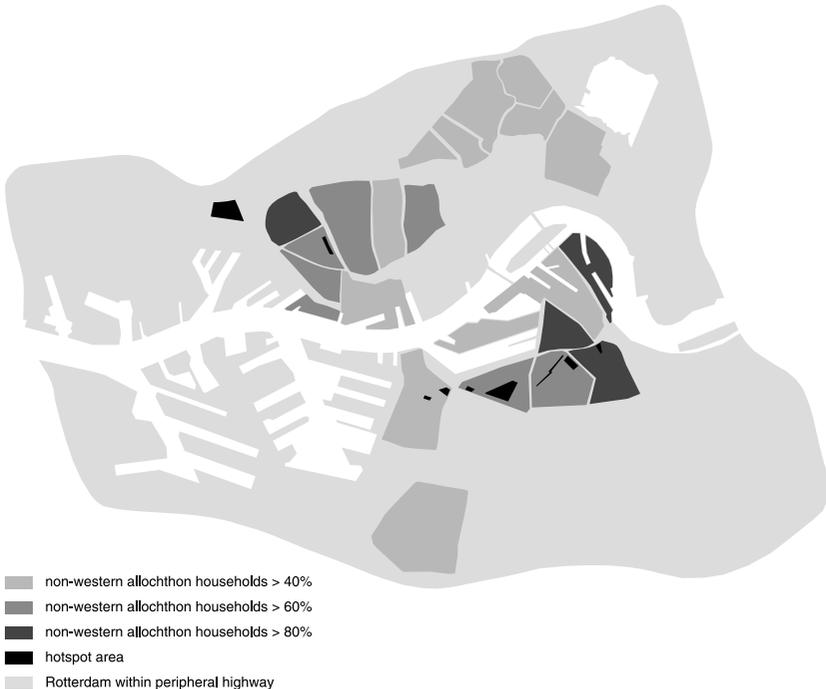
little democratic control. Ultimate power to declare an area as a “Hotspot area” resides with the mayor, who in the Netherlands has the highest executive power at the local level but officially stands above all political parties and is not elected by the public but appointed by the queen. Second, as the Rotterdam Ombudsman argued (2007), local policy practices, if taken to court, would probably have been found illegal, as was the case in the above-mentioned Zeist case. Since the population targeted in the Rotterdam “Hotspot zones” is largely low educated, no cases have yet been taken to court. Those subject to the exceptional measures were often not in a position—given their lack of information and other forms of capital needed to establish legal proceedings, and often given their dependence on the actions of “Intervention Teams” for income support—to legally fight their subjection to the “Intervention Teams”. Instead, the local situation in Rotterdam was, on a national level, construed as a laboratory in which innovative policies could be tested (Noordegraaf 2008). In fact, national government was all too keen on letting these local policies pass, since Rotterdam was considered by many to be a testing ground for new and “innovative” policy practices. As the Dutch minister said after passing the “Umbrella and Exception Law”: “don’t tell anyone, but in The Hague [seat of Dutch government, authors] we called this law the Rotterdam Law” (Pechtold 2006).

A less elaborate state of exception thus constitutes a form of government by decree that suspends some of the rights of inhabitants of urban zones defined as problematic. Urban states of siege have been quite common in history, one example being Paris after the 1848 fall of the July Monarchy. But the interesting thing is that most of the time, mixtures exist that do not conform to Agamben’s “pure” state of exception, but nonetheless have the effect of selectively excluding persons from the *bios* that the city constitutes. The most fundamental right of persons visited by “Intervention Teams” that is in practice suspended is the constitutional right to the inviolability of the home (*huisrecht*). Its latest codification dates back to 2002, in which article 12 of the Dutch Constitution states that entry into a private home against prior consent is only allowed in cases stated by law (Koops et al 2004:25). This 2002 formulation was in fact a revision of the 1987 statement, and it replaced “against the resident’s will” by “without the resident’s consent”. In theory, subjects were thus better protected, since explicit consent is needed, as is stated in the “Intervention Team” Protocol (2007). In practice, teams enter by bluffing, intimidating, and threatening to cut social security benefits. The right of the inviolability of the home (*huisrecht*) is therefore the crucial example of the exceptional suspension of rights in Rotterdam urban practices. To a certain degree, Agamben’s remark that, in the state of exception, the city and the house become indistinguishable applies here (Agamben 1998:188). But it is crucial that not only are those whose homes are actually visited by

“Intervention Teams” transformed into the *homo sacer*, but also all those who are *potentially* targeted. This qualifies Agamben’s claim that, increasingly, all democratic citizens are turned into *homines sacri*. Rather, in contemporary urban policies, this applies to a highly specific subpopulations.

A crucial addition to Agamben’s perspective is therefore the prevalence of “ethnic profiling”. The population targeted by the “Intervention Teams” is largely of a non-Dutch ethnic background. It is categorized in the Netherlands by a distinction between “allochtons” and “autochtons”, whereby native Dutch are labeled “autochtons” and non-native Dutch and non-Dutch as “allochtons” (Geschiere 2009). A further distinction is made between “Western allochtons” and “non-Western allochtons”, although the latter category includes Indonesians and Japanese. The population living in urban “Hotspot zones” is largely classified as “non-Western allochtons”, as Figure 2 illustrates. It shows a significant overlap between the concentration of “non-western allochtons” in the city and the designation of Neighbourhood Security Areas in general and “Hotspot zones” in particular.

The large area in the south of the city—which, as Figure 1 indicates, is designated a Neighbourhood Security Area—consists of newer and largely public housing, which means that it can be easier regulated and surveyed with regular instruments. We would argue that, for this reason,



**Figure 2:** Rotterdam: Percentages of “allochthon” households per area

no “Hotspot area” has been designated there. In general, however, it is this category of “non-western allochtons” which is problematized, for instance when the suppression of women is linked to “Islam” or “Moroccan culture” or when the “problem” of “single mothers” is associated with “Antillian ethnicity” (Schinkel 2007). This adds a specifically ethnic dimension to the selective targeting that creates the spatio-temporal urban *homo sacer*. This is a dimension that Agamben, who never gave racism a central place in his analysis, does not fully recognize. Judith Butler has noted that such “ethnically” selective mechanisms for creating the *homo sacer* should receive attention: “such general claims do not yet tell us how this power functions differentially, to target and manage certain populations . . . they do not tell us how . . . state sovereignty . . . works by differentiating populations on the basis of ethnicity and race” (Butler 2004:68). The selection of urban “Hotspot Zones” does indeed take place on the basis of a criterion of “ethnicity” incorporated in the “Rotterdam Safety Index” on the basis of which “Hotspot zones” can be selected. The “Safety Index” includes a variable concerning “ethnicity” to the effect that a neighborhood in which relatively many “non-Western allochtons” live automatically attains a lower score on the Index (Noordegraaf 2008). Likewise, the “ethnic screening” and indirect discrimination inherent in the “Umbrella and Exception Law” (“Rotterdam Law”) was noted by the *European Committee against Racism and Intolerance* (ECRI 2008). The *homo sacer* is thus a figure able to temporarily inhabit persons, transforming them from subjects of the law into subjected individuals in a shadowy realm outside the law yet to a large extent provided for by the law. But the *homo sacer* is not the person deprived of rights; it is the person *potentially* deprived of rights. The *homo sacer* is thus a figure that has become applicable to *entire urban subpopulations*, most notably, in the case we are discussing here, the immigrant poor. The link between place (*Ortung*) and order (*Ordnung*) is highly relevant in the production of spaces of the urban poor, whose control and disciplining take place upon their localization in “Hotspot zones”. The exceptional policy measures on the basis of which the Rotterdam “Intervention Teams” operate in such zones effectively constitute a form of government by decree. Aspects of the *homo sacer* are actualized in highly localized and changing settings. Both the *place* or *locale* in which and the *time* during which persons are deprived of rights are variable. That means that *homines sacri* are formed daily. In fact, the crucial point of this application of Agamben’s notion of the included exclusion is that it is *the “ethnic” poor population of the city* that, because it is *potentially* disenfranchised, is transformed into *homines sacri*. In the “ethnic” targeting that thus takes place lies a first clue to the broader context of the practice of urban “Intervention Teams”.

## The Emergence of Emergency

The remainder of this article is devoted to two things. One is to provide a contextual account of the development of exceptional urban policy measures such as described above. The other is to scrutinize the discursive mechanisms by means of which these measures are given credibility and legitimacy and by means of which they are construed as measures of *ultima ratio*.

### *Overseeing the Poor*

The “Hotspot zones” in which the “Intervention Teams” operate are areas occupied by low-income inhabitants. The discipline and surveillance that these inhabitants are subjected to is deemed necessary by the local administration because of the logic that the “uncivil” and “criminal” behavior are expected among poorer segments of the city’s population. In fact, income level is as such one of the primary indicators in the “Rotterdam Safety Index” that the municipality uses to define and select “Hotspots” in which the rights of the inhabitants are temporarily suspended (Noordegraaf 2008). The urban *homo sacer*, in this sense, is poor and is to be found in Rotterdam’s poor neighborhoods. Figure 3 gives an indication of the concentration of the poor and the location of “Hotspots” in the city.



**Figure 3:** Percentages of households below the “poverty line” per area

The poverty line is a rather vague instrument of the Central Bureau of Statistics and the Netherlands Institute for Social Research to indicate the amount of people and households receiving/earning an income on or a little bit above the “social minimum”. The “social minimum” is a national policy measure to ensure all citizens have a basic income level, which is annually adjusted. Basic income support (*Bijstand, Wet werken bijstand*: WWB) is based on this calculation. In the Netherlands as a whole, 10% of all households are at or below this poverty line.<sup>9</sup> We use this definition as it is used by policy makers. It therefore gives the best indication of a criterion of selection of “Hotspots”.

One of the explicit goals of the “Intervention Teams” is policing for and prevention of social security fraud. The “Intervention Teams” are thus partly put in place to define who is “deserving” or “worthy” of income support and who is not. Schemes of poor relief in the United States and Europe were often based on this dichotomy because it allowed for measures for “rehabilitation” (Engbersen [1990] 2006; Piven and Cloward [1971] 1993; Rath 1999). Using surprise visits and explicit moral prescriptions (such as the prohibition on spending money on alcohol), the authorities constructed the conditions that the poor have to respect in order to be “worthy” to receive their income from the state. These strategies are still very much used (compare Engbersen [1990] 2006; Gilliom 2001). Wacquant (2001) has argued that at least in the USA there has been a shift towards a penal state, in which the “right hand” of the state has become more dominant. According to Wacquant, the poor in the USA, but increasingly also in Europe, are being subjected to criminalization. To analyze the European situation in these terms is too sweeping. In Europe, the left hand of the state (Bourdieu 1999) is not so much *superseded* by the right hand as it is *supplemented* by it (Wacquant 2001). Wacquant furthermore notes the prevalence of a “territorial stigmatization” of the poor (Wacquant 2008). Such “stigmatization” is part and parcel of the “problematization” that allows for the construction of an object of intervention.

The “Intervention Teams” in Rotterdam are a perfect example of the spatialized way in which policing and criminal justice come together in one policy practice when a police officer, a social worker and a local bureaucrat go on “house calls” *together*. The poor of Rotterdam are not only subjected to surveillance, criminalization and unannounced police visits, but also to disciplining efforts and the treatment of their “incivilities” by bureaucrats in the markets of care. The focus of the “Intervention Teams” is therefore not only on the perceived criminal behavior of the poor, but as much on the normative disciplining of marginals (van Swaaningen 2005; Wacquant 2001). It is a practice that selects the poor and poor neighborhoods to be “paternalistic and punitive at the bottom” and “liberal at the top” (Wacquant 2001:402). In this respect, the Dutch example of ways to oversee the poor is thoroughly

different from the ghettoization and segregation of the poor that have taken place in many cities in the USA. In fact, in Western Europe and the Netherlands inhabitants of “areas of relegation” (Wacquant 2008) have many more encounters with the state than do other citizens.

This *new paternalism* resonates with the specific history of strong paternalism in the Netherlands. As René Boomkens put it, in the Netherlands, the “self-evident presence” of urban planning and social engineering “became a genuinely national project after the war” (Boomkens 2008:10). Building on a rich history of private civilizing offensives in the nineteenth and early twentieth century (see for example Dercksen and Verplanke 1987; De Regt 1984), after the World War II, the formation of the welfare state came with the state’s supervision of citizen’s behaviours. Paternalistic social policies not only set criteria of entrance into social policy schemes but also enforce certain behavioural requirements through close supervision (cf Mead 1998).

While developments in the Netherlands were of course connected to those in the surrounding countries, the tradition of Dutch paternalism is one of exceptional civic obedience and conformity (Duyvendak 1999). Resistance against the status quo was very limited in the Netherlands because of its pillarization until the 1960s. Because of this history, the break down of pillarization and the movement for democratization led to an especially fierce reaction *against* planning and paternalistic policies in the 1970s and 1980s (Duyvendak 1999). However, in the beginning of this decade, far-reaching government intervention has indeed become en vogue again. The “paradox of paternalism”, that is to say the idea that the government should intervene yet people should also remain autonomous subjects, now seems to be solved by implementing very paternalistic policies for very *specific* groups of citizens who are “not yet autonomous” (see Duyvendak 2003). This way, paternalism is very much publicly supported, yet for *other* people: the urban “vulnerable” poor.

### *Dutch “Integration” Policies*

A context crucial in explaining the Dutch rise of urban exceptionalism consists of policies and discourse on immigrant integration. In the early 1990s, that discourse took what has been described as a culturist turn, indicating that a culturalized form of racism became endemic to policies of integration (Schinkel 2007). Dutch culturism, as the normative observation based on a cultural distinction, can be compared to “neo-racism” (Balibar 1991) and to what yet others describe as a form of “cultural racism” (cf Foner 2005). Culturist policies shifted the focus vis-à-vis the “minorities policy” of the 1980s towards the level of the individual migrant instead of striving for group-wise emancipation. After 2000, and aggravated by international events in 2001, a populist

rhetoric of “realism”, “new politics” and a break with “leftist political correctness” became the dominant discourse on immigrant integration. Under the aegis of Conservative minister Verdonk a harsh policy of integration became effective, aiming (paradoxically) at the control of immigration and discursively emphasizing the cultural assimilation of immigrants in the Netherlands (Driouichi 2007; Schinkel 2007). Further, spawned by the many public and political interventions of Ayaan Hirsi Ali, member of parliament for the Dutch Liberal Party—the Conservative Party—debate centered on issues of cultural integration such as the wearing of the head scarf and other gender issues such as forced marriages (Berg and Schinkel 2009). Debate on integration thus narrowed down to cultural issues and, more specifically, to issues relating mainly to “Islam” (Schinkel 2007).

This had as a consequence that integration policy zoomed in on the city. Increasingly, policies of integration became highly localized and embedded in “Large Cities Policy” (*Grote Stedenbeleid*). This led to an important synchronization between national and local policies, in which the latter at times tended to take the lead. Thus, the mayor of Rotterdam saw the “Umbrella and Exception Law” (2005) as a “fine example” of a “fruitful cooperation” between the municipality and the state. Within the larger cities, then, policies further narrowed down to specific quarters. The “ethnic screening” in the Umbrella and Exception Law—which was originally designed to target specific “ethnic groups”—is thus a consequence of a new discourse on integration, which no longer saw integration as a “two-sided process”, but as one-sided cultural assimilation, and which then spatially zoomed in on those in need of assimilation. If Figure 3 is compared with Figure 2, it becomes clear that a huge overlap between poverty and the status as “non-western allochton” exists. In the current culturist climate, this has led to a rhetorical ethnicization of poverty, that is, to a “cultural” explanation of poverty. As the Rotterdam alderman has repeatedly indicated: many in Rotterdam south suffer from a “culture of poverty” and a “street culture”: they aren’t acquainted with proper codes of conduct in working life and therefore they don’t get jobs.

### *Dutch Paternalist Revanchism*

This touches on a third and crucial fertile ground for exceptional urban policy measures, consisting of a *European* form of what Neil Smith has termed “urban revanchism” (Smith 1996; see also van den Berg 2007). Focusing on New York and other major cities in the United States, Neil Smith first identified a reaction in popular media and in public policies to the “supposed ‘theft’ of the city, a desperate defense of a challenged phalanx of privileges, cloaked in the populist language of civic morality, family values and neighborhood security”

(Smith 1996:211). Revanchism is about the identification, elimination or disciplining of the “enemies of within”: of the migrants, the poor and the homeless. MacLeod (2002:616) argued that “the revanchist city framework might stand accused of being a slave to New York”. However, many scholars have attempted to use “revanchist urbanism” as a heuristic tool to understand developments in the UK (Atkinson 2003; MacLeod 2002), Ecuador (Swanson 2007) and the Netherlands (van der Horst 2003; Uitermark and Duyvendak 2008). When using the concept in a more flexible manner, it enhances understanding particularly of the *political* dimensions of contemporary urban inequalities (compare MacLeod 2002; Uitermark and Duyvendak 2008).

The “Intervention Teams” and their practices can be seen as forms of Dutch revanchist practices (compare Uitermark and Duyvendak 2008) in all four senses distinguished by Atkinson (2003): the policy executors are given much discretion; the teams are part of a programme put in place to enhance public space (“Schoon, heel en veilig”: “Clean, whole and safe”); legitimized by dystopian images of the city (compare Baeten 2002); and referring to economic objectives such as the activation of citizens for the labour market and enhancing the economic climate of the designated areas. The “Intervention Teams” are explicitly put to work to take back, reclaim, and “reconquer” (Engbersen, Snel and Weltevreden 2005) parts of the city. Uitermark and Duyvendak (2008) argued that the concept of revanchism fits Rotterdam, even though the differences with the United States are quite substantial as well. Also, van der Horst (2003) insists that even the promotion of multicultural festivals in Rotterdam has revanchist characteristics as they are in fact primarily marketed to the middle classes and used to present the city in a more attractive way for these groups.

Dutch revanchism can be characterized as a specific *paternalistic* brand of revanchism of which the focus on *inclusion* of the “marginalized” and the belief in altering their behaviour are important ingredients. Incorporation and discipline are central processes in urban restructuring in the Netherlands (Uitermark and Duyvendak 2008). The “mixing” of ethnic minorities with Dutch indigenous and efforts to “civilise” these groups are at the centre of attention. Precisely this *inclusion* of “marginalized groups” and the civilizing offensives are characteristic of the practice of the “Intervention Teams” in Rotterdam.

The practice of the “Intervention Teams” is often coupled with a form of restructuring of the public sphere. Especially in Rotterdam, state-led gentrification has been aimed at enhancing social order in the public sphere in certain neighbourhoods (Uitermark, Duyvendak and Kleinhans 2007). The “Rotterdam Law” entails not only the 120% rule, regulating the number of poor inhabiting an area, but also lowers taxes for businesses to enter such areas. In the current large-scale restructuring of the south of Rotterdam (called the “South Pact”), aldermen and

policy-makers explicitly use the term “gentrification” to describe their intentions. This has been a critical concept in social science but has been co-opted by policy-makers (compare Lees, Slater and Wyly 2007). The underlying theory of the practice is that now the public sphere has been restructured, the private sphere is still out of reach of authorities and needs to be entered in order to solve social problems such as illegal housing, prostitution and “chaotic parenting”.

### Discourses of Legitimation

Crucial for the emergence of emergency measures such as the Rotterdam “Intervention Teams” has thus been a mix of factors relating to certain populations in the city. Their discursive legitimation is the next point of attention here. In techniques of governmentality (cf Foucault 1997:185; Miller and Rose 2008:29–32, 57; O’Malley 1992), language and discourse are crucial in articulating biopolitical efforts, in circumscribing targeted populations and in legitimating policy practices. In the discourses that legitimate the practice of the Rotterdam “Intervention Teams”, the exceptional status of the practice returns in many guises and becomes a key element in rhetorical justifications.

The first of these discourses is a *populist discourse of decisiveness*. This not only fits with the Rotterdam image of a “city that works”, but also with the populist turn its politics took after 2002. After Pim Fortuyn, leader of the right-wing party “Livable Rotterdam” (*Leefbaar Rotterdam*) was murdered, his party remained in office in Rotterdam. This party capitalized on the “Rotterdam style” expressed in the slogan “actions speak louder than words!”, which appealed to its electoral base and chimed well with the Rotterdam football team Feyenoord’s house song “No words, but acts”. The focus on decisiveness, which also characterized national political debate on integration policies (Schinkel 2007), is typical of a populist appeal to the sovereign decision, the decisive act in the name of the people regardless of opposition or red tape (Canovan 2005).

This coincides with a *moral discourse of emergency*. The Minister of Housing Spatial Planning and the Environment declared in 2006 that he had visited poor, “backward” neighborhoods in the Netherlands and that the situation there had deteriorated fast enough for chaos to arrive any time. According to his assessment there was a time bomb ticking in these areas. Far-reaching policies are being legitimized because of the “disproportional problems” (Rotterdam City Council 2004) in these areas of exception.

A third discourse of legitimation is an *administrative discourse of innovation*. Generally, “innovation” is an important form of symbolic policy capital for Dutch governmental policies (Tops 2007). Nowhere

does this perhaps become as apparent as in urban policy (cf Lelieveldt, Baerends and de Laat 2002). In an age in which administrators use the phrase: “I don’t need the best practice, I need the *next* practice!”, unorthodox policies such as the “Intervention Teams” can be promoted because of the simple novelty. The “innovativeness” of the Rotterdam “Intervention Teams” was recognized by the City Council when it awarded the coordinating “Front Line Office” a prize for innovative policy practices, the “Get Cracking Award” (*Aanpak Prijs*) (Engbersen, Snel and Weltevreden 2005:102). Part of the innovation of these practices lies in the structure of their governance, that is, in their potential for “cooperation” of various public and private that is typical of contemporary forms of “plural policing” (Jones and Newburn 2006).

Lastly, a fourth discourse of legitimation is an *executive discourse of war*. A bellicose rhetoric exists that construes the situation in the urban zones of exception as a war-like “urban crisis”. This amounts not so much to the “militarization of city life” that Mike Davis (1990:223) noted in LA, but it lends symbolic weight to policy practices garnished in a rhetoric of militarization. Agamben has likewise noted the use of a bellicose rhetoric to legitimate exceptional measures, for instance in the economy in the 1920s: “World War One (and the years following it) appear as a laboratory for testing the functional mechanisms and apparatuses of the state of exception as a paradigm of government” (Agamben 2005:7). The bellicose rhetoric of the “innovation” in Rotterdam urban policy involves urban practice as the “front line” with street-level bureaucrats and other executives as its “front line workers”. It involves “city marines”, high ranking officials with exceptional powers of bypassing red tape in order to be “decisive”. The focus of these urban policies is on “Hotspot zones” in which “Intervention Teams” operate.

## Conclusion

The messiness of the social world is inadequately captured by the “pure” philosophical concepts of Agamben’s work. But his work can nonetheless be fruitful in analyzing contemporary forms of spatial differentiation in exceptional policy practices. Agamben notes how “one of the essential characteristics of the state of exception [is] the provisional abolition of the distinction among legislative, executive, and judicial powers” (Agamben 2005:7). The practice of the Rotterdam “Intervention Teams” embodies a mix of prevention and repression, of assistance and control that amounts to an ensemble of techniques of governmentality targeting specific urban subpopulations. The mixing of functions is one reason to regard this practice with critical scrutiny. It involves a form of zoning based on an exceptional executive power. It therefore coincides with the permanent construction

of the urban *homo sacer*. Agamben's perspective can hence be made fruitful in critical research on urban policies. It involves a connection between politics, law and the production of space—a triangle in which the construction of the human subject is situated. The link between neoliberal governmentality and biopolitics that Foucault first highlighted in his 1978–1979 lectures at the Collège de France (Foucault 2004a) can thus be illustrated by bringing Agamben's link between biopolitics and sovereign power to bear on urban policy practices. Situated in the context of Dutch state-led urban revanchism, a culturist discourse on immigrant integration and a policing of the poor characterized by territorial stigmatization, the urban *homo sacer* emerges. As a consequence of a politics of emergency, the urban *homo sacer* becomes the emblem of an exceptional production of space by decree—a member of a largely immigrant poor subpopulation whose rights are potentially suspended.

Analyzing such policy practices with the help of Agamben's "conceptual persona" of the *homo sacer* means to adopt a critical stance towards these practices. While what we have termed a "rhetoric of emergency" is without question experienced in a wholeheartedly positive way that seeks to diminish poverty and other social problems, we have sought to illustrate the dangers of the resulting policy practices. Not only are the discretion and prerogatives of government officials abused. A further problem concerns the mixing of care and control, leaving poor citizens targeted by policies in a dependent position and hardly able to resist disciplinary efforts or to display their agency. Next there is the problem of selectively disenfranchising citizens, in practice, of various rights. But the biggest normative issue underlying all of this is surely the restriction of the policy focus in dealing with various social problems to such selective target groups. The spatial identification of an "ethnic underclass" has the effect of a supposed spatial "zooming in on the problem". This form of spatial differentiation or "sorting" (Lyon 2003) of the population of the city operates on the assumption that a *localization* of the poor equals their *identification* and subsequent melioration. It thereby at the same time attributes causality, assigns responsibility, and obscures the structural determinants of poverty in a largely industrial city with an increasingly postfordist economic organization. We have aimed both at circumscribing the limits and possibilities of Agamben's perspective in geography, and at contributing to a rights-based critique of spatial differentiation in urban policy (compare Blomley 1994:58). Respecting the fundamental rights of the poor is pivotal in the full recognition of their citizenship. We believe it thus constitutes the first step towards a relational perspective that does not one-sidedly "localize" social problems, but that recognizes both the production of spaces of the poor and the ensuing state-led erasing of the traces of that production.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.rotterdam.nl>, document on “Strevelsweg-methodiek”, registration number 3.003, retrieved 5 September 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Forcing six inhabitants to participate in drug rehab programs, 85 to a social project (Project Goals), relocating 48, retaining/ fining 29, and closing hemp plants etc. These results are frequently published in local newspapers and newsletters.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.strevelsweg.nl> for the website on which the street is now promoted as “cleaned up” with the slogan: “Strong together, ever better” (in Dutch: Samen sterk, steeds beter).

<sup>4</sup> Current Hotspots are: Westzijde Hilleliet/Dahliastraat/Jasmijnstraat (Bloemhof), Boergoensestraat/Maximilliaanstraat (Oud Charlois), Verschoorblok (Tarwewijk), Mijnkintbuurt (Tarwewijk), Mathenesserdijk/Van Dorp locatie (Delfshaven), Putsebocht (Bloemhof), Boulevard Zuid/Beijerkop West (Hillesluis), Oostvoornsestraat/Schilperoordstraat/Frans Brekkenstraat (Oud Charlois), Schepenbuurt (Oud Mathenesse).

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.cos.rotterdam.nl>, Buurt Informatie Rotterdam Digitaal.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.Rotterdam.nl>, document: “Inzet interventieteam”, registration number 1.015, retrieved 30 August 2008.

<sup>7</sup> In most cases this is on the basis of social assistance law (*Wet Werk en Bijstand*). This law decentralized social security and the organization of benefits to the municipal level. This explains how Rotterdam can use different policing techniques as in other cities. Note, though, that in other cities, those dependent on social support benefits are also policed by local bureaucrats; see <http://www.minszw.nl>. See also <http://www.Rotterdam.nl>, document: “Inzet interventieteam”, registration number 1.015, retrieved 30 August 2008.

<sup>8</sup> This is called the GBA approach: Gemeentelijke Basis Administratie. It is based on the municipal administration.

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.scp.nl>; <http://www.cbs.nl>

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