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Spatial Segregation: The Persistent and Structural Features of Exclusionary Policies

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Definition

Spatial segregation is the visible result of deliberate policies aimed at insulating groups of people away from the rest of society in neighborhoods or whole regions. Literature includes different terms for spatial segregation, such as ghetto, ethnic enclave, gated community, suburb, exurb, inner city, or edge city (Brown and Chung 2006) across a wide range of specific situations. Louf and Barthelemy (2016) would add that "segregation" equates to any spatial distribution of population that deviates from a random distribution.

This kind of segregation can persist even after these policies are revoked, with long-lasting effects, while specific dynamics linked to different demographic, social, and economic phenomena may lead to different kinds of spatial segregation. This may not be the result of explicit, deliberate, and coercive public policies, but rather the result of such dynamics within the public space. This more *structural* segregation logic will be addressed in more detail in a subsequent section. The importance of studying spatial segregation is palpable: a secluded society may be an obstacle for the equal participation and effective inclusion of all its members and might also be a powerful contributing element to persistent exclusion and poverty. Balakrishnan and Hou (1999) state that residential segregation can evince how well (or not) a group is integrated. However, Arbaci (2008) warns that spatial concentration does not automatically imply social exclusion and that dispersed settlements do not entail integration.

Addressing spatial segregation as a social problem is a matter of justice since an inclusive and just society cannot be conceived with such forms of exclusion. But at the same time, it is also a matter of peace-building, if one assumes peace to be more than the absence of direct violence. Therefore, spatial segregation might be apprehended as a form of structural violence over groups of people and an obstacle to a positive and comprehensive understanding of peace.

What Spatial Segregation Is and Is Not

The aforementioned deliberate policies are put into practice by public institutions within their national jurisdictions and depend on a discursive and empirical distinction between a "self" and a defined "other." This distinction generates a legal hierarchy between them, and this definitional

W. Leal Filho et al. (eds.), *Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions*, Encyclopedia of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71066-2_21-1

power is usually held by a privileged "self." Although this might not be at all the purpose intended, controlling the defined "other" is a key idea behind enforced spatial segregation since, by its very definition, the presence of this "other" might endanger the survival of the defined "self."

The first step for constructing spatial segregation is the definition of the aforementioned "other" according to specified but variable characteristics, which can be based on nationality, religion, ethnicity, race, or socioeconomic criteria. In the following section, some historical examples of such *forced* segregation will be explored.

Strong institutions may have a key role in overcoming this kind of social exclusion. Although strong institutions are required for enforcing segregation whenever they are implemented in order to be effective, they are also required when it comes to removing more structural forms of segregation. Therefore strong institutions with an effective presence in society have a key role in overcoming and in implementing comprehensive policies against spatial segregation.

How can we make sense of this *spatial segregation* and avoid including other similar situations? Firstly, although it could be defined as a deliberate form of segregation, international borders will not be considered an example of spatial segregation, since our interest lies *within* national societies and not *between* them. Secondly, no-go areas or walls/buffer zones created to avoid or complicate any kind of crossing do not fit as a tool of segregation for *specific* groups of people. Thirdly, the idea of spatial segregation is conceived as a long-standing form of social and political organization, not so much a provisional situation of segregated groups for a theoretically defined amount of time, such as concentration/labor camps, gulags, or refugee camps. Fourthly, the domestic distinction between public and private spheres will not be considered either, since we are looking for policies or structures *within* the public space. Fifthly, although compulsory confinement (prisons, psychiatric institutions) is the result of public legislation and may aggregate hundreds of individuals in the same place, this is a more *individual* form of segregation (based on specific individual behaviors) implemented on a case-by-case basis; we are looking for *collective* forms of segregation in which an individual may end up living in one place or neighborhood as he/she possesses the collective features of a given group.

In the following section, we will discuss some historical examples of enforced spatial segregation, such as the *ghettos* in European cities in the Middle and Modern Ages, the Jim Crow system in the United States until the 1960s, and the apartheid in South Africa until 1994. Structural segregation will be addressed in the third section. Analyzing former segregated societies will not be our sole focus but also an analysis of the factors and dynamics stemming from or leading to different forms of spatial segregation. This section is divided in three subsections: socioeconomic factors and mobility; (de)industrialization, migration, and urban changes; and awareness of spatial segregation and its impact on public policies.

Enforced Segregation

A historical example of the spatial segregation of a particular group of people could be the concentration of the Jewish population in specific neighborhoods in many cities throughout Europe since the Middle Ages up until the nineteenth century. Present on the European continent since the Roman Age, Jews did not always live in separate areas. In fact, according to Wirth (1956), at its inception, the segregation of Jews would have started as voluntary and not necessarily a formal, compulsory creation of the local authorities. Although they may have started as a mechanism for preserving customs and practices, such neighborhoods soon became a necessity for these communities' self-preservation, as Jews were often blamed as scapegoats for the eruption of diseases or for the dissemination of heresy (Wirth 1956). Keeping the Jewish population in specific neighborhoods gradually turned into an instrument of control, and by the fourteenth century, Jews lived in concentrated areas within many European cities. The name *ghetto* associated with these

neighborhoods originates from Venice, when the local government decided at the beginning of the sixteenth century that Jews in the city had to live in a specific neighborhood (Haynes and Hutchinson 2008). Rome adopted a similar law soon after, and segregated life in ghettos became compulsory for Jews throughout Christian Europe: walled neighborhoods with one or more gates that were locked at night (Wirth 1956) and increasingly restrictive rules (Duneier 2016). Those ghettos gradually disappeared during the nineteenth century, but the word "ghetto" (and its meaning) was revived by Nazi Germany in the 1930s when the Jews of the occupied territories in Central Europe were confined to segregated neighborhoods (Duneier 2016).

One other major historical example of a particular population's enforced segregation is the apartheid regime in South Africa (1948–1994). Built on earlier race-related segregationist policies, political domination by the white population meant that only the white minority was entitled to participate in the republic's affairs. At the same time, spatial segregation was also a cornerstone of this political regime. On the one hand, apartheid promoted residential and educational segregation according to institutionalized racial belonging (Worden 1995). On the other hand, self-ruled "homeland states" based on former "native reserves" were gradually unilaterally created by the government (Worden 1995). However, these territories were deeply fragmented, and the proportion of territory assigned to the homeland states did not correspond to the different population sizes, rendering them unviable (Thompson and Prior 1982). Outside their homeland state, the black African population could not own land; they had to register for residence and work and were confined to specific zones (Thompson and Prior 1982). Even after the end of apartheid in 1994, the long-term effects of segregationist policies are still present in society (Breetzke 2018).

A final historical example of institutional segregation is the Jim Crow period put into place in the former Confederate States in the United States. After the end of the American Civil War in 1865, slavery was constitutionally abolished, citizenship granted to all former slaves, and equal protection attributed to all US citizens (Brown and Stentiford 2008). This Reconstruction Era did not last long and was followed by a period of legislative setbacks which not only hindered the political rights of the African-American population but also consistently institutionalized racial segregation based on white supremacy.

Although some form of racial segregation already existed in the North (Higginbotham 2013), such an articulate and comprehensive system emerged in the South (Alexander 2010). One by one, these states enacted a set of laws ranging from segregation in public spaces (schools, hospitals, churches, restrooms, restaurants, transport, employment) and housing – following the principle of "separate but equal" – to limitations of the right to vote for black men (literacy tests, poll taxes, grandfather clauses, residency, and property restrictions) (Higginbotham 2013). Vagrancy laws were also enforced (Higginbotham 2013) which, along with systematic arbitrary arrests and court costs and fines, led these prisoners to be sold as forced laborers in order to pay off their debts (Alexander 2010). Although some civil rights movements soon took shape within the black community, their reach was rather limited, and their activities were met with hostility during the first half of the twentieth century. However, after 1945, legal campaigns led by associations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and some legal decisions by federal courts (Klarman 2004) eventually challenged the Jim Crow laws, with their reversion in the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Voting Rights Act (1965) (Alexander 2010).

Structural Segregation

Segregation is not only present in societies where a legal framework separates people according to a set of criteria (racial or ethnic) (Colini and Czischke 2015). Some scholars claim segregation may persist over time in some societies (Boustan 2013; Breetzke 2018; Popescu et al. 2018) even if they take new forms (Berenguer 2014; Lichter et al. 2015). Balakrishnan and Hou (1999) refer to two major negative consequences segregation

may have for minorities: becoming a structural basis for institutional and organizational segregation and increasing the visibility of racial differences.

On the other hand, other phenomena may create situations of some sort of structural segregation based on socioeconomic features. Class differentiation and poverty, industrialization processes, migration, urban planning, and privatization of public space, among other factors, can also be determining factors.

Socioeconomic Factors and Mobility

Race and ethnicity may be interconnected with socioeconomic features in different ways. Economic segregation, for example, can be found alongside racial segregation in the United States (Glasmeier and Farrigan 2007). However, in their study on the evolution of urban segregation in colonial and postcolonial Indonesia, Colombijn and Barwegen (2009) found that the "from-race-to-class-segregation" (class divisions replacing ethnic differences) dynamic might not be accurate and that class has had a more critical impact on spatial segregation than racial categories, on a "class-segregation-throughout-decolonization" basis.

Spatial segregation is not only a geographical phenomenon; it is also the result of economic ties and social interactions (Mossay and Picard 2013). Inequality in income/resources and uneven development may have an impact on segregation patterns (Glasmeier and Farrigan 2007; Greenstein et al. 2000). Van Ham et al. (2016) stress that higher-income individuals have some freedom in selecting neighborhoods, whereas low-income households have fewer options. Segregation can therefore be involuntary and can be reproduced over time between generations (Van Ham et al. 2016). However, Berenguer (2014) states that, in Brazil, segregation can be co-opted by nonwhite people either by kinship or in order to avoid potentially racist contact with white people. Residing in areas of greater ethnic diversity as a reaction to perceived prejudice is also pointed out as one factor by studies on segregation in the United States (Kwon et al. 2018). On the other hand, self-segregated, thus voluntary, neighborhoods have also taken shape as *gated communities*, in which their high- and middle-income inhabitants choose to live in those very selective, highly securitized areas (Greenstein et al. 2000).

Different levels of income within a specific group or the same level of income in different groups must also be taken into account for understanding patterns of segregation. According to Berenguer (2014), in Brazil, for example, segregation increases with higher income: nonwhite middle class is more likely segregated from white middle class and low-income white more likely to live close to low-income nonwhite. Racial homogeneity in low-income neighborhoods may also be a consequence of the mobility of white households to other neighborhoods as soon as they are able (Boustan 2013). In the same vein, Malheiros, quoted in Arbaci's study on Southern Europe (Arbaci 2008), suggests there might be a mismatch between the spatial distribution of foreigners and local population with similar socioeconomic profiles.

Status changes brought about by better incomes may lead to the displacement of former members of traditionally segregated areas, aiming to match social status and neighborhood status (Bailey 2012), especially among young adults (Arbaci 2008). However, in Southern Europe, for example, the role of family in welfare and access to/provision of housing in some societies may be a key element in rather low residential mobility, along with the presence of a dualist formal/informal labor market (Arbaci 2008). On the other hand, this mobility seems to occur mainly between neighborhoods of a similar status or may even be geographically limited: residential immobility can persist over time among long-term residents in working-class areas, obstructing new residents' access to these neighborhoods (Arbaci 2008).

Some scholars argue that spatial segregation alone may not be enough to understand the persistence of inequality and social immobility. In some contexts, such as in Canada, studies show that occupational segregation has declined, while residential segregation remains constant (Balakrishnan and Hou 1999). Van Eijk (2010),

on the other hand, challenges the focus on spatial segregation by stating that this phenomenon might not be relevant to understanding poverty and exclusion, emphasizing the perhaps more relevant possibility of unequal and interpersonal networks, with people living in other places that provide access to opportunities and resources (information, jobs, and education opportunities).

(De)Industrialization, Migration, and Urban Changes

The industrialization (and later deindustrialization) of societies has also been crucial for understanding patterns of concentration and segregation. In his analysis *The Age of Revolution*, Hobsbawm (1996) refers to a process of class segregation already present in the nineteenth century, caused by mass movement to industrial cities in which the new laboring poor lived in misery far from where decisions were made. More recent industrialization processes have had similar if not greater consequences. Beserra and Teixeira (2016) point to governmental industrial plans for import replacement as one leading factor of spatial segregation in Brazil during the twentieth century. The drastic rural-urban flow of those attracted by job opportunities in new industrial sites was not matched by the state's ability to accommodate this sudden urbanization process appropriately. An unplanned internal migration of this scale pushed these populations into precarious housing with poor sanitary conditions, lacking basic urban infrastructures and public services, close to factories and far from the city center.

If we consider that immigrants are disproportionately concentrated within cities (Accetturo et al. 2014), urban spatial segregation may also be connected to migration (either domestic or international). The abolition of slavery, for example, brought many freed slaves from Northern and Northeastern Brazil to the city in search of work, who settled in newly established informal settlements (*favelas*) in the hills close to the city center (Berenguer 2014); spatial poverty would therefore go hand in hand with the racialization of urban space. Research has revealed significant segregation between immigrants and French natives in France, for example, and that segregation might be even higher with non-European immigrants (McAvay 2018). Immigrants often settle in conational neighborhoods since their networks can be helpful for finding a house and work upon arrival. These immigrants' (or their descendants') later mobility to other neighborhoods may then be blocked by discrimination in the rental market, which perpetuates their residential segregation, as demonstrated in Spain (Bosch et al. 2015).

Depending on specific national contexts and historical backgrounds, spatial segregation is visible in some city centers and in peripheral or even suburban areas. Different social, economic, and urban dynamics in each country may have an influence on the location of such segregated areas. Greenstein et al. (2000) show that, in North America, minorities tend to be segregated in inner-city areas, whereas middle classes are more widely dispersed across smaller neighborhoods or suburbs; in Latin America, this trend is reversed. Arbaci (2008) refers to the peripheralization of low-income groups in Southern Europe, since the central areas have not been depopulated consistently over the years as a long-term result of rent-control legislation, among other factors. Boustan (2013) argues that emphasis on neighborhood interactions may not be relevant in this day and age, since data suggest that residential segregation takes place between cities and suburbs, and Lichter et al. (2007) point to a changing pattern of racial neighborhood segregation within cities in the United States, now being reproduced on a different scale in suburbs and small towns.

More recent phenomena have altered the configuration of cities and thereby population distribution within them. The displacement of factories out of city centers, the deindustrialization and tertiarization of the economy, and the restructuring of the labor market as a consequence of globalization (Colini and Czischke 2015) brought about an extreme polarization between very high-income and very low-income workers (Sassen 2005). Some of these cities lost their polarized demographic shape and took on a more fragmented form (Martinez 2018). More vulnerable sections of the population had no

choice but to move to less attractive areas (Glasmeier and Farrigan 2007) as plans for rehabilitation and urban renewal of old city centers pushed them out of these newly gentrified and more expensive neighborhoods (Arbaci 2008). The proliferation of gated communities (Greenstein et al. 2000), the privatization of public places and services in South Africa (Mini 2012), the creation of "Special Economic Zones" in India (Rajagopal 2010) and Africa (Van Noorloos and Kloosterboer 2018), and a progressive dispossession of common goods in Europe, linked to an increasing rolling back of state intervention in welfare and housing policies (Colini and Czischke 2015), are also considered contemporary dynamics one could correlate with the neoliberalization of urban spaces, which have a huge impact on housing options.

Knowledge on Spatial Segregation and Its Impact on Public Policy

Policies to accommodate traditionally segregated groups within a larger society may vary greatly from one country to another. Therefore, organizing and categorizing knowledge on policies to overcome exclusionary dynamics linked to spatial segregation may be complex. At the same time, there might be significant lacunae on how to make sense of segregation. Some authors would even claim that segregation issues are recurrently underestimated, de-problematized, and underresearched both in academia and in the political arena and that ethnic residential marginalization is considered either unintentional or a temporary phase that mechanisms such as markets will accommodate (Arbaci 2008).

Other scholars put forward different sets of dimensions they deem critical in analyzing segregation. Lamanna et al. (2018) state that spatial segregation dynamics stemming from immigration may differ from one country to another according to a combination of factors, such as the culture of origin, the culture of the hosting country, and said country's specific policies. This means that particular policies aimed at tackling spatial segregation may also differ greatly from one country to another and depend on a complex set of factors. Sabatini (2003) stresses three central dimensions in segregation studies: the degree of spatial concentration, the social homogeneity of the area, and the neighborhood's prestige or social stature (degree of stigmatization). Finally, Massey (*apud* Brown and Chung 2006) introduces five dimensions upon which segregation can be assessed: *evenness* (the distribution of a specific group over a defined area), *exposure* (the isolation of a group according to the degree to which it shares a neighborhood with others), *clustering* (related to persons living close to others of the same group and how they form a contiguous enclave), *concentration* (a group's density in a certain area), and *centrality* (proximity to the urban core).

When it comes to the specific spatial mobility of immigrants, three theoretical perspectives are usually considered in literature on segregation: spatial assimilation theory, place stratification, and residential preferences (Kwon et al. 2018). The first argues that acculturation processes (active participation in social institutions, language proficiency, understanding social norms) play a key role in expanding individual choices about where to reside. The second perspective, however, suggests that discrimination, racism, and prejudice may be significant obstacles to acculturation processes and these processes may therefore have a mitigated impact when it comes to choices within the housing market. Finally, the third perspective stresses the cultural preferences of the newcomers: residential options may also depend on individual preferences, above and beyond limited resources.

In political and practical terms, the integration of immigrants could be conceived according to two broad strategies: assimilationist and multiculturalist strategies. While an assimilationist approach would, by its own definition, seek to avoid the concentration of incoming population as an integrative tool, multiculturalist strategies have been promoted in some countries as a way of incorporating immigrants. Kwon et al. (2018) have mapped critical literature on this multiculturalist approach, which could amplify residential segregation along three lines of reasoning: these policies might be an impediment to acculturation, they would reify boundaries between immigrants

and the native population, and they might amplify hostility toward immigrants.

As to particular policies addressing spatial segregation, Boustan (2013) lists the different policies states have implemented. First is *place-based policies*, in which governments and local authorities seek to improve these specific neighborhoods' facilities in order to make them more heterogeneous by attracting new inhabitants. Second is *people-based policies*, aimed directly at individuals through fair housing regulations or vouchers or improved access to mortgages. Third is *indirect solutions*, policies targeting the symptoms rather than the root causes, such as improving public transport to reduce isolation.

Scope of Further Research on Spatial Segregation

Deliberate public policies leading to the spatial segregation of groups of people used to be common in some countries, but a more comprehensive understanding and practice of human rights have inhibited states from sustaining or implementing such policies. Although many of the former segregationist policies are long gone, their consequences are still present in society. Therefore, these structural, nondeliberate forms of human segregation can persist in the present even after such policies have been revoked. Nevertheless, one can trace other human experiences linked to the increasing geographical confinement of certain groups in twenty-first-century societies that can be equated to spatial segregation and therefore require further research.

Other forms of geographical confinement might be related to different patterns of mobility within the framework of immaterial and de-territorialized globalization. Zygmunt Bauman (1998) makes the distinction between "tourists," voluntary, cosmopolitan travellers for whom borders and space (either real or virtual) are not a constraint and travelling is a matter of choice, and "vagabonds," uprooted people for whom geographical mobility is a painful, dangerous, and often illegal option. Qualifying the consequences of unwanted mobility as "segregation" would be inaccurate, but some of its more extreme cases could easily be included within the scope of spatial segregation. One example of an increasingly permanent form of segregation through confinement might be the experience that a growing number of individuals have to endure in refugee camps. These are intended as structures for providing provisional shelter (Montclos and Kagwanja 2000) to refugees and asylum seekers in between two worlds: the violent reality these individuals are escaping from and a safe, peaceful new life (either back in the country of origin or in the incoming country). However, in too many situations, such a provisional solution becomes a lifelong experience (Agier 2002) over several generations, often because the root causes behind these forced migrations also persist (Moehler and Backer 2012). At the same time, these settlements may be equated to urban slums in their inequity, violence, and informal economic structures (Oka 2011). With no legal status allowing a regular life in the incoming country nor a realistic chance of returning back home, these groups are forced to live in overcrowded camps as second-rate human beings (Diken 2004) with no agency (Turner 2015) and no possibility of participating in the decision-making processes concerning their own individual and collective lives (Hanafi and Long 2010).

Considering such confinement as spatial segregation illustrates how debatable and difficult it is to circumscribe what does indeed fit within its very definition. No definition will ever be fully comprehensive or definite, as it can change over time, with new important defining elements, while other features become obsolete. Deliberate public policies at the root of spatial segregation can no longer be at the core of its definition. Nevertheless, that does not negate the social and political effects that such policies implemented in the past still have in the present. That said, informal, nondeliberate structures may lead to real situations of spatial segregation that can be as harmful as those stemming from deliberate policies.

Cross-References

- ▶ Economic Exclusion
- ▶ Housing Discrimination
- ▶ Local Governance from City Government to Good Urban Governance

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