

Dismantling the Architecture of Segregation

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Title: Boundaries, Borders and Spatial (In)Justices

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Abstract: Local government boundary changes (LGBCs) can have profound ramifications for the region in which they occur. LGBCs create new geographic, political, demographic, economic and social realities for regions and residents. A new municipality means new taxes, regulations and elected officials. An annexation can provide new and needed public services to a neighborhood. A merger of two cities or the consolidation of city and county services can create economics of scale. However, little thought has been given to how these borders and boundaries influence spatial (in)justice. Can local government boundary change lead to a more spatially just future? Or are local government boundary change actions cementing existing spatial inequalities through legal mechanisms, existing power structures and the creation of borders. This paper seeks to explore the relationship between local government boundary changes and spatial (in)justice. Specifically, the paper will discuss the myriad of ways local governments in the United States utilize boundary changes (i.e. municipal incorporation, annexation, secession, mergers/consolidations and special districts) to promulgate spatial inequalities among racial and economic groups. Past research has highlighted the connection between municipal underbounding and racial spatial exclusion. This paper seeks to continue this discussion and apply the lens of spatial justice to other forms of local government boundary change in an effort to reveal how 'white privilege' and the role of the 'state' aids in the creation and continuation of unequal and spatially unjust urban communities. Finally, this paper will broach the topic of the creation of Cities of Color and whether or not the creation of majority-minority municipalities are the penultimate expression of spatial justice or injustice!