

The Diversified Neighbourhood in Western Europe and the United States: How do countries deal with the spatial distribution of economic and cultural differences?

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Many politicians in Western societies assume that strong concentrations of public housing have a debilitating effect on the residents and produce high social costs. The general expectation is that mixed housing projects can help overcome integration problems. In the United States, Belgium, France, Sweden, and the Netherlands, opportunities to mix neighbourhoods vary due to different traditions in housing, as well as specific institutional and socioeconomic conditions. In this comparative article we show that yet another parameter—the predominant view on integration and multiculturalism in each country—is relevant when explaining differences in anti-segregation strategies.

Plusieurs hommes politiques dans les sociétés occidentales supposent que de fortes concentrations de logement social ont un effet débilant sur les résidents et entraînent des coûts sociaux élevés. De façon générale, l'on croit que les projets d'habitations hétérogènes peuvent aider à surmonter les problèmes d'intégration. Aux États-Unis, en Belgique, en France, en Suède et aux Pays-Bas, les occasions de créer des quartiers mixtes varient en fonction des traditions différentes liées au logement et des conditions institutionnelles et socioéconomiques particulières. Dans cet article comparatif, l'on démontre que pour expliquer les différences entre les stratégies anti-ségrégation, il faut tenir compte d'un autre critère, c'est-à-dire la vision qui prédomine dans chaque pays quant à l'intégration et le multiculturalisme.

Key words /Mots-clefs: International comparison/comparaison internationale; spatial concentration/concentration spatiale; immigrant-dense neighbourhoods/quartier à haute concentration d'immigrants; models of integration/modèles d'intégration; multiculturalism/multiculturalisme; housing policies/politiques du logement.

Introduction

Modern Western societies are becoming increasingly multiethnic. Even countries that officially do not consider themselves immigration countries have experienced an influx of economic migrants and political refugees. The world is adrift: the poorest countries suffer conflicts that force millions of people to flee, and a significant number of these people seek refuge in the prosperous West. But closer to home—from the perspective of Western Europe and the United States—many people also find reasons to leave their countries of origin. Economic problems in Mexico have propelled a continual flow of migrants to North America despite measures to halt it. And following the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia all Western European countries are facing large numbers of fugitives from the Balkans.

Many refugees settle in the countries of destination like the numerous guest workers who permanently established themselves in the rich industrialized countries. Consequently, the receiving societies grow more pluriform, which is particularly “shocking” in those countries that were previously relatively homogeneous in terms of language, religion, and ethnicity. Of course, nearly all countries have experienced periods of large-scale migration and immigration in the past. Whether during colonialism and decolonialization, or due to the slave trade, religious intolerance, and world wars, large groups of people have migrated throughout history, often against their will. In the country of arrival they have tried to build a new life. Where and how they did this, of course, depended on local circumstances.

Over the years various models and policies have been developed to help integrate newcomers and other disadvantaged groups into society. In these models of incorporation (Brubaker, 1992), fighting economic and cultural inequality—and the expression of this inequality through spatial divisions—often figures prominently. As a result of the large recent influx of migrants and refugees, this discussion on concentration and segregation has once again reared its head in many Western countries. Here *concentration* refers to the relative overrepresentation of a population category in a certain urban area (compared with the urban average), whereas segregation denotes the process of spatial separation and alienation between particular population categories (Musterd, Ostendorf & Breebaart, 1998; Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau [SCP], 1995).

To counteract harsh (socioeconomic or sociocultural) divisions, forms of diversification politics receive high priority in many Western countries;

in particular mixed neighbourhoods are proposed as the solution to (potential) problems of concentration and segregation. Policy-makers generally suggest two possible tracks for achieving diversification in neighbourhoods. One is to realize exit options, which help vulnerable groups to leave “bad” districts and enter “good” ones. The other is to introduce role models for weaker groups into problem areas. In both variants quota measures sometimes play a role, but usually a new population mix emerges from physical measures in the housing stock (e.g., demolition, new construction, upgrading). Yet every country gives diversification politics its own face. Traditions in housing and in socioeconomic conditions influence the opportunities to mix. However, differences in policy measures are also related to beliefs and traditions about multiculturalism.

This article focuses on the diversification motives and practices in Western countries and on dominant notions of multiculturalism. We examine the US, Belgium (Flanders and Brussels), France, Sweden, and the Netherlands. Several factors make comparative international research on concentration, segregation, and (the effects of) diversification a difficult task. First, countries adopt various definitions of ethnicity: France, Belgium, and Sweden register immigrants according to nationality, whereas the Netherlands distinguishes between ethnic groups. Second, in collecting quantitative data on population trends, different scales are used. Third, the limited availability of empirical resources hampers cross-national comparisons. And finally, the information that is accessible often varies over time (Musterd et al., 1998). To avoid inconsistencies, we focus on a qualitative description of diversification policies and beliefs. But we do refer to quantitative research if it helps us illustrate developments in the compared countries.

In each case study we start with a brief review of the political context, immigration history, and immigrant composition. Second, we highlight several essential characteristics of the housing supply and housing policy of each country. Then we shift our focus to perceptions of concentration, segregation, diversification, and multiculturalism—primarily from a policy perspective. What is the perception and diagnosis of concentration and segregation in these countries? What room, figuratively as well as literally, do various (ethnic) groups have to manifest themselves? And what opportunities do governments have to implement diversification politics? Following these case studies the article concludes with a comparison of the findings.

The United States

Much of the literature and insights concerning the negative aspects of concentration and segregation are based on US scholarship and discussions that deal with segregation and ghetto formation (Musterd et al., 1998). Although it is often pointed out that the US debate and situation are not directly comparable to the situation in many European cities, European discussions often refer to the US literature. For this reason, our international comparison starts with a description of the situation in the US.

Historically, the US is the immigrant country par excellence. In earlier centuries most people entering the country were either European migrants or African slaves. After World War II, the majority of immigrants have come from Latin America (especially Mexico) or Asia, and currently the number of people flowing into the US is about 1.1 million a year (including refugees and asylum seekers) (WRR, 2001). Whereas the federal government makes immigration policy and determines the selection criteria, the states are responsible for integration.

Economically, the US has always been a strongly market-oriented country with a different social security and income redistribution system from that in many northwestern European countries. One important consequence of this is that income inequality is much greater in the US than in those European countries. Although food and shelter are basic human needs, housing is not a fundamental right in the US. It is primarily a consumer item, susceptible to the rules of the market. For most of the country's history, the private sector has built housing. The public sector (both the local and federal government) has generally regulated the size, architectural style, and location of new houses, but has not built many itself (Burgess, 1998). Consequently, most of the US housing supply is privately owned, inhabited by the owner, or rented to others. Public housing is much less extensive (3% of the total housing stock) and primarily concentrated in a few cities. The government's limited influence on the housing market is also one of the main reasons for persistent segregation by ethnicity and class and for the social problems this causes (Burgess, 1998).

Segregation in US inner cities is often a matter of race. In the cities more than a third of the Black inhabitants live in "hypersegregated" areas, meaning that they seldom have contact with other population groups. The spatial distance is so extreme that living in these neighbourhoods can become an autonomous cause of deprivation and poverty (Wilson, 1987; Deurloo, Musterd & Ostendorf, 1997). It is argued

that living in a ghetto restricts social mobility because it offers almost no opportunities for sociocultural integration into the surrounding world (Lewis, 1966). Such neighbourhoods are seen as fertile ground for the emergence of *cultures of poverty*, which refers to the existence of fatalistic subcultures, poor work ethics, and lack of ambition. In these circumstances inhabitants acquire easily "deviant" norms and values (Merton, 1957). The assumption is that a culture of poverty persists if the children, like their parents, are unable to master the dominant social codes. US authors like Lewis (1966), Wilson (1987), and Massey and Denton (1993) have found support for the culture of poverty theory in areas with high concentrations of poor African-Americans. The social problems in these areas have also led to stigmatization and negative stereotyping of a neighbourhood or city district, which results in discrimination against people from such an area. Research points out that employers, for example, may avoid hiring these people (Carpenter, Chauviré & White, 1994).

This pessimistic view of an inverse correlation between segregation and integration is not shared by all observers. Some experts argue that low-class areas dominated by one ethnic group facilitate mutual aid, networks, and specific markets. Fischer and Massey (2000), who examined the effect of segregation on the likelihood of entrepreneurship, found that a certain degree of concentration yields advantages for (ethnic) markets, but beyond this threshold it reduces the opportunities for enterprise.

Based on the mostly negative findings, US policy assumes that "residence in concentrated poverty neighbourhoods has a debilitating effect on residents and imposes disproportionate social costs" (US Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD], 1996). This assumption has stimulated federal and local government to take initiatives to offer residents of poor neighbourhoods opportunities to escape to more developed parts of cities and conglomerates, usually the suburbs. The expectation is that low-income households will improve their chances by moving and integrating (socially as well as ethnically) into suburban neighbourhoods. These Moving to Opportunity Programs, however, encounter resistance from "middle-class communities who fear an upsurge of social problems and erosion of overall quality of life as the result of relocating poor families into their midst" (Galster & Zobel, 1998, p. 607). Such resistance is not surprising, because when groups are asked to define their position vis-à-vis each other, Blacks are consistently perceived in unfavourable terms. Certainly white homeowners with

children are not inclined to live in racially mixed neighbourhoods (Charles, 2000).

Nevertheless, since 1998 the *Quality Housing and Work Responsibility Act* has mandated numerous projects for diversified housing. This law demands that every building project for social housing must consist of 40% of low-budget houses for the extremely poor and 60% of houses for higher-earning households (up to middle-class income). This income mix is regarded as one of the solutions for problems emanating from the concentration of poor Black households (Housing Policy Debate, 1998).

In a review article, Galster and Zobel (1998) attempted to answer the question as to whether US diversification policy has led to a reduction of social problems. Their answer is not without ambiguity. Following their analysis of various research results, they comment that evidence strongly suggests that participants in diversification programs have benefited. On the other hand, they observe that there is little empirical evidence to support a causal link with the (socioeconomic) composition of the neighbourhood. "It seems that the improvements are more the result of other structural advantages of the suburban areas, such as schools, public services, and job accessibility" (Galster & Zobel, 1998, p. 615). The results, in short, have more to do with services than with diversification of the population.

It is not only policy-makers who have explicit views on the desirable social mix of inhabitants. Recently the New Urbanism school of thought has emerged among US architects and urban engineers. This school of thought seeks to find solutions to the acute problems of sleepy suburbs and deserted inner cities. The architects aspire to "garden village" suburbs with a certain degree of social diversification and social interaction. Their proposals frequently invoke ideas about reinforcing social cohesion in the context of a close community (Talen, 1999).

The call of New Urbanism has found a huge response, but the traditional view of communities as a circumscribed territory is also criticized because it denies the nature of many personal contacts and interactions that exceed the level of the immediate living environment (Wellman & Leighton, 1979; Talen, 1999). Others criticize the strong emphasis on the constructed environment's influence on social interaction. They question the idea that a new social order emerges from the shaping of the spatial order. Hall (1998) accuses New Urbanism proponents of being far from all-inclusive in their specific plans: "nowhere have the real issues of social or economic segregation that New Urbanism theorists claim to be solving really been addressed" (p. 31).

Despite attempts to diversify through housing, the US remains a spatially class-and-colour-segregated country. Moreover, in many urban neighbourhoods one ethnic group is by far in the majority. Particularly the situation of African-Americans is alarming; socioeconomic inequality and cultural differences go hand in hand. This does not mean that every distinction between neighbourhoods in the US is problematic. On the contrary, many neighbourhoods with a strong identity (Chinatowns, Little Italies, gay districts, Hispanic neighbourhoods) are attractive not only for residents who feel a personal bond with the area, but also for visitors who enjoy the charm of such different surroundings.

How do these neighbourhoods-with-identity relate to conceptualizations of multiculturalism in the US? When and how is segregation considered a problem? It is somewhat difficult to answer these questions because the concept of multiculturalism is highly contested in the US. According to some authors, the US is still the country of the *melting pot* in contrast to, for example, Canada, which embraces a fundamentally different concept of multiculturalism, the *salad bowl*. Whereas the US has only one official language and dual citizenship is prohibited, many Canadians emphasize the value of cultural differences (Lipset, 1990; Kymlicka, 1995; Taylor, 1994). In the melting pot view, the citizens of the US are asked to share an American identity regardless of their background: minority groups are supposed to give up many of their cultural particularities and adapt to—or slightly change—the dominant standards of the majority.

However, this view, which favours intermingling, has been criticized in recent political debates. Are minority groups expected to assimilate, to hyphenate, or do they get space to live and cultivate their differences? (Young, 1990; Seidman, 1997; Alexander, 2001). Although 9/11 has shifted some of the focus (back) to the meaning of being an American, to the common ground, the recent decades in the US have revealed a growing tendency to emphasize and recognize cultural differences. However, because cultural and economic differences are strongly interwoven, protagonists of a mosaic society (Etzioni, 2001) only approve of neighbourhoods-with-identity as long as there are bridges between communities. Otherwise socioeconomic inequality will persist.

Belgium

Like the US, Belgium is a relatively young country with a pluralistic background. The government is strongly federalized and decentralized, but this is a recent development. The three main regions—Flanders (where Dutch is the common language), Walloons (French-speaking), and Brussels (bilingual)—have gained influence since the reformation of the Belgian Constitution in 1993.

During the economic boom after World War II large waves of immigrants arrived, most of them Spanish or Italian. Later Belgium recruited immigrants from Turkey and Morocco to meet the needs of its expanding economy. Since the 1970s, emphasis has been on family reunification and more recently on asylum seekers (Musterd et al., 1998). Today, approximately 8.4% of the total population has a “foreign nationality” (Institut National de Statistique [INS], 2000). Due to changes in naturalization procedures in 1985 and 1992, it has become easier to obtain Belgian nationality. Behind this measure lies a political desire for rapid integration of newcomers (de Winter & Musterd, 1998).

Belgium’s immigration policy reflects its political structure. Regulation and entrance of foreign immigrants is the responsibility of the federal state, whereas local authorities are responsible for accommodation and integration of foreigners into the host society. The influence that lower-level governments have gained over the last years does not include the housing market. This is mainly because of the housing tenure structure (Boelhouwer & Van der Heijden, 1992). The owner-occupied sector is dominant, with a market share of 71%. The second most important segment is the private rental sector (20%). The social rental sector is limited in size (about 6%) and usually also in quality. This tenure distribution reflects the ideological preference for home ownership.

Given this context, it is difficult to apply physical restructuring measures to influence the composition of the population in certain areas. Moreover, the lack of a regional planning agency prevents a supra-municipal solution for spatial socioeconomic inequality. Partly for this reason, and partly due to the ideological preference for private homeownership, spatial concentration is considered a natural occurrence that cannot easily be reversed (de Winter & Musterd, 1998).

The nature of the Belgian housing stock results in high concentrations of lower-income households (often immigrants) in the rental sector and the cheapest owner-occupied dwellings. Although relatively high for European standards, concentration of poor and ethnic groups in Belgium is not comparable to the US situation. This is due to the tradition of

social security and of the welfare state in general. Nevertheless, the urban concentration of immigrants still increases in major cities like Brussels and Antwerp. In Brussels, a study of Breebaart, Musterd, & Ostendorf (1996) shows that especially Turks, Moroccans, Algerians, and Tunisians live segregated from the rest of the population.

In the political arena, however, the ethnic component of concentration is not clearly articulated. During the 1990s issues concerning poverty and lack of opportunities dominated urban policy discussions. Here we take a closer look at the region of Flanders. The Flemish government analyses urban problems primarily from the perspective of underdevelopment. It argues that problems like shoddy housing, concentration, and deprivation accumulate in cities, particularly in old neighbourhoods (Peeters, 1995). A Social Impulse Fund founded to facilitate urban renewal represents the core of Flemish urban policy: special assistance for the underprivileged, emphasis on the population's participation, administrative innovation, and an extensive and integral budget (Stouthuysen, Duyvendak, & van der Graaf, 1999).

Stouthuysen et al. (1999) assert that the Flemish urban policy's strict socioeconomic focus is related to the present political situation. By approaching urban problems in terms of underdevelopment and deprivation, the debate seeks to transcend the dichotomy between indigenous residents and immigrants. This could be interpreted as an attempt to avoid a more cultural-ethnic definition of the issue, particularly after the recent electoral successes of the far-right *Vlaams Blok* (Flemish Bloc). Therefore, the current debate (deliberately) does not consider special treatment of deprivation among immigrants. "Local minority policy needs to form an integrated whole with other existing policy plans for combating subordination and raising the welfare and quality of life in the municipality" (Vanattenhoven, 1999, translation ours). Spatial politics is regarded in the same colour blind way. Preventing or fighting ethnic concentration by stimulating diversified neighbourhoods is officially not an issue. The focus is on improving social and economic conditions in underdeveloped neighbourhoods. This spatially oriented policy aims to increase public investment in the social rental sector, stimulate private investment in the redevelopment of derelict buildings and areas, and, finally, improve public spaces and develop initiatives for social cohesion in the population (Musterd & de Winter, 1998).

Apart from this dominant area-based politics, some developments are related to diversification. Since 1996, housing corporations in the Brussels region have the opportunity to assign a share of their houses to

middle- and higher-income groups, which encourages socioeconomic diversification in residential complexes. The flip side of the coin is that this rental diversification policy partly excludes the lowest-income groups from the cheap housing supply. Moreover, affordable alternatives are scarce in the city because of the small rental sector (Musterd & de Winter, 1998).

In particular private sector initiatives have in some cases introduced higher-income groups into areas in decline. Municipalities support private redevelopment projects, sometimes in terms of *mixité sociale*, but usually not as a deliberate diversification policy. The reason for this is that particularly poor municipalities strive to enforce their tax base, that is, stimulate an increase of higher-income groups to raise municipal tax revenue. Private initiatives have occasionally resulted in a process of gentrification and displacement of lower-income groups.

France

Until 1983 the French government was strongly centralized. New laws have devolved certain functions and responsibilities to lower-level governments (the regions, the departments, and the municipalities). In the area of housing, however, the central government continues to exert strong influence on local policy, primarily because it finances most of the housing projects (Boelhouwer & Van der Heijden, 1992).

The housing supply consists of the following sectors: private home ownership (more than 50%), the rental sector (approximately 40%), and a small percentage of other ownership forms. Of the rental sector, slightly more than half are rented privately. About one fifth of the total supply represents social housing, which is built and managed by the Housing and Renting institutions. In 2000 the social rental sector accounted for approximately 3.65 million houses and 11 million residents (Liberation, March 2000).

Over the last 50 years the immigrant population of France has grown to 7.4% of the total. This percentage has been stable since 1975, a year that marked the end of a period of decolonization. In 1999 4.3 million immigrants were living in France. The number of immigrants from European countries has fallen, whereas the number of immigrants from North Africa has increased slightly. Today, Algerian-, Portuguese-, Moroccan-, Italian-, and Spanish-born immigrants are the largest groups. Most immigrants live in the cities and the Paris area (Boëldieu & Borrel,

2000). More specific data are not available: France does not produce (international comparable) statistical figures on ethnic concentration and segregation (Musterd et al., 1998).

This is because of French minority policy, which is unique in European perspective. This policy strongly emphasizes the assimilation of minorities through naturalization measures (*Français par acquisition*). As a result, there are few official policy measures aimed at specific ethnic groups. In general French politicians and citizens are strongly opposed to linking specific policy to specific ethnic groups for fear of discrimination and prejudice against such groups (Jacquier, 1990).

In republican France, a politician who draws attention to specific groups is liable to be accused of North-American-style, communitarian sympathies (Roman, 1995). Paradoxically, because policy formally ignores differences among ethnic groups, there is no attention to ethnically based deprivation, and there is no room for an official diversification policy aimed at *ethnic* diversification. Only attention for mixing socioeconomic groups has a place in French policy discourse.

Regardless of official policy, many social scientists have concentrated on the unfavourable living conditions of many immigrants. Sometimes local governments acknowledge the ethnic dimension of poverty and the struggle against it. Moreover, reality forces politicians to consider the nonrandom concentration of migrants. Since the early-1980s fatalism and deprivation among immigrants have frequently led to explosions of social unrest and riots (Duyvendak, 1995). Many social problems occur in the *grands ensembles*, the enormous districts on the outskirts of cities, which were built after World War II. The *grands ensembles* were originally designed for socially and economically diversified populations (Chamberon & Lemaire, 1970), but since decolonialization, immigrants from former French territories have flocked to subsidized-rent projects in the *grands ensembles*, known as *Habitations à loyer modéré* (HLMs). These housing projects now closely match the social and family profile of the immigrant population, which has a high proportion of large, low-income families. Nearly half of the tenant immigrant population lives in HLMs, primarily in the oldest dwellings (Boëldieu & Thave, 2000).

French urban policy aimed at reducing social and economic underdevelopment has produced a broad range of policy forms and projects, with varying intensity and scale. Since the 1970s several policy programs have been launched, mostly by national and local governments, although sometimes private actors are also involved (Kruijthoff & Baart, 1998). In the 1980s the *Politique de la ville* (Town Politics) report guided

various measures for an integral and territorial approach. In 1991 the *Law for Urban Policy* went into effect. This law and the measures it produced were aimed at striking a new balance between the housing functions and other functions in urban areas with significant uniformity in housing supply. The law also contained the *Dotation de la solidarité urbaine* (Rules for Urban Solidarity), a kind of levelling arrangement that redistributed resources from the richer to the poorer municipalities.

From the mid-1990s policy documents have expressed the goal of greater socioeconomic diversification in problem areas in much clearer terms. As part of the *Pacte de relance* (Urban Pact, 1995), the governments and private actors forged "public-private agreements" to implement measures to stimulate economic activities and job opportunities in underdeveloped areas, reinforce public order, and improve the quality of life by stimulating social diversity. To achieve this goal, they eliminated income requirements for social rental houses and created fiscal incentives to improve (private) housing and encourage new housing development (Kruythoff & Baart, 1998). The Urban Pact has also created new measures for relatively rich municipalities, which are obliged to build a certain percentage of low-cost housing in their area. In addition, the central government stimulates construction of social rental houses with financial incentives.

A law recently passed by Parliament, the Law for Urban Solidarity and Renewal, incorporates the measures discussed above. It stipulates that every municipality must ensure that 20% of the housing supply consists of social rental houses. Such diversification politics, "compensating" the displacement of lower-income groups in gentrification processes, faces much resistance, particularly among the relatively wealthy municipalities that claim not to have the space for building new social houses and often prefer paying a fine (Liberation, 2000). Relatively wealthy population groups are also in opposition; they fear the arrival of problematic new residents and an increase in crime and insecurity. Consequently, French debates about socially and economically diversified neighbourhoods and cities are more heated than ever before. Nevertheless, in almost all official discourse there is still no place for the ethnic dimension of segregation and diversification.

Sweden

Social equality has traditionally been an important political value in Sweden. Until the economic crisis of the early-1990s, the Swedish welfare

state and its social services supported an egalitarian society, which prevented serious spatial inequalities in living areas. Furthermore, Sweden is a country with a strong tradition of decentralization. Regulated by state laws, the local authorities take care of public services, social security, the integration of immigrants, urban development, and public housing (Elander & Montin, 1990; Swedish Institute, 2000).

Immigration to Sweden was fairly insignificant until World War II. During the 1960s, there was a large influx of labour immigrants from southern Europe and Finland. In the 1970s immigration from other Nordic countries ceased, but there was a substantial increase in the number of Latin American refugees. Since then, refugees from Iran, the former Yugoslavia, and Somalia have followed their example. In 1999 about 20% of the total population of nine million were immigrants or had at least one foreign-born parent (this includes persons from other Nordic countries, Swedish Institute, 1999).

Sweden's former integration policy had three major objectives: equality (in opportunities, rights, and obligations), freedom of cultural choice, and solidarity (Jederlund, 1998). This egalitarian policy was formulated during a period of economic stability, full employment, and forecasts of continued rapid growth. However, immigrants were hit particularly hard by unemployment during the economic crisis of the 1990s. For example, in 1998 unemployment among immigrants rose to 20%, whereas the total unemployment was only 6.5% (Swedish Institute, 1999). These developments have influenced Sweden's immigration and integration policy strongly, as we see below.

Sweden's housing policy also reflects its egalitarian tradition. Unlike in many other countries, public housing is not distributed according to socioeconomic position and household status, but is accessible to everyone (Borgegård & Dawidson, 2000). Today Sweden has approximately 4.3 million dwellings. The private rental sector accounts for 20% of the total stock; public housing companies are responsible for the 20% share of (nonprofit) rental dwellings; about 40% of the total stock is owner-occupied; and the remaining 20% consists of cooperative housing, an ownership arrangement in which apartments in a building are owned by a corporation of all renters.

Although most of the housing stock is comfortable and technically advanced, there have been problems with the construction and management of certain neighbourhoods—especially in the suburbs, where during the 1960s densely built neighbourhoods were created as part of the Million Housing Program (Swedish Institute, 2000). Housing

maintenance was neglected, and many of the new dwellings were structurally defective and environmentally unsound. The suburbs' unappealing social climate and lack of services further contributed to the outflow of "better" families, whereas low-income families (particularly immigrants) remained or moved in (Borgegård & Dawidson, 2000). The original plan to create a mixed population to stimulate good social relations and to prevent socioeconomic segregation (Hjärne, 1994) was reversed during the 1970s and 1980s. To stem downgrading, Swedish authorities initiated large restructuring projects in the most problematic areas in order to attract more middle- and higher-income households. However, this strategy has relocated rather than solved the social dilemmas of problematic households (Öresjö, 1995).

National diversification attempts rooted in immigration policy also proved unsuccessful (at least in economic terms). Between 1985 and 1995 newly arrived immigrants were distributed over the country to avoid concentrations in the major cities (Westin, 1997). The sharp increase in immigrant unemployment put an end to this "Whole-of-Sweden" policy. Afterward, many refugees moved to Stockholm and other cities to find jobs, which led to increasing concentrations of migrant groups in the cities. Public opinion associated many socially undesirable phenomena—unemployment, poverty, violence—with these "sudden" concentrations of immigrants, mostly in Million Housing Program areas (Andersson, 1999). Since then the ethnic component of concentration has been a hotly debated topic. The clearest example of concentration is the district of Rinkeby in Stockholm. In the 1990s this district, which is dominated by social rental housing, had the highest percentage of immigrants (61% compared with 15% in Stockholm as a whole). Typical for this area it is not so much the domination of one ethnic group, but the relative absence of Swedish-born residents (Westin, 1997). To prevent further ethnic concentration, the local housing cooperation determined that new immigrants should be more evenly distributed among other districts. Therefore, the housing corporation attempted selective distribution of vacant dwellings. However, this attempt at ethnic diversification failed because of the population's unwillingness to cooperate (Musterd et al., 1998).

In the late 1990s, racism, xenophobia, and multiculturalism were prominent subjects of discussion in Sweden—as they were in many other countries (Jederlund, 1998). Between 1995 and 1997 the government struck several committees to study immigrant policies and the segregation issue. The most influential group, the Committee for Immigrant Policy,

suggested that newcomers should be helped intensively during the first five years to qualify themselves (in terms of language, job qualifications, and social participation) for full integration into Swedish society. After this period they should be considered normal Swedish citizens (Andersson, 1999; Jederlund, 1998). The recommendation of the Committee suggests a melting-pot scenario of immigrant assimilation into Swedish mainstream culture. However, respect for different ethnic and social backgrounds, bilingualism, and the wish of some groups to live in segregated areas are not fully rejected (Westin, 1997).

In response to the Committee's recommendations, the national government has reserved extra funding for programs aimed at improving the conditions of immigrants in underdeveloped neighbourhoods. It has encouraged job and language training, activities stimulating interaction, and measures to combat racial discrimination (Jederlund, 1998; Musterd et al., 1998). Critics point out that the special attention could lead to stigmatization (the danger of blaming the victim) and to increasing dependence on social assistance and unemployment benefits (Andersson, 1999; Jederlund, 1998). The role of housing in this new area-focused policy is limited. Housing only becomes an issue when there is a high vacancy rate in living areas. The Ministry of Integration now has a central position in the new urban policy. To integrate the "new Swedes", the emphasis is no longer on mixing, but on socially improving the underdeveloped areas in which they live.

The Netherlands

Like Sweden, the Netherlands has traditionally engaged in high levels of state intervention in residential policy and emphasized the importance of equal opportunities. The Dutch have always tried to maintain a balance between rental and privately owned housing. After an era with a great deal of government intervention, many responsibilities have been decentralized or delegated to private actors in the last few decades. Yet the national government maintains a coordinating role. The gradual liberalization in the housing sector (by reducing rental subsidies and privatizing housing corporations) has led to a slight increase in residential inequality, but social rental houses (36% of the total stock) remain relatively attractive and affordable for people with a low income. Although the Netherlands now have more owner-occupied (52%) than rental houses, the rental sector—generally managed by housing corporations—

is still by far the most important element of the local housing market in the major cities.

The Netherlands has experienced migration patterns comparable to those of other Western European countries. First, migration related to former colonial rule accounted for the influx of Surinamese, Antilleans, and Indonesians. Second, Turks and Moroccans came to the Netherlands to work in the booming economy of the 1960s and 1970s. Third, labour migration was followed by family reunification and formation. And finally, growing numbers of asylum seekers have contributed to immigration from abroad, especially the last 10 years (Musterd et al., 1998). Currently approximately 17% percent of the Dutch population are of foreign descent (i.e., at least one parent was born outside the Netherlands). Approximately 10% of the people belong to ethnic minorities, people from non-Western foreign descent, especially Turks, Surinamese, Moroccans, and Antilleans (WRR, 2001). Most of these minorities live in the cities.

Although the retrenchment of the welfare state is moderate, particularly in comparison with Anglo-Saxon countries, and although the Netherlands has enjoyed high levels of economic prosperity, many observers are worried about the reduction in social protection. The main concern is that not all social groups have benefited equally from the new prosperity: the migrants' piece of the pie has remained relatively small. In 1995 the government's most important research agency wrote that "ingredients for marginalization, geographical segregation and the emergence of a culture of poverty are present" (SCP, 1995, p. 47, translation ours). Also the large cities were concerned about the fact that most of their Turkish and Moroccan population lived concentrated in certain areas (Statistical Bureaus, 1998). Furthermore, they expressed their concern about the emergence of "white" and "black" schools. Restricting integration politics to various special arrangements for migrants (such as extra funding for schools with predominantly foreign pupils) to solve these problems was no longer deemed sufficient. During the second half of the 1990s, the assumed negative implications of concentration and segregation became the focal point of housing and integration policies.

In 1995 the Dutch government initiated a *Grotestedenbeleid* (Major Cities Policy) that involved joining and integrating various sectoral efforts to improve living conditions for underprivileged people living in depressed neighbourhoods. The Major Cities Policy also promotes diversification of the population at the neighbourhood level, with the intention of stimulating integration in social and economic spheres. The

governmental document entitled *Stedelijke Vernieuwing* (Urban Renewal) states, "To ensure a healthy future for the city, a diversified composition of the urban population and housing is essential. Increasing the differentiation of housing in those neighbourhoods where homogeneity dominates, or threatens to become dominant, will contribute to the physical, social, and cultural improvement of living and working environments" (VROM, 1997, p. 47; translation ours).

To achieve diversification of the housing supply in "unbalanced areas", part of the social rental housing will be demolished and replaced with more expensive dwellings, preferably owner-occupied. Furthermore, social rental homes are sold, and relatively expensive rental homes are restored. Policy-makers argue that the attracted middle- and higher-income groups may serve as social and economic role models for weaker groups (Kleinhans, Veldboer & Duyvendak, 2000).

The Dutch government is not considering diversification measures such as specific allocation of houses or dispersing ethnic groups because court decisions prohibit the distribution of housing along ethnic lines. Still, the reasoning behind the restructuring policy contains a clear ethnic and cultural component. The Urban Renewal document asserts that "restructuring may help neighbourhoods with a high concentration of ethnic minorities to differentiate socially, which will increase the stability of these neighbourhoods and improve their reputation" (VROM, 1997, p. 81; translation ours). From the perspective of recent public debates this is a modest formulation. On various themes multiethnic relations are in the spotlight of civic attention, and there is much discussion on the question of how much difference can be allowed toward migrants (Scheffer, 2000; Veldboer & Duyvendak, 2001). There are strong calls for mixed schools and neighbourhoods in order to stimulate the integration or even assimilation of immigrants. Recently, immigrant resident organizations have also lobbied for more socially diversified neighbourhoods. They argue that a stigmatized neighbourhood is a setback for underprivileged groups (Lange & Vloet, 2000).

Geographers and sociologists doubt whether homogeneity in Dutch neighbourhoods is really as excessive and economically disadvantageous as claimed, and whether diversification produces sound social relations (Van Kempen & Priemus, 1999). Research shows that forced mixing usually does not lead to intermingling. Although physical distances are reduced, social distances remain vast. A forced mix is likely to result in a form of "living apart together" and could even lead to new tensions (Kleinhans et al., 2000).

In the last two years the focus in restructuring policy has gradually shifted from promoting social cohesion by mixing residents to issues of supply and demand of quality housing. Most policy-makers promote diversification to strengthen the economic value of districts and to improve housing opportunities. This is also motivated by social assumptions because opportunities for upward mobility (in a neighbourhood) are considered essential preconditions for maintaining local networks. The policy memorandum *Mensen Wensen Wonen* (People, Preferences, and Living in the 21st century) observes that although many people claim to be in favour of mixed living areas, there is widespread preference for socioculturally homogeneous living areas. The memorandum argues that a uniform social or cultural structure of neighbourhoods or districts is only a problem if it is involuntary or due to lack of choice (VROM, 2000). As a consequence, it only regards *involuntary* concentration and segregation as negative phenomena. Whether this pragmatic view will prevail is doubtful. After the elections of 2002, populist parties who stand for 'force integration', have gained influence in the political arena.

Concluding Remarks

What does this sketch of five countries teach us? First, we observe heated debates on spatial segregation, integration, and the desired level of neighbourhood differentiation in all five countries. Who "may" live in certain areas is not only a matter that concerns politicians and city developers. Because diversification politics directly influences the position of individual families, it results in mixed emotions in receiving or targeted neighbourhoods. To put it mildly, having lower-class and/or minority neighbours is not the first choice of privileged groups. At the same time we have to keep in mind that groups' motives for preferring to stay in their own communities are not necessarily negative. Second, we find remarkable differences in mixing policies between the countries, which are related to national economic structure, ownership relationships in housing, the level of ethnic concentration, and beliefs about multiculturalism. In Table 1 we briefly summarize the differences with regard to these dimensions of the various diversification policies.

In the US the high levels of differentiation between suburban neighbourhoods and certain city districts should not surprise us. Where the market dominates the government is relatively weak, homeownership is common, and where views on cultural differences vary strongly the

Table 1
Overview of dimensions of diversification politics

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>United States</i>	<i>Belgium</i>	<i>France</i>	<i>Sweden</i>	<i>Netherlands</i>
<i>Economic policy</i>	<i>Laissez-faire</i>	<i>Welfare State</i>	<i>Welfare State</i>	<i>Welfare State (Egalitarian).</i>	<i>Welfare State (Egalitarian).</i>
<i>Housing stock (main sector)</i>	Owner-occupation; little public housing; Vouchers for low incomes	Owner-occupation; little public housing.	Owner-occupied and rental housing; Financing by central government	Owner-occupied, private rental and strong public housing with unlimited access.	Owner-occupied and relatively strong social rented sector, managed by housing corporations
<i>Immigrants</i>	Influx \pm 1.1 million annually, mainly in Metropolitan areas.	\pm 8,4% of total population, mainly in cities.	\pm 7,4% of total population, mainly in cities.	\pm 20% of total pop. has at least one foreign-born parent; mainly in cities.	\pm 17% of total pop. has at least one foreign-born parent; mainly in cities.
<i>Ethnic / racial concentration</i>	+++ (Monoethnic).	++ (Multiethnic).	++ (Multiethnic).	++ (Multiethnic).	++ (Multiethnic).
<i>Multiculturalism</i>	Limited praise of cultural differences.	Colour blind.	Colour blind.	Multiethnic interaction.	Multiethnic interaction.
<i>Anti-concentration policy</i>	Small-scale attempts for mixing of areas (Moving to opportunities: class focus).	Area-based policy to improve social and economic conditions.	Area-based policy of diversification, (class focus).	Dispersal policy until 1995; now class and cultural focus.	Urban diversification policy (class and Prevention of involuntary concentration.

doors are wide open for processes of separation and even segregation. Americans' sensitivity for *class* and *race* issues may remain extremely high, but actual opportunities for reversing destructive forms of segregation are limited.

Like the US, Western European countries deal with increasing congruence between (under)class and race. Signs of (ethnic) concentrations often provoke references to the situation in the US. However, unlike the US, the welfare state avoids large-scale segregation in most European cities. Remarkably, the fear for American ghettos has been particularly outspoken in countries where government influence on the housing sector used to be strong, and where neighbourhoods are balanced compared with the US. In particular the Netherlands and Sweden tend to consider cultural and ethnic differences as signs of inequality. Regarding the immigration topic, Sweden and the Netherlands show strong hesitation about the idea of society as a *salad bowl*. Both countries are eager to prevent high levels of group separation. In Dutch public debate the widely accepted credo is to live together regardless of cultural and social background. However, although mixing income groups in neighbourhoods is still seen as an important instrument to revitalize cities, pragmatic Dutch policy-makers are gradually starting to realize that this ambition is unrealistic. Mixed housing is less decisive for socioeconomic and sociocultural integration than was expected.

Sweden resembles the Netherlands: its egalitarian tradition also makes it sensitive to every kind of distinction. Sweden has acted strongly to counter such differences by limiting ethnic concentrations, but with few positive results so far. Experiments to force a certain ethnic mix seem to have only limited influence on the socioeconomic problems of migrants. Therefore, in Sweden the attention is shifting to other policies against exclusion and deprivation.

Although the above countries acknowledge ethnic and cultural plurality (which does not imply that cultural differences are welcomed by everyone in these countries), Belgium and France, in sharp contrast, exclude the cultural dimension from official deliberations. These countries focus on reducing socioeconomic differences. The chosen policies are colour blind: even though immigrant-dense neighbourhoods exist, policy-makers do not like to acknowledge them because they wish to uphold the republican principle (France) and/or because of the political threat of right-wing extremism, which eagerly highlights ethnic differences (Belgium). At the same time, the admitted concentrations of low income-groups are difficult to combat with housing policies. France faces the

opposition of rich municipalities, and Belgium has to cope with a lack of public instruments.

Our comparison of countries elucidates that conceptions of integration and culture strongly influence urban diversification politics (or the absence of it). Looking at concentration or segregation data, one could expect, for example, that Belgium would follow the path of the US with (relatively small) attempts for diversification. This is not the case, primarily because ethnicized thinking is taboo in Belgium. Overlooking multicultural themes can also result in wrong impressions, such as the idea that the French and US approach (both stimulating relocation opportunities for lower-income groups) are quite similar.

We make no claims about what is right or wrong, what models for diversifying neighbourhoods are good or bad. Certain types of politics suit a certain historically given context and social reality; others do not. It is remarkable, however, that neither ignoring ethnic concentrations (Belgium, France) nor attacking them at the roots (as Sweden has done at times) seems to have a positive effect. Government (housing) policy has only a limited influence on the amount of intermingling between different groups and on how intermingling proceeds (e.g., through assimilation or mutual learning). This should encourage humility among politicians in their ambitions to change reality.

What issues should be advocated? We believe that involuntary concentrations emanating from poverty and lack of choice should be regarded as a serious problem, whereas voluntary concentration of groups of citizens should not necessarily be problematized. Neighbourhoods-with-identity should only be regarded as a problem when they are based on the negative avoidance of others, on discrimination. Furthermore, policy should stress the increase of opportunities in the housing market for the socially and economically underprivileged. This could be achieved either through carefully planned forms of diversification (aimed at satisfying the needs of residents and not pushing aside lower-income groups) or through other methods like maintaining high levels of rental subsidies and providing specific information to impoverished people looking for housing. But it seems most important to stress broad measures that restrain socioeconomic inequality. A general level of welfare strongly increases the equality of opportunities in the housing market. Whether people will subsequently live together on the basis of ethnic, religious, national, or other affinities (such as life style, sexual preference, or age) is a free choice that should be respected. As long as a certain degree of

socioeconomic equality is preserved and discrimination is prevented, this choice should not be in the domain of policy-makers.

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