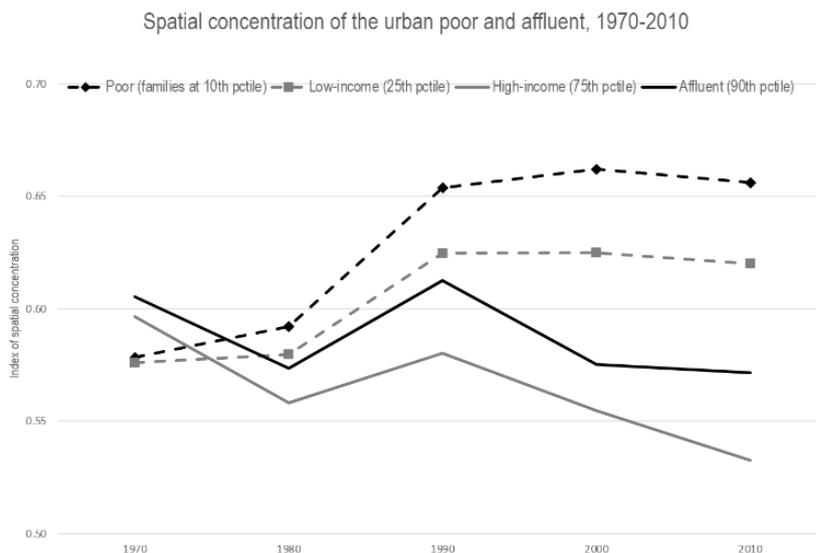


# Unravelling the interwoven dimensions of geographic inequalities webinar

## Breaking down the barricades – Space and Inequality in the US – Pat Sharkey Princeton University

- Like spatial inequalities, Covid-19 is a good example of a challenge that requires sacrifice for a the best collective outcome
- In the last 80 years we have experienced many grand challenges that require a sacrifice for the best collective outcome, but we have not achieved this in many areas
  - o E.g. Deaths of despair (suicide, drugs and alcohol) rapid increase in US since 2000; upward mobility has steadily decreased since 1940; dramatic rise in economic inequality since 1980; enormous poverty gaps have not narrowed at all; mass shootings steadily rising; police killings have not decreased; imminent threat of climate change
- Why are we so bad at solving it?
  - o Trust in government is no longer there – most Americans in past 50 years now no longer trust the government to solve large scale problems
- Policies were put in place to ‘work around’ problem rather than solve it. From 1960s starting from ‘red line’ neighbourhoods, motorways, new towns – gave people a mechanism to escape poor areas, which came from a strategic level. Rooted in longstanding racial inequality in the US.
- Currently, geographical inequalities are magnifying inequality and stopping upward mobility



Poverty has gradually become more compressed in space

Sharkey and Rieger. 2021. “The Consolidation of Poverty.”

## Person centred approach to spatial inequality - Professor Gwilym Price – Sheffield Methods Institute

- The more unequal income distribution becomes – the more hierarchical society becomes – this is borne out in the data e.g. more mental illness in unequal countries, more trust in governments in equal countries

#### 4. Our national reliance on barricades has had three consequences:

- Barricades facilitate segregation and concentrate disadvantaged groups and social problems in space.
  - Barricades amplify inequality.
  - Barricades reduce the chances for collective mobilization and problem-solving.
- When people can see such differences in their own circumstances (i.e. big house next to small house) the person in the small house is affected in their sense of status which affects sense of worth, wellbeing and esteem
  - Set of interventions which centred on segregation, barricades and vote seeking from political parties.
  - Nordic countries held up as examples where people are willing to sacrifice to address inequality as they have a firm sense of solidarity. So is it solidarity, and lack thereof that really effects people's self-esteem? It is a tautology.
  - Social media reinforces perceptions of status – comparing self to others and feeling low. This exacerbates spatial inequality.
  - Inequality in engagement also exacerbates the problem. For example - not including prisoners in large scale surveys has proved to skew reality.

#### Policy implications

- Is mixed tenure housing the way forward? Yes – mixed tenure is over simplified. Not just about percentages of types of properties. About structures – social mobility for example. In many ways, we don't know the answers as we have not tried and so don't have the information. However, we do have evidence that places that are more heterogeneous do better.
- Communities with concentrated poverty are places of disinvestment, punitive policies, no political power – how do we know what it would be like otherwise? The disinvestment comes from policy decisions. If investments were distributed across communities in an equal way then we would have much less to worry about with spatial inequality.

#### Recommended Reading

On Institutions:

Nast, Julia, und Talja Blokland. 2014. „Social Mix Revisited: Neighbourhood Institutions as Setting for Boundary Work and Social Capital“. *Sociology* 48 (3): 482–99.

Weck, S. 2019. 'Together apart' or 'apart together'? – middle-class parents' choice of playgrounds and playground interactions in socially diverse neighbourhoods. *Social & Cultural Geography* 20 (5), 710–29.

Quantitative studies:

Blokland, Talja & Eijk, Gwen. (2010). Do People Who Like Diversity Practice Diversity in Neighbourhood Life? Neighbourhood Use and the Social Networks of 'Diversity-Seekers' in a Mixed Neighbourhood in the Netherlands. *Journal of ethnic and migration studies*, 36 (2).

Qualitative studies:

Barwick, Christine. 2017. „Are Immigrants Really Lacking Social Networking Skills? The Crucial Role of Reciprocity in Building Ethnically Diverse Networks“. *Sociology* 51 (2): 410–28.

Weck, Sabine, und Heike Hanhörster. 2015. „Seeking Urbanity or Seeking Diversity? Middle- Class Family Households in a Mixed Neighbourhood in Germany“.

*Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 30 (3): 471–86.

*Uneasy Street: The Anxieties of Affluence* - Rachel Sherman

A recording of the event can be watched here:

<https://bit.ly/InequalityGeographyWebinar>