Putting interethnic attitudes in context.  
The relationship between neighbourhood characteristics, interethnic attitudes and residential behaviour

By Dr. Esther Havekes

Abstract

Against the background of growing ethnic residential concentration in European city neighbourhoods, this dissertation closely studies the relationship between the neighbourhood of residence and interethnic attitudes. Building on research in the fields of interethnic relations and urban sociology, I examine the extent to which various ethnic, socioeconomic and physical neighbourhood characteristics affect residents’ interethnic attitudes, but also the degree to which these attitudes are reflected in the residential choices people make (i.e., having the wish to move and the specific ethnic composition of the neighbourhoods in which people search for housing). These topics are studied from the perspectives of both the ethnic majority group and ethnic minority groups using various methods, such as multilevel modelling and a vignette experiment, in the Netherlands and the United States.

The analyses in this dissertation show the importance of ethnic encounters in a safe and liveable environment: deteriorating neighbourhood circumstances relate to more negative attitudes towards ethnic minorities, especially in ethnically concentrated neighbourhoods. Yet, the results undermine the assumption that just meeting other ethnic groups in the neighbourhood would stimulate positive interethnic attitudes. Ethnic neighbourhood exposure affects interethnic attitudes only to a limited extent, and when it does, it results in more negative rather than positive attitudes. Finally, interethnic attitudes appeared not a prominent factor in residential intentions and behaviour.