W13 - Housing and Minority Ethnic Groups

"IT'S ALL IN THE MIX" - IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION BY MEANS OF HOUSING POLICIES?

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Abstract: The role of housing policies in generating and shaping ethnic and social segregation has been highly underrated by urban and migration studies in Germany. Most studies imply that a combination of constraints (selective allocation mechanisms of the housing market) and individual preferences on behalf of the immigrants have led to the concentration of immigrant households in inner city districts or high-rise estates on the outskirts of cities. By contrast, many European countries such as Sweden, The Netherlands or Germany, try to intervene and pursue an ethnic and/ or social mix on the neighbourhood level, although scholars have underlined that it remains controversial whether and to what extent living among co-ethnics has a negative effect on integration. Nevertheless, there seems to be a shared political scepticism towards ethnic enclaves, a consensus in terms of assessment, but at the same time a divergence in implementation: Whereas some German cities have tried to prevent ethnic concentration by moving-in bans or quotas for foreigners in certain quarters, still maintained under the recent anti-discrimination legislation, other countries take a more subtle approach by targeting ethnic segregation indirectly by means of social, tenure or housing mix. The paper’s starting point and emphasis is the German case which it tries to take into a comparative perspective to illustrate to what extent mixing is related to national contexts. It tries to forecast future prospects for de-segregative housing policies against the background of demographic realities, the entrance of financial investors in the (German) housing market and the ongoing shrinkage of the social housing sector.

Introduction
The idea of a balanced ethnic mix, the creation of communities with a blend of residents from different housing tenures and income levels, is of common concern for contemporary housing and planning policies in many European countries. According to its proponents, social and ethnic mix policies aim to stimulate social mobility and social integration, often within a wider attempt of urban regeneration. Whereas countries like Germany are looking back at a long tradition of desegregative housing policies, in others the fear of (Muslim) “parallel societies” following 9/11 has put the topic onto the agenda. In the UK the discussions following the disturbances in Oldham and Bradford and, more recently, about homegrown terrorism, have led to recommendations that future housing schemes should be ethnically mixed.
"For example, in France a recent law (...) forces each municipality to adjust the housing stock towards one that includes a certain share of social housing. The policy tries to avoid large concentrations of poorer households and, for that matter, immigrant households. Debates on mixed housing policies can also be found elsewhere, in Sweden, (…) the Netherlands, and Finland." (Musterd, 2005; p. 340) The interventions can vary from strategies regarding the housing stock (demolition, new construction or upgrading) to offering opportunities to remove or even dispersal policies (Veldboer & Kleinhans & Duyvendak, 2001) either explicitly aimed at immigrants or along socioeconomic lines and thereby implicitly targeting the poorer immigrant population.

Interestingly, in the German case, there is not only a high discrepancy between how segregation is judged by scholars on the one hand and practitioners or the general public on the other hand, but there is also an inconsistency between the high importance attached to mixing strategies by practitioners in both municipal administrations and the housing industry and its neglect in German research. The role of housing policies in generating and shaping ethnic and social segregation has been highly underrated by urban and migration studies in Germany. (Bürkner, 2002). Volker Eichener’s study from 1988 is no exception to this rule, although his rule of thumb „only 15 % foreign households per building“ is assumed to have influenced Germany’s housing associtaions for many years (Planerladen, 2005). Eichener tackles the question of allocation policies only recommendatorily which might be explained by the fact that at the time of his writing the inner city quarters with many different private landlords were the classic immigration quarters where naturally no mixing strategy was employed. Most academic work focuses on reasons for and processes of segregation (segregation as a dependent variable) or area affects (segregation as an independent variable) (Odermatt, 1997) but even in this respect a “veil of ignorance” dangles upon the topic (for an exception see Schönwälder, 2006). The lack of reliable census data might have contributed to this fact. However, this is no distinctive feature of the German situation: In a comprehensive review in 2005 Atkinson found very few studies that deal with the impacts of social, and one could add, ethnic mix (Atkinson, 2005).

**Ethnic segregation as a “social problem”**

A social constructionist perspective can be a valuable tool to take a look at how segregation is dealt with in the housing policies of different countries. This holds particularly true because one can get the impression “that the debates are most lively in countries and cities that show surprisingly low levels of spatial inequalities.” (Musterd, 2005; p. 340) This is certainly supported by the German case, where the avoidance of ethnic concentration entered the housing policy discourse at a time when the portion of people with a migratory background was still marginal. Already in 1974, the German Association of Cities demanded to „dissolve or prevent ghettos“ and to enable access for immigrant households to all quarters in order to encourage intercultural contacts (Alpheis, 1990; p. 149). This contradicts the assumption, that segregation or a social problem in general has to reach a certain degree before it is reacted on. A constructionist perspective can challenge some common sense assumptions wide-spread in the German public debate - which regard segregation automatically as a problem and the mix strategies as a “natural” rational problem-solving. In this paper, following Kemeny, constructionism is used as an analytical tool to tackle otherwise overlooked topics and not in order to produce “pure” constructionist explanations.
Over the past 30 years since the publication of Blumer’s „Social Problems as Collective Behavior“ constructionism has emerged as a leading perspective in the sociology of social problems. According to this view, social problems – in our case ethnic segregation - are not social phenomenons which are in themselves problematic, but the categorisation as problematic has to be actively constructed in a social process of definition. (Groenemeyer, 2003) “Constructionism resists the ‘essentialist’ assumption that these problems have objective and identifiable foundations. Social problems are constructed on shifting sands of public rhetoric, coalition building, interest group lobbying and political expediency.” (Jacobs & Kemeny & Manzi, 2004; p. 6) Because of the sociology of knowledge claim that objects can only be captured by categories and definitions, some drew the conclusion that the construction of X means that X does not really exist and is “merely” constructed. Social problems in a sociology of knowledge understanding are, naturally, constructed, but these constructions have far-reaching consequences, as policies, interventions and controls are build upon them. (Groenemeyer, 2003)

Edley tries to shed light on the debate by differentiating between ontology and epistemology:

[A] constructionist might point out that Nottingham is a city by virtue of a text (i.e. by royal decree) and that its boundaries - where it begins and ends - are also a matter for negotiation and agreement. The argument is not, therefore, that Nottingham doesn't really exist, but that it does so as a socially constructed reality. (Edley, 2001 found in Burr, 2003; p. 92f)

According to Kemeny, the debates on how to study social problems passed housing studies by, almost entirely unnoticed. (Kemeny, 2004) The development of the field of “housing studies” in the UK was, according to Jacobs, Kemeny and Manzi, dominated by a strong presumption that its primary task was to aid policy prescription. The authors explain this outcome by the lack of enthusiasm from funding bodies for theoretical innovation in favour of evidence based policy analysis. (Jacobs & Kemeny & Manzi, 2004) What Arthurson states about the anglophone research is also the case in Germany:

(...)[A] large amount of the research funded on specific housing policies, including social mix, seeks to inform policy makers in their practices and to answer the related question of "what works". Important as this policy focused research is, such an approach does not pay attention to questions of the "why" and "how" particular policies emerge, nor does it scrutinise the policy objectives. (Arthurson, 2005; p. 521)

On the one hand, policy-oriented research ensures that research is up-to-date and close to the practical concerns of policy-makers. On the other hand, the resulting research product is often methodologically conservative and generally reactive to the professional housing lobby which limits the potential to pursue a critical line of enquiry. (Jacobs & Manzi, 2000) That political processes not only solve problems, but also create them, is easily forgotten in policy analyses. As a contrast, a path informed by the sociology of knowledge is based on the premise that “political strategies cannot be de-coded as natural responses to objective problem contexts, power relations or constraints on action, but rather must be seen as operationalized interpretations of these elements”. (Hofmann, 1995; p. 128) The following is to illustrate what kind of different concepts to establish ethnic diversity at a neighbourhood level exist and the arguments to justify them.

**Mixing strategies in comparison**

“A clear problem for those who have consistently asked for more socially diverse communities as the basis for sustainability and social equity is that this position has relied on an intuitive rather than explicit evidence-base.” (Atkinson, 2005; 27) The concepts of cohesion, stability and balance remain unspecific in all countries. In Germany, for example, the Federal Building Code...
requires land use plans to “prevent population imbalances”. The Housing Support Law from 2002 also clearly embodies this philosophy: Article 6 states the obligation to “create and maintain socially stable inhabitant structures”. These somewhat vague concepts are implemented differently by municipalities as German cities exercise a considerable degree of autonomy when it comes to housing policies. A number of questions which have been posed with regard to social mix remain unanswered for ethnic mixing, although many municipalities and housing organisations still rely on physical, geographical solutions to what they perceive as social problem:

- How can a unit of measurement be defined?
- What does “successful” (...) mix mean? (…)
- How much mix is mix?
- What level of environment should remain homogeneous and where should heterogeneity occur?
- To what extent will residents accept and tolerate mix? Do residents actually derive ‘social and cultural enrichment’ from a more diverse social environment?
- Do people who live near each other actually ‘mix’?
- How much mix, at what scale, has positive effects, and for whom?” (Vischer quoted in Sarkissian et al., 1990; p. 10f)

**Explicit ethnic mix**

Margo Trappenburg raises the question whether national or local governments should have the right to disperse members of minority groups on their territory so as to facilitate their integration or, alternatively, whether they should have the right to move non-immigrant, white middle-class families in order to reach the same objective (Trappenburg, 2003). In the German case the emphasis seems to be on the first strategy. This is easier in case of newly arrivals such as Ethnic Germans: The city of Münster for example has introduced a detailed counselling scheme to convince Ethnic Germans to move into non-segregated areas and to get involved with local organisations according to their own interests and hobbies. This is however not a typical solution: the goal of mixing is hardly ever followed by advising immigrant households but by stricter allocation criteria which can’t be influenced by the households concerned.

Trappenburg discusses several possible motives for an ethnic mixing policy. The first is sharing the burden of immigration: “It seems only fair for rich and middle-class families to share the burden that low-income families have been carrying for so long.” However, the burden-sharing argument sounds disrespectful when trying to rephrase it to address minorities themselves: Look members of the Turkish (Moroccan) minority group (…), you cannot all choose to live in area x of city A, surrounded by your fellow Arabs. That would not be fair to the original residents of area x. They have put up with quite a lot of you already, and we think the residents of area y in city B have had a relatively easy time so far. Why don’t you apply for housing in B, preferably in area y” (Trappenburg, 2003; p. 300f)

In addition, at least in the German case, ethnic mixing policies usually do not effect affluent or middle-class households – in fact these are the groups that live in the most homogeneous neighbourhoods.

The dispersal of refugees and Ethnic Germans (repatriates from the former Soviet Union) across the German Bundesländer is indeed fuelled by the argument of burdensharing. In Sweden the similarly motivated “Whole-of Sweden” policy which spread all newly arrived immigrants over the country to avoid concentration in major cities kept on for ten years but the results were not as long-lasting as was expected. After 1995 immigrants could decide for themselves where they
wanted to live and as a result, more refugees moved to Stockholm and other cities. (Veldboer & Kleinhans & Duyvendak, 2001)

Proponents of mixed neighbourhoods see segregation as a major obstacle for equal opportunities for children because residential segregation goes hand in hand with school segregation. (Trappenburg, 2003) In the German case, school segregation is even stronger than residential segregation, a) because in many city quarters in the younger age group there are relatively more children with an immigrant background than without and b) when it comes to enrolling their children for a primary school “white flight” is particularly obvious. This phenomenon can also be observed in those lively inner city quarters with a high portion of immigrants and many young alternative academics. In fear of worse opportunities for their children many of those who used to enjoy their neighbourhoods multicultural flair move to another neighbourhood to avoid local primary schools where the majority of the children does not speak German as their first language.

A further argument in favour of ethnic mixing is about protecting national culture. Trappenburg poses the question provocatively “Many political theorists seem to think that members of minority groups should have the right to preserve their culture. Should not the members of majority cultures in principle enjoy the same right?” (Trappenburg, 2003; p. 302). Indeed, this line of argumentation is often found in the German debate when it comes to the individual human rights part of Western culture. Advocates of ethnic mixing point to the allegedly high social control in quarters where a high share of Muslim population is said to impair the residents’ integration into the wider society. This argument illuminates the weakness of the term “stability” which is often used to imply “integration” in the housing policy debate and also in official concepts: Blasius and Friedrichs have shown that the rejection of deviant behaviour is stronger among Turkish residents (Friedrichs & Blasius, 2001). So one might expect stability for the neighbourhood. At the same time the community cohesion – also a generally positive concept – is feared to foster illiberal and non-integrative behaviour on behalf of the immigrants.

The rather unspecific national guidelines have been implemented differently in German municipalities. At a local level there are examples like the cities of Munich and Berlin that – in the past - used to operate a moving-in ban for legal aliens in some districts - a concept which had been discussed from the 70s onwards in different cities. In the case of Berlin, where the ban lasted for 15 years, it affected most of all immigrants and refugees from Eastern Europe, Lebanon, Palestine, Iran, Vietnam and Poland whereas citizens from countries of the European Community and associated countries were exempted as well as those immigrants with an unrestricted residence permit. In 1990 the ban was lifted due to legal reasons and its sheer impracticability. (Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Umweltschutz und Technologie Berlin, 1995). Berlin also tried to implement more subtle measures such as rent subsidies for potential German residents in polarized areas and the demand towards the non-profit housing associations to open at least 10, later 15 percent of their stock to foreign households, albeit unsuccessfully. (John, 2004).

The city of Frankfurt has been operating an agreement between the municipality and the social landlords since 1974 which had to be adjusted to the demographic realities a couple of times since then. In its latest form it states that 30% of the social housing stock is to be rented to foreigners, 15% to those living on social benefits, 10% Ethnic Germans (“Aussiedler”) and 25% dwellers from the quarter in question. (Bartelheimer, 1998) But, despite their appearance, quotas are neither scientific nor realistic. People don’t react on numbers but because of personal perception. East Germany with its xenophobia without foreigners is a case in point. Ideas about
community cohesion and stability should not make the mistake to assume that nationality is a reliable guide to people’s identities or relations with the rest of the society. Moreover, not all quarters with a high share of immigrant residents are problematic or unstable. Even the housing industry admits that in some quarters its the immigrants’ families with their comparatively intact family structures and networks that stabilise the neighbourhood. (GdW, 1998)

In addition, there are examples, where quotas were of no use because German households simply rejected to move into the newly erected dwellings in a neighbourhood densely populated by immigrants (Bartelheimer, 1998). Something similar happened in Rinkeby, the most “foreign” part of Stockholm when the local housing corporation determined a maximum quota for newly arriving immigrants. Because the local population was unwilling to cooperate the goals were not achieved. (Veldboer & Kleinhans & Duyvendak, 2001). In Birmingham, between 1969 and 1975, a dispersal policy was implemented in response to pressure from white tenants, to ensure that in future allocations black households would be separated by at least five white tenancies. To achieve this goal, however, “dispersal would have had to offer black tenants privileged access to the better parts of the housing stock, a strategy that local politicians would not have entertained.” (Harrison, 2005. 88). In general, however, studies of segregation seeing any concentration of non-white groups as negative, have carried little weight in the UK. In a submission to the Government’s Commission on Integration and Cohesion, the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) called for

“realistic objectives for community cohesion that recognise that most people want to live in neighbourhoods with people like themselves. There is a danger that policy focuses solely on creating more ethnically-mixed areas, whereas it might be better to try to break down concentrations of poverty and poor housing. Policy should aim at tolerance between people and groups, rather than having ambitious aims for levels of interaction in communities that are unlikely to be realised.” (CIH, 2/15/2007)

Current British interest in measurement of segregation “derives from a wish to measure Muslim assimilation in particular, and is potentially racist.” (Harrison, 2005; p. 92)

In addition to the municipalities’ allocation criteria there are German housing associations that employ their own strategies and (mostly) intransparent quotas. In the past, the verdict “Only one immigrant household per entrance” was quite widespread. In the face of demographic reality, however, these tipping points show their arbitrariness: It is obsolete to claim that German dwellers will move out if the proportion of immigrants reaches more than 15 % in a district when the city’s proportion of immigrants is already higher than that. The social housing stock usually takes the city’s share of immigrants as an orientation which is neither theoretically nor empirically sound. (Alpheis, 1990) A survey conducted by the Planerladen in 2006 highlights on the one hand, the great insecurity of the housing industry in dealing with this matter as shown in many differing allocation strategies, and on the other hand, the unwillingness to change or discuss their own policies. (Planerladen, 2006)

Despite this insecurity in municipalities and housing corporations the ideal of ethnic and social mixing is deeply entrenched: Lobby groups managed to change the original draft of the Anti-Discrimination Legislation in 2006 in so far as it is still possible to limit the access to some neighbourhoods in order to “stabilise” quarters. When letting homes, a different treatment with regard to creating and maintaining socially stable inhabitant structures and balanced settlement structures as well as well-balanced economic, social and cultural conditions is permitted. (§ 19.3 AGG). In the debate, the riots in French banlieus – often interpreted as a local “clash of
civilization” and a “natural” consequence of ethnic segregation – were often taken as an example for the consequences of withdrawal from mixing strategies (for an example see Ridinger in Schader Foundation et al., 2006).

Admittedly, the mixing paradigm is only one part of the story, particularly when it comes to the interest of the housing lobby. Firstly, few landlords would adhere to quotas if there was not enough demand for their homes. Secondly, community cohesion and social integration, often used synonymously, need not be the same: Some housing associations are in favour of ethnically homogeneous colonies at a small scale. In the past, the housing managers of the 6,000 homes belonging to the Thyssen company allocated housing to different “ethnic” groups in different quarters. (Waltz, 2005). In fear of tensions between the neighbours, a mix of many different ethnic groups is avoided. (Planerladen, 2006). However, this mix of many different origins is indeed the reality in most of Germany’s segregated neighbourhoods – and not the concentration of one group as it is often implied in the public debate. (Schönwälder, 2006; p. 22). To sum up, Germany does have mixed neighbourhoods but this is often overlooked due to an ethnocentric view which only draws the line between foreign and German, “us” and “them”.

**Ethnic by means of social mix**

Whereas explicit ethnic mixing strategies seem to be common sense among many German practitioners a constructionist, comparative look at other countries’ practices is illustrative. The degree to which “cultural difference” is promoted as the dominant factor of social relations differs. (Bürkner, 2001). When the author of this paper presented the German strategies to a Danish audience involved with their government’s “anti-ghetto”-policy she was asked whether quotas for immigrants would not mean legalising discrimination. In fact, in the Danish programme to fight ghettoisation only social indicators, not cultural or “ethnic” ones are drawn upon. Nevertheless, the underlying assumptions for the programme such as “growing up in these [“ghetto”] areas typically results in poor Danish skills (…) and failing integration in society” and the fear that “these neighbourhoods contain the germ of the development of parallel societies” – interestingly, the latter being a very prominent catchphrase in the German discourse as well – mark immigrants as a main target group. (Ministeriet for Flygtninge, Invandrere og Integration, 2005; p. 7).

In the mid-eighties, Sweden also followed large-scale restructuring projects in order to attract more middle and higher income households to settle in polarised areas. “Later research showed that the main effect was that social problems became relocated, but not solved.” (Veldboer & Kleinhans & Duyvendak, 2001; p. 3). In the Netherlands the Major Cities Policy also promoted the diversification of the population on the neighbourhood level by eliminating cheap rental homes and rebuilding more expensive houses instead. It was argued that the attracted new income groups could serve as a “role model” to weaker groups. Research shows, however, that mixing mostly does not lead to intermingling. Even when physical distances are small, social distances are still clear. (Veldboer & Kleinhans & Duyvendak, 2001). Studies in the UK have also shown that mixed tenure in neighbourhoods does not increase the contacts between homeowners and renters. To generate greater levels of interaction it has been recommended to mix tenures on a street level. (Atkinson, 2005). Moreover, an early British attempt at tenure mix in council housing, the introduction of the “Right to Buy”, had the negative side effect of residualisation of the remaining housing stock. (Kleinhans, 2004).
Advocates of tenure mix point out, that a mix of housing types and costs permits residents to stay within their own area even though their housing requirements change. (Sarkissian et al., 1990). This could support neighbourhood cohesion as a high residential mobility is seen to threaten social ties. (Schader Foundation et al., 2005). There is, however, a great ambiguity in the question of fluctuation: Some regard it as a symptom of the low attractiveness of an area, a condition for a lack of identification and responsibility for the neighbourhood, as reason for and consequence of the neighbourhood’s marginalisation. This line of argument can be found in the German and Swedish discourses on distressed neighbourhoods (Andersson & Brama, 2004) A contrary approach is taken by the Danish programme to fight “ghettoisation” which was launched in 2005: “A vital element in the action to prevent ghettoisation is mixed forms of ownership of the dwellings, which may contribute to a fairly rapid shift to a more varied mix of residents (…)”. (Ministeriet for Flygtninge, 2005; p. 2). In this case, promoting higher resident turnover is high on the agenda.

**Future prospects for mixing policies in Germany**

It can be expected, that future prospects for desegregative housing policies in Germany are impaired because of

- demographic change,
- changes in the housing market,
- consequences of globalisation.

Firstly, the main source of immigration to Germany is family reunion, and this automatically reinforces the geographic distribution already in place.

The second and perhaps more important reason is related to the structure of the housing market:

**Table 1: Structure of the rental market in different European countries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Private Renting</th>
<th>Social Renting</th>
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<td>B</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
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*Sources: BBR, 2006 & Housing Statistics in the European Union, 2003*

In Germany the rented sector holds a large share of 55 % of the national housing stock. The already small owner-occupied sector is even smaller in urban areas (Berlin = 13%; Frankfurt = 17%) and even more negligible for immigrants: Only 17 % of immigrants are homeowners. Germany has also one of the smallest sectors for social housing in Europe, which is, moreover, based on particular principles in comparison with how social housing is defined in other European countries. First of all, the past years have seen the development from a “universalistic” approach of providing decent housing for the general public towards a more “targeted” approach
of limiting access in social rented housing to the socio-economically weaker parts of society. As
immigrant households remain more vulnerable and face greater difficulties on the market relatively more households rely on the social sector, for example 18% of Turks and 25% of immigrants from the former Yugoslavia. (Will, 2003).

In addition, the concept of the social landlord in Germany differs from the way it is understood elsewhere, as it is not limited to those dwellings managed by non-profit housing organisations. Social rented housing in Germany is defined in terms of supply subsidies and rent regulation. The subsidised dwellings are released from their status between 20 to 40 years after construction. Therefore, as opposed to other European countries, the number of social housing units has been decreasing at a steady rate over the past decades, nowadays covering only 7% of the housing stock. (BBR, 2006). This is important for the topic of de-segregative housing policies because the municipalities exercise allocation rights only in this segment. So what has been said about de-segregative strategies most of all applies to this segment and additionally but to a lesser degree to the stock owned by municipalities outside the social sector which makes up around 4% in West Germany (BBR, 2006). The more housing units are released from the social sector and, consequently, the smaller the supply, the higher the social and thereby ethnic segregation in the remaining stock will be. To put it in numbers: In 1980 in Germany there were 4 Million social housing units and 1 Million unemployed people, nowadays there are almost 4 Million unemployed but only 1 Million social housing units left. (Häußermann, 2005).

Thirdly, consequences of globalisation have further impaired the steering capacities of German municipalities: The past years have seen the entrance of financial investors into the German real estate market. About 650 000 housing units have been sold in the past years. It can be expected that for the new owners cashflow generation is more important than social aspects. Some municipalities already report that the new owners have withdrawn from cooperation platforms in urban renewal programmes. According to some municipalities, the new owners follow two opposing strategies, which could both fuel social and thereby ethnic segregation: They are either prone to “cherry-picking” – e.g. highly selective in choosing to whom to rent their dwellings. As a consequence households with a weak position on the market will be filtered into other quarters. The second strategy is different: In some privatised housing, the new owners reportedly are trying to attract households who live on benefits because in their case one is sure to receive the rent from the state. Needless to say that this will fuel social segregation.

The deep rift on the question whether segregation impairs integration or whether ethnic mix is a viable concept that divides social scientists from municipalities and the housing industry (Planerladen, 2005) can be illustrated by a short digression on a project called “Immigrants in the City”, a cooperation which the Schader Foundation, the German Association of Cities, the German Head Federation of Housing Associations and two further research institutes conducted in partnership between January 2004 and September 2006. As part of the project an Expert Forum of ten high-ranking practitioners from local administrations, the housing industry and academics developed “Recommendations for Urban Integration Policy”. Those were passed on to a Practice Network of eight major German cities willing to develop their own measures/strategies on the basis of these recommendations. Interestingly, the recommendations themselves did not receive as much attention compared to what was originally intended to be their premise: instead of trying to alter the spatial distribution of residents, the Expert Forum had argued, municipalities should try to solve social problems by targeting them directly with area-based initiatives in the
respective quarters. The catchphrase “Integration despite Segregation” was to express that integration should be and indeed could be possible despite the existence of segregated quarters.

The project, consequently, was confronted with a number of sometimes strong reactions, particularly from the housing industry that in one case went as far as withdrawing from the cooperation with the municipality on this project. (Höbel et al., 2007).

The negative reactions can be grouped as follows:

- Misunderstanding by municipal actors wrongly assuming that the project wants to actively promote segregation.
- Disagreement in those municipalities that still regard ethnic and social mix as feasible due to their balanced housing market.
- Scepticism from those municipal actors and the general public who regard the acceptance of ethnic colonies as a retreat from political responsibility, and, finally,
- A consent on the loss of steering capacities brought about by demographic change, the structure of immigration to Germany, changes on the housing market and the loss of allocation rights, but a general unwillingness to discuss the consequences publicly.

The accompanying research showed that some municipalities and housing providers were particularly interested in the measurement of “tipping points” or the social-engineering of “ideal” compositions of neighbourhoods in ethnic terms – something the project could not provide.

Conclusion

The traditions and institutions of different welfare state regimes offer very different conditions for agenda setting, different interpretations for what is to be an official responsibility and the role of the state as recipient of claims-making-activities. Different moral infrastructures, developments of conceptions of what is right, and sensitivity for problems are just as important as different believes in the possibilities of social engineering. (Groenemeyer, 2003). In a comparative constructionist perspective it becomes apparent, that, on the one hand, there are major similarities in agenda setting and problem definition across the European countries, while at the same time there are marked differences. Apparently, societies are confronted with the same challenges, leading to similar interpretations and definitions of problems. On the other hand, it depends on the institutional structure, and specific cultures of construction how political actors react. So there seems to be a support for both convergence and path-dependency.

"Future research would benefit by commencing from an understanding of the historical basis of (...) mix strategies and the different conceptions of the term." (Arthurson, 2005; p. 522). The interrelation of how integration is perceived in the field of housing and planning and how this relates to the general concept of integration and a general understanding of diversity and social cohesion remains an interesting field of research.
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