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**DOI**

[10.4337/9781788116152.00023](https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788116152.00023)

**Publication date**

2022

**Document Version**

Author accepted manuscript

**Published in**

Handbook on Urban Social Policies

[Link to publication](#)

**Citation for published version (APA):**

Boterman, W., & Ramos Lobato, I. (2022). Local segregation patterns and multilevel education policies. In Y. Kazepov, E. Barberis, R. Cucca, & E. Mocca (Eds.), *Handbook on Urban Social Policies: International Perspectives on Multilevel Governance and Local Welfare* (pp. 219-233). (Research handbooks in urban studies). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781788116152.00023>

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## <a>CHAPTER 14

### LOCAL SEGREGATION PATTERNS AND MULTILEVEL EDUCATION POLICIES

*Willem Boterman and Isabel Ramos Lobato*

#### <b> Introduction

Educational systems can be key institutions for social mobility. At the same time, based on their structure, curricula and selection mechanisms, they can also be a key factor in social reproduction (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Ball 2003) in quite intricate and context-dependent ways. Inequalities across social class, ethnicity and gender are therefore strongly influenced by educational policies.

School segregation — the unequal distribution of children of different social and ethnic backgrounds across schools — is one of the more important manifestations of educational inequality. Although being characteristic of, and a problem of, the entire educational system, school segregation always appears in specific spatial and local institutional contexts and is predominantly an urban phenomenon (Boterman et al. 2019; Butler and Hamnett 2007). One area of research has analysed the relationship between residential and school segregation, illustrating how residential patterns are central for understanding school segregation, particularly in primary education (Butler and Hamnett 2007). Meanwhile, other studies have mainly focused on the role of parents' choice strategies in school segregation and educational inequality (Boterman et al. 2019; Wilson and Bridge 2019). Although there is a substantial body of literature

that integrates institutional perspectives with the choice behaviour of parents and resulting social and spatial inequalities, less attention has been paid to the interrelationships between, on the one hand, institutional contexts and the role of their regulations and policies, and on the other, the spatial context in which parents select schools. However, since policies provide the institutional context parents operate within, they thus set the framework of rules and sanctions enabling certain practices and hindering others. They have a significant effect on parents' school choices, and subsequently, on school segregation (Raveaud and Van Zanten 2007).

Across the globe, there has been a trend towards the decentralisation of management and administration in education associated with the introduction of quasi-markets, higher levels of competition, school choice, and evaluation and performance indicators (Klitgaard 2007; Makris 2018). The aim of the decentralisation of responsibilities is to make educational systems more efficient, anticipating that 'the redistribution of power to a school level will stimulate educational innovations designed to meet the needs of pupils, parents, and employers' (West et al. 2010, p. 452). In combination with free parental school choice, allowing schools to display more competencies and autonomy is mainly assumed to induce competition between schools, and subsequently, expected to result in quality improvements in education (Forsey et al. 2008). Both the decentralisation and marketisation of educational systems are part of a broader performance-oriented, neo-liberal shift in education that can be discerned across most national contexts (Ball 2003; Makris 2018). It has already been suggested that this introduction of market mechanisms in education has exacerbated inequalities within and between schools (Ball 2003; Hursh 2005; Makris 2018). However,

decentralisation does not necessarily equate to neo-liberalization, as evidenced by the historically decentralized systems of social democratic Norway and Sweden.

Explaining the institutional patterns and causes of segregation in different spatial contexts is an analytical endeavour that should consider multiple layers: educational and spatial policies; the power of and the room to manoeuvre at each level; and the ways in which the different levels are interwoven. Policies aimed at combatting segregation and educational inequalities originate from and affect several institutional levels, whereas the level of attention and the understanding of how to deal with these inequalities are not necessarily consistent. Moreover, besides the different competencies at various administrative levels impacting upon local segregation patterns, the gap between official policy and policy-in-action should be considered (Ramos Lobato 2017; Van Zanten 2005). This depends on interests, knowledge, autonomy, and the subsequent interpretation of regulations by local educational authorities and schools. Studying the interplay between educational policies and dynamics at different institutional levels and how these are embedded within particular spatial patterns is therefore a prerequisite to understanding how segregation manifests itself in a specific local context, how it is reproduced and how it can be mitigated.

In this chapter we aim to cast light on the relationship between local education policies and school segregation patterns from an international perspective. Therefore we first present an overview of the explanations of school segregation and how they are related to variations in educational policies and territorial structures. We have focused on three main dimensions and their relationship in shaping school segregation patterns at the local level as follows: 1) the (local) institutional context; 2) the spatial context;

and, 3) parents' school choice practices. To explain the interrelationship between these, we discuss two recent policy interventions, both of which pay attention to the significance of parents' school choices for school segregation: one by controlling, and the other by expanding parental choice. In the first example, Mülheim an der Ruhr, North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), Germany, increased parental choice was introduced within a context in which geography previously played a pivotal role. In the second example, Amsterdam, the Netherlands, parental choice was free but is now tied more closely to place of residence. By drawing on these and other international examples, our aim was to uncover the (institutional) mechanisms behind school segregation and to shed light on both the opportunities of, and limits to, school policy interventions.

### **<b>The landscapes of school segregation: institutional and territorial explanations**

School segregation emerges from the complex interplay between demographics, geography and institutional contexts, which come together in what has been referred to as educational landscapes (Boterman et al. 2019). The patterns and trends of segregation, as well as the policies combating them, are thus strongly differentiated between different educational landscapes. Nevertheless, we can discern several dimensions that play a central role in shaping school segregation patterns at the local level. These are all closely interlinked. First, educational landscapes are institutional contexts which are a complex and multi-layered amalgam of national, regional and local education policies and regulations that guide and structure schools' admission policies

and strategies, parents' school choice practices and educational outcomes. Second, these dimensions have territorial aspects relating to the size and distribution of different social and ethnic groups in urban space, but also to the location of different schools. Both institutional and territorial dimensions of school segregation are strongly interrelated and therefore often difficult to separate. Third, school segregation patterns at the local level are formed by how parents navigate these educational landscapes differently. Parents' choices and the underlying norms and values are based on wider relationships of class and race, and these are strongly embedded in the territorial and institutional context in which parents operate; ultimately, these all contribute to specific patterns of segregation.

Using these three dimensions as the key analytical perspectives of this chapter, the following section makes this interrelationship more explicit. Whilst predominantly focusing on the institutional dimensions of school segregation, we then discuss how geography is intertwined with the territorial dimension and how parents interact with this.

#### **<c>Institutional dimensions of school segregation: Multi-level governance**

Amongst the key institutional aspects particularly affecting levels and patterns of school segregation are allocation regulations and the degree of parental choice (catchment areas versus choice-based systems); school autonomy with regard to the admission process, as well as funding schemes; and school differentiation (e.g. public vs private, religious denominational schools, or schools with a specific pedagogical focus) (Boterman et. al. 2019; Wilson and Bridge 2019).

Although school segregation always manifests itself at the local level, the institutional context in which it unfolds is shaped by policies and governance at different administrative levels: national, regional, local and school. Thus, understanding the way in which educational inequalities manifest themselves in segregation requires a multilevel approach. Much of the literature discusses educational contexts from the perspective of the national state and tends to compare the performance and equity of national educational systems (OECD 2012a; Van de Werfhorst and Mijs 2010). This is related to the fact that typically, general policies, such as pupil selection and tracking, are decided at the national or federal level. However, as illustrated in Figure 14.1, most countries are highly variegated in terms of how the competencies, policies and their effects are organized across different levels.

**Figure 14.1: Share of decisions taken in educational policy in OECD countries at different government levels**

<Figure 14.1. 1 here>

Source: OECD 2012b

The Netherlands, England and Estonia stand out as countries in which schools are highly autonomous; however, at the other extreme, Greece, Luxembourg and Norway allow school to have little autonomy, but differ in terms of the level of government that makes most of the decisions. In some countries, such as Norway and the USA, municipalities are the key level of decision-making, whereas in Luxembourg, Mexico and Portugal, education policy is centralized at the national level. As a result of its federal structure

and the strong tradition of regional government, Germany has a fairly diffuse distribution of power between the various levels. However, at the federal level the legislative purview in the field of education is within the sixteen Federal States (*Bundesländer*).

When studying local patterns of school segregation, the distribution of competencies is highly relevant because: 1) the laws and regulations that govern the funding and the conditions for founding, closure, and operating of schools largely shape the specific educational landscapes at the local level; and, 2) the distribution of competencies determines the legal scope (local) governments have to counteract and/or mitigate segregation. Consequently, educational inequality can be produced and hence should be addressed in quite heterogeneous ways and on distinct territorial levels. Thus, whilst the decision-making power at the local level seems to be most relevant for explaining segregation patterns, and certainly for counteracting them, a multilevel approach is needed to understand local segregation patterns.

In more centralized systems, schools have little autonomy, and the central state has a strong influence. Nevertheless, regional and municipal differences are substantial. For instance, in France, segregation is strongly influenced by national policies aimed at creating an equitable unitary system. However, these national policies play out differently in different places. The *carte scolaire* — the regulations that tie schools into their spatial context to ensure that educational facilities fit with local demands or families — is one of the key elements of national school policies aimed at regulating the intake of schools, but also to ensure social diversity (Felouzis et al. 2018). In contexts like the US and in the Nordic countries, in which municipalities are autonomous in terms of



how school funding and allocation mechanisms are organized, this higher autonomy creates more variation in the institutional dimensions that may lead to different levels of segregation in cities within the same country.

Within educational systems where schools are highly autonomous, such as in England and the Netherlands, local school assignment and enrolment policies are sometimes centralized for the whole city. However, in many instances, they are left to the discretion of the school. The degree to which schools can set the rules and/or have the liberty to interpret those rules can significantly affect school segregation. In addition to the principal's promotional role in advertising or canvassing (Ramos Lobato 2017), higher levels of school autonomy with regard to the admission process elevates the importance of the interaction between parents and the school and is often biased for and against specific types of parents. The surveillance of schools and the increasing competition for resources can create a system in which schools and principals are discouraged even from reducing inequalities, and thus play an additional role in reinforcing school segregation (Hursh 2005; Jennings 2010; Ramos Lobato 2017; Van Zanten 2005). The autonomy of schools to make official rules and to apply these and other unwritten rules are therefore another key factor in explaining uneven school outcomes.

The significance of school autonomy in explaining segregation depends on the relationships between schools and other governance levels. In the context of the Netherlands, for instance, schools primarily deal with the national ministry. Most decisions regarding the curriculum, freedom of school choice, the founding of new schools, allocation of resources, and quality control are organized at the national level.

Several institutions, such as the Inspectorate of Education – which oversees the quality of schools and the closure of those that fail to meet minimum standards – are independent of the ministry to various degrees. However, in terms of the implementation of these policies, school boards have a high degree of autonomy. As a result of this autonomy, institutionally grown educational landscapes across the country are highly diverse and are characterized by high levels of segregation (Boterman 2018).

Within systems where competencies are more-or-less equally divided across different levels, variations in institutional arrangements are even greater. In Germany, where the legislative purview in the field of education lies with the sixteen *Bundesländer*, their educational systems differ in many respects, including with regard to the duration of primary schooling or the types of secondary school (West et al. 2010). However, the distribution of competencies and the density of regulations are comparatively strong and complex: whilst the *Bundesländer* set the general educational framework, the regional educational authorities are responsible for the schools' administration, the teacher training seminars and the supervision of the local educational authorities (Sparka 2007; MSB 2005). The local educational authorities are 'solely' in charge of the administration of specific school types, such as primary schools or special needs schools, while the municipalities have minimal input in educational policy (except for 'external matters', such as school development planning (OECD 2014, Sparka 2007; MSB NRW 2005; West et al. 2010)). With regard to the autonomy of individual schools, Germany ranks amongst the countries in which the schools themselves have very little control over their educational policy and administration (OECD 2012b). However, in recent years, principals have benefitted from increased

autonomy on school budgets, staffing decisions and programmes (OECD 2014).

Aside from the distribution of responsibilities, the differentiation of the school landscape is another factor in explaining school segregation patterns at the local level. In many contexts, a public-school system exists next to or is integrated within a wide variety of faith-based or otherwise denominational schools. For instance, in Scotland, Germany and the Netherlands, for historical reasons several schools specifically provide education to various religious groups, notably Catholics, Protestants and Jews. In NRW, Germany, for instance, children with the same faith have a priority claim for admission to denominational primary schools<sup>1</sup>based on the NRW constitution (Landtag NRW 2016). Thus, this has always offered a loophole for parents to circumvent disadvantaged, less reputable catchment area schools and contributed to primary school segregation (Riedel et al. 2010). In recent years, Islamic and Hindu schools were also founded in educational contexts such as Flanders and the Netherlands (Merry and Driessen 2005). Moreover, some state-funded and private schools additionally offer education based on different pedagogical traditions, such as Waldorf/Steiner, or language (such as French schools or English-instruction International schools).

### **<c>Territorial dimensions of school segregation**

Research across many countries has illustrated how residential patterns are central to understanding school segregation. Where children live largely determines where they attend school. This is especially true within educational contexts where a near monopoly of public schools is combined with school catchment areas, or where there is one public school in a district and few, if any, alternatives. For example, in Helsinki (Bernelius and

Vaattovaara 2016), 95 per cent of the pupils attend a school in their residential neighbourhood. In this case, school segregation is almost a neat reflection of residential patterns. Interestingly, even at the other end of the spectrum, in contexts where parents enjoy a strong degree of choice and are able to choose a school outside of their residential neighbourhood, such as in Dutch cities, most pupils nevertheless attend a nearby school. This implies that whilst school admission policies mediate the relationship between residential location and school segregation, in all contexts, geography matters.

Residential and school segregation are tightly interlinked in a ‘geography of education’ (Burgess et al. 2005; Butler and Hamnett 2007). As demonstrated in this literature, the close relationship between neighbourhood and school implies that the residential mobility of young family households’ is also often informed by school choice considerations (Bernelius and Vilkama 2019; Hamnett and Butler 2013). However, parents’ school choice strategies (which are dealt with in more detail in the next subsection) are not only highly dependent on the education system and its (local) admission criteria, but also on residential structures, local housing systems, and of course, parents’ resources (Boterman et al. 2019; Maloutas and Ramos Lobato 2015). Moving to specific neighbourhoods to be close to the ‘right’ schools – often driven by class- and racially- based considerations of avoidance and peer-group seeking (Boterman 2013; Boterman et al. 2019) – is a common phenomenon in many places. However, it is particularly true within education systems where catchment areas are the principal way to ensure access to the ‘right’ school (Bernelius and Vilkama 2019; Reay et al. 2011). As the case of London illustrates, even in contexts without official catchment

areas, one's distance from school can become the major access criterion (Butler and Hamnett 2011). This is based upon a combination of existing school performance rankings and the insufficient supply of places at popular schools. As a result, apartments close to popular schools have become highly valued in London since they guarantee privileged access. In the context of more geographically dispersed disadvantage, the 'distance to school' criteria can thus 'be seen as means of cementing middle-class social closure around the education market' (Butler and Hamnett 2011, p. 46).

While high levels of residential segregation are usually accompanied by segregated schools, low levels of residential segregation do not necessarily result in mixed schools. In this case, since ensuring access to the right schools is not necessarily linked to residential mobility, the level of school segregation is often higher than that of residential segregation (Boterman et al. 2019; Burgess et al. 2005; Karsten et al. 2006; Schindler Rangvid 2007; Wilson & Bridge 2019). In cities with low levels of residential segregation and mobility, such as Athens, Greece, complete educational insulation with 'people like us' is barely possible. Depending on their resources, parents thus pursue stratified education tactics: while upper middle-class parents living in mixed neighbourhoods often send their children to large, elite private schools located in the bourgeois residential areas of the city, middle or lower middle-class parents may try to colonize a local public school (Maloutas and Ramos Lobato 2015). The underlying common reason is that these parents try to avoid the school their children are normally assigned to within the public education system.

The question arises as to why parents put all this effort into the choice of and the access to the 'right' schools - a question that will be dealt with in the next subsection.

### <c>Parental choice

A third dimension that has been suggested in school segregation is the degree to which parents can and do make choices, including opting-out of their neighbourhood schools. In many educational contexts, the circuit of private education (Ball et al. 1995; Ball 2003) is a growing alternative for families who can afford it. Private schools are a common feature of highly marketized school systems, such as the US, but are also significant in European cities such as Paris, Milan, and Barcelona (for an overview, see Boterman et al. 2019). Even within public systems in social democratic welfare states, such as in Denmark, the number of private schools has increased by 50 per cent since 2000 (Skovgaard Nielsen and Andersen 2019). Interestingly, the expansion of private schools typically occurs in the larger cities, pointing to a specific interaction of local conditions and educational governance. The expansion of private education in these contexts has an evident effect on social segregation in schools, especially along the lines of class. Apart from private education, the expansion of choice-based education provision has also increased the alternatives within publicly funded schools. Publicly funded schools with specific pedagogical profiles and founding charters have mushroomed in a wide range of national and local contexts. Although the effects are not identical, the expansion of choice has increased the sorting and segregation of pupils (Renzulli et al. 2005; Wilson and Bridge 2019) between, but also within, districts.

Both the decentralisation of competencies and the degree of differentiation of the local school landscape – and thus the options between which parents can select – is closely associated with more parental choice and subsequently with greater

segregation, both along ethnic and social class lines (Boterman 2018). Several studies have demonstrated that highly-educated parents use their social and cultural capital to gain access to desired schools (Boterman 2013; Ramos Lobato and Groos 2019; Reay et al. 2011; van Zanten 2005). More generally, longstanding research argues that the entire educational system favours the interests of the middle classes (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Ball 2003; Reay et al. 2011). School segregation is therefore not only an outcome of unequal opportunities throughout the entire school selection, assignment and enrolment process, it also contributes to reproducing and consolidating existing socio-economic inequalities.

#### **<b>Desegregation policies at the local level**

Most policies that aim to achieve desegregation (or integration, as it is also referred to) come from the United States. When public schools were prohibited from selecting pupils according to racial categories, quite successful desegregation policies were enacted at different levels of government (Frankenberg et al. 2019). However, whilst desegregation policies were abandoned in later decades at the federal level, local efforts to actively desegregate schools continued in many places. Perhaps the best-known example of this is the so-called 'bussing', which worked by driving disadvantaged children to 'white' schools outside their neighbourhoods, enabling them to 'escape' from their poor and segregated neighbourhood schools. However, since white privileged parents reacted by increasingly avoiding these schools and enrolling their children in private ones, the

programme had minimal success in increasing social and racial mixing at public schools (Renzulli et al. 2005). In response to the rise in private education, voucher programmes were introduced to give disadvantaged children access to private schools, with mixed results (Klitgaard 2008).

School segregation has also become a contested issue within European cities, and in recent decades there have been attempts to desegregate schools in several countries, including Sweden, Denmark, or the Netherlands (Bakker et al. 2011). Bussing was similarly attempted in some European countries, such as Germany. However, due to the high financial costs, but especially because the attempt worked only in one direction, the programme was abandoned quite quickly (Baur 2012). Transferring children with a migrant background to 'white' schools, whilst trying to impose the same policy on children without migration backgrounds, was politically unenforceable.

Another attempt to overcome the barriers that residential segregation may present is the introduction of more parental choice. However, as demonstrated by research in several countries, it appears that this attempt only exacerbated levels of school segregation because of the uneven and socially selective exercise of choice by different groups of parents (Oberti and Savina 2019; Wilson and Bridge 2019).

In contrast, a third line of desegregation policies goes in the opposite direction. So-called charter schools – schools with a special profile, such as magnet schools – were introduced with the aim of attracting families with a higher social status to public schools in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Goldring 2009). However, this strategy has also been highly criticized for leading to unexpected 'skimming effects'. Since an increasing proportion of privileged parents started to enrol their children in charter schools, they



simultaneously withdrew their children from other schools – in which the proportion of disadvantaged children rose accordingly. At the same time, the magnet schools' increasing attractiveness amongst more privileged families living outside the neighbourhood lowered the chances of disadvantaged children living nearby to be accepted (Goldring 2009). Similar effects can also be observed outside the US, for instance in Germany, or even in the more egalitarian Finland, where magnet schools, or schools with special classes, aggravate segregation between or even within schools (Kosunen 2014; Nast 2020).

A final type of desegregation policy – mainly conducted in several US cities, such as Boston or Seattle – entailed experiments with 'controlled choice'. School boards agreed on an integrated system in which parents could express a choice, but several criteria guided the intake of pupils, according to a carefully crafted allocation mechanism. These took account of socio-economic status, and before 2011, racial composition (Frankenberg 2017). Controlled choice experiments based on socio-economic benchmarks have also been conducted in the Netherlands (Paulle et al. 2016). Interestingly, these desegregation initiatives in the Dutch context of free school choice were aimed at tightening the relationship between residential neighbourhood and school (Felouzis et al. 2018), as was the case with the French *carte scolaire*.

**Table 13.1: Desegregation policies**

Type of intervention	Intended mechanism
'Bussing'	Decrease influence neighbourhood

Expanding choice	Decrease influence neighbourhood
Controlled choice policies	Reducing school autonomy/ increase influence neighbourhood
Centralising admission policies	Reducing school autonomy
Tenure mixing	Change neighbourhood populations

Source: Author's own

In conclusion, the types and effectiveness of desegregation policies are context specific. Table 13.1 summarizes the interventions through which segregation has been and is addressed, and the mechanisms through which they are intended to work. In countries with very rigid public systems, many policies seek to relax the connection between residential and school segregation through bussing, vouchers or simply expanding choice to counteract segregation. In choice-based systems, bringing in more control is supposed to work against segregation. Thus, to understand how social policies can effectively reduce segregation, one must analyse the idiosyncrasies of the specific local educational landscape. To this end, we now briefly present two 'opposing' policy interventions that significantly changed school choice and, subsequently, the segregation dynamics within two educational landscapes.

#### <C>Expanding choice: Mülheim, North Rhine Westphalia, Germany

One type of policy intervention associated with changing dynamics of segregation is offered by the case of Mülheim an der Ruhr, in North Rhine-Westphalian (NRW), Germany. In the State of NRW, where access to primary schools had previously been organized through primary school catchment areas, free primary school choice was implemented in 2008. The reform was not targeted at school segregation, but rather

part of a paradigm and performance-oriented shift in NRW education policy towards an educational market with a stronger focus on quality assessment and competition (Ramos Lobato and Groos 2019). Although there had always been room for (illegal) choice, this reform was clearly advertized as a tool to enable all parents to apply for a primary school suiting their individual preferences (MSW NRW 2005).

Nevertheless, there still is a legal claim for a place in the nearest primary school (MSB NRW 2005). Consequently, spatial proximity still plays a role in parents' school choices. This is particularly true for less affluent parents since travel expenses are only reimbursed for travel to the nearest primary school (MSW NRW 2005). The new legislation is thus likely to be an option particularly for those parents equipped with higher levels of economic, social and cultural capital to increase their chances of entry to their preferred primary school. Moreover, official admission criteria are missing and the final decision on the admission of pupils is up to the school principals (MSB NRW 2005). Thus, although not intentionally implemented as such, the new legislation tremendously extends principals' leeway for admitting pupils.

#### **<c>Controlling choice: Amsterdam, The Netherlands**

Another example of a policy intervention changing the dynamics of choice can be seen through recent developments in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. In Amsterdam, the boards of primary schools in the city collectively agreed to reform their admission policies through a centralized enrolment system. The aim of the new admission policy was to make the process more transparent and predictable for parents and schools, and to strengthen the relationship between neighbourhoods and schools (BBO 2018). While

the new policy was based on several pilot studies aimed at desegregation (Paulle et.al. 2016), this was not mentioned as an official aim. Nevertheless, the goal of creating a closer relationship between school and neighbourhood does impact upon the patterns of school segregation.

Based on the postal code of the home address of children, eight schools have been designated as 'priority schools'. After parents' ranked preferences have been submitted, children are allocated to schools according to simple algorithms: first, younger siblings of pupils at a school are guaranteed a spot; second, children who attended a pre-school connected to the primary school and live in the priority area are prioritized; third, children whose parents work at the school on a permanent contract are prioritized; fourth, children for whom the desired school is within the priority area will be prioritized. Admission is conducted through three rounds; first, all priority children are admitted to the school of their highest ranking; second, all non-prioritized children are admitted to their highest-ranking school; and third, all children from outside Amsterdam are admitted to their highest-ranking school.

### **<c>Effects on segregation**

Both policy interventions could be expected to affect segregation. Whilst expanding school choice is sometimes proposed as a means of reducing school segregation in rigid and highly segregated residential contexts, it usually exacerbates it (Wilson and Bridge 2019).

In the Mülheim, NRW case, where catchment areas were abolished, parents' choice patterns indeed changed significantly after the introduction of free primary

school choice. While 10 per cent of first-grade schoolchildren in Mülheim were sent to a primary school outside of their catchment area before the reform, this proportion tripled to almost 31 per cent in 2016/2017 (Ramos Lobato and Groos 2019). However, the increased choice is socially selective, depending both on the parents' educational attainment and on the schools' social and ethnic composition. While almost half of the parents making use of free choice were well-educated, lower educated parents were more inclined to select the nearest primary school, independent of its composition. The more highly educated parents usually avoided those schools with a higher proportion of families dependent on social security benefits and with a migration background. The effects also have a clear geography: whilst the more reputable primary schools (located in the city's most privileged neighbourhoods) were hardly affected by changing choice patterns, the effects of free choice were comparatively strong for schools that already had a more disadvantaged composition (located in the mixed inner-city neighbourhoods) (Ramos Lobato and Groos 2019).

Conversely, in Amsterdam, controlling choice might be expected to result in a reduction in segregation. The new admission policy introduced a stronger role for geography in school choice and hence constrained some of the freedom of school choice. However, evaluations of the first three years of this policy showed that most children were admitted to one of their three desired schools, so little impact on school segregation can be attributed to changing choice. An analysis conducted for the municipality (Cohen et al. 2018) yet demonstrates that children who started school under the new policy are less segregated than older cohorts. These findings suggest that the new admission policies may have a modest desegregating effect but that other

mechanisms may also play a role. The reduction of school autonomy and a more transparent procedure may be responsible for a slightly lower segregation.

Both examples illustrate that by (re)creating the institutional context of rules and incentives, education policies affect both parents' and institutional actors' opportunities to develop practices and strategies. Whilst the introduction of free parental choice in NRW sparked a surge of choice for schools outside the former catchment area and consequently led to an increase in school segregation, the modification of parents' choice opportunities in Amsterdam by coupling them to place of residence seems to have slightly mitigated levels of school segregation.

## **<b>Conclusions**

This chapter presented discussion about the relationship between local education policies and school segregation patterns from an international perspective. Segregation in schools is the result of the intricate and complex interplay of policies at different levels of governance, and the specific demography and geography of a local (urban) context, coming together in educational landscapes (Boterman et al. 2019). School segregation always manifests at the local level, but the patterns and trends of segregation result from a complex system of mechanisms playing out at (inter)national, regional and local levels. On one hand, the way in which policies shape the educational landscape are crucial for understanding which choices parents make and how this produces uneven outcomes (Ball 2003; Butler and Hamnett 2007). At the same time, the literature on

school segregation has revealed that local patterns of school segregation are highly contingent on residential patterns of segregation (Burgess et al. 2005; Frankenberg et al 2019). Residential and school choice are so tightly interwoven that calibrating one mechanism automatically changes the relationships within the entire system. This interconnectedness of different levels of governance and the range of factors associated with residential patterns and choice behaviour of parents also complicate potentially successful interventions.

The two quite opposite policy interventions illustrate that parental choice has a crucial impact on school segregation. However, the relationship between education policies and local segregation patterns is more complex than findings of ‘more choice leading to higher, and less choice to lower segregation levels’ suggest. It is highly dependent on other aspects both within and outside of the education system. School choice is not only a result of having the legal opportunity to choose, but it is equally dependent on the size of the set of choices embedded in the variation in the supply of schools. The mechanisms contributing to uneven distribution of pupils in schools are a result of a complex interplay between the urban context, the institutional landscape, and parental choices.

The argument in this chapter is that the effects of policy interventions within school choice dynamics can have unintended consequences for residential choice and segregation. The literature on social mixing at the neighbourhood level (see the chapter by Musterd in this volume) has many parallels with the debate on school segregation. Social mixing in schools might counteract the negative effects of higher concentrations of socially disadvantaged children; in fact, social mixing within schools might be even

more important than within the broader levels, since school effects are generally stronger than neighbourhood effects (Sykes and Musterd 2011). However, as we have argued, the residential and school domains are intertwined in various and complicated ways. For instance, spatially constraining choice could reduce school segregation, but might lead to an increase in residential segregation, causing families to strategically choose their residential neighbourhood for access to particular schools. Correspondingly, under certain circumstances, expanding school choice may help social mixing policies in the residential domain, and thus change residential patterns as well. Yet, introducing school choice in parallel with high levels of school autonomy has effects that are different than when that choice is coupled to a more centralized admissions policy. Our analysis suggests that in dealing with educational inequalities (of which school segregation is a key manifestation and often also a cause), it is important to simultaneously deal with residential segregation. Promoters of social mix policies at the neighbourhood level should equally aware of the consequences in school choice practices. As we have argued, given the complexity and multiple layers of mechanisms involved in segregation, an integrated analysis of the causes and solutions is required – taking account of factors both at the vertical (across different institutional levels) and horizontal (between mechanisms at the urban level) levels. Only when such a cross-sectoral perspective is assumed will successful governance of school segregation be achieved.

Finally, the dynamic of educational inequality and school segregation might be exacerbated by the current COVID-19 pandemic. The ramifications of school closures and cancellation of exams for heightening educational inequalities are already apparent



in several educational contexts (Bol 2020; Jaeger and Blaabaek 2020). In addition, schools appear to be unequally equipped to support students in home learning and delivering digital teaching (Bayrakdar and Guveli 2020). This may exacerbate existing tendencies of affluent parents in opting out of publicly (less well-funded) schools, reinforcing existing school segregation.

What is more, there are signs that the pandemic will have negative repercussions on cities and for the demographic growth of urban areas more generally (Florida et al. 2020). A new surge in suburbanisation or even de-urbanisation is likely to have effects on patterns of residential segregation in metropolitan areas. Although this is speculative, some of the specific dynamics of school choice and mixing associated with the economic and demographic growth of cities and the rise of middle-class families in recent decades might consequently be partly undone. If affluent households increasingly reconsider their urban locations, this will have effects on the dynamics of school choice and segregation in cities (and elsewhere too). At this point, it is still too early to draw any definite conclusions. However, even now it is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affects those children and communities that were already less favourably positioned in the first place.

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<sup>1</sup> NRW and Lower Saxony are the only states in Germany in which public denomination schools still exist, which partly leads to a certain level of competition between them and the municipal primary schools.