

Cohesive Vienna? Features and dynamics of socio-spatial segregation in Vienna (Austria)

Gerhard Hatz

Dept. of Geography and Regional Research, University of Vienna, Universitaetsstrasse 7, 1010 Vienna, Austria, tel.: +43 1 427748631, E-mail: gerhard.hatz@univie.ac.at

Post-modern restructuring of urban societies, as it is attributed to globalization and restructuring of labour, is often associated with a growth in intra-urban social disparity and even polarization (Sassen, 2001). Based upon the assumption developed by Sassen (2001), this polarisation is marked by the increase of a highly skilled labour force with high incomes that is tied to the global economy and a new and growing urban underclass that is low-skilled, low-paid or even unemployed, and who provide services for the highly-qualified and highly-paid workforce. It is argued that an increasing polarization of urban society is represented in its socio-spatial patterns. However, the concept of increasing polarization in cities of the North as coined by Sassen has been criticized in the context of European Cities (e.g. HAMNETT, 1998), respective studies reveal no empirical evidence for increasing socio-spatial polarization. In many European Cities the extent of socially and spatially orientated welfare state policies weakens social inequalities and segregation: Hence the study selects Vienna as an example for a European City and analyses the effects of Vienna's welfare policies on segregation and socio-spatial inequalities.

Like other European metropolitan areas Vienna has been affected by de-industrialization and migration. However, social integration and cohesion have a long tradition as a prime agenda of urban planning in Vienna as well. With about 220,000 public housing apartments, comprising one quarter of the entire housing stock in Vienna, the city ranks top, not only in Europe. A comprehensive study focuses on the restructuring of urban society and the related socio-spatial patterns in Vienna. The study applies the concepts and methods of social area analysis and factorial ecology not only to identify the socio-spatial patterns but also to test the contribution of the theoretical framework for identifying and explaining socio-spatial diversities and their dynamics in a post-modern society. In this context the social sustainability of Vienna's ambitious programs - the soft urban renewal program and the social housing program - for maintaining social cohesion and socially mixed urban neighbourhoods, is evaluated as well.

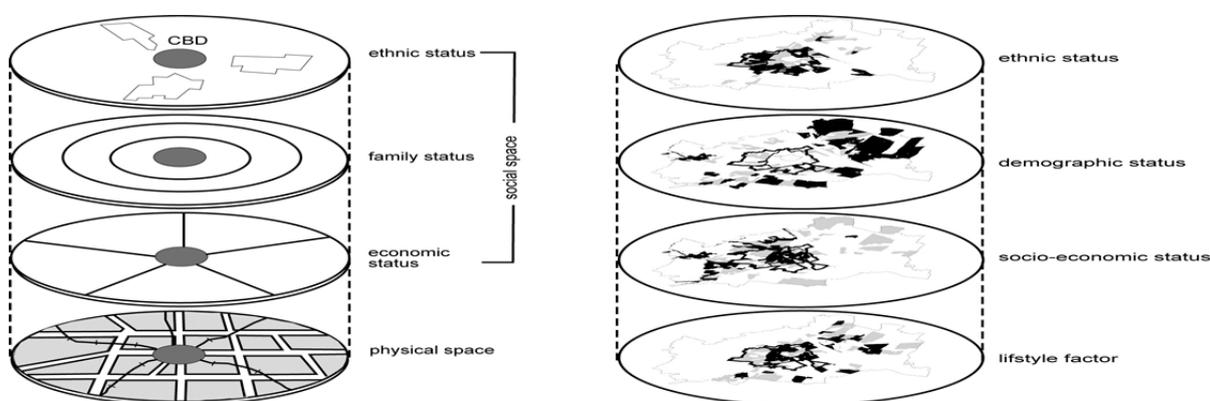


Figure1: Murdie (1969) model of social areas (left), model applied to Vienna (right)

Using census data from 2001 and statistics based on registers for 2011 at the level of census tracts, the first section of the study analyses the contextual framework of Vienna's welfare and housing policies. The second section provides indicators that characterize the socio-economic transformations and related restructuring processes of socio-economic segregation patterns. Using statistics on qualifications, indices of segregation and dissimilarity will allow a comparative evaluation of socio-economic segregation in Vienna. The third section refers to a multilevel approach and a cross-sectional study of segregation patterns by examining the basic sources of structural differences that shape and reshape the socio-spatial patterns in Vienna. On grounds of the notions of social area analysis, underlying dimensions in terms of contextual factors of the formation of socio-spatial patterns and neighbourhood changes are identified.

The results reveal the prevailing evidence of social and ethnic dimensions in the formation and explanation of the socio-spatial patterns as provided by the concepts and models of social area analysis. But according to the societal changes in the last decades the features of these dimensions have changed. A positive effect of planning strategies aimed at social sustainability is that spatial segregation is not increasing, but they cannot prevent 'strengthened structural spatial divisions among the quarters of the city with increased inequality among them...' (Marcuse & van Kempen, 2000, p.249). While upper class neighbourhoods are expanding, those who cannot afford living there are becoming increasingly trapped either in the "Migration City" or the "Welfare City" that have emerged within the city proper. Social area analysis and factorial ecology have proved to be an adequate and robust theoretical and methodological blueprint for analysing features and dynamics of segregation and socio-spatial inequalities.

Key References:

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