

Urban diversity as a 'stay-factor'? Neighbourhood choice and satisfaction in hyper-diverse contexts

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Abstract

Living in hyper-diverse, deprived areas can have many and different advantages and disadvantages for residents. Much is still unknown about the extent to which the diversity of the areas shapes neighbourhood choice and neighbourhood satisfaction of residents of these neighbourhoods, particularly of lower social classes and ethnic minority groups. We try to fill this gap with empirical evidence on these matters from qualitative studies among residents in Rotterdam and Antwerp. The findings indicate that for most residents, diversity is not a primary push- or pull-factor in itself. Yet, residents who belong to a minority group, e.g. based on ethnicity or household type, do consider the presence of other minority groups when considering moving to or out of these areas. When settled in the neighbourhood, elements of diversity are mostly considered positively and contribute to the decision to 'stay'. Although, residents who lack opportunities to move are clearly less satisfied with the neighbourhood, including its diversity.

Introduction

Cities have always attracted diverse groups of people as they offer opportunities for work, education and housing, social contacts and facilities and services. Yet, recently it has been argued that cities are becoming even more diverse. According to Vertovec (2007), the diversification and increase of migration flows are making cities *super-diverse*, referring to the diversification of the ethnic and cultural make-up of cities. Tasan-Kok et al. (2013) further argue that cities are becoming diverse on many other demographic dimensions as well, including house hold types, social classes, ages, lifestyles, activity patterns and preferences and attitudes. They use the concept of *hyper-diversity* to describe how this is leading to complex and dynamic urban areas, in which people increasingly belong to multiple and shift social groups. Not all urban areas experience similar processes of diversification. Cities can simultaneously have homogenous and diverse neighbourhoods. In Western Europe, neighbourhoods that are highly diverse and dynamic are often relatively deprived areas (Wessendorf, 2014) that host low-income groups, ethnic minority groups and newcomers to the city. In public and political debates, these areas are often portrayed as undesirable places to live. The diverse and changeable resident groups are thought to lack social cohesion. Low-income groups are thought to be 'trapped' in their neighbourhood in terms of their residential careers, and are further associated with crime, vandalism and a low

quality of housing, public space and education. Nevertheless, few policy-makers and scholars have actually examined what attracts residents of diverse, dynamic and deprived urban areas to their neighbourhood and how they experience their neighbourhood. Studies that have done so mostly focus on quantitative neighbourhood effects that derive from the population structure. The composition of income and ethnic groups has received particular attention in this respect. Few studies have looked at the way in which multiple dimensions of difference, including individual and household and contextual features, impact on neighbourhood choice and neighbourhood satisfaction of residents in diverse, dynamic and deprived urban areas.

This article seeks to fill these research and policy gaps with a qualitative study among residents in hyper-diverse contexts. An in-depth approach is adopted to gain insight in how resident perceptions of diverse neighbourhoods affect their neighbourhood choice and neighbourhood satisfaction, which is the key aim of the study. The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. Why did residents of diverse, dynamic and deprived urban areas move to their current neighbourhood? To what extent was the diversity of people a pull-factor?
2. How satisfied are residents in diverse urban areas with their residential environment? How does the diversity of people shape their neighbourhood satisfaction?

The article is structured as follows. The next section provides a theoretical framework on the push and pull-factors regarding neighbourhood choice and the mechanisms behind neighbourhood satisfaction. Particular attention is paid to existing findings on the relation between urban diversity and neighbourhood choice and neighbourhood satisfaction. Hereafter, the research areas, methods and interviewees are introduced in the research design section. The research findings section exists of two parts that subsequently discuss: resident motives for moving to the current neighbourhood, and motives for staying or leaving the neighbourhood. In the discussion section we highlight the particular contribution of our findings to existing literature on neighbourhood choice and neighbourhood satisfaction and urban policies for hyper-diverse urban areas.

Literature review

Why do people move? Push-factors

People wish to move when their experiences of the residential environment do not meet their expectations in this respect. The mismatch is described as residential stress (e.g. Brown & Moore, 1970; Feijten & Van Ham, 2009). Resident expectations derive from certain residential needs and preferences. A primary reason for a shift in residential needs and preferences is a life-course event: because of a growing household (going to live together with a partner or as a consequence of having a child) or a shrinking household (as a consequence of children leaving home, a divorce or the death of a partner) people want to move, because they want to adapt their housing situation (Mulder & Hooimeijer, 1999). A shrinking income may also be an important reason to move, because the present housing situation may then become too expensive. Rising incomes may work the other way around: households in such a situation can afford to live in more luxurious homes, in terms of for example housing quality or size (Kley, 2011; Van Ham & Clark, 2009). Furthermore, the need to relocate can emerge when people (are forced to) change jobs and seek to reduce their commuting distance. For those who can afford it, a need for residential change can also derive from changes in lifestyles and attitudes regarding housing. For example, since the 1990s, many middle and upper classes have moved to or within cities because they enjoy an 'urban lifestyle' with e.g. a busy and lively atmosphere and specific amenities (Atkinson, 2006; Karsten, 2007). Indeed, residential stress can also find a cause in dissatisfaction with the neighbourhood (e.g. South & Crowder, 1997). This can relate to an increase in nuisance due to e.g. noise or unauthorised rubbish disposal, a decrease in feelings of safety and the quality and proximity of specific facilities and services, or changes in the social composition of the neighbourhood (Feijten & Van Ham, 2009). For instance, nice neighbours might have moved.

Whether residential stress makes people move depends on their individual opportunities (e.g. financial means and time) and the availability of suitable housing. In general, moves take place because people want to make an upward move in their housing career. Pickles and Davies (1991, p. 466) define a *housing career* as "*the sequence of dwellings that a household occupies during its history*" (Pickles & Davies, 1991, p. 466). For example,

residents move to a bigger home, from the rented to the owner-occupied sector or simply to a dwelling with a better physical quality. Yet, people can also move more sideways: they move, but the new situation is not much better than the previous one or even *downwards* (Kendig, 1990; Bolt & Van Kempen, 2002). Such moves occur when the move is not voluntary, but induced by, for example, personal circumstances (a declining income, divorce) or processes of demolition as a consequence of urban restructuring. In such cases the chance of ending up in a situation that is evaluated more negatively than the previous one may be bigger.

Determinants of neighbourhood choice and satisfaction: pull factors

Why do people settle in specific neighbourhoods and what factors keep them from moving? The literature indicates that neighbourhood choice and neighbourhood satisfaction are shaped by people's evaluation of factors of the dwelling and neighbourhood, as well as individual features and preferences. A first motive for settling or staying in a certain area is the availability of suitable housing. Potential movers look for homes that fit their preferences, for example in terms of tenure, size and price and will find these dwellings in a specific set of neighbourhoods. Satisfaction with the dwelling can be an important reason for residents to stay in their neighbourhood (Permentier et al., 2007). The extent to which a dwelling secures privacy can be an important point as well (Van Eijk, 2012; Stokoe, 2006; Tersteeg & Pinkster, forth.). Stasangi & Kearns (1992) have illustrated that a sufficient quality of construction that demands low maintenance levels attract or keep people in a neighbourhood. The quality and size of the dwelling in relation to its price appear the most important factors of the dwelling explaining neighbourhood choice and satisfaction (Dekker et al., 2011).

Neighbourhood characteristics may also play a role. Physical aspects of the neighbourhood that shape neighbourhood choice and satisfaction including building density, the location towards the city centre and work, the availability and quality of facilities, services and public spaces (e.g. shops, markets, public transportation, medical services, schools and parks) and traffic safety. The way in which people take these aspects into account depends on personal needs and preferences. While (young) people might appreciate a high density of buildings and entertainment facilities, families with children might feel more attracted to a quiet

neighbourhood with play-grounds, parks and good day-care facilities. Likewise, for people who work in or regularly visit the city centre, living close to this area can be very important. For most resident groups, perceived safety e.g. in terms of traffic and crime rates generally has a positive impact on neighbourhood choice and satisfaction (Mohan & Twigg, 2007; Mohit et al., 2010). School choice has received particular attention in studies of residential choice and satisfaction recently. Many studies find that middle and upper class parents in diverse urban areas do not bring their children to local schools, as they regard the quality of the schools too low (Boterman, 2013; Crozier et al., 2008; Karsten, 2007; Parkes et al., 2002). This indicates that the quality of local schools might have a low impact on neighbourhood choice and satisfaction of the middle and upper classes. Diverse neighbourhoods often offer diverse facility structures and employment opportunities. This might attract certain resident groups to an area and contribute to neighbourhood satisfaction. However, scholars have hardly examined this so far.

Another dimension of the neighbourhood that appears important in this respect is the maintenance of public and semi-public spaces. Studies of Mohit et al. (2010), Salleh (2008) and Zanuzdana et al. (2012) have stressed the importance of frequent garbage collection, clean public spaces and a sufficient water and air quality for neighbourhood choice and satisfaction. Also social aspects of the neighbourhood have a significant impact. Positive perceptions of fellow residents can be an important pull factor, or a reason for staying in an area (Parkes et al, 2002). Some scholars find that local social networks are more important predictors of residential satisfaction than physical features (Amerigo & Aragones, 1997; Adriaanse, 2007; Völker et al., 2013). Most studies on housing preferences indicate that people generally prefer to live among people who they perceive as alike (Van Kempen & Bolt, 2009). Similarities can exist at one or more dimensions including age, ethnicity, class, lifestyles, attitudes and behaviours.

Would the diversity of people in an area play a role in the decision to choose a specific neighbourhood? No specific literature on this issue is available, but we can formulate some expectations. A diverse neighbourhood can offer residents many advantages, such as a diversity of amenities, work, (housing) cultures, social formations and activities, and support networks. However, it can also lead to a situation in which resident groups live parallel lives

or even come into conflict with one another. For some residents, the population diversity might be an important pull factor for moving to the area, while others might not have considered it at all. Some people might consider living in a diverse area as an improvement of their residential situation, others might experience it negatively.

A last set of features that can shape neighbourhood choice and satisfaction is personal and household features of residents. This is mainly due to selection effects (Permentier et al., 2011). First, the choice for a certain neighbourhood and the extent to which people are satisfied with their neighbourhood can depend on household composition. Dwellings with little living space per household member and dense neighbourhoods are generally perceived less attractive than more spacious residential environments (Dekker et al., 2011; Mohit et al., 2010), particularly among large households. The presence of children is often associated with higher levels of satisfaction (Lu, 1999). According to Permentier et al. (2011) this could be because families with children select themselves into safe neighbourhoods and have more interaction with local residents, which is thought to generate higher levels of satisfaction (e.g. Dekker & Bolt, 2005; Parkes et al., 2002, in: Permentier et al., 2011). Second, age can shape neighbourhood choice and satisfaction. In several studies of neighbourhood satisfaction young people are less satisfied with their neighbourhood than elderly people, possibly because they experience can exert less influence on neighbourhood choice (Dekker et al., 2011). However, a forthcoming study of Visser & Tersteeg indicates that young people in diverse contexts experience a diversity of people more positively than elderly people, possibly mitigating opposite age effects on neighbourhood satisfaction. Third, the socio-economic status¹ (SES) of people, determined by their education level and household income, can have a strong influence on neighbourhood choice and satisfaction. Households with higher incomes and owner-occupiers generally have more options when searching for suitable housing than lower income households and renters. Therefore, the former groups are found to be more satisfied with their neighbourhood than the latter (e.g. Parkes et al, 2002; Permentier et al., 2011). Fourth, duration of stay can influence

¹ We define socio-economic status by interviewees' education level and household income. A low, medium and high SES we respectively define as having: a primary or lower vocational educational degree and a net monthly household income below €1670; a pre-university or intermediate educational degree and a net monthly household income between €1670 and €3300; a university (of applied sciences) educational degree and a net monthly household income above €3300.

neighbourhood satisfaction, although academic studies do not agree on how. A long-duration of stay can induce higher levels of satisfaction with the residential environment as residents who are not satisfied might have moved away (Feijten & Van Ham, 2009). Yet, it can cause low satisfaction levels when residents lack the opportunity to move away. However, some studies have found that people who lack such opportunities adjust their expectations of the residential environment to reduce residential stress (e.g. Brown & Moore, 1970), suggesting that their neighbourhood satisfaction might not be as negative as one could expect. Finally, evidence on the influence on ethnicity is ambivalent. Living close to people with a similar (migration) background can provide important support networks and contribute to a sense of home (e.g. Górný et al., 2014; Flint & Rowlands, 2003). Yet, it can also cause negative residential experiences in the case of (too) high levels of social control (Dekker & Bolt, 2005). An ethnically diverse neighbourhood could mitigate this, but not if ethnic communities live parallel lives.

Research design

Research areas

The research in this article focuses on the cities of Rotterdam and Antwerp, which are comparable cities on many aspects. With about 624.800 and 516.000 inhabitants respectively they are both the second largest city in their countries. The cities are highly diverse in terms of their population. Former industrial cities and still port cities, Rotterdam and Antwerp have relatively high levels of low-skilled workers, unemployment, income segregation and poor households compared to other large cities in the Netherlands and Flanders. Therefore, it is a priority in urban policy in both cities to attract more middle and high income groups to the city e.g. by stimulating processes of neighbourhood gentrification (Doucet, Van Kempen & van Weesep, 2011; Loopmans, 2008). Due to their histories as international trade centres, the cities have attracted migrants from all over the world. Migrants have come to work on the docks or e.g. as diamond traders in the case of Antwerp. They re-joined their families or formed new families. In 2015, almost half of the inhabitants of Rotterdam and Antwerp (49% and 46% respectively) were born abroad or had at least one parent born abroad (Stad Antwerpen, 2015; OBI, 2015). There are some important differences between the cities on the matter of housing. While almost half of the housing in Rotterdam (47%) is social rent, and 18% is private rent, these percentages are respectively

11% and 34% in Antwerp. Furthermore, the number of owner-occupied dwellings in Rotterdam (35%) is much lower than in Antwerp (54%) (OBI, 2015; Gsir, 2010). The housing of low income groups is much more regulated, and less subject to market forces in Rotterdam than in Antwerp. Ethnic and income groups are not distributed evenly over the cities. Compared to other cities in their countries, Rotterdam and Antwerp have relatively high ethnic and income segregation levels. Yet, segregation levels are higher in Antwerp than in Rotterdam.

Within the cities the research has taken place in the district of Feijenoord in Rotterdam South, and in Antwerp Noord, Deurne Noord and Borgerhout Intramuros in Antwerp. Feijenoord has about 72.200 inhabitants and comprises nine neighbourhoods. The researched districts in Antwerp are three adjacent areas and about 95.650 inhabitants in total. The areas are located relatively close to the city centre, both in terms of absolute distance and public transport connections. We conduct our research here because the areas are *diverse*, and relatively *dynamic* and *deprived*. The areas are *diverse* because they show an enormous diversity of individuals and households, not only in terms of income, but also in terms of education, household composition, age, ethnicity attitudes and lifestyles. Therefore, they are sometimes labelled as *super-diverse* (Vertovec, 2007) or *hyper-diverse* areas (Tasan-Kok et al., 2013). The areas are *deprived*, because they show combinations of physical deterioration (low housing quality, badly maintained public places and streets), and a concentration of low-income groups (with relatively high crime rates and high numbers of people who are unemployed and on welfare benefits). The areas are *dynamic*, because they are witnessing a quite fast population change: although quite some people have lived in their deprived area for quite a long time, even sometimes since they were born, others stay there only very temporarily and leave to a better place (in terms of housing and neighbourhood) as soon as possible.

The research area in Rotterdam

Most of the dwellings in Feijenoord are relatively cheap. The majority of the housing stock is in the social rented sector: housing corporations own 70 per cent of the housing stock in Feijenoord. A large part of Feijenoord's population is low-skilled, unemployed, has lower than average household incomes or receive welfare benefits. The relatively low rents attract

(disadvantaged) newcomers to the area. Over the last decade, there has been a concerted effort by the municipality of Rotterdam to attract high-income households to the area and retain them through various urban regeneration and social mix programmes, and this has partly been successful. Also in Feijenoord the number of higher-income households has increased. With respect to ethnicity the area is very mixed. The largest ethnic groups in Feijenoord include: native Dutch² (32%), Turkish (19%), Surinamese (9%), and Moroccan (11%) people in 2014. While the native population is ageing, the population of Feijenoord as a whole is getting younger (in 2014 32% the population was younger than 25 and 31% 25-45 years of age).

The research area in Antwerp

Antwerp Noord, Deurne Noord and Borgerhout Intramuros can be considered as one the most diversified areas in the city. Nevertheless, there are some differences between the areas. Antwerp Noord is the most ethnically diverse area. More than 60 per cent of the people living here are of foreign origin. The diversity of the population is also reflected in the diversity of amenities. Walking through this area you will find Portuguese cafes, African hairdressers, Moroccan butchers and there is even a little China Town located in Antwerp Noord. Borgerhout Intramuros is located south of Antwerp Noord, and also on the city centre side of the urban ring road. Borgerhout is also known as Borgerocco, referring to the high amount of Moroccan people living in this area. Based on the first nationality almost 29% of the people living here are from North-African origin and almost 55% is of foreign origin, which is a bit lower than in Antwerp Noord (61%). Although this amount is decreasing (in 2007 32% of the people were from North-African origin), people still associate this area with the presence of Moroccans. The third and last neighbourhood of the case study area is Deurne Noord. This neighbourhood has become more ethnically diverse in the last ten years. In 2005 71% of the people living here were from Belgian origin. Nowadays, only 55% of the inhabitants are from Belgian origin. Deurne Noord is located at the other side of the urban ring road and was an independent suburban municipality until 1983. Nowadays it can be seen as an urbanized suburb.

² Throughout the report we define ‘native Dutch’ and ‘native Belgian’ as citizens of whom both parents were born in the Netherlands or the Flanders respectively (CBS, 2015).

Methodology

Interviews were conducted with residents of Feijenoord in Rotterdam, and Antwerp Noord, Deurne Noord and Borgerhout in Antwerp. We aimed to include people of as many social groups as possible, rather than to create a sample that is representative of the population. We approached interviewees by means of ‘purposeful sampling’, to ensure that we speak with people of the above-mentioned groups (Bryman, 2012). Within this framework, three different methods were used. First, we asked local organisations, of which most we knew from previous research in the area (see Tersteeg et al., 2014b; Saeys et al., 2014), to introduce us to individuals in the neighbourhood. Second, we approached individuals on the streets and in their homes in order to include local residents who were not related to local initiatives. Finally, through the use of the so-called ‘snowballing method’, we asked interviewees to introduce us to other possible interviewees. All interviewees have signed a consent form and we have only talked to adults (aged 18 or above). Most interviews were held at people’s homes. When people did not feel comfortable to give an interview at home, we conducted the interview in an alternative (quiet) place at the suggestion of the interviewee, such as a community centre, library or café. The interviews lasted between 45 and 120 minutes and focussed on resident motives for *settling*, *staying in*, and where relevant *leaving* their current neighbourhood in relation to local diversity. We expected local social networks to be important for the neighbourhood choice and satisfaction of some resident groups. Therefore, we also mapped resident’s social egocentric networks of family, friends, acquaintances and neighbours in the interviews. All interviews were taped and transcribed and then analysed using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. The interviews were held between September 2014 and May 2015.

The interviewees

In Rotterdam, we have interviewed 56 people who live in eight different neighbourhoods in Feijenoord. Most interviewees live in the neighbourhoods of Feijenoord³, Hillesluis, Katendrecht and Vreewijk. In Antwerp we have spoken with 54 people, of which 21 live in Deurne Noord, 16 in Antwerp Noord and 17 in Borgerhout. Our research samples include 15 and 12 nationalities in Rotterdam and Antwerp respectively. The largest ethnic groups among the interviewees are native Dutch, Surinamese, Turkish and Moroccan in Rotterdam,

³ One of the neighbourhoods within the research area, the city district of Feijenoord, is called Feijenoord as well.

and Belgian, Dutch, and Moroccan in Antwerp. In terms of religion, the sample includes people with different forms of Islam, Hinduism and Christianity. Interviewees' duration of stay in the dwelling and neighbourhood varies from a few weeks, a couple of years, to several decades. We have interviewed people of different age groups between 18 and 80, household types (e.g. single, couples, couples with children, single parents) and socio-economic statuses, referring to income and education levels. See Tersteeg et al. (forth.) and Albeda et al. (forth.) for an overview of the basic demographic features of the interviewed persons.

Shortcomings of the sample

We have managed to speak with residents of many different social groups in the research areas. Nevertheless, our sample has some shortcomings. First, the research areas are home to hundreds of ethnicities. We have not spoken with people of all ethnic groups. Furthermore, the number of women is higher in the sample in Antwerp than in Rotterdam (38 out of 54 and 32 out of 56 interviewees respectively). Finally, we have interviewed people who were able to express themselves in Dutch or English. We have not been able to speak with people who are not able to do so. This could be a substantial group of people because of the traditionally large and diverse and international migration flows to our research areas.

Research findings

Neighbourhood choice

Why did residents move away from their previous dwelling and neighbourhood? For most interviewees in Rotterdam and Antwerp in the researched areas in Rotterdam and Antwerp, a 'life course event', e.g. moving in with a partner or having a(nother) baby, were clearly the primary *push factors* for moving to the current neighbourhood. For example, Hannah (62, Surinamese Dutch, single household, social housing, 37 years in Feijenoord in Rotterdam) explains: "*my son was born there [previous house] [...] the dwelling became too small. There was the living room, a bedroom and a large kitchen. We were given the opportunity to move into this house [present dwelling]*". Yet, the housing markets of Rotterdam and Antwerp offer a wide range of neighbourhoods with (affordable) housing. Why did people settle in their current diverse, dynamic and deprived neighbourhood? Before we discuss the most

important *pull factors* in this respect, it is important to note that for some resident groups the decision to move was not entirely voluntary and housing options were sometimes limited.

Different degrees of choice

From the literature on neighbourhood choice we know that the extent to which residents have a choice when moving to their neighbourhood and dwelling has important implications for their satisfaction with the neighbourhood (e.g. Posthumus et al., 2013). Although most interviewees express having made a conscious decision to move to the present dwelling and neighbourhood, for some the decision was not entirely voluntary. A number of interviewees in Rotterdam with a low SES were forced to switch social rental apartments due to demolition or restructuring programmes. Other residents in Rotterdam with a low SES and in Antwerp with a low SES and a non-western ethnicity had limited housing options because they were in urgent need of a dwelling. For example, Nancy (41, Cape Verdean Dutch, couple with 3 children, social housing) moved into her apartment in Feijenoord, Rotterdam 23 years ago because it was allocated to her by social housing services when she became pregnant unexpectedly and needed a house on short notice. Some interviewees needed a house because they were homeless or staying in a shelter, like Meriam (28, Afghani, single household, private rent, 2 years in Antwerp Noord), who knew: *“a family in the asylum centre, and that was a family from the same country. And I say, I need an apartment and then I had a friend here. And I went to that friend and she said, this woman needs an apartment. She gave me a number and I made an appointment and I came to the house”*.

The availability of affordable housing

Although relocation options were thus sometimes limited, most interviewees experience having chosen to move. Why did they move to the current neighbourhood? Obviously it is not the deprivation people choose for, but a first and primary reason to move to these areas is the *availability of affordable housing*. Dwellings in the research areas often belong to the most inexpensive alternatives in the city. Households with low incomes can hardly afford to live somewhere else or even to think of moving to a better place in terms of housing and neighbourhood quality. Households with higher incomes can often not afford a dwelling with a similar size in other areas of the city – interviewees explain. For example, when asked how they have come to live in their current neighbourhood Edward (43, native Dutch, couple with

4 children, owners, 7 years in Hillesluis in Rotterdam) explains: “we were looking for a [bigger] house. We considered [buying a house in] Rotterdam South because of the affordability of the owner-occupied houses. I mean, it saves us €100,000 buying a house four km away [from the city centre]. This [house] was affordable and large. [...] I will never get the opportunity to buy such a house for such a low price again”. Likewise, John (between 40-50 years old, Ghanese, single household, private rent, 18 years in Antwerp Noord) argues: “I did search in other places. In some places the prices were too high and so, I could not afford to own the dwelling. I was also looking for a place at the ground floor, which is not easy to find”. Remarkably, in Antwerp interviewees with middle and high socio-economic backgrounds and diverse ethnicities relate the low housing prices in their neighbourhood to the presence of migrant groups. Milou (32, Dutch, single household, private rent, 4 years in Borgerhout in Antwerp) for instance argues that: “it is cheaper to live in this neighbourhood, because a lot of foreigners live here”. Also Kamil (46, Turkish Belgian, single household, owner, 4 years in Antwerp Noord) argues that he came to live in his current neighbourhood: “... because it was affordable, cheap. Why is it cheap? Because there is a large migrant community. They lower the housing prices. The average Flemish person, who can afford it, prefers not to live a neighbourhood with migrants. Therefore, the houses are mostly rental and bought by migrants. A magnetic effect”. In Rotterdam, interviewees do not connect the low housing prices to the presence of migrants.

A convenient location

A second primary motive for settling in the neighbourhood regards its proximity towards the city centres of Rotterdam and Antwerp, work and facilities and amenities⁴. Both in Rotterdam and Antwerp, this is mentioned by residents with different socio-economic backgrounds. These residents argue that a close proximity to the city centre allows them to make use of facilities and amenities of the city centre, while enjoying relatively low housing prices. In addition, for many of these interviewees the neighbourhoods have a convenient location towards their work. For example, Karin (60, native Belgian, single household, owner, 29 years in Borgerhout in Antwerp) says: “I came to live here because I did not have a car and I was working in the harbour, 25 kilometres from here, 20 kilometres away from the city centre [...] I came to live here because the public transport connections are convenient. [...]

⁴ Some interviewees mention more than one as a driver to move to the current dwelling.

Also, the location is very central. It is only a 7 minute walk to the train station. By tram it only takes me minutes to get to the city centre. I can go to the cinema, theatre. It is all nearby”.

Both in Rotterdam and in Antwerp, interviewees with diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds and households mention the existence of shops, public transport connections and other facilities and amenities as pull-factors for settling in the neighbourhood. Residents were not attracted by the diversity of facilities in itself, but by specific facilities. For example, what attracted Nancy most to her neighbourhood in Rotterdam is: “...*whenever you need something, you can find it all in the neighbourhood. Whenever you want to do something fun, with the kids. There is a swimming pool further up [the road], you do not have to leave the neighbourhood if you want to do something fun or do some shopping”.* For a few residents the proximity of a primary school was an important pull-factor. In Rotterdam, this was mentioned by people with different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds. When asked why she settled in her current neighbourhood, Mila (27, Yugoslavian, couple with 4 children, private rent, 6 years in Deurne Noord in Antwerp) for instance responded: “...*for the school, it is right across the road. Also, the hospital is close, Aldi [supermarket] is close, city centre is close. The location is very central”.* Similarly, Willemijn (41, native Dutch, single parent with child, social housing, 4 months in Vreewijk in Rotterdam) responded: “*I chose this house because of the location, the garden and the school”.*

Bonds with family and friends

A third feature of the neighbourhood that has encouraged interviewees to settle in the area is the existence of strong ties with family and friends⁵. Notably, in Rotterdam this goes particularly for interviewees with a low SES, while in Antwerp this was found among people of all socio-economic backgrounds. Both in Rotterdam and Antwerp, interviewees have settled in their present neighbourhood because they prefer to live near family members and/or friends whom they feel emotionally close to. These networks appear relatively homogenous in terms of ethnicity and class. These people provide interviewees with company and support, including sharing meals, doing shopping together or for one another, taking care in case of illness or disabilities, babysitting, and keeping an eye out. For example, Karin explains that after her husband passed away she decided to move to Deurne Noord, Antwerp to live close to her daughter. Likewise, Souad (39, Belgian Moroccan, couple with 4

⁵ Some interviewees mention more than one as a driver to move to the current dwelling.

children, owners, born and raised in Borgerhout in Antwerp) describes her motivation to move to her current neighbourhood as follows: *“I did not want to move too far away [from Antwerp]. My husband did though, he wanted us to go live in Kontich [a town 20 km south of Antwerp]. It seemed so far away for me. I told him no. I just wanted to live close to my parents, particularly with the kids”*. As another example, in Rotterdam, Willemijn and her son recently moved to the neighbourhood of her parents, e.g. to live close to them. They live across the street. When asked how important it is for her to have family live nearby, she says: *“Yes, it is very nice to have your parents live nearby, because they are getting older. They are both 70. I can support them. Of course it is also nice for my son, and convenient for me: when I need to do some shopping, I tell him ‘go visit your grandmother’”*. Interviewer: *“How often do you see your parents?”*. Willemijn: *“Very often, I see them daily, here [at home] or at their place”*.

For some interviewees in Rotterdam and in Antwerp, the existence of close friends was an important reason to settle in the current neighbourhood. While, in Rotterdam this goes particularly for interviewees with a low SES (and diverse ethnicities and household types), in Antwerp this is an important settlement motive for residents with a medium or high SES and children (the ‘middle classes’). Lily (33, native Belgian, couple with 1 child, owners, 4 years in Borgerhout in Antwerp) for instance explains that the fact that a befriended couple already lived here attracted her to the area. The couple taught them that it is a good neighbourhood to live in and they prefer to move to a neighbourhood where they already know people. Similarly, when asked why he moved to his current neighbourhood Usha (27, Indian, couple, private rent, 4 years in Antwerp Noord) responds: *“...because all my friends also live nearby and I do not know that much about Belgium yet. Therefore it was important for me to live close to my friends”*.

Diversity as a pull-factor?

For a very specific group of interviewees in both cities, with a low SES, a non-western ethnicity, and/or a single household, the diversity of people appeared a pull-factor for moving to the area. These interviewees argue that when belonging to a particular minority group, e.g. based on your ethnicity or household type, they prefer to live in a context without certain majority groups because this makes them feel more at ease (see also

Wessendorf, 2014). Both in Rotterdam and Antwerp, interviewees who belong to a non-western ethnic minority group argue that they prefer not to live in a neighbourhood with a majority of native Dutch or native Belgian residents. Some compare their current neighbourhood with neighbourhoods with relatively high percentages of native Dutch or Belgian residents (e.g. Hilligersberg in the case of Rotterdam) to explain why. Interviewees argue that the commonality of being part of an ethnic minority group in their neighbourhood motivates residents to treat each other as equals, despite of the differences. Similarly, Rick (45, native Dutch, anti-squat shared housing, few weeks in Hillesluis in Rotterdam) explains that he prefers to live in his current neighbourhood which exists of diverse types of households rather than in his previous neighbourhood which is mostly inhabited by couples with children because he just got divorced and lives by himself. Living in a context of diverse ethnic groups or household types makes the interviewees feel less 'out of place' (Cresswell, 1996).

Neighbourhood satisfaction

To examine the extent to which residents are satisfied with their neighbourhood, residents were asked to elaborate on positive and negative experiences with their residential environment. In addition, residents were asked whether they prefer to stay in their neighbourhood or leave if they had the opportunity, and why. While interviewees in Rotterdam generally experience their residential environment positively and prefer to continue living in their neighbourhood, experiences of interviewees in Antwerp appear more mixed. In Rotterdam, quite a number of interviewees with a low SES prefer their current residential area above other parts of the city. Therefore, they have moved to their current dwelling within the same neighbourhood or from an adjacent neighbourhood. Furthermore, of the interviewees with a relatively low SES who moved in from outside the area many have deliberately moved back to the neighbourhood they once lived before. This is in line with the finding of Dujardin & Van der Zanden (2014) that, since the 1990s, at least 35 per cent of the settlements in Rotterdam South are local residents, often with a non-western ethnicity, who moved within their neighbourhood or to other neighbourhoods in Rotterdam South. In Antwerp however, most interviewees moved to their current neighbourhood from other parts of the city, or even further away. While residents with a medium and high SES (who are often native Belgian) are generally satisfied with their neighbourhood, several residents with

a low SES, both newcomers (often with a non-western ethnicity) and long-term residents with a native Belgian ethnicity emphasise negative aspects of the neighbourhood (including its diversity) more.

Why do people choose to stay in the neighbourhood?

Strong and weak ties with local people

'Strong ties', social bonds with close family members and friends, were not only an important motive for settling in the current neighbourhood. For interviewees with a low SES in Rotterdam and interviewees with different SES's in Antwerp they were also an important motive for staying, as they provide residents with care and support. When asked if she would like to move out of her neighbourhood, Sandra (71, native Belgian, single household, private rent, 6 years in Deurne Noord in Antwerp) responds: *"Not at the moment. I have my group of friends here. I am glad that they are there, because otherwise I would be very lonely. [...] Also my daughter in law lives nearby. She teaches at a school in Antwerp"*.

In addition to bonds with family and friends, the same interviewees mention 'weak ties', bonds with neighbours and other local acquaintances, as a motive to stay in the current neighbourhood. Local acquaintances are described as local people whom interviewees became familiar with and sometimes interact with in (semi-)public spaces in the neighbourhood, and whom are not considered family or friends. The story of Maanasa (26, Hindustani Surinamese, couple, social housing, 3 years in Feijenoord in Rotterdam) illustrates how local acquaintances were found to positively influence the neighbourhood satisfaction of residents. Maanasa recently moved back to the neighbourhood she grew up in because she explains that here: *"I meet a lot of people from the old days, whom I grew up with. Most of them still live here, or they moved to Noordereiland [adjacent neighbourhood]. [...] [I meet] their parents, or friends of their mothers. I love that. [...] When I walk outside in the summer, when you go out to buy some bread, it takes at least half an hour to get home because you bump into people and chat with them everywhere"*. Bonds with local acquaintances and neighbours do not only contribute to a sense of familiarity. They also provide residents with support. For example, Mouad and Lina (45 and 31, Moroccan, couple with 3 children, owners, 24 year in Hillesluis neighbourhood in Rotterdam) explain that an important reason for staying in their neighbourhood is their contact with local acquaintances

and neighbours from which they regularly receive practical support, for instance when they moved into their current dwelling “*children, men, everyone helped us*”, or when their house was broken into “*all the neighbours came around as well, that did help us*”.

Both in Rotterdam and in Antwerp, the networks of neighbours appear diverse in terms of ethnicity (see Tersteeg et al., forth; Albeda et al., forth.). The networks of other *local acquaintances* however, are clearly more diverse in this respect in Rotterdam than in Antwerp. Interviewees in Rotterdam meet with local acquaintances with other ethnic backgrounds more often than in Antwerp. Local community centres and schools appear important places for such interactions in Feijenoord (see Peterson, forth.; Tersteeg et al., forth.). In Antwerp networks of local acquaintances mostly exist within ethnic communities. Here, non-western migrants indicate that ethnic communities provide temporal or structural support with finding affordable housing and work, getting acquainted with local people, facilities and institutions and the legal system. This so-called ‘safe haven’ function of ethnic communities is not new and has been found earlier, for example with respect to Italians in Chicago (Suttles, 1974) and Pakistani in Bradford in the UK (Dahya, 1974).

Bonds with local institutions

Another factor that interviewees with a low SES in Rotterdam and an interviewee with a high SES in Antwerp mention as a motive to stay in the neighbourhood is a bond with local institutions such as a mosque, volunteer organisation, school or community centre. For these interviewees, it is important to live close to the institutions because visiting them is part of their daily or weekly routines and allows them to sustain their (local) social networks. For instance, another important reason for Mouad and Lina to move houses within their neighbourhood was their children being able to stay at the same school. As another example, Yavuz (21, Turkish, co-habits with brother, social housing, 1 year in Feijenoord in Rotterdam), grew up in the neighbourhood of Feijenoord and recently moved back after having lived in another district of Rotterdam, Prins Alexander, for two years. He moved back because most of his family, friends and acquaintances live in Feijenoord, and this is where most of his daily activities take place. He visits a local mosque twice a day, volunteers at a local food bank and with disadvantaged local youths, and works as a part time salesman in the neighbourhood. Yavuz’s attachment to Feijenoord and hence his decision to move back

to the area were determined by the people and institutions in the neighbourhood. Yavuz explains: *"I did not like it there [Prins Alexander], so I came back [to Feijenoord]. I find the atmosphere in the neighbourhood important, as well as what I can do for the neighbourhood. There, nobody was active, nobody organised any activities for youths, [...] it was just everyone for themselves. Here this is not the case. Here, we want to support the youths, who can contribute to society. [...] I tried to [organise activities for youths in Prins Alexander], but I had no connections, that would enable me to do so. [...] I do have those connections here, because I grew up here"*. Also in Antwerp, an interviewee (30-45, native Belgian, single household, owner, 8 years Borgerhout in Antwerp) preferred to stay in her neighbourhood because of her work as a volunteer at a community shop. Nevertheless, local institutions appear more important for neighbourhood satisfaction in Rotterdam than in Antwerp.

A diversity of facilities and amenities

A third feature of the neighbourhood that interviewees in Rotterdam and Antwerp, with diverse ethnicities, socio-economic positions and household compositions, find a positive attribute of the neighbourhood and motivates them to stay in the neighbourhood is a *diverse local facility and amenity structure*. Residents argue that the facilities cater well to the diverse interests and needs of the ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse population. Both in Rotterdam and Antwerp, residents with a medium and high SES and a native Dutch or Belgian ethnicity value the diversity of local shops and restaurants, the extended opening hours of ethnic minority businesses and the liveliness they bring in the streets. Michael (39, German, single parent with 1 child, private rent, 10 years in Hillesluis in Rotterdam), for instance says: *"One of the assets, a main reason for living here is the diversity. When I am hungry for a Kurdish kebab, or a Turkish kebab, or a Shish kebab, I have that choice"*. According to Julia (63, native Belgian, couple, owners, 33 years in Antwerp Noord): *"What I think is very positive, and I really appreciate, is that the whole world comes together here, for instance to shop, the exotic supplies are great. The opening hours, the shops are always open, even on a Sunday evening at 9pm you can buy foods, or even a new TV. Some shops never close"*. Another interviewee in Antwerp argues: *"the shops are exotic, the mentality of people seems energetic. It is exciting. There is always something happening"*. Differently, residents with a low SES and a non-western ethnicity mostly value

the specific supply of local shops that caters well to their specific needs. In Rotterdam, Hannah for instance values the presence of local Chinese and Surinamese stores highly because she can buy specific Surinamese foods here. Likewise, Usha values that she can buy products e.g. from her home country in Antwerp Noord, as “...there are a lot of Moroccan shops at the Diepestraat [a shopping street]. You can also find Indian shops there, and African shops”.

A diversity of social experiences and exchanges

In both cities interviewees, with diverse ethnicities, socio-economic positions and household compositions, further argue that ethnic, cultural and religious diversity allows them to learn about and offers them *new experiences* with e.g. different foods and cooking styles, religious practices, and marriage and family cultures. Cheng (30, Asian Antillean Dutch, single household, 6 years in Zuidwijk in Rotterdam) for instance explains how local diversity allows for intercultural cooking experiences: “*I mix with families, women. I am very interested and enthusiastic [about social mix]. I always want to learn from them: how they cook. I really love cooking. I hang out with Turkish and Moroccan [people]. I am always curious. ‘Hi, how do you cook this, how do you prefer [that]? Oh that is a difference, but I think it is delicious’. This way I learn new things from them. I always try, I always ask [them]: ‘if you would like to learn to cook Chinese, I can teach you’. We can help one another*”. Interviewees in Rotterdam and in Antwerp enjoy to exchange foods with neighbours. When asked how she thinks about local diversities, Pari (38, Pakistani, couple with 4 children, social rent, 17 years in Hillesluis in Rotterdam) responds: “*I like it because I enjoy getting to know different people. Different cultures and practices. For instance, Moroccans are Muslim, we are Muslim, Surinamese people are Muslim, Turks are Muslim, but our way of celebrating [religious events] differs. But we like to learn about one other: how do you do things. How do you celebrate Sugar Feast? How do you celebrate Ashura? How do you celebrate Sacrificial Feast? It is fun. Always the same things, that is boring. So the differences [...] we share our food with each other: Turks give me, I give to Moroccans. When we make something special, we give it to other people: ‘Here, taste! This is how we make this. So you do it like this’”*. Furthermore, interviewees with a non-western ethnicity in Rotterdam and a relatively high SES in Antwerp value the *business and the liveliness* that comes with the ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. These interviewees argue that they enjoy their neighbourhood because “*there is*

always something happening” (Nancy). Turkish, Pakistani and Moroccan marriage cultures, often including loud music, dancing in the streets and car honking, are mentioned as examples of events that positively contribute to the liveliness of the neighbourhood. Dunya (40, Surinamese, single mother of 2 children, social housing, 1 month in Hillesluis in Rotterdam) for instance says: *“The diverse and mixed cultures in the neighbourhood, make it fun”*. Interviewer: *“What do you think is fun?”*. Dunya: *“The liveliness, differences, like yesterday I was walking that way and suddenly I heard a sound ‘ooooow’, it was a wedding. [...] The happiness, the atmosphere that comes with it. You can see the people sing and dance [in the streets], and then I surely go have a look, to see what is happening”*.

Tolerance of differences

Another aspect of local diversity that contributes to the satisfaction of interviewees with their neighbourhood is a tolerant mentality of residents towards cultural differences. Three narratives can be distinguished in this respect. First, for a very specific group of interviewees in both cities, with a low SES, a non-western ethnicity, or a single household, the diversity of people was not only a motive for moving to the area, but also for staying. These interviewees argue that living in a context of many minority groups allows them to feel at ease in their neighbourhood (see also Wessendorf, 2014). Second, in Antwerp several interviewees with a native Belgian ethnicity argue that living with diverse income groups, ethnicities and life styles has made them more aware and tolerant of these differences. Lily for instance says: *“it has definitely opened my mind about how other people can live, that it need is not all a white middle class dream. It has made me less naive about how the world works, about that there is poverty”*. Another interviewee Martin (66, Dutch, couple, owners, 8 years in Antwerp Noord): *“because there are so many different people living in one street, you do not get large social groups.[...] People are more tolerant towards one another because everyone is different in some way”*. A third narrative about tolerance was mentioned by interviewees with a medium or high SES, mostly parents, who discuss the value of children growing up in diverse neighbourhoods. While these interviewees have diverse ethnicities in Rotterdam, in Antwerp this is mostly discussed by people with a native Belgian ethnicity. Vera (41, native Dutch, couple with 3 children, owners, 6 years in Katendrecht in Rotterdam) explains that the advantage of living in a diverse neighbourhood

is that she can bring her children to ethnically, religiously as well as socio-economically mixed schools, where children with diverse backgrounds play together: *“I find that a very good thing. [...] because it [diversity] is just an everyday reality. [...] One day, they [the children] will together have to deal with it in Rotterdam, or somewhere else. The more you know about and understand each other’s life world, the more you will be able to make joint decisions on how to handle things. If you do not know one another, it will become very difficult to understand why some people want certain things. Yet, if you grow up with it, ‘yes for a Muslim it is important that there is a mosque, so therefore this is not a point that we should take into consideration, we just need to see how to go at it’. Of course, this is a much better way than if you do not know it, and therefore think it is not important. [...] Just being realistic: this [diversity] is what you grow up with, and later on you will also be part of these people. People with little money, much money, people with high education levels, low education levels, then you will know how to deal with it”*. Similarly, in Antwerp, Julia explains that she and her husband consciously chose to bring their children to a local ethnically mixed school: *“even though it is a black school, we never regret that they grew up in a diverse world. The children went to school with all kinds of children. [...] The best way to teach children to be tolerant of differences is by bringing them to the same school so that they become friends”*.

Negative perceptions of the neighbourhood

Both in Rotterdam and Antwerp, interviewees with diverse ethnicities, socio-economic positions and household types are generally satisfied with their neighbourhood. When asked the question ‘would you like to move to another neighbourhood?’, almost all respond negatively. This is likely to be due to selection effects (Permentier et al., 2011). Residents who are not satisfied with their neighbourhood and have the opportunity might have moved away (Feijten & Van Ham, 2009). Nevertheless, some specific groups of residents, mostly in Antwerp, clearly experience their neighbourhood more negatively because they are not always in the position to move away. These include people with a low SES and newcomers with a non-western ethnicity in Antwerp and long-term residents with a native ethnicity in Rotterdam and Antwerp.

A poor housing quality

A first reason for being less satisfied with the neighbourhood is the need for a dwelling that better fits residential needs and preferences, something the current neighbourhood does not seem to offer (at an affordable price). Particularly, migrants with a low SES in Antwerp complain about a small size and insufficient number of rooms, lack of central heating, poor air quality and leakages, and limited options for moving away. Their dwellings often have a poor quality compared with other resident groups. This is also mentioned in municipal policy acts (see Stad Antwerpen, 2006). In Rotterdam, interviewees, including those with a low SES, do not complain about a poor housing condition, suggesting that social housing in Rotterdam is still relatively accessible and of a sufficient quality.

“Foreigners”

A second factor that negatively affects the neighbourhood satisfaction of particular groups of residents concerns the presence of migrant groups. For different reasons, some resident groups experience the presence of ethnic minority groups in their neighbourhood negatively. First, the presence of “foreigners” is related to unauthorised rubbish disposal in public spaces, noise nuisance, criminality (of youths⁶), drugs (ab)use, and/or feelings of fear and unsafety. Interviewees with diverse ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds attribute the negative behaviours to the poor social and economic position of migrant households, cultural differences. In Rotterdam, a few native long-term residents with a low SES simply relate it to the ethnicity of residents. An example of such a generalised perception comes from Eric (69, native Dutch, single household, social housing, 68 years in Katendrecht in Rotterdam) who says: *“Moroccans, the young generation, often behave badly outdoors [...]. They steal, break into houses, all those crazy things. [...] Especially the young ones are bad guys. [...] Then there is also the Antilleans, dope and booze, acting crazy. You do not see them during the day. They come out at night, they are like cockroaches when they come out. Of course we [native Dutch, long-term residents] are not like that. [...] Those young Antilleans are out of control. But luckily, Antilleans and Moroccans do not like each other. Those groups, no, it is not ok man”*. According to Eric, the size and behaviours of these Antillean and Moroccan youth groups cause fear and feelings of unsafety among local residents of his kind: *“The problem with those guys [is]: when an Antillean comes inside*

⁶ These groups are sometimes very visible in the streets.

[community centre in which he volunteers], I cannot refuse him. But when he behaves badly, that goes for everyone though, I will send him out. If it happens with other people, you send them out, finished. If you do it with an Antillean, then within 5 minutes there will be 40 men on your doorstep". Second, the same group of long-term residents complain about the changes in neighbourhood facilities due to the inflow of ethnic minorities (see also Feijten & Van Ham, 2009). They mainly argue that traditional (Dutch or Belgian) shops gradually disappear. Louisa (59, native Dutch, single household, social housing, 59 years in Rotterdam) lives in the neighbourhood of Hillesluis in which in 2010, 81 per cent of the residents did not have a native Dutch ethnic background. She argues: *"I wish there would be more Dutch shops. We do not have a butcher. A Turkish butcher, but not a Dutch one. Do not have a bakery".* Interviewer: *"What is the difference?"*. Louisa: *"The pastries. They have really nice things, but they are often quite buttery, so that is something that you have to like then".* Interviewer: *"Do you miss particular foods?"*. Louisa: *"The local foods are very spicy".* Interviewer: *"What about the butcher?"*. Louisa: *"The sausages would be the problem there. I have to go to the super market for them. [...] A Dutch butcher would be nice, even though I do not mind visiting Turkish or Moroccan bakeries".* A third negative experience of ethnic minorities concerns language barriers. A number of interviewees in both cities, with various ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds and households, have problems with residents who do not speak the Dutch language in public and semi-public areas. They feel that language diversity has a negative impact on social cohesion between local groups. For example, Rick and Sonia (41, Moroccan Dutch, couple with 1 child, social housing, 8 years in Feijenoord in Rotterdam) explain how hearing ethnic groups of e.g. youths or women speak in a foreign language makes them feel excluded (see also Atkinson & Kintrea, 2000). Long-term native residents with a low SES complain that it is difficult to communicate with foreigners who do not speak the Dutch language. For example, Sarah (86, native Belgian, single household, owner, 2 years in Deurne Noord in Antwerp) says about her former neighbour in Antwerp North: *"It bothered me that that person lived there now for so many years and she even could not say my name. It bothered me enormously. (...) That person did not come outside. So she could not talk to anybody. And when the children came from school, they spoke Berbers inside".* A resident with a non-western ethnicity in Antwerp is bothered because she argues the high local concentration of non-native Dutch speakers prevents her from learning the Dutch language. She explains that she experiences a lack of diversity: *"I have to stay here (...)*

but I do not like my neighbourhood. I do not have problems with my neighbours, but I have the problem that I cannot learn the Dutch language. All my neighbours speak another language, for instance in the local stores. Sometimes it seems as if I live in Turkey or I am in Morocco". Some interviewees in Rotterdam and Antwerp, with a medium or high SES and different ethnicities, discuss language diversity in relation to the disadvantaged position of children and local schools in the area. Lauren (50, native Dutch, couple with 4 children, owners, 7 years in Hillesluis in Rotterdam) volunteers at a local school with children with diverse ethnic backgrounds. She argues that many children have deficiencies in the Dutch language because their parents do not speak Dutch with them: *"As a result, the children have deficiencies in maths as well, because all the maths assignments involve reading assignments"*. She explains that therefore most local native Dutch parents bring their children to schools that are less ethnically mixed. In Antwerp, however, mostly interviewees of foreign origin prefer schools that are less ethnically mixed in fear of a lower quality of education at highly ethno-cultural diverse schools.

A final complaint about ethnic minority groups relates to sexual intimidation. Female interviewees in Antwerp, particularly with a non-western ethnicity, experience sexual intimidation by *"foreign"* people and do not experience this from native Belgians: *"You might call me a racist, but I think [that the neighbourhood is] a little bit too Arabic. [...] I was never against them, I always loved them. But, then: I was walking and behind me kids shouted 'prostitute' at me, 'Russian prostitute'. [...] I had it several times"* (Olga; 41, Ukrainian, couple, owners, 10 months in Deurne Noord in Antwerp). Likewise, Usha says: *"You need to be a little bit more careful with what you wear. If you're on your own, in the summer, if you wear an open dress, and if you pass this street, then people start to whistle or yell 'Oh hi' like this and if you respond then you run the risk that you end up in a fight"*.

Residents live parallel lives

In Antwerp, some residents with different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds complain that young and middle-aged native Belgians with a medium and high SES, mostly families, disaffiliate from other resident groups in their neighbourhoods. The Belgian middle classes are described to spend most time within their own homogenous group. The observations are in line with studies of e.g. Pinkster (2014) that indicate that the social networks of middle

class residents in mixed income neighbourhoods are often more homogenous and their activity patterns more segregated, than those of other resident groups. Several native Belgian residents in the researched areas in Antwerp with diverse socio-economic backgrounds and with different ages do not appreciate this observed behaviour of middle classes. Karin has a relatively low SES. She for instance argues: *“They very much keep to themselves in my opinion. They think they are ‘great’. [...] But I do not know if they are that ‘great’ to other people [...] to older people or to people who are not like them. I do not think so. I do not like them that much. In general, [they are] not very sympathetic”*. Nevertheless, Michelle could be categorised as a Belgian middle class resident herself and argues: *“The people who are the most indignant about stricter policies on migration [...] they are the same parents who put their kids in a tricycle and go to Zurenborg [adjacent neighbourhood] to a white school. [...] They are supposed to be oh so progressive, and oh so open-minded, but they only go to, yes, environments where their own children surely cannot get ‘infected’ by. Where they do not have to make concessions on the nice lives of their children”* (Michelle; 39, native Belgian, couple with 4 children, owners, 10 years in Borgerhout in Antwerp). Some critiques on the middle classes suggest that they present themselves more tolerant of differences than is actually the case: *“A Turkish restaurant wanted to start in Zurenborg and yeah, they [the middle class residents] immediately started a petition that it should not be there because it was of lower status. It was a take away pizzeria. Yes, actually quite messy. And that did not fit in the nice, cool Zurenborg. (...) Than, I think, well, there you are with your tolerance and openness. ‘We are the progressive Zurenborgers’ so far”* (Julia).

In Rotterdam, resident groups do not appear to live parallel lives. Instead, local social networks in Rotterdam, particularly of those with a low SES, are generally quite mixed in terms of ethnicity and interviewees of all classes report and enjoy frequent interactions with residents of other ethnic and socio-economic groups in public spaces (Tersteeg et al., forthcoming).

Discussion

This study has sought to provide insight in how resident perceptions of diverse neighbourhoods affect their choice of and satisfaction with the neighbourhood. The findings show that diversity is generally not a primary push- or pull-factor in itself. Thus, people do

not move to diverse, dynamic and deprived areas because of the diversity of people. Instead, a first and primary reason to move to these areas is the *availability of affordable housing*. This is not only the case for low income groups, but also for middle classes e.g. in search of affordable family houses. The study shows that diverse, dynamic and deprived neighbourhoods are important because they fulfil the residential needs of many different groups. Although for most residents, diversity is not a primary push- or pull-factor in itself, for residents who belong to a minority group, e.g. based on ethnicity or household type, it is. These residents are attracted to and stay in these areas because of the presence of other minority groups. The diversity of the neighbourhood makes them feel less 'out of place'. The diversity of people and amenities in hyper-diverse neighbourhoods appears to be more important for residents' decision to 'stay'. This suggests that living in diverse urban areas can contribute to positive perceptions of differences and stimulate intercultural awareness and exchanges. Particularly, the Rotterdam case study illustrates that 'weak ties' that residents develop with people of other resident groups can be an important motive for staying in the neighbourhood. Nevertheless, the negative experiences of very specific groups of residents, mostly in Antwerp, with a low SES and/or non-western-ethnicity, with their neighbourhood, including elements of diversity, indicate that neighbourhood satisfaction and positive experiences of diversity are more likely to occur when residents have opportunities to improve their housing situation and hence can move away if they wish.

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