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Social Segregation in Urban Area: the results of a project in the metropolitan city of Reggio Calabria

Giuseppe Critelli^{a,*}, Marco Musella^b

^a*LASTRE Laboratory - University "Mediterranea" of Reggio Calabria*

^b*Dipartimento of Political Sciences of the University "Federico II" of Napoli*

Abstract

Several studies have highlighted the importance of social and institutional mechanisms on a urban level that heavily influence the processes of social and economics integration and intensify the phenomenon of spatial segregation. The dynamics of metropolitan development and new factors of differentiation on a social and spatial-temporal level rough out inequalities connected to the management of the complexity of the urban life from the point of view of the health, the quality of life and the active social participation.

We want to pay attention to the segregation processes both on a theoretical level and through some data based on the results of a research sponsored by the "Regione Calabria" to one of its institutions in House.

The focus is on the phenomenon of spatial segregation in Reggio Calabria, that is the result of discrimination processes on a large scale, and especially, on the perception of the urban quality of self-declared segregated people that promote urban contests always more socially divided with consequent urban transformations that nowadays are causes and consequences of radical changes in the organization of daily life with serious consequences on the quality of life.

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* Corresponding author. Tel.: 00393293106729.

E-mail address: giuseppe.critelli@unirc.it

1. Introduction

Many branches of knowledge usually study the social segregation in the urban area, above all in the Anglo-Saxon countries, even if in the last years a debate about the insert and the stabilization of populations that are changing their way of life has been opened also in Italy.

The current situations of segregation and behaviors of discrimination imply the existence of a potential and unexploited economic growth, both as human resources and social and economic connections.

Cities have become more and more the place where phenomena of extreme poverty, social disadvantage and social segregation are concentrated. The social and institutional mechanisms on a urban level that influence heavily the processes of social and economic integration and that increase the phenomenon of social segregation are many (Oroz 2005). This phenomenon damages the urban fabric and makes problematic the urban policy.

It often produces the growth of areas with social disadvantage, the birth of mono-cultural and mono-ethnic areas and the estrangement of the citizens from public spaces. So the phenomenon of self-segregation, in particular that one of rich people that are creating enclaves more and more protected, and “divided city” has started (Calame and Charlesworth, 2012). The responses to these questions are very important for the plan of a correct policy that may affect vicious circles of segregation and start inclusion processes.

This work intends first identify the evolution of the spatial segregation concept in the literature and after to present a very incisive model of integration of social and territorial policies and to present some results of a research about the “perception” of segregation of the population of the Metropolitan city of Reggio Calabria.

2. Theoretical aspects of spatial segregation

The literature about the spatial and urban dynamics has shown interest in the phenomena of spatial concentration and segregation, starting from the hypothesis that they are “a not uniform spatial distribution in respect to the remaining population”. (Dematteis, 1993). The first interpretative scheme about the social segregation in urban area is the result of the analysis developed by the Ecological School of Chicago, that has elaborated a study about the segregation in urban area as a function of the social condition (Park, Burgess, 1925).

Starting from the 1970s, in the USA, the interpretation of poverty concentration and residential segregation of ethnic minorities, has become a central theme in the economic and urban reflections. All that through the measurement of the social disadvantage and the neighborhood distress, that is one of the essential problems of the theories of the underclass and its empirical applications (Abramson and Tobin 1990; Kasarda 1993).

Wilson has conceived a very interesting approach about the formation of a new underclass. Leaving from a study about the case of the Chicago ghetto, he affirms that the urban underclass is made up of individuals whose life is between the unemployment and a persistent underemployment and that live in spatially isolated areas.

In North-American studies, the segregation has been studied through some indexes related to the ethnic identity of the individuals, while in the European ones it has been studied through the social economic status and the composition for social classes, gender, the instruction level of residential population and the housing quality.

The problem of the spatial segregation is also the theme of analysis of Van Kenpen (1994) that hypothesizes a global-dual city as the final result of the division process in the urban space of the big city.

Later the concept of a life opportunity is taken into account to clarify the role of the segregation and spatial concentration of poverty, affirming that is the result of the lack of life opportunities of urban segregated.

Ellin (1995) considers the segregation in urban area closely related to the pluralism conflicts and that appears as the rejection of the diversity and with the multicultural difference, a concept re-arranged and extended by Aguilera (2002). He identifies the segregation as a voluntary or involuntary condition of isolation in an urban area of a particular social group.

The segregation is a crucial factor in the reorganization of the welfare. It is often connected to the low income and it often starts from the individual peculiarity and the idea of the exclusion related to the territory through the connection of the individual disadvantage and the less well-off quarters.

This phenomenon activates a mechanism of interpretation of the need and a planning of institutional responses that aims at to the containment of the segregation effects through economic policies on a particular target group of individuals that live in some critical contexts.

They address the attention to the phenomenon of segregation as a result of processes of discrimination on a large

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