

Social cohesion in housing and neighbourhood research in Europe

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Abstract

This paper takes as its starting point the inter-dependency of housing and neighbourhood and through a multi-scalar perspective explores a tension between heterogeneity and cohesion in the arenas of housing and neighbourhood. First, it discusses housing as a crucial element of consumption within the socio-economic dimension of social cohesion, and explores forms of exclusion from housing. Second, it examines housing systems in Europe and the tendency of convergence towards a neoliberal market-based model. Third, it looks at diversity and the fragmentation of social bonds within and between urban neighbourhoods. Within this context, the debate concerning social mixing as an instrument for social cohesion is considered. Finally, the paper calls for new directions in research to look at housing systems and at neighbourhoods from the perspective of those who experience them.

Keywords: housing systems; urban neighbourhood; social cohesion; diversity.

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Introduction: housing, neighbourhood and social cohesion

The starting point for this paper is housing. Housing plays a crucial role in the construction and sustaining of socially cohesive urban environments through its dual role as an item of consumption which is central to the well-being of individuals and households, and as a locator of the household in the neighbourhood and in the wider socio-spatial structure of the city. These two aspects of housing will be examined separately under the headings of 'housing' and 'neighbourhood', but it is essential to stress their interdependence as a key aspect of understanding their significance for social cohesion in cities.

Novy et al (this Special Issue) in their overarching discussion of the concept of social cohesion emphasise its multidimensional nature. Specifically, they identify four dimensions: socio-economy; culture; ecology and politics. Beginning with housing as an item of consumption, exclusion from access to adequate housing can be seen as a crucial challenge to the first of these dimensions of social cohesion, concerned with socio-economic inequality and exclusion, as shelter constitutes one of the most basic material requirements of the individual or household. The most extreme expression of exclusion *from* housing is homelessness, or more precisely street homelessness, what is sometimes called 'rooflessness'. The topic of homelessness in Europe is discussed below. Beyond this, housing

which is inadequate in either physical quality and condition or security of occupation may bring with it a significant degree of socio-economic exclusion from a socially-acceptable living standard and raise issues of environmental sustainability and justice. One aspect of this, the significant negative effects of poor quality housing on mental and physical health, is used as an example. The paper then moves on to look at systems of housing provision across Europe, patterns of diversity and convergence in housing systems and at how these may affect urban social cohesion.

Neighbourhood is of importance to urban social cohesion at two levels. Firstly, there is the relationship and interaction between neighbourhoods, and the question of whether socio-spatial divisions between neighbourhoods undermine social cohesion. Secondly, there is the dynamic of social interaction within the neighbourhood and the cohesiveness of neighbourhood social bonds. One specific issue which is often seen as of great significance for urban social cohesion and which links intra- and inter-neighbourhood processes is the spatial concentration of poverty and deprivation in particular neighbourhoods. Households located in such neighbourhood can be seen as socially excluded *through* their housing situation as a result of neighbourhood effects which reinforce disadvantages operating at the individual and household level. Location within a neighbourhood may have consequences for the socio-economic dimensions of cohesion through the access this provides to economic

opportunities within the city. However, it is the cultural and political dimensions of social cohesion which come to the fore in the discussion of neighbourhood – issues of social networks and bonds, social values and social capital, and of the neighbourhood as a focus for collective action by residents or as a target for area-based public policies. While the impact of housing processes at the local neighbourhood level is the starting point for this discussion, other processes also have fundamental impacts on social cohesion within and between neighbourhoods. In particular, migration and mobility are key processes whose impacts are discussed below, especially in relation to ethnicity.

In drawing upon comparative research on housing and neighbourhood in Europe, there is a danger of concentrating on Northern and Western Europe which have been the main focus of much this research. This paper seeks to avoid this bias by quite explicitly giving attention to housing and neighbourhood in Southern Europe, and most particularly in the New EU Member States.

1. Social cohesion and exclusion *from* housing

1.1. The problem of homelessness across Europe

Homelessness can cover a range of problems, from ‘rooflessness’ and rough-sleeping, through inadequate housing quality and/or security to lack

of safe and private personal space (Edgar and Meert, 2006). A lack of clarity and commonality of definitions means that as yet no definitive European level statistics exist. It has been estimated, though, that in total 1.8 million people were homeless in Europe at least one day in 1995 and 1.1 million were homeless on an average day (EUROSTAT, 2004). Some countries such as Italy, Spain, Belgium, Netherlands, and Sweden report especially intensive growth of homeless populations in recent years. Homelessness proves to be linked with growing migration in Southern Europe, and more often touches young people who are employed in the low-paid retail sector (Edgar et al., 2004). The lack of suitable immigrant or asylum reception provision, in some countries, has resulted in both documented and undocumented immigrants using homeless hostels or sleeping rough (Edgar and Meert, 2006). An unprecedented rise in rooflessness was also noted in Eastern Europe where escalating unemployment, organization culture shock and rapid privatization of housing stock left many people on the margins revealing the existence of homelessness which had previously been hidden. (Duracz-Walczak, 1996; Kowalak, 1998; Porowski, 1995; Przymeński, 2001; Rüdiger, 1996; Panier 2006).

The adoption of a more neo-liberal set of housing policies throughout Western and Eastern Europe that has seen owner occupation as a `solution` for all has greatly contributed to intensive growth of homeless populations. The pathways into homelessness are many and varied. Some will become

homeless because of issues situated in the self - mental illness, learning disabilities, substance abuse – that are inadequately addressed by policy instruments or agencies at the grass roots level leading to a loss of shelter. However, for the most part these increases in homelessness are attributable to economic and political shifts within Europe giving rise to key structural problems which include amongst others lack of affordability of housing in any tenure, inadequate supply of appropriate housing, overcrowding, and eviction policies (FEANTSA, 2008).

1.2. Housing and health

As Shaw (2004) argues, as the focus of public health debates has swung from issues of socioeconomic structure to individualistic lifestyle factors, so the view of housing has shifted from its role as social determinant of health to one where it is increasingly seen as an indicator of individual wealth. As she contends “housing is also about social relations and inequalities; in the extreme, these inequalities can refer to those who have it and those who do not, but it is also a matter of degree - where housing demand exceeds supply, housing becomes one of the most blatant expressions of underlying inequalities” (Shaw, 2004: 414). As access to good housing is increasingly governed by market forces or, in the social rented sectors, by forms of rationing to deal with an excess of demand over supply, more vulnerable groups are likely to be found in the dwellings that

are more likely to be detrimental to health because of overcrowding, dampness, poor thermal regulation, toxins or location near industry.

Overcrowding has been linked to developmental delay and emotional problems in children (Hunt, 1997 cited in Pevalin et al, 2008). Damp housing caused by structural disrepair or poor ventilation is strongly linked to respiratory disease (Walker et al, 2006). While dampness and cold are associated with general as well as mental health problems (Shortt and Rugkasa, 2007). Low indoor temperatures lead to hypothermia, particularly among older people leading to what are termed `excess winter deaths` (Burholt and Windle, 2006). Over heated and unventilated indoor environments are implicated in the deaths of older people in European and North American heat-waves of the mid 1990s (Klinenberg, 2002). Research by Van Hoof et al (2010) warns that good thermo-regulation of the home is critical in the home management of dementia since extreme temperatures can induce problematic behaviours. Given the global demographic shift to ageing together with global warming and the growing political demands for energy conservation, this poses a considerable societal challenge. Carbon monoxide poisoning, often arising from incorrect installation and inadequate maintenance of gas appliances, leads to fatalities, (Tekbas et al, 2001) while Radon –the naturally occurring radioactive gas- is, particularly, in the United States, linked to the development of lung cancer (Field 2001 cited in Shaw, 2004). Furthermore, the location of housing units plays a crucial role,

as poor households suffer from exposure to environmental hazards caused by heavily polluting industries (see: Swyngendouw and Cook, this Special Issue), and transport infrastructures (see: Miciukiewicz and Vigar, this Special Issue).

While homelessness is suffered by individuals, the root causes often lie in deeper socioeconomic inequalities arising from de-industrialisation, economic restructuring and retreat of the welfare state. A number of studies have explored the incidence of physical and mental health problems among homeless people and whether they lead to or are a manifestation of homelessness (FEANTA and MHE, 2009). Both conclusions “confirm the close relationship between health problem and inadequate housing” (Shaw, 2004: 407). Victor’s study (1997) of the British homeless population concludes that the officially-accepted homeless population - dominated by women headed families - have very different health problems from the unofficial homeless population dominated by older men. The former report higher levels of chronic health problems and general psychiatric problems while the unofficial homeless have higher rates of mental health disorders and problems stemming from alcohol abuse. An Irish study reveals that while economies may boom and governments may pledge to address social exclusion, the take up of primary health services by homeless people seems not to increase. (O’Connell and O’Riley, 2008)

2. Housing systems and social cohesion

In examining the relationship between systems of housing provision and access and social cohesion, two questions are addressed here – are there differences between housing systems in Europe in the extent to which they deliver social cohesion, and are there trajectories of change in housing systems which affect levels of social cohesion in European societies? In the comparative housing literature two different approaches to housing systems can be identified – those analyzing difference between national systems and those suggesting a process of convergence and growing similarity – and these approaches can be used to address in turn each of these questions.

2.1. Housing systems and welfare regimes

In moving beyond the simple description of individual housing systems substantial use has been made of the welfare regime model of Esping-Andersen (1990) in the classification of housing systems which reflect the divergent trajectories of European housing systems (Kemeny and Lowe, 1998; Arbaci, 2007). This three-fold model of welfare regimes is based primarily on the concept of decommodification: the extent to which welfare outcomes are detached from determination by the market. Analysis of this kind has often involved not only description and classification, but also an element of normative evaluation of different welfare regimes. In its

application to housing, this can be seen clearly, for example, in the work of Barlow and Duncan (1994) who looked at housing in Britain, France and Sweden as exemplars of the three welfare regime models – respectively liberal, corporatist and social-democratic, which are characterised by progressively greater degrees of decommodification. The study concluded that the Swedish system was not only more socially inclusive and responsive to the range of housing needs in society, but that it also provided a more effective and supportive framework for housing production and supply and provided greater housing choice. The more market-based, liberal regime of Britain was assessed in the study as the least successful in both those regards, with the French corporatist regime somewhere between the other two (Barlow and Duncan, 1994). To the extent that access for the whole population to good housing is a precondition of social cohesion, this analysis did, therefore, suggest a clear conclusion. The housing system reflecting the most decommodified welfare regime was the most effective; the least decommodified was the least effective.

There are, though, some important provisos which have been raised about the notion of decommodification in housing and the application to housing of the welfare regime model which was originally focused on income support systems (Doling, 1999). The concept of decommodification in housing is complicated by the very wide range of policy interventions which are made to modify market outcomes in housing. In particular, direct

provision of housing by the state is only one strategy; there are many other forms of intervention involving subsidy to or regulation of other agents in the private and voluntary sectors, and the extent of decommodification cannot be 'read off' from the balance between the private and state or the profit and non-profit sectors of housing systems (Doling, 1999). An alternative analysis distinguishes unitary and dualist housing systems (Kemeny, 1992; Whitehead, 2003). Unitary housing systems treat public and private sectors in a co-ordinated and flexible way to encourage affordable housing provision across tenures. Dualist systems typically privilege home ownership and operate systems of subsidy and access to social housing which emphasise its separation and stigmatisation as housing for the poor.

“The dualist policy strategy strives to channel and direct household demand towards owner occupation and away from renting.... There is no attempt to develop neutral government policy which allows unbridled choice on the market to determine the relative balance between owning and renting...The unitary cost rental strategy, by contrast, does not presuppose any sort of over-riding public goal as to which housing tenure should receive political favour...Instead it strives to create an even playing field between the tenures.”
(Kemeny, 1995: 43).

There are clear implications here for social cohesion, especially the cultural dimensions of social cohesion concerned with common values, identity and social capital. Dualist systems are associated with strong housing-related social status differences and stigma which undermine social cohesion, especially when these operate at the level of the neighbourhood as well as the household through the spatial segregation of high-status and low-status housing tenures.

These approaches are not mutually exclusive and the unitary/dualist model can be usefully combined with welfare regime classification. Arbaci (2007) in particular presents an analysis identifying the more unitary character of social democratic and corporatist regimes, and suggests liberal regimes are associated with dualism, as are housing systems in 'Latin rim' welfare regimes. Allen et al. (2004), however, suggested that the welfare regime model is better used to provide ideal types rather than a typology into which national housing systems can be placed. Specific housing systems may accord to a greater or lesser extent with one of these ideal type welfare regimes, or perhaps more often display a combination of characteristics from different regimes. Indeed, Allen et al suggested that perhaps only Sweden can be seen as a relatively 'pure' example of a specific welfare regime (social democratic) in terms of its housing system (op cit, p. 102).

2.2. Housing and welfare regimes in Southern Europe

The discussion of housing systems and welfare regimes by Allen et al. (ibid) took place in the context of an analysis of housing systems in Southern Europe. As suggested above, much of the discussion of European housing systems has focused on North-Western Europe. The extension of this analysis to the countries of Southern Europe has emphasised the importance there of associative relations, especially the family, in addition to the market/state relation (Mingione, 1991; Allen et al, 2004). The limited role of the state in housing provision, weak land-use regulation and a significant role for self-provision of housing are also seen as characteristic elements. The outcomes of Southern European housing systems for social cohesion are not simple and consistent. On the one hand, in terms of provision of and access to good quality housing, Southern European systems compare relatively poorly, especially with the Northern and Western European housing systems combining social democratic and corporatist elements. On the other hand, some aspects of Southern European housing traditions show limited socio-spatial segregation. Athens provides a good example of housing forms, arising in the context of weak state intervention and regulation, which can create socially-diverse neighbourhoods. This has included the informal, suburban self-provision of housing (Leontidou 1990; Allen et al., 2004). It has also included the development and densification of the inner city with apartment blocks which accommodate different social

groups at different levels (higher level – higher class) in a pattern of what has been called ‘vertical segregation’ (Maloutas and Karadimitiou, 2001) within a socially diverse neighbourhood, a phenomenon also found in some other cities of Southern Europe, Naples for example (Morlicchio and Pugliese, 2006).

2.3. Trajectories of housing system change

An additional reason for using the welfare regime concept to provide ideal types rather than fixed categories is the potential for dynamic rather than static analysis of housing systems. Ideal types of welfare regimes can be used to trace the trajectories of change in a housing system as well as the static classification of that system. An example of this was the use of a dynamic approach to welfare regime analysis to trace the changes to the Dutch housing system, which had combined social democratic and corporatist elements, in ways which weakened the social democratic and strengthened liberal welfare regimes aspects of housing policy (Hoekstra, 2003).

Dynamic approaches to the analysis of housing systems in Europe concerned with housing system change have tended to emphasise processes of convergence leading to growing similarities between housing systems. Kemeny (1992) discussed these theories which argue that all housing systems are converging in a similar direction. Such theories have a long

history, but earlier interpretations (for example, Donnison, 1967; Castells, 1977) suggested that convergence was towards the inexorable growth of the State within capitalist societies meeting the needs for welfare provision, including housing, which cannot be met by the market. In contrast, the more recent convergence theories (Harloe, 1985) – supported by cross-national empirical research and local case studies (e.g. Czasny, 2004) - have focused on the withdrawal of the state from welfare provision, shifting the responsibility for affordable housing to regional and local governments (see: Eizaguirre et al., this Special Issue), and the strengthening of the role of the market.

The common features of this convergence have been reductions in social housing construction, the privatisation of social housing, a shift of emphasis in subsidy systems from subsidising the development of housing to means-tested subsidies directed at the household, the deregulation of housing finance and the disappearance of protected, separate housing finance circuits and the expansion of owner occupation (Ball, Harloe and Martens, 1988). While comparative studies have revealed significant variations, the generalised restructuring of housing markets fuelled by neoliberal policies, the withdrawal of state intervention and deregulation of finances appears to have made housing less accessible and less affordable both in the social and owner-occupied sectors. This seems to have been accentuated by the 2008 downturn in the global credit market as access to

housing markets has been squeezed by the twin pressures of affordability and credit availability (Lloyd, 2009). While the problem of exclusion from housing has been made more difficult for some households, for others new housing cultures have grown as households increasingly look to investment in housing property as a vehicle to enhance their existing or future economic position, with further potential to undermine social cohesion through socio-economic division. The convergence of housing policies towards the privileging of home ownership and residualisation of social housing has also led to housing systems resembling more closely the dualist model with, as suggested above, the potential to undermine social cohesion through stigmatisation of social housing and social housing neighbourhoods.

2.4. Housing system change and social cohesion in Eastern Europe

A 'dynamic' approach to housing system analysis is particularly relevant given the imperative to extend analysis to the housing systems of Eastern Europe. The key to this analysis is not a static model of divergent welfare regimes and housing systems, but a dynamic model emphasising the impact of change and transition in housing systems and in the wider society. The transition to a market economy and the related social and political changes have had a profound impact on the institutional frameworks that support the supply of and access to housing in the former socialist countries (Clapham, 1995). The main trends seen in the convergence towards neo-

liberal housing policies in Western Europe have been echoed, often in an extreme form, in Eastern Europe.

There has been large-scale privatisation of state-owned housing which Hegedüs and Stuyk (2005) suggested was in effect much more for ideological reasons than to achieve housing objectives. In most cases it was not supported by corresponding housing policies at the national level (Mandič, 2000); responsibility for public housing was transferred to local authorities which were not prepared to lead comprehensive housing programmes. In fact, based on the extent of privatization of their public housing stock in the 1990s Mandič (2001) identified two groups of countries. The first group - Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia - only slightly reduced the stock of their public housing while the second one - Hungary, Lithuania, Croatia, Romania, Slovenia - witnessed a marked decrease in public renting and followed the pattern of residualization (Cirman, 2008). In the latter group, where 'nations of homeowners' were created with levels of homeownership exceeding 80% (Tsenkova and Turner, 2004), the marginalized public housing stock only targets low-income households and the lack of proper rental alternatives is forcing households to opt for owner-occupation (Cirman, op cit).

In the financial sector, privatization and deregulation took place without the benefit of effective policies to support the development of a new housing finance system. The state dominated housing finance systems that

collapsed in the 1990s have been slowly replaced by market based housing mortgage markets with new privatized banks beginning to lend from around 2000 onward (Hegedüs, 2009). However, the effectiveness of private mortgage systems as channels to home ownership, being highly correlated with the income of households, has proved to be relatively low in Eastern Europe (Domański, 2008). Due to reduction of production subsidies and insufficient capacity of mortgage systems, delivery of new housing radically declined in 1990s and has recently recovered only to a very limited extent (Hegedüs, 2009; Norris, 2008). The overall production of new housing units in the 10 New Member States in the period 1990-2004 averaged only 1.8 per 1,000 people as opposed to 6.3 in the EU-15. Relatively low wages and employment uncertainty coupled with escalating housing costs and mortgage rates reduce accessibility of housing both in poorer South Eastern countries, such as Albania or Macedonia and in booming economies of the New EU Member States. As a result of rocketing prices of properties in more successful cities, Poles, Hungarians, and Czechs were on average much poorer on the housing market in 2008 than in 2004, e.g. in Warsaw, Wrocław, Cracow and Poznan prices per square metre on average rose by 150-250 % in this period (GUS, 2004; 2008).

Through these changes, many of the negative consequences for social cohesion suggested above have been writ large in much of Eastern Europe. The 'give away' privatisation of former state owned housing has

increased inequalities: households living in good quality dwellings have acquired considerable wealth at little cost while others for the same cost own a dwelling in poor repair (Tsenkova, 2007). House price inflation has shifted the market power to existing owners, while newly formed households tend to be disadvantaged (Tsenkova, 2006). The gap between income and entry costs has increased dramatically creating significant affordability constraints for new households. Overall, the housing gap between EU-15 and NMS-10 – in terms of overcrowding, accessibility of housing for newly formed households, security of tenure, and maintenance of housing infrastructure – has increased since 1990 (Norris, 2008). The previous housing shortage has been replaced by a shortage of affordable housing (Tsenkova, 2006).

3. Social cohesion and neighbourhood bonds

The discussion of housing above, focusing on the housing of the individual household, has been mainly concerned with the availability of housing as a key element in material welfare and the issue of exclusion *from* adequate housing as an aspect of the challenge to cohesion of socio-economic inequality. Cultural dimensions of social exclusion and cohesion have been identified, especially linked to situations where housing systems privilege and stigmatise different housing tenures, but it has been noted that

this may be particularly significant where this is then reflected at the neighbourhood level through concentration and segregation of different housing tenures and types.

In turning attention more explicitly to the neighbourhood level, it is the process of exclusion *through* housing, in its role as a locator of the household within the neighbourhood and the socio-spatial system of the city, which is addressed. While location in the neighbourhood may have implications for socio-economic dimensions of social cohesion relating to access to services and economic opportunity, it is the cultural and political dimensions of urban social cohesion (Novy et al in this Special Issue) which have been given most attention in the discussion of residential neighbourhood. The key issues for social cohesion addressed below are: does neighbourhood matter, and is social cohesion facilitated by greater diversity or homogeneity?

3.1. Social segregation between neighbourhoods

In this Special Issue, Cassiers and Kesteloot discuss the socio-spatial differentiation of the city and the economic, political and social forces driving change. They conclude that, with the exception of only a few European cities, there is a trend towards greater social and ethnic residential segregation in Europe as a result of the restructuring of economies and welfare regimes. Increasing spatial segregation between neighbourhoods

both expresses increasing socio-economic inequalities and acts as a driver of the re-enforcers these inequalities.

Despite these trends, there are still significant differences between cities in different parts of Europe (Arbaci, 2007). In terms of ethnicity, high levels of spatial segregation were associated with cities in liberal welfare regimes such as the UK, whereas in Scandinavia, Germany and France with social-democratic/corporatist welfare regimes, the level of ethnic segregation is at a lower level. Class and ethnic segregation in Eastern European cities is still relatively low, with the exception of severe spatial exclusion in the case of Roma minority (Tomova, 1995). However, the deregulation of housing markets in the post-socialist states discussed above puts Eastern European cities at risk of rapidly escalating segregation in the immediate future.

In considering the impact of housing systems on social cohesion within a range of European countries, Czasny (2004) argued that systems of housing provision have a decisive influence on the extent and type of social and ethnic segregation between neighbourhoods, and that changes in housing systems are crucial to the process of intensifying tendencies towards greater segregation. The relationships between them are however extremely complex, involving the interaction of subsidy, rent and renovation policies. Linking social housing rents to housing quality leads to the concentration of the poor in poor quality housing, while attempts to focus

subsidies very selectively on the poorest leads to poverty concentration, as does the segmentation of subsidies by tenure or household type (Priemus, 2001). Subsidy of housing supply, less targeted by income, achieves a far more balanced social mix. To a significant extent this can be linked to the unitary/dualist distinction with poverty concentration and segregation especially a feature of dualist housing systems (Arbaci, 2007). The shift in housing policies towards dualism, especially through the promotion of home ownership and residualisation of social housing, does imply greater levels of residential segregation which challenge urban social cohesion (Arbaci, op cit).

3.2. Poverty concentration, cohesion and social housing

The concentration of poverty in social housing neighbourhoods has come to be seen as one of the major challenges to urban social cohesion (Prak and Priemus, 1984). From the 1980s onwards there was an increasing concentration of only the poorest in social housing in the UK, a process of residualisation previously associated mainly with social housing in the USA. This pattern has been repeated, to a greater or lesser extent, in many European countries, including Denmark whose social-democratic welfare regimes had formerly minimised social segregation (Skifter Andersen, 2002). In the countries with broadly social-democratic regimes in particular, social polarisation has often been linked to concerns regarding the

segregation of ethnic minorities, and indeed Arbaci (2007) suggested that the availability of large-scale peripheral social housing in these countries has been associated with rather higher levels of ethnic segregation than are found in corporatist welfare states such as Germany and France.

The residualisation of social housing is typically seen as a challenge to social cohesion not as result of the existence of poverty and inequality per se, but because of the assumption of ‘neighbourhood effects’ which reinforce the exclusion of households in these neighbourhoods, especially in relation to mainstream cultural norms and values and civic and political participation. The concept of social capital is drawn upon (Mayer 2003, Forrest & Kearns 2001), and more specifically the distinction made between bonding and bridging capital. This reflects the argument made by, for example, Grannovetter (1973) that poverty concentration leads to too much ‘bonding’ social capital, reinforcing deviant norms and values within the community, and too little ‘bridging’ social capital connecting the neighbourhood to the opportunities and aspirations of the mainstream. As indicated in the discussion of social mix policies below, these assumptions have powerfully influenced policy despite the limited evidence for strong neighbourhood effects arising from the concentration of poverty in European cities (Ostendorf et al, 2001).

The problematising of social housing neighbourhoods in terms of social cohesion has, though, been questioned. Drawing on evidence from a

major study of large-scale social housing estates, van Kempen et al (2005) while acknowledging the physical and social problems of social housing estates, typically the large-scale, high-rise, high-density social housing estates built on the urban periphery in the early post-war period, questioned the assumption that such estates are generally problematic. Andersson and Musterd (2005) also suggested that while providing a range of housing options on such estates to encourage housing mix was useful, some of the assumptions underlying contemporary policies were questionable, especially those which problematise poverty concentration and seek the creation of more socially diverse populations through demolition and gentrification.

In some parts of Europe this concentration of low-income groups in deprived, stigmatised neighbourhoods is increasingly accompanied by voluntary segregation of the middle and upper class from the rest of the urban population through the development of gated communities. In countries with more social-democratic/corporatist welfare regimes, such as Germany or Sweden, gated estates are almost non-existent, but they are appearing in countries such as the UK with higher levels of residential segregation and liberalised housing systems. The sharpest recent growth in numbers of gated and guarded estates has, though, been observed in Eastern European cities particularly the capital cities of Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria, where gated estates constitute 40-70% of newly built housing units (Lewicka, 2007). The prevalence of gated communities in Eastern

Europe, which arises from a desire for social differentiation of more affluent from less affluent groups rather than from personal insecurity, is at the same time a consequence of the lack of social capital and social cohesion within neighbourhoods and a re-enforcer of new social conflicts.

Gated communities may form an element within wider gentrification processes which insert a more affluent population into low-income neighbourhoods, especially in inner cities. While this may increase social diversity within the wider neighbourhood, gated communities clearly involve a strong element of exclusion and segregation from immediately surrounding residents, what Smets and Salman (2008) describe as the 'escapist' response to the problems of urban segregation. There is evidence that where gentrification brings a more affluent population to low-income neighbourhoods there may be little interaction with the existing community regardless of the existence of gates and walls, with gentrifiers maintaining largely separate social relations and social worlds (Butler & Robson 2001), a point again returned to in the discussion of social mix policies.

3.3. Migration and ethnic diversity as challenges and opportunities to social cohesion

While the focus of this discussion of neighbourhood and social cohesion has been on housing systems, other processes are clearly relevant to neighbourhood dimensions of social cohesion, in particular the role of

migration and its implications for ethnic diversity within neighbourhoods. Two rather different issues for social cohesion are considered: how are ethnic minority migrants inserted into the housing system and neighbourhood, and what are implications of ethnic diversity for neighbourhood cohesion. Effective systems of housing provision for migrants may in themselves help to ameliorate potential problems of social cohesion arising from migration (Robinson et al 2007). Local housing policies in host countries have been identified both as a central issue for well-being and for the process of social, cultural, and economic integration of migrants, and as an indicator of structural capacity of receiving countries (CLIP, 2007). As outlined above, there is evidence (Arbaci 2007, CLIP 2007) of significant differences in the extent of ethnic segregation arising from the way in which housing systems operate in relation to minority ethnic migrants.

The growing ethnic and cultural diversity of neighbourhoods may be in itself perceived as evidence of social fragmentation with the potential to decrease social cohesion, but equally may be seen as an increase in urban richness (Dukes and Musterd, this Special Issue). Blokland (2003) in her analysis of 'urban bonds' in a Rotterdam neighbourhood suggested that neighbourhood-level social relations had declined because of a range of societal changes. Among these, increasing diversity, particularly ethnic diversity, may lead to conflict within neighbourhoods: "When

neighbourhood use is high among different groups in a single location, they claim the same space and symbolic definition of the meaning of this space. Groups may then develop antagonistic relationships” (ibid, p. 176). Conversely, diversity of neighbourhoods is considered as a form of capital, which attracts new pro-diversity residents to the area and helps keep the commercial infrastructure buoyant (van Eijk & Blokland, 2006). Looking at this issue from a different perspective, Dekker and Rowlands (2005) argued that expectations of neighbourhood relations in diverse neighbourhood need to be realistic and that rather than a single cohesive community, ethnically-mixed neighbourhoods typically form a series of overlapping communities, and that mutual respect and democratic inclusion rather than homogeneity is the future for social cohesion in such neighbourhoods.

3.4. Social mix policies

The issue of whether social homogeneity or heterogeneity facilitates urban social cohesion is of particular importance in view of the recent popularity of area-based urban policies aiming to increase the social mix of deprived urban neighbourhoods. Processes of social change that alter the social or ethnic mix of a neighbourhood may instigate feelings of greater insecurity or stress from the proximity of “the other” perceived as a threat and may undermine some aspects of social cohesion. Olaghero et al (2005) for example, looked at the effects of increasing diversity in neighbourhoods

in Dublin and Turin, where welfare regimes were characterised by weak welfare states with reliance on family and informal community-based welfare support. In both cases, a greater social diversity and changes in the local demographic strata lead to undermining the existing systems of support, neighbourhood bonds, and the attachment of residents to the neighbourhood.

Nevertheless, promotion of social mix and diversity in neighbourhoods has become a common objective of public policy, though this remains contentious (Arthurson, 2002). Some researchers support the arguments that area-based approaches which include the insertion of a higher income population is necessary to address the decline of neighbourhoods with concentrations of poverty and poor social reputations, and that an element of gentrification may have a positive role (Skifter Andersen, 1998). Certainly there has been a widespread adoption of such policies in Europe and elsewhere (Musterd and Andersson 2005). On the other hand, as noted above, it has been widely argued that, within a European context, there is limited evidence of the assumed positive neighbourhood effects upon which social mix policies are based whilst their negative impacts on social cohesion in deprived neighbourhoods are prevalent.

As suggested in the example above, the socio-demographic changes caused by area-based social mix approaches might undermine the

effectiveness of existing self-help networks, which are particularly important in countries where welfare regimes are characterised by weak welfare states and reliance on family and informal community-based welfare support. Last, but not least, the arrival of affluent newcomers might have negative impacts on existing emotional ties between members of the community and on the attachment of residents to the neighbourhood. Morrison (2003) emphasised the dual problems for social cohesion of exclusion of the neighbourhood and fragmentation within the neighbourhood: “Inhabitants feel cut off from wider society because of the neighbourhood in which they live. At the same time, they are cut off from other residents because of the fragmenting effects of the diversity within neighbourhoods.” (p.135)

3.5. The neighbourhood as an arena for action to promote social cohesion

As suggested above, the popularity of social mix policies is associated with an assumption that there are significant neighbourhood effects related to poverty concentration which generate and reinforce processes of social exclusion and disadvantage and constitute a barrier to a social cohesion. Conversely, the critique of such policies has been based in part on raising the question of whether there is evidence for the existence in the European countries of strong neighbourhood effects. There is evidence

for some moderate neighbourhood effects in studies in Europe (for example Musterd et al 2003, Atkinson & Kintrea 2001) but the extent and nature of these effect may be scale dependant (Andersson & Musterd, 2010), and there is not necessarily a direct relationship between mix of housing tenure and type and social mix (Musterd & Andersson 2005). Authors such as Ostendorf et al (2001) have questioned the relevance of neighbourhood effects as a basis for policy and argued that directly addressing poverty and inequality at societal level is a more relevant approach than policies at the neighbourhood level. Rowlands and Dekker (2006) similarly argued that in addressing the problems of large social housing estates policy actors should be working towards social cohesion by increasing resident participation in decision-making processes, and reducing inequalities at the societal level rather than focusing on changing housing and social mix. Kesteloot et al (2006) suggested that strong neighbourhood and family support and policy interventions at the neighbourhood level are not enough to overcome poverty and unemployment, and do not compensate for the lack of an effective welfare state. Musterd and Andersson (2005) also warn against an over-concentration on neighbourhood policies and argue for the need to address problems of social exclusions at a variety of scales.

Nevertheless, throughout Europe, the neighbourhood is a crucial focus for policies to counter social exclusion and foster social cohesion (Atkinson & Carmichael 2007). As Kennet and Forrest suggest: “the

neighbourhood has become strong and pervasive element in the European social project [...] and is seen as an essential building-block to achieve wider social cohesion and solidarity” (2006, p. 713). Moulaert et al (2000; 2010) put forward a powerful argument, drawing on case studies from across Europe, for the potential for grassroots action within the neighbourhood as a focus for social innovation to promote social cohesion (see also MacCallum et al 2009). They argue that in this way ‘the neighbourhood can save the city’, though usually not without a supportive framework of partnership with the state and other wider-scale, more formal institutions.

Conclusions and future research directions

As suggested in the introduction, while this paper has separately examined ‘housing’ and ‘neighbourhood’, these are both aspects of the ways in which housing systems have consequences from social cohesion in cities. While very significant differences in housing systems remain across Europe, an important influence on the impact of housing and neighbourhood on urban social cohesion has been the tendency for housing systems to move towards more neo-liberal policies involving privatisation and the withdrawal of the state. This has been associated in much existing research with growing inequalities and insecurities in housing. While this is true

throughout Europe it is, perhaps, most evident in the radically-transformed housing systems of Eastern Europe.

Firstly, housing was discussed as a crucial element of household consumption within the socio-economic dimension of social cohesion. The extreme form of exclusion *from* housing is homelessness, but living in inadequate or insecure housing conditions can also have exclusionary effects, as in the example of health discussed above. In considering how best to assist access to adequate housing, policymakers are faced with a housing system change which has made direct state provision and intervention more restricted and has led to a more fragmented and weakly-regulated housing system. More attention might be given in future research to understanding how households, especially those who are less advantaged, negotiate this kind of housing system. Methodologically, such research should stress the need to consider housing processes from the perspective of the user, rather than emphasizing systems of housing provision. What pathways do individuals and households take through their housing careers and what are people's expectations of tenure and type across the life course?

Secondly, housing was considered as a locator of the household within the neighbourhood. In addition to processes of housing system change, globalisation and higher levels of mobility also create housing and neighbourhood impacts through increased social and ethnic diversity. The relevance of neighbourhood to social cohesion, and particularly issues

raised by greater diversity, is complex. Comparative research suggests that the significance of neighbourhood in relation to cohesion, poverty and inequality varies considerably between countries, cities and sections of the population. In general, neighbourhood is less significant in countries with well-developed welfare states, while a number of studies have also concluded that support and action at the neighbourhood level cannot compensate for the absence of strong national systems of social support.

Growing diversity within neighbourhoods may have positive and negative consequences. Greater cultural and ethnic diversity can be a positive impetus to tolerance and social and economic dynamism. Moulaert et al. (2010) note that “despite (and perhaps thanks to) this diversity, many such neighbourhoods have expressed an extraordinary capacity to generate socially innovative and politically progressive initiatives” (p. 10). Homogeneity, especially when this is in the form of spatial concentrations of poverty and deprivation often associated with large-scale social housing, may be seen as dysfunctional and in many countries housing policies have sought to increase neighbourhood social diversity.

On the other hand, in some cases fragmentation within neighbourhoods and the weakening of neighbourhood bonds arise from greater social and ethnic diversity. There is a tension between people being cut off from the rest of society by neighbourhood homogeneity, and being cut off from their own neighbourhood by growing diversity and

fragmentation. More research is needed on the experience of neighbourhood, both in terms of its social dynamics and its built environment, in an increasingly mobile, diverse and fragmented society. Methodologies would emphasise the need to look at neighbourhood in a dynamic way as populations move into and through neighbourhoods and housing stocks.

Social diversity and fragmentation may also be associated with new housing cultures created by those who are advantaged in the housing market, and with a view of housing as an investment vehicle. With this come new forms of housing consumption such as second home ownership, gentrification, and gated communities. Future research should include a focus on those who are advantaged in the housing system and their impact on localities and neighbourhoods and on the less-advantaged.

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