

**Flint Ashery, S.: Micro-residential Dynamics: A Case Study of Whitechapel, London.** The Urban Book Series. Cham, Springer, 2019. 130 p.

*Micro-residential Dynamics* is a book containing niche studies in micro-segregation research, from the point of view of using both quantitative and qualitative methods. In the study of segregation, smaller scales than neighbourhoods, such as street and building levels, have been coming to the fore since the 2000s, one result of which is the introduction of suburban areas as a scale of inquiry into the scientific discourse. One of the main motives of these studies is that, unlike previous research, they do not neglect scrutinising socio-economic and cultural differences within streets and argue that if we do not consider such micro-spaces homogeneous, we will see a much more diverse society. As a result, micro-segregation research is one of the defining aspects of urban research nowadays where, due to the rudimentary nature of the topic, mainly quantitative studies have been conducted to present the phenomenon.

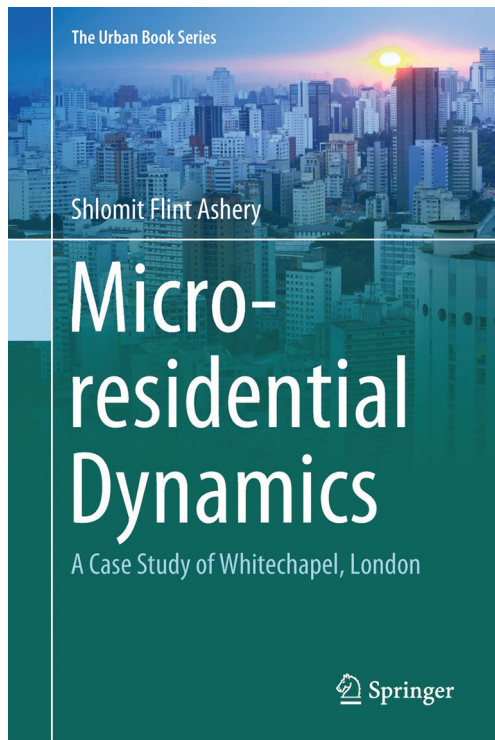
Micro- and vertical segregation studies on European cities such as Budapest (KOVÁCS, Z. *et al.* 2022), Bucharest (MARCINZAK, S. and HESS, B.D.

2022), Naples (DINES, N. and MATTIUCCI, C. 2022), Athens (MALOUTAS, T. *et al.* 2023), have been complemented in the literature by South American and Near and Far Eastern settlements such as Tel Aviv (SHAMUR, T. and YACOBI, H. 2022) or Hong Kong (HO, H.K. and YIP, M. 2022). FLINT ASHERY'S book on London's Whitechapel neighbourhood has expanded previous research on micro-segregation to include views of small-scale segregation, vertical residential segregation, and social differences perceived by local populations. The readers can get acquainted with the topical question of how the image and causes of segregation between commonly known neighbourhoods can be interpreted on a micro scale. The answer is made possible by the long-time series statistical analyses presented in the study, while the longitudinal description of the socio-economic and ethnic composition of the pilot area and the interviews reveal the underlying reasons, which are mostly site-specific but sometimes generalisable to other areas.

Based on this dual approach, the book consists of two separate parts where FLINT ASHERY examines issues related to the topic of micro-segregation. It should be emphasised that the book deals with the relationship between private and public property in the light of micro-segregation. Therefore, the majority of the studies focus on the private sector and, although with less emphasis, the author presents the role of the public sector. The book begins with an introduction to the model area of Whitechapel, so the reader can learn how the area has developed and changed and gain a general picture of the ethnic and religious complexity of the district. The novel approach of the book is supported by its limited emphasis on describing the physical environment, which often dominates traditional segregation research.

In the first part of the book, entitled *Private Realm*, the author presents the impact of social diversity on the development and existence of micro-segregation through four studies. The studies reveal the positive and negative relationships that can develop between different social groups such as illegal immigrants and indigenous locals, or the impact of the real estate market on immigration and immigrants. The author devotes a separate chapter to examining the pattern of horizontal and vertical segregation on a small scale.

In the second chapter, we can learn the background of the choice of residence, which proves that socio-cultural and economic reasons can be traced back to who chooses which place of residence. The historical connection between ethnic and/or religious groups plays an important role in making housing decisions in the study area. Another decisive aspect is the proximity of friends living in the area. In the chapter on



horizontal segregation, the author concludes that inside buildings, newcomers look for close acquaintances who belong to their own group, while they regard other people living there as “enemies”. It is an interesting observation of the researcher that the same phenomenon and pattern, however, cannot be observed at the neighbourhood level. FLINT ASHERY’S research does not explain why this phenomenon occurs but it provides a new opportunity within micro-segregation research.

The third chapter of the book, dealing with vertical segregation, is perhaps one of the most important parts of the work, because it summarises academic literature on the topic. The author analyses several concepts and processes of vertical segregation and differentiation, which raise the question of which statistical criteria in which study can be used for interpreting segregation. The chapter states that vertical segregation and differentiation are based on income disparities and employment group categories, but FLINT ASHERY expands on this knowledge. As a result of primary research the author investigates the inner guiding force of verticality in the studied part of the city. She reveals why people of the Muslim religion prefer to choose the upper floor. As qualitative research confirms, the corridor is functioning as a kind of public and private space, which also becomes the place of prayer. The corridor builds the community of the given floor, where the dwellers will not be made vulnerable or discriminated because of their religion, and, thus, the number of conflict situations with other groups will remain moderate. The author complements what previous analyses identified as the causes of vertical segregation with his study results, i.e., that identity and belonging to a specific social group also determine social separation within the building.

In the fourth chapter, the author presents the situation of micro-segregation in the light of public and private homes. In this section, FLINT ASHERY explores several processes, some of which are present in the real estate market globally. The number of state-owned properties in the pilot area of Whitechapel is insufficient, but the number of people living in social housing is increasing. Another important aspect is that since the EU enlargement in 2004, people arriving from EU Member States have much better prioritised social housing than other nations (e.g., of Somali and Irish origin). The gentrification process has also started in the pilot area. People with low income are crowded out, which is manifested in the fact that more and more people and families live together in the same real estate. These dynamics is also confirmed by the so-called overcrowding index, which measures the number of people living in one apartment, and indicates an accelerating growth. As a result, informal letting of real estate has started in the area, which in turn plays a role in maintaining micro-segregations. Although a general solution to the

problem is yet to be found, the author briefly presents some possible solutions at the end of the chapter.

In the last, fifth chapter of the first part of the book, the author presents informal housing in more detail, so the reader can understand the situation of the affected residents and their motivations. FLINT ASHERY visited and made interviews with immigrants who do not have official papers and therefore live informally in an apartment. The result is helpful for micro-segregation research and urban planning because we can learn that: „Most of the undocumented population prefer to live close to the centre and amongst their ‘friends’”. However, there is a lack of cohesion between the title and the content of the chapter.

The second and shorter part is entitled *Public Realm*. It consists of two chapters, one of which deals with the role of decision-makers in the diversity and micro-segregation of Whitechapel. The second chapter serves as a summary of the book as a whole. The chapter entitled *Whitechapel Road: Between Group Behaviour and Planning Policy* draws attention to that one should not only keep in mind what has been decided, but also what has not been decided and why, while examining the decision-making behaviour of city managers. In the pilot area of Whitechapel, the aforementioned changes in the real estate market brought about the transformation of social groups and increasing tension between them. Despite the fact that both the local population and the local city administration are aware of the situation, nothing has changed, which results rather from the preservation of the territorial status quo instead of a compromise between the groups.

For those interested in micro-segregation, I recommend FLINT ASHERY’S book because it provides a comprehensive overview of available research on the topic and enriches small-scale social segregation studies with its qualitative research results. The reader can learn about the ethnic and religious diversity of the Whitechapel pilot area as well as the problems and conflict situations arising from it. The book examines the relationship between the private and public spheres in the light of micro-segregation, but these two strands do not have equal weight. In most cases, the private sphere comes to the fore, while only one chapter analyses the public sector. The complexity of the topic is indicated by that the author examines micro-segregation from several perspectives. Yet, as the imbalance between investigating the public and private sectors illustrates, many aspects of the problems affecting communities are still to be explored, and these would further expand our knowledge about horizontal and vertical segregation and micro-segregation.

The book *Micro-residential Dynamics* may contain less maps than what a geographer expects, but the author fills this gap with illustrative images and figures. In addition, the 322 in-depth interviews will help researchers better understand how and why micro-

segregation develops, and why different ethnic and religious groups choose to live side by side. Although the author answers many questions, she also raises many new ones, which confirms that micro-scale segregation is still a process to be explored – but I think *Micro-residential Dynamics* will be one of the defining studies in the future.

**Acknowledgement:** Supported by the ÚNKP-23-2 New National Excellence Program of the Ministry for Culture and Innovation from the source of the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund.

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