

Policy schizophrenia and the sociology of fragmentation

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Artigo recebido a 24/10/2025.

Aceite para publicação a 31/12/2025.

Abstract

This article revisits the concept of ‘policy schizophrenia’, introduced in *Fragmenting Cities* (Schultz Larsen & Delica, 2024), to analyse how democratic governments increasingly govern urban marginality through stigmatizing and discriminatory policies. The concept captures the ambivalence, incoherence, and fragmenting effects of contemporary urban governance shaped by rapid political and bureaucratic change. Grounded empirically in the Danish “ghetto list,” the article situates policy schizophrenia within debates on neoliberalism, arguing that fragmentation is intrinsic to neoliberal governance. It outlines six interrelated logics of practice as analytical tools and concludes by framing policy schizophrenia as a social diagnosis, briefly exploring its relevance beyond Denmark through the analysis of the rise of Portugal’s Chega party.

Keywords: Policy schizophrenia; Fragmentation; Urban policies.

Esquizofrenia das políticas e a sociologia da fragmentação

Resumo

Este artigo revisita o conceito de “esquizofrenia política”, introduzido em *Fragmenting Cities* (Schultz Larsen & Delica, 2024), para analisar como os governos democráticos governam cada vez mais a marginalidade urbana por meio de políticas estigmatizantes e discriminatórias. O conceito captura a ambivalência, a incoerência e os efeitos fragmentadores da governança

urbana contemporânea moldada por rápidas mudanças políticas e burocráticas. Baseado empiricamente na «lista de guetos» dinamarquesa, o artigo situa a esquizofrenia política no âmbito dos debates sobre o neoliberalismo, argumentando que a fragmentação é intrínseca à governança neoliberal. Ele descreve seis lógicas de prática inter-relacionadas como ferramentas analíticas e conclui enquadrando a esquizofrenia política como um diagnóstico social, explorando brevemente a sua relevância para além da Dinamarca através da análise da ascensão do partido Chega em Portugal.

Palavras-chave: Esquizofrenia política; Fragmentação; Políticas urbanas.

Schizophrénie des politiques et la sociologie de la fragmentation

Résumé

Cet article revisite le concept de «schizophrénie politique», introduit dans *Fragmenting Cities* (Schultz Larsen & Delica, 2024), afin d'analyser comment les gouvernements démocratiques régissent de plus en plus la marginalité urbaine par le biais de politiques stigmatisantes et discriminatoires. Ce concept rend compte de l'ambivalence, de l'incohérence et des effets fragmentateurs de la gouvernance urbaine contemporaine, façonnée par des changements politiques et bureaucratiques rapides. S'appuyant empiriquement sur la « liste des ghettos » danoise, l'article situe la schizophrénie politique dans le cadre des débats sur le néolibéralisme, en affirmant que la fragmentation est intrinsèque à la gouvernance néolibérale. Il présente six logiques de pratique interdépendantes comme outils analytiques et conclut en présentant la schizophrénie politique comme un diagnostic social, explorant brièvement sa pertinence au-delà du Danemark à travers l'analyse de la montée en puissance du parti portugais Chega.

Mots-clés: Schizophrénie politique; Fragmentation; Politiques urbaines.

Esquizofrenia de las políticas y la sociología de la fragmentación

Resumen

Este artículo retoma el concepto de esquizofrenia política, introducido en *Fragmenting Cities* (Schultz Larsen y Delica, 2024), para analizar cómo los gobiernos democráticos gobiernan cada vez más la marginalidad urbana mediante políticas estigmatizantes y discriminatorias. El concepto capta la ambivalencia, la incoherencia y los efectos fragmentadores de la gobernanza urbana contemporánea, moldeada por los rápidos cambios políticos y burocráticos. Basándose empíricamente en la «lista de guetos» danesa, el artículo sitúa la esquizofrenia política en el marco de los debates sobre el neoliberalismo, argumentando que la fragmentación es intrínseca a la gobernanza neoliberal. Esboza seis lógicas de práctica interrelacionadas como herramientas analíticas y concluye enmarcando la esquizofrenia política como un diagnóstico social, explorando brevemente su relevancia más allá de Dinamarca a través del análisis del auge del partido Chega en Portugal.

Palabras clave: Esquizofrenia política; Fragmentación; Políticas urbanas.

Introduction

Our recent book *Fragmenting Cities* (Schultz Larsen & Delica, 2024) addresses the question of how it came about that democratic governments increasingly have come to rely on forms of stigmatization and discrimination with regard to the governance of urban marginality. Underpinning this paradox are processes of social change and struggle, which constitute the fundamental objects of analysis in our book, and especially the concept of *policy schizophrenia*, that we developed throughout its writing. As a concept, policy schizophrenia is intended to capture the ambivalence, the incoherence, the disturbances, and the fragmenting effects of many contemporary urban policies, in tandem with the rapid political and bureaucratic innovations needed to govern increasingly fragmented societies and cities. While policy schizophrenia has already proved to be a valuable social scientific concept in our work, we nonetheless keep questioning its construction. Not least because we understand that the concept may evoke strong emotions or even accusations about using a catchy metaphor founded on stigmatizing terminology when researching the structures, mechanisms, and effects of urban marginality, discrimination, and stigmatization.

In line with this reflexive orientation, in this article we return to the very production process and different aspects of the concept. First, we return to 2010, where the first version of the Danish ‘ghetto list’ was launched to outline how this policy innovation became central to our research trajectory and how the systematic analysis hereof formed the first more empirical gist of the concept. From here we turn toward an outlining of policy schizophrenia as a scientific concept, grounding it in Wacquant’s (2022) principles for forging robust concepts. On this foundation we highlight the intricate relationship between policy schizophrenia and the continuous debates about the contemporary state of neoliberalism, arguing that, as an analytical concept, it can help qualify core, yet overlooked, aspects of neoliberalism, namely those relating to forms of fragmentation as something inherent and part and parcel of neoliberalism.

The next section ‘*Researching policy schizophrenia and Identifying logics of practice*’ condenses the central, conceptual results from the extensive empirical analysis that forms the book’s backbone regarding policy schizophrenia. This is where we specify that policy

schizophrenia, as an analytical concept, refers to a range of different (but interrelated) logics of practice or dispositions that inform political, bureaucratic, and organizational position-taking and practices that are founded on different forms of fragmentation. We specify these logics as de-contextualization, de-historicization, de-particularization, dis-proportionality, decoupling, and finally de-humanization. Here it is important to underline that we do not see these as substantialist invariants, but rather as provisional, intrinsic, and generic invitations to do empirical research across fields and contexts beyond urban sociology, as well as beyond the Danish context in which they were forged.

By way of summing this article up, we provide two sections that, in different ways, look ahead. Firstly, by taking stock across the six logics of practice to argue how policy schizophrenia can be viewed as a *social diagnosis*, providing a novel view on contemporary neoliberalism. Secondly, via an excursus on how policy schizophrenia might travel and open for fruitful analytical insights well beyond the Danish case, we briefly discuss, by way of example, how we see, from outside and afar, the inherent contradictions and fragmentation in the recent tilting to the right of the Portuguese political field via Chega Party's rapid rise and establishment as a political power and how this party pushes debates on immigration, national identity, institutional reforms, and welfare retraction to the forefront.

1. The '*Ghetto list*' and the discovery of policy schizophrenia

In the autumn of 2010, the first iteration of the now internationally (in)famous Danish 'ghetto list' was introduced by the Government. At first glance, the ghetto list, which at the time represented the first and only state-sanctioned definition of a ghetto in the world, appeared to be a populist attempt by the liberal Prime Minister to attract voters in the run-up to the elections. Political programs and policy ideas are, after all, floated and launched frequently during these periods. Despite the openly stigmatizing, discriminatory and symbolically violent nature, there was no indication at that time that the list would gradually become assimilated into the structures of political and bureaucratic fields. We had no idea that this electoral ballooning – and its political and bureaucratic success – would become a central element in

our future research in the impetus for writing the book. Furthermore, we could not foresee the profound, practical political influence that it would have on housing policies, immigration policies, and the wider political climate in Denmark and abroad. In hindsight, one of the astounding things about the 'ghetto list' is how it developed into a real political 'Swiss knife' governance tool, suitable for multiple purposes.

In autumn 2016, we decided to embark on a collaborative project on the stigmatization of housing in Denmark (BOSID). Our original intention was to focus, in relatively narrow terms, on the territorial stigmatization of housing, considering especially the not-for-profit housing estates in Denmark, and to document the varied and complex consequences it has for places and social groups (Schultz Larsen, 2018; Schultz Larsen & Delica, 2019). However, several questions kept nagging us around the production of territorial stigmatization and the apparent deep-seated nature of territorial stigma once established. Pondering these questions in the context of the political and academic discussions about the 'ghetto list' gradually led us to consider the state and its role in the production of territorial stigmatization. It became increasingly clear that we kept falling back on the state in our attempts to comprehend the spatialization of advanced marginality and the entrenchment of territorial stigmatization. At first, we did not consider the state *per se*, but rather concentrated on the political forces that produced forms of territorial stigmatization and their exploitation of state power for their political projects (e.g., Schultz Larsen, 2014, 2018; Schultz Larsen & Delica, 2019). It was not until we began bringing together the questions of the production of territorial stigmatization *and* territorial de-stigmatization that the fundamental, ambivalent involvement of the state became more apparent, not least when we began to question how and by whom they were produced in practice (Schultz Larsen & Delica, 2021). This discovery of the state's indisputable simultaneous role in both the production of territorial stigmatization and of de-stigmatization processes was what led us initially to construct the concept of policy schizophrenia and constituted our initial definition of the concept: as situations of political and bureaucratic stigmatization from above, in combination with policy initiatives directed at de-stigmatization from below.

Once defined, the concept helped sharpen the construction of our object of research by posing new questions – as such, this process can be seen as an example of reflexive sociology in practice (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). It meant posing the simple question of how the state could be responsible for the ghetto list and its de-stigmatization policies at the same time. It also opened for more specific questions, for instance, concerning the ways in which the various ministries and different levels of government were involved, how different agents of the state were sometimes in competition or direct confrontation with each other while other times promoting collaboration within and across the state, the extent to which they were grounded in different rationalities depending on their position within the state, etc. To us, all these new questions helped frame the importance of the state and bring it, explicitly and empirically, into the equation. Additionally, the concept helped us view the policy efforts in response to the deep-seated nature of territorial stigma in a new light, whereby the double-sided, Sisyphean character of efforts to destigmatize are not unforeseen policy consequences of addressing a wicked problem but partly integral to the political and institutional logics of wider state and housing policies (Schultz Larsen & Delica, 2021), something that feeds directly into the concept of policy schizophrenia, comprehended as *a social diagnosis which designates processes whereby policies and initiatives are as much directed toward transforming state institutions themselves as toward the city and its residents.*

One of the most potent examples of the schism between policies of stigmatization from above and political ambitions to destigmatize at neighborhood level was the launch of the Parallel Society Act (PSA), in 2018. It took place under intense media attention, not least because the launch was staged in the most blighted and blemished place in Denmark over the past two decades: Mjølnerparken, in the heart of ‘Wonderful Copenhagen.’ Here, the Prime Minister, flanked by seven ministers, including the Minister of Housing responsible for destigmatization, showed up with a massive security presence without any warning and ousted the residents from their own community house. In a speech given by the Prime Minister in the community house, a place designed to foster local belonging and community, he proclaimed that:

“Around the country, there are parallel societies where many people with the same problems are lumped together, and it creates a negative spiral. A counterculture. Where people do not take responsibility, do not participate, and do not use the opportunities we have in Denmark – they stand outside” (Løkke Rasmussen, 2018).

The PSA, which allegedly would eradicate all ghettos (and thereby stigmatization) by 2030, comprised 22 proposals, including increased policing and social surveillance, as well as that 60% of the not-for-profit family housing units in so-called ‘ghetto areas’ should be demolished, privatized, or transformed into non-family housing units. As a direct outcome, the community house in Mjølnerparken was demolished in 2022, and around 260 families have since been displaced as part of the process because their apartments were sold off to private developers. All along, several publicly sponsored area-based programs were kept going to ensure support to the residents, helping local youth in the educational system, getting a foothold on the labour market, etc. (for an in-depth analysis of the Mjølnerparken case, see Söderberg, 2024).

Simultaneously, through our empirical research, we documented a continuous strengthening of the collaboration at the local level between local politicians, municipalities, housing associations, civil society organizations, and residents concerning the development and implementation of territorial de-stigmatization policies and strategies across numerous municipalities all over Denmark. This was what alerted us to the wider implications of policy schizophrenia *as a process*. It implies fundamental shifts within the state in the very definition of what constitutes a legitimate social problem (for instance, poverty or lack of social integration), which type of institutions should deal with these social problems (redistributive, empowering, or correctional), with what types of agents (welfare officers, social workers, or police), and so forth.

Our empirical engagement with this ambiguous and contradictory process led us to consider policy schizophrenia more systematically, and aim at developing it into a rigorously constructed scientific concept, not least given the contemporary discussion on ableism and the long and intensive stigmatization of people suffering from the effects of mental health

issues relating to schizophrenia. In the following section, we unpack the construction of policy schizophrenia as a scientific concept.

2. The construction of policy schizophrenia as a scientific concept

In *The Invention of the 'Underclass'*, Wacquant (2022) stresses the need to test our concepts to ensure that they are a) *clear and neutral* in order to minimize the risk of misreading and misuse, while at the same time not playing on emotions, ideology, or moral verdicts; b) *coherent and specific* in such a way that their attributes do not contradict each other while at the same time identifying a distinctive configuration or object of research and separating it from other objects; and c) *empirically adequate and theoretically productive*, thus helping to generate rich, nuanced data, hypotheses, and comparisons across multiple cases and scales, while also linking up and engaging with other concepts and theories to validate, refute, or develop them.

Turning to the concept of policy schizophrenia and viewing it through this lens, we note that the prefix 'policy' is deliberately placed before the suffix 'schizophrenia.' This runs parallel to the arguments within ableism, which stress that we should place object attributes before identity characteristics. Thus, the focus is first on *policy* and how policies are part of, or are the outcome of, political, bureaucratic, and institutional struggles (e.g., classification struggles in Bourdieu's (2018) sense) and concern the principles of vision and division of the social world or within a given field, guiding decision-making and shaping the social conditions for action. Policy thus underscores the relations to the political and bureaucratic fields (i.e., the state, politics, and regulation). The suffix '*schizophrenia*' indicates a diagnosis of a novel type and form of policies and policymaking that we should consider and which we need to classify and specify as distinct from other forms of policy. Drawing on the US *DSM-5* and international *ICD-11* classifications of diseases, schizophrenia denotes an empirically identifiable diagnostic construct with a distinct set of criteria, albeit one characterized by multifactorial causes and a significant heterogeneity of signs, symptoms, process courses, and outcomes within and across multiple domains (see also Valle, 2020). Specifically, the suffix of policy schizophrenia

underscores a focus on symptoms, processes, and outcomes relating to ambivalence, incoherence, disturbances, and fragmentations within and across multiple domains. In this way, both policy schizophrenia and the clinical concept are diagnostic constructs, each with a distinct set of criteria which are nonetheless open-ended, adequate, and deliberately designed to be applied to a variety of empirical cases and situations across different contexts and places.

Yet, and this is very important, we should not forget that policy schizophrenia differs from the clinical concept in addressing the classification and diagnosis of social and urban problems and *not* individual mental disturbances. Neither should we forget that just as social problems are contested, so is the clinical concept of schizophrenia. In fact, it is highly contested and characterized by wide disagreement within the medical field, especially in pathology and nosology, concerning its definition, causes, and practical clinical classifications regarding its precise diagnosis. In other words, the concept of schizophrenia itself represents a specific type of classification struggle while simultaneously constituting a classificatory concept. An important facet here is the reciprocal legitimation between a (medical) science with a high degree of autonomy guaranteed by the state – this relative autonomy means that the classificatory struggles are principally based on medical principles, which are not directly influenced by political or economic interests. The outcome of these struggles in turn tends to be institutionalized by the state as the official (medical) definition. Hence, we can already note here that the concept of policy schizophrenia is explicitly constructed to highlight the important relations between classification struggles and the state.

Finally, as already mentioned, the use of the term ‘schizophrenia’ in public discourse is highly controversial, as it is often reductionist and used misleadingly and interchangeably with other mental health conditions. It also relies on common stereotypes, prejudices, and misunderstandings, which results in the legitimization of stigmatization and discrimination. Combining both parts of the concept, policy schizophrenia highlights the fact that classification struggles over categories of perception of the social world are not only symbolic but also practical, institutional, and material (i.e., people and bodies are marked and defined); more importantly, at their core, such concepts and classification struggles are related to

power and, ultimately, the state. Therefore, policy schizophrenia also implies that forms of stigmatization inevitably relate to the social and structural conditions of their production, which in contemporary societies underscore the need to comprehend the role of the political field and the state in such processes. In our case, it involved breaking away from the doxic concession that territorial stigmatization is the result of neighborhood effects and/or the poor choices of the poor and analysing it as an integral component of contemporary neoliberal urban governance.

In sum, the two parts of the concept enable us to capture processes characterized by ambivalence, incoherence, disturbances, and fragmentations in multiple domains and dimensions across social, symbolic, and physical space. These processes have an inherent duality: they are partly the effects of struggles over the perception, representation, and classification of social and urban problems, as well as struggles over the organization and allocation of resources for responses to these problems. This social scientific comprehension of policy schizophrenia has very little to do with the unjust and tragic stigmatization of people living with a severe mental health condition and should not be confused with it.

3. Policy schizophrenia as a specification of contemporary neoliberalism

To further substantiate our arguments, we will briefly outline two interconnected arguments that link policy schizophrenia to neoliberalism: the first, empirical, the second more theoretical. Firstly, as argued above, policy schizophrenia is a novel type and form of policy directly relating to the gradual expansion of neoliberalism, which increasingly pervades every sector of social and urban space. Secondly, it has become a key feature of neoliberalism, and to comprehend it, we must include in the analysis the increasing number of ambivalences, disturbances, disjunctures, disorders, fragmentations, and self-contradictions that it produces, not as wicked problems, unfortunate events, or unintended side- or site-effects, but as integral to neoliberalism in its different forms.

This requires us to provide further specification to the current understandings of neoliberalism. For instance, according to Harvey (2005, 2006), neoliberalism is a theory of

political economic practices that champions the idea that self-regulating markets are the most efficient and ethical way to allocate resources. Moving beyond Harvey, we argue that we should also conceive neoliberalism as a political philosophy, at the core of which is the belief that economic freedom is a prerequisite for political and personal freedom. Together, these conceptions essentially translate into both practical and moral questions of political legitimacy on how to adequately conceive the relation between the political, economic, and social order. This is in line with Wacquant's (2009, 2023) arguments that underscore how neoliberalism is not merely an economic doctrine but also a practical political project that reshapes the state itself. We concur with this but want to underscore how neoliberalism is not only a project intending to reshape the state but also to reshape the social space and the physical space through processes that are related in at least two ways. Firstly, to champion the idea and practice self-regulating markets involves efforts to fragment social collectives and microcosms not based on, or directly opposed to, such market regulation. Fragmenting social collectives can be very hard and, in many cases, require a strong state, but with entirely different capacities than that of the welfare state. Nonetheless, an effect of such fragmentation of different social collectives is a wider fragmentation of social space and a weakening of cohesion across multiple domains. Secondly, to govern increasingly individualized and hence fragmented social domains often requires measures across scales and sectors that readily contradict neoliberal ideology and orthodox economic rationality. These include expanded state regulation – especially targeting marginalized groups and sectors advocating for democratic welfare – alongside with nationalism, stigmatization, ethnicization, welfare contraction, aggressive labour market policies, and the privatization of public space and housing. Public management reforms, while ideologically celebrating entrepreneurship and private-sector efficiency, often contradict these ideals in practice (Harvey, 1989; Hood, 1991; Hood & Dixon, 2015; Osborne, 2006; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992).

Together, this paints a picture of neoliberalism as fragmented and incoherent, but also as very flexible and adaptive. In other words, neoliberalism gives rise to ambivalences, incoherences, fragmentations, and schisms within the state and between different scales of the state, in social spaces, between social groups, and in the city, over the use, value, and right to different types of spaces and places. At the same time, however, neoliberalism involves a highly

productive and flexible rearticulation of these spaces, which may be reintegrated and governed as marketable places and financial objects designed for consumption, circulation, investment, and exploitation. It is this multiplicity of practical-political struggles, ambivalences, and fragmentations – and their governance – that we intend to capture with the concept of policy schizophrenia as a specific articulation of neoliberalism.

On this backdrop, policy schizophrenia may tentatively be defined *as processes based on efforts to fragment ideas of public services, welfare, and social security (including public space) and to transform the social collective associated with them into sets of individuals with their own personal interests and tastes, the state and its varied institutions into the (re)producers and guarantors of self-regulating markets*. Consequently, an implicit core process in policy schizophrenia becomes the struggle to direct state power against the relatively autonomous social microcosms that are not in line with market rationalities, including those that rely on the state for their existence. Something that in practice will mean the direction of state power against state institutions. This, of course, entails resistance, which means that processes of policy schizophrenia necessarily include the production, organization, and implementation of policies to overcome resistance and to legitimize such interventions.

4. Researching policy schizophrenia and identifying logics of praxis

The argument we unfold through the empirical analysis in *Fragmenting Cities* (Schultz Larsen & Delica, 2024) is that the fragmentation of the state, the city, and society are not unfortunate side effects of wicked problems but integral parts of neoliberal state crafting and governance of advanced urban marginality. As an analytical concept, policy schizophrenia refers to the increasing extent to which a cumulative set of *logics of practice* or dispositions that inform political, bureaucratic, and organizational position-taking and practices are founded on fragmentation, peripheralization, division, and individualization. As such logics of practice become more interwoven, more dominant and more taken for granted across multiple domains, they give rise to several systematic inconsistencies within and across the state, the city, and the conceptions of citizenship, rights, and duties. Through our empirical analysis, we

identified six such distinctive characteristics of policy schizophrenia, which we believe can be applied fruitfully to understand how the driving logics of forms of neoliberalism and advanced marginality are produced and legitimized in struggles in and over the urban and the state.

In other words, each characteristic constitutes an invitation to ‘site-specific’ analyses across the whole gamut of the state and its policy fields based on the logics of fragmentation of social collectives, groups, and institutions – especially those attempting to uphold universality and public goods as something worth defending. This is also our argument for the use of the dissociating prefixes *de-* and *dis-* in the following specification. They serve to remind us that the state is not a unified and unifying institution in its own right; it can and does, in fact, in many cases, produce fragmentation:

De-contextualization. In our case, this refers to the de-contextualization of the stigmatized housing estates, the de-contextualization of ‘the areas’ from the surrounding city, and of the flows of people, goods, and resources. This is achieved by constructing ‘the area’ as a *container category*, which, on the one hand, is claimed to represent a ‘natural’ physical space, yet ignores the wider geography and the social and symbolic boundaries and networks of everyday life. This makes changing the political scale possible. In our case, it meant that it was possible to circumvent the issue of equality and *class politics* at the national level through a *politics of places* that focused on the high concentration of social problems at the local level and the categorization of these places. From a wider perspective, de-contextualization can be defined as the artificial isolation of a given social phenomenon or a given public problem from its social, spatial, and symbolic contexts.

De-historicization is, in a sense, a specific temporal form of de-contextualization. In our case, it involves the isolation of the problems of ‘the area’ and the residents living there to the ‘here and now.’ The annual publication of the ‘ghetto list’ is a clear example of this logic. More broadly, de-historicization amounts to the production of *amnesia genesis* – forgetting the history of the production of a social condition – which legitimizes the neglect of the long-term historical struggle that shaped the stigmatized housing estates, including the fight over the political economy of the housing market, the labour market, and the education system. An

additional consequence is that it becomes possible to neglect the historical struggles over the rights to, and over the distribution of, public goods, services, and resources.

De-particularization involves invoking short-term project logics attuned to the conjectures of the political field rather than those of the policy field, which in our case manifested in the annual publication of the list, the launch of new initiatives as part of election campaigns, and changing the framework for the relevant goals and measurements in de-stigmatization work every four or five years. These short-term logics also help to ratify ‘the area’ as something that is independent from the wider social space – a socially produced artifact that can be measured, compared (with other areas), and manipulated. Furthermore, the combination of a short-term logic and the lack of a structural and historical analysis to partly explain why people live where they do enable the political shift to the shame and blame of personal misfortunes at the individual level, while further supporting the increasing ascription of negative social honour to both places and people.

Dis-proportionality. Within jurisprudence, proportionality is used as a criterion of fairness and justice in statutory interpretation processes – to determine the right balance between a restriction imposed by law and the severity of the act committed (i.e., the punishment should fit the crime). In our case, it constitutes a lack of proportion between the actual social problems and how they are portrayed in public, as well as a lack of proportion between the social problems and the measures and initiatives implemented to address them.

De-coupling of the different scales of (urban) governance means, in our case, that the national level is being increasingly decoupled from the local level, which fosters stigmatization from above and below simultaneously. This is achieved by *de-centralizing* responsibility while *re-centralizing* control over the definition of the problem that ‘the area’ (defined centrally) is facing (i.e., the *allocation of resources*) and by standardizing the production of knowledge about de-stigmatization, especially through evaluation and application standards. With this double movement of de-centralizing and re-centralizing, the state is naturalized as something outside and above the area. In fact, this constitutes a mode of knowing (a *doxa*) that neglects the role of the state and the political process in reducing ‘housing research and knowledge

production' to questions focused on processes, policies, interventions, implementation, and evaluation. This fits hand-in-glove with the division of labour in the scientific field in Denmark, in which think tanks and sector research institutions deliver evaluations of current urban problems without questioning more critical perspectives or the given definitions delivered by the state.

De-humanization. Following Bauman (2000), dehumanization is characterized by three central components: (1) producing distance between decisions, actions, and consequences; (2) casting the objects of action (be they particular social groups or individuals) from any position of social or moral worth, from which they may challenge the actions or the social agents of the given action; and (3) reducing the object of action itself from a whole object to a semblance of a finite or limited set of attributes constituting a political problem and never a whole object in its own right, let alone an object that can be ascribed any social or moral worth.

Thus, including de-humanization as a logic of practice enables us to connect the concept of policy schizophrenia with Baumann's (2000) analysis of bureaucratic rationality, Wacquant's (2024) re-conceptualization of race and ethnicity as the social ascription of the estimation of honour of different social groups, and Elias and Scotson's (1994) conceptions on the logics of the 'minority of the worst.' Overall, this casts a new light on the efforts to respond to persistent territorial stigma, implying that their apparently Sisyphean character of dealing with sticky stigmas is not an unforeseen policy consequence of addressing a wicked problem but is integral to the institutional logics of urban governance. In fact, the Sisyphean character of territorial de-stigmatization has come to legitimize current radical policy measures of (territorial) stigmatization, demolition, eviction, gentrification, and re-privatization of the neglected territories. De-humanization represents a regression from the welfare state rationalities of universality, redistribution, and citizenship rights towards a return to the moral and moralizing distinction between the deserving and the undeserving based on individual conduct and on social origin (based on a particular hierarchization of a mix of categories of differentiation such as class, ethnicity, and race, etc.). In practice, this comes to constitute social investment and enablement of the deserving and stigmatization and sanctioning of the

undeserving. Hence, de-humanization is also linked to the production of invisibility, interchangeability, and indifference, in combination with the production of ignorance, all of which inform, underpin, and legitimize a wide range of policies and initiatives. This occurs by generalizing findings and experiences, which are often based on standardized evaluations, statistical aggregation models, and overarching policy models. In practice, this becomes evident in many ways, such as in the increased reliance on think tanks as key entrepreneurs in the business of the development and import-export of new ideas. Furthermore, de-humanization is also supported via the institutionalization of so-called ‘evidence-based evaluation’ and ‘knowledge production’ based on narrow politically defined criteria and goals, the increased reliance on in-house (interministerial) knowledge production, and the ignoring of critical academic research, engaged frontline workers, and citizen perspectives.

Spanning these six characteristics and linked to each of them is *knowledge production*, which involves intensive classification struggles over the politics of knowledge and ignorance, which both Slater (2021) and Wacquant (2022) underscore, and which we have tried to demonstrate and address throughout our analysis. These political precursors are central not only to the actual production of contemporary advanced marginality but also to the production of *toxic agnotology*. Toxic because it becomes increasingly difficult for individuals to question and oppose decisions concerning their welfare as these are increasingly based on abstract administrative processes and data collected from across the public sector. In its most radical form, this form of agnotology involves experimentation with and implementation of AI and machine-based prediction, which seeks to identify those most likely to commit crimes, ‘cheat’ on the welfare benefits system, or put children at risk, without wider democratic discussion about the underlying assumptions on which the algorithms are founded nor about their societal implications (Jørgensen, 2023; see also Jørgensen *et al.*, 2022; Pereira & Raetzsch, 2022). More commonly, the production of agnotology takes the form of grey bureaucratic literature without authors (only ministries, institutions, consultancies, think tanks, etc.), produced without consideration of the historical conventions of scientific knowledge production, but instead reliant on the symbolic power often granted by the state. Increasingly, this literature is drawing from scientific papers, which are chosen precisely because their conclusions support desired pre-established conclusions and because of the

symbolic credibility they lend to the grey literature, and not because they are state-of-the-art. In such roundabout ways, academia also increasingly lends itself to the production of policy-based evidence in opposition to evidence-based policy.

5. Placing policy schizophrenia in the field of the social sciences

The strategies and territorial de-stigmatization efforts are not without effect. We do not claim that the managers and social workers involved in the efforts are simply reproducing specific forms of social and symbolic domination. It is important to emphasize the multiple, often positive, effects of many area-based strategies and initiatives – especially at the local and individual level (Christensen, 2013; Jensen & Christensen, 2012; Mazanti & Pløger, 2003) – and the numerous ways in which frontline workers and project managers strive to make a difference within this regime of urban governance. Nevertheless, these logics become part of the very production of territorial stigmatization at the national level, and under these conditions, there is a constant risk that de-stigmatization efforts will uphold this regime. As such, novel regimes of urban governance that rely on policy schizophrenia constitute a distinct dynamic of contemporary advanced urban marginality and a characteristic of contemporary neoliberal political economy in the urban sphere, which stresses the urgent need to analyse and comprehend the historical formation of policy schizophrenia and the role of the state in this process, which is exactly what we pursue in the subsequent analysis.

The logics of policy schizophrenia briefly outlined here are based on our empirical and analytical findings in the book. From a neo-Bourdieuian perspective, the components take the form of practical logics that inform position-taking, political strategies, and bureaucratic regulation. As such, they should be expected to manifest themselves in different ways depending on the context (other policy fields, countries, or cultures). In this way, they are explicitly constructed to support comparative analysis. These practical logics are founded on an anti-collective view of the social world, which, in principle, only acknowledges the individual. As a result, these logics inform praxis and political position-taking with the aim of fragmenting, dividing, or completely dismantling social collectives and institutions, notably

collective forms of welfare in their different forms. This is why these logics have an entirely different status than, for instance, the characteristics and driving mechanisms of advanced marginality outlined by Wacquant in *Urban Outcasts*, or the four institutional logics of neoliberalism he discusses in *Punishing the Poor* (Wacquant, 2008, 2009). This is because even though the practical logics of policy schizophrenia are the result of a concrete empirical analysis of different social positions and their points of view (i.e., an analysis of the visions of the social world seen from different particular positions through the analysis of particular agents as representatives of these positions), they are also, at the very same time, a representation of the structures of perception informing these agents' visions of the social world. These practical logics constitute part of different 'socio-symbolic dispositional programs' that manifest themselves in practice without there being a need for explicit individual will, as Bourdieu (1967) asserts in his rearticulation of habitus as a sociological concept.

In this sense, *Fragmenting Cities* identifies some of the fundamental logics that underlie contemporary *neoliberal reality*. This includes the struggles over the state's ability to have these logics become state-certified principles taken for granted. This implies an analysis of the state and its role in producing and legitimizing policy schizophrenia and its logics and practices. This is also where we extend and integrate Bourdieu's analysis of the field of power, the political field, and the bureaucratic field by rearticulating the state itself as a set of relatively autonomous yet nested fields (for an in-depth outlining of the state as nested fields, see Schultz Larsen & Delica, 2024, chapter 2).

An analysis that takes the struggle over the nested fields of the state into account will allow us to assess the extent to which different policies, initiatives, and strategies, which are manifestations of social struggles among contending positions, are shaped and founded on logics of praxis and categories of perception, which can be said to be neoliberal. This analysis, however, is only possible if it also considers that neoliberalism as a theory/ideology (Harvey) and as state crafting and institutional dynamics (Wacquant) is represented by some of the contending positions that are part of the struggles over the state but nonetheless take an interest in the state. Taken together, this allows us to single out the collectivity at the heart

of individual agency – via common and collectively shared categories of perception – without neglecting the individual’s potential for adaptation, innovation, and improvisation, as well as situations in which agents are acting out of place. Situations like these may arise when an individual’s categories of perception or dispositions are out of concordance with the position and/or field in which the agents are struggling, which may occur gradually over time because of aging or a change of career position, or more rapidly due to migration/immigration or upward/downward social mobility. This restores the individual agent to structural and institutional analysis and helps us comprehend the messy and complex varieties of existing neoliberalism, which is then understood as the outcome of historical struggles between existing agents and collectives endowed with different chances to succeed in preserving or changing the principles of vision and division in accordance with their social position and the categories of perception and recognition that inform their dispositional intuition.

This analysis shares some similarities with Foucault’s (2014; see also Foucault & Senellart, 2008) conception of neoliberalism as a political and governmental rationality that leads to specific ways of problematizing social phenomena and addressing them by applying different forms of knowledge and techniques. For Foucault, these forms of problematization and action are first and foremost organized around the concepts of market and free competition. Second, and in contrast to earlier forms of liberalism, neoliberal political rationality underscores the need for the state to actively pursue and produce marketization and competition, which in turn entails that the state itself should be organized according to these principles. Third, for Foucault, a key principle of the neoliberal state is that, once organized according to these principles, the state should govern as little as possible. Building on this general comprehension of neoliberalism as a political rationality focusing on marketization, competition, and ultimately the reduction of government has led to a shift in focus from the state towards the various and varied political projects it fosters, supports, and organizes, as well as the different forms these take, their uneven distribution, and their impact in different contexts (Brenner, Peck & Theodore, 2010; Harvey, 2005; Jessop, 2013). While this shift has been theoretically productive, it has paved the way for the analytical neglect of the state itself and how the very structures and institutions help shape the role of the legitimate control and use of diverse forms of state power. This is especially true in cases such as ours, where we

analyse how state institutions and powers are being directed *against* social institutions and social collectives that constitute a part of the state itself or that rely on, and are guaranteed by, the state for their existence.

The process of turning *the state against the state* is another key feature of the concept of policy schizophrenia. By relegating neoliberalism to a political or governmental rationality, the analysis of its various and uneven forms risks ignoring that its self-contradictory and practical aspects are the outcome of historical struggles between contending positions over symbolic, social, and material profits and risks overemphasizing particular traits as comprehensive. Such a claim could be made for concepts such as Harvey's (1989) *entrepreneurial state*, Cerny (1997), Hirsch (1995) and Jessop's (2004) *competition state*, Giddens' (1999) *social investment state*, and Wacquant's (2009) *centaur state*. Rather than overemphasizing particular traits and developments, the different conceptions of the state can be viewed as an exposition of aspects of practical strategies that are informed by similar or homologous logics of praxis. Hence, to consider *policy schizophrenia* as a social diagnosis from this perspective is also to point out the similarity in the numerous practical strategies aimed at fragmenting social collectives and producing the social conditions of sustaining and producing agents with an appreciation of market rationalities across varied cultural and social contexts.

6. Policy schizophrenia as a social diagnosis

Viewing the logics of practice in our outlining of policy schizophrenia together enabled us to draw the contours of a novel regime of neoliberal governance. This shifts the register from the logics of practice themselves to the analysis of the regime, including the character, role, and effect of the state in the historical production of the social conditions, for these logics to become institutionalized as official state logics operating as modes of defining and dealing with public problems. Finally, policy schizophrenia allows us to play with the registers of social diagnosis, which amounts to outlining some of the more general properties of our case and, by extension, its potential for comparative analysis.

As a social diagnosis, policy schizophrenia can be said to designate a regime of governance consisting of specific forms, modes, means, and instruments of fragmentation at multiple scales, in combination with the development of the modes, means, and instruments of governing fragmenting cities and societies under the pretext of addressing the challenges that globalization, migration, pandemics, digital capitalism, authoritarianism, and so on pose to social cohesion, social values, and the thriving of the nation. This in turn also allows us to underline how policy schizophrenia – as a particular specification of neoliberalism – does not presuppose any opposition between neoliberalism and the state. On the contrary, our diagnosis and specification of neoliberalism underscore the struggle to appropriate and use public resources and different forms of power against social collectives, institutions, rights, and social microcosms not founded on general market logics, many of which the state has historically come to be the guarantor of. In this sense, policy schizophrenia as a social diagnosis becomes a case of the state being turned on itself, not with the intent of reducing its size, but rather to fundamentally reorganize it, which in many cases leads to its practical expansion. One reason for this is that establishing and upholding (quasi)markets is costly, and further exposing public goods and services to market logics requires huge resources for control, regulation, and knowledge production, including boosting knowledge and know-how of contractual specification, the functional and organizational separation of principal, provider/producer, and recipient (consumer) of the public services, and so on.

What is more carrying through a great transformation, in Polanyi's vocabulary (Polanyi, 2001), or a symbolic revolution, in Bourdieu's sense (Bourdieu, 2017), involves long and hard battles against all those who are invested in, have an interest in, or are dependent on the microcosms involved, and in our case of housing, especially those related to public services and welfare. As we have argued, the practical logics of policy schizophrenia are exactly key components in producing the social conditions needed to fragment and stigmatize social collectives to undercut investments in and dependencies on collective welfare and public goods. The cost of the social, symbolic, and ideological labour and resources needed to legitimize, instrumentalize, and institutionalize this regime is massive – not least in terms of social suffering. This is so not least because of the neoliberal struggle to reorganize the state, which has been and is being met with strong resistance: wide factions of the population, especially

those most dependent on the welfare state, whether through redistribution, the provision of public services, or employment, do not readily accept the logics of practice informing policy schizophrenia. Overcoming this resistance has called for not only the increasing reliance on forms of stigmatization and symbolic violence but also for the tightening of the control over the people contesting the institutions of the state.

Another key mechanism has been the increasing political and societal concern with public expenditure. This concern has fostered an acceleration in knowledge production and public innovations in terms of governance techniques and technologies that can discern between those who are deemed eligible for public resources and those who are not, and increasingly we see how the allocation of public resources has become a moral question of who is worthy and unworthy of receiving support. The demand for such knowledge and means of governance (including theories, methods, measurements, assessments, evaluations, etc.) comes from different agents in the political field. It also comes from within the bureaucratic field, not least treasuries, which have an explicit interest in controlling expenditures, not just out of devotion to their public office and duty, but also to increase their position and power within the bureaucratic field and implicitly in the political field. Capturing how policy schizophrenia operates in practice as polyphonic and attuned to several registers at the same time, while being linked via logics of practice relating to forms of fragmentation, enables us to argue that both the logics of practice and policy schizophrenia as a regime of neoliberal governance and state crafting have wider application beyond the Danish case.

Further, an ambition in developing policy schizophrenia as a scientific concept is a firm belief in the need for interdisciplinary research. In this vein we end this piece by highlighting that the six logics can be generalized into orientational *foci* points, forming the outline of a research program adaptable to analysing and asking questions at different scales in different national contexts.

De-contextualisation sharpens the sociological focus on structures and institutions, *de-historicization* makes a case for the relevance of the genesis of social conditions and social struggles, *de-particularization* focuses explicitly on the political struggles used to impose

political logics (e.g. short time) and reduce the relative autonomy of any specific field, *dis-proportionality* adds a focus on the process behind the circumventing of juridical logics of rights, citizenships and proportionality and how these are replaced with moral justified distinctions between deserving and undeserving people (often targeting immigrants), the logic behind *de-coupling* provides a spatial element drawing on the geographical separation of different scales according to the economic distinction between principal (centre/national) and agents (periphery/local), and, finally, as humanistic compass, our explicit focus in tendencies to *de-humanization* sharpens our awareness on the process behind subversion of questions of *human worth* and *social justice* as a core element always asking who benefits and in which ways, regarding ongoing and historical processes of change.

7. An excursus: policy schizophrenia in contemporary Portugal

The following excursus, which we hope will be read on a principle of charity, can only be very preliminary and provisional. We are no experts on the Portuguese political field, and we rely on the limited existing English language academic literature referring to the recent rise of the Chega Party. Our intentions are to, humbly, provide an invitation for Portuguese colleagues and fellow researchers to think about how an analysis in terms of ‘nested fields’ and ‘policy schizophrenia’ might travel and open for fruitful analytical insights.

Looking from Denmark to Portugal (and beyond) through the lens of policy schizophrenia, we register the explosive success of the Chega Party and the tilting to the right of the political space. While Portugal has been praised, over the past decade, as an European exception for managing to hold off the right-wing populism sweeping across the continent (Heyne & Manucci, 2021; Manucci, 2024; Mendes, 2021; Quintas Da Silva, 2018), the country celebrated the 50th anniversary of the Carnation Revolution, which marked the end of almost 50 years of the fascist-authoritarian *Estado Novo* regime, dealing with the fact that right-wing populism has come to the forefront in the wake of the Chega Party’s extraordinary political ascendancy. From one seat in parliament in the 2019 national election to 50 in 2024, before reaching 60 seats in the 2025 election, when Chega became the second-largest party in

parliament, just behind the Social-Democrat Party, and despite Chega's falling short of expectations in the latest municipal election, Portugal has witnessed the rise of this party as a new major political force in Portugal, bringing about a major challenge to the traditional balance between the two major parties, a balance that has been in place since the Carnation Revolution (Manucci, 2024; Mendes, 2021).

Chega's rise in Portugal mirrors a broader European trend of increasing support for far-right populism. While this phenomenon is undoubtedly part of a continental shift that has been unfolding over the past two decades and has intensified in recent years, it is also very localized and founded on the particular history and cleavages of the Portuguese political space (Manucci, 2024; Mendes & Dennison, 2021). Hence, Chega's register and tactics are both highly context-dependent, yet well-known and consisting of harsh populist rhetorics, including André Ventura's unconstitutional call for the chemical castration of pedophiles, sprinkled with the nationalism targeting immigrants (often Muslims and, in the case of Chega, Romani minorities), advocating austerity measures and welfare chauvinism in combination with a broad call for a restoration of both 'law and order' and 'personal freedom.' Without engaging in a full socio-political analysis of the social conditions, deep causes, and political conjectures underlying the sudden rise of right-wing populism and of the Chega Party, we will merely point towards a register of fragmentations and a range of contradictions, each being part and parcel of policy schizophrenia, that we see signs of in Chega's policies.

Firstly, Chega presents itself as being a party catering to a diverse set of lower and (former) working-class voters. This by blending and bending different forms of conservatism, traditional conservatism ('country and nationalism') with Christian conservative values ('God and family'), with economic conservatism ('tax reductions' and 'institutional reforms'), with authoritarian nativist conservatism (anti-immigration stances and practically absorbing right-wing activists and mobilizers), while at the same time barring them from attaining formal positions to maintain its formal distance to the radical right (Marchi, 2023). This volatile mix of conservative ideologies produces a flexibility which allows Chega to channel and mobilize a wide range of protest voices who have 'had enough' and lost trust in major traditional parties. In this sense, it can be argued that Chega has an interest in both exploiting and

contributing to a fragmentation of political space by contributing to a *crisis of belief* in the traditional political system while presenting itself as an explicit protest against this system and the answer to solve the crisis (Manucci, 2024). This involves the combination of several practical logics, including a deliberate de-contextualization and de-historicization of the historical backdrop and democratic and social rationales of the system.

Secondly, through its variegated mix of conservative ideologies, Chega positions itself as simultaneously being tough on crime, being anti-establishment and critical of the established political elite, and in favour of tax reduction, welfare cutbacks and institutional reform. Furthermore, Chega's policy visions combining tax cuts for the wealthy and attacks on pensions and social benefits will, likely, if put to practice, worsen inequality and increase the hardship of large swaths of the voters it claims to represent. This indicates another contradiction or fragmentation of the bureaucratic field. Chega criticizes the welfare state as a producer of problems in tandem with demanding a stronger, more authoritarian state to impose its vision and solve the problems of the social state. As such, Chega seems in line with our analysis of policy schizophrenia in the Danish case to be less about supplanting the state with a self-regulating economic market (in Polanyi's sense) and more about a specific form of neo-liberal state crafting. This in turn can be claimed to involve de-coupling different scales, such as selling tax cuts and institutional reforms as anti-establishment at the national level, while separating these from their actual impact on local communities.

Thirdly, as observers of Portuguese politics have noticed, Chega, in general, avoids detailed economic debates, instead often focusing on cultural and identity issues, both right-wing identitarian and anti-leftist identitarian ones. Together with Chega's strong claims for 'law and order', especially directed against specific social groups (e.g. sex offenders, immigrants, Roma people, the 'corrupt establishment'), is its support of nativism and forms of racism supporting the distinctive production of othering (Marchi, 2023; Mendes, 2021). This strategy means the party lacks a coherent economic plan, leading to mixed messages and potential policy contradictions, but it has also enabled the mobilization of a diverse voter segment, at the cost of the production of a fragmentation of social space (Küppers & Stapleton, 2024; Marchi, 2023; Mendes, 2021; Mendes & Dennison, 2021). This fragmentation of social space

is squarely bound up with both dis-proportionality and de-humanization in so many different aspects that it almost goes without saying.

While we believe there is merit in outlining these multiple fragmentations, two key aspects of an analysis in terms of policy schizophrenia would be to look into the accumulative effects of these fragmentations across the different fields and scales and, secondly (and more importantly), to engage in an analysis of the long term and structural processes that led to the social conditions enabling the formation, mobilization, and rise of a right-wing populist party such as Chega.

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