Urban social deprivation

In every city in the world, whether in a high-income or low-income country, there is a **gap** between the **incomes** and **assets** of rich and poor people. The **cost of housing** varies in different parts of any city because of factors such as accessibility to transport routes, elevation, distance from the CBD and other areas of employment, and so on. Differences in the costs of housing and accommodation throughout a city result in a **sorting** of wealth and poverty as people locate in the areas they can afford. Consequently, wealth, affluence and poverty are never distributed evenly through an urban area.

When people are forced to live in areas where facilities such as housing, education, hospitals, roads, sewerage and drainage are inadequate, sub-standard, or inferior to the rest of the city, we say they are experiencing **urban social deprivation**.

Urban social deprivation is difficult to quantify because its threshold standard **changes over time**, and **varies from place to place**. A house with no electricity or sewerage may be considered sub-standard in a high-income city today, but a hundred years ago it may have been considered quite satisfactory. Similarly, an average dwelling in a low-income country today may be considered sub-standard in a city in a high-income country. We should therefore distinguish between **relative urban social deprivation**, which is hardship caused by lack of access to services that most other people in the same city have, and **absolute urban social deprivation**, which is hardship that is potentially life-threatening, or which leads to physical or mental health problems. In cities located in high-income countries, most urban social deprivation is **relative**, as it is based on comparisons with wealthier families living in the same city rather than (for example) an shanty dweller in a city in Sub-Saharan Africa or South Asia.

A person's **occupation** is a major indicator of urban social deprivation because income levels depend largely on occupation. This is why people in occupations that earn generous remuneration, such as lawyers and doctors, tend to **cluster** in more expensive districts, while low-income earners and unemployed people live in much less expensive areas.

In most cities of the world, **segregation** (separation) of people with different **occupations** occurs most strongly at the extremes of earning capacity. In other words, very high-income earners cluster in certain expensive areas, very low-income earners cluster in socially deprived areas, while occupational groups without extremes of status do not segregate markedly. Low-income earners simply **cannot compete** in the housing market, so their residential locations are **forced upon them**, whereas high-income earners have the option to make a selection from several locations. In **ethnically diverse cities**, different groups tend to work in certain occupations, and where this occurs, occupational segregation also means that **ethnic clustering** mirrors urban social deprivation.

Many measures could be used to quantify urban social deprivation, but **long-term poverty** is the most commonly used measure. Long-term poverty (and therefore urban social deprivation) results from unemployment, lack of access to welfare payments, medical disabilities and discrimination.

In the United Kingdom, the government developed a more complex measure of urban social deprivation known as the **Multiple Deprivation Index** (MDI). The MDI includes **seven components** to measure deprivation:
- income
- employment
- access to health care and disabilities
- education skills and training
- barriers to housing and services
- crime
- quality of the living environment.

Using measures such as the MDI, it can be seen that urban social deprivation is **unevenly distributed** across urban areas. Figure 3.80 shows the distribution in three large world cities. In **São Paulo**, Brazil, social deprivation is concentrated on the **outskirts (periphery)** of the urban area where transport is poor and the provision of social services such as medical care is sparse. Other cities in developing countries show a similar pattern, largely because **shanty** and **slum** areas inhabited by unemployed rural-urban migrants usually become established on unused land on the edges of the city.
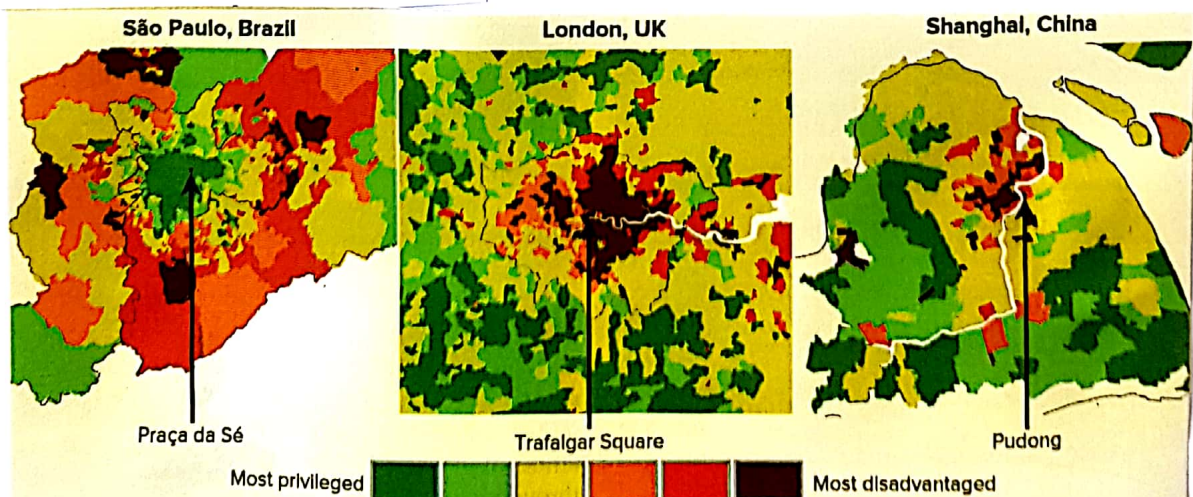

3.80 The distribution of urban social deprivation in three large world cities. The scale of each map is 100 kilometres by 100 kilometres. Source: Drawn from data in the Urban Age Project, London School of Economics, Deutsche Bank's Alfred Herrhausen Society.

São Paulo, Brazil — Praça da Sé

London, UK — Trafalgar Square

Shanghai, China — Pudong

Most privileged — Most disadvantaged

By contrast, **London's** urban social deprivation is concentrated in **inner city areas**, especially to the east of the CBD in the area known as the East End. This is a common pattern in well-established cities in economically developed countries, and it reflects the urban decay that follows deindustrialisation as inner city manufacturing industries have closed or relocated.

Although **Shanghai** is located in a developing economy, its urban social deprivation is also concentrated in **inner city areas**. Shanghai has no shanty or slum areas on the periphery of the city, and the inner-city areas are still dominated by older, government-subsidised housing that is used by elderly residents and low-income earners.
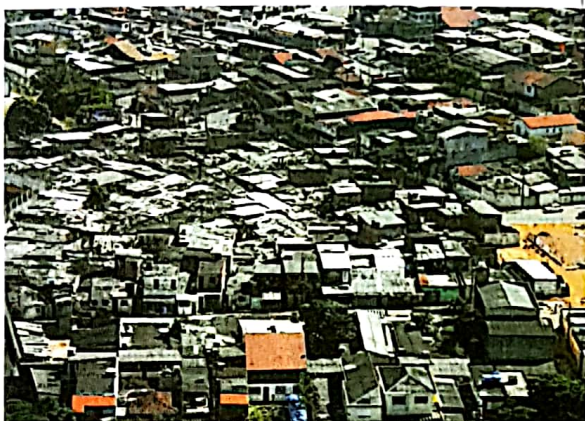
3.81 Guarulhos, an area of urban social deprivation on the outskirts of São Paulo, Brazil.

3.82 Elephant and Castle, an inner area of urban social deprivation in London, UK.

3.83 Beizhan, an inner area of urban social deprivation in Shanghai, China.

Urban social deprivation tends to be **self-perpetuating** for the most deprived parts of the population, and people find they are **trapped** in disadvantage that passes from one generation to the next. This is known as the **cycle of deprivation**. The cycle begins when children born into disadvantaged households must confront early health and developmental challenges, followed by educational deprivation, which leads to employment deprivation which in turn results in economic deprivation. Economic deprivation restricts housing choices, forcing people into disadvantaged areas that perpetuate the deprivation for the following generation.
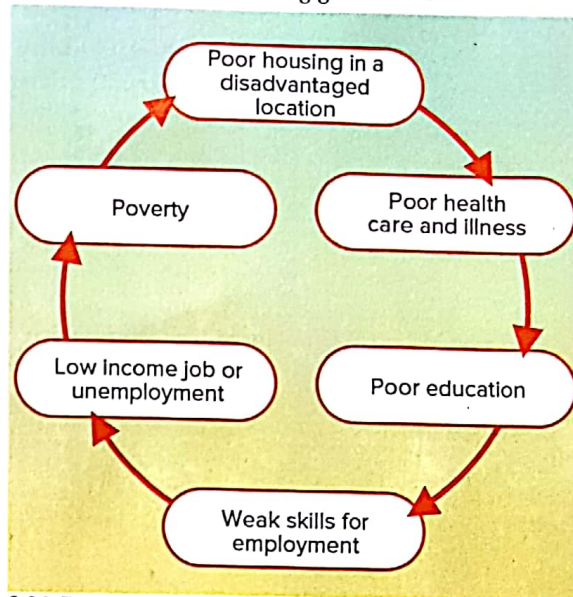
3.84 The cycle of urban social deprivation.

Breaking free from the cycle of deprivation is difficult, but the best chance of doing so occurs with education. In almost every city in the world, children receive a lower **quality of education** if they live in socially disadvantaged areas. This is not usually the fault of the schools in such areas. The disadvantage arises because when they are compared with children in affluent areas, children in socially disadvantaged areas:

- are often **less ready to start** schooling because their vocabulary, knowledge of numbers, ability to concentrate for extended periods and social skills are less developed;
- have higher **absenteeism** rates because of sickness;
- are less likely to have access to **learning resources**, such as academic books and internet access at home;
- often have **lower aspirations**; and
- live within a **community culture** that often places less emphasis on education as a priority over other ways of spending time and money.

If socially disadvantaged children can obtain a good education, and in low-income countries this means achieving basic **literacy**, then the spiral can be broken.

Crime rates tend to be higher in areas of urban social deprivation than elsewhere in cities. To some extent, this is understandable given the combination of poverty, higher than average use of illegal drugs and high rates of unemployment. It is a serious **problem** because urban crime in socially deprived areas is often violent, and therefore threatens human welfare, and it reinforces poverty by discouraging financial investment. Crimes that are more common in socially deprived urban areas than elsewhere include murder, assault, rape, drug possession and selling, burglary, car theft, and robbery (sometimes in public with violence, which is mugging).

3.85 A typical home in Sabama, an area of urban social deprivation in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, that is populated by rural-urban migrants of different ethnicities from various parts of the country. The corrugated iron fencing is intended to discourage burglars, and is almost universally used to surround houses in Sabama.

Reasons that crime rates are high in socially deprived urban areas include:

- **Inequality:** It is commonly believed that poverty leads to crime. The theory is that when people lack the money to satisfy basic needs, some will decide out of desperation to obtain funds illegally by committing a crime. However, research suggests that poverty is not a cause of crime, but poverty is an outcome of the types of social behavior that lead a person to want to commit crimes. Inequality may, however, be a cause of criminal activity as frustrated people who lack access to material possessions want the things that they see other people have.

- **Unemployment:** Statistics in many cities show that unemployed male youths are statistically more likely to be involved in crime, especially crime with violence, than other members of their community.

- **Drugs and alcohol:** Use of drugs and alcohol is higher than the general community average in socially deprived areas, and this can lead to a lack of self-control and poor judgement;

- **Organised crime:** Criminal organisations are often based in areas of social deprivation, especially in the shanty settlements of low-income countries;

- **Inadequate protection:** Houses in socially deprived areas are less likely to have effective defences against burglary or armed attack, such as electronic arm systems;

- **Ethnic diversity:** Socially deprived areas in many cities often contain a diverse ethnic mix, especially in developing countries, and some residents feel that crime against a different ethnic group is easily justified; and

- **Poor urban infrastructure:** Poorer urban neighbourhoods are more likely to lack street lighting, have vacant buildings occupied by squatters, and be criss-crossed by thin alleyways, situations that make crimes easier to commit.

Mixed Zoning May Reduce Crime

Neighborhoods with a mix of residences, offices and retail outlets are now conventionally thought to have a host of benefits, a departure in thinking from the years of urban planning when cities sought to segregate uses of land, with the houses in one corner of town and the shopping district in another. Mixed-use neighborhoods enable people to walk more, with downstream health benefits. They help cut down on traffic congestion, and therefore pollution. For many people, they create livelier communities and a higher quality of life.

The list of evidence in support of these places is constantly expanding, and proponents can now add one more empirical argument: Mixed-use zoning also appears to cut down on crime.

"People say this makes intuitive sense," says John MacDonald, the chair of the department of criminology at the University of Pennsylvania. A neighborhood with lunch counters, offices, condos and bars is likely to have more "eyes on the street" at more times of day. And this collective surveillance ostensibly deters criminals.

But in a new study published in the *University of Pennsylvania Law Review,* MacDonald and colleagues put actual data for the first time behind this notion. They examined eight high-crime neighborhoods in Los Angeles, in residential-only and commercial-only areas, as well as in neighborhoods with a mix of the uses or a change in land use over time.

The commercial-only areas had the highest crime rates – 45 percent higher – when compared to similar blocks that included residences. The researchers also found that neighborhoods experiencing a change in zoning, typically to add residences to a commercial area, saw a 7 percent drop in crime thanks mostly to a decline in automobile theft and break-ins.

The authors can't definitely account for why these trends occur, although it makes sense that people would feel a greater sense of ownership and care for neighborhoods where they live, relative to those neighborhoods where they simply shop or go to work. Put residences in an otherwise commercial area, and that sense of ownership increases alongside the eyes on the street.

The findings suggests that we should start thinking about zoning laws as one largely overlooked tool in crime prevention. "It's surely less costly than arresting people and putting them in jail," MacDonald says.

More often when police do think about "environmental design" for crime prevention, they focus on interventions like sidewalk cameras, street lighting or new cul-de-sacs. This study, though, suggests they should also think at the level of land use, alongside urban planners.

"We thought if we can see some relationship between zoning – and also the change in zoning – and crime, then we might be a little bit closer to understanding the link between the actual physical environment and crime," MacDonald says.

Mixed-Income's Anticipated and Realized Benefits

June 16, 2016

Mixed-income housing and neighborhoods are commonly advanced as a method of alleviating the harms of concentrated poverty and achieving urban revitalization. A 2013 literature review, published in Cityscape, clarifies the hypothesized benefits of mixed-income communities, examines the state of the evidence, and considers potential next steps for reducing economic segregation.

The hypothesized benefits of mixed-income living have included poverty alleviation, increased property values, an increased tolerance for diversity for residents of all incomes, and improved housing quality, services, and neighborhood conditions for lower-income residents. The evidence generally supports the hypotheses regarding neighborhood improvements, but not those related to social interaction and poverty alleviation.

Evidence

- Economic desegregation does not, on its own, lead to meaningful interactions between neighbors across economic groups.
- Community events and facilities may reinforce socioeconomic divisions if one income group feels more of a claim on the space.
- Relationships between residents may change over time, either as residents become more comfortable with each other or as residents give up and retreat to their comfort zones.
- Mixed-income communities have not generates the hypothesized improvements in economic well-being for low-income households. While some evidence suggests an increase in employment, the evidence is weak at best about income benefits.
- Achieving economic improvements will likely require changes in school quality, job supports, and other factors. Benefits may also accrue over a longer period of time than previously studied.
- Residents of mixed-income developments report satisfaction with housing quality, neighborhood services, and public safety.
- Moving to a mixed-income community appears to have psychological benefits for low-income residents, namely in mental health improvements and the reduction of stress related to neighborhood safety concerns.
- Children may experience educational, health, and behavioral benefits from moving to a lower-poverty or income-diverse area.

Recommendations:

- Mixed-income communities offer low-income households an improved sense of safety and security, but intentional and specific services and supports are necessary for addressing poverty.
- The design of the public space may increase residents' interactions.
- If resident organizations are structured to serve separate community populations, resident interactions across socioeconomic status are likely to be impeded.
- Grocery stores and other resources in the surrounding area create additional opportunities for resident interaction.

Managing Cycles of Urban Deprivation

Work in a group and identify strategies to manage the following characteristics of urban social deprivation

MOBILITY

CRIME

DEINDUSTRIALIZATION

SERVICES

HOUSING

GREEN/BLUE SPACE

UNEMPLOYMENT

POVERTY