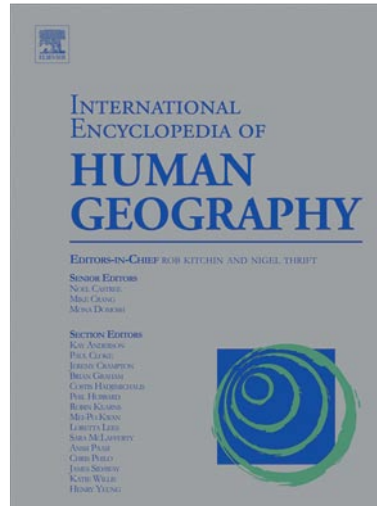


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Ghettos

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Glossary

Apartheid A term meaning 'separation' in Afrikaans, referring to a period in South Africa from 1948 to 93 when the ruling white supremacist National Party divided the country into four racial groups and created separate residential areas for each group along a distinct racial hierarchy.

Assimilation The process of an ethnic minority group acquiring the characteristics and sharing the resources of the 'host' or majority group through residential settlement patterns and/or behavior.

Banlieue The French word for 'suburb', it is now most commonly applied to the declining working-class zones of the French urban periphery housing relatively high concentrations of ethnic minority residents.

Blockbusting A profiteering tactic deployed by realtors or developers to convince white homeowners to sell their houses by telling them that black people are moving into their neighborhood, exploiting fears of lowered property values. The price of the house is then raised by the realtors when sold to black people.

Cités The French word to describe large estates of cheaply built high-rises situated in the *banlieues*.

Ethnic Enclaves An urban settlement where the dense clustering of one or many ethnic groups occurs, a consequence of group solidarity, cultural affinity, kinship ties, and occupational concentration, and usually accompanied by economic and social activity tied to the ethnicity of the group(s) in question.

Ethnoracial Group A group classified along the lines of skin color, caste, culture, and/or religion.

Ghetto A space deployed by discriminatory authorities to isolate, contain, and exploit a single ethnoracial group; a place to cast out (permanently) a group outcast from society.

Index of Isolation A measure of how often individuals from a particular group are likely to meet other individuals from their group – a group is 'isolated' if it rarely comes into contact with different groups.

Index of Segregation A measure of the percentage of a minority population which would have to change its location in order to replicate the distribution of the rest of the population of a city. It has a range of 0 (no segregation) to 100 (total segregation).

Jim Crow A system of legally enforced racial segregation (separate and inferior schools and public spaces, along with separate churches and clubs) in the southern states of the USA lasting from roughly

1865–1965. The term comes from a minstrel show song-and-dance routine entitled *Jumping Jim Crow*.

Redlining A term coined in the late 1960s by community activists in Chicago to describe the government-initiated (in 1935) practice of marking a red line on a map to delineate the area where banks would not invest (especially through rejecting mortgage loan applications). During the heyday of redlining these areas were almost always black inner-city neighborhoods.

Segregation Either voluntary or involuntary, the exclusion of a social group from the rest of society, usually used in reference to spatial residential patterns, but it can also relate to economic, social, and political spheres.

Introduction

'Ghetto' is without question one of the most misunderstood and inappropriately deployed terms both within and beyond geography and the social sciences. It is regularly used (or abused) as a metaphor to describe the spatial clustering of any social group (student ghetto, immigrant ghetto), or indeed simply a dilapidated and/or poverty-stricken urban area, rather than correctly used to account for and analyze the selected few areas on the planet that exhibit the involuntary spatial confinement of a single ethnoracial group (in line with the history of the term). It is also something of a surprise, perhaps even an embarrassment to those who patrol the disciplinary walls of geography, that the majority of the most widely read and cited scholarship on ghettos – inherently geographical expressions of extreme racial oppression – has come not from geographers but from sociologists. Furthermore, arguably the strongest and most famous studies of ghettos tend to have in common their anchoring in ethnographic methodologies – very few geographers researching the formation and social conditions of ghettos have contributed to this tradition pioneered by the Chicago School. The paucity of geographical research that is accurately tuned in to the history of the term, together with the qualitative geographical disengagement and increasing confusion emanating from countless (and rather numbing) indices of segregation/isolation, means that analytical and policy errors toward marginal neighborhoods, whether ghettos or not, should come as little surprise.

Origins: The Jewish Ghetto

Perhaps due to the power of stereotypical representations of ghettos in the United States, and more recently the rise of the 'ghetto fabulous' discourse, it is seldom acknowledged that the term 'ghetto' in fact comes from Renaissance (sixteenth century) Venice. Following the defeat of the Venetians by the French at Agnadello (northern Italy) in 1509, Jews fled into Venice in increasing numbers, and quickly gained in social status via the professions of, *inter alia*, moneylending and medicine. Fledgling fear and hatred of Jews by the ruling Christians was in part a consequence of a campaign for the moral reform of the city following the weakening of its regional power at the time. Jews were viewed by the Venetian authorities to be the sole source of moral corruption, as well as carriers of disease (the spread of syphilis was incorrectly attributed to 'overly sensual' Jewish religious practices, rather than to the growth of prostitution; and, ironically, Jews making profits through usury was seen as tantamount to prostitution, and thus disease). There were widespread calls for the expulsion of all Jews to save the city from further moral degeneracy and contamination, but that would have been economic suicide for Venice, which desperately needed the high taxes, rents, and skills that the Jewish population provided. The solution of the Senate of Venice was thus complete spatial segregation, not expulsion: in 1516 all Jews were rounded up into an abandoned foundry called *ghetto nuovo* ('ghetto' originally meant 'foundry' in Italian) (see Figure 1). The ghetto was surrounded on all sides by water, not unusual in Venice, yet its walls were the highest in Venice, its outer windows and doors permanently sealed, its two bridges to the rest of the city guarded, and its surrounding canals patrolled by police boat. Jews were allowed out into the city during daylight hours only for economic reasons, but they had to wear special yellow badges – the same color as the scarves prostitutes were forced to wear. At dusk, Jews had to return to the ghetto or face serious consequences. (It remains something of a mystery why Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, Shylock, moved with so much freedom around the city!)

While oppression and violence toward Jews in Europe did not begin in Renaissance Venice (ghettoization was in fact a huge improvement on massacre, which happened to Jews in medieval York under Henry II), the Venetian Ghetto became a blueprint for cities throughout Europe. The same fears about disease and moral upheaval, in tandem with the same needs to retain and exploit a Jewish population for its economic function, saw the involuntary segregation of Jews in cities across the continent, as geographically distant as Rome, Frankfurt, Prague, and Amsterdam. While they are often referred to today as 'Jewish Quarters', historically they were ghettos in both form and function. Yet while characterized by

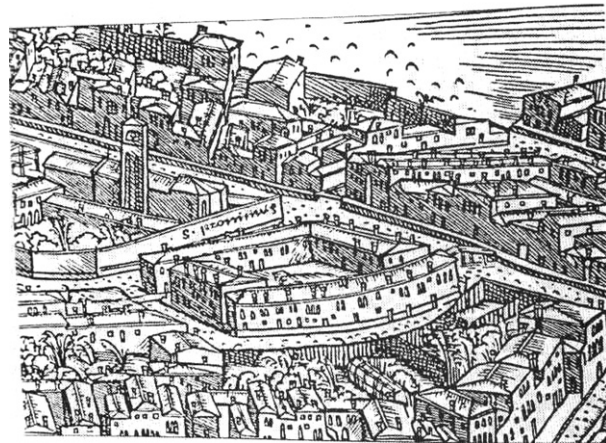


Figure 1 Jacopo dei Barbari's woodcut drawing of the Venetian Ghetto, 1500. Reprinted from Sennett, R. (1994). *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization*. New York: Norton & Co.

intense overcrowding, squalor, disease, and deprivation, they were also zones of collective consciousness, solidarity, and social organization. Because ghetto Jews were subject to territorial confinement by night and overt racial ostracization during the day, Jewish culture and community had no option but to develop in the densely packed ghetto. The peculiar combination of spatial entrapment and social cohesion saw the emergence of a 'city within a city', with its own institutions and administrative priorities. Everything from synagogues to markets, from schools to charities formed and developed behind ghetto walls, amplifying the rigid segregation of the Jews from the rest of society, yet strengthening bonds and kinship among ghetto dwellers, to the extent that strong divisions between Ashkenazic and Shephardic Jews collapsed in city after city under the experience of complete and involuntary ethnoracial containment. If we adhere to this historical fact – important if the ghetto is to be correctly distinguished from other marginal spaces that emerge from a different set of structural constraints (requiring a different set of analytical lenses) – then the ghetto can be defined as a space deployed by discriminatory authorities to isolate, contain, and exploit a single ethnoracial group; a place to cast out (permanently) a group outcast from society.

Transatlantic Connections: The African-American Ghetto

From the late nineteenth century onward, as urbanization accelerated in the cities of the north and eastern United States (partly fuelled by immigration from Europe), ethnic 'clustering' intensified as a consequence of group solidarity, cultural affinity, kinship ties, and occupational concentration. Three crucial factors distinguish the

resultant 'ethnic enclaves' (Little Italies, Little Polands, Little Irelands, etc.) from ghettos – first, they were not products of ethnoracial control and containment by external overarching powers (one residential block in an ethnic enclave often contained people of many different nationalities); second, segregation within and between them was neither extreme nor rigid; and third, they were 'temporary' spaces for the many thousands of European immigrants residing in them, acting as springboards for an assimilative leap into the American 'melting pot' once plentiful opportunities for upward social mobility and class ascension were captured (many ethnic enclaves dissolved within two generations). A grave and terribly influential error of the Chicago School of Sociology, an extraordinary flowering of urban scholarship that drew their inspiration from the natural sciences in order to document the human-urban equivalent of animals adapting to and competing in their natural habitats, was to equate ghetto with ethnic enclave and predict that all ethnic groups would assimilate into American society after initial clustering in their 'natural areas'. This was not the experience for one group, African-Americans, who from the early twentieth century migrated in massive numbers from the southern states to northern cities for the twin reasons of fleeing Jim Crow racism and abject rural poverty, and for employment in the booming factory-based industries of the north (where unskilled labor was desperately needed to grease the engines of Fordist capitalism).

The arrival of substantial numbers of blacks in northern cities, just like the arrival of Jews in Venice four centuries earlier, was seen by whites as a disturbing threat to racial purity, the moral order of the time, and the livelihoods of working-class whites employed in the same industries. Blacks encountered harassment, hostility, and violence from whites, strictly on the basis of the color of their skins, together with a brutal tightening of previously porous systems of segregation in employment, education, and especially housing. For a black person, to cross the residential color line that emerged was to risk serious physical harm inflicted upon them by whites who had been socialized *en masse* into regarding blacks as subhuman (a legacy of slavery). Furthermore, neighborhood organizations lobbied successfully to prevent blacks from moving into white neighborhoods, while realtors set in motion a profiteering process of 'blockbusting', thus trapping African-Americans in overcrowded residential areas where they quickly had to develop their own institutions to ensure the delivery of basic needs. This is another clear parallel with the Jewish ghetto, another city within a city, this time black within white, bounded by the walls set up by racism smouldering at the core of American society, and filtered through private and public institutions that ensnared a group that was nonetheless necessary for capitalist gain. Without question the most

famous (and most studied) example is the 'Black Belt' of Chicago's South Side (see **Figure 2**), the Bronzeville of Drake and Cayton's magisterial 1945 study, *Black Metropolis*, and an area that housed an almost all-black population, and 92% of Chicago's entire black population by 1930. Bronzeville is often the 'dual definition' marker used by many analysts to define a ghetto: almost the entire population in the area was comprised of one ethnic group, and almost every member of that ethnic group in the entire city lived in that one area.

It must be noted here that, first, African-Americans are the only group ever to experience urban ghettoization in the United States (a legacy of entrenched systems of racial oppression, and of the white supremacy so ingrained in the power geometry of American capitalism); and second, that the African-American ghetto has not been consigned to history as a feature of the Fordist metropolis, but is still a feature of the urban landscape in city after city across the post-Fordist Rust Belt of the United States. Following World War II, the color line hardened even further due to the influence of federal

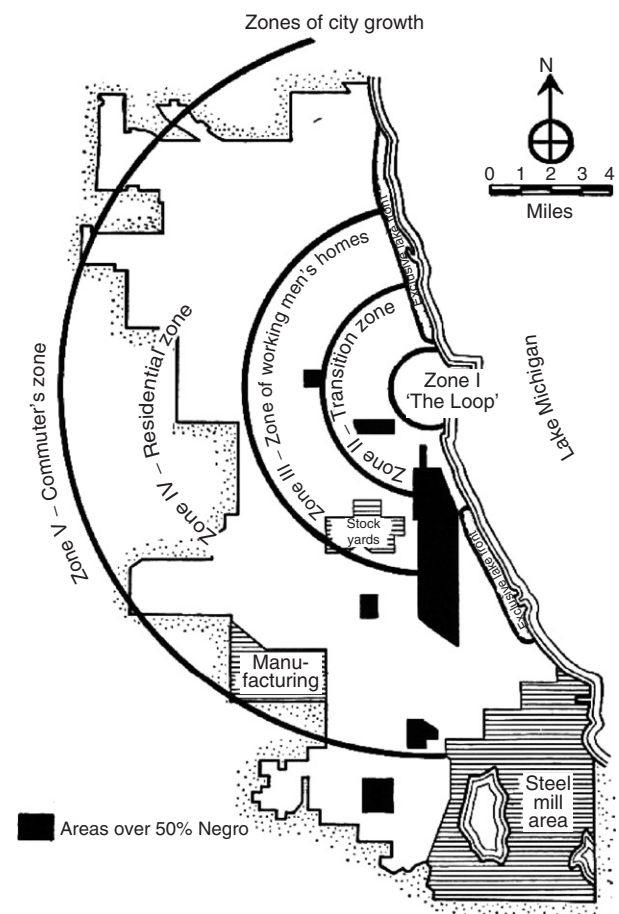


Figure 2 The location of Chicago's 'Black Belt', 1945. Reprinted from St. Drake, C. and Cayton, H.R. (1993). *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (first publ. 1945). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

government initiatives in spurring rapid suburban expansion. Mortgage loans for white families led to what became known as 'white flight' to the suburbs, and the construction of highways enabled transportation between downtown employment centers and the suburbs. The problem of ghetto overcrowding was addressed by a federally sponsored program of urban 'renewal', whereby freeway construction ploughed through existing ghettos and residents were relocated into vast public housing projects invariably built alongside the freeways, effectively turning public housing into reservations for the black urban poor, often termed 'second ghettos'. For example, between the early 1950s and early 1960s, the Chicago Housing Authority built 33 housing projects comprising 21 000 units, 98% of which were built in neighborhoods almost all black. Combined with the discriminatory practice of 'redlining', which made it impossible for black homeowners to sell up and leave ghettos, systematic capital disinvestment amplified entrenched mechanisms of racial exclusion to ensure that ghettos expanded and persisted, rather than dissolved and eroded. It is therefore no surprise that the Kerner Commission report of 1968, following the widespread black uprisings or 'ghetto riots' of the 1960s (described by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as the "language of the unheard"), concluded that one factor above all underlay all social and economic malaise – racial segregation.

One could be forgiven for assuming that the gains of the Civil Rights Movement in the US led to the gradual dismantling of the structural apparatus that had confined African-Americans to ghettos, but ghettos persisted through the 1970s and onward due to massive economic restructuring and its effects on the poorest African-Americans confined to ghettos. The major spatial impact of Civil Rights and the abolition of overt racism within housing markets (redlining was officially outlawed in 1977) was to facilitate the departure only of middle- and lower-middle-class blacks from ghettos, leaving behind a subproletariat lacking the political clout, the institutions, the education, and the services required for upward mobility. The advent of neoliberalism triggered the rapid decline of manufacturing (and thus decent wage blue-collar employment), the suburbanization of alternative employment, and the growth of the de-regulated low-wage service sector labor market (which offered no social protection, unionization, or opportunities for promotion). The outcome was the removal of the ability of young black men able to support a family, so the number of female-headed families grew exponentially at a time when welfare payments were cut back, leading to deepening 'feminized' poverty on a staggering scale in economically traumatized cities such as Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, and Buffalo.

The contemporary post-Fordist African-American ghetto is thus a different animal from its Fordist

predecessor in terms of social organization and structural constitution. The neoliberal state has systematically dismantled the welfare state that allowed people to survive outside the formal economy, and has replaced it with a punitive 'workfare' state which coerces people into the de-regulated low-wage labor market. Young black men who either reject or are rejected by this labor market often turn to the criminal economy in order to survive, and thus come face to face with the increasingly punitive arm of the neoliberal state (police, courts, jails, prisons), which easily justifies its actions (mass incarceration) by blaming the 'underclass' poor for not exercising 'personal responsibility'. This has led some scholars to argue very convincingly that ghettos and prisons have become a single, interconnected system for the punitive spatial entrapment and management of the black urban poor.

Other Examples

Ghettos in the United States, then, while unique urban phenomena in the Western Hemisphere, are not unprecedented – they are closely tied to the Jewish ghettos of Europe in exhibiting the involuntary containment, exploitation, and control of a single demonized group. While ghettos in the accurate geographical, historical, and sociological sense of the term are rare urban forms, there are other zones of oppression and exclusion scattered throughout the world that can be termed ghettos. The areas that contain Japan's taboo Burakumin population, descendants of the country's rural outcasts, are a case in point. The premodern Tokugawa (or Edo) period (1603–1868) saw the organization of Japanese society into the four class categories of samurai, peasant, artisan, and merchant. Below the merchant class were the outcast groups of *binin*, usually town guards, street cleaners, and executioners; and *eta*, usually butchers, tanners, leather makers, and undertakers. *Hinin* literally translates to 'nonhuman', while *eta* literally translates to 'filthy' – reflections of the attitudes held toward them (*binin/eta* villages were rarely printed on official maps). Unlike Jews in European cities and blacks in American cities, the descendant Burakumin were never an immigrant group, yet they were widely perceived as a different race and officially labeled outcasts by the Tokugawa government. Burakumin were only permitted certain types of clothing, not allowed to leave their *burakus* (rural hamlets) to enter towns at night, and banned from entering Buddhist and Shinto sites of meditation and worship. Rigid and total segregation was enforced via strict rules controlling the size of their houses and settlements, and even laws prohibiting their windows from facing tracks and roads.

As the Tokugawa era gave way to the Meiji period, in 1871 the Burakumin were emancipated, but akin to the African-American experience this did not lead to simple

acceptance and assimilation into Japanese society. The Burakumin became an increasingly urbanized population and experienced new patterns of segregation through the mechanisms of housing (Burakumin populations were invariably forced into the poorest neighborhoods of Japanese cities with the worst public services – Kyoto in particular contains many segregated, poor Burakumin), marriage (there was strict monitoring of family registration records to prevent marrying into other groups), education (separate schools), and employment (they were informally barred from industrial employment, and forced to work traditional, low-paying, ‘unclean’ jobs). Yet, in line with a chief characteristic of ghettos, to meet their own needs the Burakumin developed their own institutions replicating those of the society which had excluded them, and organized efficiently to lobby for urgent action to counter discrimination. While there have been considerable gains in Burakumin rights since the 1960s, and evidence of desegregation in many cities and villages, Burakumin ghettos still exist in tandem with the discrimination that created them – while the latter may be more subtle than in the past, continuing prejudice is reflected in the resistance non-Burakumin children often encounter from their parents when they wish to marry Burakumin.

Another example of ghettoization which departs from the textbook model but still exhibits the same organizing principles is the townships of apartheid South Africa. The white supremacist National Party came to power there in 1948, viewing itself as ‘God’s chosen race’ to ‘civilize’ the southern tip of black Africa, despite the fact that whites were massively outnumbered by black Africans in that country. Hendrik F. Verwoerd, Minister of Native Affairs in the early 1950s and widely regarded as the architect of apartheid (a word literally meaning ‘separation’ in Afrikaans), viewed complete and total racial separation as the ‘answer’ to conflicting material interests and cultures, to perpetuating white rule (via economic control of vast mineral resources), and to reversing the decline of the white population. Shortly after it came to power the government enforced the classification of South Africa’s population into four casually defined but tightly policed racial groups, with a distinct hierarchy – whites, Indians, ‘coloureds’ (mixed race), and Africans (later ‘blacks’). In keeping with the accurate meaning of the ghetto term, the National Party realized that South Africa’s economy needed a vast supply of cheap non-white labor, but also felt that under no circumstances should that labor live in city centers or anywhere near desirable (white) areas. Therefore, they legislated in *de jure* racial segregation to intensify, extend, and cement in place the *de facto* segregation that already existed, via the Group Areas Act (1950), called “one of the cornerstones for preserving a white South Africa” by Minister of the Interior, T. E. Donges that same year.

Between 1950 and 1993 it is estimated that over 1.5 million people were forcibly removed from their homes under the Group Areas Act, and relocated to other parts of South African cities, away from whites. ‘Group Areas’ (both business and residential) were ‘proclaimed’ by the government for occupation/ownership by a specific racial group, and persons of any other racial group became ‘disqualified’ persons who had to move out before a government deadline (usually 3 months). This vast, brutal system of social engineering through spatial manipulation led to the creation of vast township ghettos involuntarily confining, exploiting, and controlling subordinated racialized groups, with devastating psychological, economic, and social consequences for displaced persons. The legacy of the Group Areas Act is a highly segregated urban landscape with millions of non-white township dwellers living in grinding poverty, now amplified by the neoliberalization of South Africa, extreme overcrowding via mass migration from all over sub-Saharan Africa, and the spreading AIDS pandemic. Townships, then, can accurately be termed ghettos, but they are unusual in that they are relics of racist ‘minority’ rule that sought to enclose a ‘majority’ population, and are located inside cities systematically and ‘entirely partitioned’ along racial fault lines.

Case Study: The Myth of Contemporary European Ghettos

It should be clear from the discussion above that not all segregated areas are ghettos. Ghettos should be viewed as a peculiar, extreme type of urban form rooted in discrimination toward a particular group of people loathed by their oppressors, to the point where the oppressed are forced to develop their own institutions behind the parameters of their involuntary confinement to necessitate their survival. To designate as ghettos any other segregated areas, such as gated communities of affluent white suburbanites, residential concentrations of students in neighborhoods adjacent to universities, or even the diverse neighborhoods of Western cities themed along ethnic lines (‘Little Italy’ in Toronto; ‘Japantown’ in San Francisco; ‘Banglatown’ in London), is to erase over 500 years of the term’s history and to begin any analytical focus from an entirely inappropriate conceptual point of departure. Yet time and time again, ‘ghetto’, a morally loaded term carrying with it a set of pernicious representations, is used incorrectly by scholars and especially by policymakers. Two recent examples from Britain and France, reinforcing the myth that ghettos on a par with African-American ghettos exist in European cities, serve to illustrate problems of misuse.

The fear of nascent ghettos is a recurrent one in Britain, but went into overdrive in September 2005, following a declamatory yet high-profile speech entitled

'After 7/7: Sleepwalking to Segregation' by Trevor Phillips, then-Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality (now the Commission for Equality and Human Rights). Phillips argued that Britain has some residential districts (in Bradford and Leicester) that are nearly as segregated as Chicago's South Side, and "are on their way to becoming fully fledged ghettos – black holes into which no-one goes without fear and trepidation, and from which no-one ever escapes undamaged." Not surprisingly the national media picked up on this part of the speech and massaged it into a colossal moral panic about the failures of multiculturalism, integration, community cohesion, and immigration policy (Figure 3). However, the speech was written without careful attention to the 2001 census, which revealed that there is not a single administrative ward, let alone neighborhood, in Britain in which the population is 90–100% ethnic minority, whereas tracts with these percentages are commonplace in the US. Furthermore, for all ethnic minority groups identified by the census, indices of segregation in fact fell between 1991 and 2001. If he did do much preliminary reading, Phillips was most likely misled by research on segregation using less reliable indices of isolation, which did imply that Britain's ethnic minorities were becoming more isolated.

Regardless of what measures were consulted, however, Phillips was painfully unaware that geographers have been at the forefront of published research confirming that Britain does not have ghettos. In Leicester, for example, the only city in which a segregation index rose between 1991 and 2001 (from 30 to 39 for people of Black Caribbean descent), local residential concentrations of ethnic minorities are most definitely not a consequence of the involuntary spatial containment and control of an outcast single group that has since developed its own

parallel institutions for survival. All ethnic minority groups in that city and elsewhere remain heavily dependent on the welfare state to supply basic needs, and even if discrimination is present both in public and private institutions (such as in housing and employment), Britain's often ethnically diverse neighborhoods offer no material for sensible comparison with the hostility and systematic racial exclusion that historically and geographically characterize rigid ghettoization. There are two dangers of labeling as ghettos those British neighborhoods that house a greater proportion of ethnic minority groups than others. First, it creates reputational ghettos, bogus territories that are nonetheless avoided through fear and damaged through stigma, perpetuating the harmful discourse of 'self-segregation' and stirring up another myth, that of ethnic withdrawal from society. Second, it obscures the increasing segregation that is happening in Britain – between rich and poor (not between white and non-white, or between Christian and Muslim, for example) – and deflects social policy attention away from class stratification/inequality and inappropriately toward fictitiously broad racial divisions.

Britain is not the only country to experience ill-informed policy-led 'ghetto blasting'. French urban policy toward its poorest neighborhoods has for some years now been guided by the myth that the *cités* (housing projects) in the working-class *banlieues* (suburbs) of its largest cities are very similar, if not identical, to African-American ghettos in the United States. A few weeks after Trevor Phillips' speech was funnelled through hysterical national media in the UK, the legend of structural and geographical equivalence between the black American ghetto and the French urban periphery was reinforced by the policy and media reaction to the major civil disturbances that occurred in several *banlieues* in city after city across France for a period of nearly 1 month. The uprisings were a reaction to many months of severe police oppression and harassment of marginalized first- and second-generation immigrant communities in those areas, mostly from North and West African nations. On 27 October 2005, these 'zero-tolerance' surveillance tactics of then-Interior-Minister (and now President), Nicolas Sarkozy had culminated in the death by accidental electrocution of two teenagers trying to escape 'routine' police questioning in the *banlieue* of Clichy-sous-Bois. In the weeks that followed, as cars and buildings burned on the streets of urban France, commentators and pundits quickly resuscitated long-running debates over immigration policy and the failures of assimilation ideology, the tensions between Islam and the secular policies of the French state, and in particular the dilapidation and deepening misery of the *cités*, which in demographic composition (large ethnic minority population), socioeconomic condition (crushing poverty and widespread unemployment), and behavioral features (pandemic despair-cum-violence) were viewed to be the



Figure 3 Trevor Phillips, along with some of the headlines his speech created. Reprinted from The Observer, 25 September 2005.

European example of the American ghetto, as they have been viewed for decades.

While the deterioration of living conditions and declining life chances in the French urban periphery since the advent of the intertwined processes of post-industrialism and neoliberalism cannot be disputed, to designate as race ghettos the *cités* and/or *banlieues* robs these areas of an appropriate conceptual and analytical framework that otherwise may go some way toward explaining their plight. Why, then, are they not ghettos, as the respected source of BBC News repeatedly claims that they are (see **Figure 4**)? Two crucial reasons (among many) begin to explain why. First, a brief glimpse at censuses of population, or even a few hours spent there, will reveal that the population residing within them, just like in many other 'notorious neighborhoods' in European cities, is characterized by remarkable ethnic heterogeneity, as opposed to the strictly enforced (from without) ethnic homogeneity of ghettos. What unites the marginalized urban population of France is (working) class position, not racial subjugation via spatial entrapment. Second, residents in housing projects of suburban France have regular contact with and dependency on (through employment and consumption practices) residents of adjacent neighborhoods or those in the central

city. This was not the case in recent memory in Chicago's West Side ghetto, for instance, where so segregated and contained were the residents of one housing project, the Henry Horner Homes, that a young African-American boy repeatedly asked his mother if all black people lived in housing projects, and if all black people were poor. With the possible exception of religious institutions, in no *cité* or *banlieue* of (sub)urban France will a rigorous analyst find evidence of a set of parallel institutions forming to serve the basic needs of the excluded population – by contrast with what is common to all ghettos, the same analyst will quickly discover that these are areas where the tentacles of the welfare state, while shorter than in previous decades, still stretch into and attempt to assist lives of those for whom employment is precarious or absent and opportunities for upward mobility limited by language and skills.

Conclusion

Contrary to the powerful imagery associated with the 'ghetto fabulous' discourse, an attempt by hip-hop industry moguls in the United States to celebrate the triumph of those who have escaped ghetto poverty through



Figure 4 Urban legends are reinforced through inappropriate misuse of 'ghetto'. Reprinted from the BBC News Website.

music and fashion (and now live lives of lavish consumption amidst 'bling-bling' Cristal champagne, expensive jewellery, and stretch limousines), ghettos are far from fabulous, and instead should be viewed as tragic urban forms that result from fear, oppression, and hatred. If there is anything fabulous about ghetto life, it is the extraordinary ability of their residents to form institutions of their own in the absence of external concern, and to form strong communities that, contra the Chicago School, are not 'socially disorganized' around the demonic imagery of the criminal 'underclass', but are organized in collective response to brutal confining forces that seek to isolate yet exploit, and contain yet retain. Reclaiming the ghetto term from inappropriate usage and restoring it through direct linkage to its historical/geographical roots is vital if policies toward marginal neighborhoods are to be accurately formed and sensitively implemented.

See also: Chicago School; Gay Geographies; Multicultural City; Planning, Urban; Race; Redlining; Segregation; Segregation Indices; Segregation, Urban; Slums; Suburbanization; Underclass; Urban Morphology.

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- <http://www.districtsix.co.za>
District Six Museum, Cape Town: Documents and Explains the Group Areas Act.
- <http://www.fcit.usf.edu>
Excellent Photographs of the Venetian Ghetto, A Teachers Guide to Holocaust, Florida Center for Instructional Technology.
- <http://www.urbandecay.ca>
Remarkable Photographs of Chicago's Ghetto Neighborhoods and Public Housing Projects (Before They Were Knocked Down by the Federal HOPE VI Program).
- <http://www.detroityes.com>
The Fabulous Ruins of Detroit, DetroitYES.