Good for Whom?

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The concept of the good city is inherently subjective – good for whom? Beyond the physical infrastructure, the concept of a city is also made up of its visitors and workers, the role that the city as a functioning entity performs and the influence that it brings to bear on those outside its borders, which may reach from the local to the global. However the group that has the greatest stake in the notion of a good city are its residents, and it is they with whom this essay will be primarily concerned. The essay will approach the good city as one that is good for all its residents. It is therefore directly concerned with the concept of social justice.

Definitions of social justice differ but most contain a variant on two main elements. Harvey (1973) offers a definition of a just outcome justly arrived at, which suggest that social justice is concerned with both an outcome and a process. Young (1990) elaborates that social justice involves more than a distributive outcome but must also be concerned with the social and institutional context, which helps determine distributive outcomes. Fainstein (1999) looks specifically at the good city as an outcome and a process. She offers a definition of social justice that incorporates material equity and social diversity, democracy and environmental sustainability. This definition is similar to that offered by Mandanipour (2007) where social justice equates to access to income, resources, decision making and social integration.

Because we are concerned with the city we are necessarily concerned with ideas of space. This essay will therefore emphasise the notion of integration / inclusion and specifically how it is reflected in space and the relation of this spatial connection to the good city in terms of achieving social justice both in distributive outcomes and inclusion in the process of determining those outcomes.

The hypothesis that will be used a filter through which to examine what makes a good city is: a good city is one that is spatially integrated - socially, economically and culturally.

Processes driving integration and segregation

City-space is socially produced and reproduced space and the processes that shape the function, structure, and internal relations of cities vary over space and time (Amin 2006, Harvey 1973, Marcuse 2002). Musterd and Ostendorf (1998) provide a useful starting point for examining the causes of segregation in cities with the view that the recent social processes that have been shaping cities are processes of polarisation, segregation and exclusion, which are dependent on wider factors, including the economic structure of a city, the welfare state, ethnic population divisions and the self-reinforcing effect of segregation (Musterd and Ostendorf (1998).

By highlighting economic structure, they raise the issue of polarisation in the workforce in many cities between higher skilled and paid jobs and the unemployed / low skilled that is said to have taken place as a result of economic restructuring since the 1970s, and its potentially significant role in the production of socio-spatial segregation and exclusion in contemporary cities.

In an alternative view of processes and impacts that identifies where the role of mediating the impact of economic change on cities might lie, Marcuse (2002) offers a typology of the divisions to be found in cities, which operate separately but may overlap and compete in the forces they exert on cities. These are Culture, which could be related to ethnicity, language and what others might call identity. The second is Functional Role, which are the relations of different economic uses arranged in space and expressed legally in zoning for uses in city planning. The third is Differences in Status, which are produced and reproduced by relationships of power including military, political, economic, social and legal power.

Marcuse claims that divisions in cities by status are enforced and therefore unjust. However to propose that the spatial integration - economic, social, and cultural - of people in cities represents the presence of social justice, and therefore a good city, we must look for evidence of a clear relationship between the two that relates not just to the processes of integration/segregation but also their outcomes.

Spatial integration and social justice

There is not consensus on the role of spatial segregation or integration in the production or reproduction of social inclusion or exclusion. For example Musterd and Ostendorf (1998) suggest that perceptions of the role of strong socio-spatial or ethnic segregation in cities in generating social problems for those segregated in cities are based largely on extreme cases found in the United States. They challenge whether the same effects can be found in Europe, where segregation is more moderate (their review of cases does not extend into the Global South, where segregation to a greater extreme than in the US maybe found).

Marcuse (2002:14) is more certain, arguing that "social relations determine spatial relations, [..] these in turn influence, generally but not always reinforcing, social relations". Certainly spatial proximity does not automatically equate to any definition of social justice, for example the live-in domestic employee of a high-income family in a gated community in the United States, is culturally different, economically dependent on and of different status to the people whose living space (s) he shares.

But we can look for evidence of this how this relationship between social and spatial relations operates through four brief case studies, which between them illustrate examples of spatial segregation and look at the causes (whether they are voluntary or involuntary, as Marcuse proposes) and at the impacts of segregation on those who have been excluded.

Schiffer (2002) reviews the case of São Paolo, where historical class-based segregation in the city has been exaggerated by the effects of economic restructuring since the mid 1970s. Globalisation and neo-liberal economic restructuring have been un-mediated by the state, with welfare and social housing policies sidelined for monetary and fiscal policies. The effect has been a falling average income, especially in the lowest waged households, increasing unemployment and a state too weak to effectively provide for the favelas within the city fabric. Outcomes for the residents of the favelas have been disastrous including huge increases in occupation densities and greatly increased crime and homicide rates. The response from the elite has increasingly been to retreat to fortified gated communities close to their similarly segregated sites workplaces, shopping, schools and leisure areas. She notes that negative effects are also being felt by the elite as the functional attractiveness of the city and overall quality of life are affected by the impacts of segregation.

Murie (1998) considers Edinburgh to examine the impact of what he calls the recommodification of housing in UK cities since the 1980s through Right to Buy, combined with the impact of economic restructuring. The effect in Edinburgh has been that those who have done best economically or "survived the restructuring of the economy" (Murie 1998:125) have bought their houses and so reduced the publicly provided housing available in the city. Those remaining, who are typically unemployed or outside the labour market are restricted to a reduced rental sector with a new spatial distribution, which reinforces where people live according to how they have been affected by economic change, and in turn has a reinforcing effect between spatial segregation and further disadvantage.

Lupton and Power (2002) also examine the process of segregation and local concentration of people with the least choice in UK cities and the effects on those who live there. Taking a behavioural approach to the analysis they illustrate how the least popular neighbourhoods can quickly decline, as more secure families choose not to live there and are replaced by the most economically and socially disadvantaged. This spatial concentration of the most disadvantaged people in the most undesirable neighbourhoods of a city negatively affects the neighbourhood through decline of the physical environment and infrastructure, fewer and more expensive private services, poor public services, a sense of powerlessness, inferiority and exclusion of residents, reduced social organisation and trust and increased crime and antisocial behaviour. They then progress beyond the other examples in identifying some measures to limit economic and social polarisation of neighbourhoods through state-led planning and housing interventions. These are revealing in their assumption – that living in a neighbourhood of mixed income is a better outcome in itself for the poorest and most disadvantaged.

Van Kempen (2002) examines the Netherlands where since 1945 promotion of income equality and rent subsidies has gone hand in hand with extensive social housing construction that has attracted mid- and high-income as well as low-income households. This combination of economic, housing and planning policies has resulted in urban areas where socially and ethnically homogenous areas are uncommon. However he notes that this pattern is under threat from the steady retreat of the welfare state, changes in the provision of social rented housing and growing effects of economic restructuring on low-skilled migrants which are likely to result in increased partitioning of Dutch cities along lines of ethnicity and economic status.

These case studies come from cities or countries with varying economic, political and social contexts but nonetheless provide some consistencies in their message about the relationship between spatial integration and social justice and segregation and its absence.

Firstly, all four examples demonstrate that segregation in these cases was (or in the case of the fourth, is predicted to be) involuntary and tied to issues of status and power relations, typically economic in origin.

Secondly, that the three examples where involuntary segregation was found to have taken place were accompanied by identifiable negative impacts on those who were spatially excluded, including impacts on quality of life, health, access to public services, economic opportunity and ability to exercise agency over elements of their lives.

Thirdly, all identify the major influence of state actions in influencing segregation in cities. They illustrate that the choices made by the state (in either its presence or

absence in making an intervention) and policies have intentional or unintentional socio-spatial effects as they interact with and mediate (or not) the effects of economic restructuring, people's behaviours and choices and competition for resources, in these cases housing.

We can conclude from these examples that involuntary segregation represents the spatial reinforcement of unequal social relations, can lead to negative impacts on those excluded that reinforce those inequalities and as such it has no place in the good city.

This conclusion is open to the challenge of being self-evident, however the examples above also illustrate that involuntary segregation is not always the result of the construction of walls or enforced through bulldozers, nor need it be an actively pursued policy by planners. They illustrate the ideas developed through Harvey, Lefebvre and others that cities are socially produced and reproduced spaces and show that those charged with responsibility for cities – governments, planners, architects etc are mediators that have choices, in the execution of which they resist or reinforce the reproduction of the most unequal social relations in space.

There are of course examples where people exercise the choice they have in cities by choosing to live in communities of identity. Ethnic or cultural groups may choose to live together to preserve cultural identity, for a sense of safety or to stay close to family and community networks. As Susan Fainstein offers "people often want to live in situations where they do not have to constantly interact with people pursuing radically different lifestyles" (Fainstein 1996: 39).

However this view must be treated with caution. The concept of active choice leading to spatial segregation along ethnic or cultural lines becomes problematic when ethnicity intersects with class along ethnic divisions of labour (Soja 2000: 290) leading to greater exclusionary effects. This corresponds to Marcuse's model refenced above where divisions of economic power "may be particularly damaging when it is reinforced by divisions of culture and/or function." (Marcuse, 2002: 15).

Conclusion

This essay has argued that a good city is an inclusive and integrated city. The case study examples have shown that spatial integration can be directly related to both inclusion and distributive outcomes. The two operate in a reciprocal and reinforcing relationship, to different extremes in different contexts and cases. Crucially the impact of segregation can be shown to have disastrous impacts on those excluded, which holds the most potent warning for the professional exercising their and decision making in the urban environment.

However, integration and inclusion do not mean assimilation in questions of identity. Lefebvre's right to the city includes the right to difference – the right to be different in the city (Lefebvre 1996). There is a question of agency, freedom to choose to be separate, to be on the margins, to challenge. Segregation should not be imposed but may be voluntary.

In returning to the question of how to achieve this good city, it is argued that the major driving forces of segregation are economic and their impacts are mediated to the greatest extent by the state. But if strong welfare state provision and intervention in housing allocation is needed to mediate impacts of global economic restructuring in segregating the city, how can this be achieved in countries without the infrastructure or resources for such a welfare state? Ultimately the neo-liberal paradigm must be challenged. If cities are where we find the greatest potentials and challenges for humanity then perhaps these are growing at the same rate as cities globally. As the São Paolo example shows, the negative effects of segregation reach the rich and powerful too. The responsibility for the good city lies significantly with the state, its priorities and their execution by those professionals granted the power to make choices concerning the making of cities.

"Whose place is this and how do we know?
Look to the 'twilight zone of communication'. The signs in the streets, the measures, the markings, the meanings, the movement..."

(S.J. Smith, 2000: 86)