

Editorial

Housing Policies for Ethnic Minorities in Developed Societies: An Editorial Introduction

David P. Varady*
University of Cincinnati

Rachel Katoshevski **
Israel Ministry of the Interior

This special issue of *Geography Research Forum* includes eight articles from the US, Canada, The Netherlands, Australia, and Israel that deal with the way in which immigrants and ethnic minorities are treated as part of their country's housing and neighborhood development policy. All these countries are facing the same challenges: How is it possible to promote the ability of ethnic minorities to maintain their identity within the context of strong, cohesive societies? And in the urban-planning context, how do planning policies support the inclusion of these minorities into the general national discourse and ensure relevant and adequate social environments?

We begin with the article by Rachel Kleit and Lynne Manzo, a rich and thick description of refugee adaptation (Cambodian, Vietnamese, Somali, and Eritrean) in the face of public housing redevelopment (the HOPE VI program) in Seattle, Washington. Seattle and the Twin Cities (Minneapolis-St. Paul, see Goetz, 2003) stand out because of the large number of immigrants and refugees living in public housing. In this respect public housing in these two cities more closely resembles the make-up of public/social housing in Europe than in other US cities where a disproportionately large number of the residents are either black or Latino.

Kleit and Manzo show that these immigrants and refugees recognize their differences from the larger American society; public housing helps to maintain in-group social ties while facilitating interaction with American society. These immigrants and refugees feel a sense of ambivalence in relation to authority. They are grateful for governmental and humanitarian assistance, but are distrustful of these and other unfamiliar US institutions such as utility companies or the housing authority itself. Respondents experienced the customary stigma associated with public housing redevelopment in the US and elsewhere (see Arthurson, 2012), but surprisingly the heightened experience of stigma was usually due to the derisive judgments of non-subsidized co-ethnics. An important implication is that policies aimed at dispersing

* School of Planning, P.O. Box 210016, University of Cincinnati, Cincinnati, OH 45221-0016 USA. Email: david.varady@uc.edu;

** Israel Ministry of Interior, Beersheva, Israel. Email: krachel@bgu.ac.il.

black public housing residents (in order to redress past housing discrimination) may work against immigrants and refugees who need to live near co-ethnics to ease the transition into mainstream American society.

We next turn to the article by Jino Distasio, Gina Sylvestre and Elizabeth Wall-Wieler on the circular movement pattern of Aboriginals (also called Indigenous persons – but not Indians as in the US) from rural reserves to Winnipeg, Canada and then back to home communities. Currently more than half of Canada's Aboriginal population live in urban areas and at 15 percent the proportion of Winnipeg that is Aboriginal is the highest of any major Canadian city. Aboriginals moving to Winnipeg resemble trans-national migrants (e.g. Turks moving to Amsterdam) in that both groups seek to preserve familial, economic, social and cultural relationships. However because reserve communities are relatively close to home this makes return moves much easier than for international migrants. In addition, the return back to the reserve usually does not prevent a subsequent move back to the city. In contrast, the trans-national migrant is more likely to be rooted in place in their “new” country because of the expenses involved in returning permanently to their “home” country and because of the cultural differences between their new and home countries.

Using a longitudinal survey Distasio et al. find that many Aboriginal migrants are unable to find decent, affordable housing or the needed services to facilitate a successful transition to urban living and are therefore “forced” to return to the reserve. Based on the collected data Distasio and colleagues are unable to examine the extent to which Aboriginal cultural factors contribute to residential churn. This is a needed area of research for the future.

The volume's three articles on the Netherlands deal with the challenges that all European governments face in integrating a growing non-Western immigrant population into mainstream society. Prior to 9/11 European ethnic enclaves were viewed as “good” whereas American black ghettos were viewed as “bad.” This dichotomy no longer makes sense in Holland or elsewhere; ethnic enclaves can be bad if they lead to rioting, as has occurred in French suburban public housing (*banlieues*), if terrorists are able to find safe havens in them, if segregated living discourages either learning the new language (e.g. Dutch, French, German), or the adoption of “modern” values such as tolerance toward other groups (e.g. Jews, gays; see Varady, 2005; 2008).

Wouter van Gent and Sako Musterd seek to explain the growing support for Right-wing Radical Populist Parties (RRPP's) in Europe and more specifically the Dutch “Freedom Party” (PVV) headed by Geert Wilders. Analyzing voting data for the city of The Hague, they find that there are three types of neighborhoods where different explanations for RRPP support are relevant: native working class neighborhoods (where the arrival of immigrant workers and their families is viewed as a threat by native low-skill workers); ethnically-mixed urban neighborhoods (where native residents feel a sense of anxiety and insecurity related to globalization, fi-

nancial crises and unemployment as well as welfare state retrenchment) and lower middle class suburban neighborhoods (where residents are dissatisfied with existing parties and their platforms).

Van Gent and Musterd advocate that the Dutch abandon area-based neighborhood regeneration policies, because they are aggravating social discontents elsewhere (e.g. non-targeted neighborhoods and the suburbs) and because they are stigmatizing the targeted areas and should replace them with people-centered policies addressing discrimination, lagging educational performance and poverty. We wonder whether it is feasible to implement such a radical policy change and (assuming that it is) whether the policy shifts would reduce voter support for the RRPP and fundamentally reduce tensions between non-Western immigrants and native Dutch.

Lex Veldboer and Reinout Kleinhans' article on gentrification in Amsterdam questions the assumption that gentrification inevitably leads to widespread displacement for renters, especially minorities and in turn, class conflict (see Lees et al., 2010). In the case of Amsterdam, (where gentrification in the inner core has been widespread) gentrification has had a softer impact than critical scholars would predict. Analyzing data from the 2001 and 2009 biannual Living in Amsterdam Surveys, along with case studies of two gentrifying neighborhoods, Veldboer and Kleinhans show that an increase in home-ownership rates (as an indicator of gentrification) was correlated with a significant rise in the level of neighborhood confidence. Furthermore there was no widespread displacement of ethnic minorities. However, because the authors focus on overall levels of neighborhood confidence, it is impossible to know whether long-term renters, who are faced with the possibility of being displaced, are as confident about their neighborhood's future as newer, more affluent arrivals. In general, the article injects some needed balance into academic debates about gentrification. Well-designed government policies (e.g., rent control, social housing schemes) can go a long way toward reducing the adverse effects of gentrification.

André Ouwehand and Wenda Doff discuss the Rotterdam Act, probably the most vigorous response to immigration of any Dutch city (or for that matter any European or American one as well). The Act limits the flow of low-income immigrant tenants to designated neighbourhoods. Although the ostensible purpose of the act is to promote an income mix in the inner city, the authors believe that politicians had more sinister motives, i.e. to prevent the rapid growth of non-Western (heavily Muslim) immigrant enclaves.

Ouwehand and Doff contend that the Act is unjust, because it fails to meet Susan Fainstein's three criteria for a "just city" (democracy, diversity, and equity) and more specifically because it "drew on a mix of intolerance of ethnic diversity [and] anti-Islam sentiments...." We believe their assessment may be overly harsh, especially when one considers the ineffectiveness of pro-integration efforts in the US. Consider for example the case of Starrett City in southeastern Brooklyn, New York. After opening in 1975, Starrett City filled vacancies using a quota to fill two thirds of the apartments with white families. This formula was supported by many

black and Hispanic residents and some civil rights groups because without this type of action the development likely would “tip” from white to minority (black and Hispanic). Other civil rights groups contested the policy arguing that the policy constituted racial discrimination. In November 1988, the US Supreme Court said that it would not hear the Starrett City appeal of low-court rulings, which had found the use of quotas illegal (Finder, 1988).

The parallels between Starrett City and the Rotterdam Act should be obvious. Pro-integration efforts that have the capacity to affect demographic trends (such as the Rotterdam Act) are bound to be controversial and also are bound to be labelled as racist or xenophobic. Strong policies like the Rotterdam Act may be needed to achieve a just city. In any case whether one agrees with Ouwehand and Doff or not, their article should stimulate a healthy debate on how governments can promote ethnic as well as income mixing. It will be interesting to see whether other Dutch and other European cities adopt Rotterdam’s innovative approach.

Following the three Dutch articles we turn to Ilan Weisel and Hazel Easthorpe’s qualitative study of the housing pathways of sixty individuals in three different states in Australia who recently moved into social housing despite stigmatic perceptions of public housing. Concerns have been expressed in the literature about the more problematic aspects of living in social housing particularly stigma (note our earlier discussion of Kleit and Manzo’s article in this volume). Wiesel and Easthope found that any feelings of stigma associated with living in social housing were far outweighed by the economic security and generally better physical conditions offered by this housing type. Although there were too few immigrants in the sample to treat them separately, the main conclusion - that social housing plays a positive role in the lives of most residents - applies to immigrants as well. Given that a third of all social housing tenants in Australia are born overseas, social housing will likely continue to be an important mechanism for helping the newly arrived adapt to Australian society. This conclusion closely conforms to Kleit and Manzo’s “bottom line” that immigrants greatly benefit from the availability of public housing as an entry point into American society.

Two Israeli papers conclude this special issue. While these papers deal with the same general issue as others in this volume – housing policies for ethnic minorities – they differ in two major ways. While the other papers deal with aspects of inclusion of ethnic minorities into the general population and how to ensure their housing and neighborhood quality as part of the city built environment, the Israeli papers, in contrast, discuss housing issues linked to the settlement patterns of Bedouin Arabs (in the Negev desert in southern Israel) and the urbanization process of the (non-Bedouin) Palestinian Israeli population concentrated in non-urban parts of central and northern Israel. Secondly, whereas most of the other papers focus on immigrant groups, these two Israeli papers concentrate on indigenous groups. In this respect, the Israeli papers bear some resemblance to the Distasio et al. paper on Aboriginals in Winnipeg, Canada.

Rassem Khamaisi's paper deals with the residential transformation process among Arab Palestinians, most of whom live in small rural communities in the central and northern parts of Israel, whereas the Bedouin of the Negev, discussed in Steven Dinero's paper, are a distinct group still adhering, to some degree, to a tribal lifestyle similar to their past semi-nomadic life. This residential transformation change, described in Khamaisi's paper, includes moving from detached self-built houses to apartment buildings as part of the urbanization process. Three factors play a key role in the urbanization of this minority group: (1) the strong attachment to place of residence, (2) the strong desire to reside in close vicinity to families in order to maintain kinship relationships, and (3) the continuing importance of the self-built private house. Khamaisi's core argument is that Palestinian urbanization involves more than changes in residential patterns and housing types. The shift toward apartment living from that of living in "home/house-villas," i.e. detached housing, inevitably results in a decline in kinship relationships. These trends will become stronger in the near future, because of lack of adequate land (partly as a result of high birth rates and restrictive state land use planning policy) and will, therefore, likely lead to increased internal tensions within the Palestinian society.

The setting for the final paper - the Negev desert in Israel - could not be more different from the North American and European settings discussed above. Steven Dinero's paper examines Israel's ongoing initiative to resettle the Bedouin Arab community consistent with modern planning principles. Although 200,000 people whose previous generation were former nomads have been resettled in planned towns with modern-western housing, more than a third resist resettlement and continue to reside in informal settlements where housing and neighborhood conditions are substandard. Dinero argues persuasively that the contrasting "attitudes toward housing layout, design and structure provide but one example of how social and political relations with the State (of Israel) are actualized and contested." The fact that many Israeli academics have acted as advocate planners on behalf of the Bedouin community is a hopeful sign of the prospects for closing the political, economic, and cultural gap between Bedouins and other Israelis.

Taken as a whole, this special volume offers case studies that highlight the challenges policymakers in developed societies face as they strive to meet the needs of immigrants (the US and Dutch case studies) as well as the needs of long-established residents (the Canadian and Israeli case studies).

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