Challenging governing practices in the city - remaking the gender order of governance?

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Christine Hudson
Department of Political Science
Umeå University
SE-901 87 Umeå
Sweden
chris.hudson@pol.umu.se

Paper prepared for IPSA 23rd World Congress of Political Science, Challenges of Contemporary Governance, Montreal, 19-24 July 2014
Challenging governing practices in the city - remaking the gender order of governance?

[Sorry this paper still needs a lot of work!!]

In this paper, I make a rather jumbled effort to draw on both governmentality and feminist theories to analyse and problematize the gender orders of governance in the city. How do these shape the invisible power relationships preserving or transforming the roles, responsibilities, privileges, status etc. of women and men in the city’s public and private spaces? The tensions and contradictions in the processes of (re)making the gender order of governance are lived out in everyday experiences in the city that shape new, often contradictory, subject positions. Thus the technologies of power associated with participative governance may not only produce new forms of governable subjects but also open up spaces for mobilizing agency and challenging the city's existing governing practices. These issues are explored using empirical material gathered from focus group interviews with different groups of women (reflecting age, class and ethnicity) in four Swedish municipalities. I show how the women both accept and challenge the discriminatory orders of the city in relation to the public space, the workplace and the home and in this way contribute to the (re)making of urban governance. I argue that the right to the public space is closely linked to the right of private space and that the home should also be seen as a site of governance. This suggests that a broader “multi-level” concept of governance is needed - one that also includes the household and the family.

Introduction

Governance theory has been criticized from a feminist perspective for focusing almost exclusively on the political and economic dimensions rather than on the social and cultural aspects of governing. This has meant that the importance of the domestic, familial or personal domains as sites of governing has been overlooked (Newton 2005; Jarvis et al 2009; and Brody 2009). From a governmentality perspective, Walters (2012) argues that the practices of, for example, steering, networking and partnership need to be extracted from governance theory’s tendency to de-politicize them and instead be assessed within an analytics of power. However, as Larsson et al (2012) argue, although governmentality theory emphasizes power as decentred and
resistance is not precluded from the theoretical framework, there is tendency to portray power so that it appears as top-down governing strategies and resistance and power struggles are frequently neglected. Indeed, Larner & Walters 2004 argue governmentality studies tend to neglect the role of agency. Here it may be useful to draw on Mehta and Bondi’s (1999) argument that feminist post-structuralist theories of the subject allow us to take account of both relations of power and domination and the individual’s agency, desires, and creativity. Thus “these theories create a space in which it is possible to think about gender identity as both constructed and lived, without having to posit a gender-neutral, pre-social essence at the core of the person. Within this framework it is possible to interpret gender identity as neither fixed within existing systems of meaning nor freely chosen, and to think of actors as agents capable of both resistance and compliance” (Mehta and Bondi 1999: 68).

Combining these critiques suggests that a (re)conception of governance is required that focuses both on issues concerning politics in a broad sense (i.e. that includes the private as political) and the relationship between politics and civil society; as well as on accountability and justice and governing as a “multi-level concept” that also includes the household and the family.

It becomes important to scrutinize the seemingly “natural” ways of organizing and structuring the city and its decision and policy making processes. Drawing on Young (2005) and Jarvis et al. (2009), the prevailing systems of governing in cities are seen as constituted by gender orders (governmentalities?) which shape the invisible power relationships preserving or transforming the roles, responsibilities, privileges, status, sexuality and behaviour of men and women within households, communities, the market and the state (Agarwal 1997). Thus I do not want to stay at the abstract level, but want to explore the everyday practices of governing in the city - how the relations of power and domination and the individual’s agency, desires, and creativity interplay in the construction of gendered citizenship in the city. Here I draw on Ettlinger’s (2011) suggestion that:

“Governmentality offers an analytical framework that is especially useful towards connecting abstract societal discourses with everyday material practices. It privileges neither the discursive nor the material but rather the relation between the two.” (Ettlinger 2011: 538)
I use focus group interviews carried out with different groups of women (reflecting age, class and ethnicity) gathered in four Swedish municipalities. The interviews involve the re-imagining of the political through the space of the everyday. The women’s narratives are often complex and contradictory in that they both adopt and resist (and sometimes transgress) normative femininity and gendered expectations of women’s behaviour in the city.

**Governance - Governmentality**

I find it difficult at times to untangle governance and govermentality. As Walters (2012) points out, although these concepts are rooted in different traditions and differ in a number of significant ways, they share a concern with a number of themes and around the problems of governing in modern society. This is particularly the case with regard to the new more subtle ‘soft’ governance approach which shifts focus to the practices and procedures of governance and the ways in which these are shaping, guiding or affecting conduct and making some forms of activity thinkable and practicable both to practitioners and recipients. This brings governance theory closer to Foucault’s concept of “governmentality” (the mentalities of government) in which new technologies and strategies of government are being directed towards “the conduct of conduct” (Foucault, 1991). In common with governance theory, power is seen as not merely exercised through direct sovereign governmental control but as dispersed through a variety of domains such as experts and professionals and through technologies of power such as surveillance and the internalization of regulation. These technologies of governance involve technologies both of agency by which the individual is made responsible for her/his actions and of performance involving benchmarking rules against which self-assessment can take place (Dean, 2010). These calculative practices seek to produce individuals who, although constrained by asymmetrical networks of influence and control, act as self-regulating, calculating persons. Governmentality is thus concerned with the generation of different subjectivities through techniques and modes of ruling and guiding in an encompassing sense. However, there are important differences between governance and governmentality theory in that governance theory sees the decentring of the state as a response to the increasing complexity of society and espouses an “anti-political politics” (Walters 2012: 66) that sees co-operation and consensual styles of governing as the way to solve societal problems.
Turning to the city, I understand space as relational (Massey 2005) which, Ettlinger (2011) argues, is integral to how sense can be made of everyday activity in terms of techniques of power or governance i.e. “the conduct of conduct” (Foucault, 1991). This involves processes of normalization which materialize societal norms in daily practices and by which subjects are normalized to sustain a pattern of rule (Rose 1996). Power is exercised not only through dominance and coercion, but by shaping actors’ desires, aspirations and beliefs - creating self-governing subjects who conduct themselves in accordance with certain norms (Dean 2010). Accordingly, calculative practices are needed that guide people’s decision making unconsciously (Ettlinger 2011). Governance thus concerns how norms are unconsciously produced and reproduced by citizen-subjects, thereby making governance at a distance possible (Rose 1996). Thus Ettlinger (2011) argues that people in this framework are produced by an external gaze.

There are differences in the constructions of masculinities and femininities in the city, in who is constructed as the ‘active citizen’ reflecting that the lives of women and men are deeply and systematically conditioned by various social norms and expectations and unequal economic and social power relations (Nussbaum 2003). Social perceptions, norms and practices and women’s economic situation affect their position not just within the home space but also the public space. Further, feminist research on the gendered construction of cities shows how women’s insecurity in urban spaces curtails not only their access to and participation in the city, but also limits their visions of the city as a “good place” to live and work. At the same time, my interviews show that there is both compliance with and resistance to the dominant gendered constructions of femininity in the city.

In relation to the governing processes of the city, it also important to acknowledge that fear and safety in different spaces are interconnected - that feelings of security/insecurity in public places are affected by experiences of fear and danger in the private space. The home can be a contested space for women where their right to participation in the city and its governance (in all its forms) can be constrained or hindered i.e. the right to the public space is closely linked to the right to the private space. However, this is largely ignored in both governance and governmentality
theories. This paper seeks to make a contribution to a more nuanced understanding of governing processes by exploring how women’s insecurity in urban areas affects their use of, access to and participation in the city and the consequences for their citizenship. Drawing on theories relating to the embodied nature of citizenship (O’Loughlin 2006; Bacchi & Beasley 2002; Beasley & Bacchi 2000; and Young 2011) as well as a governmentality perspective; focus group interviews with different groups of women (reflecting age, class and ethnicity) gathered in four Swedish municipalities are analyzed and the implications for urban governance are considered.

Dimensions of Governing

As mentioned previously, the new governance theories have several themes in common with governmentality theory (Walters 2012) in that governance has become increasingly to be viewed in terms of more broad-based processes of governing which encompass state-society interactions and partnerships (Jayal 2003). In other words, governance has moved from being defined largely in terms of public sector management and accountability, to a broader understanding of governance as including “the wide range of ways in which the political, social, and administrative structure of a society affects the access of its members to basic opportunities and capabilities” (Nussbaum 2003:4). However despite these broader definitions of governance, discussion of the gendered nature of governing is largely missing from more theoretical approaches in both governance and governmentality theory.

Topographies of power

Walters (2012) highlights the need to move beyond state-centred forms of analysis that see the state as the central or major source of government and political power and explore new topographies of power. This denotes the flow of power beyond the state drawing attention to ways in which multiple organizations, groups and individuals have become implicated in the process of governing (Barnes et al 2007). "Political forces seek to give effect to their strategies, not only through the utilisation of laws, bureaucracies, funding regimes and authoritative state agencies and agents, but through utilising and instrumentalising forms of authority other than the State in order to govern 'at a distance'" (Rose, 1996: 46). Miller and Rose (2008) argue that this does not mean that the state is unimportant, but rather that its activities should be in focus in the analysis – i.e. the rationalities, techniques, and practices. Thus
power is seen as multi-centric and performative, as something that produces meanings, interventions, social relations, subjectivities, and material objects Larsson et al (2012). Thus, for example, is highly involved in the construction and regulation of gender and sexuality and the reproduction of heteronormative family forms (Newman 2005). Thus, if we are to gain a deeper understanding of the power processes involved in governing, the concept of “multi-level governance” needs to be reinterpreted beyond focusing on levels of “government” to include the household/family and the community as part of governance (Ashworth 1996).

The market
Jayal (2003) suggests that there is nothing inherently “woman-friendly” in widening the ambit of governance beyond the state. Civil society institutions are not necessarily less androcentric than the state. Indeed Kantola & Squires (2012) argue that there have been negative consequences of both a lateral loading of state power to other and partly non-elected state bodies and an offloading through the delegation of state powers and responsibility to actors in civil society.

“Lateral loading and offloading present a depoliticized and remote set of state policy-making agencies … (that) … potentially works against the inclusion of women’s interests and gender equality issues in public policy discussion, formulation and implementation” (Kantola & Squires 2012:386).

Markets are social institutions embodying social norms and practices and gendered power relations (Waylan 2008). Women’s ability to bargain in the market, as in other arenas, is mediated by these gendered norms and practices (Agarwal 1997). In their discussion of the shift from state feminism to market feminism, Kantola & Squires (2012) suggest that feminist engagements with public policy agendas are increasingly mediated via private sector organizations according to the logic of the market. The fact that the introduction of market mechanisms into the public sector and the restructuring of the provision of state and local government services have had important gendered consequences tends to be ignored (Newman 2005). The reduction of regulation and the introduction of competition, for example in the caring services, have been accompanied by a “feminization” of labour as low paid, flexible, part-time, temporary service sector jobs (where women often dominate) have grown in importance. [Needs further development].
The public-private relationship
According to governance theory, hierarchical relationships between citizen and state have been replaced by “multiple parallel spaces in which power is encountered and negotiated” (Newman 2005: 4) and which blur the boundaries between the public and the private. This seems to offer potential to connect with feminist critique of the public-private dichotomy. However, as both Waylen (2008) and Newman (2005) point out, a better understanding of the gendered nature of the public-private relationship is required in order to combat the narrow economistic view of much mainstream governance theory where the focus is on the economic and the political and tends to omit the social and cultural. The view of the private sphere as primarily an economic domain, (with a very narrow view of what counts as economic) needs to be replaced by an extended view of the private that includes households, the “reproductive” economy as well as the "productive" economy (Waylen 2008). The exclusionary notion of the public sphere as comprising male citizens enjoying rights from which women are excluded also needs to be challenged and "private" issues such as rape and domestic violence politicized and brought into the public sphere (Wendt Höjer 2002). Related to this is the need to acknowledge that that the right to the public space is closely linked to the right of private space; that the home can be a contested space for women where their right to participation in and to appropriation of the city and its governance can be abused (Fenster 2005). Further, experiences of fear and danger in the private space affect feelings of security in public places i.e. fear and safety in different spaces are interconnected (Pain 2001).

Accordingly it becomes important to scrutinize the ways in which traditional understandings of women’s “private” role in the family contribute to constructing or forming and constraining their activities and aspirations. Indeed Agarwal (1997) argues that women’s bargaining power within the home is clearly associated with their situation outside it and vice versa. As Ashworth (1996) points out, women as a group have been and still are often excluded from participating in society’s cultural, economic or political institutions and associations - especially at the policy-determining or evaluating levels. “Thus, engendering the understanding of governance requires scrutinizing all of these institutions, the family included, and their interactions with a wide range of concerns pertinent to women’s lives in view” (Nussbaum 2003:5).
Networks
Turning to networks where the flows of influence in interpersonal and inter-organizational relationships are seen as more important than formal power positions and government hierarchies (Newman 2005). These new governing styles are seen as requiring new more collaborative styles of governing and forms of co-ordination such as partnerships between the state, the private sector and civil society that draw in non-traditional actors such as voluntary organizations, community groups and even the general public into the processes of urban policy and decision-making (Hudson & Rönnblom 2007). However, the processes of network coordination and bargaining and the resource dependencies that shape them ignore the role that factors such as gender, class and race play in the way networks operate. Power relationships and issues of equality and inequality, differential status and rights are obscured or ignored (Hudson 2001). The operation of networks is overshadowed by flows of influence operating in interpersonal relationships that are often gendered in ways that have negative consequences for women as a heterogeneous category and other excluded groups (Newton 2005). Thus Nussbaum (2003) argues that gendering governance must include women’s political participation in a wide sense not just in the formal institutions of the state, but also in informal groups, movements and institutions of civil society and the way in which these areas interact.

Gender orders
Gender orders refer to historically constructed patterns of power relations between men and women (not only as subjects, but also in the social arrangements of masculinity and femininity) which are mediated and institutionalized via distinctions and relations (Connell 2009). Drawing this concept of gender orders, Jarvis et al. (2009) argue that “greater understanding is needed of the gender contracts that constitute the prevailing systems of government and governance” (Jarvis et al. 2009: 224). These they suggest shape social, economic, political and sexual relationships and are formed over long periods of time through day-to-day interactions. Agarwal (1997) identifies four levels at which the myriad of gender contracts that together constitute gendered governance are negotiated: the household/family; the community; the market; and the state. These gender contracts, Young (2005) suggests, serve to constitute the invisible power relationships that determine the
roles, responsibilities, privileges, status, sexuality and behaviour of men and women within households, communities, the market and the state and which preserve or transform the prevailing gender order (Jarvis et al. 2009). The tensions in and the unevenness of the processes of (re)making the gender order of governance are lived out in daily experiences that shape new, often contradictory, subject positions. Thus Newman (2005) argues that the technologies of power associated with participative governance not only produce new forms of governable subjects but may also open up spaces for mobilizing social identity and agency. Further, “new forms of citizen participation may not just reflect external changes in the public-realm and the public itself but may be constitutive in their effects” (Barnes et al 2007: 65).

**Governance, citizenship and the city**

There has been a tendency in urban governance theory to ignore the gendered, racialized, sexualized and classed relations of power in the city and how they have the potential to oppress and dominate not just through the distribution of material resources, but also through taken-for-granted assumptions and practices that include some while excluding others (Young 2011). Further, the particular nature of gender relations at any point in time is reflected in the spatial structure of cities and that neither gender relations nor the spatial structure of cities are fixed but always in a process of making (England 1991). Cities are complexes of varying, sometimes contradictory, gender orders (Jarvis et al. 2009). Those, for example, underpinning the welfare state are coexisting with and partly challenged by new gender orders emerging in the new service economy of globalized markets (see Newman 2005). The new service economy is opening up new employment opportunities for women but also shaping new patterns of inequality that are highly classed and racialized. For example, staffing or recruitment agencies are frequently being used to provide temporary staff or replace staff in many public sector services. The employees (often women and or immigrants) have to be on continuous stand-by but are usually only paid for the hours they work. Many public services have been marketized and, for example, services provided by local government have to compete with private companies and co-operatives for contracts. As Newman (2005) argues, these processes of re-commodification into the market or decommodification into the family or communities of, for example, caring services previously carried out by the

Shifting focus to the practices and procedures of governance highlights the ways in which these are shaping, guiding or affecting conduct and making some forms of activity thinkable and practicable and others not (Hudson 2011). The ‘retreat’ of governmental power as the state withdraws, for example, from direct provision of welfare services and its expansion through the evolvement of new forms of regulatory practice controlling citizens’ lives (Newton 2005) have far reaching consequences for citizenship. The neo-liberal concept of the ‘active’ citizen (Rose 1999) is closely linked to the processes of governance (Hudson 2012). The active citizen exercises responsibility and participates not just in the public sphere “but in a variety of private, corporate and quasi-public practices from working to shopping” (Rose 1999:166), and is constituted as a self-governing, responsible subject. However, the transformation of citizenship to a more active performing subject is profoundly gendered and racialized (Newman 2005). Regulatory practices become intertwined with the new modes of provision of welfare that work not only to constrain individual behaviour but also to define and limit subjectivities (Newman 2005). The shift from welfare to neo-liberal citizenship regimes (Lister et al 2007) has been seen as having a profound effect on women’s citizenship. The ‘good’ citizen is the active, working citizen (Lister 2003). The “de-gendering” of the active citizen i.e. women as worker-citizens become “equal” with men as worker-citizens (Newman 2005), means that women in general are being made “invisible” i.e. they “seemingly ‘disappear’ or fall off of the political radar” (Dobrowolsky 2008: 466).

Citizenship is a ‘lived experience’ (Lister 2003a, Lister et al 2007) involving social, political, cultural and symbolic practices – the everyday experience of “being a citizen” (Sandercock 2003:151). It means things such as the right to earn money, to study, to have fun, to be able to go where and when one wants in the city. It is about emotions - to feel safe and welcome or afraid and unwelcome in the urban places and spaces (Hudson & Kvist 2011). Citizenship has a materiality (Bacchi & Beasley 2002 and Beasley & Bacchi 2000) and is always embodied and contextualized in particular times and places (Young 1990). Political subjects’ embodied positioning (in terms of gender, class, ethnicity, sexuality, disability and so on) affects their citizenship status
offering different opportunities and potential for inclusion/exclusion (Beasley & Bacchi 2000).

The next part of this paper turns to examine how these processes of gendering (and de-gendering) governance are playing out using examples from a number of Swedish cities.

**Governing practices in the city**

Trying to understand how women are both constructing themselves and being constructed as active citizens in processes of governing, focus group interviews were carried out in four Swedish municipalities. Two were municipalities in the Stockholm metropolitan region and two were located in the more rural Västerbotten region in the far north of the country (where one was the urban regional centre and the other was a more rural community). In order to try to reflect the heterogeneity of the category “women”, interviews were carried out with four different groups of women relating to class, ethnicity and age in each municipality. Women employed within the caring services and women small business owners were used as a proxy for class; pensioners for age; and women with immigrant backgrounds or belonging to the Swedish aboriginal people (Sami) represented ethnicity.

In the women’s narratives, the intersections of class, gender, ethnicity and age played out in different ways in different situations. Although Sweden has a very high level of female economic activity, the Swedish labour market is highly sex segregated. Women predominate in the service sector particularly in the caring services. These are often low paid jobs, with unsocial hours, and many women work part-time to be able to combine family life and work - leading to lower pensions for women. Differences in women’s circumstances, such as class, race, age, where they live, the type of employment, income and so on affect the way they use the city and their opportunities to participate in the decision and policy-making processes in the city.

**Broadening governance**

The gendered nature of governance and its broader meaning than simply the management of the city emerged clearly in the narratives from the focus group interviews with women in the four municipalities. Here there were signs of
challenges to the dominant norms of the city and the constructions of femininities that restrict women’s mobility in the city:

“If we are going to talk about equality then everyone ... even women should be able to move around as they want in the city ... to be where they want ... when they want...they should be able to do that without being afraid.”

“Many women are afraid to go out. I think that this should never happen... Everyone should be able to go out without feeling afraid. I think that a city should be constructed so that you feel safe.”

Ideas about how to create safer cities that questioned the way cities are designed were also present,

“...there’re too many offices in the centre. There needs to be more housing so that people live there... so people are moving around there all the time... it would feel safer…”

But at the same time the discussions reflected the complexity and occasionally the ambiguity of women’s feelings about the public space and their construction as a “woman” in the city.

“As a woman I want light ... as much light as possible when I’m out and I want openness – I don’t want bushes and trees. But at the same time I love parks and trees and greenery – so I’m split – I want greenery and beauty but I also want openness and light so I feel safe.”

Further, a common theme in the women’s narratives in all the groups and municipalities was that the household and the family also figure as a level of governance where the gendered relations and norms prevalent in society construct and regulate gender and sexuality and the reproduction of heteronormative family forms. It was, however, particularly strong in the focus groups involving women working in the caring and welfare services where the construction of the home as there “safe place” for women was challenged even in the smaller more rural municipality. The following narrative illustrates this:

“I was at a meeting about refuges for battered women... and they said small places and villages they don’t need them because everyone knows each other ... there’s no need for safe places for women there because if anything was going on in a family then everyone would know. And a woman from a women’s refuge said that’s just what you don’t know... these small places are more secretive than anywhere else. But the politician was sure that nothing happened because everyone knew each other!”

It was also clearly expressed in focus groups in the larger urban municipalities. The commonly held misconception of the home as the safe place for women and the public space as dangerous when the reverse is all too frequently the case was discussed:
“I was just saying on my way here that it’s in the home that it’s most dangerous (for women). We see that every day at the crisis centre. You can make the city... the public space...safe as you like for women, but still most violence takes place in the home.”

“...Most women are vulnerable in their home. It’s there most crimes are committed beatings, rapes...”

and the need to expose the gendered power relations at work in the family and the home was raised:

“...Yes women are more afraid to be outdoors but safer than in the home. You should build apartments made of glass... so you can see what’s happening!”

The importance of bridging the public - private dichotomy and make the private political was evident for example in the discussions of collective forms of living that were taken up in several focus groups in the different cities. The following discussion from one of the groups illustrates this point:

“If there was more collective living... then you’d not be isolated in your home... you’d be more secure... with other people...”

“...Yes ...and people would start to work in a different way and ... people wouldn’t be afraid...”

... Yes there’d be more security in collective living...not just from men’s violence. If you’re a single parent then there’d be others to help if you were ill and to look after the kids ...and even for older people...you wouldn’t be on your own...”

This also relates to breaking the heteronormative construction of the nuclear family - mother - father – child and allowing for other constellations.

**Gender orders**
The changing subject positions for women as a consequence of the cutbacks in the welfare state and the growth of the new service sector was reflected particularly in the focus groups with women who ran their own small businesses and with women working within the caring services. However, it also figured in the focus groups with women with an immigrant background as many of them felt the consequences of deregulation directly as they worked in low-paid jobs in the welfare sector as cleaners or caring assistants, often with split-shifts (i.e. starting work early, having unpaid “free time” in the middle of the day and then resuming work until late in the evening). The public sector, particularly the caring services, is a major employer in all the four municipalities studied. Worry about whether their jobs would disappear and the opportunities to get new employment were raised particularly in the more rural
northern municipality where employment in the public sector has dominated women’s employment. As one women put it –

“It’s really important that there are jobs available – qualified employment that matches my training. Too often the jobs are only part-time.”

This raised issues concerning the possibilities to remain in the municipality, many young women have left the rural areas to continue their education but also because of the lack of employment opportunities. There is a serious problem of an aging population and too few people (i.e. women) in economically active ages to take care of them.

However, for some women the deregulation of the welfare state is leading to new opportunities. The number of women starting their own businesses has increased in recent years. They are often carrying out the services that were previously performed by the public sector. However, the focus groups with women running their own businesses took up the problems they faced in staring their own businesses – a prime example was to be able to borrow money. Business loans and advice tend to be masculine coded and the women complained that they were often seen as wanting to borrow “too little” money for the “wrong” sorts of things.

”No special support just for women – women don’t need special support more than men. But barriers for women need to be removed – that you can borrow money to finance your business – loans and grants tend to be for typical “male” types of business activities … you often don’t get taken seriously as a woman trying to set up a business.”

Although all the municipalities run services directed towards encouraging women to start their own businesses, several of the women running their own small firms pointed out that female entrepreneurs still faced difficulties. For example, their enterprises were often seen as too small and the rules and regulations were not adapted to suit their requirements.

“It’s still the big firms that count – as a small business you don’t get the same respect and the regulations aren’t adapted to our needs. Many women work part-time so that they have time with their families - that doesn’t fit in with how you’re supposed to be as a ‘businessman’ …”

This was echoed in the narratives in the focus group with Sámi women:

“When it comes to helping us combine reindeer herding with other employment there is a lack of flexibility. Loans and other forms of assistance to small businesses are usually based on a fulltime enterprise – but we need to be able to combine it with keeping reindeer.”
This reflects contradictory constructions of these women both as active citizens taking responsibility for their own livelihood, but at the same time as “wanting” in what they choose to work with. And, in the case of Sami women, their ethnicity compounded this “lack”, constraining their possibilities to be constructed as the active citizen.

The influence of gender orders affecting and shaping the roles, responsibilities, privileges, behaviour and so forth of women and men could also be discerned in the discussions concerning women’s place in the city.

“Even those who mean well are a problem ... when they say that we (women) should take care, we should behave, dress in a certain way, ask a man to accompany us home, take a taxi and so on ... and as a women you get angry about that. Men never get to hear that they should be afraid to go out alone, to walk alone - but we women get that.”

Women in all the focus groups talked about how being “afraid” is constructed as part of femininity and how this is reinforced by the media. It was particularly strong in the larger urban municipalities where there had been recent incidents of rape and sexual assault which had been sensationalized in the local media. This is illustrated in the following:

“I think that it is often to do with that we are different as individuals - some women aren’t afraid and some men are ... but if people are frightened and show their fear – then they’re in trouble ... because they become an easy victim. Then there is the mass media. They contribute to making people afraid. Many women have probably not experienced anything themselves... just read about it in the papers and that can be enough to imagine that something will happen”

“....Yes the newspapers and such ... that we women should stay at home. Sometimes I wonder if it’s some sort of conspiracy... to get women to stay indoors...”

“... Yes the media ... there are many women particularly elderly women who think that they will be assaulted if they go out the front door. And there is perhaps one elderly woman a year that it happens to...”

They also discussed how women are constructed as circumscribed not only by the media, but also by other women. How women are imprisoned in a construction of femininity as vulnerability:

“I think... I think we scare each other. For example, if I say I’m going to walk home... then everyone says – ‘you can’t do that!’ So I think it goes together - you say ok I won’t walk home.”
“I think it’s wrong that women can’t wear what they want because they are afraid of being raped … that you get blamed, that it’s your own fault if anything happens. You were asking for it …wearing a short skirt …that kind of thing.”

These narratives illustrate how the construction of feminine gender identities often emphasizes women’s bodily vulnerability (Wendt Höjer 2002) and bolsters the idea of public space as dangerous for women (Hollander, 2001). This can serve to reinforce the image of women as passive victims, rather than as active subjects challenging and changing the discriminatory spaces of the city, and thus circumscribe their citizenship (Lister, 2003). Indeed Day (2001) suggests that fear and the perception of danger may encourage women to adhere to gendered social norms for behaviour that restrict their independence in public space. However, there was also anger at the way women were constructed as vulnerable, particularly in the media and how this works to constrain women’s right to the city. This was articulated in all the groups, but particularly the groups in the more urban areas:

“... The media... all the articles in the papers... if it was more positive it could reduce the fear”...

“if I’m honest, it’s very rare that something happens... but how... who makes us so afraid? The media - I think it’s disgusting - they make it sound like all women get raped or all guys in a certain age get beaten up. Sure it happens but who... who has this malevolent aim to make us so afraid?”

The women express that they feel more secure in well-populated places. If there are other people around then there is someone who could see or hear if something happens to them.

“...that theatre and cinemas are open quite late and then there are people around. Cultural activities but even that a café is open late - not just pubs and restaurants that are open late - so you can go and have a cup of coffee...”

“Although when I cross XXXX or XXXXX (squares) and there are lots of people - doing all sorts of activities - then I don’t feel afraid, because there are groups of people around and I’m not alone. And if something should happen then it won’t be anything dangerous because there are so many who can help but in other places - even if it’s the middle of the day - I can meet people and I check – look - and chose which way to go - because it’s in me. You have to ... you have to be a bit careful... on your guard ... even in broad daylight...”

However, not all people spread these feelings of security; for example, those engaged in criminal or anti-social behaviour instead engender feelings of fear. Many of the women describe that they feel afraid of gangs of youths hanging around in public
places, drunks or people high on drugs. These groups are described as unreliable and unpredictable and create feelings of insecurity.

“I’m on my guard... but then I think it’s no idea that you cross the road because then they’ll see that you’re afraid. So instead I walk straight ahead and pretend that I own the whole world when I go passed them - as if nothing could happen.”

The experiences of feeling insecure also affect the women’s choice of place to live and also how they choose to travel back and forth from work and other activities. Age, class and race also figured here – elderly on fixed incomes, unemployed women, women in low paid jobs cannot afford a car or to take a taxi when returning home late at night and have to use public transport.

“If I have been to the city centre, then I don’t like to take the train home because it feels really unpleasant – there is a dark, dark tunnel. Even if I have to stand and wait for a bus at xxxxx there are always a lot of people there and it feels much safer”

“When I was searching for a flat, I took note of whether there were a lot of bushes and such and whether I would dare to go home at night – it’s important when you live by yourself that you know you can take yourself to and from the busses.”

These are quite common narratives and they are consistent with the social construction of public spaces as dangerous for women (Hudson & Kvist 2011) and affecting the subject positions available.

[Further analysis needed]

**Conclusions**

The focus in much of the governance literature has been on the political and economic dimensions rather than on the social and cultural aspects. This has meant that the importance of the domestic, familial or personal domains has been overlooked. Governmentality theory combined with feminist post-structuralist theories of the subject open up possibilities to adopt a new understanding of governance which focuses on issues concerning politics in a broad sense (i.e. that includes the private as political), and the relationship between politics and civil society, but also on governance as a “multi-level concept” that also includes the household and the family. Such an approach shifts focus to the practices and procedures of governance and the ways in which these are shaping, guiding or affecting conduct and making some forms of activity thinkable and practicable and others not.
With regard to the city, the discussions from the focus group highlight the need to problematize urban governance so that the unequal power relations in the city relating to sex, ethnicity, class and so forth become apparent and can be confronted. The dominant constructions of gender affect the ways in which women and men (as heterogeneous groups) participate in and benefit from the city, often constraining those constructed as the “other” and limiting not only their access to the decision-making processes of the city but also its cultural, social and economic resources. Governance needs to be broadened so that the household and the family are included.

[Conclusions need to be developed]

References
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