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Chapter 31:

Regenerating through social mixing: origins, aims and strategies

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Summary

‘Social mixing’ is a core component of European and North American urban regeneration policies. Policies of social mixing are employed in socio-economically and ethnically or racially segregated areas and aim to make the population more mixed in terms of socio-economic status and ethnic or racial background. This Chapter discusses, first, the origins and development of mixing policies; second, the aims of social mixing; and third, the various strategies that have been employed in different countries to achieve greater spatial and social mixing. The Chapter concludes with a brief discussion of critical views on the effects and effectiveness of social mixing and possible future directions for policy and research.

Introduction

In the context of urban regeneration, the concept ‘social mixing’ refers to the policy strategy, aim or ideal of increasing the (usually socio-economic) diversity of the population in an urban area. As a strategy, social mixing is one of many strategies deployed to regenerate urban areas. As an aim, it refers to

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the desired effect of increasing population diversity as a result of, for example, creating a more diverse housing supply. Social mixing is also very much an ideal, as it implies not only a mix of tenures and social categories but also a 'better' way of living together: more mutual understanding, more interaction between groups, and more bridging social capital. Social mixing is a core component of urban regeneration in a wide range of countries such as Australia (Wood 2003; Arthurson 2012), Belgium (Veldboer et al., 2002; Loopmans et al., 2010), Canada (Rose 2004; Walks and Maaranen 2008), Finland (Varady and Schulman 2007), France (Blanc 2010; Bacqué et al, 2010), Germany (Munch 2009), Malaysia (Graham et al., 2009), the Netherlands (Kleinhans 2004; van Kempen and Bolt 2009; Blokland and van Eijk 2012), Sweden (Holmqvist and Bergsten 2009, Andersson et al., 2010), the United Kingdom (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2000; Kleinhans 2004; Kearns and Mason 2007) and the United States (Briggs 2006; Austin Turner et al., 2009).

In the context of urban regeneration, social mixing is about deliberate attempts to increase the diversity in social categories in an area. But what is diversity? Diversity may cover a wide variety of indicators (even religion – see Murtagh, 2001 on mixed-religion housing in Northern Ireland. In reality, every neighbourhood or area is in one way or another, to greater or lesser extent, mixed, for there are no homogeneous areas (Cole and Goodchild 2001). In most urban regeneration projects, social mixing aims to increase diversity in terms of socio-economic status; less frequently, it (also) aims to increase diversity in age, household types and ethnic or racial categories. Socio-economic mix, in turn, can be conceptualized in different ways. In the UK, for example, policy makers aim for mixed-tenure housing, while in the US and the Netherlands it is more common to speak of mixed-income housing. In addition, the scale on which one wants to mix varies: in the US, regeneration entails building mixed-income developments in public housing projects, while in the Netherlands, housing diversification means replacing part of the social housing stock with owner-occupied housing; in the latter case, social mixing thus occurs on a larger scale. A further variation concerns to extent to which 'mix' means 'representation' or 'more balanced'. In some cases, policies seek to ensure that the neighbourhood population is more representative of the make-up of the city population, in other cases policies aim for a more balanced composition than

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the present situation, in the sense that all social categories are more or less evenly present in a neighbourhood.

When it comes to mixing in terms of increasing the diversity of ethnic or racial categories, things are more complicated still, because reference to ethnic or racial mixing is often implicit. There are examples of attempts in the past to mix ethnic groups (for instance in the 1970s in Israel: Ginsberg and Marans 1979) and of explicit dispersal policies (for instance in the 1970s in the Netherlands: Bolt 2004, and more recently in Germany: Drever 2004). Nevertheless, such policies are currently (in 2012) controversial and there are often legal barriers to implementing policies that differentiate according to racial or ethnic category (Cole and Goodchild 2001; Veldboer *et al.* 2002; Austin Turner *et al.* 2009). It can be argued that, because of the strong correlation between socio-economic status and ethnic or racial background, mixing in terms of socioeconomic status will automatically result in ethnic or racial mixing. However, Austin Turner *et al.* (2009) argue that by neglecting the problem of racial segregation in public housing in US cities, building mixed-income developments has not had any impact on racial segregation. Indeed, this observation is also relevant for European countries, as traditional migrant categories (for instance former guest workers and their descendants in the Netherlands and Germany) are becoming more socially mobile, and high incomes and home ownership are becoming more prevalent among these categories. Finally, the concepts of ethnic mix and racial mix mean different things in different contexts, as countries have different migration histories. In the US, the focus is usually on ‘black-white issues’ as residents of the most distressed public housing developments are predominantly African-American (Austin Turner *et al.*, 2009). In European countries, the focus is on particular migrant groups, usually from non-Western countries. Migrant groups may include ‘traditional’ migrants such as former guest workers (for instance from Turkey in Germany and from Morocco in the Netherlands) and migrants from former colonies (for instance from India in the United Kingdom and from Algeria in France), and ‘new’ migrants such as refugees from African and Middle-Eastern countries. In practice, in European cities, increasing ethnic diversity means increasing the share of white residents (which thus actually decreases the diversity in ethnic categories); in other words, ethnic mix is about

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a more even presence of members of the white majority and non-white minority groups.

Because the practice of social mixing varies depending on the indicators, different terms are used to describe the same phenomenon. Such terms include 'mixed', 'mixed-income', 'socially balanced', and 'inclusive', sometimes referring to 'communities', at other times referring to 'neighbourhoods'. The literature further describes various, comparable, strategies of social mixing: housing differentiation or *red*ifferentiation, tenure or housing diversification, and mixed-income or mixed-tenure developments. Arthurson (2012) notes that social mix and mixed-tenure housing should not be confused since a more diverse housing stock might not result in a greater socio-economic diversity. Through 'right-to-buy' schemes, for example, social housing tenants buy their dwelling; consequently, the tenure mix changes, while the socio-economic mix stays the same.

While social mixing is becoming a research theme in its own right, much of the literature on social mixing relates to neighbourhood effects studies (for instance Friedrichs et al. 2003; Galster 2007) and gentrification studies (for instance Lees 2008; Bridge et al. 2012). The neighbourhood effects literature is concerned with understanding the additional effect of neighbourhood composition on residents' individual and social lives, such as job opportunities and social networks. One of the key questions is whether living in a more mixed neighbourhood improves people's lives. The second body of literature deals with the process of 'upgrading' of neighbourhoods through the influx of higher-income households into low-income neighbourhoods (which sometimes also means an influx of white residents into black or minority neighbourhoods). In the first phases, a process of gentrification increases socio-economic diversity, but as the process proceeds, higher-income households may become more numerous than the original low-income residents, which results in a loss of diversity. Urban scholars disagree as to whether regeneration strategies of upgrading or social mixing should be called gentrification. Obviously, if we look at it the other way around, gentrification is not equivalent to urban regeneration, as mixed neighbourhoods and social mixing exist and emerge also without deliberate policies; indeed, some areas are historically mixed and

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gentrification may occur spontaneously. Studies on neighbourhood effects and gentrification are thus not necessarily about urban regeneration, but they are important for understanding the consequences of social mixing as regeneration strategy.

Most of the literature on social mixing concerns countries in Europe, North America and Australia. As for other parts of the world, social mixing does not seem to have a central role in urban regeneration and development (this is also suggested by the limited available literature [in English] on the topic of social mixing in Europe, North America and Australia). In Japan, for example, neighbourhoods are relatively socially mixed, and society overall is relatively homogeneous (Fielding 2004), which could explain why urban improvements are not concerned with increasing (or even maintaining) social mix (see for instance Lützel 2008). In China, the redevelopment of urban central areas has displaced the original residents, mostly public sector workers, reducing the social mix which characterized older neighbourhoods, and other redevelopments will also likely result in 'newly divided cities' (Wang and Murie 2000). While segregation is a problem in Latin American cities, those cities also suffer from a host of other very different problems, which could explain the lack of (effective) social mixing policies. Lonardoni (2009) gives an example of a suburban development which promotes 'sustainability' but in practice is highly income-segregated and does little to promote social inclusion or diversity. Further, while there are examples of mixing strategies in developing countries but they involve not the regeneration of existing urban areas but the development of new-build schemes (although these may be built as part of wider urban regeneration), such as an eco-village in South Africa (Swilling and Annecke 2006). This Chapter is therefore limited to developments in Europe, North America and Australia.

Origins and development of social mixing

Social mixing is certainly not a new concept or idea, although in the context of urban regeneration it has seen an international revival in the last two decades or

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so. The idea of social mixing can be traced back to the mid-19th century UK (Sarkissian 1976; Heraud 1968). In this context, anti-urbanism and the idealization of the village led to an enthusiasm for the ‘balanced’ community as an antidote to new class divisions (Sarkissian 1976). The first class-mixed community to be built according to this vision was Bournville, near Birmingham. The Bournville site was a model for the Garden City movement and the British New Towns (Sarkissian, 1976). In planning the New Towns, the aim was to create ‘socially balanced communities’ where all classes lived together (Heraud 1968). Town planners in the 1930s and 1940s adopted this idea, claiming that ‘if the community is to be truly balanced, so long as social classes exist, all must be represented in it’ (Sarkissian 1976: 35). In the late 1990s, mixed-tenure housing, or tenure diversification, was adopted again as a strategy to deal with social exclusion in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Graham et al. 2009).

Australia borrowed the idea of social mixing from UK policies (Sarkissian 1976). It was first applied in building new (suburban) estates in the 1950s and 1960, when mixing tenure and housing styles was a response to homogeneous working-class post-war neighbourhoods. Australian housing policy saw a revival of the social mix idea in the late 20th and early 21st century in attempts to regenerate disadvantaged areas (Arthurson, 2012). Regeneration to this end involves demolition of public housing, replacement of obsolete public housing with private housing to attract homeowners, and relocation of public housing tenants to other areas.

In the US, mixed-income development is since the mid-1990s has been seen as a tool for transforming failed public housing developments (Austin Turner et al., 2009). Building mixed-income developments was part of the HOPE VI program (‘Home Ownership and Opportunities for People Everywhere VI’) of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Increasingly, social mixing plays a role in broader urban development efforts, creating not only healthy neighbourhoods but also economically thriving cities (Joseph et al., 2007).

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In many European countries, social mixing in the context of urban regeneration became a goal several decades after the Second World War, as the problem of residential segregation intensified, particularly in post-war districts. In the Netherlands, social mixing policies took off particularly with the launching of the Major Cities Policy in 1994, which aimed to redifferentiate the existing housing stock particularly in post-war neighbourhoods where, due to the concentration of social housing, social problems had accumulated (Priemus, 2001). Additional aims were to increase the share of owner-occupied housing and increase the prices and quality of housing. In Sweden, concerns about residential segregation followed the building of new housing within the Million Homes program as part of the 1960s and the beginning of 1970s, which did solve the problem of housing shortage but created a new problem since it resulted in several neighbourhoods with a homogeneous housing stock (Andersson et al. 2010).

In addition to homogenous post-war new build, processes such as suburbanization, deindustrialization and economic globalization intensified residential concentration of underprivileged families and accompanying problems. Earlier debates on the underclass and anti-social behaviour seem to have re-emerged internationally, spurring attention to the homogeneity or 'lack of social mix' in deprived neighbourhoods (Arthurson 2008, 2012). In this view, concentrations of social housing are seen as breeding grounds for numerous social and individual problems such as welfare dependency, unemployment, under-achievement in education, lack of professional skills, language deficits and crime and disorder. Creating mixed neighbourhoods would tackle these problems as they bring in middle-class role models into the neighbourhood and prevent the formation of a culture of poverty. In addition, as cities now compete in attracting knowledge workers or the 'creative class', marketing themselves as 'liveable' and 'vibrant', post-industrial cities have a growing interest in marketing themselves as being built on a foundation of 'inclusive' neighbourhoods capable of harmoniously supporting a blend of incomes, cultures, age groups and lifestyles (Rose, 2004).

Aims of mixing strategies

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Determining the aims of mixing strategies – what urban policy makers want to achieve – is not a straightforward task. Often, policy makers and policy documents are rather vague about the expected effects and outcomes, and sometimes certain goals seem implicit. A substantial part of the social mixing literature is devoted to uncovering the underlying motives or understanding the policy rhetoric (Cole and Goodchild 2001; Uitermark, 2003).

Put simply, the immediate aim of mixing policies is to transform the composition of an area's population. It thus seeks to diminish segregation along lines of socio-economic status and ethnic or racial background. However, changing the population make-up seems to be more a means than an end goal. Reasons for mixing strategies are concerned with the expected positive effects of social mixing. In the earliest attempts at social mixing in the UK, 'exposure to a mixed environment would, it was argued, enlarge people's horizons and so benefit society as a whole' (Heraud 1968: 35). This was envisaged not only as physical proximity but as actual face-to-face contact. New Town planning aimed not only to alter the spatial distribution of classes but also to 'change the whole character of urban class relationships (Heraud 1968: 33). Contrary to contemporary aims, social balance then explicitly recognized the existence of class and promoted the co-existence of classes rather than social mobility of underprivileged classes. In addition, it was thought that in working-class communities there was a lack of the leaders necessary for 'healthy' community life (Heraud 1968). In relation to immigration, early attempts of mixing were based on the underlying aim of 'civilizing' immigrants (Heraud 1968).

The idea that mixed areas provide role models and social capital for the benefit of deprived households and the local community as a whole is still apparent in current mixing policies. But there are now a wide variety of aims, or attributed aims, some directed at the well-being of poor households, others directed rather at urban redevelopment and economic growth (Joseph et al. 2007).

Schoon (2001) identifies three rationales which cover most of the aims reported: the 'defending the neighbourhood' argument, the 'money-go-round' argument and the 'networks and contacts' argument. The first holds the expectation that higher-income residents are more capable of drawing public

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resources to the neighbourhood, which would benefit the wider neighbourhood population. The second rationale holds that higher-income groups are better able to support the local economy, and the third holds that ties between poor and affluent residents generate social cohesion and opportunities for social mobility for the poor.

Another, partly overlapping, typology of rationales is offered by Bolt et al. (2010), who argue that the underlying rationale for social mixing policies internationally is the premise that mixed areas will enhance the living conditions and life chances of inhabitants, and will promote more stable communities. They identify four key arguments in terms of provision of the following: opportunities for 'housing careers' (enabling socially mobile families the opportunity to buy a house in their own neighbourhood instead of moving to a better neighbourhood); more social contacts and social cohesion; enhanced social capital, social mobility and integration for underprivileged and ethnic minority inhabitants; and increased integration through planned dispersal of ethnic minority groups, for instance via quotas.

Securing property taxes and investment has also been identified as an aim, and this is an important rationale for US city governments, since they are dependent on tax revenues for investments. However, the securing of such taxes and investment is not an aim for, for instance, Dutch cities, since in the Netherlands state support is not related to taxes. Another aim is to bring about a more even demand for public services, thus decreasing the municipal costs for local services, as happens in Sweden (Andersson et al. 2010).

Policies directed at increasing ethnic or racial mix are in most countries not legally allowed, but in some cases this goal is articulated more or less explicitly by policy makers. In the Netherlands, France and the UK, for example, social mixing is intended to contribute to social cohesion and to the socio-economic and cultural integration of non-Western ethnic minorities.

Strategies for mixing

Two main kinds of strategies can be distinguished: housing or tenure diversification, and sales programs (see Atkinson 2008). Housing or tenure

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diversification entails replacing part of the affordable public or social housing stock with more expensive, owner-occupied housing. For example, in the US, as part of the HOPE VI program, the most distressed public housing projects in high-poverty areas were replaced with mixed-income housing developments (Austin Turner et al. 2009). Housing and tenure diversification in the Netherlands, the UK, and other countries is achieved through demolishing part of the social housing stock and building new owner-occupied or expensive private rental housing (Kleinhans 2004; Atkinson 2008). Strategies of this kind vary according to the scale on which diversification is achieved, in terms of the home, cluster, block, street or neighbourhood, and this is important for the extent to which mixing can actually lead to interaction between different groups of residents (Arthurson 2012). There is a variety of practice for instance in terms of whether the replacement with more expensive housing happens through demolition and new build, through renovation and upgrading of the existing stock, or through adding new housing to the existing stock. An example of the latter approach can be found in Swedish cities, where, due to housing shortage, regeneration does not normally include demolition (van Beckhoven et al. 2006). The new build increases the density and the diversity in tenure and housing price and type.

The second main strategy, deployed in for example Australia, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK, is to sell off part of the rental housing stock (Atkinson 2008). This strategy changes the composition of the housing stock without physically changing anything. Sales programs, such as the Right-To-Buy-scheme in the UK, change the tenure balance but not necessarily the socio-economic mix, since renters may, and often do, buy their own dwelling. In Sweden, tenure conversion has not had significant effects in terms of urban regeneration, since it has occurred mostly in already attractive neighbourhoods with sparse public rental housing (Andersson et al. 2010). However, selling off public housing may improve the perceived value of an area and the housing stock and reduce the stigma of an area, which may create further investment (Atkinson 2008), thus making an area more attractive for higher-income households. Furthermore, local governments could select only affluent buyers, so as to ensure the drawing of high-income households into the area. For example, in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, ill-maintained property – a ‘do-it-

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yourself-house' – were offered for next to nothing by the local government, with the provision that buyers invest in their dwelling by renovating and upgrading it. Originally a feature of first-wave spontaneous gentrification, the local government now deployed this strategy to get rid of 'crack houses' (abandoned buildings where drug dealers and users buy, sell and use drugs) by confiscating them and attracting high-income residents by selling them cheaply.

A frequent critique of social mixing is that housing diversification is always deployed in low-income areas, but never in high-income areas (see Atkinson and Kintrea 2000: 153). There are exceptions, however. For example, in France, municipalities are legally required to reach a minimum of 20 per cent social housing in their housing stock before 2020 (Blanc, 2010). Nevertheless, relatively rich municipalities may circumvent this requirement by paying the fine (Veldboer et al. 2002).

In some urban regeneration areas, social rather than physical strategies are implemented to achieve greater diversity. Social strategies aim to improve the socio-economic situation of low-income residents directly, by investing in education, employment, and so on. For example, in Sweden, in 1999, the government invested in 24 poor, immigrant-dense neighbourhoods in seven municipalities (Andersson et al. 2010). This integrated policy initiative focused on a wide variety of issues such as education, employment, health, democratic participation and culture. However, no physical measures were taken, as 'the general understanding was that this is primarily a social and not a physical problem' (Andersson et al. 2010: 250). The targeted areas thus still house a predominantly deprived population. Whether greater socio-economic mix is achieved through investing directly in people and their opportunities, depends on whether people choose to stay in their neighbourhood once their socioeconomic situation improves; unsurprisingly, in the 24 Swedish areas it has not changed the ethnic mix (Andersson et al. 2010).

Additional strategies to stimulate social mixing are to eliminate income requirements for social rental housing, create fiscal incentives to improve (private) housing and encourage new housing development (Veldboer *et al.*, 2002).

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Critical views

In terms of the aims of social mixing policies and the ideal of social mixing, there has been much debate and critique, mainly around the question of what has been and what can be achieved. One of the problems in this context is that there are tensions between different goals, since pursuing one goal may conflict with others (Tunstall and Fenton 2006). In policy discourse, the benefits of social mixing ‘have become something of an unquestioned gospel’ (Lees, 2008: 2450). Of course, strategies such as housing diversification are *by definition* always effective in some sense, in that they increase the diversity of an area’s population. After all, changing the balance in tenure, affordability or housing style will likely change the balance in income groups. Statistical indicators will also show improvement since social mixing is ‘effective’ in reducing the statistical concentration of social problems: less low-income residents means lower rates of unemployment, school drop-out, language deficiency and so on. However, one could argue that the problems, which are usually attached to individuals, are dispersed rather than solved, as social mixing means that low-income residents are replaced by higher-income residents.

This brings us to the main critique to social mixing often discussed in the gentrification literature: the reduction in housing density and affordable housing that follows from demolition and the ‘vouchering out’ of public housing tenants (who are given vouchers to move to private rental housing) is likely to lead to displacement of low-income families (Atkinson 2004; Walks and Maaranen 2008; Davidson 2008; Lees 2008). If social mixing leads to full gentrification, whether planned or unplanned, low-income residents will be pushed out by rising housing prices; consequently they will be disadvantaged for instance by having access to fewer cheap shopping facilities. For social mixing to work out positively for both new and old residents, it seems necessary to slow or halt the process of gentrification (Walks and Maaranen 2008).

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However, even if a stable mix is achieved, are such neighbourhoods also inclusive? In other words, to what extent is social mixing effective in relation to the ideal of social mixing – to create ‘better’ neighbourhoods that facilitate and stimulate intergroup interactions and mutual understanding, perhaps even collective social capital? There is limited evidence that social mixing strategies have positive effects in terms of mixed relations. Scholars have pointed out that new higher-income residents make no efforts to socially mingle with lower class households (Butler and Robson 2003; Briggs 2006), or that while different classes may share a neighbourhood, their life worlds (including for instance work, leisure, their children’s school) remain segregated (Blokland and van Eijk 2012).

Neighbourhood effect studies provide some evidence that living in high poverty areas negatively affects people’s lives and opportunities, although the effects of neighbourhood are usually much smaller than the effects of individual characteristics or macro-economic conditions, particularly in European countries (Friedrichs et al. 2003; Atkinson 2004). However, that does not necessarily mean that reversing segregation changes people’s lives for the better, as the process of social mixing entails more than changing the housing stock.

Consequently, we should also consider the actual effects of social mixing, some perhaps unintended or unforeseen by policy makers, which are not necessarily positive for low-income residents. In this context, social mixing policies have encountered much critique, mostly in the gentrification literature (for instance Bridge et al., 2012). It is not just that socially mixed neighbourhoods are ineffective in stimulating intergroup relations; the critique goes further: the gentrifiers may not be very tolerant of deviant lifestyles (Smith 1996; Lees 2008). In this view, social mixing may actually lead to conflict, polarization, and, eventually, exclusion (for instance from public space). Pattillo (2009) therefore dismisses the goal of social mixing, arguing conversely for investment in poor black neighbourhoods in American cities ‘as is’. In her view, creating mixed-income communities ‘underestimates the tenacity of racial segregation ..., has not led to substantial investment or prosperity ..., reinforces the unjust status quo ..., [and] promotes a tyranny of the middle class’ (Pattillo 2009: 33).

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This last point refers to the dominance of middle-class norms in defining what orderly and civilized behaviour is, and such norms leave little room for working class or alternative lifestyles. Moreover, others have pointed to what would be the ‘real’ aim (and consequence) of social mixing: to control and manage problem groups and problem places (Uitermark 2003). These consequences of displacement and decrease in affordable housing, whether intended or unintended, form an urgent challenge to achieving inclusive neighbourhoods and cities. There are examples of effective strategies in slowing or halting gentrification, but it takes political will to build or secure social housing, or to remove land from the market (Shaw 2008).

Briggs (2006) concludes that there is little hope for the mixed neighbourhood as a ‘social world’ in which different categories of people meet and mate, though it may work, he considers, if mixed neighbourhoods go together with shared institutions (such as schools and community centres). But Briggs is positive about mixed neighbourhoods as ‘location’, since such places are more likely to profit from job growth, more likely to get the public services required, and less likely to face environmental hazards. However, such benefits are only real benefits when the original, poorer population remains in the neighbourhood to take advantage of such improvements.

Conclusions

While social mixing strategies are deployed in a great number of cities, its effects are still debated. A particular point of debate concerns the benefits for the original low-income population, and processes of displacement. Future directions for policy and research are therefore first to find ways to achieve stable social mixing, through preventing or halting processes towards total gentrification and displacement of low-income residents, and second to achieve inclusive, mixed urban neighbourhoods that tolerate lifestyles that deviate from the middle-class norm and in which shared local institutions bring together different residential categories. As some commentators argue, it takes political will to halt gentrification. Perhaps the current economic crisis will force local and national governments to search for less costly policies and to move away from large-scale demolition and rebuilding. The crisis may thus open up

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opportunities for social rather than spatial measures that are effective in stimulating social mixing without the associated negative consequences.

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