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# Segregation, Spatial (In)Justice, and the City

By Sonia Lehman-Frisch

## Abstract

Segregation has been widely discussed by social scientists and especially by urban geographers and planners over the past decades. However, regardless of their focus, most of these studies view segregation as an obvious case of spatial injustice. I argue that this implicit relationship between segregation, (in)justice, and space needs to be reexamined. This paper approaches this task by reviewing an interdisciplinary body of literature (including geography, sociology, history, political sciences, and philosophy) that deals with segregation without (explicitly) tackling the issue of justice. Focusing on the case of poor, segregated neighborhoods in France, this paper examines the question of whether the segregated city is essentially unjust, analyzes the extent to which segregation is a spatial injustice, and identifies segregation's underlying (spatial) causes. It will then question the dominant contemporary discourse that holds that the Just City should be a diverse city at the neighborhood scale.

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## Introduction

Many studies have researched segregation in the past decades, but few have thoroughly analyzed its relationship with the concept of (spatial) justice. This article aims to fill this conceptual gap by reviewing an interdisciplinary body of research (in geography, urbanism, sociology, history, and political science) focusing primarily on French cities.

"Segregation" is a term that comes from the Latin *segregare*, which means "to separate an animal from the herd." Transposed into an urban context, it refers to an intentional act, and was initially used in works relating to Jewish ghettos in Eastern Europe or South African apartheid to convey the idea of discrimination. With growing interest in the social sciences in the concept of urban space (initiated by the Chicago school of urban sociology in the 1920s, developed throughout the 1960s in the United States and since the 1980s in France), the term today is used more widely to refer to the phenomenon of social division within a city (Roncayolo 1972). The term "segregation" carries a strong pejorative connotation today more than ever, particularly in France: it is seen as an undeniable spatial form of urban injustice. Several scholars have dealt

with this particular understanding of the concept (Brun 1994, Lévy 2003, Madoré 2004) but have never truly sought to clarify its basis. Since Yves Grafmeyer's excellent article on segregation (1994), the lack of substantial analyses of the interrelationship between segregation and injustice has been a major obstacle to understanding the phenomenon's real issues, and subsequently to developing policies that address segregation in an attempt to create a more just city.

This article therefore proposes to analyze, in practical terms, the relationship between segregation and spatial (in)justice within the city. I will first examine to what extent—and according to what criteria—the processes leading to spatial segregation can be considered unjust. The focus will then turn to segregated (that is, resulting from the process of segregation) and disadvantaged neighborhoods, with a view to reassessing the (spatial) causes of injustice to which their inhabitants are subjected. The final section will question the notion that, if all segregation is unjust, therefore the “just city” should revolve around the notion of diversity. A simple answer to the fundamental question of the socio-spatial organization of the “just city” is very hard to come by. But a clearer understanding of the relationships between segregation, justice, and space may help politicians and planners to design urban policy and progress more efficiently towards a just city.

## **Bringing Together Theories of Social Divisions, Justice, and Space**

It has long been established among anthropologists that life in society is impossible to maintain without some minimal division of labor, and that social differentiation, in whatever form (whether based on kinship, gender, caste, and/or class), is universally widespread. Many philosophers have attempted to fit these social differentiations into their conceptions of justice, and two of them have particularly made their mark in recent decades. According to John Rawls (1971), a fair society is one which recognizes the intrinsic equality of each person, guaranteeing the fundamental rights and equal opportunity of every individual (principle of equality), while maximizing the benefits of the less advantaged members of society (the principle of difference, which legitimizes certain inequalities). In his eyes, a fair society therefore rests on a social contract that aims to diminish the social differentiation by the most efficient redistribution of primary goods. In *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990), Marion Iris Young criticizes the rawlsian conception of justice on two fundamental points. First, she objects to rawlsian individualism: she states, quite to the contrary, that individuals inevitably belong to different social groups defined by affinity. Second,

she contests the purely distributive nature of justice, and shows that injustice within a society can be split into five “forms of oppression”: exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness, cultural imperialism, and violence. Therefore, whereas for John Rawls social divisions should aim to cancel each other out in a fair society, for Marion Young, society should instead guarantee the respect of individuals’ differences and ensure their representation.

Henri Lefebvre (Lefebvre 1968, 1974) demonstrated how social differentiations, “as they are visible by hierarchies of status and power, by various ways of appropriating space, and by neighborhood preferences” (Grafmeyer 1994: 93-94), are fundamentally interwoven in space. The complex correlations between social differences and spatial divisions within the city lead to the question of segregation in the light of theories of justice and the concept of “spatial justice” (Dufaux and Gervais-Lambony 2009, Dufaux et al. 2009, Soja 2010). Although in the three decades following the pioneering work of Henri Lefebvre and David Harvey (1976) there has been a marked increase in publications on justice and the city (particularly in the English-speaking academic world: see in particular Merrifield and Swyngedouw 1997, Mitchell 2003, Marcuse 2009, Fainstein 2010), Ed Soja remains convinced in his last work of the need for subtle and contextual analysis of the phenomena of segregation (Soja 2010: 55-56).

This is precisely the purpose of this article: to identify in what way segregation can be considered a spatial injustice.

## **Segregation: An Unjust Process?**

Segregation is, first and foremost, a process. To understand the injustice that is embedded within it, we can distinguish—following Thomas Schelling (1980)—three main processes. The first results from intentional acts of discrimination, the second emanates from structural economic forces, and the third is the consequence of individual decisions. Of course, these three categories are not exclusive and may be combined to explain segregation, but for the sake of clarity in our analysis, we will treat them successively.

### **Ethno-Racial Processes of Discrimination**

The first form of segregation consists of an “organized action, legal or illegal, by force or by exclusion, subtle or blatant, moralistic or pragmatic” (Schelling, quoted by Grafmeyer 1994: 104). And yet this intentional form of discrimination is more problematic in its relationship with justice or injustice than it first appears.

The reasons behind the voluntary ostracism of certain groups of the population have historically fallen into two categories, which we distinguish according to their just or unjust nature. The first and most common category is the sidelining of certain individuals or groups of individuals who are considered “weaker,” in an attempt to protect the whole of society from “contamination” by this group. It must be noted here that this type of segregation very often carries with it racial or ethnic connotations. Examples span different geographical contexts, from notions of caste that continue to affect the socio-spatial organization of Indian cities (Gervais-Lambony, Landy, Oldfield 2003), to symbolic processes of institutional segregation such as the Jewish ghettos of Eastern Europe or the black ghettos of the United States (Marcuse 2002) or apartheid in South Africa (Gervais-Lambony 2004). In different contexts, this type of segregation could be considered just or unjust depending on different notions of justice. According to the anthropologist Louis Dumont (1966), in hierarchical societies inequalities are not unjust, because in a holistic ideology hierarchical superiority does not equate to superior individual value. As inequalities and discriminatory practices do not depend on the value of the individual, they are considered just (Dupuy 2005). Nevertheless, within a society of egalitarian values such as contemporary liberal democracies, such segregation is definitely considered unjust.

Institutionalized processes of segregation, however, have not always been motivated by the protection of the social structure by excluding “harmful” elements. This leads us to consider the second example of segregation, which consists of isolating the weakest groups with the aim of protecting them from maltreatment by the rest of society. Following the conquest of America, for example, certain religious figures (including the Dominican Las Casas), anxious at the spectacular demographic decline of the American Indian population, favored the physical separation of the Indians and the Spanish (Bernard 1994). Although the religious authorities claimed to have had the best interests of the Indians at heart, it is indisputable that these projects often led to a quasi-totalitarian domination of the latter by the former. This segregation was unjust, because individual liberties were not respected.

### **Structural Socio-Economic Processes**

The second type of segregation results simply from unequal resources and social position of the inhabitants. In this case, disparate social distances in the urban space can be explained in part by structural socio-economic reasons, even if it is clear that the physical inertia of cities necessarily limits the impact of contemporary economic tendencies.

Urban research in the Marxist tradition, starting at the end of the 1960s, emphasizes the link between the question of economic development and that of urban inequalities. Marxist geographers, sociologists, and economists (David Harvey, Manuel Castells, Alain Lipietz, amongst others) analyze segregation as a structural element of the capitalist production of space, whereas the city comprises the projection on the ground of social relationships. Social division appears in urban space at the same time that the partition of urban space guarantees reproduction of social classes. In other words, segregation—being simultaneously the consequence and the condition of exploitation of workers by bourgeois capitalists—is unjust.

Saskia Sassen has extended this analysis to the case of “global cities,” in which we witness an accentuation of the social and urban split between the “global service class” and the new tertiary proletariat, poorly qualified, badly paid, and at the service of the former. Globalization has ultimately presided over the emergence of a new urban order, where the spatial contrasts are more and more acute. While the applicability of Saskia Sassen’s argument to all global cities, such as Paris, is debated (Préteceille 1995, Préteceille 2006), we must explicitly consider the just or unjust nature of the structural processes of capitalism, and of the relationship between economy and justice (Dupuy 1992). For John Rawls, the crux of the matter is to identify whether these economic processes guarantee the maximization of the share of the poor. For Marion Young, the capitalist system is inseparable from one of the five forms of oppression that she herself denounces: exploitation. In the same line of thinking, numerous geographers denounce the intrinsic injustice of capitalism, whose uneven development is necessarily manifested in space, leading to a “geographical unevenness,” also indisputably unjust (Harvey 1996).

### **Processes Resulting from Individual Decisions**

Finally, the process of segregation is not necessarily forced (by discriminatory public policy or by structural economic forces): it can be chosen, and can result from the sum of individual discriminatory decisions. The collective process arising from these individual decisions does not necessarily flow from a desire for segregation and a refusal of the other. It can demonstrate a desire for territorial grouping based on affinities; we can therefore qualify this movement as voluntary aggregation. Territorial grouping of immigrant minorities, for instance, can be a tool for enjoying the benefits of community resources and infrastructure, as is the case with Algerians of the Belzunce neighborhood of Marseille (Mazzella 1996), or the Tunisian Jews in the Belleville neighborhood of Paris (Simon 2000). Or it can demonstrate a choice of community life and a strategy of

identity: the town of Sarcelles, for example, offers Jews “possibilities of Jewish life,” opportunities which a considerable number of people have seized (Benveniste and Podselver 1996: 19)<sup>1</sup>.

Nevertheless, this pattern of voluntary aggregation leading to the forming of segregated neighborhoods does not solely characterize poor ethnic areas. In the bourgeois Parisian neighborhoods, for example, the spatial concentration of the elite is not seen as a process of exclusion or elimination, but as a phenomenon of voluntary aggregation among similar kinds (Pinçon and Pinçon-Charlot 1989). This process can also be the subject of negative judgments, as numerous authors have seen it as a deliberate attempt by the middle and upper classes to escape the working class (see Davis 1992). While the extent of this phenomenon in France is debated (see Ascher et al. 1999, Maurin 2004, Prêteceille 2006), we are less concerned with the accuracy of the different segregation and aggregation processes among social classes, and more with their just or unjust nature. At first glance, it would seem neither inherently just nor unjust to voluntarily leave an area for discriminatory reasons—if individual freedom is still of fundamental value—even if we are within our rights to question whether it is moral or not (good or bad). On one hand, the social sciences have long since updated the weight that socio-economic and cultural determinations put on individuals (Durkheim 1897), leading us to ask what actual freedom anyone still has in making choices (residential, in this case). On the other hand, the process of segregation/aggregation can be considered unjust in the sense that the individual decision (when combined with other similar decisions) has an impact at the other end of the urban chain: the departure of the wealthy affects the neighborhoods they leave behind, since the poorest are unable to relocate.

We can therefore conclude that the social or ethno-racial division of an area is unjust when it results from unjust processes which contravene the intrinsic principles of freedom and equality of individuals. Conversely, certain movements of segregation freely consented to by individuals—we can qualify these as movements of aggregation—cannot *a priori* be

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1. It must be noted here that these processes of aggregation on an ethnic basis are viewed with extreme caution by French society, which considers it a demonstration of a dangerous “communitarianism” and a threat to one of the fundamental principles of its “republican model”: the integration of individuals considered equal regardless of their cultural origin, their skin color, their faith, etc. It is under the pretext of this ideal of equality and universality, of indifference towards an individual’s ethno-cultural characteristics, that public statistics take none of these criteria into account, making the analysis of the phenomena of aggregation and ethnic and religious segregation particularly difficult in France. In light of the sociologist Hugues Lagrange’s recent qualification of this reticence as a veritable “concealment of the social facts” (Lagrange 2010), we can affirm that “the perceived neutrality is less egalitarian and universalist than it is blind to the differences and needs of these families,” and, therefore, unjust.



considered unjust. The question of justice should be raised when the processes of segregation lead to the development or the maintaining of concentrated poor areas, or to the emergence of territorialized constructions that can become exclusive and therefore unjust. In other words, it is a case of examining how forces which are not necessarily unjust in themselves evolve into unjust situations and, above all, to understand what makes them unjust. It is to this that we will now turn.

## **Segregation, Producer of Spatial Injustice**

To ask when and why a case of urban segregation can be considered unjust requires us to question how the injustice occurs territorially in those neighborhoods characterized by great poverty. I shall focus on three specific elements: employment, schooling, and identity.

### **Spatial Relegation and Employment: The Spatial Mismatch**

Does segregation place the inhabitants of poorer neighborhoods at a disadvantage in terms of equal opportunity and access to employment? In the United States, researchers first questioned the effects of inner-city residential segregation on the inhabitants' access to employment. John Kain, in his thesis on spatial mismatch (Kain 1968), demonstrated that the degradation of these segregated neighborhoods and the high rate of unemployment therein should be analyzed in the context of transformations of the urban economy and post-fordism: the inhabitants of ghettos could not aspire to jobs which were out of the reach of their qualifications and too far geographically from their homes. While the middle classes had succeeded in leaving the ghetto, the poorer inhabitants found themselves without the social networks that might have given them access to the job market. This situation of residential segregation therefore constitutes a true spatial injustice, as the inhabitants of poorer neighborhoods are condemned to unemployment by the very socio-spatial isolation in which they find themselves.

In France, only very recently have researchers sought to examine this idea imported from America (Fol 2009). It must be noted that it is discussed in socio-professional categories and not in ethnic terms, as is the case in the United States. Another difference is that the spatial mismatch is not a clear opposition of inner-cities versus suburbs, given the far greater complexity of the geography of poverty. Overall, however, a similar pattern emerges, as the discrepancy between the place of work and the place of residence affects the mobility of the semi-skilled and unskilled workforce notably, whereas executives are used to a more coherent social space (Berger and Beaucire 2002, Korsu and Wenglenski, forthcoming).

In cases of redundancy, it is therefore the disadvantaged social classes who are most vulnerable to unemployment. These works highlight that in France, too, there remains strong social inequality—in terms of spatial factors—in access to employment.

The spatial mismatch thesis continues to be heavily debated in academic circles today (Fol 2009, Gobillon and Selod 2007, Duguet and Lhorty 2009). In the United States, as in France, some researchers argue that the high rate of unemployment in poorer segregated areas is not so much due to socio-economic and spatial factors as the persistence of racial discrimination (Massey and Denton 1993, Marpsat and Laurent 1997): the ghetto is not in itself a producer of injustice, but merely the urban realization of a social process. In addition, other researchers show that the high rate of unemployment in poorer areas comes down to a lack of qualifications, more than any spatial gap between place of residence and place of work (O'Regan and Quigley 1999). The importance of qualifications in access to employment leads us to the central question of equal schooling opportunities in segregated areas.

Whereas the spatial mismatch debate seeks to establish whether location and spatial organization are, themselves, sources of injustice, in the sphere of education we begin with the question of the “effects of place” (Bourdieu 1993), just or otherwise.

### **Segregation, the Right to Education, and “Social Citizenship”**

The right to education is one of the pillars of the social contract of contemporary western democratic society. Yet much research has criticized the apparent growth of educational inequality, in France in particular. If unequal schooling opportunity is an undeniable injustice, the question remains as to what exactly the links are between educational inequality and socio-spatial segregation.

How does segregation impact access to education? In the United States, where schools are funded by taxation on property, the quality of educational infrastructure is directly proportional to the level of property, with great disparities emerging between inner-city and suburban communities. In France, specific measures have been taken to battle against failure at school in poorer segregated neighborhoods, but the social justice aim of these educational policies is uncertain to say the least (Oberti 2006). Given that the allocation of educational resources is a crucial factor, the priority education zones (ZEP) look to grant greater resources (learning materials, staff, and equipment) to schools with more disadvantaged children. But the central education authority is not the only source of finance, and the varying wealth and involvement of local

councils and regional authorities (*communes, conseils généraux, conseils régionaux*) leads to greater discrepancies between schools, canceling out the stance of positive discrimination championed by the ZEP. School districting (*carte scolaire*) is another tool that in theory attempts to promote equal schooling opportunity, and is based on social diversity. But in practice it is unequally applied to social groups, favoring the more advantaged classes, and only goes to reinforce social and spatial disparity among the working classes (Oberti 2007, van Zanten 2009). Overall, it is undeniable that the quality and quantity of educational opportunity—public or private—is far greater in middle class communities.

Beyond the question of the quality of educational provisions, Stéphane Beaud (2002) looks at the many pressures that weigh on the shoulders of the inhabitants of poorer housing estates (*cités*), leading to a profound inequality of opportunity and access to learning. Thus youth from the *cités* start life at a huge educational disadvantage, and, crucially, lose the hope that school might be a means to move up the social ladder. Current changes to educational establishments (the mass production approach to secondary schools and universities, fewer barriers to overcome, more time spent studying, etc.), far from easing educational inequality, only accentuate it by “pushing the young towards study without the proper arms,” leading to “psychological and moral fragility,” and thus developing “a certain form of anti-intellectualism” (Beaud 2002: 308). We must, of course, underline the strong heterogeneity of this population and its schooling: some indeed do well, and subsequently move away from their neighborhood, even developing a deep-rooted sense of hate for it; while others are somewhere in between the two scenarios.

Building on American studies, some researchers have gone further, asserting that the concentration of poverty in certain neighborhoods in France constitutes in itself a factor of failure at school: the failure and poverty of some children would lead to the failure of others (Maurin and Goux 2004). This argument implicitly subscribes to the idea of the “culture of poverty,” where the socio-spatial isolation of the poor promotes the emergence of certain cultural trends, which would explain their “deviant” behavior, and, as such, their social exclusion. Yet Marie-Hélène Bacqué and Sylvie Fol (2007) underline the ideological assumptions on which this theory is based: the behavior that emerges from peer pressure in the poorer neighborhoods is clearly destructive, whereas in richer neighborhoods social capital and positive role models prevail. They also point out that, to this day, the multiple studies which have sought to evaluate the effects of social context in the United States have not been able to establish a convincing and unequivocal link with the children’s school results. We can say, therefore, that educational injustice does not

solely result from the concentration of poorer children, but rather from a set of social factors that heavily influence the schooling outcome of children from segregated neighborhoods.

### **Territorial Stigmatization, Identity Tension, and Resentment**

The deep inequalities that are rife in employment, schooling, and social services are exacerbated by a process of territorial stigmatization against the inhabitants of segregated neighborhoods. Loic Wacquant (2006) considers this a fundamental trait of these isolated areas, an “advanced marginalization” of post-fordist societies. Injustice does not only appear in the form of a lack of material possessions or low income. Confinement to poorer neighborhoods deprives people of their ability to build their own self-representation and collective identity. The estates of the French suburbs are therefore deeply scarred by a negative image, a veritable “taint of place”: the inhabitants have to live with this “territorial infamy” on a daily basis, in looking for jobs, in their relationships, when facing the police or the social services, or simply in conversations with their friends (Wacquant 2006: 246).

This social stigma not only prejudices their access to the fundamental services of everyday life, it also seriously sullies the image they have of themselves. In other words, the territorial stigmatization leads to identity tension (Young 1990). This imposed and internalized identity appears both fixed and inscribed in the space (Gervais-Lambony 2004). As a defense, some inhabitants of deprived areas take the identity that is given to them and put a positive spin on it; hence, a deep sense of attachment for their neighborhood can emerge, and its symbolic importance is assured. Segregation in this case produces a different form of injustice, and perhaps all the more unbearable, as it touches the intrinsic value of the individual by forcing him to reconsider his self-esteem.

This analysis of the stigma and identity tension found in segregated neighborhoods brings us to examine the role that feelings and passion play when determining what is just and unjust in segregation terms. Nowadays we cannot imagine a sense of justice without emotions, which is one of the criticisms aimed at John Rawls’ theory of justice. Even if we are prepared to accept that some inequalities are legitimate in that they protect society’s most vulnerable, it is impossible not to see that reflecting on the differences can provoke a profound sense of injustice and “resentment” among the disadvantaged (Dupuy 2005).

This assertion needs qualifying further: in similar situations (in terms of poverty levels), the resident’s feelings will also depend on the ideals and models of social justice advocated in each community. We can

cite the paradox that is Italian society, far from egalitarian, but where the inhabitants of poorer neighborhoods provide fewer outward expressions of injustice (in the form of riots, for example) than their French counterparts. Hugues Lagrange and Marco Oberti (2006) explain that those feelings of exclusion are diminished by the people's informal solidarity. On the contrary, in France, poorer neighborhoods' residents adhere to the "republican model of integration" (which guarantees equal opportunity to each citizen irrespective of his position on the French territory), and being left behind or forgotten by these ideals subsequently creates a crushing sense of frustration. In other words, the resentment felt by these groups springs from being victims of cultural imperialism.

Whatever the cause may be, this feeling of injustice, when it emerges, can manifest itself in many ways. The reaction can be individual. Stéphane Beaud and Michel Pialoux (2003), show with great finesse how the innumerable injustices suffered in every sphere of daily life brings out in the young people of the estates a "neighborhood syndrome," a feeling of constantly "being had," as regular victims of discrimination. In some contexts, their resentment is transformed into "hate," into "rage," is demonstrated by a "culture of provocation" (p.340), and manifests in the neighborhood by violent attitudes and behavior, revealing "a pathetic willingness to capture an impossible world" (Sayad, quoted by Beaud and Pialoux 2003: 341). This can open the door to a "delinquent career," the only option which is attainable and can provide access to some form of social recognition and the consumer society. These young people can turn this violence against themselves when the feeling of injustice reaches the abyss of social despair: drug use, alcohol abuse, delinquency, prison, but also insanity, suicide, and road accidents—yet this "social massacre" (Amrani and Beaud 2004: 223) goes largely unnoticed by the general public.

The resentment can also be manifested collectively. Political mobilization is one way of fighting injustice for the victims, and the workers' movement in France, for example, has long been a resisting force against proletarianization. But since the 1980s the workers' movement has suffered serious marginalization, been sidelined politically with a diminishing power base, and today is in terminal decline. Confronted with this multifaceted "institutional solitude" (Lagrange 2006: 51), the feeling of injustice found a new outlet in the violence of the riots. Accordingly, the collective urban disorder which rocked a number of French, British, and American cities in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s—of which the November 2005 riots are the most recent illustration in France—should be interpreted as a triple protest against ethno-racial injustice (discrimination and racism against African Americans in the United States, and against "Arabs" and other "people of color" in France and in Great Britain), against social injustice (increasing job precariousness

and pauperization amongst the working classes), and against spatial segregation (segregation and degradation of the most disadvantaged neighborhoods, stigmatization) (Lagrange and Oberti 2006, Wacquant 2006). In essence, this urban violence is the paroxysmal answer to the social—and illegitimate—violence that weighs down the working classes of these impoverished neighborhoods, whose means of resistance have been considerably diminished (Beaud and Pialoux 2003).

The question of the effects of segregation on the resident victims is more complex than it first appears, and researchers have not yet reached a consensus. Aside from general trends, it is difficult to accurately establish a link between the undeniable injustice suffered by the most fragile people and the specific role played by the territory in which they reside. However, one thing is certain: the inhabitants of these communities often demonstrate a profound sense of injustice, and when this feeling does not find another outlet, it can be unleashed in urban riots, in a paradoxical process of collective self-destruction.

## **Should the City Be Desegregated? Diversity and (In) Justice**

The lingering idea that segregation is unjust is inextricably linked to the ideal of social diversity that dominates nowadays in many northern countries. Once we have reminded ourselves of its basis, we shall examine whether the concept of diversity is intrinsically just. Finally, we will see how the policy of desegregation adopted in cities all over the world brings with it many difficult questions to be resolved.

### **The Urban Ideal of Social Diversity**

If the ideals of justice and diversity dominate today's debates on the city, notably for city planners, it appeared some time ago, as the examples of France and the United States show. In France, the term justice appears neither in constitutional texts nor in the maxim "*Liberté, égalité, fraternité*," even if it is closely associated with the notions of equality and fraternity (through that of solidarity). Justice therefore finds its roots in the notion of equality. "Assimilating the ideal of social justice with the equal distribution of goods handed out by the public authority, [the republican model] goes back to the classic conception of the universality of man's needs" (Pincon-Charlot *et al.* 1986-87, quoted by Madoré 2004: 208). A legacy of the French revolution, this ideal is designed to apply to individuals as well as to territories, and it is intimately linked to the notion of balance or territorial egalitarianism. On a city scale, segregation is therefore seen as reprehensible, and diversity as the goal of a just society.

Whatever the origin of segregation (many attribute it to the industrial revolution, while others consider it to be less clear-cut—see Pinol 1994 and Fourcaut 1995), in general terms segregation is contrary to the republican model of social justice and French planning ideology has regularly fought against it by favoring diversity. The idea of diversity permeated the first social housing programs—and their integration into the city—as early as the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but since the 1980s it has hit new heights, regularly appearing in town planning and housing policy in the 1990s and 2000s. In the context of the rise of marginalization, diversity is viewed as a way to fight against exclusion by scattering the poor throughout the city or by attracting the new middle class to lower-income neighborhoods (Bacqué 2003, Blanc and Bidou 2010).

Unlike in France, urban planning in the United States has not always believed in the ideal of diversity: at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the ideal city was that which was rational, efficient, orderly, and beautiful. City planning, throughout the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, strived to meticulously separate residential, commercial, and industrial activities by means of zoning, which contributed to social segregation by developing vast social housing projects in the inner cities and promoting the extension of isolated suburban neighborhoods. Following the Second World War, the deep economic crisis in America's cities (and the deterioration of poor inner city neighborhoods) highlighted the environmental, economic, and social limits of the concept of the efficient city, and it drew widespread criticism. As a result, urban planning has recently reviewed its priorities, with economic growth and social justice at the heart of its aims. The belief is now ingrained that diversity is a key element in creating the just city, with the rise of multiculturalism and participatory planning (Fainstein 1997, 2005, 2010).

### **Unjust “Segregative Diversity”**

It is this premise that more and more researchers are beginning to question (Kirszbaum 2008, Blanc and Bidou 2010). In Marcel Roncayolo's words, we can hypothesize that diversity is perhaps not the exact opposite of segregation. In other words, might some forms of diversity be concealing types of oppression?

Planners, architects, social housing managers, and elected politicians all agree on the growing need to create more socio-spatial diversity—by which they mean residential diversity—to solve urban problems. This diversity can be achieved in two ways. First, the middle and upper classes could move to working class neighborhoods. In the inner city, this process would be akin to gentrification, and it has been observed since the 1960s in numerous cities, north and south, where old derelict



neighborhoods have been “revitalized” by the arrival of new urban, and slightly wealthier, classes. In Paris, for example, the “gentrifiers” who move to these neighborhoods are receptive to the debate on diversity and social cohesion, and sensitive to the idea of tolerance. However, even if in these areas there is visibly less segregation, can we qualify as just a process that progressively leads to an increase in the cost of living (rent, property tax, goods and services, etc.), which finally brings about the (often involuntary) expulsion of the old residents who can no longer afford to keep up with this evolution (Clerval 2007)? We cannot ignore the anxiety of the working class neighborhood residents who are harassed by the threat of expulsion. However, a distinction must be made between homeowners and tenants among the old residents; the former group accepts the changing face of a neighborhood far more serenely, as it signals an improvement to their living conditions, whereas the latter feels a confused sense of injustice (Lehman-Frisch 2008).

Second, diversity could be promoted by equally spreading out poorer residents across the urban landscape, notably through social housing (in theory the only mechanism free from market forces). However, on one hand, social landlords often find ways of avoiding granting housing to riskier categories of people, and discrimination is not lacking in the social sector (see Levy 2002). In addition, urban renovation policy often leads paradoxically to a process of “reconcentration” of the least advantaged social groups (Lelévrier 2010). On the other hand, when this diversity is achieved in some neighborhoods, is it proof of social cohesion between the different classes involved? Jean-Claude Chamboredon and Madeleine Lemaire (1970) demonstrated long ago that in the 1970s, for the most part the cohabitation of socially mixed people was not synonymous with the positive effects of social solidarity, or even the absorption of the working class by the middle class. Quite the opposite. The imposed nature of this diversity led to the discrediting of working class culture and the fragmentation of class solidarity (Bacqué 2003). Research has since confirmed the ambivalence shown towards this diversity, with the suggestion that homogenous residential situations create more integrated social groups (Simon 2002, Authier 2007). Furthermore, to diminish segregation by dispersing poorer people is to deprive them of important local resources (jobs, services, infrastructure, and even social networks) which they call upon in their daily life (Fol 2009, de Souza Briggs 2005). These resources are not only material and social, but also symbolic: let us be reminded how the young people from the most marginalized estates compensate for “social dispossession” with a strong sense of attachment to their neighborhood (Beaud and Pialoux 2003). To relocate and scatter them all over town is to deprive them of one of their only remaining means of self-assertion. It would seem more relevant to base the just city not on residential diversity but on equal access to the city by all its



inhabitants—access which would rely heavily on transport links and the ability to get around town (Lévy and Dureau 2002).

The question of diversity and its connection with the idea of justice deserves to be examined beyond residential spaces alone. Hence the “right to the city” theorized by Henri Lefebvre (1968) hinges on the idea of “centrality,” or, in other words, on the diversity of public spaces. Marion Young, when attempting to define the ideal city, also insists on the importance of social and functional diversity in public spaces: “the interfusion of groups in the city occurs partly because of the multiuse differentiation of social space. What makes urban spaces interesting, draws people out in public to them, gives people pleasure and excitement, is the diversity of activities they support” (Young 1990: 239). The multi-functionality of public spaces must allow social groups with different lifestyles and social characteristics to be brought together and interact. Trafalgar Square in London comes to mind, as do Place Djema el-Fna in Marrakech, Plaza Major in Madrid, and Place Beaubourg in Paris (Fainstein 1997, 2005). The diversity in some public spaces sometimes conceals signs of oppression, though. Urban gentrification, which goes hand in hand with a decrease in segregation in the gentrifying area and an increased stimulation in the liveliness of public spaces (streets, parks etc.), consequently brings about the privatization of those spaces. In other words, in the guise of urban “revitalization,” and with the aim of expanding access to certain parks, the eventual result of different planning strategies is in fact the exclusion of the most fragile people (see Davis 1992 on Los Angeles, or Harvey 1992, Zukin 1993, Mitchell 2003 on New York, or Fleury 2007 on French cities).

Overall, diversity, in residential or public spaces, is no guarantee of an equal “right to the city” for all city dwellers. On the contrary, it can result, in a twisted way, in imposed situations, values, usages, and practices by one (dominant) group on a (dominated) other.

## **Conclusion: Which Socio-Spatial Organization for the Just City?**

This review of French social science literature on urban segregation has shown how complex its relationship is with the notion of justice. The segregated neighborhoods with the highest concentration of poverty seem, in many respects, to be the embodiment of spatial injustice. And yet these same neighborhoods supply their residents with various material, social, and symbolic resources, and to take these away would constitute a further form of injustice. In addition, the diversity ideal, to which the notion of segregation is systematically opposed, merely presents more questions, which make us doubt its ability to guarantee any further urban justice.

As segregation and diversity have revealed themselves to be very ambivalent notions in terms of the idea of spatial justice, what form of socio-spatial organization *can* we envisage for the just city? How can we find that perfect balance between a “social pluralism” (De Souza Briggs 2005) acceptable to all city dwellers and exclusion? Marion Young attempted to apply her theory of justice to the city, and lays down as a fundamental principle of the just city a “social differentiation without exclusion”: “In this ideal, groups do not stand in relations of inclusion and exclusion, but overlap and intermingle without becoming homogeneous.... In the good city one crosses from one distinct neighborhood to another without knowing precisely where one ended and the other began.” In her normative ideal of “city life,” borders are “open and undecidable” (Young 1990: 238-239). The philosopher thereby advocates a just city that would be neither strictly segregated nor completely mixed, where group affinities (whatever their basis) could be freely expressed and without oppression towards other groups, and where one could freely roam without spatial or social constraints.

Susan Fainstein believes she has identified a just city in Amsterdam, where no one neighborhood is completely homogenous but where ethnic concentrations are not discouraged, and where large social housing projects isolating their residents from the rest of the city do not exist. She establishes this principle of temperate diversity as that of the just city, which, combined with the principles of fairness and democracy, should inspire planners (Fainstein 2005, 2010). Finally, following Nancy Fraser, we must highlight the pivotal role played by politics: the just city cannot be reduced to its form or to the question of diversity, and the necessary condition for it to succeed is the establishment of a democratic political system which allows free and respected representation for different city dwelling groups (Fraser 2005).

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