In the current era of increasing globalization large cities occupy a dominant and strategic place. Utopian and apocalyptic views on the city predominate alternately on the morrow of the third millennium. On the one hand, there are utopian treatises on the city as the focal point of economic prosperity, culture, tolerance and (world) citizenship, and, on the other, there are twentieth-century fin de siècle texts in which the city is depicted as a cesspool of poverty, exclusion, moral decline, and crime. Both these views have a long history in literary and social science texts. The utopian cityscape, for example, has been outlined in Campanella’s renaissance work The city of the sun (Manuel and Manuel 1979). But also a more recent, influential report of the Dutch Advisory Council on Government Policy (WRR 1996) offers a very sunny view on the social question of dual cities and divided societies. The apocalyptic cityscape has been described in Spengler’s The decline of the West (specifically where he discusses the soul of the city) and is also manifest in many sociological studies on the decadent and destructive effects of the metropolis on the social relations between citizens (Brunt 1989). The apocalyptic paradigm, however, is mainly dominant in the social sciences, and the utopian perspective in architecture and city planning.

In this article I will try - without joining the Horsemen of the Apocalypse - to delineate the nature of urban marginality in the Netherlands. Dutch bishops and ministers, as well as the Queen herself, have pointed out in the past that more attention should be paid to poverty and the exclusion of citizens in Dutch society. In this, they are supported by a large number of international studies which show that social inequalities and job insecurities in the prosperous western societies are increasing. Since the 1980s and early 1990s, the citizens concerned are labeled as the new poor, the excluded, the welfare dependent, and the underclass. The urban areas in which they live are referred to as ghetto’s, inner cities, neighborhoods of relegation, and no go areas. The cities in which these neighborhoods can be found are considered to be divided, dual, or fragmented cities. The major split cities are metropolises such as New York, London and Paris, followed by a host of cities that have to settle for a less dominant role in the world economy. In these split cities, new forms of urban marginality emerge. By this I mean, following Wacquant (1995, 1996a), those institutional forms of exclusion that result in the emergence of vulnerable groups concentrated in specific disadvantaged neighborhoods. This urban marginality results from the ‘fatal’ connections between exclusion processes in four spheres: the employment structure, welfare state provisions, family support systems, and spatial structuring. These fatal connections between the four spheres differ from one country to another, from one region to another, and from one city to another. The manifestations of urban marginality are therefore very diverse. There is now a proliferation of typologies which can be used to determine these differ-
ences and to indicate how the various spheres interrelate and reinforce each other in terms of consequences. The Italian sociologist Enzo Mingione (1996: 11) uses in this respect the term “malign circuits of exclusion”.

These circuits vary considerably in terms of their malignity. There is a world of difference between the social conditions in the hyperghettos of North America and those in the neighborhoods with many unemployed in the Netherlands (Wacquant 1996, Engbersen et al. 1993). If one looks at the four spheres from an overall perspective, the conclusion must be that the Netherlands is economically quite successful, seeing that the number of jobs are increasing, that the level of state care is still very high, that family relations are still relatively strong, and that the Netherlands has no ghettos. It is to a large extent an egalitarian society with rather egalitarian cities (WRR 1996, Fainstein 1996, Visser and Hemerijck 1997). However, anyone who researches forms of urban marginality, has to specify things instead of giving an overall impression. For urban marginality affects specific groups and manifests itself concretely in specific urban areas.

In this article I will focus on two forms of urban marginality: urban marginality as a result of exclusion from the nation state and the welfare state and urban marginality as a result of exclusion from the formal labor market. Illegal immigrants and unemployed citizens are the most important exponents of urban marginality in the twentyfirst century.

The making of an undocumented outsider class

In 1906, George Simmel published his essay on the ‘secret society’. Simmel argued that the secret society is a product of the manifest society and concurrently possesses specific sociological characteristics. Simmel’s concept of the ‘secret society’ can be used to describe the undocumented worlds that exist in the large cities of Europe, Japan, and North America. One can think in this respect of the spheres of the informal economy and organized crime, or of the social worlds in which illegal immigrants are embedded. Such secret societies are characterized by direct connections with the public world, or as Simmel (1950: 330) puts it: “The secret offers, so to speak, the possibility of a second world alongside the manifest world”. This connection between the secret and public world indicates that the underworld metaphor frequently recurring in journalistic and scientific works is not accurate enough. After all, many reports and studies on illegal immigrants also feature numerous characters from the ‘overworld’: legal compatriots, employers, clergymen, lawyers, and state officials, including police commissioners and mayors who turn a blind eye or even assist illegal immigrants (Staring 2001, Van der Leun 2001). Much more adequate is therefore Salman Rushdie’s ‘palimpsest metaphor’: the scroll of parchment on which a new text is written after the original writing has been made invisible, or the canvas on which a new painting is painted over the old one. A good observer, however, will see the old texts and paintings come shining through the surface. Rushdie uses the palimpsest metaphor to describe the ‘fateful layering’ of the city of Bombay. In his novel The Moor’s last sigh, Rushdie (1995: 184) writes:

“The city itself, perhaps the whole country, was a palimpsest, Under World beneath Over World, black market beneath white; when the whole of life was like this, when an invisible reality moved phantomwise beneath a visible fiction...”.

There are indications that undocumented worlds of illegal immigrants exist in the large cities of advanced societies, in a subtle way interwoven with regulated reality. How large this group of illegal immigrants is, is of course hard to say. For the United States, it was estimated that by 1990 the number of illegal immigrants residing in the United States was
about 3 million (Passel 1994). In 1991, the number of illegal immigrants in Western Europe was assessed at 2.5 million (Castles and Miller 1994). For Japan, estimates vary from 300,000 to 500,000 illegal immigrants (Sassen 1995). It is expected that the size of these illegal populations will increase in the near future (Miller 1995). This projected growth has led to a greater awareness of the question of illegal immigrants. This is illustrated by immigration laws that were introduced in Japan, the United States and in European countries such as Germany and France during the last decade (Cornelius et al. 1994, Meissner et al. 1993, Andreas and Snyder 2000). The admission of migrants is regulated more strictly and illegality is combated more vigorously.

The Dutch immigration policy has also become more restrictive, although there are some recent attempts to relax the distribution of temporarily work permits. In the 1990s, new legislation was developed to prevent illegal labor, immigration and residence. In the period prior to this new legislation, no one seemed to be interested in disclosing the public secret of working illegal immigrants (Engbersen and Van der Leun 2001). This situation has now changed. The current policy, which strongly resembles that of other European countries, aims to break open the ‘secret societies’ or ‘undocumented spheres’ in which illegal immigrants are embedded. Society has to become so transparent that illegal workers can be traced and are not able to profit from public provisions. But it has already become clear that a restrictive policy in respect of unwanted immigrants has certain unintended consequences. For example, the implementation of the Compulsory Identification Act has led to a lively trade in false identification papers. Within the Ghanaian community in Amsterdam, it has even become an important source of income. They may, for example, start working in the informal economy or seek refuge in criminal spheres (Andreas and Snyder 2000; Engbersen 2001; Staring 2001: 143-151). And this would make the secret societies of illegal immigrants even more elusive.

In other words: the policy in respect of illegal immigrants must be seen as a systematic attempt of the Dutch government to exclude certain categories of unwanted immigrants and to marginalize systematically the groups of illegal immigrants staying in the Netherlands. However, it would be too simple to state that a stricter immigration regime will automatically lead to an increase in criminal and informal activities. After all, there does exist a discrepancy between formal legislation and the way in which the migration policy is implemented in actual practice. According to the Aliens Act, every illegal immigrant has to be traced and deported, but in actual practice the focus is primarily on illegal immigrants who cause inconvenience and display criminal behavior. As a result of this priority, many illegal immigrants hardly ever come into contact with the police or aliens department (Van der Leun 2001).

This is illustrated by the results of the ‘Unknown City’ research project which reveal that the four large cities in the Netherlands accommodate illegal immigrants from more than 120 countries (Burgers and Engbersen 1999, Engbersen et al. 1999). The defense lines of ‘Fortress Europe’ are apparently not impregnable. In 1995, for instance, the aliens departments in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht have made up to 7,000 arrests, involving more than 6,000 illegal immigrants. Among whom as might have been expected illegal immigrants from Turkey, Morocco, Algeria, and Surinam were over represented. Our data also reveal that illegal immigrants are highly concentrated geographically. They are residing in a limited number of multi-cultural areas in the large cities of the Netherlands.

The analyses of the data sets and the interviews with 170 illegal immigrants in Rotter-
dam create a picture that is very heterogeneous. This diversity is a function of the differential opportunity structure to which illegal immigrants have access. Some illegal immigrants have a fairly established social position, others live in the margins of the city; some illegal immigrants have a regular job, others work in the informal economy or operate in the criminal sphere (particularly in the drugs scene), again others are unemployed and totally dependent on the support of family and relatives; some illegal immigrants have gained access to public provisions (housing, education), others have not gained access and, even worse, also have to survive without a supportive social network. These different opportunity structures lead to different types of illegal careers: (semi)integrated, stationary, marginal and criminal careers. Evidently, this diversity is threatened by the current restrictive policy. This will make it practically impossible to realize a (semi)integrated career. It is likely that more and more illegal immigrants will therefore opt for marginal and criminal careers. Others will return to their home country because of the impossibility to legalize their stay (Staring 2001: chapter 8 and 9).

The presence of illegal immigrants has thus led to a recurrence of old phenomena such as material poverty, exploitation, and direct dependence on employers and family. Due to their illegal status, these immigrants cannot fully base their lives on the sale of their working power, simply because their status forbids them to work in the formal economy. At the same time their illegal status leads to an inferior position in their own communities. As a result, they take up a very marginal position on the marriage and the (informal) labor markets. For example, Moroccan illegal immigrants take up the lowest and most risky positions in the drug economy, and Turkish illegal immigrants have to pay increasingly higher amounts of money for a marriage (of convenience) (Staring 1997, Van der Leun 2001). Thus, the outlines become visible of an undocumented ‘outsider class’ living in certain urban areas. The notion of outsider class was first introduced by Esping-Andersen (1993) to indicate a group of citizens who fall outside the formal employment structure. The undocumented outsider class, however, is not involved in the formal legal structure. It concerns a mobile and heterogeneous category of immigrants who have an inferior status due to the fact that they are classified as illegal and therefore excluded from the nation state and welfare state (Engbersen 1999).

**Joblessness and the rise of bastard institutions**

The second form of urban marginality concerns the exclusion of citizens from the formal labor market. Despite the dramatic increase in jobs in the Netherlands, there are still a substantial number of citizens who do not have a job. This is particularly the case in the larger countries of the European Community (Germany, France, Italy, Spain). Esping-Andersen (1996) therefore classifies the continental welfare states as ‘welfare states without work’. To elaborate my point with regard to urban marginality, I will mainly focus on jobless citizens (unemployed or disabled) who have been dependent on a minimum benefit for a considerable period of time. They are, of course, far better off than the illegal immigrants. They do not have an illegal status and their labor position is not pre-capitalistic. Their labor has been decommodified through a series of welfare state arrangements: social security, housing, health care, etc. They are therefore less dependent on the market for public protection. Nor do they harbor a secret of which the disclosure might have serious consequences for their chances of survival. Nonetheless, they are outsiders just as well, because they fall outside the formal employment structure (Esping-Andersen 1993). And this outsider status is unintentionally reinforced by the current labor participation offensive in Dutch society (Visser and Hemerijck 1997).
In order to gain a better understanding of the marginal position of the current category of jobless citizens, it may help to fall back on three reference periods: the economic crisis in the 1930s, the period of full employment, and the heydays of the welfare state.

**The 1930s**

The reference to the 1930s reveals some similarities in terms of the concentration of jobless citizens in specific urban areas, but also shows how much the employment structures and family and community relations have changed. An accurate description of the social implications of long-term unemployment in the thirties can be found in George Orwell’s *The road to wigan pier* (1937). His observations concerning the effect that unemployment has on the community are still very up-date:

“It is only when you lodge in streets where nobody has a job, where getting a job seems about as probable as owning an aeroplane and much less probable than winning fifty pounds in the Football Pool, that you begin to grasp the changes that are being worked in our civilization” (Orwell 1983: 207).

This statement is also applicable to a considerable number of Dutch ‘benefit districts’. By this we refer to neighborhoods in the main cities in the Netherlands in which a large part (40% sometimes even 50 percent) of the adult inhabitants with a regular independent income are dependent on social security and social assistance (Engbersen, Vrooman en Snel 1996). The population of these urban districts is often semi- or unskilled and has little chances of finding a regular job. Instead they live from social security, small and often informal jobs or a combination of both sources of income (Engbersen and Staring in this volume). Based on data from 1994 we constructed a top thirty of Dutch urban neighborhoods with proportionally the highest density of dependency from social security. Strikingly, 15 of those 30 benefit districts were in Rotterdam. What we see here, are the social effects of a de-industrializing city with little new economic activities.

A good example is the Afrikaanderwijk in Rotterdam, in 1994 number one on the list of benefits districts. It was once a very lively harbor district in which most of the labor force was working in the harbor and shipping industry, but has now become a district in which the industrial wage-labor regime has been replaced by a social security regime. In this district with more than 10,000 inhabitants, not less than 56% of the people with a regular income are living on social security or social assistance (old age pensioners not included). Apparently, only few have profited from the modernization of the Rotterdam harbor economy. The 1990s in the Netherlands were a prosperous period of economic growth. The question is, however, to what extend these jobless urban districts benefited from the economic growth. In a period of steadily declining unemployment figures the economic situation in the main urban centers of the Netherlands also improved. However, the main cities in the Netherlands - as elsewhere - still show a concentration of joblessness and economic inactivity. And within the cities there are still strong concentrations of joblessness and welfare dependency in certain districts. Revealing, recent figures demonstrate that during the 1990s, although the number of low income households in the Netherlands decreased, there was an increasing spatial segregation of these households in certain urban districts. Not surprisingly, these were the districts were many ethnic minorities live (SCP and CBS 2001).

In these benefit districts, a change has taken place in class, race and family relations. Homogeneous working-class communities have changed into heterogeneous multi-cultural benefit neighborhoods in which the traditional Dutch family no longer plays such a significant role. Many of these neighborhoods accommodate a substantial number of immigrants and one-parent families. For example, 70% of
the inhabitants of the Afrikaanderwijk are immigrants, and the number of one-parent families practically equals that of two-parent families. With a few exceptions, comparable patterns can be found in other neighborhoods. Orwell (1937: 209) observed that the family system remained intact during the economic crisis of the thirties. This seems to be less the case in the ‘benefit neighborhoods’. Some groups that are excluded from the labor market and receive insufficient state protection cannot automatically fall back on family and relatives, and have to fend for themselves.

**The period of full employment**

The reference to the period of full employment particularly points out that the security of a lifelong, steady job has been replaced by job insecurity (Standing 1995). This job insecurity is reflected in the growth in poorly paid part-time jobs, temporary employment contracts, additional labor market circuits, and workfare-like programs. And it is mainly people without the appropriate education level, or those who have received no education at all, who are dependent on these new phenomena on the labor market (De Beer 2001). Wage labor does therefore no longer automatically offer protection against forms of poverty and marginalization, and, for a substantial group of citizens, it also no longer guarantees social mobility and increasing purchasing power (Engbersen, Vrooman en Snel 2000).

The ultimate form of job insecurity is of course long-term unemployment. There are now many studies that address the issue of the permanent unemployed in England, France, Germany and the Netherlands. For example, the German study *Im Schatten der Arbeitsgesellschaft* (Kronauer et al. 1993), which portrays jobless citizens who have no prospect whatsoever of finding a new job and also have not been able to find a status alternative for work. They are the real outsiders. In the twenty-first century, a substantial group of citizens will be without work, i.e. they will not have a formal job.

**The heydays of the welfare state**

The reference to the heydays of the Dutch welfare state particularly indicates that the universal protection systems are being eroded (Schuyt 1995). The neo-liberalization of the social housing sector and the reform of the social security system are examples of this. The latter involves tighter regulations concerning the access to social security benefits, lower benefits, and a limitation of the duration of the benefits (Teulings et al. 1997). Furthermore, the national social assistance system has also been changed. The national standards for single people and one-parent families have been reduced by 20% and it is up to the local authorities to bring the benefits up to the original level again. Most local authorities do so, but not always.

The dismantlement of certain universal provisions is counterbalanced by the development of more specific schemes and ‘made-measure’ provisions ‘for those who really need it’. An example of the former are the ‘additional’ employment programs (subsidized jobs, social job creation and job pools) for long-term unemployed; an example of the latter is the ‘supplementary benefit’ which individual welfare officers may allocate to individual households in dire straits. It is, however, clear that not all jobless citizens will profit from these selective provisions.

The changes described with the use of the three reference periods provide an important explanation for the current fragmented experiences and policies concerning joblessness. The way in which jobless people spend their time and perceive time reveals a ‘plurality of social time’. Some individuals and groups are ‘lost in time’, others bend time to their will and again others are very busy developing alternative, or sometimes informal and illegal, activities (Engbersen et al. 1993). The different ways in which individuals and groups deal with
their joblessness relativize and differentiate the documented reality of economic inactivity and relational instability. After all, many politicians and social scientists may state that jobless people ought to be enabled to take care of themselves (Giddens 1998), but many inhabitants already do so of their own accord. And this brings me back again to the palimpsest metaphor: In the neighborhoods that accommodate the highest number of jobless (and illegal immigrants), many inhabitants prove to be busy with informal, part illegal, part criminal activities. This happens along two lines.

First of all, through the mobilization and reactivation of social networks. Family, lovers, friends, and acquaintances may after all provide help in times of need, and benefit payments can be maximized by ‘pooling’ or by living together on two benefits. The anthropologist Gonzalez de la Rocha (1995) reported in a penetrating way how poor households in a Mexican city managed to survive on the various sources of income that different members of the household supplied. Comparable collective household strategies also occur on a Dutch scale among the native households, and even more so among those of the ethnic minorities, in the ‘benefit neighborhoods’ in the Netherlands. Incomes from formal and informal labor, regular or supplementary benefits, the informal gift economy, and sometimes from self-production are ‘pooled’ and divided. It should be stressed, however, that not everyone has such supportive social networks and that not everyone is able to invest in them (Komter 1996). The lack of informal networks thus leads to new forms of social inequality.

Secondly, there is the development of bastard institutions in the ‘benefit neighborhoods’. Bastard institutions form the illegal or unofficial other side of official institutions. Two important examples are the informal economy and the criminal sphere. These bastard institutions are important in that they help to increase the (household) income, and can also play a role in the integration and emancipation of vulnerable groups that cannot advance through the regular channels (education and labor market). The assumption that the informal economy is gaining importance is made plausible by Kloosterman and Burgers (1996). They particularly emphasize the opportunities that post-industrialist cities such as Amsterdam and Rotterdam offer to ethnic entrepreneurs who know how to use their social networks strategically. See also studies into the hustling practices among Surinamese adolescents (Sansone 1992), into the importance of illegal clothing workshops for Turks (Rath 1995, Raes 2000), and into illegal entrepreneurs and moonlighters at the day markets in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and Utrecht (Kehla et al. 1997).

The importance of the criminal sphere was highlighted in a report on the investigation techniques of the Dutch police published by a parliamentary inquiry committee. One startling revelation was that socio-economically marginalized groups from the immigrant communities were involved in newly formed drug rings (Bovenkerk 1996). The involvement in drug trafficking of members from the Turkish community in Amsterdam is explained, among other things, by the loss of industrial employment and the high unemployment among Turkish men. Long before the report was published, it had already been established that certain ethnic minorities were proportionately more involved in violent offences and property crimes. The study concerned also revealed that there was a connection with their marginal social position (Bovenkerk 1991).

Thus, I come to a similar conclusion as the one in my analysis of the position of illegal immigrants. Jobless citizens have also a differential opportunity structure in which the extent to which they have access to the formal labor market, informal networks, and bastard institutions determines their income level and social position. However, the access to bastard institutions that some groups have, does not often lead to an increased integration. It often leads to quite the reverse: further marginalization and self-exclusion (Sansone 1992, De Haan and Bovenkerk 1995).
Marginality and social policy

So far, the two forms of urban marginality have been treated separately, and differentiated in a sociological sense. What they have in common is that jobless citizens and illegal immigrants meet each other in the same neighborhoods and that some of them develop informal, and sometimes illegal strategies. Such processes of informalization and illegalization are not only activated by the restrictive illegal aliens policy and the decreasing integration capacity of public institutions (labor and education), but are also reflected in the ways in which the government and policy-makers react to the problems of illegality and joblessness. Again, the palimpsest metaphor is applicable. There exists an ‘overworld’ of formal rules and objectives and an ‘underworld’ of informal rules and adjusted objectives, and sometimes even of illegal practices.

Let me first say a few words on the actual policies in these fields. There is a formidable zest for legislation as well as an ambitious urge for renewal in these areas with respect to the administration of information, for example, the link-up of databases. These activities are partly of a symbolic nature. The signal sent is that Dutch society no longer puts up with the residence of immigrants who are not allowed to stay in the country and with the ‘misuse’ of the national assistance system by those people who might be able to work. In order to strengthen this moral signal, two defense lines are erected: ‘Fortress Europe’ for guarding the external borders, and ‘Panopticum Europe’ for guarding the internal borders of the welfare state and its public provisions by utilizing sophisticated identification and control systems (Engbersen 2001). No one should any longer be able to hide themselves in the catacombs of the nation state and the welfare state. In this respect, modern society deviates from Orwell’s utopia Nineteen eighty-four (1981). The omnipresent television screen in Orwell’s book was only there to spy on the establishment, and not on the poor proletariat. The current identification and control systems industry however, focuses mainly on the most vulnerable groups. In the meanwhile, it has become clear that the defense lines of Fortress Europe are not impregnable, and that the monitoring systems function inadequately. This does not mean that they do not produce any effect at all.

However, there is a gap between the official legislative objectives of ‘apprehension and expulsion’ and ‘fraud control and labor activation’, on the one hand, and the everyday policy practice, on the other. This practice shows, again and again, that in the implementation process rules and objectives are neglected, distorted and applied selectively. After all, the aim of the police and the aliens department is not to apprehend all illegal immigrants, but only those illegal immigrants that disturb public order; and the social services do not ‘activate’ everyone, but only a select group of more privileged clients (creaming). These adaptations are sometimes introduced at the bottom, i.e. the shop floor (Falk Moore 1978, Lipsky 1980). On the other hand, they are also sometimes controlled from the top. In that case, the term used is that of a ‘policy of tolerance’: to tolerate illegal immigrants who do not cause any inconvenience or jobless citizens who have very little prospects of ever finding a job.

These adaptations of formal rules and objectives are first of all related to the unmanageableness of the problems in combination with the impracticability of the rules, or the limits set by certain rules. The classic example is the identification of the household composition of people who rely on social assistance. Another example is the impossibility to deport illegal immigrants who are non-identifiable. International legislation makes the non-identifiable illegal immigrant - as far as deportation is concerned - bureaucratically invulnerable. The Netherlands is, for example, often confronted with the phenomenon of the so-called revolving-door illegal immigrants, i.e. illegal immigrants who have been apprehended several
times for offences they have committed and immediately have been released again. Van der Leun et al. (1997) estimated that approximately 22% of the illegal immigrants who have been apprehended for criminal offences in the city of Rotterdam were picked up more than once. Many of them have been known to the aliens department for many years.

These informal practices are also the result of a shortage of appropriate means, and therefore a selection has to be made. In the selection process, all kinds of moral and efficiency considerations will subsequently play a role, considerations which you will not find mentioned in the Explanatory Memorandum of the new National Assistance Act or the new Aliens Act. But they do help to explain why the most prospectless unemployed are not helped to find a job, and the most criminal illegal immigrants are not deported. Due to the current tendency to decentralize, these practices will only become more extensive. For the simple reason that decentralization seems to mean that local authorities are given more freedom and more tasks, but not the appropriate means to operate properly.

**Intermezzo: survival strategies in a comparative perspective**

It is important not to exaggerate the above-mentioned processes of informalization and illegalization. A comparison with other countries makes clear that informality and illegality in the Netherlands still occur at a typical Dutch level. Comparisons with other countries are usually made with respect to institutional differences between welfare states (Esping-Andersen 1990), but they can of course also be made with respect to other differences, for example, those between the survival strategies developed by marginal groups in an urban context (cf. Roberts 1991). In this section I would like to discuss these strategies with particular reference to jobless citizens.

For such a comparison of survival strategies, the United States and Italy are of course interesting countries. In an institutional sense these countries differ considerably from the Dutch welfare state. The United States can be regarded as the prototype of the liberal (semi)welfare state in which the role played by the national or local state is very limited, and that of the market very large, whereas Italy can be regarded as a combination of a corporatist and a rudimentary welfare state in which the family as a protection system is still very important. The living conditions in the poor districts of the large cities in the United States and Southern Italy reveal different aspects of urban marginality. This is reflected in the survival strategies used by people without a formal job.

In the United States joblessness inevitably leads to the development of informal and illegal strategies. This is made very clear in the works of Edin and Lein (1997) and Scharf (1987). Edin’s detailed study of a poor Chicago district reveals that the welfare mothers living there do not receive enough welfare payment and are therefore forced to seek sources of informal income. She points out that there are two sources of additional income: income from family, acquaintances, friends and absent fathers, and income from (informal) labor. Scharf’s study of a poor New York district produced similar results. In order to survive, it is necessary to find an irregular job (this also applies to people with poorly paid, regular jobs). Scharf particularly stresses the importance of gambling, drugs and other criminal circuits for the inhabitants. Other ethnographic studies show similar findings (cf. Newman 1999, Anderson 1999).

Comparable strategies can be found in the large cities of Italy. The most substantial difference is, however, that the ‘welfare mother’ is not a very well known phenomenon in Italy. The two-parent family - possibly supplemented with other relatives - has remained relatively intact in the poor urban areas. This becomes evident, for example, Morlicchio’s study of Naples (1996). On the one hand, he
points to the weaker position of the family as a protection system under influence of high unemployment and the insufficient welfare state arrangements (e.g. the lack of an adequate national assistance system), but, on the other hand, the results of his study indicate that the family support networks remain existentially important and are even revitalized. Jobless people are furthermore dependent on an extensive informal economy that is (partly) closely tied up with the formal economy. It is also said that native Italians and immigrants are engaged in fierce competitive warfare with each other on this informal market.

Anyone who compares the Dutch studies into survival strategies of long-term unemployed with the American or Italian studies will soon understand the importance of government-related strategies. The most common Dutch strategy is to run into debt with (semi)government institutions (electricity companies, housing corporations and social services). Another important strategy is to commit social security fraud. This is one of the reasons why the Department of Social Affairs and Employment in Rotterdam has become the largest creditor to which clients have to pay the highest instalments. Debts incurred through loans and fraud form a substantial part of these debts (Engbersen et al. 1993).

It may be deduced from the comparison between the United States, Italy and the Netherlands that the three main strategy clusters are mixed in different ways (cf. Mingione 1996, Wacquant 1996b). These main clusters are: (1) the involvement in informal labor and/or the development of criminal activities; (2) the use of family or relational networks; and (3) the strategic use of (semi)government provisions. These three strategies occur in all three countries, but in different proportions and gradations. The extent of, and violence within, the drug economy in the ghettos in the United States are of a totally different order than the events taking place in the drug circuits in the Dutch neighborhoods on social security (Bovenkerk 1996). If the situation in the ghettos in the United States is compared with that in the poor urban areas of Southern Italy, or that in the ‘benefit neighborhoods’ in the Netherlands, the outcome is roughly that the first cluster of strategies prevails in the United States, the second one in Italy, and the third one in the Netherlands. To a large degree, the different mixes of strategies can be related to the institutional characteristics of welfare states (see Mingione 1996). This implies that institutional changes - for example, towards more selective and limited welfare state arrangements - will influence the nature and severity of the strategies that vulnerable groups develop. That is also the underlying message of this section. If exclusion from the formal labor market is accompanied by a deterioration of public institutions (social security, social housing), the first two strategy clusters, given certain limiting conditions, will gain more importance.

The discovery of urban marginality

The forms and processes of urban marginality and policy described here reveal border crossings, connections and linkages between a formal overworld and an informal underworld. This interwoveness can find expression in a person, but also in a company, branch of industry, household, public institution, community or limited urban space. Some Dutch examples are: the illegal Turkish tailor who wrote a ‘Dutch diary’ in the Dutch quality newspaper NRC-Handelsblad, and who had to leave the country despite the support of the mayor of Amsterdam; the Moroccan butcher who runs a legal enterprise in which some of the employees are illegal immigrants; or the former Platform Zero, the drugs toleration zone at the Central Station in Rotterdam where the overworld and underworld met each other legitimately. It should be mentioned that the so-called toleration zones can be regarded as the official institutionalization of what the
palimpsest metaphor stands for.

This specific interwovenness between the formal and informal, the overworld and underworld, has not been given sufficient attention in urban sociology and policy sciences. Nonetheless understanding this interwovenness is of crucial importance for mapping out the life-chances of vulnerable groups. It should, however, be taken into account that the difference between formal and informal, legal and illegal, overworld and underworld, has never been a given fact, but is rather a result of exclusion processes in the spheres of the market, state, family, and spatial restructuring. This implies that it is incorrect to take the division into overworld and underworld as an unproblematic premise for research, and that, instead, the social processes that create such demarcation lines should be studied, as well as their consequences for marginal groups. And whoever wants to study such processes should also take the methodological implications into account.

Looking at the current research, there are two stories to tell, as Mingione (1996: 12) has pointed out. The first one is the ‘macro-story’ based on all kinds of impoverishment indicators: poverty lines, high-risk groups, labor market opportunities and segregation indices, etc. It is not a story about poor people, but about poverty and social inequality. It merely provides some insight into the broad social field in which malign circuits of exclusion may occur. The second story, however, relates to the life histories of individuals and their households, as well as the chain of events that activates the circuits of exclusion. According to Mingione, it is only by looking from this perspective that one gains insight into the specific relationship between macro-structural factors and individual behavior. And it is only then that one can identify the ‘real poor’ and understand the nature of new urban poverty. I differ with Mingione who states that the two strategies of research cannot logically be connected with each other. It is nonetheless clear that the second, anthropological strategy is particularly relevant for the study of the above-mentioned forms of urban marginality.

The palimpsest metaphor can also be used in this respect. Researchers must be able to see beyond the superficial answers, rough impoverishment indicators and policy classifications in order to trace the new forms of urban marginality. Research into urban marginality is therefore also research into its myths (Perlman 1976). It has to take into account the resilience and vitality of vulnerable groups and should not so easily adopt victimization concepts. Research into the urban palimpsest will lead to a complex standpoint in the current debate on poverty and social exclusion. For not every illegal immigrant is poor and not every long-term unemployed is socially excluded. The differential opportunity structures to which they have access lead to differences in income level and social position. Nonetheless it may be obvious from my argumentation that they stand for two forms of poverty that will play a role in the large cities of tomorrow: a subsistence poverty and a modern type of poverty, especially among undocumented immigrants and jobless citizens who are excluded from formal and informal institutions.

Note

1. The concept of ‘bastard institutions’ is introduced by Everett C. Hughes in 1951 in a regular class lecture in Social Institutions, University of Chicago. Hughes wrote: “Some (bastard institutions, G.E) are the illegitimate distributors of legitimate goods and services; others satisfy wants not considered legitimate. Among bastard institutions are gambling, prostitution (the second oldest profession), rackets, black markets (whether of babies for adoption, food, or foreign exchange), the fence, professional crime, bootlegging (of alcoholic liquor or of forbidden drugs or literature). All take on organized forms not unlike those of other institutions. (...) these bastard enterprises should be studied not merely as
pathological departures from what is good and right, but as part of the total complex of human activities and enterprises. In addition, they should be looked at as orders of things in which we can see the processes going on, the same social processes perhaps, that are to be found in the legitimate institutions" (1994: 193-194).

References


Hughes, Everett C. 1994. On work, race, and the sociological imagination. Edited and with an


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