



A Review of 'Socio-economic segregation in European capital cities: East meets West', Edited by Tiit Tammaru, Szymon Marcinczak, Maarten van Ham and Sako Musterd

Stephen Jivraj

To cite this article: Stephen Jivraj (2016): A Review of 'Socio-economic segregation in European capital cities: East meets West', Edited by Tiit Tammaru, Szymon Marcinczak, Maarten van Ham and Sako Musterd, International Journal of Housing Policy, DOI: [10.1080/14616718.2016.1189410](https://doi.org/10.1080/14616718.2016.1189410)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14616718.2016.1189410>



Published online: 07 Jun 2016.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

BOOK REVIEW

Socio-economic segregation in European capital cities: East meets West, Edited by Tiit Tammaru, Szymon Marcinczak, Maarten van Ham and Sako Musterd, London and New York, Routledge, 2016, ISBN 13: 978-1138794931

This edited volume paints a detailed picture of spatial socio-economic segregation in 13 European cities. The editors' introduction and conclusion make a novel, direct comparison between these cities and each city-focused chapter provides a thorough description of the historical trends and patterns of spatial segregation. Readers will be left with an understanding of where the most and least affluent areas are within each city and the extent to which spatial inequalities have changed over time. The book rarely strays away from description and the reader is left to think: why does it matter? The analysis would have been more powerful if the consequences of high and increasing levels of spatial segregation for individual and societal outcomes were more clearly explored in the conclusion. The book claims to provide 'a set of theoretically informed, methodologically sound, and policy and planning relevant systematic comparative studies that provide new evidence of the changing levels and patterns of socio-economic segregation across a diverse set of European cities' (p. 2). What follows is a description of where I believe the book lacks in these domains.

Theory

The analysis in many of the chapters strays into describing patterns of ethnic segregation and some chapters conclude by suggesting that increased ethnic segregation is more of a concern than increased socio-economic segregation. The link between the two is never fully explored in any chapter and certainly not in the introduction or conclusion to the book, which emphasises the key structural indicators shaping socio-economic segregation as globalisation, social inequalities, welfare regimes and housing systems. While these, as well as discrimination, may also be important in shaping ethnic segregation, this is not explored in detail in any chapter.

The editors furthermore claim that most of the existing literature on segregation focuses on ethnic rather than socio-economic segregation. This is not the case. Many papers may not have explicitly referred to socio-economic segregation, but the spatial concentration of poverty was a very active area of research during the 2000s and many academic works were used as the basis for policy interventions to correct housing market problems in deprived areas, especially in the UK and the Netherlands. Moreover, the editors and chapter authors should have gone further to

engage with other theories that explain the processes that cause segregation, for example, counter-urbanisation or re-urbanisation, rather than focussing on social mobility and immigration. It is also not clear from the evidence in the book whether residential segregation is worse than, for example, workplace segregation.

Method

The methods used in most chapters are similar. The introduction provides a useful description of three measures of segregation applied by the editors in their cross-country analysis and in many other chapters in the book. It is unfortunate that these indices are inconsistently referred to in the rest of the book. For example, the index of isolation is sometimes described as *I* (e.g. Chapter 1) and other times as *P*^{*} (e.g. Chapter 3). This is confusing to the reader.

As well as a lack of engagement with theory on the processes that bring about segregation, there is no detailed decomposition analysis of the factors that can cause a city to be more or less segregated (i.e. natural change, *in situ* change, and migration [internal and international]). Such an analysis would allow a more clearer link to how planners and policy makers might intervene to correct increased segregation. For example, if most of the increased segregation is a result of *in situ* change, policies to encourage social mixing through internal migration might not be effective.

The chapters use measures of income, occupation and education to determine socio-economic segregation, yet there is very little discussion as to whether these are the best measures of socio-economic position. The meaning of occupation and education will vary between generations, for example, the value of having a degree or a non-manual occupation changes. Therefore, using data on people of all ages might hide differences between and within generations. The editors are open to the criticisms that using any measure to compare data cross-nationally is problematic. However, the editors reliance on different measures to compare different countries is particularly limiting, especially the lack of more recent data for Milan (Chapter 8), as well as the different size geographies used in each country to make the comparisons.

Policy

The implications for housing policy are not clear because it is not certain whether increased socio-economic segregation is bad for either individuals or populations based on the analyses presented in the book – you are left to assume that is the case. Furthermore, one might expect that because socio-economic segregation is not near levels seen in other parts of the world, they may be reversible. This is something you take from reading between the lines of the conclusion because there are few clear recommendations for planners or policy makers. It is therefore not at all clear

whether a reversal of policies of privatised housing markets, reduced welfare spending, greater social inequalities or more globalised cities would actually lead to more or less segregation. This is because there is not a dramatic shift but rather a trend of greater polarisation, and not even in all cities. The change in segregation that the authors focus on the most is the spatial separation and isolation from one another of the wealthiest and poorest socio-economic groups. There is discussion on the extent to which this change is merely a function of the change in size of these groups, especially the poorest, but almost no discussion on the policy reaction to counter it. It would appear that spatial segregation is driven by increased socio-economic inequality and not by something that can be corrected by housing policy alone.

Despite these limitations, the book will be useful for researchers (academic and policy) who are interested in spatial segregation in any of the cities featured in the book. The book presents the problems of small area comparisons internationally and provides a worthy attempt of differences in spatial segregation in Europe.

Stephen Jivraj
Research Department of Epidemiology and Public Health,
University College London, London, UK
Email: stephen.jivraj@ucl.ac.uk
© 2016, *Stephen Jivraj*