

WINDOW ON THE NETHERLANDS

ETHNIC SEGREGATION IN THE NETHERLANDS: NEW PATTERNS, NEW POLICIES?

GIDEON BOLT, PIETER HOOIMEIJER & RONALD VAN KEMPEN¹

*Faculty of Geographical Studies, Utrecht University, PO Box 80.115, 3508 TC Utrecht, The Netherlands.
E-mails: g.bolt@geog.uu.nl, p.hooimeijer@geog.uu.nl & r.vankempen@geog.uu.nl*

ABSTRACT

An impressive set of welfare state arrangements has kept ethnic segregation and concentration in Dutch cities to a relatively low level. Indices of segregation have also been relatively stable over the last two decades. This does not mean, however, that concentrations of ethnic minority groups are stable. Some types of neighbourhoods seem to have become less important as housing areas for ethnic minority groups, while others are becoming their main housing areas, especially for Turks and Moroccans. While in some cities this shifting pattern has already been characteristic for more than a decade, in other cities it is of more recent origin. We describe these shifting patterns of ethnic minority groups in the largest cities in the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht). We then focus on the policy response to these patterns and we briefly evaluate this response. Our main conclusion is that ethnic concentrations are not problematic in themselves, but that policy can significantly enhance the situation of (the inhabitants of) specific neighbourhoods.

Key words: The Netherlands, ethnic minorities, spatial segregation, ethnic concentration, big cities, spatial policy

INTRODUCTION

With respect to ethnic groups, considerable attention has always been paid in the geographical sciences to the processes of segregation and concentration. These processes have also received attention in urban, housing and spatial policies of many West European countries, certainly when in the course of the 1970s it gradually became clear that the guest workers from Mediterranean countries would not be returning to their country of origin.

Concentration and segregation are the (unintended) consequences of the housing market behaviour of individuals and households within the opportunities and limitations of the societal and spatial context. Policy can be seen as only one of the factors influencing the processes of concentration and segregation. Nevertheless, it is justified to put the question,

to what extent ought policy, especially spatial policy, to be used to counteract concentration and segregation? This is the aim of this paper. The first part of the paper focuses on recent developments of segregation and concentration patterns in the four big cities of the Netherlands. The second part discusses the possible contribution of spatial policy to the problems that seem to be correlated with spatial segregation and concentration.

ETHNIC SEGREGATION IN DUTCH CITIES: NEW PATTERNS?

Many studies have appeared about ethnic segregation in Dutch cities. Most of these studies are concerned with segregation within the four largest cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht) (Van Amersfoort & De Klerk 1987; Tesser *et al.* 1995; Musterd *et al.*

1998; Van Kempen & Van Weesep 1997). In some cases attention is also paid to medium-sized cities (Tesser *et al.* 1995; Bolt & Van Kempen 1997) and in just a few cases an explicit comparison is made with cities abroad (Musterd *et al.* 1998).

The large ethnic minority groups are very strongly concentrated in the big cities. In 1992, 57% of Surinamese, 48% of Moroccans, 37% of Turks and 31% of Antilleans lived in the four big cities. The share of the four big cities in the total population was only 13%. The concentration of ethnic minority groups in the four big cities has remained more or less stable over the last decade. Existing concentrations are strengthened through immigration being strongly directed to the big cities. In 1997, 45% of Turkish immigrants arrived in the four big cities, while for Moroccans, Surinamese and Antilleans the percentages were 53%, 63% and 41% respectively (Van Huis & Nicolaas 1999). The orientation of immigrants in the four big cities is thus clearly still higher than that of the ethnic minority groups already living there.

At the same time, the suburbanisation of Turks and Moroccans remains particularly low in comparison with the indigenous population. The limited suburbanisation can be partly explained by the poor income position of many ethnic minority groups. Their housing market position appears to be weaker than that of comparable indigenous groups, so that they have fewer opportunities to leave the city (Bootsma 1998).

How can ethnic segregation in the four largest Netherlands cities be characterised? And how has this changed in the last few years? An important first observation is that the segregation of the ethnic minority groups distinguished takes no extreme forms (Table 1). Segregation is certainly present, and is markedly stronger in Rotterdam and The Hague than in Amsterdam or Utrecht, but it is certainly not the case that the groups distinguished only live in a few neighbourhoods while the rest of the city is not accessible. It is also clear that in general Turks and Moroccans display a stronger segregation than other groups, such as Surinamese and Antilleans.

How has the segregation of the different ethnic minority groups developed in the last

few decades? According to the Chicago School (Park 1925/1974) the segregation of ethnic groups should decline the longer they stay in the receiving society. The idea is that the longer the length of residence becomes, the more the need to remain in the vicinity of fellow countrymen declines. Moreover many immigrants manage in the course of time to improve their social-economic status, so that they are also less frequently designated to cheap dwellings in concentration neighbourhoods (Massey 1985). Bearing in mind the ideas of the Chicago School, a decline in segregation in the four big cities ought to be evident. However, between 1980 and the first half of the 1990s few large shifts occurred in the scale of the segregation (Table 1).

Apparently it is not the case that the various groups spread over the city to an increasing extent. Only in The Hague (often called the most segregated city of the Netherlands) was there any sign of a decline in the segregation of the different groups. In the other three big cities there is evidence of a fairly stable level of segregation.

Looking at the last few years for which data are available (1995 and 1998), the most striking fact is that the segregation of ethnic minority groups in Amsterdam and Utrecht is increasing while in Rotterdam and The Hague it is declining. The segregation level is somewhat higher in The Hague and Rotterdam (just as it was in the years prior to 1995), but the four cities are growing closer together. When the separate groups are considered, the same story applies to Moroccans and Turks (with the exception of Utrecht, where the segregation of Turks has remained stable).

The development of the segregation of Surinamese and Antilleans between 1995 and 1998 differs however from that of Turks and Moroccans. The segregation of Surinamese has declined in each of the four big cities in the same period (to a greater or lesser extent). With Antilleans there is evidence of declining segregation in Rotterdam and Utrecht, while the segregation level in Amsterdam and The Hague has remained stable.

Segregation figures are only part of the story. The same value of the segregation index might hide different patterns of spatial concentration. What can be said about the

Table 1. Segregation index¹ of ethnic minority groups² in the four big cities, 1980, 1986, 1995 and 1998.

	Turks	Moroccans	Surinamese	Antilleans	Minorities ³
Amsterdam					
1980	37.3	38.8	27.8	26.2	30.0
1986	38.8	36.9	33.7	33.0	31.5
1995	40.7	39.1	34.8	34.9	31.7
1998	42.3	41.2	34.2	35.1	33.1
Rotterdam					
1980	–	–	–	–	46.5
1986	–	–	–	–	43.0
1995	51.7	46.8	28.6	28.5	43.0
1998	49.9	44.2	26.2	25.7	40.8
The Hague					
1980	66.4	64.7	–	–	55.5
1986	65.1	57.3	46.4	26.9	52.7
1995	54.6	49.9	40.2	25.5	43.1
1998	53.0	48.6	38.7	25.9	41.8
Utrecht					
1980	–	–	–	–	37.1
1986	46.4	37.2	–	–	33.2
1995	43.2	42.2	24.0	22.5	32.9
1998	43.1	44.5	23.4	19.5	34.8

1. The segregation index indicates the share of the population category that would have to move to obtain a distribution over the municipality that is equivalent to that of the rest of the population. The maximum value is 100, the minimum value is 0.
2. A member of an ethnic minority is someone born outside the Netherlands, or having one parent born outside the Netherlands.
3. Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese, Antilleans, South-Europeans; for 1995 and 1998 also 'other non industrialised countries'.

Source: Tesser *et al.* 1995; Van Kempen *et al.* 2000.

changing concentration of the minority ethnic groups in different kinds of neighbourhoods in the cities under research? The general picture is that neighbourhoods built between 1945 and 1975 have become more and more important for the housing of ethnic minority groups. The housing stock in most of these neighbourhoods consists mainly of relatively cheap social rented dwellings. Turks and Moroccans especially have become very much dependent on this section of the housing market.

Differences between the four big cities can be found in the timing of the shift towards post-war neighbourhoods. The distribution pattern of ethnic minority groups in Amsterdam has changed little during the last few years. The relative importance of the pre-war neighbourhoods near the inner city is declining. Most growth is to be found without

exception in Amsterdam West, in neighbourhoods built soon after the war or in the 1960s and 1970s. The higher segregation index in 1998 can be attributed to these neighbourhoods. Most of these neighbourhoods were also neighbourhoods with a high concentration of ethnic minority groups in 1995.

For Utrecht, in general terms the same story applies. A strong increase is taking place exclusively at the edges of the city, particularly in the neighbourhoods that were developed between the end of the 1950s and 1970. In the older concentration neighbourhoods at the edge of the inner city there is evidence of only a slight growth, or even a decline in the share of ethnic minority groups. In Utrecht the increase in the share of ethnic minority groups in the districts dating from the 1960s is responsible for most of the increasing segregation.



Figure 1. Change in ethnic minority population in four cities per neighbourhood, 1995–98.

In Rotterdam, the ethnic minority groups are still much more heavily concentrated in the pre-war residential districts than in Amsterdam or Utrecht. At the same time the importance of a number of post-war neighbourhoods has strongly increased. Since the share of ethnic minority groups in these neighbourhoods in 1995 was still fairly low, the increase of the ethnic minority population in these neighbourhoods has played a large part in the reduction of the segregation index. In addition, the reduction in the share of the ethnic minority population in a few concentration districts has also played a part.

In The Hague the greatest growth in the ethnic minority population is taking place in the existing concentration areas, or at their edges. A few pre-war neighbourhoods have undergone the greatest growth; there is actually also a strong growth in a few post-war neighbourhoods at the edges of the traditional concentration area and in the southwest of The Hague. Since the concentration of ethnic minority groups in many of these post-war districts was still low in 1995, the increase in the ethnic minority population in these neighbourhoods has played an important part in the reduction of the segregation index.

In summary, the growth of the ethnic minority population in Utrecht and Amsterdam has taken place increasingly in post-war neighbourhoods. Until recently, the fact that ethnic minority groups had penetrated these neighbourhoods relatively often in Utrecht and Amsterdam ensured a lower segregation level for these districts than in Rotterdam or The Hague. However, the concentrations in several post-war neighbourhoods have now increased strongly, and the segregation level of the groups is increasing in both cities. In Rotterdam and The Hague on the other hand, many of the older concentration neighbourhoods are still among the fast growth areas. In the last few years the number of minority group residents in various post-war neighbourhoods has actually also increased markedly. Since ethnic minority groups had not previously been so strongly concentrated in such neighbourhoods, a declining segregation is the consequence.

A ROLE FOR SPATIAL POLICY?

To what extent do the observations outlined above provide an argument for policy options that can counter the disadvantages of segregation while at the same time not destroying the advantages of concentration? The question that needs to be addressed here is whether, and in what ways, spatial policy is necessary and meaningful.

The necessity for spatial policy is not to be derived from the existence of concentrations as such, but in the nature of the concentrations and the spatially perceived negative phenomena that accompany them. In a number of concentration areas tension arises between the various population groups; there is little evidence of social cohesion, criminality figures are high, the physical environment becomes derelict, there is high unemployment, extensive dealing in and use of drugs (Tesser *et al.* 1995). To that can be added that the dwellings in these districts are usually small and have poor sound insulation, the open-space development is unattractive, the nuisance from immediate and other neighbours is substantial, as is the dissatisfaction with the dwelling and the residential environment, and the propensity to move in these districts is relatively high. In other words, to assert that concentration in itself is not a problem is not to say that no problems arise that are associated with that concentration.

Concentrations of ethnic and low-income groups arise in neighbourhoods where the housing and neighbourhood quality leaves much to be desired, and where many dwellings become vacant through the relocation of households with higher incomes which can improve their housing situation. Such phenomena as criminality and the increase of the social distance between residents are associated spatially with increasing concentration and in their turn neighbourhood-quality damage. This deleterious effect can once more lead to the relocation of economically successful residents, so that existing social networks become weaker and informal support declines.

Such a downward spiral leads to segregation having an increasingly forced character. The negative effects must mostly be borne by those who, because of their low income, have no

opportunity to leave the neighbourhood. Enhancing the choice space set of higher-income groups can reinforce this spiral. Through meeting the residential desires of an increasingly large group of more prosperous households on urban extension sites and in the suburbs this selective moving process will accelerate and the forced segregation will move into a higher gear.

The conclusion is then that a substantial task still lies ahead for spatial policy. In specific terms, three policy options can be considered:

1. Improvement of access to employment opportunities from the neighbourhoods in the inner city.
2. Extension of the housing opportunities for groups with a low income outside the city.
3. Improvement in the quality of the housing and the residential environment in the city itself. These options are further considered below.

Improvement of access to employment opportunities from the neighbourhoods in the inner city –

Concentration of employment opportunities on urban locations that are not only readily accessible by car but also by bicycle or public transport could contribute to the employment opportunities of urban residents with a low level of education, living in concentration areas. Attention must also be paid to the support of the independent entrepreneur. Ethnic entrepreneurship is not only a form of self-employment, but also a source of paid employment for others working with these entrepreneurs. Regulation and adequate support can contribute to the development of this to an important extent. It is probably even more important to ensure that suitable accommodation becomes available.

Extension of the housing opportunities for groups with a low income outside the city –

Policy ought not to be restricted to the areas within the city boundaries. The reduction of affordable housing alternatives within the city will in any case be compensated for in part by the supply of alternatives elsewhere. In suburban municipalities (old and new) the supply of cheap, affordable rental dwellings must be sufficient to be able to offer the lower-income

groups adequate freedom of choice in a spatial sense. The increase in the availability of cheap dwellings outside the concentration areas and outside the city boundaries does not aim explicitly at the counteraction of the poverty and ethnic concentration (and certainly also not at the reduction of poverty in itself); it aims rather at the enhancement of the choice opportunities of low-income households from a spatial point of view.

Improvement in the quality of the housing and the residential environment in the city itself –

Improvement of the housing stock can to an important extent contribute to the improvement of the residential situation of households that have had to manage on a low income on a long-term basis. In addition, differentiation of the housing stock and the enhancement of the opportunities of making a residential career within the city binds higher incomes households to the city.

CONCLUSION

Segregation indices for ethnic minority groups in the big cities of the Netherlands have been remarkably stable over the last 20 years. However, these indices conceal powerful dynamics in the distribution and concentration pattern of ethnic minority groups. While in Amsterdam and Utrecht the early post-war areas had already experienced a sizeable input of ethnic minority groups, in the second half of the 1990s the early post-war parts of Rotterdam and The Hague also had an increasing inflow of ethnic minority groups. At the same time the importance of the older districts in various cities as housing areas for ethnic minority groups has decreased. Ethnic minority groups have hardly penetrated the newer residential areas in the city or the suburban residential areas outside it.

For the future it would not seem unreasonable to predict a strengthening of segregation and concentration on the basis of both income and ethnicity. In particular many social-economic developments work so as to promote segregation. The increasing prosperity leads to a larger choice space set for those who share in this prosperity (indigenous and ethnic minority groups) and to an increasing concentration in

the neighbourhoods where the housing and neighbourhood quality leaves much to be desired of those who fail to integrate adequately into this development. As a result social networks threaten to fall into decline, so that the advantages of ethnic concentration are lost. Existing concentrations then threaten to become synonymous with concentrations of poverty.

Although spatial policy may not be capable of solving poverty, it can certainly make a solid contribution to the conditions that determine the escape from (the effects of) poverty. The enhancement of the availability of employment opportunities for those still outside the employment process, the broadening of the spatial freedom of choice for people currently allocated to cheap and affordable housing, the replacement of forced segregation by opportunities of self selection for groups that cannot bring that about via the market and the improvement of residential environment in the neighbourhoods with the lowest popularity are the specific policy options available. The goal is not to counteract ethnic concentrations, but to ensure that concentration only arises as a result of the positive choice of the people concerned.

Note

1. The paper is based on a report written by Van Kempen *et al.* (2000).

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