The Poverty of Theory in Finnish Segregation Research

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Abstract

The uneven distribution and differentiation of demographic groups in neighbourhoods – sometimes called segregation – are popular topics of research among Finnish urban scholars. However, Finnish segregation research builds on certain unwarranted and as of yet unquestioned assumptions about the process of segregation. This article identifies three such assumptions. First, the consumer choice model for segregation rests on the assumption that segregation is a "natural" phenomenon, brought on by consumer choices in housing. Second, the theory underpinning so-called neighbourhood effects assumes that less well-off groups are to blame for their situation. Third, some ethnic segregation researchers assume that the U.S. based white flight thesis can be uncritically transferred to the Finnish context. After identifying these assumptions this article discusses why they are unwarranted. Primarily, this has to do with the neglect of structural, political economic reasons for segregation such as uneven development of the built environment. This neglect has resulted in circular reasoning about the causes and effects of segregation. Because of the assumptions made by Finnish urban scholars, segregation research has the risk of unintentionally stigmatizing neighbourhoods and blaming low income people and ethnic minorities for segregation. To close, alternative approaches to analysing and understanding segregation in Finland are outlined.

KEYWORDS: Finland, housing preferences, neighbourhood effects, segregation, white flight

Introduction

Segregation or "the degree to which two or more groups live separately from one another, in different parts of the urban environment" (Massey & Denton 1988, 282) has become a popular topic of research among Finnish urban scholars during the past two decades. Despite its contemporary popularity, studying segregation is by no means a novel topic in Finland. One of the earliest studies is Heikki Waris's (1932) *Työläisyhteiskunnan synty Pitkänsillan pohjoispuolelle*. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, Helsinki was very clearly divided. The bourgeoisie lived in the south of the city, while a working class community had emerged on the north side. It was this division and the working class community in particular that Waris studied in his seminal piece of urban research. During the second half of the 20th century

the segregation of socio-economic groups began to alleviate. Due to the development of a universalistic welfare state, income redistribution and active land and housing policies, by the year 1990 Helsinki was socially the least segregated it has been during its modern history. (Lankinen 1997.) However, during the late nineties and thereafter, Finnish scholars have again reported on moderate levels of social differentiation in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area (HMA).

The works of Kortteinen, Vaattovaara and their colleagues are examples of such reports and their studies span the better part of the last two decades (see for example Kauppinen, Kortteinen & Vaattovaara 2009; Kortteinen, Lankinen & Vaattovaara 1999; Kortteinen, Tuominen & Vaattovaara 2005; Kortteinen & Vaattovaara 2000; Vaattovaara & Kortteinen 2007; Vaattovaara & Kortteinen 2012). One of the main claims of these contemporary scholars is that a new type of spatial differentiation can be identified in the HMA during the 1990s. Neighbourhoods had begun to differentiate according to levels of education, income and employment. In 1999 Kortteinen and others wrote that "it appears that the population [of HMA] has differentiated into distinct areas based on their housing preferences and according to educational levels" (Kortteinen, Lankinen & Vaattovaara 1999, 420). This differentiation, according to Vaattovaara and Kortteinen, has since then become a permanent feature of the city to such an extent that we can now talk about segregation and that segregation is slowly intensifying (Vaattovaara & Kortteinen 2012, 61). Vaattovaara and Kortteinen distinguish segregation as "negative areal differentiation" (ibid.). This understanding of segregation has permeated much of the work on the topic in Finland. Differentiation is often understood as a self-perpetuating cycle of negative events that leads to further negative differentiation, that is to say, segregation. Accordingly, in this article I use "Finnish segregation research" rather broadly to denote a variety of studies that explore either social and ethnic differentiation or segregation or both.

A defining component of the approach adopted by Finnish segregation research is the role of housing preferences and consumer choice. According to this consumer choice approach, because of the concentration of social deprivation and deteriorating apartment blocks, some neighbourhoods no longer meet the preferences of the educated, higher income groups and families with children who decide to move elsewhere, exacerbating segregation. As Vaattovaara and Kortteinen write, "there is empirical evidence that the native population[1] has begun to avoid socioeconomically weak and ethnically stigmatized neighbourhoods" (Vaattovaara & Kortteinen 2012, 64, translation MH). This is an important finding and points to the urgency of studying segregation in Finland. However, there is a problem with the analysis of segregation in contemporary research. The problem with Finnish segregation research is that it rarely asks why neighbourhoods segregate. It simply takes for granted that neighbourhoods are different and – through what I call circular reasoning – assumes that these differences are exacerbated as a result of individual choices in areas such as housing and schools. In this article I turn the assumption around and argue that housing and school choices are

1 Native population translated from "kantaväestö". I have marked direct quotations translated from Finnish to English with "translation MH" in parenthesis for clarification. The translation of the texts of the Finnish segregation scholars has not always been easy as the use of concepts is occasionally ambiguous. I have tried to understand the arguments and translate them into English, not mechanically translating the Finnish expressions into English. In this article I discuss the dangers of ambiguous use of concepts and the poverty of terminology used in Finnish segregation research.

influenced by the inequalities in the housing stock and the school system. Therefore, to understand the processes of segregation we need to analyse the production of such inequalities in housing, schools and neighbourhoods by, for example, analysing the uneven development of the built environment, the practices of developers and municipal land and housing policies.

Neighbourhoods with low employment rates exist especially in the apartment block suburbs of Helsinki built during the 1960s and 1970s. Because of the low employment rates, Finnish segregation researchers argue that in recent years these neighbourhoods have witnessed signs of social deprivation and the neighbourhoods themselves now negatively affect residents' employment. (Vaattovaara & Kortteinen 2012, 63–64.) The consumer choice approach goes hand in hand with one of the principal assumptions of the so called neighbourhood effects paradigm, which is that neighbourhood background affects an individual's life chances (Slater 2013, 368). This neighbourhood effects assumption has gained modest interest in Finnish studies. Finnish neighbourhood effects research has largely concerned education; the differentiation of schools according to student population and its effects on students' learning (Bernelius 2011; 2013; Karisto & Montén 1996; Karvonen & Rahkonen 2002). Karisto and Montén (1996) and Karvonen and Rahkonen (2002) have investigated the effects of the neighbourhood on students' educational attitudes. Bernelius and Kauppinen (2011) and Bernelius (2013) develop the neighbourhood effects thesis to one of "school effects", and ask whether schools in disadvantaged neighbourhoods have effects first on students' educational performance and second on the housing choices of families who are concerned about the educational prospects for their children. In this article I discuss how, not only is circular reasoning again present in neighbourhood effects studies, but how the approach too easily blames disadvantaged people for segregation.

The emergence of concentrations of ethnic minorities in neighbourhoods is another issue that has caused worries among a group of Finnish urban scholars. Vilkama, Vaattovaara and Dhalmann (2013) suggest that the presence of ethnic minorities in a neighbourhood may drive out and discourage so called native Finns from moving in, a phenomenon known from American literature as "white flight". In this article I discuss some of the theoretical and conceptual problems with Finnish ethnic segregation studies that have built on the "white flight" theory adopted from the American research tradition. I discuss the problems involved in such a transatlantic theory transfer. While there has been vibrant discussion about the methodology best suited for Finnish segregation research (see e.g. Bernelius & Kauppinen 2012) the theoretical assumptions underlying this research have not been thoroughly examined. This article begins to fill this research gap by identifying the assumptions and theories applied in the Finnish segregation studies. In what follows I analyse the adoption of the consumer choice model, the neighbourhood effects thesis and the transfer of the white flight theory.

Housing preferences and the consumer choice approach to segregation

Housing preferences are a popular topic of Finnish social science research, particularly amongst those interested in understanding segregation. In a study titled *Housing desires, social disorder and urban planning in the Helsinki region* Kortteinen, Tuominen and Vaattovaara (2005, 123) suggest that in the Helsinki region there exists what they call a "homogeneous culture of housing dreams" (translation MH). The suggestion is

based on the findings of a survey in which people were asked what type of building they would like to live in, what is their preferred tenure and where they would like to live (ibid., 122). Kortteinen and others found out that a great majority of respondents would like to be homeowners and live in detached housing close to nature. Based on this finding, they criticize Finnish urban planners for not accommodating housing dreams but instead planning neighbourhoods with high population densities and high rise buildings which, they suggest, drives out higher income populations and eventually leads to segregation (ibid., 129–131). There are a number of issues with this approach to segregation.

Firstly, there is a methodological problem with the consumer choice approach that needs to be briefly pointed out in order to make sense of the theoretical issue. Lapintie (2010) has paid attention to "the obscurity of housing dreams" and criticized asking dream-world questions that forget that rational housing choices are made under budget constraints and affected by available housing stock. Dream-world questions, Lapintie argues, lure respondents into "contra-factual" thinking, where they consider all the alternative options for their current housing type and neighbourhood and imagine what these dream-world options feel like (Lapintie 2010, 44). Such a dream-world, then, is named by consumer choice scholars as a "homogeneous housing culture". As Kortteinen, Tuominen and Vaattovaara (2005, 131) write, "according to the data, a relatively homogenous housing culture seems to prevail within the population: regardless of their social standing or education, respondents prefer low-rise detached housing, quiet and peaceful surroundings and being close to the natural environment". Such surveys however neglect other needs of the residents. According to Lapintie, once we include questions about people's current living situation in the city, interviewees often emphasize the importance of services, use of public spaces and their hopes of living close to friends and relatives (ibid., 51–52). Lapintie's interviewees tended to favour urban life and their current housing type. People can simultaneously have dreams about housing and understand that those dreams are incompatible with their daily needs and realities. Researchers should be able to distinguish fantasies from housing needs, housing demand and effective demand.

In his thesis *Sosiaalinen eriytyminen Turun kaupunkiseudulla* Rasinkangas (2013, 69), seems to be aware of the criticism presented by Lapintie (2010), yet in his analysis of social differentiation in Turku he leans on the popular preference and choice model for interpretation. Rasinkangas writes that (italics added) "small rented apartments are concentrated in Turku, whereas families with children live in owner occupied houses in the neighbouring municipalities of Turku. The findings concerned *with the housing preferences* of people in Turku *show* that this trend most likely will continue in the future." (Rasinkangas 2013, 261.) Rasinkangas sees the fundamental problem in planning and writes that (italics added) "socially homogenous neighbourhoods in Turku are *not a result of housing preferences*, but a result of housing policy and town planning" (ibid.). Rasinkangas explains social differentiation referring to planning and the housing preferences of the highly educated, raising the question of the uneven development of the built environment only in passing (ibid., translation MH). I point this out as, despite the well-rounded approach in Rasinkangas's study, it is exemplary of the robustness of preference thinking in Finnish segregation studies which easily leads to ambiguities in explaining segregation as a result of consumer choices.

We now encounter the first theoretical problem with the consumer choice approach to segregation, which is that it places causal emphasis on

individual choices. Kortteinen, Tuominen and Vaattovaara (2005, 129) criticize Finnish urban planning for failing to understand "that peoples' thinking is culturally determined and that people make their [housing] choices based on the options available in the market place and how this shapes the very urban fabric" (translation MH). This idea of urbanization driven by individual, culturally determined choices recalls the classic accounts of the 1920s Chicago School ethnography combined with the consumer sovereignty ideas of neoclassical economics. According to the Chicago School proponents, the urban environment develops towards equilibrium like an organism and individuals and groups find and sort into their "natural" areas. As Park wrote in 1925:

> One of the incidents of the growth of the community is the social selection and segregation of the population, and the creation, on the one hand, of natural social groups, and on the other, of natural social areas. […]Such segregations of population take place upon the basis of language and of culture and upon the basis of race. […] Natural areas are the habitats of natural groups.
> (Park 1925, 8–11.)

The problem with applying the approach of the Chicago School and neoclassical economics to this issue and hence with some of the Finnish segregation research, is in assuming housing choices as a causal component of segregation without – except for blaming planners – asking why distinct types of houses are found in different areas in the first place. As we know from the rich urban studies literature, the production of the built environment is a complicated process affected by much more than planning – also economic resources, policies and politics. I suggest returning to the works of David Harvey (1985) and Neil Smith (1982) who show us that segregation is not a natural phenomenon but an uneven and politically produced development. It is hardly a result of peoples' choices to live in "natural areas that are the habitats of natural groups".

The second theoretical issue with the consumer choice approach is that it practices what I call circular reasoning. The assumption is that, if the qualities of a neighbourhood (e.g. housing and tenure types and social and ethnic composition) do not meet the preferences of the middle class, they move elsewhere, worsening the cycle of segregation. Kortteinen and Vaattovaara (2000) apply Hans Skifter Andersen's theory (1995; 1998) of a "process of succession and decay". Skifter Andersen explains the cycle of neighbourhood decay as follows:

> […] decay in a neighbourhood is a self-perpetuating process where simultaneous changes occur in the composition of the residents, the economic conditions of the properties, and in the physical conditions of the buildings themselves. The immigration of people with lower incomes to a neighbourhood leads to lower demand and limitations on rent, which results in less investments in maintenance, which causes physical deterioration, and which in turn accelerates the migration of people with higher incomes out of the areas followed by immigration of low-income groups - a process called succession. (Skifter Andersen 1998, 112–113.)

The challenge to this consumer choice approach and circular reasoning is that they too easily blame low-income people for segregation. Skifter Andersen's (1995; 1998) theory of the process of decay adopted by Finnish segregation scholars is an example as it explicitly blames the "low income population" for low property values and disinvestment. Kortteinen and Vaattovaara for one do not shy away from pointing out where Helsinki's neighbourhoods that have fallen into a process of decay exist as they write that "Eastern Helsinki has fallen into a vicious circle of underdevelopment where socio-economic deteriora-

tion of the population structure and declining desirability as a residential area seem to be feeding one another" (2000, 124). But what in fact is the cause and what is the effect here? Let us look at the order of events more closely; is there a cycle of self-perpetuating effects or is the disinvestment a cause for the deterioration of the neighbourhood which leads to a concentration of low income people?

As it pertains to the economics behind segregation, we can understand the production of the built environment in advanced capitalist societies as connected to what David Harvey (1985) has called a rhythmic process of "capitalist urbanization". That is, the formation of the built environment as the outcome of switching investment from production to the built environment as a solution to over-accumulated capital. Economic cycles and switching investment, not just housing demand, affect what type of housing is built and where. Investment in the built environment of production (like factories) and consumption (like housing) tend to be unequal. Preventing neighbourhoods from dilapidation requires repeated investments of labour and capital, yet often more is invested in those neighbourhoods with higher potential for profit and less in other places. Hence, some environments become neglected as better opportunities for investments with more potential arise. This leads to what Neil Smith has called the "'locational seesaw': the successive development, underdevelopment and redevelopment of given areas as capital jumps from one place to another" (1982, 151). In the case of residential neighbourhoods with less potential, the wealthy and middle classes leave together with investments. They are replaced by poorer residents who "can only afford to move in after a neighbourhood has been devalorized – after capital disinvestment and the departure of the wealthy and middle classes" (Slater, 2013, 377). As Tom Slater has aptly concluded:

> [s]tructural factors cause neighbourhood disinvestment and truncate the life chances of the poor, who become stuck in place owing to the exclusive nature of a city's highly competitive housing market. (ibid., 377).

Capitalist urbanization explains, how disinvestment takes place before the low income populations settle in, not after. This helps us in undoing the "cycle of effects" and move to an analysis of the development of the built environment as fundamental in causing segregation. I will look more closely at the relevance of the theory of capitalist urbanization for segregation in Finland later in the article. Now, let me turn to the second unwarranted assumption.

Neighbourhood effects and the precariousness of circular reasoning

One question that has received an overwhelming amount of attention from urban scholars during the past two decades is the question "[t]o what extent are an individual's future prospects influenced by neighbourhood background?" (Brännström 2005, 169). Urban scholars around the world have been so enthusiastic in exploring this question that we can talk about a neighbourhood effects school of thought. Research on neighbourhood effects is based on "the overarching assumption that 'where you live affects your life chances'" (Slater 2013, 368). Both scientific and political justifications can be put forth for proving the effect of the neighbourhood on an individual's life chances. Firstly, finding out the effects of neighbourhoods appears to simultaneously disclose inequalities between them. This knowledge can be used to promote social justice, which is obviously an important motive for doing research in social sciences. Secondly, policy makers need evidence-based research for their place-based policies. Hence, this type of research

with its apparent policy impact has become particularly popular at a time when universities and research institutions demand influential results from research. (Slater 2013.) This explains why we see today a "mad search for neighbourhood effects" (Massey 1998, 571) and why some say neighbourhood effects research has become a "cottage industry" in social sciences and acquired an analytical hegemony (Sampson et al. 2002; Slater 2013). Finnish scholars have also grown interested in the effects of neighbourhoods. Kauppinen, Kortteinen and Vaattovaara (2009) have investigated the effect of high unemployment neighbourhoods on residents' employment. Bernelius (2011; 2013) and Bernelius and Kauppinen (2012) follow the classical question of neighbourhood effects research; "do poor areas make their residents poorer" but focusing on the dynamics of segregation and education, they reformulate the question as "do schools in disadvantaged areas render students' educational outcomes weaker?" (Bernelius & Kauppinen 2012, 235.)

There are methodological, theoretical, and moral problems with neighbourhood effects research. Some of the methodological problems are well known to the Finnish neighbourhood effects scholars and include the lack of suitable data, problems of selection and the challenge of observing the actual process of how context affects the individual's outcomes (Bernelius & Kauppinen 2012, 232–234). However, the theoretical and the moral problems of neighbourhood effects research have not been recognized or discussed by Finnish urban scholars. The theoretical problem is the same as with the consumer choice explanation; neighbourhood effects research does not ask why neighbourhoods are different or why inequalities exist. Instead it simply takes for granted that neighbourhoods are different and concludes that they become even more different. Neighbourhood effects research rests on the unwarranted assumption that a socio-economically segregated low-income neighbourhood itself causes its deepening social deprivation and the decreasing life chances of its inhabitants. An example of such circular reasoning is found in Bernelius's study (2013), according to which social and ethnic segregation is causing schools to differentiate. The argument goes as follows: neighbourhood demographic affects the student composition of a school and it also affects school children's learning outcomes because there is a connection between the "student composition" (i.e. the socio-economic and ethnic make-up of student population) and individual learning outcomes and attitudes towards education; what she calls the "school effect" (Bernelius 2013, 129; 136). This steers families' school choices and according to Bernelius (ibid., 129) effects of the neighbourhood demographic on school choices occur most commonly in disadvantaged neighbourhoods where local schools are sought away from. According to her, choices then exacerbate and maintain the "self-perpetuating cycle of segregation" (Bernelius 2013, 103). (Translations MH.)

It is curious that scholars do not notice the precariousness of circular reasoning. Social scientists interested in, say, educational inequalities should be well aware how

> [u]nequal educational attainment needs to be considered as an offshoot of the unequal provision of public goods and unequal treatment by the state of the different areas. The degree of inequality between neighbourhoods with bad schools and good schools is not a property of the neighbourhood, but a property of the school system (Elliot et al. 2006 as referred to by Slater 2013).

This is a time in Finland when education is under heavy budget cuts and the retrenching welfare state is feared to lead to the unequal provision of public goods. Simply referring to an ambiguous

cycle of effects misses the underlying structural causes of urban inequalities.

The moral problem is connected to the theoretical problem; the explanation of the "cycle of effects" too readily blames underprivileged neighbourhoods, the poor and ethnic minorities for their predicament. For example, Vaattovaara and Kortteinen refer to their own study and generalize that (translation MH)

> studies show that the neighbourhood will prevent residents' employment if the unemployment rate in that neighbourhood rises to 13 percent. The negative effect of the neighbourhood's unemployment rate on individual's employment opportunities appears to function in the way that heavy drinking, smoking and other bad health behaviour are more common in the neighbourhoods with high unemployment rate (Vaattovaara & Kortteinen 2012, 64).

To claim such a wide generalization ("studies show") based on the results of an author's own research is questionable. Furthermore such a statement does nothing to unpack the reasons for unemployment – a big societal issue in Finland – but points the finger at underprivileged neighbourhoods and individuals with their drinking and smoking habits.

A similar risk runs in Bernelius's study (2013) where she finds that certain "characteristics of the student composition" (meaning disadvantaged children) affect other children's learning outcomes, whose parents choose to move out of the neighbourhood, aggravating segregation and bringing more disadvantaged children into the neighbourhood and school. Blaming the underprivileged, of course, is nothing new; we can find similar stigmatizing rhetoric for example in the infamous "culture-of-poverty" theory popularized by Oscar Lewis (1966). According to the culture of poverty theory, "the demographic context of poor neighbourhoods instils 'dysfunctional' norms, values and behaviours into individuals and triggers a cycle of social pathology and poverty that few residents escape" (Bauder 2002, 85 as quoted in Slater 2013, 378–379). Such accusations – "a veiled form of class antagonism" (Slater 2013, 379) – utterly disregard processes at work outside the neighbourhood.

Finnish neighbourhood effects scholars too readily dismiss the structural and social forces that create divisions between the poor and the rich and in the end only come to accuse underprivileged individuals. This is especially problematic at a time of labour market restructuring that is feared to cause increasing precariousness and long term unemployment. As Wacquant writes, it is at times when the state has "renounced its traditional missions of economic regulation and social protection" that such conditions are created "under which scholars could (mis)attribute to space disparities generated by the uneven retraction of public policies of provision" (Wacquant 2008, 284). Later in this article I put forth some alternative ways to investigate the structural causes of urban poverty and segregation as well as the way people in disadvantaged neighbourhoods experience and tackle hardship and inequality. But before that, let us turn to the third unwarranted assumption and its critical assessment.

"Native" flight, theoretical plight

The segregation of ethnic groups has surfaced as a topic of social science research in Finland. Vilkama asks (translation MH) "how have the selective migration of natives and those of immigrant background and the different rates of population growth affected ethnic differentiation of residential neighbourhoods in the HMA and how is dif-

ferentiation reflected in migration?" (2011, 56). Vilkama (ibid., 26) defines "selective migration" within a city or across municipal borders as the dissimilar migration of households with different demographic backgrounds. In some residential neighbourhoods there is a difference between in- and out-movers' social, economic and ethnic backgrounds. Vilkama writes that the

> processes and patterns of ethnic residential segregation will continue for as long as the levels of out-migration of the native population constantly exceeds the levels of in-migration and there is an influx of immigrants into those neighbourhoods. It seems likely that the reproduction of these migration flows will largely determine HMA's future development of ethnic residential segregation. (Ibid., 206.)

This is an important point and highlights the need to follow the process of segregation of ethnic groups closely now and in the future. However, there is theoretically an unwarranted assumption as to the reason of said processes and patterns of segregation.

To analyse the impact of immigration, Vilkama (2011) and Vilkama, Vaattovaara and Dhalmann (2013) apply a theoretical approach known as white flight, renaming it in the Finnish context as "native flight". The title of their article *Kantaväestön pakoa? Miksi maahanmuuttajakeskittymistä muutetaan pois?* is translated and reformulated into English by Vilkama, Vaattovaara and Dhalmann (2013) as *White flight? Why do people move out of immigrant-dense neighbourhoods?* However, a more exact translation would be *Native flight? Why do people move out of immigrant concentrations?* Their translation is revealing. First, it connects native Finns to white people. Second, it reveals their theoretical model. This is the theory of white flight developed in the United States to explain white Americans' aversion of black Americans in inner cities of large metropolises. The main tenets of this theory are explicit in the reasoning of the Finnish ethnic segregation scholars. They claim that selective migration is one of the major mechanisms leading to ethnic segregation.

The transfer of the theory of white flight to the Finnish context is problematic. First, the white flight theory was formulated to explain the process of white American's avoidance of black Americans in the mid-20th Century U.S. inner cities. The period between World War II and the 1970's, "the Short American Century" as Beauregard (2006) calls it, was marked by suburbanization and mass desertion of inner cities. Vast amounts of white Americans moved out of inner cities to live the suburban American Dream and to flee neighbourhoods that were seen as inferior and unwanted. White flight scholars wanted to understand this apparently race-induced migration and starting perhaps with the works of Thomas Schelling (1969; 1971), begun the search for the "tipping point"; that is how large a proportion of black people in a neighbourhood make white people begin to move out *en masse*? Why the neighbourhoods became unwanted by whites needs to be discussed in more detail. The racist category of black neighbourhoods as "inferior" was not born out of thin air.

Gotham (2000) has provided a sobering account of the origins of racial segregation in the U.S. cities. According to Gotham before the 1900s

> race- and class-mixed neighbourhoods and undifferentiated land uses dominated the spatial organization of residence in the city. With the rise of the modern real estate industry, local land developers and real estate firms worked to create racially segregated neighbourhoods through the use and enforcement of racially restrictive covenants. (Ibid., 617.)

These restrictive and exclusionary covenants were the outcome of contractual agreements made between neighbourhood associations and property owners and prohibited the sale and lease of land or property to black Americans. The covenants "racialized" urban space and "helped to nurture and reinforce emerging racial stereotypes that identified black living space and culture with deteriorating neighbourhoods and dilapidating housing." (Ibid., 618.) This process was further enforced with what is known as "redlining" which involves a plethora of practices of denying services such as banking, insurance and housing from residents of specific neighbourhoods on the basis of race, income, status, or class (Shantz 2013). White Americans' avoidance of black neighbourhoods then became institutionally enforced racism. Neighbourhood associations and property owners agreed on and propagated the idea that black peoples' presence would drive down the exchange value of real estate.

All these conditions and causes for white flight in the United States are absent in Finland. The heterogeneous working class and mixed income neighbourhoods of the HMA, and other European metropolises for that matter, are not the systematically and ethnically bound territories of relegation of the United States. According to Wacquant (2008) neighbourhoods of European metropolises are moderately segregated at most and their populations are not demographically homogeneous, culturally united nor do they struggle for recognition as communities bound by a shared ethnicity. As Wacquant writes,

> on the contrary, the demands of their residents are fundamentally social, having to do not with difference or "diversity" but equality in treatment by or access to the police, the school system, housing, health care and, above all, employment. They pertain to the sphere of citizenship and not that of ethnicity (whether defined on a national, linguistic or confessional basis). (Ibid., 284.)

Applying the white flight theory is based on the unwarranted assumption that segregation in Finland follows the same trajectory as it did in U.S. cities.

My second critical point deals with scholars' responsibility of using correct theoretical concepts and giving proper names for phenomena. With the increase of migration and being aware of the problems of segregation in the U.S. cities, Finnish urban scholars, like their European colleagues, are worried whether there is a danger of an emergence of ethnically segregated neighbourhoods in European cities. In this new situation Finnish urban scholars face not only an urgent need to study the effects of increased migration, but also a challenge in how to name new phenomena. As Dhalmann (née Virtanen 2007, 7) aptly notes, the concepts used in Finnish segregation research are rather underdeveloped. In Finland, the terms such as ethnicity, minority, immigrant and foreigner are often used interchangeably, not only in journalism and public discussions but also in scholarly work.

In their article Vilkama and others (2013) use the Finnish word *maahanmuuttajakeskittymä*, which directly translated into English is "immigrant concentration". However, in their English translation *maahanmuuttajakeskittymä* is "immigrant dense neighbourhood". They define "immigrant dense neighbourhood" as a neighbourhood in which at the end of the year 2007 the proportion of people born outside the Nordic countries from the total population was 11 to 24 percent. (Ibid., 488.) Even in statistical terms, this is a problematic definition. Having been born outside the Nordic countries does not automatically render one of immigrant background. For instance, some of those people born abroad have been born to Finnish families, meaning the people are Finnish speakers and citizens of Finland (Rapo 2011).

The more serious problem is that a concept such as "immigrant concentration" is what Andrew Sayer has called "bad and chaotic abstractions"; it lumps together features of the Finnish demographically heterogeneous, multi-ethnic and mixed neighbourhoods without isolating what is significant about neighbourhoods (Sayer 1992, 138). And as Sayer writes, "abstractions, whether good or bad, can form part of the object of study in social science and have real effects" (ibid., 139). In addition there are unsettling tactics of "Othering" in the sense of Edward Said (1979) within this discourse. The article title, *White flight? Why do people move out of immigrant-dense neighbourhoods?* implies a hierarchical distinction between "people" who the authors call the "native population" and "others", that is to say, those immigrants born outside the Nordic countries. Such discourse reinforces the harmful categorization and stigmatization of people according to a binary logic of "us and them", of "subject and object".

The *White flight?* -article (2013) was cited in the media[2]. Journalists and commentators stated that native flight is true in Helsinki; immigrants are concentrating in certain neighbourhoods and "the large number of immigrants is reason enough for natives to move out of these neighbourhoods" (Helsingin Sanomat 27.10.2013, translation MH). While researchers cannot be held responsible if the media misinterprets, popularizes and makes unwarranted generalizations, researchers do bear a responsibility for making correct abstractions and using good theoretical concepts. Being aware of their moral responsibility the authors of *White flight?* note that their theory of "native flight", on its own, is insufficient and that a wish to escape from social problems, uncleanliness, bad reputation, bad architecture and feeling of insecurity also affects the selective migration – so called "social flight" (Vilkama et al. 2013, 495). But even after such reservations, they "lump together" (Sayer 1992, 138) all other aspects under the derogatory concept of "immigrant concentration", which suggests that all the other problems mentioned are less important and even internal to the places where large numbers of immigrants live. The result of such vocabulary is that the status of "immigrant" becomes synonymous with poverty and social disorder within this discourse. The concept of immigrant concentration is not only statistically unfounded, it is an arbitrary abstraction that runs a high risk of stigmatizing neighbourhoods and aggravating the predicament of their residents. Social scientists should avoid chaotic abstractions and distinguish journalistic folk concepts from analytical concepts that help to explain and understand social phenomena.

An alternative segregation research paradigm

In this article I have identified and critically examined three assumptions that Finnish segregation research rests on. The first assumption is that of the consumer choice model for segregation. Here, segregation is seen as the outcome of a cycle of effects where housing choices made by consumers in the housing market according to culturally determined housing and neighbourhood preferences aggravate segregation. The second assumption is made by proponents of neighbourhood effects. Again, a cycle of events is assumed where low income populations are blamed for causing social deterioration in segregated neighbourhoods as a culture of poverty catches on, causing disinvestment and further segregation. The third assumption is that the white flight theory can be transferred to the Finnish context. Finnish scholars interested in ethnic segregation have applied the U.S. based white flight theory, renaming it "native flight" in order to understand whether

2 See for example Helsingin Sanomat 25.10., 27.10., and 30.10.2013.

the presence of ethnic minorities in certain neighbourhoods is steering away so called native Finns. Instead of simply criticizing the work of others I hope to now outline some options for an alternative framework which might help us explain and understand the processes and experiences of segregation in Finnish cities, instead of simply describing it.

Capitalist urbanization

We need analysis of the political economy behind the development of the built environment to explain the complicated processes of segregation. Here, understanding capitalist urbanization (Harvey 1985) and the uneven development of the built environment (Smith 1982) work as a starting point. Taking into account the intricacies in the Finnish context such as differences in municipal land and housing policies, real estate practices and particularities of neighbourhood disinvestment, we can begin to sketch an outline of unequal development of the urban fabric in Finnish cities. The neighbourhoods that, according to Finnish scholars, are segregating because of selective migration are apartment block suburbs, developed far away from the city centre (Vaattovaara & Kortteinen 2012). Although the apartment block suburbs in Helsinki were developed under the regime of a young welfare state, the logic of capitalist urbanization explains their development. At the time of their development, in the 1960s and 1970s, Finland was going through a major structural change. Industry and service economy in the south of the country demanded more labour force, which brought thousands of workers to Helsinki in a mere few decades. Building housing and infrastructure for this rapidly growing population of labourers was of course a lucrative opportunity for developers. To implement their projects, they needed long term financing thus creating lending opportunities for banks and financial institutions and creating links between the construction industry and banks. Banks then became key agents in financing land purchases and the subsequent development of land in Helsinki. (Hankonen 1994, 380.)

Rapid development of fringe land was the outcome of so-called development contracts, contracts between the municipality and the developers who had bought land outside the city (Mäkinen 2000). Developers used new, inexpensive construction materials in many apartment block suburbs to cut costs. These suburbs seldom saw upgrading investments, services were poor and declined even further when higher income groups moved out. As a result of such uneven development of the built environment some of these neighbourhoods became demographically heterogeneous working and middle class neighbourhoods. The uneven urban development is further aggravated by the fact that the municipalities of the HMA have different resources and policies to solve their housing problem. According to Haila and LeGales (2005, 122) Helsinki has built social housing, small apartments and practiced social mixing in neighbourhoods. Espoo has concentrated on semi-detached owner occupied housing. Kauniainen maintains its villa settlement nature. Population growth and the different responses to it by the municipalities have contributed to social differentiation and segregation.

My argument is that there are structural reasons for the disinvestment of these neighbourhoods that have created the conditions for their segregation. Discrepancies in land and housing policies between municipalities in the HMA aggravate segregation. Housing choices alone do not suffice in determining segregation, and the focus on housing choices by Finnish segregation scholars turns attention away from the fundamental reasons. This is not to deny the fact that peoples' housing preferences are different or that they matter. Of course they are and they do. But the fundamental causes of segregation are unequal development of the built environment via capi-

talist urbanization and land and housing policies that create differences in the urban fabric.

Structural logics of urban poverty

The study of uneven development of the built environment needs to be married with in-depth research into social and economic inequalities in Finland. What are the causes behind precarious employment and long-term unemployment for a surplus population that does not find work in the low-skill service sector or high-skill managerial sector? How does the retrenchment of the Finnish welfare state affect those most vulnerable in society? It is high time these fundamental causes for a widening gap between different social strata are brought centre stage in Finnish segregation research. We need analysis of how income inequality combined with a receding welfare state and drastic cuts in welfare spending are affecting the urban population. Wacquant (2008) provides an intriguing theoretical framework for comparative work on urban marginality, which could be extended to exploring the Finnish case. According to Wacquant, there are certain similar structural logics at work in advanced capitalist societies that are reshaping urban poverty, such as "occupational dualization, fragmentation of the wage labour form and retraction of the social welfare state" (ibid., 263).

Occupational dualization in Wacquant's framework means rising inequality in the context of rapid economic advancement, that is to say, advanced capitalist societies experience sturdy economic growth and material advancement for their privileged members and deepening material misery and social insecurity for the disadvantaged (ibid., 263–265). Fragmentation of the wage labour form for Wacquant denotes two specific transformations. First, a quantitative transformation is the vanishing of low-skilled jobs due to automation or moving of jobs to countries with a cheaper labour force. And second, a qualitative transformation "involving the deterioration and dispersion of basic conditions of employment, remuneration and social insurance for all wage-earners save those in the most protected sectors." (ibid., 265–266.) Under these transformations a part of the working class has been made redundant and will have immense trouble in finding work again. Wacquant gives an example of this surplus population: laid-off old factory workers who would now need to be able to "reconvert into flexible service workers". Also under said transformations there is now the expansion of ever growing precariousness in the labour-market due to part-time work and temporary contracts. (Ibid., 266–267.) Finally, the retraction of the welfare state means cuts in the redistribution and social provision of goods. These cutbacks hit hardest on the most disadvantaged members of society. (Ibid., 267–270.)

Finnish segregation researchers Vaattovaara and Kortteinen (2002) have in fact briefly touched upon some these transformations and their consequences. They trace the structural shifts in the HMA starting from the recession in the early 1990s and the ICT driven economic development during the 90s and come to the conclusion that a clear turn towards urban differentiation had taken place by the start of the new millennium. Vaattovaara and Kortteinen (2002, 2141–2142) argue, that it was in fact the "nature" of the economic development that had given start to urban inequalities that even a Nordic welfare state could not avoid. As the ICT sector worked as an engine of growth for the whole region after the recession, a surplus population was created consisting mostly of industrial workers who did not find employment in this new sector and who on average were older than the working population. This is in line with Wacquant's dualization and fragmentation thesis. Unfortunately, after an interesting account of discrepancies in employment levels and levels of educational attainment in the HMA, the main theoretical input from Vaattovaara and Kortteinen

(ibid., 2142) to the Finnish context is then, as they write, the following (italics added):

> it is not the Marxist class theory that seems to be most relevant in the interpretation of this new change. With new growth at the upper end of the social scale, new social and spatial divisions emerge, and specific segments of the new elite gather into special neighbourhoods, *each on the basis of their peculiar preferences.*

Some Finns are so dispossessed from wage-labour that they can be called a "surplus population" and others simply attempt to survive amidst precariousness and part time work. But despite the fact that social classes look different today than they did in Marx's time, surely "the Marxist class theory" can be used theoretically to understand their predicament? As David Harvey (1985) reminds us, Marx's class theory is not about "identifying a fixed set of categories which are supposed to apply for all times and all places" but instead

> [t]he power relation between capital and labour may be regarded as the primary force of class structuration in capitalist society. However, this force does not necessarily generate a dichotomous class structure. The two class model that Marx presents in Volume 1 of Capital is an assumed relation through which he seeks to lay bare the exploitative character of capitalist production – it is not meant as a description of an actual class structure. (Harvey 1985, 111.)

Vaattovaara and Kortteinen disregard this theoretical approach and its suggested analysis of power relations. Instead, they fall back on the same preference model, when they could instead have fruitfully combined their analyses of transformation in economic development with an analysis of the development of the built environment. Understanding these structural logics could help us move beyond describing an ambiguous cycle of events to analyses that explain segregation and urban inequalities.

Using space

Thirdly, in addition to a robust political economic analysis to find out the structural forces and dynamics behind urban poverty and segregation, if we hope to understand the mechanisms and experiences at the neighbourhood level and, for instance, schools, I propose ethnographic enquiries into the everyday life in segregated neighbourhoods. One interesting example of a different theoretical approach comes from Gotham and Brumley (2002) who have put forth the idea of studying how people in disinvested neighbourhoods "use space" to build their identities and challenge those stigmatized identities imposed from the outside. Instead of understanding locations only through their mechanical "neighbourhood effects", Gotham and Brumley urge us to pay attention to human agency and the importance of urban space for how individuals and groups "think and conceive of themselves, cultivate and develop personal and collective identities, and contest as well as reinforce prevailing meanings of race, class, gender, sexual orientation, and other social inequalities" (Gotham & Brumley 2002, 269). This approach, largely missing from the Finnish segregation and neighbourhood effect research, would help to move the discussion away from the circular reasoning of neighbourhood effects. It would also deepen our understanding of experienced segregation, how people negotiate and build their identities as active agents, not merely individuals whose destinies and behaviour are determined by the social and economic factors of their neighbourhood. I stress the need for sociological and ethnographic studies to understand the everyday workings of urban life and as Gotham and Brumley (2002) urge us, understand the use of social space by people who are so much more than just housing consumers; the way people accommodate themselves and live in the city, how people "make their daily rounds" (Logan & Molotch 1987). Instead of a relentless search for

housing preferences, neighbourhood effects and segregation maps, a robust sociological analysis attempts to understand people's neighbourhood level practices and negotiations amid macro-level, structural pressures.

A theoretical and a conceptual question

Before engaging with any alternative segregation research paradigm, however, the first step towards critical analysis of segregation in Finland must be the use of rational abstractions and concepts, not chaotic and arbitrary abstractions or folk concepts. The use of territorial categorizations, describing, mapping and naming neighbourhoods suit well to geographers. As Gotham and Brumley write,

> [a]cknowledging that neighbourhood context shapes poverty reflects the increasing use of geographic units of analysis and spatial metaphors – "concentration effects", "spatial isolation", "ghettoized poor", "super poverty areas" – to delineate the causes and consequences of urban poverty (Gotham and Brumley 2002, 269).

Social scientists on the other hand should not mistake mapping, describing and naming for social analysis. Arbitrary abstractions can be misleading and even harmful in creating and enforcing territorial stigmatization of people and neighbourhoods. Territorial stigmas turn our attention away from the structural reasons for poverty, marginality and social and ethnic segregation and instead place the blame on neighbourhoods and residents. Derogatory and unanalytical abstractions such as "immigrant concentration", coined by scientists, spread by journalists and erroneously taken on board in public policies, soon become common knowledge and affect how we see the world. As Wacquant writes:

> [w]hether or not these areas are in fact dilapidated and dangerous, and their population composed essentially of poor people, minorities and foreigners, matters little in the end: when it becomes widely shared and diffused, the prejudicial belief that they are suffices to set off socially noxious consequences (Wacquant 2008, 239).

The question for urban scholars cannot be simply an empirical one of mapping the world. We should avoid stigmatizing categories and remain cautious in transferring theories. Instead as Neil Brenner (2011) has eloquently emphasized, the question for urban scholars must be a theoretical and a conceptual question.

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