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Neighbourhood Effects and the Welfare State. Towards a European Research Agenda?

By Roger Andersson

Abstract

This paper raises four broad questions related to the neighbourhood effect issue.

(1) Is there really a strong relation between housing mix and social mix? (2) How does the social composition of neighbourhoods affect residents' social interaction and behaviour? (3) Are social opportunities of individual residents related to their neighbourhood context? (4) If there is such a relation, to what extent is this produced through local social interaction?

While the answer to the first question is often taken for granted, not only by planners but also by urban research, the following three have been much discussed over the last decade on both sides of the Atlantic. Most researchers hypothesise that neighbourhood effects would be less pronounced in countries like Sweden, where planning practices, social class differences, segregation patterns, and welfare state regulations substantially differ from those found in the U.S. However, recent empirical studies – based on large longitudinal datasets – confirm the existence of neighbourhood effects also in Sweden. Future European research should not only further explore the above four questions but needs also to systematically engage with issues concerning how neighbourhoods should be defined (scale issues), the importance of time of residency in particular neighbourhoods, and how mix should be operationalised (class, ethnicity etc).

JEL Classifications: D62, I39, J68

1. Introduction

Over the past couple of decades, studies on the impact of neighbourhood compositions on the life chances of individuals are gaining interest and also provide new insights (for an updated overview, see Galster, 2007 and an issue of Housing Studies, 2007, no 5). Most of the empirical research and theoretical inputs so far come from the Unites States, a country that have had a much longer history of racial segregation compared to European countries, but in the wake of increasing immigration to Europe, and fear of social exclusion, issues related to residential segregation have moved high up the urban policy debates in many European countries. The neighbourhood effect issue is one such topic.

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This paper takes its point of departure in one particular country, Sweden, a country that has pursued a social mix policy since the mid 1970s as an instrument to avoid further segregation. (Andersson, 2007) One may doubt the efficiency and criticise the lack of strong commitment by planners and local politicians in relation to this general aim but the country is an interesting case for researching some of the underlying assumptions about neighbourhood compositions and social outcomes. It is interesting from a policy perspective but also due to the existence of internationally unique types of data, which enable researchers to conduct large scale longitudinal studies on individuals (in fact the entire population). Empirically, this paper will make use of results from a series of published and yet unpublished papers using the Swedish data resources.[1] The paper will address four broad questions indicated in figure 1.

1. Is there really a strong relation between housing mix and social mix? This is a fundamental issue since planning for social mix is based on the assumption that the micro structures of the housing stock in terms of tenure, housing types, size and cost of dwellings etc are thought to strongly influence the population composition of neighbourhoods.
2. How does population composition of neighbourhoods affect residents' social interaction and behaviour?
3. Are social opportunities of individual residents related to their neighbourhood context?
4. If there is such a relation, to what extent is this produced through local social interaction? The idea is that social opportunities might be directly or indirectly affected by residency.

Three equally important questions arise if one wants to study these relations: What population mix matters? What scale matters? What time matters? I will deal with these latter questions after having discussed figure 1 more in detail.

2. Housing Mix and Social Mix

Combining basic individual rights – such as the right for people to make a choice where to live in a city – with aims such as striving for population mix in neighbourhoods is easier said than done. The idea behind mix is to create positive social externalities (a collective assett) but the tools cannot be allowed to conflict with the right for people to decide where to live. Hence, no legal opportunities exist that allow politicians to create social mixes directly (see

[1] Andersson (2001); Andersson / Bråmå (2004); Andersson / Musterd (2005, 2006); Musterd / Andersson (2005, 2006); Andersson / Musterd / Galster / Kauppinen (2007); Musterd / Andersson / Galster / Kauppinen (2007); Galster / Kauppinen / Musterd / Andersson (fc).

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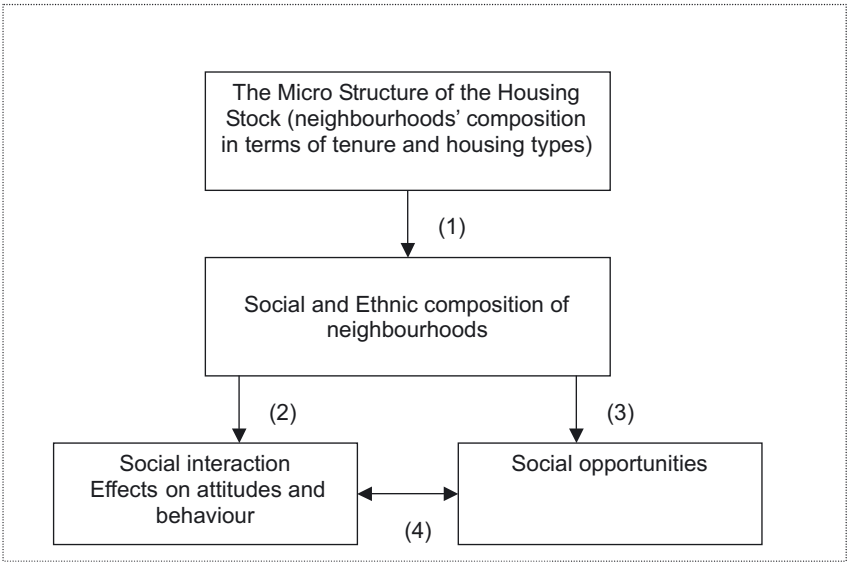
Borevi, 2002, chapter 6, who analyses Swedish housing mix policies since 1975). Therefore, politicians tend to use housing and planning policy tools (i.e. supply measures) instead to reach their goals. In short, the idea is that housing mix (a mix of housing types and tenure types) will create social mix (a mix of households according to their socio-economic position) and that this will create better social opportunities for individuals. In fact, these strategies are based on two crucial assumptions. The first is that social mix really enhances the individual opportunities (i.e. relations 3 and / or 4 in figure 1 are true). The second is that there is a strong relation between social mix and housing mix (relation 1 is true).



Source: Author.

Figure 1: A research programme on neighbourhood mix and neighbourhood effects

These issues are obviously firmly related to the actual plans and activities around the restructuring of certain areas in cities. Today, at least in many European cities, a large share of urban restructuring plans is aimed at transforming large-scale post-war housing estates (van Kempen et al., 2006). The areas in which these estates can be found tend to be rather homogeneous in terms of the type and tenure of the dwellings. They are also often attracting households with a rather weak social position and many immigrants. The dominant idea is that there is housing (type and tenure) homogeneity that creates social homogeneity (concentration of poor people) that reduces social opportunities for

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those who are living there. So, the same set of assumptions applies for these estates and the people living in them. It is worth noting that homogenous high-income areas are never considered to constitute problems for individuals or policy makers. As Andersson (2000) shows in a countrywide analysis on housing segregation in Sweden, the geographical concentration of the rich is much stronger than that of the poor. And in Sweden, as probably elsewhere, the majority of all homogenous areas are dominated by home ownership. In the Stockholm region 288,000 people live in neighbourhoods having more than 90% of the population in home ownership. As a contrast, only 52,000 live in neighbourhoods having a similarly strong dominance of rental dwellings. If more mix as such is wanted, mixing the former seems to be an appropriate recommendation.

From the literature we know that assumptions regarding the relation between housing mix, social mix and social opportunities are insufficiently tested. There will be post-war estates with a homogeneous population where individuals appear to be socially blocked; where social problems and sometimes criminality characterize the daily lives of their inhabitants and where, from time-to-time social tensions get too high, occasionally even resulting in urban riots. These estates are well known locally and often also highly stigmatized. Yet, this does not automatically imply that all post-war housing estates are associated with these problems; neither does it mean that all socially homogeneous (and poor) estates or areas are associated with problems (Musterd / Andersson, 2005)

Musterd and Andersson (2005) find that relation (1) (see figure 1) is rather weak in Sweden as a whole. Further study is needed, not least studies that analyse the relation more in detail for cities of different size. One may hypothesize that although the relation is quite weak at the national level it is probably much stronger in the larger cities (as indicated by the Stockholm example above).

3. Social and Ethnic Mix and Neighbourhood Effects

Many researchers make use of Charles Manski's (2000) distinction between three types of neighbourhood effects: endogenous, contextual (exogenous) and correlated (see Galster, 2006). If we face endogenous interactions, the propensity of an agent to behave in some way varies with the behaviour of the group. In contextual interactions, the propensity of an agent to behave in some way varies with exogenous characteristics of the group members. Correlated effects concern situations when agents in the same group tend to behave similarly because they have similar individual characteristics or face similar institutional environments. As concluded by Manski: "Endogenous and contextual interactions express distinct ways that agents might be influenced by their so-

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cial environments, while correlated effects express a non-social phenomenon." (Manski, 2000, 127).

Many versions of endogenous effects have been forwarded, including effects related to socialization, social networks, local competition over finite resources, and relative deprivation. Exogenous neighbourhood effects occur if the behaviours or attitudes of one neighbour depend on the exogenous (or predetermined, fixed) characteristics of the individual's neighbours, such as ethnicity, religion, or race. For my purpose the distinction between endogenous and exogenous effects are not of immediate importance. Both sets of effects relate to the population composition of a neighbourhood and both relate to the fact that people interact locally and potentially have influence on each other (relation 2 and 4 in figure 1). Manski's third type of possible effects, the correlated neighbourhood effect, is however interesting as it does not presuppose ideas about "contagion effects" or mechanisms related directly to the composition of households. Correlated neighbourhood effects typically do not vary by alterations in neighbourhood household composition, but rather are determined by larger structural forces in the metropolitan area, like locations of jobs and geographic dis-amenities and the structures of local government. These external forces may impinge differentially on different neighbourhoods, but within any given neighbourhood they affect all residents roughly equally, producing thereby correlations in neighbours' outcomes (Galster, 2006; Andersson et al., 2007). Such aspects of peoples' environment are not 'non-social' – and certainly not non-political – but they do not stem from local human to human interaction. Of course, the real effect of the external forces on individuals is depending on individual resources and dispositions.

4. What Mix Matters?

In a Swedish-Dutch collaboration, Roger Andersson and Sako Musterd have produced a series of papers using the statistical database GeoSweden as the empirical foundation. GeoSweden contains yearly demographic, socioeconomic, educational and geographical information on all people residing in Sweden 1990 – 2004 (later to be updated with information for 2005 and 2006). The first two papers (Musterd / Andersson, 2005 and 2006 respectively) are based on the 1991 to 1999 period, and both attempts to analyse the existence and magnitude of neighbourhood effects on (un)employment careers. Both these papers confirm the existence of such effects. Figure 2 gives an overview of the relation between the percentage of unemployed in the 500m by 500m neighbourhoods (entire country) and the percentage of all unemployed in 1991 who remain unemployed also in 1995 and 1999. The levels are different according to national origin and educational groups but all categories experience a clear impact of the residential context (horizontal axis). The effects seem to be rather linear as unemployment increases from 2 to about 15 percent.

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In an enlarged collaboration, including also George Galster and Timo Kauppinen, Swedish data are used for examining several important issues in the neighbourhood effects discourse. In Andersson / Musterd / Galster / Kauppinen (2007) the authors address the crucial question "What mix matters"? This paper explores the degree to which a wide variety of 1995 neighbourhood conditions in Sweden are statistically related to earnings for all adult metropolitan and non-metropolitan men and women during the 1996 – 1999 period, controlling for a wide variety of personal characteristics. They find that the extremes of the neighbourhood income distribution, operationalised by the percentages of adult males with earnings in the lowest 30th and the highest 30th percentiles, hold greater explanatory power than domains of household mix related to education, ethnicity, or housing tenure. Separating the effects of having substantial shares of low and high income neighbours, they find that it is the presence of the former that means most for metropolitan and non-metropolitan men and women, with the largest effects for metropolitan men.

According to research findings in a recently finished EU-funded project, Urban Governance, Inclusion and Sustainability (UGIS), both area-based policies and most mix policies are now partly driven by the fear of ethnic clustering (Andersson, 2003; Beaumont et al., 2003; Palander, 2006). Our findings do not support the hypothesis that the ethnic dimension is the most crucial one in relation to employment and income prospects. On the contrary, we find that the socioeconomic composition of neighbourhoods is the most important dimension, at least in terms of individuals' incomes. It is however important to note that although these results clearly point at the conclusion that mix of income groups is the most important aspect, this is not necessarily true for other types of social outcomes (educational achievements, crime, social cohesion etc.).

A special aspect of the 'what mix matters' issue relates to local concentration of immigrants. A Musterd / Andersson / Galster / Kauppinen (fc) paper addresses the role of ethnic clusters in relation to immigrants' income development. Differences in immigrant economic trajectories have been attributed to a wide variety of factors. One of these is the local spatial context where immigrants reside. This spatial context assumes special salience in light of expanding public exposure to and scholarly interest in "ethnic enclaves". Does concentrating immigrants aid or retard their chances for improving their economic standing? In this paper the authors contribute clear statistical evidence relevant to answering this question. They develop multiple measures of the spatial context in which immigrants reside and assess their contribution to average earnings of immigrant individuals in the three large Swedish metropolitan areas, controlling for individual and regional labour market characteristics. They use longitudinal information about Swedish immigrants during the 1995 – 2002 period. They find no evidence (with one exception) that own-group ethnic enclaves in Sweden typically enhance the income prospects of its resident immi-

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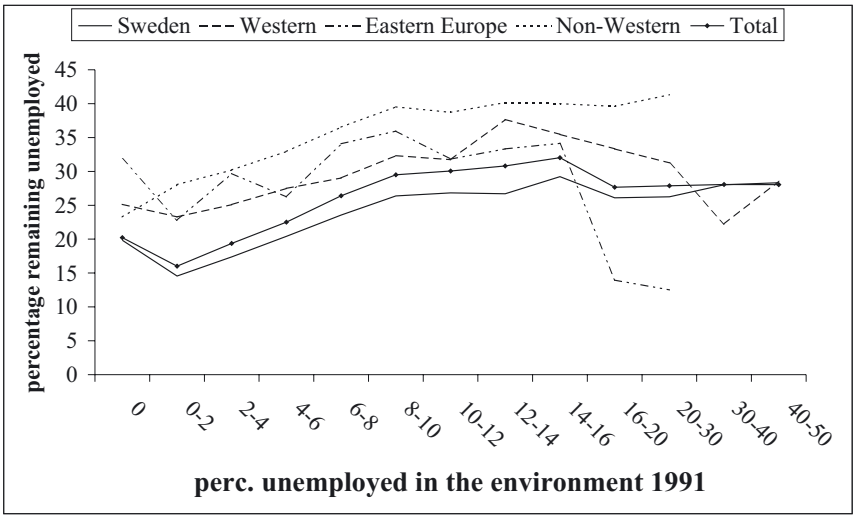
grants, unless individuals use the enclave for a short-term place from which to launch themselves quickly into different milieus.



Source: Musterd / Andersson, 2006.

Figure 2: Percentage unemployed staying unemployed in 1995 and 1999, per environment type, per country of birth

5. What Scale Matters?

In the wider literature on the relationship between man and environment some argue that the direct neighbourhood of individuals has lost significance, especially for life chances and social opportunities of the adult population. Fischer (1982), for example, stated that people tend to become socially integrated through differentiated, looser networks at different scales. However, Bridge / Forrest / Holland (2004, 39), who summarised the research evidences on neighbouring, state that "The evidence for the widely held perception that neighbourliness is declining is in fact mixed."

The 'what scale matters' question is highly relevant to the more general 'does neighbourhood matter' question. That is, if the 'wrong scale' is used in neighbourhood effect studies, we easily may arrive at wrong conclusions about neighbourhood effects; we may over- or underestimate them. Then the question should be asked whether that conclusion holds when other scales are applied.

A study carried out by Johnston et al. (2004) is very interesting from this perspective. They focused on scale and neighbourhood effects on voting beha-

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viour and applied the British Household Panel Study. They created 'bespoke' neighbourhoods, local areas defined for each individual separately; these environments were built up with enumeration district data. Two different types of bespoke neighbourhoods were created: by different numbers of nearest population around the respondent's home (neighbourhoods with nearest 500 around the individual; neighbourhoods with nearest 1000 around the individual, etc); and by different distances from the respondent's home (population within 250 m, population within 500m, etc.; see also Musterd / Ostendorf / De Vos, 2003 and Musterd / Andersson, 2006 in which similar types of bespoke neighbourhoods are used). Their arguments to do so were based on the idea that separate mechanisms and processes may operate at different scales. Among other things they found that there were simultaneous wide-area and highly local neighbourhood effects; labour voting was greater in more deprived areas, but especially so in pockets of extreme deprivation. The authors conclude that: "there are many hypotheses regarding neighbourhood effects in geographical and related literatures, but their successful testing has been hampered by the absence of relevant data. In particular, analysts have lacked data on both individuals and their neighbourhood milieus, which allow the interactions of different types of people in different kinds of local context to be explored. Furthermore, most analyses of neighbourhood effects have been significantly constrained by the nature of the areas for which data are available. In many cases these are relatively large and in almost all cases no data are available to explore variations in the nature and strength of the sought-for effects at different scales." (Johnston et al., 2004, 367).

These statements were the drivers behind a recent Andersson / Musterd (2006) paper in which the question is raised:

> *"to what extent individual social mobility of adults is influenced by individual and neighbourhood characteristics, with a special focus on various levels of scale and various definitions of area compositions."*

We assumed *that if endogenous neighbourhood effects are in operation, such effects would be greater in the immediate surrounding of an individual and they would decrease as the size of the unit increases.* However, for correlated effects it is more difficult to hypothesize which level would be the most important and the spatiality can also be expected to vary according to which outcome we decide to study. In our case, focusing on labour market-related outcomes, both the existence of spatial mismatch (number of jobs available nearby, uneven public transportation services etc) and uneven support provided to people who are unemployed or in need of job information services *can be expected to be more influential at the municipal and urban district levels than at the level of the immediate surrounding of individuals.* Or put the other way around: at higher levels of geographical scale we expect endogenous effects to be less strong than they are at the scale of peoples' closest environ-

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ment. If correlated effects exist at higher levels (municipality, urban district) they would exist also at lower levels, adding up to more strong neighbourhood effects at the lowest geographical scale.

There is, however, one particular aspect of correlated effects that might operate primarily at lower geographical scales, namely spatial stigmatization. Galster (2006) identifies stigmatization both as a type of endogenous effect and as a correlated effect: "Endogenous stigmatization of a place transpires when important institutional, governmental or market actors negatively stereotype all residents of a place and / or reduce the flows of resources flowing into the place because of its household composition. This might occur as the percentage of households in some disadvantaged ethnic group in the neighbourhood exceeds the threshold of where they are perceived by these external actors as "dominant." (...) "External stigma: certain neighbourhoods may be stigmatized regardless of their current population because of their history, environmental or topographical dis-amenities, style, scale and type of dwellings, or condition of their commercial districts and public spaces." (Galster, 2006, 8) It is highly plausible that both types of stigmatization occur at a relatively low geographical scale, such as neighbourhoods and maybe urban districts.

In this study we operationalized 'neighbourhood' at four spatial scales, running from the municipality, over an officially existing neighbourhood definition (SAMS) to coordinate-based bespoke neighbourhoods (environments constructed individual by individual on the basis of coordinate information; 500 meter and 100 meter around each individual, respectively). Using multivariate statistical techniques on employment and income development 1995 – 2002 for all inhabitants residing in Sweden's three largest urban regions, controlling for a wide variety of personal and household characteristics, we were able to confirm our basic hypothesis that contextual effects on labour market performance are strongest at the very local level and non-existent or weak at the municipal level. We were also able to show – indirectly – that stigmatization probably plays a significant role. By analysing a subset of politically targeted poor neighbourhoods we found neighbourhood effects to be much stronger there compared to what we found for non-targeted (presumably much less stigmatized) neighbourhoods. From a policy point of view this result indicates that mixing policies should aim at the micro neighbourhood level.

6. What Time Matters?

There are several types of time issues that so far have not been subject to systematically designed empirical analyses. First of all, some of the theories concerning neighbourhood effects suggest that we should expect instant effects for people residing in particular contexts. Most of the correlated effects

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(spatial mis-match, external stigmatization etc) would have more or less instant impact on for example labour market performance. The same apply for some of the endogenous effects (social networks, local competition over finite resources, and maybe also relative deprivation). Other effects would probably appear as a result of a longer period of exposure to certain environments (socialisation and other processes affecting behaviour and related to local social interaction). Secondly, effects might also last for shorter or longer periods, so that some would disappear if a person moves out of the specific context while other could last for years and maybe even decades regardless of later trajectories (certainly correlated effects on health due to bad environmental conditions, such as air pollution, water quality or nuclear-related radiation, but maybe also labour market careers as related to educational achievements in younger ages).

Sweden is a welfare state with high ambitions to allocate resources according to needs. I have hypothesized that neighbourhood effects in countries like Sweden are probably less pronounced compared to countries having less high ambitions in this regard (Andersson, 2001). But there is also another aspect of urban Sweden that speaks in favour of this hypothesis. In some countries, I get the impression that moving out of poor neighbourhoods is a difficult thing and that many are stuck in less resourceful environments for longer periods, maybe even for life and across generations. This is certainly not the case in Sweden and I will end this paper by proving further evidence on the dynamic nature of Swedish neighbourhoods (see also Andersson / Bråmå, 2004; Bråmå, 2006). I have chosen two adjacent neighbourhoods in the Stockholm region, located in the north-western part of the capital city. One of these neighbourhoods is a quite typical middle-class area, comprising predominantly home owners in single housing having a medium to high level of income. Consequently, few are unemployed. This area, Spånga, has about 6,600 residents. The adjacent area, Tensta, is one of Sweden's most immigrant-dense housing estates, home for about 17,000 people. Many are unemployed and rely on social allowances. The average level of income is very low. Tensta has been targeted by both state-funded and municipality-funded restructuring programmes since many years.

In figure 3 and 4 I display results from a longitudinal study 1990 – 2004 of the 1990 cohort for respective area. The figures show year by year and per age group how many remain in respective area. The very high mobility among younger people is a very distinct feature; half of the 20 – 29 years old have left after only about three years. After 14 years, less than two out of ten remain. In general, out migration is at a higher level in the poor housing estate compared to the middle-class area. While 50 percent of the original cohort had left Spånga by the year 2000, 50 percent of the 1990 Tensta residents had left already in 1996. By the end of the period, 27 percent still live in Tensta, while 38 percent remain in Spånga.

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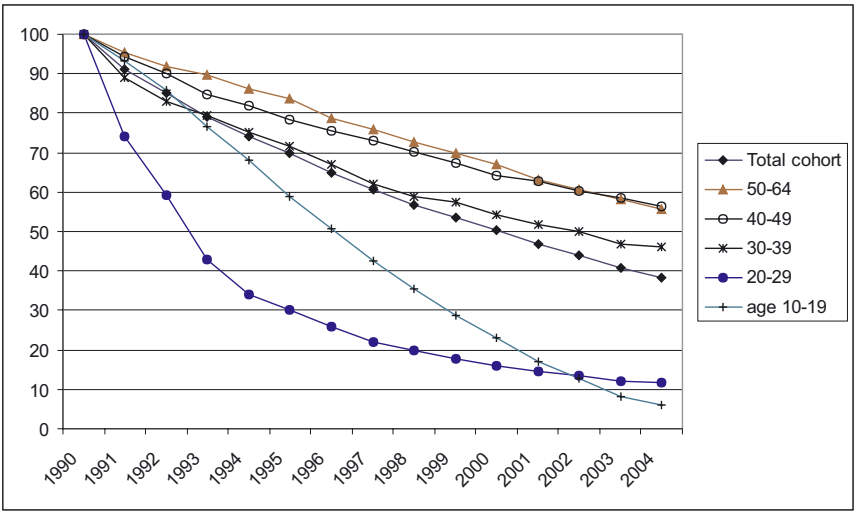
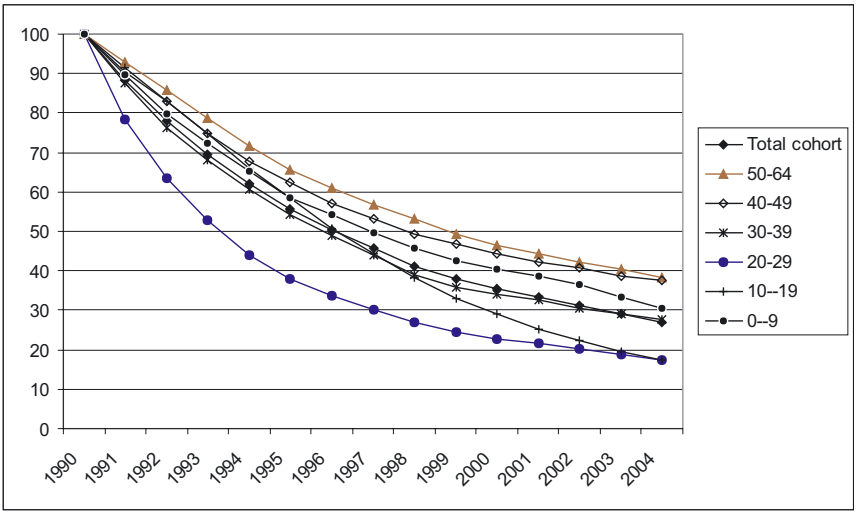


Source: GeoSweden 2004, Institute for Housing & Urban Research, Uppsala university.

Figure 3: Neighbourhood staying frequencies 1990 – 2004 for the 1990 population of Spånga in Stockholm city (area code 1800149; cohort size: $N = 6617$ in 1990; 2537 in 2004)



Source: GeoSweden 2004, Institute for Housing & Urban Research, Uppsala university.

Figure 4: Neighbourhood staying frequencies 1990 – 2004 for the 1990 population of Tensta in Stockholm city (area code 1800151; $N = 15567$ in 1990; 4206 in 2004)

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These data put the issue of neighbourhood effects in an interesting perspective. If one is interested in effects that are believed to be caused by long term exposure to a certain population mix one may chose to focus only on stayers during a certain period. However if that period is rather long, only a selected minority will qualify. I will also hypothesize that the self selection bias thus probably gets bigger (i.e. the problem of unmeasured personal characteristics, see Galster et al., 2007). However, the dynamic feature of neighbourhoods also opens up possibilities for to systematically study possible time lags in effects attributable to residency. What is the difference of being "exposed" to a particular type of neighbourhood during one, three, five or ten years? Swedish data can be used for these types of empirical studies but whether one in fact can attribute a particular outcome to a historical neighbourhood context, controlling for subsequent developments and contexts, is easier said than done. It is by no means an easy methodological task.

7. Conclusions

This paper summarizes some of the basic questions that appear both in the neighbourhood effect literature and in planning practices and policy discourses. It draws on a series of studies using Swedish data.

Clarifying the relation between housing mix and social mix is one important issue. Not only does this relation vary with national and urban contexts, it is probably also shaped by local and regional path dependencies (timing of new construction, balance of supply / demand on the housing market etc). What housing mix that seems to produce a particular form of social mix in one city at one particular point in time does not necessary produce the same outcome in another city or even in the same city five years later. So even if we indeed knew much more about what social mix would be beneficial for optimizing particular social outcomes it would not be easy to know how to produce such a mix. But from a research point of view, we need more studies that for different countries and cities provide better empirical knowledge about the relation between what I call the micro structure of the housing stock and population mix.

In Sweden, some evidence point in the direction that neighbourhood effects indeed exist and that they sometimes are quite strong. Other evidence point towards much less effects (Brännström, 2006). The lack of consensus arises partly out of methodological differences, not least the use of different geographical scales. Penetrating further the issue of what scale matters in different urban contexts is not only wishful for expanding our knowledge about causalities and how certain mechanisms might operate, it is necessary if research results should be used for informing policy makers (planning for mix). Finally, yet another basic question should be raised in future neighbourhood effects studies, namely the time issue. This also relates to hypotheses about causality:

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effects now or later, effects due to instant exposure or cumulative exposure? I have provided some empirical data on neighbourhood population dynamics, data that confirm the need of taking the time issue seriously into consideration.

Not all countries have data resources of the Swedish kind. Realising this, there are still many types of studies that can be conducted without such data. I would in particular welcome more – also international comparative – studies that look into the black box of especially endogenous neighbourhood effects. Such studies would require collecting primary data on the geography of social interaction and how that might differ across social, ethnic and demographic strata and in different urban contexts.

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