

# **Immigrants' location choice and the dynamics of segregation**

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The existing literature suggests that ethnic segregation is generally less strong in Europe compared with the United States. However, the density of ethnic minorities increases in the neighborhoods of European cities and this phenomenon implies a simultaneous concentration of educational failure, welfare dependency, low degree of labor-force participation, poverty and hopelessness. Also in Europe, therefore, there is a growing attention for both the determinants and the effects of segregation.

In the Netherlands, ethnic minority groups are highly concentrated in large cities and in some neighborhoods within these large cities. The choice of settling in a certain neighborhood is often not completely voluntary. It is usually determined by restrictions in the housing market and socioeconomic position of immigrants. New immigrants usually do not have the financial means to buy a home at first arrival. They tend to rent homes in the social housing sector, which are relatively cheap. This implies that the location choice at arrival is largely determined by exogenous factors. These restrictions lead to a situation in which immigrants from non-western countries are concentrated in neighborhoods with poor housing conditions and limited facilities.

Migration theories suggest that immigrants are more likely to move within the host country due to relatively low costs of moving (both psychological and monetary costs) compared to natives. This implies that after initial settlement, the likelihood of moving will be high for immigrants who have already chosen an initial location. Relocation decisions induced by neighbourhood characteristics and personal preferences may be both towards and from ethnically segregated areas. This paper examines determinants of the location choice of immigrants arrived in 1999 in the Netherlands at first arrival and directions of relocations from and towards ethnically segregated neighbourhoods in the consecutive years.

The data have been derived from the Dutch Social-Statistical Database (SSB), a rich register data file housed at Statistics Netherlands and including all legal residents of the Netherlands. A great advantage of the data is that they do not suffer small sample size or selective response. Depending on the nature of the data and the specification of the dependent variable, various types of regression analyses are employed.

The results show separate contributions of various individual and neighbourhood characteristics to the dynamics of segregation and significant variations between immigrant groups.