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Socio-spatial Inequalities and Intersectionality

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The way in which space constructs and is itself constructed by social power relations is at the heart of several theoretical currents that have profoundly renewed sociological and geographical approaches. By power relations, we mean here structurally asymmetrical relationships, essentializing social groups and thus producing inequalities between social groups. The characteristics attributed to social groups are generally treated as immutable and arising from natural differences (Guillaumin 2016) between social groups. These include social power relations based on gender as well as on race, ethnicity, sexuality and class. These power relations are characterized by a specific unequal relationship: that of appropriation, which results in the exploitation of the body in general, and labor power in particular (Guillaumin 2016). The concept of “social power relations” is not necessarily asserted as such by all the authors we quote. Nevertheless, beyond the question of inequalities, what they have in common is that they underline the existence and the importance of structural asymmetries based on exploitation and/or oppression.

This chapter presents three main theoretical currents that enable us to think about the links between power relations, inequalities and spaces.

The first part of this chapter (section 2.1) presents three currents that feed into the reflections on socio-spatial inequalities and the interweaving of power relations:

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coordinated by Clémentine COTTINEAU and Julie VALLÉE. © ISTE Ltd 2022.

feminist analyses, queer approaches and postcolonial perspectives. These three currents are converging in contemporary academic work. This chapter also draws on a central concept which was initially developed through critical race studies and which has significantly influenced and transformed all three theoretical approaches: the concept of intersectionality (Davis 1983; Crenshaw 1989, 1991; Hill Collins 2000; Yuval-Davis 2006; Hill Collins and Bilge 2016). This section discusses both Anglophone and Francophone theoretical bodies of work, which are often considered separately.

Following this initial theoretical part, this chapter proposes three themes to grasp the socio-spatial processes at work in power relations. Section 2.2 is devoted to the division of labor. Space gives structure to the production of socio-professional inequalities at different scales, and the processes of domination at work at a given scale have effects on inequalities at other scales. The following section (section 2.3) deals with the nation and processes of othering. Space is used by the majority group to produce the othering of minority social groups. In other words, the assignment of minorities to otherness – which is reflected in the attribution of minorities to dangerous, threatening and violent behaviors, or even as oppressed and incapacitated – is co-constructed by the “assignment to a territoriality” (Hancock 2008). Finally, we show in the last section (section 2.4) that space is a crucial issue for restoring *agency*, that is, the capacity of minorities to act. Indeed, individual and collective attempts to deal with, negotiate, contest and subvert the relationships of domination and socio-spatial inequalities are notably realized through the creation of places, flows and mobilities with a view to achieving greater social and spatial justice.

These themes, mainly based on the French context, do not of course exhaust the subjects on which feminist analyses, queer approaches and postcolonial perspectives have profoundly renewed knowledge – and the very way knowledge is produced. These three themes do not claim to be exhaustive in their consideration of the articulations of social relations and socio-spatial inequalities. On the contrary, the epistemological positioning chosen insists on the need to take into account the social, historical, economic and political context of the production of social relations of class, gender and race. Finally, this chapter draws on readings by geographers, while leaving room for approaches from other disciplines, recognizing that contemporary geography draws on largely multidisciplinary perspectives.

2.1. Relationships between power relations, inequalities and space

In the 1970s, innovative feminist analyses emerged in different academic spaces. In France, the pioneers of materialist feminism, Christine Delphy, Nicole-Claude

Mathieu, Paola Tabet and Colette Guillaumin, revisited the concept of “class”, derived from Marxist theories, to analyze the production of a class of women. They thus pointed out the exploitation of women’s work in the service of the patriarchy, interwoven with a capitalist economy. The assignment of women to the domestic space is a central element of this exploitation, which leads more broadly to the oppression of women in this feminist materialist analysis (Abreu 2017). Feminist research in geography would go on to analyze this construction of the dichotomy between private and public space. Jacqueline Coutras’ pioneering Francophone work conceptualizes women’s “spatial duty”, involving the reproduction of the home and containment around domestic space (Direnberger and Schmoll 2014). During the same period, the work of feminist geographers in the UK and the USA criticizes the masculinism of geography in English-speaking countries in the construction of knowledge, and in particular the exclusion of women in the production of geographical knowledge (Monk and Hanson 1982). They denounce the normalization of the idea of universal knowledge based on a dominant scientific rationality in the quantitative geography of the time (Oberhaueser 2002). Like feminists in France, geographers in the UK and the United States analyzed the dichotomy between private and public (McDowell et al. 1984).

Thus, feminist and gender studies have shown that space and scale are not neutral from the point of view of social gender relations. They deconstruct the supposed immutability of spatial categories such as the public/private dichotomy and show that, within this context of gender hierarchies, men and women do not have the same access to, or uses of, different spaces (Hancock 2002; Marius and Raibaud 2013; Blidon 2019). Because of the assignment of women to the domestic space and the male violence they experience in various spaces, women are indeed constrained in their occupancy of places and spaces. The freedom to move around, to enter or leave a space is at the heart of many feminist assertions. For their part, lesbian geographies contest their “natural” invisibility in the city (Cattan and Clerval 2011). As Karine Duplan summarizes, “they pave the way for new ways of understanding space, for new ways of producing spaces, which are more informal, less territorialized and less visible, with ephemeral and shifting localizations” (Duplan 2012, §19).

Queer studies, based on postmodernism and feminist theories, introduce a new turn in the consideration of gender in socio-spatial dynamics. Based on the pioneering work of philosopher Judith Butler and Jack Halberstam, a researcher in literature and gender studies, queer studies challenge the heteronormativity of society, which is based on the woman/man dichotomy. Instead, they take into account “the proliferation of alternative genders and sexualities” (Dupont and Prieur 2012; Prieur 2015). They thus expose the imposition of a binary and heterosexual

gender norm. Cha Prieur asserts the need to take into account alternative femininities and masculinities, such as “female masculinities, male femininities, queers, trans FtoM [Female to Male] and MtoF [Male to Female], drag queens and drag kings. I didn’t want us to forget all these in-betweens who, by interfering with the complementarity of masculinity and femininity, destabilize them, deconstruct them and allow us to take a critical look at gender and sexuality norms” (Dupont and Prieur 2012, §19). Queer geographies then set out to “study places and communities that resist different kinds of normativities (indicative of power relations and domination) and see through what political, social and cultural actions they carry out” (Prieur 2015, §16).

Another theoretical trend that helps us understand power relations is postcolonial studies. Postcolonial theories emerged in the 1980s, mainly in the American and British academic space. They have been pursued by researchers from ex-colonized societies, or under Western hegemony, such as Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha, Edward Said and Partha Chatterjee. Postcolonial theories are not uniform but what they have in common, despite their diversity, are their analyses of forms of imperialism and colonialism (Young 2003). Postcolonial studies in geography (Blunt and Rose 1994; Sidaway 2000; Blunt and McEwan 2002; Jazeel 2014; Woon 2015; Radcliffe 2017) have focused on “the links between representations of space, practices of space, identities, territories, and powers”, and have set out to “reconsider the question of spatiality as it relates to colonial power” (Blais 2009, p. 146). In the analysis of colonial situations and moments, these works were interested in “the production of geographical knowledge, colonial representations and imaginary geographies of space”, but also in “geographies of contact, conquest, colonial administration, diasporas and migrations” (*ibid.*, p. 147) by questioning the production of spaces and their social effects in a colonial situation. As H el ene Blais summarizes, “there is a general agreement in these approaches that spatiality is linked to practices of domination” (*ibid.*) and includes both a discursive and material dimension. Postcolonial studies in geography also analyze how colonization affects spaces long after independence, and how colonial mindsets are maintained in a neoliberal capitalist order within societies. This body of work has also analyzed social and political mobilizations within (ex-)colonized societies, as well as the processes of subjectivation of (ex-)colonized individuals, thus bringing (ex-)colonized subjects back to the fore.

These approaches nurture a fruitful critical dialog around power relations. We would like to highlight three contributions of the confluence between feminist, queer and postcolonial theories.

First, on the epistemological level, these three theoretical currents have emphasized the importance of situatedness and reflexivity in the production of knowledge. The consideration of situatedness and reflexivity is exercised on two dimensions. The first is that of the individual who produces academic knowledge (Haraway 1988). The producers of geographical knowledge, that is, geographers, are not free from any power relation or social hierarchy. Feminist, queer and postcolonial theories have thus contributed to making this positionality of geographers explicit and have shown that it has an effect on the very definition of spaces and its analyses (Rose 1993). The inequalities in the spaces of knowledge production are based on a relationship of dichotomies such as man/woman, white/racialized, cis-heterosexual/queer, on the one hand, and intellect/body, reason/emotion, culture/nature, public/private, center/periphery, visible/invisible, universal/individual, on the other hand. It is then a question of reclaiming the situatedness of knowledge production (Haraway 1988), that is to say situating in terms of power relations the experiences that produce both minority and majority knowledge. By being reflexive, geographers can thus shed light on how knowledge is situated. The second dimension captured by the work of taking situated knowledge and reflexivity is the academic discipline itself, that is, geography as an institution (re)producing power relations, and thus a system of exploitation, oppression and inequality (Rose 1993; Jazeel 2012, 2014). As Florence Deprest summarizes, much Anglophone work has analyzed how geographers have contributed to the imperial and colonial dominations of European metropolises, producing, in particular, “geographical knowledge and imaginaries as instruments of symbolic oppression and social control in colonial contexts” (Deprest 2014, p. 275). This expertise of geographers relied in particular on processes of categorization of populations and territories, and on environmental determinism, which served to legitimize and administer the European colonial enterprise (*ibid.*, p. 275). The (re)production of social hierarchies and inequalities through discipline did not cease after official independence. Recent work in the geography of English-speaking countries rethinks the link to this imperialist past through the prism of decolonial theories, questioning the feasibility of a political project of decolonizing knowledge, curricula, research practices and methodologies in the present (Pualani Louis 2007; Daigle and Sundberg 2017; Esson et al. 2017; Radcliffe 2017; de Leeuw and Hunt 2018; Craggs 2019; Ferretti 2019).

Second, many feminist, queer and postcolonial theories underscore the need to work on the interweaving of social relations of power on the basis of sex as well as gender identity, sexuality, race, class, ethnicity, caste and religion in specific configurations and contexts. Yet it is mostly feminist intersectional theories, as we pointed out at the beginning of this introduction, that have made a major contribution to these analyses. The concept of intersectionality, coined in American

academia by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991), comes from black feminism, a current of thought notably supported by authors like Gloria T. Hull, Barbara Smith, Audre Lorde, bell hooks, and by collectives such as the Combahee River Collective, some of whose texts are brought together in collective works such as *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us are Brave* or *This Bridge Called My Back*, published in 1982 and 1981, respectively. As the latter shows, black feminism was in dialogue early on with Latina, Asian and Indigenous feminists living in the Americas, who also questioned white feminism and the belief in the homogeneity of the female class. Together, they participated in the development of a *Third World Feminism* that sought to make visible and politicize the experiences of racialized women. In this context, critical race studies and the concept of intersectionality have also entered into dialogue with other postcolonial feminists, particularly their critiques of the way in which some Western feminisms represent Southern women by constructing the idea of the “third world woman” to be saved by white women (Mohanty 1988). For the postcolonial feminist theorist Chandra Talpade Mohanty (1988), Western feminism homogenizes “third world” women, those from Africa and Asia, from “developing” countries. The creation of this category of third world women erases the diversity of experiences and reproduces the idea of ignorant Southern women, victims of gendered oppressions rooted in family and tradition, in contrast to Western women who are educated and have freedoms with regard to their movements and sexuality. According to the feminist author, the creation of this hierarchy is a colonialist act. The scientific uses of intersectionality in France were first nurtured by the translated texts of American black feminist theorists and focused on what was happening in America. Whether in the scientific or political realm, these texts represent a compass on the interweaving of gender, class and race (Larcher 2018). For several years, research has contributed to centering the intersectional gaze on the French post-imperial context and enhancing the visibility of feminist, anti-imperialist, anti-racist, anti-colonial and anti-capitalist political thought developed by minority women, particularly black women (Germain and Larcher 2018). In particular, this research has drawn attention to the writings of Jane and Paulette Nardal, Gerty Archimède, Roberte Horth and Awa Thiam, but also collectives such as the *Unions des femmes communistes* in La Réunion, and the *Coordination des femmes noires* in Guadeloupe and Martinique. The concept of intersectionality is mobilized in these works, on the one hand, to make visible these minority voices in the political and social space, obscured by the major feminist movements, or by the translations of American authors; on the other hand, to contribute to the history of (ex)colonized women’s movements in the French imperial context. These issues are all the more important given that critical studies of race and intersectionality are largely disqualified as a theoretical approach and tool for understanding social relations in France (Belkacem et al. 2019). In French geography, over the past 15 years, reflections on the

interweaving of gender relations have been deployed in multiple fields: migration studies (Chaïb 2008; Moujoud 2008, 2012; Arab 2009; Schmoll 2020), violence against women (Lieber 2016), sexual and gender minorities (Prieur 2015; Arab et al. 2018), urban politics (Hancock and Lieber 2017) or racism and processes of exoticization and othering (Hancock 2008, 2011; Najib 2019).

Third, space is also a site where intersectional inequalities are produced, reproduced and contested (as will be developed later on in this chapter). Far from being isolated in the understanding of inequalities, however, the notion of space is also linked to another central geographical notion: “scale”. Inequalities are constructed, deconstructed and contested at different scales: from the global to the domestic, via the local and the national. The consideration of power relations between men and women also leads to the consideration of previously ignored scales, such as the domestic space, the space of everyday life and bodies. These different scales of power have been taken into account in the study of the relationship between men and women. They are connected, and the understanding of inequalities often requires an exploration of their relationships: the global, in fact, is co-constructed by the local, and the lived and embodied experience of inequalities is intimately linked to the changes taking place at other scales (Marchand and Runyan 2000; Nagar et al. 2002). The work of deconstructing the private/public socio-spatial dichotomy, whose boundaries are shifting and reconfigured according to the social, political and economic context, is thus central to feminist and gender studies within geography. Beyond the work on “the position of women”, this deconstruction work challenges the very conceptualizations of space and “allows us to envision a new structure of territorial occupancy focused on the fluidity of everyday connections” (Duplan 2012, §15). Women’s bodies are a central scale in these feminist geographies. They allow us to take seriously the coercion, fear and violence that structure power relations between different groups (Fluri 2009; Dixon 2011, 2015; Pain and Stachel 2014; Hyndman 2019).

2.2. Work and socio-spatial inequalities

2.2.1. Theoretical perspectives on work and space

Feminist, queer and postcolonial productions in geography have made important contributions to understanding how ideologies and experiences of work produce inequality, violence and exclusion (Hanson and Pratt 1995; Lawson 1999; McDowell 1999; Oberhauser 2002; England and Lawson 2005; Wolkowitz 2006; Wright 2006; Behzadi and Direnberger 2020). One of the major contributions of feminist geographers has been to highlight the gendered spatial division of labor that forms the basis of the capitalist and patriarchal system (McDowell et al. 1984).

Indeed, they have shown how, in Western and industrial societies, the notion of work was associated with paid, male work in the public sphere, while women's unpaid work in the domestic sphere was devalued and excluded from the definition of work itself. Marxist and materialist feminists have played a crucial role in critically analyzing the dichotomies of home/work, paid/unpaid work, public/private sphere, productive/reproductive work and the exclusions that these binary visions produced (Dalla Costa and James 1972; Vogel 1983; Gimenez 1998; Gimenez and Vogel 2005). In particular, they highlighted the way in which women's unrecognized labor in the home constituted a central mode of production in the organization of the capitalist economy (Vogel 1983; Delphy 1998; Gimenez 2005). Reproductive labor, defined to include (1) biological reproduction; (2) reproductive labor power; and (3) care (Teepie Hopkins 2015), is indeed, according to feminists, an integral part of a system that rests on the exploitation of women's bodies and the appropriation of their labor for capitalist accumulation and expansion (Federici 2004).

More recently, and following the growing interest in transnational analyses, feminist analyses of care have studied the power relations between the North and the South (see Chapter 3). Care covers activities that take care of the "needs of others", such as domestic work, care, education and support. It therefore involves the material, physical, relational, emotional and moral capacities of the people who perform it (Borgeaud-Garciandía et al. 2020, p. 13). It is organized according to an international division of labor characterized by its commodification in the North and South, and an exploitation of women from ex-colonial societies, which makes it possible for States to avoid investment in social protection systems (Borgeaud-Garciandía et al. 2020).

This national and international division of productive/reproductive labor is based on essentialist arguments about bodies. In this perspective, size, strength, fertility, sexuality, validity, intelligence and ability are all mediums for gender, class and racial hierarchies that determine who can do what kind of job and their position in the professional hierarchy. Men and women who do not respect these hierarchies by participating in forms of work that run counter to social expectations are considered as "not being in their place" or "out of place" (McDowell 1999; England and Lawson 2005; Behzadi 2019). Some of these workers are even constructed as abject and/or dirty (Tyler 2011; Simpson et al. 2012). Authors working on this issue have also more recently focused on the role of the body in experiencing these inequalities and exclusions, but also in resisting them (Wright 1997; McDowell 1999; Nagar et al. 2002; England and Lawson 2005). Bodies are disciplined by work, while embodied work practices constitute a site for micro-political struggles (McDowell and Court 1994; Dyer et al. 2008; McDowell 2009; McDowell et al. 2007). The

following sections illustrate these theoretical discussions with empirical analyses on the French metropolitan territory. In section 2.2.2, we show how access to professional spaces is structured by gender, class and racial inequalities. In section 2.2.3, we focus on care work, which is massively assigned to women who are most affected by discrimination in the labor market and by administrative precariousness.

2.2.2. Professional spaces and segregation at different scales

The inequalities experienced by minority social groups are reflected in a socio-spatial segregation in professional spaces, which is organized at different levels: from the city to the neighborhood, and even within a single building. This segregation at work is understood here as the product of a (post)colonial economic, political and social order. The industrial development of the countries of the North is based on an international division of labor that spatially inscribes the relations of production, notably through imperial and colonial enterprises. This is true of the distribution of economic activities, of the circulation of goods but also of the mobility of people, on which we reflect in more detail (see Chapter 3). In fact, in ex-colonial European societies in general, and in France in particular, the industrial and economic development of the 1960s and 1970s was made possible by the importation of workers, especially from ex-colonized societies whose economies had been ravaged by colonization. From the 1960s onwards, the importation of labor from the Maghreb, sub-Saharan Africa, the West Indies, Reunion, and French Guiana increased (Sayad 1999; Ndiaye 2009). Foreign workers and workers from (post)colonial immigration¹ were recruited into professional sectors marked by their onerous working conditions and were assigned to positions at the bottom of the professional hierarchy (Ndiaye 2009, p. 74).

Since the 1950s, the construction sector has been an employment sector that has made use of the abundance of foreign labor, particularly from post-colonial immigrants. There was also a long-standing use of foreign labor in the metallurgy sector, but this intensified from the end of the 1960s. The automobile industry was another particularly important sector for migrants in the 1970s, in connection with the increase in production rates and the fragmentation of work, which led to an increase in the number of specialized workers (Pitti 2008, pp. 98–99). Since then, the geographical distribution of migration in metropolitan France has partly reflected

1. We define persons descended from postcolonial immigration by the fact that they are assigned to an otherness, repositioned as different, in the view of republican ethnocentrism. The latter thus separates the Others, people from postcolonial immigrations, from “Us, the recognized citizens, children of the fatherland or those assimilated to a white genealogy” (Boubeker and Hajjat 2008, p. 13).

the distribution of the industries that primarily use this labor force: large urban centers for the construction industry, and the Île-de-France, North and East of France for the metallurgical and automotive industries.

However, the French/foreign labor dichotomy does not exhaust these professional socio-spatial segregations. Professional and spatial hierarchies are built on logics of ethno-racial assignments that divide and hierarchize French citizens. From 1963 to 1982, the Bureau for the Development of Migration (Bumidom) organized the emigration of approximately 160,000 women from Reunion, Martinique and Guadeloupe to mainland France (Paris 2020, p. 357). This labor force was directed to the professions of domestic service, hospital workers, community workers and laborers, according to France's needs (Ndiaye 2009, pp. 69–70). The goal was to provide French nationals for the lower ranks of the civil service, particularly in the then expanding service sector (Ndiaye 2009, pp. 69–70). It was also to regulate the demographics in the West Indies, and to counteract social protest movements. Migration was thus a political management tool of an imperial center with respect to its margins.

As Black immigrants, as early as the 1960s, women from Reunion and the Caribbean spoke of the difficulties associated with racism in the workplace: “The acerbic or paternalistic remarks of colleagues referring to them as blacks, that is, as idle people who prefer to party and nap” (Ndiaye 2009, p. 70). As we will see later, this situation was not without individual resistance. As a result of the economic crisis, but also because of the racism suffered, there was a weakening of migration from the West Indies in the 1990s.

While foreign workers of a postcolonial immigrant background are still over-represented in the construction sector and in particularly devalued jobs (Jounin 2009), there was a socio-professional diversification of people of a postcolonial immigrant background in concurrence with the economic crisis of the 1980s and 2000s: intermediate professions, managers and professionals, students, etc. (Ndiaye 2009, p. 75). This diversification did not, however, result in a reduction in socio-spatial inequalities in the 2010s, as research on the cleaning, restaurant and hotel sectors has shown.

Employment and working conditions in the hotel–café–restaurant sector are generally unattractive. This is a more feminized sector: although the proportion of women in the sector's workforce has declined, it remains higher than in the French economy as a whole (48.9% versus 43.4% for the period 2006–2008) (Pinna 2013, p. 23). Young employees with few qualifications and little experience are also very

present. From the point of view of gender relations, a “dual market” of employment can be observed within this sector itself: “A relatively more qualified market, access to which is reserved more for men, on the one hand, and a ‘transitional labor market’ in which the positions are low-qualified, female and open to inexperienced employees, on the other” (Pinna 2013, p. 23). Low-skilled jobs are unevenly distributed between white and racialized people. This division of labor has direct effects on the spatial organization of occupational locations. Thus, there is spatial segregation from what is visible or invisible from the clients’ point of view: men from post-colonial immigrant backgrounds are recruited to work as dishwashers and cleaners in communal areas, while non-white women are assigned to clean rooms. Generally speaking, racialized people tend to be relegated to back-office positions, that is, positions in which employees do not come into contact with the clients, or do so as little as possible, and must remain inconspicuous. The demand for invisibility of the tasks, and of those who do them, leads to difficult working hours: shift work, adapted daily according to the customers’ reservations, etc. Front-office positions, which are visible work, are better paid, valued by managers and clients alike, and often allow for greater autonomy in carrying out tasks. They are primarily assigned to white employees, especially in the luxury hotel industry. Thus, as Pinna shows, “the organization of work and the rigid boundary between front and back office follow a gendered and ethnic division of labor” (Pinna 2013, p. 25).

This division between back-office and front-office can also be found in restaurant chains serving less privileged social classes. From a participant observation as a waitress in a French chain restaurant in a working-class neighborhood of Paris, Marie Mathieu also notes “the more general invisibility of racialized kitchen employees [...] the vast majority of whom are men of Malian and Senegalese origin – who, outside of the times dedicated to staff meals, cannot circulate in the restaurant and remain hidden from the view of customers during their work hours” (Mathieu 2019, p. 18). The bar and kitchens appear to be masculine spaces, while the dining room is assigned to women, and this feminine professional space imposes particularly difficult constraints on body visibility. Consequently, it is the female workers’ bodies themselves that become a territory of struggle between economic exploitation and resistance. In the welcome booklet given to the waitresses, “eye, cheek, lip and nail make-up according to extremely precise rules” is imposed, as well as a “neat and elegant” hairstyle, the wearing of “flesh-colored tights in the summer – black in the winter” and of “plain, black, closed shoes, such as pumps with heels of at least 3 cm”, as well as jewelry. This construction of the body suggests “a model of feminine elegance marked by social class”, at a distance from a popular femininity with no pretense of luxury restoration (Mathieu 2019, p. 19). To conform to these standards, women’s bodies suffer (muscle and joint pain, blisters, being cold). Even though waitresses’ pay is low, the

costs incurred to look the part are significant: the purchase of clothes, shoes, and makeup products, the use of hairdressing and beauty services (manicure, waxing). Moreover, it relies on work time that is invisible: the time to change clothes in the workplace, sometimes several times a day, but also the consumer's time in stores to buy the necessary professional equipment (Mathieu 2019). The "work of formatting bodies extends the professional activities of appearance to the domestic sphere and calls into question the boundary between professional and personal time-spaces" (Mathieu 2019, p. 25). We then observe an extension of the professional space into "spaces considered the most private, such as bathrooms" (Mathieu 2019, p. 17). This extension implies free labor in the home – laundry and ironing of work clothes in the "extension of activities associated with their position as women in the family" (Mathieu 2019, p. 26). But this production of female bodies is even more burdensome for racialized waitresses. Indeed, the imposed femininity is a femininity that relies on a valorization of whiteness. On the one hand, more white women are hired into these menial front office positions. On the other hand, the characteristics associated with non-whiteness – "big" hair or hair that is not straight – are then particularly sanctioned and require a "heavier daily workload to fit the chain model" (Mathieu 2019, p. 28).

The segregations of class, gender, race and nationality thus shape the geography of work, the division between the visible and the invisible, and draw a space saturated with power relations from the widest scales of the international division of labor to the most intimate scales of the conformation, exploitation and resistance of bodies at work.

2.2.3. Care work and assignment to private space

Women have long been sidelined in the analysis of the links between migration and the division of labor in Francophone research. When they have been mentioned, the focus on female migrants arriving as part of a family group has obscured many other situations, such as women arriving alone and being deprived of papers and rights, for example (Chaïb 2008; Moujoud 2008). Moreover, research on women has long favored an evolutionary approach that supports "the idea of a linear change in the situation of migrant women [...] [establishing] from the outset a contrast between the societies (or sometimes the 'cultures') of departure and arrival" (Moujoud 2008). In this analysis, arriving in France mechanically represents an improvement, access to "modernity". However, migration and employment policies have assigned the work of migrant and racialized women to low-skilled, low-valued and low-paying jobs in France (Bentouhami 2017). While care work is a professional activity that can be performed within the public space (in state institutions and private

companies), it is very often performed in the private sphere (in the homes of employers). Thus, the assignment to domestic work reinforces the gendered opposition between public and private spaces.

In France, migrant and racialized women have historically been assigned to domestic and care work. This assignment has been organized by the State within the framework of *Bumidom*: when migration from Reunion to France was at its height, in 1975, women represented 53% of migrants (Paris 2020, p. 382). This migratory system applied to Reunion had three main objectives: to reduce the fertility of the Reunionese population (which the French state considered problematic at the time), to stifle anti-colonial movements and to provide a workforce for service jobs, in particular those of domestic workers, housekeepers, hospital workers or community workers. Thus, “in practice, women from Reunion and the Caribbean have been massively assigned to ‘dirty jobs’, literally ‘dirty work’, involving the use of their own labor” (Paris 2020, pp. 393–394). Whether as a “ward girl” in a hospital or as a domestic worker, they perform the same tasks: preparing meals, serving, feeding, caring for, washing people, making beds, cleaning rooms and washing dishes. The migrants from the West Indies and Reunion would take care of the bodies in the metropolis, mostly white, and the dirt that these bodies produce in socially and economically devalued jobs. For Myriam Paris, West Indian and Reunionese immigration thus constitutes “an important step in the racialization of domestic work in France” (Paris 2020, p. 395).

Even today, many racialized women work in the care sector as nannies, housekeepers and care assistants (Moujoud 2012; Ibos 2016; Damamme et al. 2017). In addition to being assigned to the domestic space, migrant women face extremely precarious working conditions. Many of them do not have a residence permit, which prevents them from accessing labor law and, more generally, many social rights. By mobilizing Abdelmalek Sayad’s conceptual framework on the different “ages” of male migration, Nasima Moujoud shows, for example, that Moroccan domestic workers in France have very different socioeconomic profiles. Yet, “exclusion from rights unites them” (Moujoud 2018, pp. 277–278) and their living and working conditions as domestic workers are very poor. They are poorly paid or not paid at all, many have their passports confiscated by their employers, are poorly housed, and are separated from their relatives against their will. Moreover, fear of the police, because of their legal situation, forces them to rarely leave or remain confined to the space where they work and/or live. Many of them (re)marry in order to escape undocumented status, but marriage often results in assignment to domestic labor, “which includes sexuality and control of forms of subjectivity because they are women and undocumented” (Moujoud 2018, p. 284). Thus, migrant women implement individual strategies and convert their social ties into bonds of solidarity,

both to escape undocumented status and domestic labor, and thus the confinement that division of labor and migration policies impose on them (Moujoud 2018).

A significant amount of feminist research has for a long time shown that public spaces (the space of the professional world, social and political life, social networks, and leisure) are open in a way that is advantageous to men, and the “private spaces of everyday life” (the space of the home, the family, the school, the supply of provisions, the neighborhood) are assigned to women (Hancock 2002; Marius and Raibaud 2013). Through these examples, we observe that the division of labor reconfigures the production of private and public spaces. The partial substitution of racialized women for white women in private spaces does not challenge the private/public dichotomy. The continuity of white middle- and upper-class men’s socio-spatial privileges has, for the most part, remained unchanged.

2.3. Othering processes and spaces: the place of the other

The processes of othering are based on various ideologies, one of which is Orientalism, whose analysis by Edward Said constitutes a founding work of postcolonial theories. Edward Said defines Orientalism as a “style of thought based on the ontological and epistemological distinction between the ‘East’ and (most often) the ‘West’” (Said 1980, p. 15), which is part of an enterprise of European domination (Said 1980).

In this analysis, territory is one of the fundamental elements of Orientalism. Indeed, otherness is particularly inscribed in a spatial distance: “All we have to do is draw these borders in our minds, and they become ‘them’ and their territory and mentality are designated as different from ours” (Said 1980, p. 70).

Articulated in various but central ways with Orientalism in (ex-)colonial societies, national ideology is also an ideology that rests on a process of othering. National ideology is based on the idea of the nation as an “imagined community” (Anderson 1983), that is, a symbolic and material construction that organizes connections, distances and exclusions between individuals and social groups. Here again, it is based on socio-spatial distributions and a double dividing line: one that forms the border with the outside of the national community and one that hierarchizes individuals and social groups within the national community itself, thus creating a “double process of othering” (Jarry-Omarova and Marteu 2013).

In the 2000s, feminist geopolitics (Fluri 2009; Dixon 2011, 2015; Pain and Staeheli 2014; Hyndman 2019) fed into these debates by shifting the attention toward certain neglected actors, actresses and objects, which are nonetheless at the

heart of geopolitical stakes: women, children, immigrants, asylum seekers, prisoners, the everyday, the home, the body, the intimate, the emotional. It is indeed a question of revisiting the conventional repertoire of geopolitics – the nation, but also the State, borders, security, militarism, etc. At the same time, feminist geopolitics proposes new objects of analysis such as trauma, violence, terrorism and security through theoretical and methodological approaches that capture their complexity in the “materiality of everyday life”. It is within this everyday life that bodies, subjectivities, practices and discourses become the centers of geo-political conflicts (Dixon and Marston 2011).

In the following sections, we focus precisely on developing the way in which, in specific cases, the various processes of othering mobilize spatial imaginaries and create hierarchies that are fundamental to experiences and subjectivations. We first observe the way in which (1) lines of division are constructed to build and contrast “us” versus “them”, then (2) how these lines of division are translated into everyday spaces.

2.3.1. The dividing lines between “us” and “them”

Manifesting the hierarchies between groups and between societies, the lines of division between “us” and “them” are built on “territorial assignments – because the social representations concerning persons or groups are accompanied by spatial representations, concerning the spaces associated with these ‘dominated’ groups or persons” (Hancock 2008, p. 117). Gender is a major issue in this production of dividing lines. In the war against terrorism launched by the U.S. administration in 2001, European and North American powers have set themselves up as guarantors of the defense and protection of women’s rights in predominantly Muslim societies. The “suffering of women” is thus a discursive pattern mobilized by international organizations and conservative and liberal political forces in the United States to legitimize military intervention (Eisenstein 2004). The discourses and representations of women in the context of the “war against terrorism” thus mobilize Islam as a distinctive feature; Muslim women are said to experience specific suffering. It is thus, through the prism of religion and/or culture, that the problems of women in predominantly Muslim societies are often evoked, erasing the diversity of these societies, as well as the power relations at work. On the one hand, violence against women is described as specific to these societies; on the other hand, the values of freedom, emancipation and self-determination of women are spatialized in the United States and Europe (Bahramitash 2006; Mahmood 2008; Kian 2010; Abu-Lughod 2013). This “suffering of Muslim women”, which in theory deprives

them of any capacity for action, justifies humanitarian aid and military intervention (Daulatzai 2006; Abirafeh 2009).

A similar process is at play for sexual minorities. As Alexandre Jaunait, Amélie Le Renard and Élisabeth Marteu summarize, respect for the rights of minorities, defined as “the vanguard of democratic modernity [...] allows us to oppose a European and Western ‘us’ that protects sexual minorities to a non-Western ‘them’ newly characterized by a homophobia and sexism thought of as cultural. The rhetoric of sexual democracy thus participates in the production of external and internal borders, altering at the same time, in a block mentality, a set of countries considered as non-democratic – mainly so-called ‘Muslim’ countries” (Jaunait et al. 2013, p. 10). This “homonationalism” also translates spatially into the control of people’s mobility and the strengthening of borders. Indeed, these discourses are also mobilized by anti-migrant actors, allowing for a distinction between “good” and “bad” migrant women (Arab et al. 2018), with this designation implying selection, thus promoting the restriction of mobilities of people from spaces constructed as inherently hostile to sexual minorities.

The dividing line between “us” and “them” thus separates groups located in different territories, but also within a territory or national space (Hancock 2008). In France, cities and working-class neighborhoods are spaces that are particularly stigmatized, thought of and administered through political (see Chapter 7) and media categories that “[carry] [...] the risk of obscuring the mechanisms of domination, whether economic, social or racist”, and which thus help to lay “the foundations for a despondent view” (Tissot and Poupeau 2005, p. 8). By closely interweaving populations (“immigrants”, “young people from immigrant backgrounds”, etc.) and spaces (“suburbs”, “housing estates”, “sensitive neighborhoods”, etc.), these categories produce “a homogenizing vision of populations that are *irreducibly different*” (*ibid.*). Thus, there is a “double assignment” of a social group to a territoriality and an identity, characterized by immigration, underqualification and unemployment both in public policy and media (Hancock 2008, p. 118). This double assignment is also characterized by a use of gender, as shown by Marion Dalibert’s work on the media coverage of the association *Ni putes ni soumises* (NPNS) [*Not prostitutes not dominated* in English]. In 2003, the actions of NPNS, in particular the march of the women of the districts for equality and against the ghetto, had the consequence of putting sexism “on suburban housing estates” into the media and on the political agenda. The media framing of this movement is not so much about the movement itself or its actions as it is about the “sexism of the suburbs”: “Journalists have merely staged a collective victim, ‘non-white’ teenage girls and young women, against a culprit, the ‘young boys of the suburbs’” (Dalibert 2013, §3). This framing, operated both by journalists but also by the government – Prime Minister

Jean-Pierre Raffarin announced measures to fight sexism “in the suburbs” – contributes to interweaving the public problem of the suburbs and ethno-racial minorities forged since the 1980s with the older imaginary of the “Arab man” as a sexual aggressor (Guénif-Souilamas 2006; Dalibert 2013; Shepard 2017). In this framing, white women and men are not mentioned as either victims or perpetrators of this violence. Similarly, other spaces (such as school, university, professional, media, political, cultural fields, etc.) are not described as spaces that produce violence against women. Fueled since the 2000s by multiple controversies around “gang rapes”, “polygamy”, “forced marriages” (Dagistanli and Grewal 2012), or the situation of sexual minorities (El-Tayeb 2012), this framing feeds the othering of “the suburbs”. In turn, it represents a “racialized rhetoric of otherness that sketches a hollow image of a France attentive to women’s rights and intransigent in matters of homophobia” (Fassin 2009, p. 49).

Seen exclusively through the prism of oppression and alienation, sexual and gender minorities can only emancipate themselves by accessing European modernity. This framing reduces their possibility of subjectivation as women or queer people, and conditions their presence in “host societies” to the expression of a sense of gratitude (El-Tayeb 2012, p. 80; Arab et al. 2018). The inscription of such framing in a spatial imaginary is not a French specificity. The city of Amsterdam, for example, is built on an opposition between the “modern gay identity” of the city center and those who are deprived of access to the city center, consigned to homophobia and a conservative culture (El-Tayeb 2012). On the one hand, there is the center, characterized by its picturesque architecture, so-called “metrosexual” culture, multicultural markets, liberal drug laws and international tourism – which also caters to a gay clientele. On the other hand, there are working-class neighborhoods like Bijlmer and Slotervaart, with cheap rent and substandard housing, massively occupied by non-white people, especially young and poor migrant workers, who embody a violent and dangerous otherness for the gay or heterosexual, local or international traveler.

2.3.2. The space of everyday life: the home of the “others” and the street that belongs to “us”

The processes of othering are rooted in the spaces of everyday life, whether in professional activities, as we have already seen, or in domestic activities. The professional segregation of people from the West Indies and Reunion who arrived under Bumidom between the 1960s and 1980s (mentioned in the previous section) was accompanied by large-scale access to small, often dilapidated housing in the working-class neighborhoods of Paris (from the 18th arrondissement to the 11th and

20th arrondissements, along Porte de Clignancourt-Barbès-Stalingrad-Oberkampf), as well as in the large suburban housing projects (Ndiaye 2009, p. 70). At the same time, African migrants also had difficulty finding decent housing, both in low-income housing projects and in the private market. Many families were housed in cramped and unsanitary apartments. The residential segregation of black people in France is thus based on professional segregation, through low salaries, but also on specific mechanisms of racial discrimination in access to housing (Célestine 2018, pp. 63–64). Black people are not the only racialized people to experience this segregation, as the situation of other social groups analyzed in this chapter shows. Indeed, many female Moroccan domestic workers in the 1980s and 1990s lived and grew old in *chambres de bonnes* (maids' rooms) in Paris (Moujoud 2008). Thus, processes of othering structure even the intimate spaces of the home, both for minority groups and for the majority group, which tends to benefit from a more diversified and better maintained housing stock.

Public space is also a major stake in the construction and reaffirmation of social race relations. This everyday violence and its link to national politics are particularly apparent in national contexts, where Muslim populations are minorities (Schenk et al. n.d). In Paris, Islamophobia is analyzed as a spatial organization that distinguishes spaces and places, such as the city center and the suburbs, private and public spaces, means of transportation and public institutions (Najib 2019; Najib and Hopkins 2019; Najib 2020). This socio-spatial violence is also gendered: women, because of their real or assumed affiliation to Islam, appear to be the main victims of Islamophobia in public space, whether in terms of discrimination or physical aggression (Najib 2019; Hancock and Mobillion 2019). Muslim women are more exposed to violence, discrimination and inequality in “socially valued” spaces, better served in terms of public services and more attractive in terms of access to employment, whereas they are less exposed in working-class neighborhoods and cities (Najib 2019, p. 22), which are more marked by unemployment and difficulties in accessing public services and housing. Moreover, according to facts recorded in 2015, 64% of Islamophobic acts suffered by women took place in a public institution, such as a town hall, school or hospital (Najib 2019, p. 21). If Islamophobia affects women in particular in their relationship to state institutions, it is because the legal framework and debates that have fueled the regulation of veils have fostered stigma, discrimination and violence against Muslim women (Hancock and Mobillion 2019). They are constructed as “guilty victims” who do not belong to the French national community. The Islamophobia that women experience in unequal access to public space and, with it, in access to social rights and public services thus constructs a second-rate citizenship for women who are French nationals, while it contributes to barriers and even disenfranchisement for foreigners.

2.4. Agency and minority spaces

2.4.1. *Theoretical and empirical perspectives on agency*

Minorities do not remain impassive when confronted with the relations of domination and their socio-spatial effects. To designate the diversity of positionings when faced with this situation, feminist theories have revised the concept of agency. By relying on poststructuralist theories while going beyond them, Judith Butler (1988, 1990) has redefined the notions of gender, sexuality and agency through her conceptualization of performativity. Opposing biological or purely cultural readings of gender, Butler argues that gender is the effect of a system of power produced by discourse(s) as well as realized/experienced through a series of ritualized and embodied acts. Because performance never repeats something identically, it produces an “incorrect copy” that also opens up spaces of subversion and resistance to gender norms and heteronormativity.

In the 1990s, increasing attention was given to the question of bodies in the social sciences in general, and in geography in particular. The body was conceptualized as a site of renegotiation and resistance, an approach that has been deepened by more recent theories that have sought to rematerialize processes of subjectification. Feminist geographers have emphasized how discursive constructions define socio-spatial and embodied inequalities (Nast and Pile 1998). At the same time, corporeal feminists have emphasized the importance of the “material weight” of bodies (Longhurst 2001, p. 5). The body, they argue, is the primary source of knowledge, experience and resistance. Bodies are not inert supports on which power relations are inscribed. Instead, they are “lived, embedded in systems of meaning and representation” (McDowell and Sharp 2014, p. 4), constructed through a history of gendered and ethnoracial hierarchies (McKittrick 2006). It is also through bodies that certain forms of resistance emerge.

Postcolonial and/or Southern authors have also contributed to relocating and contextualizing the notion of agency. The very foundations of the concept of agency have thus been revisited. Saba Mahmood, for example, develops a critique of the liberal vision of agency, which would systematically associate this concept with the idea of freedom and resistance, and proposes to reconceptualize agency as a “capacity for action within structures of subordination” (Mahmood 2006, p. 33), an embodied capacity that must always be contextualized. Agency, then, does not always mean resistance, and the ability to act is not always a quest for freedom as Western societies define it. This redefinition of agency has thus made it possible to take seriously the strategies of minority women, which do not come under the heading of an explicit collective struggle against patriarchy and racism, without

regarding them as passive and unconscious victims of the relations of domination. In this perspective, Carmen Teeple Hopkins and Kawtar Najib analyze the strategies of veiled women in urban spaces, and the work of identifying safe spaces that sexist and Islamophobic violence in public space requires (Najib and Teeple Hopkins 2020, p. 105). Indeed, the Islamophobia that women experience has daily consequences for their socio-spatial mobility in predominantly non-Muslim countries. They must then reinvent new mobilities to avoid potential situations of discrimination and violence (Najib and Teeple Hopkins 2020, p. 453). The neighborhood of residence often represents a space where they feel confident and less exposed to Islamophobic acts. Some veiled women explain that they do not go to the center of Paris where they feel more exposed to violence, more stigmatized and less comfortable than in the suburbs. In their daily lives, many of them therefore favor spaces and activities in their immediate environment (Najib and Hopkins 2019, p. 105).

Sociologist Hanane Karimi analyzes the “agency deployed [by veiled Muslim women] to escape the conditions of employability that involve the invisibilization of religious expression in the case of an increasingly diffuse duty of religious neutrality” (Karimi 2020, p. 108). In a context where they “experience several types of intertwined discrimination, including sexism, racism and Islamophobia, with a strong impact of social class on their academic and professional pathways” (Karimi 2020, p. 111), they develop strategies to “try to escape from discrimination through entrepreneurship” (Karimi 2020, p. 115). Self-entrepreneurship, practiced in their homes, allows them to access a status without wage subordination, to wear the veil at work and to increase household income (Karimi 2020). While this choice – the least disadvantageous one – presents a number of advantages for these women, it accentuates the difficult reconciliation between work and family (Karimi 2020, p. 122) and the confinement of veiled Muslim women to the space of the home, “despite their desire for social mixing and escaping from the social enclaves by which they are subsequently constrained” (Karimi 2020, p. 122).

Thus, taking into account the agency of these women makes it possible to show that socio-spatial segregation is not the result of minority people or their supposed behavior linked to a culture of origin (Moujoud 2008), or to a religion, but rather of the majority because of the racism and sexism that structure public and professional spaces.

2.4.2. Space as a tool and a stake in minority struggles

In social movements, space is seized as “a privileged means of struggle”, and as a “stake of struggle between social groups” (Hmed 2009, p. 222). In other words, it

is a matter of creating spaces of struggle to carry out the social, political and economic project, and to propose a conception of space that is carried by social movement. We find these two spatial stakes in the collectives of racialized women who mobilize to improve their living and working conditions and denounce the inequalities they suffer. In the context of the framing of the West Indian and Reunionese population by the French authorities through Bumidom, West Indian and Reunionese women have created spaces to fight against this policy and its social, economic and spatial consequences. Here, we take the example of the mobilizations of Reunionese women through the Women's Group of the *Union générale des travailleurs réunionnais* (UGTRF), in France, analyzed by Myriam Paris. These women activists expressed themselves from 1979 onwards in a newspaper entitled *Combat réunionnais*. They explained the need to unite among themselves to denounce colonialism, imperialism and capitalism. In their own words, they created “a place to fight”, “a place where we will listen to our voices”. Together they could “open up space” and make these places “liberated territories” (Paris 2020, p. 373). This space thus aims to make visible what was invisible, both their position as women among Reunionese women, and as Reunionese women among women. In this space, they could share their experiences, which allowed them to criticize sexism, racism and imperialism, and to make demands. Access to greater social and spatial mobility was at the heart of these demands: whether it was through the refusal of women's assignment to the domestic space – that of the family (as a daughter, mother, wife) and that of the employer (as a domestic worker and caretaker). While they aspired to greater recognition of their work and a more important place in the Reunionese mid-communist space (Paris 2020, pp. 373–375), they spoke out in particular against the state management of the socio-spatial segregation of which they were victims. This criticism is deployed on a global scale – through the criticism of national migration policies – but also on local scales – through the criticism of the “pre-training” centers reserved for migrants supervised by the Bumidom. Among these centers, the one in Crouy-sur-Ourcq, in Seine-et-Marne, which was in operation from 1965 to 1983, was the object of numerous denunciations by the Women's Group of the UGTRF in the *Combat réunionnais*. Isolation and confinement were the terms by which they described their conditions of “training” for domestic service. Based on testimonies that described the center as a prison, the UGTRF Women's Group denounced the deprivation of spatial and social mobility, but also the stigmatization of black women's bodies, designated to dirtiness and laziness (Paris 2020, pp. 405–406).

More than 30 years later, space remains a crucial issue for activists who suffered and denounced the oppression they experienced as black women in France in the 2010s. It is also one of the goals of the Afrofeminist collective Mwasi, which “demands an ‘intersectional’ approach to the violence and oppression black women

experience” (Larcher 2017, p. 118). They challenge the lines that separate “Black” and “European” through the notion of Afropeanity, which constructs the legitimacy of a presence of Black people in French society (Larcher 2017, p. 105). To construct these reflections, they organize segregated spaces. Deliberate segregation emerged in the 1960s, during the U.S. civil rights movement, to create a space of struggle by and for black people (Delphy 2017). The spaces allow dominated social groups to express themselves, think, share and organize without the presence of the dominant group (Delphy 2017). Initiated by Mwasi in July 2017, the Nyansapo festival hosted three single-sex, Black women-only workshops in private spaces. The creation of these single-sex spaces sparked violent controversy on social networks and in the French media: “In the name of anti-racism and against ‘anti-white racism,’ calling for the maintenance of ‘republican order,’ the authority of universalism and even feminism, and even science, one voice after another condemned [this] festival en bloc” (Larcher 2017, p. 103). These spaces are thus particularly contested, including when they are temporary and in private spaces.

While creating spaces between minorities is a crucial issue, so is blocking off public space as minorities, as demonstrated by the performance *30 nuances de Noir(es)...*, a musical and immersive show, which took place in the gardens of the Cité internationale universitaire de Paris (Larcher 2017, p. 99). A score of Afrodescendant women walked around to embody “a true public ode to the diversity of morphologies and black and mixed-race femininities” (Larcher 2017, p. 98). This performance was part of the Necessary Horizons festival, which invited the audience to “think about the city of today and tomorrow” as “the space we share in concrete and sensitive ways”. Anchored in this project, Sandra Sainte Rose’s performance allowed for a double questioning: the “Eurocentric norms of beauty and femininity [...] [that] traverse social space and underpin access to opportunities and places” (Larcher 2017, p. 99), on the one hand, and the concealment of black women in public space, on the other hand.

Another presence that is revealed in the public space through activist actions is that of sexual minorities in working-class neighborhoods, who are assigned to otherness. This is one of the objectives of *Femmes en lutte 93*, a women’s collective whose actions take place in Saint-Ouen, Saint-Denis and Aubervilliers (Hanane et al. 2014). Since 2010, this collective has been mobilized in the feminist struggle and is aimed at making the actions of struggling working-class women visible: “We wanted to popularize women’s struggles, whether in the workplace, in the public space, in the private space, or at the international level” (Hanane et al. 2014, p. 82). During the debate on “marriage for all”, the lesbian feminists in the group took the initiative by creating a “four-page LGBT publication to address this issue in the neighborhoods” (Hanane et al. 2014, p. 82). In this text, they set out to deconstruct

the following prejudices: “There are no LGBT people in working-class neighborhoods, and anyway [...] if you say you are LGBT and you are in a working-class neighborhood, you are dead”. From testimonies, they nuance these representations and assert a reality that is often hidden: “LGBT people exist, and just because they are not in official LGBT associations in the neighborhoods doesn’t mean that they are not in collectives, that they don’t exist. They are in the neighborhoods, at work, in lots of places, and to say that they don’t exist because they don’t organize collectively, that’s not true” (Hanane et al. 2014, p. 8). This desire to make gender and sexual minorities in working-class neighborhoods visible is also shared by the organizers of the *Marche des fiertés en banlieue*, which took place in Saint-Denis on June 9, 2019. Slogans such as “*Banlieusard-e-s et fier-ère-s*” [Suburban and proud], “*Le périph’ n’a pas arrêté le sida*” [The suburbs didn’t stop AIDS], “*Nos quartiers ne sont pas des déserts LGBTQI+*” [Our neighborhood has LGBTQI+ people, too]. During the speeches that closed the march on the square of the town hall of Saint-Denis, *Femmes en lutte 93* denounced the stigmatization of working-class neighborhoods by the instrumentalization of homophobia: “Our primary homophobe is not our neighbor in the working-class neighborhoods. The worst homophobe in France is the French State”. They justify this assertion by the gentrification of working-class neighborhoods, the lack of public services (housing, schools, daycare centers), the deportation of undocumented migrants, migration policies, racism, police violence, capitalism, France’s colonial policies and military interventions abroad, which also, and especially, affect LGBTQI+ people. They demand the regularization of all undocumented people and freedom of settlement, access to housing for all, access to assisted reproductive technology for all women and “the police out of our lives, out of our neighborhoods”. Like other types of “feminism on the margins”, they use “an expanded definition of women users of public spaces and a reflection on the varying definitions of safety and the related definition of violence that moves away from the dominant idea” (Hancock and Lieber 2017, p. 22). They, who define themselves as “the margins among the margin”, also assert an empowerment of LGBTQI+ issues by inner-city women themselves. Like Afrofeminists, they are mobilizing to assert that those who experience socio-spatial inequalities are the ones most able to effect social and spatial transformations to end segregation and assignment of identity and space for greater social justice.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter has made it possible to restore the links between the social relations of gender and race, and their interweaving with inequalities in geographical space, drawing on the concept of intersectionality initially developed by critical race

studies. In this chapter, we have focused on three theoretical currents and their role in understanding socio-spatial inequalities: feminist analyses, queer approaches and postcolonial perspectives, as well as their contributions to knowledge production in Francophone and Anglophone geography. The first part of this chapter traced the origins of these theoretical currents, and identified three common contributions to the geography of inequalities: (1) first, an epistemological contribution linked to the consideration of situated points of view and a recognition of the importance of reflexivity; (2) an understanding of the way in which social relations are interwoven through the prism of intersectionality; (3) a recognition of the importance of space and scale in understanding the production, reproduction and contestation of (resistance to) inequalities. We then break down this theoretical reading into three central themes, supported by examples in the French context: first, the question of work, then the question of the production of otherness at the national level, and finally, the question of agency of minorities.

An intersectional analysis of work, influenced by feminist, queer and postcolonial theories, allowed us to highlight the way in which hierarchies of gender, class and race, rooted in a colonial past, structure the division of labor in metropolitan France. Section 2.2 presented analyses of occupational hierarchies built on ethno-racial assignments – for example, through the over-representation of foreign workers in certain occupational categories, such as the construction sector, and precarious employment conditions in the feminized hotel sector, the control of the bodies of racialized people and their relegation to invisible spaces in the same sector. Research on care work in the French metropolitan area shows the links between migration, gender, class, nationality and race hierarchies. Indeed, the segregations that affect the living and working conditions of racialized women are at the heart of the geography of work, from the international division of labor to the intimacy of bodies.

The second theme developed in this chapter (section 2.3) focused on the production of otherness in imperial and national ideologies, and in particular on the “territorial assignment” (Hancock 2008, p. 117) of minorities. From the dividing lines between “us” and “them”, social racial relations are (re)constructed, in particular by mobilizing the suffering of women and sexual minorities at the international, national, city and neighborhood levels: territories assigned to otherness are thus constructed as hostile to women and sexual minorities, and other Western and white territories are said to be the sole guarantors of the rights of women and sexual minorities. These dividing lines justify inequalities and violence against racialized minorities, including women and LGBTQI+ people. Indeed, they translate into restricted and problematic access to housing and public space. Moreover, research shows that if minority people choose domestic space and

working-class neighborhoods and cities as places for their professional and daily activity, it is because of the racism and sexism they experience in majority spaces, not because of a supposed “nature” or “culture”.

Finally, the last theme developed in this chapter (section 2.4) was the agency of the minorities. Far from being unfazed when faced with relations of dominations, minorities deploy many strategies to negotiate and resist different forms of oppression. Central to some feminist, queer and postcolonial theories, the concept of agency allows us to conceive a diversity of actions and strategies that cannot be reduced to collective resistance in public space. Geographers have contributed to the spatialization of agency in particular through the identification of places at the margins as often being spaces of transformation, but also through the identification of different levels of agency – from the collective to the individual. In this section, we have made use of examples that cover different territories: the daily and individual strategies of Muslim women in the Paris region to counteract spatial and professional segregation, but also collective mobilizations and the blocking off of public space by the struggles of LGBTQI+ women and working-class neighborhoods and cities.

In developing these three themes, it is worth recalling that we do not claim to be exhaustive in our understanding of the interweaving of social relations. We reproduce intersectional readings influenced by feminist, queer and post-colonial theories which place the experiences of oppression at the center of the analysis. Many other geographical themes can feed into these analyses, such as the link between environment and society. Geographers have thus explored the way in which power relations and their interweaving are the product of specific political-ecological contexts, where the most vulnerable populations are excluded from access to resources and land, and often relegated to the most fragile or dangerous environments (Truelove 2011; Mollett and Faria 2013; Rocheleau and Nirmal 2015; Mollett 2017; Behzadi 2019; Sultana 2011, 2020). The study of feminist political ecology and postcolonial political ecology is beyond the scope of this chapter, but is another example of how a feminist, intersectional and postcolonial perspective can contribute to an understanding of the major issues in the geography of inequality.

2.6. References

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