

Social mix in Europe

URBACT Suite

Seminar

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Aims & structure of this presentation

Aims

1. Discuss origin and rationale of social mix policies in Europe
2. Explain link between social housing and social mix policies
3. Present current debate and evidence on desirability and usefulness of social mix as policy tool
4. Outline some policy recommendations

Structure

- I. Background: social mix policies within the context of socio-spatial integration policies in Europe
- II. Social housing in the EU: brief overview
- III. Changing demand of social housing: residualisation process
- IV. Social mix as policy response
- V. Debates: normative & operational
- VI. Policy recommendations

I. Background

Socio-spatial integration policies in Europe

- **Negative association between concentrations of low-income people and housing tenure** arises from the characteristics and historic evolution of social housing in Western Europe
- Social housing for many decades (post WW II – 1970s) synonymous of **working class housing** (positive, aspirational connotation)
- Since post-industrialization in Europe: gradual **residualisation y stigmatization** (concentration of low-income / socially vulnerable people)
- Last decades (1970/80 onwards): a new dimension adds to the (existent) socio-spatial segregation : growing **ethnic tension**, particularly in areas with high concentrations of low-income residents.

II. Social housing in the EU: Brief overview

II. Social housing in the European Union

Wide diversity of systems and definitions:

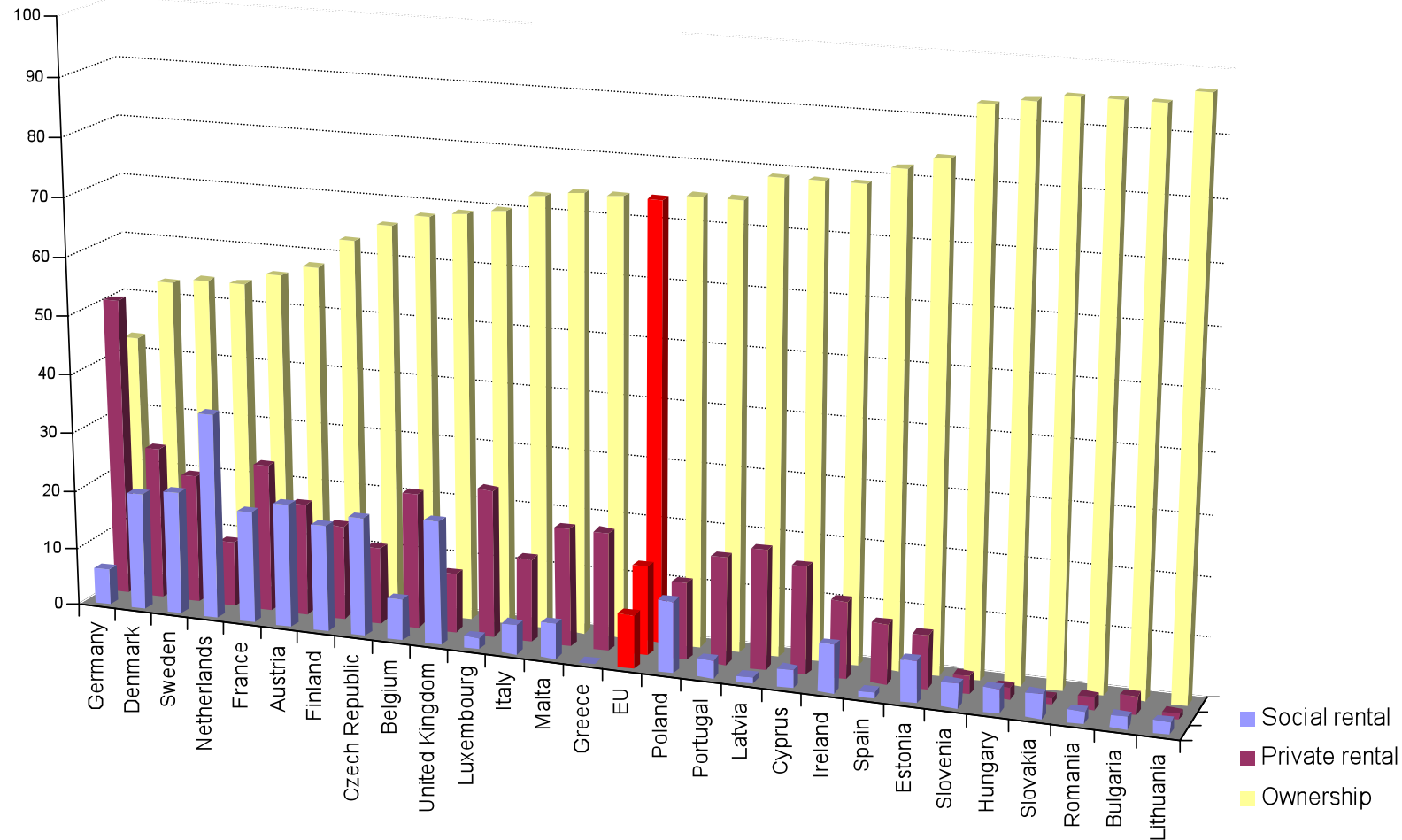
- **Types of providers** (public/semi-public – not for profit/voluntary – cooperative)
- **Tenures** (rental, ownership, intermediary, etc.)
- **Relative size of the sector** (1% - 35% of the market)

Recent trends:

- Decentralization
- Local provision and management (role of local authorities and local actors/stakeholders)
- Increasing independence of providers
- Central government's role shifting to regulatory role
- Challenges: accountability, transparency, efficiency, modernization

Diverse systems, common challenges

Tenure distribution in the 27 EU Member States



Source: CECODHAS European Social Housing Observatory (2008)

Social housing systems in WE

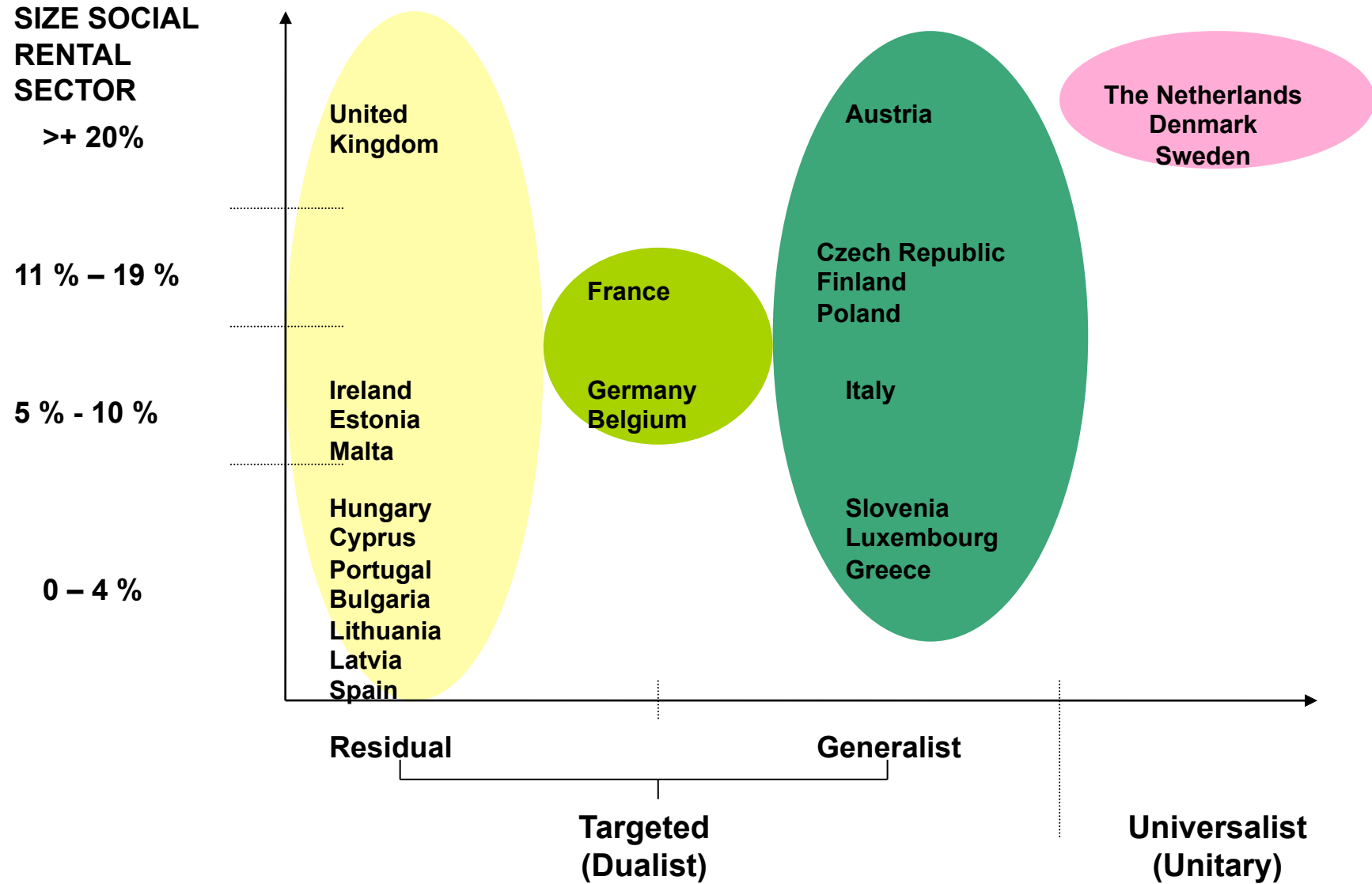
'Universalistic' (Unitary)

- Part of a broader concept of social welfare
- Aimed at providing the whole population with housing of decent quality at an affordable price.
- Public responsibility
- Delivery through a range of providers (public/municipal undertakings; entrusted not-for-profit providers; etc.)
- Market-regulating function (e.g. rent control)
- Key aim: socially balanced communities through social mix.

'Targeted' (Dualist)

- Assumes market to cater for most of the populations' housing needs
- 'Social housing' targeted to vulnerable groups (i.e. those excluded from the market)
- Wide variety in terms of type, amount and criteria of social housing provision
- Sub-types:
 - a) '*Generalist*' (traditional concept of social housing)
 - b) '*Residual*'

A typology of social housing provision in the EU-27

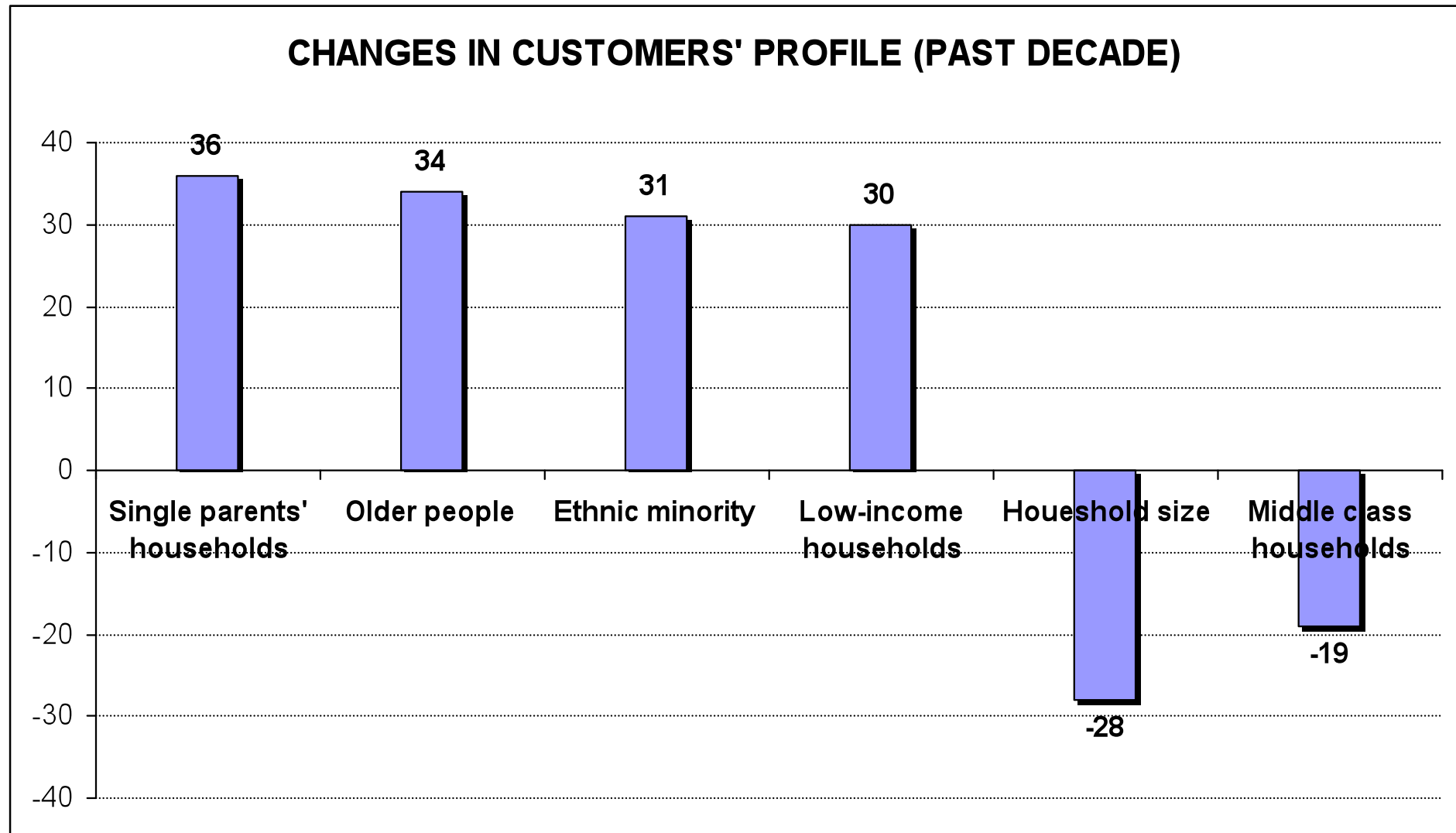


Source: CECODHAS European Social Housing Observatory (2008)

ALLOCATION CRITERIA

III. Changing demand of social housing

Changes in the demand for social housing in the EU



New type of demand for social housing in the EU

New demand:

- Increase in number of households
- Decrease of household size
- Increase in one-person households
- Higher proportion of elderly households (ageing of the population)
- Other important categories:
 - **Single parent households**
 - **Young families**
 - **Ethnic minorities / immigrants**

New supply requirements:

- More dwellings (building)
- Physical adaptation of the stock:
 - **Smaller dwellings**
 - **Family dwellings**
(immigrants, divorced parents, 'patchwork' families, etc.)
- Key role of asset management
- Social services to tenants (elderly, ethnic minorities/immigrants, labour market integration, etc.)

VI. Social mix as policy response

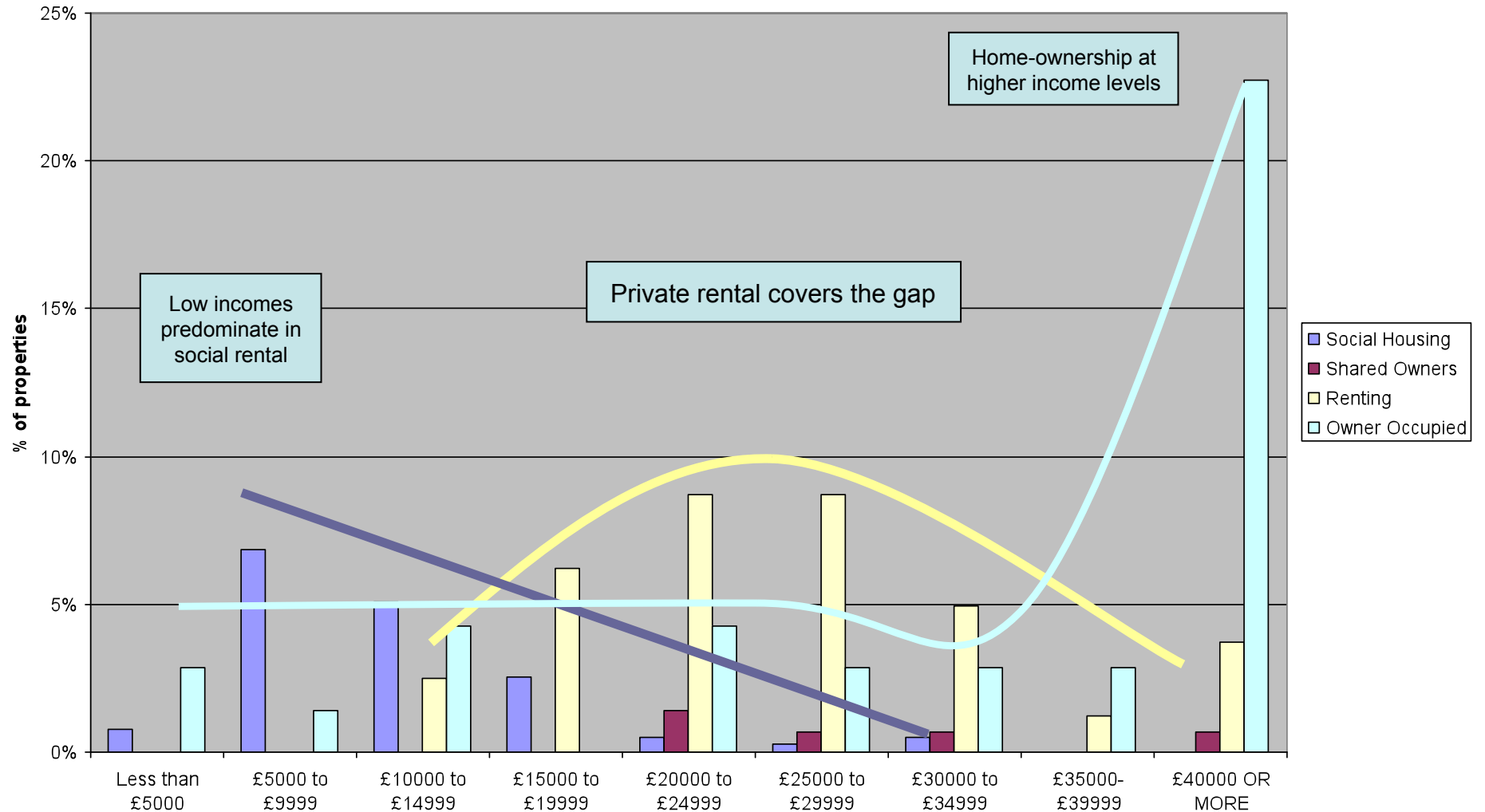
Social integration policies in European cities

- “**Area-based policies**”: main urban policy trend for the last decades in Europe as a way to recuperate areas in economic, urban and social decline.
- Assumption: spatial location of specific types of housing (i.e. **social housing**) has got independent effects on people’s opportunities.
- Examples:
 - *Soziale Stadt* (Germany)
 - *Contrats des Villes* (France)
 - *Contrats des Quartiers* (Brussels)
 - *New Deal for Communities* (United Kingdom)
 - *Big City policies* (Netherlands)
 - Etc...
- Spatial dimension of social exclusion/ social integration:
 - Location, proximity, density, infrastructure, services, social heterogeneity, social networks, etc.

Social mix

- Since the 1980s/90s **social mix** highly popular amongst policy-makers across Europe as tool to improve social integration in cities with high levels of socio-spatial segregation.
- Assumptions:
 - Positive role models
 - Proximity will foster social interaction across different social groups
 - Increase position on the housing market
 - Attraction of better-quality services
 - ‘Calm’ crime-ridden areas
 - Improve physical maintenance through influx of well-off residents
- What do we understand under “social mix”?
 - Mix income communities (MIC’s)
 - Tenure mix
 - Ethnic mix
 - Functional mix
 - Inter-generational mix

United Kingdom: 'tenure mix' as proxy for social mix



V. Debates

Social mix: Debate

Normative dimension: Is it *desirable*?

- Dilemma: implement right to housing vs. Social mix
- Social engineering
- Destruction of local social support networks, community identities, etc.
- 'Relative deprivation' effect
- Loss of services/retail for lower-income groups
(→ gentrification)

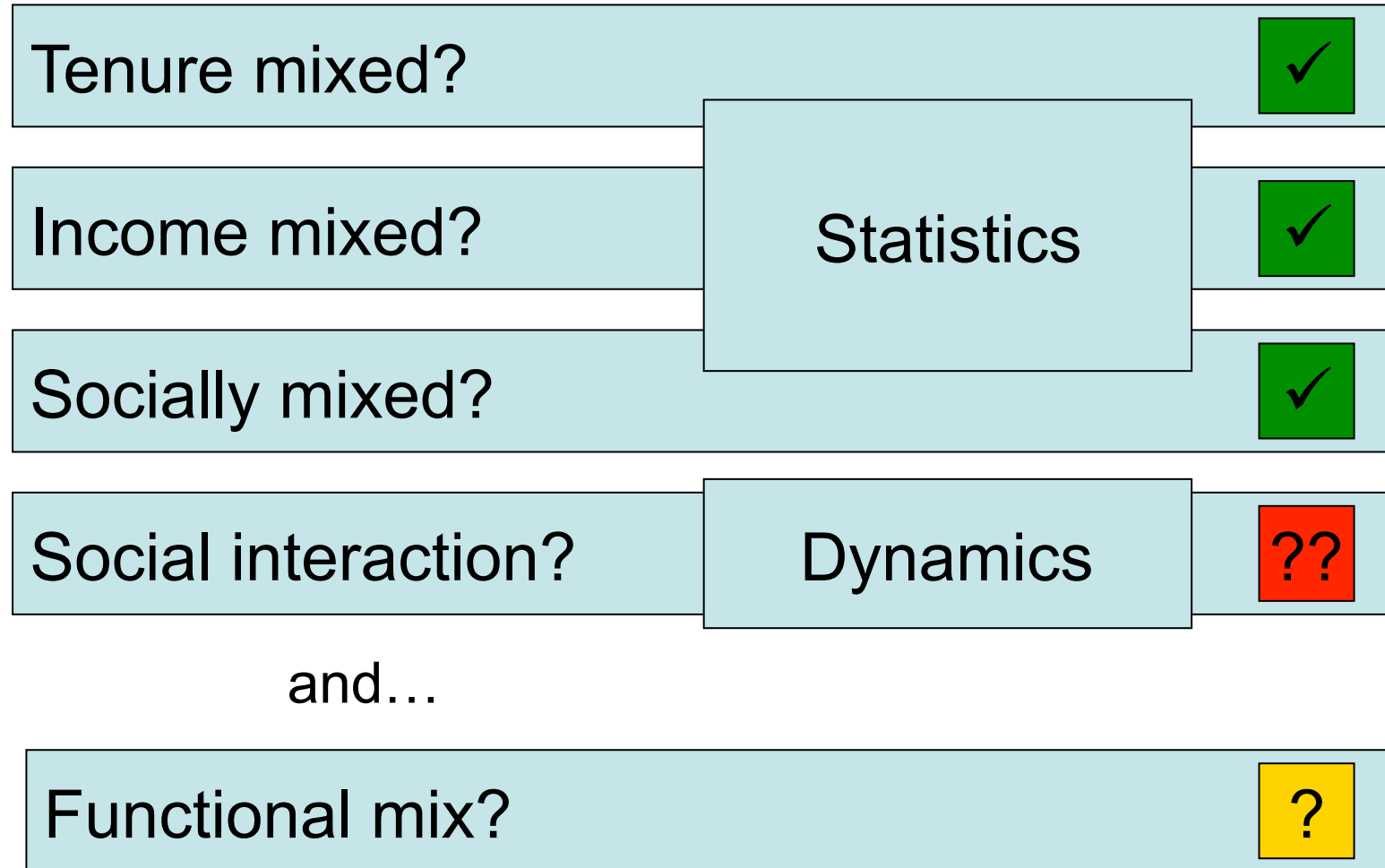
Operational dimension: Is it *feasible*?

- Gentrification
- Improvement of households' socio-economic situation or only poverty dispersion?
- Waterbed effect
- Effects on low-income households difficult to measure
- Difficult management of mixed areas
- No conclusive evidence of desired outcomes
- Living in close proximity does not guarantee social interaction

→ However, evidence shows that *not doing anything* worsens the situation of highly segregated communities.

→ Social mix policies, if correctly conceived and implemented, can *contain* the negative consequences of socio-spatial segregation

Mixed communities?



VI. Policy recommendations

Social mix policies: Lessons from European case studies

1. 'Realistic' expectations about social interaction between groups
2. Living in close proximity is not (necessarily) synonymous of social integration
3. However: measures that facilitate interaction are needed in order to counter-act or stop segregation (some evidence)
4. Long term vision
5. Consider social dynamics (mobility, gentrification, etc.)
6. Mix more possible between groups of less socio-economic difference?
7. Urban design: promoting typological similarity and harmonized standards, absence of 'barriers' (e.g. buffers), etc.
8. Role of public spaces to facilitate social interaction (safe, near, adequate size, well-equipped, well-kept, etc.)

Policy recommendations

