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De la ségrégation à la familiarité : l'agrégation réhabilitée?

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From Segregation towards Familiarity: Rehabilitated Aggregation ?

This paper aims to question the idea of spatial justice, taking as departure point the assessment of the shortcomings inherent in the “mixing” paradigm as a principal of socio-spatial justice, from both a theoretical and practical point of view. There are two major reasons for this: the search for self-containment is a fundamental given of urban living, which affects privileged populations (“The *grande bourgeoisie* prefers to live among its own kind,” as Michel Pinçon concluded in 1996) as much as the working class (the *respectables* flee the *roughs* in the working-class neighborhoods of London in the 1950's, as studied by Peter Willmott and Michael Young) and migrants. Consequently and especially in France, the politics of “mixing” fostered support for territorial policies of which one result was the destruction of living quarters and working-class neighborhoods in the old centers, as well as the sidelining of disadvantaged populations within social housing structures.

Boosted by this assessment, must all battles against segregative phenomena be abandoned? It goes without saying that they must not be. But it is certainly appropriate to question anew the premise which conflates any division of social space with segregation. Taking field studies of vulnerable inhabitants within the city of Marseille as a basis, we endeavor to demonstrate that familiarity constitutes a condition of urban citizenship, and consequently, of spatial justice. Here the notion of spatial injustice implies first and foremost the feeling of having been “sidelined,” as expressed by the study's subjects.

There exists therefore a dimension of segregation which is precisely *aggregative* but which is obscured by such theories as the “end of cities” and the “problem of the suburbs.” In France, the adolescent's attachment to his “housing estate” is the first sign of this. This attachment, repeatedly observed, announces itself as social belonging, daily sociability, and exchange (Lepoutre, 2001, Amrani et Beaud, 2004). Our field work, carried out within the working-class center of Marseille, similarly bears witness to a feeling expressed by poor urban dwellers of belonging to the city, which fits into the mode of mutual acquaintanceship. Such observations, coupled with others, call for a *rehabilitation of aggregation*, already put forward ten years ago by Henri Raymond (1996); not in the way of justifying segregation as urban policy, but in the way of acknowledging how aggregation is a central process in group organization within the city and how it gives rise to a process of territorialization.

We will conclude by questioning the boundaries between familiarity, aggregation and segregation. Under what conditions may the city remain a space of diversity, and at what point does it disappear? Here the notions of accessibility on the one hand, and anonymity on the other, must be reintroduced. Because it is a space encompassing at once otherness, movement, and working-class haven, the inner city of Marseille seems to represent an ideal model as a form of spatial justice, understood as a shared feeling of “participating.” The ongoing extensive rehabilitation of this city—a process which time and again has been presented through the “mixing” lens—has undeniably endangered it.