

A RESEARCH AGENDA FOR MICRO-SEGREGATION

Thomas Maloutas

Online seminar:

Multidimensional housing deprivation

Department of Sociology, University of Bologna

13-14/10//2021



**MICRO-
SEGREGATION
DEFINITION**

definition

the unequal spatial distribution of social groups (or ethnic, racial ...) in micro-space

2 examples

vertically segregated apartment buildings

socially segmented apartment buildings
(front/back; refurbished/not refurbished ...)
or physically segmented (separate access)

**MICRO-
SEGREGATION
MECHANISM**

the mechanism producing m-s is the same with neighborhood segregation:

those with more resources have access to the best spaces and those with less are relegated to the worst

the question: is m-s important?

**MICRO-
SEGREGATION
IMPORTANCE**

m-s neglected in the urban studies literature

is m-s a marginal phenomenon (a particularity of some cities like Naples and Athens?)

does it have important social effects?

**MICRO-
SEGREGATION
IMPORTANCE**

m-s is not a marginal phenomenon

a forthcoming book brings evidence on different forms of m-s from 20 cities (Naples, Marseilles, Athens, Budapest, Hong-Kong, Seoul, Santiago, Rio de Janeiro, Beirut, Tel-Aviv, Madrid, Amsterdam, Beijing ...)

**MICRO-
SEGREGATION
IMPORTANCE**

a phenomenon with considerable social effects

m-s combines the contradictory (positive) effects of social mix and (negative) effects of segregation at the micro-scale

m-s requires social mix (i.e. the presence of different social groups); but social mix does not lead necessarily to m-s

the question: are the positive effects prevailing over the negative? (will come back to this question)



**MICRO-
SEGREGATION
NEGLECT**

why is m-s neglected?

m-s in the US urban
context

the universalization of the
US context in urban studies

MICRO- SEGREGATION

HOW TO EXPLORE ITS FORM?

like neighborhood segregation?

(case of vertical segregation) stratum of floor level can be the equivalent of a type in the hierarchy of neighborhoods

the two (horizontal and vertical) can eventually be connected: how is the unequal distribution of social groups among floors affected by the different social types of neighborhoods?

MICRO- SEGREGATION

HOW TO EXPLORE ITS EFFECTS?

like the neighborhood effect?

(case of vertical segregation) the peer effect and the quality of the neighborhood (services, environment) do not apply

the spatial effect may be related to the unequal quality of housing among floors (sunlight, view, noise, access to open spaces, ...) and potential stigmatization

**MICRO-
SEGREGATION**

**WHAT METHOD
SHOULD BE
APPLIED?**

both qualitative and quantitative are needed

apartment building monographs / ethnographies can reveal mechanisms of social reproduction through the practices and strategies of the agents involved

patterns of m-s and their changes across different types of social spaces can reveal structures and trends that frame social reproduction

MICRO- SEGREGATION

SOCIAL MIX AND URBAN POLICIES

back to the contradictory content of m-s: requires social mix (positive) to be developed; embodies segregation (negative) at the micro-scale

some scholars don't accept the term 'segregation' at the micro spatial scale since—through the loss of neighborhood segregation—it represents its opposite

if this approach is accepted, the highest level of social mix the better (and m-s becomes invisible)

however, similar levels of social mix may be the outcome of different processes of social reproduction (e.g., when social mix is produced by endogenous social mobility or by gentrification)

MICRO- SEGREGATION

SOCIAL MIX AND URBAN POLICIES

to make sense, we need a typology of social mix / m-s to evaluate the impact of its different types on social reproduction

parameters favoring less segregated social mix

apartment building stock (old; small units; medium height)

neighborhood profile (old; central)

agents involved (homeowners; in situ small landlords)

social capital (family networks; associative ties)

market (housing as a use value; low residential mobility)

housing policies (strong regulation)

a mix of parameters providing **unequal quality of housing** in the same neighborhood or **imposing social cohabitation**

**MICRO-
SEGREGATION
& SOCIAL MIX**

conclusion

m-s shows that social mix
cannot be a goal; its shifting
content is a stake

work in progress