The contradictions of the desegregation-policy in Szeged

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In 2017, the local government of Szeged started to eliminate the largest segregate (ghetto) of the city. According to the anti-segregation plan of Szeged, this process will have been finished by 2029. The aim of the process is to remove the affected families into an integrated environment. Several studies and policy papers also emphasize the negative effects of the enduring ethnic and/or social/economic-based spatial concentration of households (negative neighborhood effect). This is the underlying rationale for implementing mixing-policies, which are frequently applied planning strategies. However, in practice and according to recent studies, these processes seem to be more complicated and contradictory.

The aim of the present paper is to reveal how segregation and policy-led desegregation influence the social mobility of the affected families. We apply qualitative (e.g. individual and group interviews) and long-term participatory methods (participatory action research – PAR). We have worked together with the inhabitants of the above-mentioned segregate since 2015, and therefore our main data set was mostly acquired from this PAR-process. We found that segregation can provide important resources for families through the internal relations of community members. These can be damaged by displacement. Furthermore, the artificial social mix is not in itself enough to create favorable conditions for social cohesion and social mobility. Thus, without appropriate monitoring and facilitation, the affected families may be unable to replace these resources after their displacement. In this way desegregation may generate more external and internal social tensions, contribute to re-segregation, and/or further deprivation and exclusion.

Keywords: segregation, displacement, social capital, mixing-policy

1. Introduction

Ethnic-based spatial segregation is generally considered an undesirable state by policy makers, and in several respects by the related literature. Therefore the anti-segregation plans of Hungarian cities (which are the obligatory parts of the City Development Strategies in Hungary) argue that spatial segregation is a destructive anomaly associated with a low level of life-quality and the lack of social mobility, thus the aim of local planning should be to curtail the existence of these segregates (Méreiné 2017a).

The writers of the anti-segregation plan of Szeged also agree with this view. In 2017 the local government of Szeged started to eliminate the largest segregate of the city. According to the anti-segregation plan this process will have been finished by 2029. In addition, the plan defines that families should be removed into an integrated environment.

Mixing-policy is a frequently applied strategy in political planning. Apart from political planning the related literature also emphasizes the negative effects of an enduring ethnic and/or social-economic based concentration of households (Bolt

et. al 2010). It is usually called 'negative neighborhood effect' (Massey–Denton 1989, Friedrichs et. al 2003). Basically, it means one of the most important concerns about poverty trap: cumulative disadvantage and social exclusion. These approaches frequently argue that social diversification policies are able to provide significant new resources for the displaced families, and in parallel they could strengthen social cohesion between different social groups.

According to these arguments the role of social capital is essential for achieving these results. They usually attribute an exclusively positive impact to the role of social capital, and it is considered a significant instrument of social mobility. Briefly, spatial segregation has a negative effect on upward mobility and social capital can play an effective role in countering the factors which interfere with this mobility through the segregated condition. Therefore policy-makers often have positive expectations of mixing-policy.

However, these overwhelmingly positive effects are not supported by empirical evidence. Furthermore, in some cases we can find evidence of displacement to an integrated environment meaning the loss of considerable resources of these families (Bolt et. al 2010, Kearns et al. 2013; Mugnano–Palvarini 2013).

Through our case-study we tried to reveal the real effects of displacement. Thus firstly we investigated the visible and hidden mechanisms which influence the consequences of desegregation. Secondly, we analyzed the impact of desegregation on the opportunity for upward mobility for the affected families. Finally, we tried to collect those factors which should be considered during the decision-making process on desegregation and its implementation.

The applied methodology through the long-term participation enabled us to reach the families from the segregate, furthermore, due to common learning we have had an opportunity to reveal the hidden mechanisms of the vulnerable and closed life-world of segregates, and the hidden effects of the displacement.

2. Integration, the role of social capital, social cohesion and mixing policy

Despite the fact that the urban development concept puts considerable emphasis on the role of social capital, an in-depth analysis of the Hungarian anti-segregation plans revealed that the significance of social ties is discussed only to a limited extent. Furthermore, if social capital is dealt with at all, it is attributed a simplified, mainly instrumental role as it is mostly considered as a common resource (Méreiné 2017b).

In contrast, the related literature has been dealing with the term of social capital for a long time (Hanifan 1916, Ben–Porath 1980, Putnam 1993, Bourdieu 1986, Coleman 1998, Fukuyama 2001, Woolcock–Narayan 2000, Burt 2000, Granovetter 1973), however, it has not been possible to place it in a comprehensive theoretical framework so far. In the social sciences, the analysis of social capital is primarily inter- and multidisciplinary. It could appear as an individual or collective resource, furthermore it is investigated not only in sociology, but also in economics and political science, and in the field of political planning as well. Therefore, we ought to move beyond the strict sociological framework, and try to interpret the term in a much wider context.

Social capital is able to have an influence on many other forms of capital. Its neglect might lead to impolitic development interventions (Méreiné et al. 2017b), as social capital is the key for the operability of democracy (Putnam 1995). It might play a bridging but also a bonding role: it might encourage or set back the social integration of individuals and groups or social cohesion in general, and it can even give a new meaning to these notions (Lockwood 1964, Putnam 1995, Castel 2000, Woolcock–Narayan 2000).

Therefore, social capital is extremely relevant in understanding extreme poverty and segregation. In order to examine the role of social capital in the alleviation of segregation and extreme poverty, we first examine how notions of solidarity and integration relate to the concept of social capital.

In the alleviation of segregation and extreme poverty, integration is a primary goal, however, in the related literature the notion of integration has several interpretations (Lockwood 1964, Castel 2000, Lin 1990). In order to fully understand how social capital operates, it is important to reflect on the different theories about integration. Lockwood distinguishes two forms of integration, system integration and social integration. It is system integration which usually appears in the communication of policy-makers. It is realized through participation in different social institutions, primarily in the division of labor, the educational system, etc. On the other hand, social integration is about the natural milieu of individuals through being members of smaller communities (relatives, family members) who support them, and provides significant resources towards their daily survival (Lockwood 1964, Archer 1996). Social integration might be especially strong in the case of the segregated and marginalized, extremely poor communities, mainly in the Central and Eastern European context (Crețan–Turnock 2008, Farkas 2012).

Castel (2000) distinguishes three degrees on the scale of integration. Lack of integration means "disaffiliation", the partial presence of integration means belonging to a "disaffiliation zone", while full integration means belonging to the "integration zone". Integration is realized through performance in three dimensions: work, community embeddedness, and culture. These function in different areas such as our place in the division of work, family or school, and they are strongly related to the social capital acquired in these areas.

There have been further integration theories which can draw strong analogy from these typologies. Nan Lin (1990) also distinguished macrointegration and microintegration. Basically macrointegration follows the concerns of Lockwood's system integration, while the type of microintegration described has parallels with social integration. Lin basically argues that macrointegration is mostly connected with instrumental actions, and microintegration is connected with expressive actions.

Durkheim (1893) aimed to address these questions by distinguishing two types of social solidarity. While mechanical solidarity is based on the feeling of belonging together because of similarity (we belong to the same family or ethnic group, we have a similar social status, we do the same work etc.), organic solidarity is based on differences: despite our differences we still have to cooperate with each other (most of all because of the division of work).

According to the social network theory of Granovetter (1973), societies are interwoven by strong and weak ties. Strong ties are usually closed and appear within communities. These are potentially able to provide security and resources for the

members of the given group. Weak ties span social groups, and these are the ones which are able to significantly contribute to upward social mobility and social integration (understood here as system integration) through connecting otherwise disconnected social groups.

The earlier interpretations of solidarity, integration and social ties show eye-catching parallels with those social capital theories which aim to classify social capital by understanding and interpreting the direction and strength of social connections (Putnam 1993, Gittel–Vidal 1998, Woolcock–Narayan 2000). These theories distinguish either two or three types of social capital. Bonding social capital is based on inner ties (Granovetter 1973) and most of all on mechanical solidarity (Durkheim 1893). Bonding connections are based on trust, solidarity and reciprocity (Messing– Molnár 2011). For the extremely poor, these closed and homogenous relations contribute to their everyday survival and they function as resources, on the one hand, but they reduce the opportunities to break out from poverty and they might be of a limiting nature, on the other hand, since group solidarity is often based on opposition to the mainstream society (Fehér–Virág 2014). Therefore, these factors are also able to contribute to the conservation of extreme poverty for generations (Méreiné et al. 2017b).

Mobility among social groups and system integration is supported by bridging and linking social capital, which are most of all based on weak ties (Putnam 1993, Woolcock–Narayan 2000, Messing–Molnár 2011, Füzér 2015). Bridging social capital means weak ties that span different social groups and thus provide access to the resources of other social groups. Linking social capital '*describes the ability of groups to engage with external agencies, either to influence their policies or to draw on useful resources*' (Pretty 2003, p. 1913). Therefore, linking capital is related to formal organizations (institutions) having relative power over a given social group, including the provision of access to services or jobs (Hawkins–Maurer 2010, Messing–Molnár 2011). Social capital, solidarity and integration strongly influence and could be influenced by urban segregation which is a spatial appearance of social distances and inequalities among different social groups (Ladányi 2007).

The related policies that argue for generating heterogeneous neighbourhoods through the mixing policy emphasize that spatial proximity is able to generate social cohesion between different social groups (Van Kempen–Bolt 2012). Nonetheless, there have been several investigations which reveal that merely spatial proximity and artificial neighborhood between different social groups rarely lead to real social cohesion. (Bolt et al. 2010; Kearns et al. 2013; Mugnano–Palvarini 2013).

Therefore, the positive effects of mixing-policy regarding social cohesion have yet to be proven. Furthermore, it has often been the experience that the subjective well-being of the affected residents decreases and the tensions between different social groups rise significantly after displacement. The above-mentioned literature on social capital, social ties and the different considerations about solidarity and integration could provide a potential explanation for these phenomena.

Taking all these considerations into account, it seems that a professionally supported mixing policy could be one of the possible ways to establish bridging social capital among these different social groups and in parallel support upward mobility. Although, the segregated families in extreme poverty (who are targeted by these policies in particular) usually base their daily survival on their bonding social capital

which establishes special norms and rules, habits and sometimes inner sanctions against the rise and well-being of families. These elements also impose a serious limitation on upward mobility, and on the formation of social cohesion with the majority society when they are displaced to a (system)integrated environment as a result of mixing-policy (Bolt et al. 2010).

3. Context and methodology

We implemented our research in one of the most populous Hungarian cities, in Szeged with approximately 160,000 inhabitants. There are two areas which are mentioned as segregates in the anti-segregation plan of the city. The Hungarian Central Statistical Office defines areas as segregates, where the rate of the residents whose highest level of education is elementary education, and who do not have regular work, is higher than 50%. The main employment and educational data were the following in 2011 for the larger segregate of Szeged (Table 1).

Table 1 Employment and educational data of the larger segregate of Szeged

The rate of residents who do not have regular income from work	74.4%
The rate of residents with maximum elementary education	75%
The rate of residents with maximum elementary education and who do not have regular income from work (segregation index)	**54.4%**
The rate of economically non-active population in the segregate	68.2%
The rate of long-term unemployed	30.4%

Source: Own illustration based on the 2011 census data from Central Statistical Office

This notion can mainly be determined by quantitative data, although, the related literature is more sophisticated. The international literature uses the notion slum or ghetto instead of segregate to describe the spatial concentration of poverty. According to Wacquant (2012), ghettos have further characteristics. In addition to the spatial concentration, educational and activity rates, families in ghettos suffer from stigmatization by the majority and they usually have parallel norms and institutional systems. Thereby they reproduce the 'culture of poverty' (Lewis 1961), the concept of which was published even in the classical literature of sociology. We consider Wacquant's definition as our theoretical basis, however, and in the present study we use the expression 'segregate' because this term is applied to the concept in Hungarian policy making and regulations. The local government started measures to eliminate of the larger segregate in spring 2017. According to the anti-segregation plan it will have been finished only by 2029, but the process of displacement has recently been accelerated. This process and its impacts were in the focus of our investigations.

As reported by the 2011 census, the largest segregate had 211 residents. By the beginning of the summer of 2018 the number of residents had declined to 130 due to displacement. In 2017 six houses (that contained 24 flats) were demolished. Six out of the 24 flats were privately owned and four flats were inhabited by renters. The rest of the apartments were occupied by squatters.

According to the anti-segregation plan, it is extremely important to carry out the desegregation process in a way which makes it possible to avoid the formation of

new spatial concentrations of extreme poverty in the city. The policy-makers claim that spatial-based interventions should be made during the process, on the one hand by moving the affected families to different parts of the city in order to prevent spatial concentration, and on the other hand by attracting social groups with higher status to the area concerned.

However, in practice the strategy of the local government is rather ad hoc. They try to displace the owners and the tenants as soon as possible. The implementors of the anti-segregation process hardly take into account the new environment of the displaced families. It seems that for the decision-makers, the temporal factor is cardinal because they want to carry out the process as quickly as possible and with as few media reports as they can.

The complexity of the context is extraordinary and the analysis of social capital presents several difficulties as well. It is usually determined by hidden mechanisms which can hardly be 'grabbed' by snapshot-methods. Furthermore, the life-world of a segregate is a highly sensitive field, therefore we preferred to use qualitative and participatory methods.

Our methods are grounded in a participatory action research (PAR) cooperation among the local Roma underclass, local Roma representatives, NGOs and local middle-class scholar-activists. This cooperation started in 2011. PAR *„is a research paradigm within the social sciences which emphasizes collaborative participation of trained researchers as well as local communities in producing knowledge directly relevant to the stakeholder community"* (Coghlan 2016, Brydon-Miller p. 583.) The intention of the PAR-process is to generate a social change besides contributing to the theoretical corpus of the social sciences. Thus, this process is based on long-term cooperation of the academic and non-academic participants and on actions serving both social change and scientific observation and understanding (Reason–Bradbury 2008, Málovics et al. 2014, Málovics et al. 2018a, Málovics et al. 2018b). The PAR-process means common learning for all of the participants and attempts to abolish the asymmetrical relationship between scholars and laics. PAR is arguing for the validity of laic knowledge.

Our preliminary results are based on the research diary-notes of the scholar-activists who are also the authors or the contributors of the present study as well. Furthermore, we are planning to carry out semi-structured interviews with the displaced inhabitants and with those who are still living in the segregate. Our further aim is to reveal the real intention of the local government, therefore we would like to conduct interviews with local policy-makers as well.

During the data-analysis of the research diaries, firstly we directly investigated the codes referring to the role of social capital and the effects of the displacement. In addition, we tried to remain open about further characteristic codes and these also contributed to the preliminary results of the present study.

4. Preliminary results

The status of the inhabitants of the larger segregate is particularly heterogeneous. Basically, three types of residential statuses exist here: owners, renters and squatters.

Therefore, the local public property (housing) company[17] and the local government treat their displacement differently. Renters are provided with other accommodation to rent, the local government buys up the owner's flats (usually above the market price), but the squatters are forced to move without any form of compensation. Hence these different treatments generated tensions between the inner community of the segregate. Some (especially the owners and the renters) are interested in the implementation of displacement, preferably as a matter of urgency, while others (mostly the squatters) are in a particularly vulnerable position, since they could easily lose their place of residence if the local government continues the demolition process. These tensions and insecurities have left a strong impression on the social capital of the inhabitants.

Table 2 Preliminary results regarding to the displacement

Process	Consequences
For the families in the segregate it is almost impossible to appreciate the whole process, because the local government negotiates with the families separately. Therefore, they try to gain relevant information from each other, but in parallel they consider each other as rivals. Thus, the information is often stalled and distorted.	These events are largely fragmenting the community, disrupt the bonding social capital, thus raising distrust and uncertainty.
There are different interests regarding the demolition and displacement because the inhabitants have three different residential statuses (owners, renters, squatters).	The community has been definitely fragmented along the lines of residential status, as a result of their different interests. There are more and more conflicts among the different groups within the segregate.
No appropriate facilitation of the displacement during the desegregation process on the part of the relevant institutes.	Not only is distrust among those living in the segregate intensifying, but also distrust of the institutes.

Source: own construction

During our research the strong presence of bonding connections clearly became evident. It provides significant material and non-material resources for the families in the investigated communities in terms of their daily survival. In parallel, their upward mobility is largely limited because of the specific norms and laws of the isolated community (Tóth et al. 2017, Málovics et al. 2018a, Méreiné et al. 2017b). According to the anti-segregation-plan, the families should be removed into an integrated environment, however, there were difficulties in carrying out this process in practice. Unfortunately, the decision-makers are not properly monitoring the process, they hardly analyze the consequences of displacement, or the later lives of the displaced families. Through our involvement we have been able to collect several significant pieces of background information in connection with the displacement. The following table shows the identified processes and their consequences (Table 2).

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[17] IKV Zrt.

In the framework of the PAR process, due to regular and interpersonal relationships, we were able to follow up the affected families. According to our research diary notes we distinguished 4 types of inhabitants with regard to the changes in their social capital because of the displacement.

(1) **Pseudo-movers**: Despite the fact that they moved out of the segregate, they were not able to create new social connections with the majority society, therefore they mostly spend their time in the segregate. Bonding social capital is still dominant in their lives.

(2) **Re-segregating inhabitants**: They moved out of the segregate, and they were able to create new relationships, but only with Roma families who have similar characteristics to them (e.g. norms, values, economic status etc.). Although they have broken out of the segregate, they have found new homes in „mini-segregates" (gypsy-houses). This phenomenon is strongly connected to the social housing policy in Szeged. Gypsy houses represent lower value on the real estate market, therefore the local government cannot sell them at competitive prices. They often offer them to gypsy families, and other 'voiceless' inhabitants with low levels of negotiating power. Bonding social capital is still dominant in their lives, and upward mobility through bridging connections with the majority society is still unavailable.

(3) **Real-movers:** They have access to bridging social capital which has been continuously increasing since the displacement. The desegregation can improve their real chance of upward mobility. However, it is important to note that they already had bridging connections even before the displacement. Only two families belong to this category.

(4) **People getting into a vacuum of social relations:** The desegregation damaged their bonding connections, and they could not create new bridging connections. They have got into the most desperate situation due to the displacement, their daily survival is often endangered. Many inhabitants have become homeless and victims of the desegregation policy of the city.

The displacement-process has been going on for only one and a half years, therefore it is still in an initial stage. In connection with the movers, we have had only „before" experience of their situation for now. Despite the fact that we also paid attention to the socio-economic statuses of the affected people by using the database created by the Hungarian Central Statistical Office, based on quantitative data we could not find any determining factor. It made our investigation more difficult that only little data is available regarding the segregates of Szeged (e.g. employment, educational level), furthermore these are usually not able to show the real state of the households (referring to the squatters, illegal job opportunities, etc.). We do not claim that social capital is the only aspect which can provide the chance of social mobility for the affected families, or facilitate the success of the displacement process, although, even at this early stage, it is clear that social capital could play an extremely important role during the process. Other factors are likely to emerge in the future, thus we strive to analyze them comprehensively.

5. Conclusions

The desegregation policy should put more emphasis on the role of the bonding social capital. It usually provides significant resources for the affected families and it contributes to their daily survival. If unwise decisions are taken, social integration will continuously invalidate system integration aspirations. Therefore, the gap between the underclass and majority society will increasingly expand. The factors which construct and sustain these bonding connections can be alleviated by bridging and linking connections, however, if the presence of these connections is limited and if their nurturing is not provided considerable resources, upward mobility will be unrealizable for the displaced families.

As a result of resegregation, isolation is often reestablished, for example numerous Hungarian anti-segregation decisions have led to this. Furthermore, at worst the affected people can find themselves in a social relations vacuum. Thus, an extreme consequence may well be that their situation becomes more desperate and they become victims of the desegregation policy.

The decision-makers should keep in mind that the establishment of bridging and linking social connections has a crucial role in poverty alleviation and desegregation. The trust-based, interpersonal, and long-term relationships between different social groups on the one hand can contribute to promoting solidarity and social cohesion, and on the other hand they can improve the affected families' chances of real upward-mobility. Therefore, the artificial-establishment of social capital would be worth considering, even though institutes (linking social capital) and in other less formal ways (e.g. social awareness raising programs, NGOs, voluntary-based networks, related social initiatives) which could help the formation of bridging social capital.

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