Growing segregation in European cities due to income inequality

The growing divide between rich and poor in European cities is leading to spatial segregation. Rich and poor are living further and further away from each other. This can have disastrous consequences for social stability and the competitiveness of cities, an internationally comparative study makes clear.

The increase in segregation is of great concern to policy-makers in many European cities as this can undermine competitiveness and social sustainability. The spatial separation of rich and poor can lead to misunderstanding and social turmoil. The riots in recent years in Paris, London and Stockholm can not be seen separate from concentrations of poverty in these cities. Amsterdam was the only researched city where segregation has diminished.

**Spatial grading**

Increasing inequality due to the influence of globalisation, economic and labour reforms, neo-liberalism – and in some cities – a reduction in investment for social housing have directly led to growing segregation. In certain more fortunate areas, gentrification takes place, whereby incomes rise here. In other less lucky neighbourhoods, the middle classes move out, reinforcing the segregation process. This is revealed in case studies and comparative research into detailed population studies regarding income and employment mobility.

By constructing mixed neighbourhoods of private and social housing, the authorities in many cities attempted to combat segregation right up to the start of the recession. In deprived areas, a lot of social housing was demolished and replaced by private owned property. Through this expensive area-based policy, neighbourhoods undergo a new lease of life, however nothing changes the underlying cause of segregation, namely income inequality.

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Mixed housing doesn’t solve socio-economic problems

In practice it is probably better to invest in education and social mobility. This is a sustainable solution, which contributes to economically stronger cities.

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