

Against Segregation: Ethnic Mixing in Liberal States*

MARGO TRAPPENBURG

Utrecht School of Governance, Utrecht University

I. INTRODUCTION

IT HAS become commonplace among political theorists to observe that almost all liberal, Western societies have turned multicultural one way or another. We know about the plight of aboriginal people in Australia and Canada, we have learned a great deal about French speaking Canadians residing in Quebec, and we have been taught about West European governments and their ethnic minorities: inhabitants of former colonies (Pakistanis in Britain, Algerians in France, Indonesians in the Netherlands), former guest workers and their descendants from Turkey and the Maghreb, and asylum seekers from all over the world. Debates among political theorists have focused on questions such as: should cultural minorities be given special rights, and if so, what kind of rights? Must they be collective rights or individual rights? Should these rights be granted to ancient national minorities only, or should they also be given to recent immigrants? If cultural minorities are given special rights, how should these rights be weighed against the rights and interests of individual members of minority groups, in particular women and children? Is the rights vocabulary adequate for the wishes and interests of minority groups? Is it not more appropriate to talk about a need for recognition or respect?¹ In this article I want to address a slightly different, albeit related issue. I want to find out whether it could be morally acceptable or even desirable to consciously aim for ethnically diverse neighbourhoods and primary schools. Should national or local governments have the right to disperse the members of minority groups on their territory so as to facilitate their integration in the mainstream culture? Or, alternatively, should they have the right to move non-immigrant, white middle-class families in order to reach the same objective?²

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¹Cf. e.g. Kymlicka 1989, 1995, Taylor 1992, Galenkamp 1993, Carens 2000.

²The question is closely connected to a more fundamental issue: how much immigration should there be, and what kind of immigration? I will not address that question here. I have dealt with immigration in another article (Trappenburg 1998).

Before embarking on this project a few preliminary remarks are in order to delineate its scope. First, I am going to talk about minorities in West European countries, that is, in countries which are generally taken to be old nation-states. Although some of my arguments may also hold for traditional immigrant countries such as the United States, Canada or Australia, others clearly do not.³

Second, I will talk about immigrant minorities, hence I will not discuss a possible ethnic mixing policy toward ancient national minorities such as the French-Canadians in Quebec. Charles Taylor has argued that the Québécois have the right to remain a French-speaking enclave in an English-speaking world, and to take appropriate measures to assure that.⁴ One may justifiably ask whether Quebec should indeed have the right to force its French-speaking citizens to raise their children in French,⁵ but it would seem outrageous if the Canadian federal government would relocate the Québécois all over Canada in order to turn them into English-speaking citizens as soon as possible. This would strike us as a Stalinist policy. In this respect national minorities and immigrant groups are clearly different. A governmental policy that would set out to disperse immigrant groups or former refugees in some West European country may or may not be morally defensible, but it would not be disqualified as Stalinist out of hand.

Moreover, thirdly, I am not going to talk about racial segregation in the United States, although there are some similarities between the position of immigrant minorities in Europe and the plight of African Americans, and although some of my arguments might hold for the latter as well. In their impressive book *American Apartheid*, Massey and Denton analyse the causes and consequences of segregation in the United States. They argue that black ghettos were constructed between 1900 and 1940 as the result of a whole series of individual and collective decisions. Ever more whites refused to put their children in racially mixed schools. Racial violence toward black families in white neighbourhoods contributed to the feeling that people could only feel safe among their own kind. Banks refused to grant loans to people who wanted to move to decent houses situated in neighbourhoods which were considered unsafe. The value of houses in black neighbourhoods decreased rapidly, thus blocking a route of exit from ghetto neighbourhoods: many people simply could not afford to move out any longer.⁶ And once the ghettos were a fact things went from bad to worse: blacks living in ghettos lost contact with white middle-class society, white middle-class values, even white middle-class language. Frustration and resentment created

³Cf. on nation states and immigrant countries Walzer 1997.

⁴Taylor 1992.

⁵Actually, I think Barry convincingly argues that Quebec should not be allowed to do so, because this language policy diminishes the opportunities of Quebec's children outside their immediate environment. Cf. Barry 2000.

⁶Anthony Downs (1973) argues that maintaining housing quality standards is an important cause of segregation in the US. Apparently building authorities do not allow substandard housing in the suburbs, which makes living in the suburbs far too expensive for low income (black) families and forces them to live in slums.

some kind of counter-culture in which it was generally considered acceptable to become welfare recipients, teenage mothers, even juvenile delinquents. Massey and Denton observe that black ghettos are not at all like traditional immigrant neighbourhoods in the United States. No immigrant community has ever had to fight prejudice and discrimination as much as African Americans. And no little Italy was ever as exclusively Italian as the ghettos are exclusively black, if only because of the sheer size of the ghettos:

Typical inhabitants of one of these ghettos are not only unlikely to come into contact with whites within the particular neighbourhood where they live; even if they travelled to the adjacent neighbourhood they would still be unlikely to see a white face; and if they went to the next neighbourhood beyond that, no whites would be there either. People growing up in such an environment have little direct experience with the culture, norms and behaviour of the rest of American society and few social contacts with other racial groups.⁷

When one compares immigrant ethnic minorities in West European countries with immigrant American minorities living in little Italys on the one hand and African American ghetto inhabitants on the other hand, the European minorities seem to be somewhere in between. In many European countries ethnic minorities of immigrant descent mostly live in the larger cities, and within these larger cities they tend to inhabit certain neighbourhoods. In this article I shall use the situation in the Netherlands as primary point of reference, but similar stories can be told about other West European countries such as Germany, France, Sweden, and Denmark.⁸ In the Netherlands only 9 per cent of the population can be classified as having a non-Western ethnic-cultural background.⁹ However, in the four biggest cities in the Netherlands, Amsterdam, Utrecht, Rotterdam and The Hague, about 20 to 30 per cent of the population belongs to one or another ethnic minority group.¹⁰ This pattern of segregation seems to have a variety of causes. On the one hand there is definitely such a thing as white flight. Whenever large numbers of minority groups come to live in a certain neighbourhood, Dutch residents tend to look for housing elsewhere. On the other hand some members of immigrant ethnic minority groups seem to prefer living in an ethnic neighbourhood. This may have something to do with a genuine preference for their own ethnic group, but it may also sprout from the feeling that they are not welcome in predominantly white neighbourhoods. Some members of minority groups do not seem to be willing to spend as much money on housing as the native population, because they want to send money to family members who stayed behind in their homeland. Hence they tend to remain in low-quality neighbourhoods, whereas native Dutch citizens tend to move up as soon as they

⁷Massey and Denton 1993, p. 77. Massey and Denton's 1993 analysis does not seem to be outdated yet, cf. Young 2000, pp. 199–200 and Rae, 2001.

⁸Cf. Young 2000, chapter 6. Cf. also Huttman, Blauw and Saltman (eds) 1991.

⁹WRR 2001, p. 50.

¹⁰Tesser et al. 1995.

make enough money. The consequences of this pattern of segregation are in many aspects not as serious as those of racial segregation in America, if only because of the size of the country (travelling from an immigrant ethnic neighbourhood to an all-white, native Dutch neighbourhood will never take long in a country that can be crossed from north to south and back by train in less than 24 hours). However, some elements of ghettoisation are clearly visible: there is much more crime in immigrant neighbourhoods, many people are unemployed and no longer search for work, and living apart does not seem to enhance the ethnic minorities' affection for their new homeland and its native population.

There is one aspect that makes the Dutch ethnic minorities' position worse than that of African Americans and that is the language problem. It may be true, as Massey and Denton observed, that ghetto inhabitants have come to speak a peculiar kind of American-English, but they do at least talk American-English. Some members of ethnic minority groups in the Netherlands have lived there for decades and still do not speak Dutch. They live amidst their own kind, they visit ethnic shops, they watch satellite television in their mother tongue and they raise their children in Turkish or Moroccan. This is a big impediment to intergenerational upward mobility. Hence, a large part of the segregation problem in European countries such as the Netherlands has to do with language and education. Due to the ethnic concentration and subsequent white flight, neighbourhood schools in ethnic immigrant neighbourhoods gradually turn into 'black schools'.¹¹ Native Dutch residents who, for one reason or another, choose to live or continue to live in a 'black neighbourhood' usually do not take their children to the neighbourhood school. Instead they search for a predominantly white school in an adjacent area.¹² In the Netherlands black schools are not poorer than white schools. On the contrary. Schools get quite a lot of extra money for pupils with a 'less than ordinary' background. Extra funding is available for children whose parents have little education, for children from broken homes, and for children from immigrant descent. However, despite the

¹¹The labels 'black school' and 'black neighbourhood' are commonly used in the Netherlands. However, it should be noted that many pupils in black schools and many residents in black neighbourhoods are not black at all. People from Turkey and from the Maghreb are racially white. Research shows that real black citizens (mostly immigrants from Surinam) perform a lot better (in terms of education, job level and income) than white citizens from Turkey or the Maghreb.

¹²Dutch parents are free to choose a school for their children. Ordinary public schools usually have to accept all pupils. However, there are also special schools. During the era of pillarization (roughly from 1917 to 1967, cf. Lijphart 1968), most special schools were protestant and roman catholic. They catered for a protestant or roman catholic clientele. Hence they were allowed to refuse pupils. Due to ongoing secularization there are not many protestant and catholic parents left in the Netherlands. Many of the former protestant and catholic schools have changed into quite ordinary public schools, but they still have the right to refuse pupils. Black schools are sometimes ordinary public schools, sometimes special schools. There is no reason to assume that special schools use their power to refuse to conduct a policy of outright discrimination. Mostly black and white schools seem to come into being as a result of self-selection. However, some kind of refusal policy may indeed keep some special schools lilywhite.

extra funding, children in many black schools perform markedly worse than children in white schools. There are quite a lot of data that suggest that this is one of the main causes of unemployment among minority groups.¹³

Obviously, there are a number of striking similarities between the position of immigrant ethnic minorities in Western Europe and African Americans in the United States. Still, I would not expect that a moral evaluation of one or another mixing policy in Europe or America could ever be the same. In America there is a white majority and a black minority with a long history in the country, which began with black ancestors having been dragged to the country against their will. In European countries the moral issue is about a native majority in a traditional nation-state and an immigrant group who came voluntarily just a couple of decades ago. In the latter situation one might think in terms of a native majority that would be entitled to ask their new fellow countrymen to join the national project.¹⁴ Evidently, it is debatable whether this would be the most appropriate way to phrase the issue in European countries, but we could at least consider this a plausible moral perspective. In the United States the black population could never be addressed the same way. One cannot properly discuss an ethnic mixing policy in the abstract; the causes and consequences of the segregation one is willing to remedy are morally relevant. One cannot block out the specific American history of slavery and racial violence.

Hence, I will only discuss the moral pros and cons of a possible ethnic mixing policy in European countries such as the Netherlands. In the second part of this article I will consider several possible motives for such a mixing policy. I will weigh these motives and decide whether ethnic mixing could ever be morally legitimate. In the third part of this article I intend to look more closely at the actors and subjects in such a policy. In many works of contemporary political theory, it is taken for granted that it is usually the government that has to do something or refrain from doing something. Recently two interesting books were published that challenge this assumption. In *If You're an Egalitarian, How Come You're So Rich?*, G. A. Cohen argues that rich people might be morally obliged, as individuals, to give up their wealth and distribute it among the poor. In *Democratic Justice*, Ian Shapiro develops a very interesting theory about moral obligations, not just for the state, but also for parents, citizens and workers. Patterns of segregation and desegregation seem to have as much to do with individual decisions as with government policy. I want to use Cohen's and Shapiro's valuable ideas with regard to my central question. If there is to be mixing or desegregation, I will try to work out as precisely as possible who should 'do the right thing': native white citizens, immigrant minority groups or the government.

¹³Tesser et al. 1995; WRR 2001, p. 119.

¹⁴Cf. e.g. Miller 2000, chapter 4.

II. MOTIVES FOR MIXING

In this section I will discuss and evaluate several possible motives for an ethnic mixing policy.

A. SHARING THE BURDEN OF IMMIGRATION

A simple argument for ethnic mixing might run as follows. During the 1970s and 1980s, many guest workers found places to live in cheap neighbourhoods in the big cities. The original residents of these neighbourhoods had to share everything. They had to share their neighbourhood, they had to put up with neighbours who cooked differently, dressed differently, behaved differently and very often did not speak their language. When economic growth fell back in the 1980s, they were the ones who had to compete with the newcomers for the few jobs that were left. Their children had to put up with ever more classmates who did not share their native language. For well-to-do citizens in Europe, multicultural society was an abstract ideal. For lower-income families in old city neighbourhoods, it was a daily reality. It was, moreover, a reality that they had never asked for and that they did not like very much.¹⁵ It seems only fair for rich and middle-class families to share the burden that low-income families have been carrying for so long. Besides, if the burden is shared by all from now on, it will not be much of a burden anyway.

Is there something wrong with this argument? There is a little flaw to it, I would say. In an interesting article on social justice theories, Elisabeth Anderson argues, among other things, that most theories of justice cannot very well be put into words for an audience of less-talented fellow citizens without sounding utterly disrespectful. In Anderson's opinion most modern theories of justice effectively say

[t]o the stupid and untalented: Unfortunately other people don't value what little you have to offer in the system of production. Your talents are too meager to command much market value. Because of the misfortune that you were so poorly endowed with talents, we productive ones will make it up to you: we'll let you share in the bounty of what we have produced with our vastly superior and highly valued abilities.¹⁶

According to Anderson, every self-respecting citizen should be insulted by such a message.

This same line of reasoning can be an argument against a burden-sharing rationale for ethnic mixing. The burden-sharing argument sounds rather disrespectful when you try to rephrase it in terms that address ethnic minorities themselves. One would have to address them like this:

¹⁵Right-wing extremist parties were especially popular in these neighbourhoods.

¹⁶Anderson 1999, p. 305.

Look members of the Turkish (Moroccan) minority group in the Netherlands, you cannot all choose to live in area x of city A, surrounded by your fellow Arabs. That would not be fair toward the original residents of area x. They have put up with quite a lot of you already, and we think the residents of area y in city B have had a relatively easy time so far. Why don't you apply for housing in B, preferably in area y?

It does not seem very respectful to refer to ethnic minority citizens as a burden to be distributed evenly. A plausible reaction from the minority group at issue might be: 'We don't want to be a burden and we do not want to impose on anyone, nor in A nor in B. Can't you find us a place where we can be on our own, so we will not be resented by anybody?'. One may suspect that members of ethnic minority groups would not be encouraged to participate in their new political community if they are perceived as a burden on everyone else.

B. ENHANCING ECONOMIC GROWTH

Another simple argument in favour of ethnic mixing would emphasize its potential beneficial effects on the national economy. Ethnic segregation greatly diminishes newcomers' chances to learn their new country's language. There is no point in trying to speak a new language if you are surrounded by fellow immigrants who share your mother tongue. A national economy needs many productive workers who speak the national language, hence it does not seem strange if a government would choose to establish some kind of mixing policy in order to further economic growth.¹⁷ After all, governments do all sorts of things to further economic growth: they construct railways, motorways and bridges, they relocate national industries or public service institutes in order to rearrange employment opportunities in different areas in the country. Sometimes these measures seriously curtail citizens' rights and liberties: home owners whose house is located on a railway-to-be can be dispossessed, employees who do not want to be relocated along with the public service institute in which they are working can lose their job. So why should a government not adopt an ethnic mixing policy in order to make sure that there will be many more productive citizens in the future who can all understand each other and work together accordingly?

The only possible caveat here is that the economic growth argument is not necessarily empirically correct. Some segregation-friendly economist may point out that ethnic segregation provides economic opportunities as well.¹⁸ Ethnic entrepreneurs may seek their chances in an ethnically segregated neighbourhood: they can open specialized shops and cater for an ethnic clientele, they may open specialized restaurants or travel agencies that organize flights to the immigrants'

¹⁷Cf. Barry 2001, p. 227.

¹⁸Cf. on ethnic entrepreneurship in the Netherlands: Rath and Kloosterman, 1998.

native country, etc.¹⁹ However, it does not seem outrageous to assume that, on the whole and in the long run, including immigrant groups in the dominant national workforce is better for economic growth than maintaining a little secondary economy in ethnically segregated neighbourhoods. Unlike the burden-sharing argument, the economic growth argument does not sound disrespectful to newcomers. Asking them to look for housing in area B rather than in area A, because this would probably have a long-term positive effect on the gross national product (as well as, hopefully, the newcomers' own income), would not hurt their self-respect the way the burden-sharing argument did.

C. PROTECTING NATIONAL CULTURE

A lot of the literature about multiculturalism is concerned with the preservation and protection of minority cultures. Minority languages (such as French and Inuit languages in Canada) and cultural peculiarities (such as gypsy life or a culture of hunting and fishing) are presumably at risk. If nothing is done to save them, these languages and cultural phenomena might be affected by the dominant language and culture or disappear altogether. It does not seem completely unreasonable to presume that dominant national cultures may run similar risks. True, it seems unlikely that they could disappear altogether, but they may certainly be affected. Many political theorists seem to think that members of minority groups should have the right to preserve their culture. Should not the members of majority cultures in principle enjoy the same right? Certain common policy practices suggest that they already do. For example, it is not uncommon in Europe for governments to try to preserve their national film industry by subsidizing its products. If they did not do so, cinemas would probably offer only Hollywood products and, although these are greatly appreciated, it is generally accepted that it is good for a European country to hang on to its own cinema tradition as well.²⁰ Governments may decide that part of the national heritage (paintings, sculptures) is not for sale, or cannot be shipped abroad. In France the government has tried to ensure that French remains a vehicle for academic communication; academic conferences in France have to be conducted, at least partly, in French. Of course these are all measures to defend national culture against foreign influences, but if these are acceptable, it seems logical to assume that one could also have the right to defend national culture against possible corrupting influences from within.²¹

¹⁹Cf. Hoerder 1997, p. 92; non-integration of minority groups clearly serves the interests of ethnic entrepreneurs.

²⁰On the dominance of Hollywood cinema culture cf. Barber 1995, chapter 6.

²¹Granted, states usually have completely different regimes toward people and things within and people and things outside. However, with regard to the protection of national culture, I do not see why the argument for protection against corrupting influence from the outside should necessarily be different from an argument for protection against corruption from within.

Are there parts of the dominant culture at risk of being affected by immigrant cultural habits and, if so, could we avert this danger by dispersing the members of minority groups? Let us first talk about cultural phenomena which are obviously just that: cultural phenomena. You may think of food and eating habits, dancing, partying, dressing, decorating one's home, etc. With regard to these phenomena the answer is clear. It seems not unlikely that eating, dressing and partying habits of minority groups might indeed be changed by a policy of desegregation. However, the mere wish to change these cultural characteristics does not seem serious enough to warrant such a policy. We may follow a three-step argument here: a) there is absolutely no chance that the majority culture concerning eating, dressing and partying will disappear; b) insofar as the majority culture is affected, this will often be seen as a straightforward enrichment; c) insofar as the minority habits in this area are not especially popular, the cultural majority will probably agree that they do not constitute a real problem either. Some concrete examples to illustrate this: a) Dutch (or German, French, Danish, even British) cooking is not going to disappear because immigrants and their descendants eat different things or cook them differently, nor is the European businessman's suit going to disappear because Sikhs or traditional Moroccan men dress differently. b) European citizens generally like the extension of their menu with all kinds of foreign fruits, fish and vegetables, as well as the restaurants where they are served. c) Although there are no doubt many European citizens who do not like the nightgown-like dresses that are part of the traditional male Moroccan costume, very few Europeans would seriously consider dispersing Moroccans all over the country so as to entice them to dress like ordinary Europeans.

There is another part of the dominant culture in West European countries which is conceived as being much more important than dress codes and dinner habits. We might call this the individual human rights part of Western culture. The moral majority in many Western European countries believes that people should be as free as possible to live their life the way they choose. People choose to get married or not, they may choose to live together before getting married or instead of getting married, they may choose to have children or not, they may choose to live with a same-sex partner, in some West European countries they may even choose to marry a same-sex partner.²² When people talk about cultural minorities who should adjust to the norms of the host country, they usually refer to this human rights part of Western culture. Headscarves for Muslim women are considered problematic, not because people cannot tolerate differences in dress codes, but because the headscarves have to be worn by Muslim women only and thus refer to their subordinate position in Muslim societies. Or, as in France, because headscarves are a religious symbol and, according to the French moral majority, public space should be free of religious symbols.²³

²²Cf. on individualist Western culture Giddens 1994, 1996.

²³Carens and Williams 1998.

Can we advocate an ethnic mixing policy in order to ensure that minority groups will adopt the human rights part of Western culture as soon as possible? In order to answer this question we should try to split the individual human rights morality in two elements. On the one hand there is the hard core, almost legal doctrine of human rights, as they are laid down in the Universal declaration, in the European Convention of Human Rights and other international treaties: people are entitled to freedom of speech, should not be subjected to torture and arbitrary arrest, people have the right to family life, and so on. Probably, citizens in liberal states would agree that these human rights are the sort of things that should be respected at all times by everybody, full stop. The uncompromising rigidity of these norms suggests that they should be enforced, plain and simple. Newcomers need not be lured into adopting them by means of an ethnic mixing policy, they should respect them as soon as they set foot in a liberal state.

On the other hand there is the soft, culture-specific part of the individual human rights morality. People in modern, Western societies see their lives as a series of choices. In *Habits of the Heart* Robert Bellah described the norms and lifestyles of many different American citizens, among them modern individualists who chose their spouses and stayed with them as long as they had fun and could communicate. If this was no longer the case, they split up. Similarly, these modern individualists chose their profession and their hobbies; they seemed to feel little obligation, commitment or overriding loyalty. Bellah also portrayed traditional Americans, who married their high school sweethearts because they felt they belonged together, who felt obligations to their families, their church, their neighbourhood, their city, their country, and who did not experience their life as a series of choices to ensure their personal development and their individual happiness.²⁴ One could probably say that modern individualists constitute the moral majority in many European countries. However, does this mean that newcomer groups are expected to transform into modern individualists? In a way, they are. Minority groups in the Netherlands are subjected to ongoing research and opinion polls to find out how many of them share modern individualist values, and it is almost always taken as a positive sign when many of them have managed to incorporate these individualist values. No doubt there are many modern individualists who find their own way of life, with its emphasis on individual autonomy, gender equality, rationality and openmindedness vastly superior. However, many other liberal individualists would probably say that the choice whether or not to adopt a modern individualist lifestyle (as opposed to a more traditional lifestyle, in which one conforms to the norms of one's religion and/or the cultural group in which one has been raised) is up to the individual and should be free. They would hesitate to argue that a modern individualist lifestyle could be considered intrinsically

²⁴Bellah 1985.

better than a more traditional one. In their opinion this would simply be too much of a moral perfectionist point of view.

This argument for ethnic mixing ends with a balanced scorecard. In so far as modern individualism stands for universal human rights, ethnic mixing does not seem to be the most logical policy instrument. Legal enforcement and legal control would fit much better with the supposedly non-negotiable, absolutist character of basic human rights. In so far as modern individualism is merely the most popular way of living, not all of its adherents would be prepared to become its apostles, and to lure others into adopting it by becoming their neighbours and classmates and thus providing them with living examples. However some modern individualists might certainly feel a missionary drive, so we cannot rule out this argument for mixing altogether.

D. BEING TRUE TO OUR SHARED UNDERSTANDINGS

There is more to Western morality than just liberalism and individual rights. In his famous book *Spheres of Justice* (1983), Michael Walzer has shown that a lot of morality in Western liberal states has to do with spheres of life in which different moral logics apply and which should be kept separate accordingly. In the sphere of money and commodities, market criteria apply: goods are sold to whoever wants to buy them according to the laws of supply and demand. In all other societal spheres wealth and money should not be so important. In the sphere of love and affection, money should not play a role; in the sphere of love and affection one ought to follow one's heart. In the sphere of education, every child ought to get the same basic education, after which places in higher education might be distributed according to desert. In the sphere of medicine, health care should be distributed according to need.²⁵ These are supposedly important elements of our morality which we seriously want to uphold. It would probably weigh heavily on our conscience if we could buy ourselves love, college grades or preferential medical treatment that we did not need as much as poorer patients.²⁶ Likewise it weighs on our conscience if we use ethnic criteria in societal spheres in which these should not count at all. According to our separate spheres morality, we choose a primary school for our children for all sorts of reasons: because it is near home, because we like the teachers, because we want our children to be taught certain religious values, because the educational climate will suit our child, and so on. It is hard to specify exactly what criteria should

²⁵Walzer 1983. Contrary to what Walzer believes, I think medical care belongs to a separate sphere of justice and is not just one element in the sphere of welfare. Cf. Trappenburg 1997.

²⁶One of the strange and perhaps rather sad things that could be said about Walzer's theory of justice is that while trying to describe his fellow American citizens' shared understandings, Walzer has ended up with a description that is much closer to European shared understandings than to American ones. E.g. in the US people probably would not feel very guilty about buying preferential medical treatment, but in Europe many of them would. Cf. Rustin 1995.

be used and in what order.²⁷ However, it is not at all difficult to acknowledge that ethnic or racial criteria are not properly part of our shared understandings in the sphere of education. Hence, if we find ourselves classifying schools in white and black, as if that were a prime selection criterion, we are not true to our own shared understandings.²⁸ Similarly we choose a neighbourhood to live in for all sorts of different reasons: because we like the houses, because the area is close to work, close to the railway station, close to our parents, close to the park, because we can afford the prize or the rent we have to pay for the house and so on. Again, it is not easy to find out exactly what criteria apply in choosing a place of residence, but it seems plausible that being with neighbours who belong to our own ethnic group is not one of the shared understandings that we endorse and discuss in public.²⁹ If that has nevertheless become a very important reason to move, we are not true to our shared understandings. We may even be destroying our shared understandings: after years of seeking out white schools for our children we may forget that this was not the reason why we adopted a system of free choice for parents in the first place.

Perhaps our sphere-specific shared understandings are the part of dominant national morality that is most at risk as a result of ongoing immigration and segregation, not the eating and drinking parts or the human rights elements discussed in the previous section.

E. FOR THE SAKE OF DEMOCRACY

In an interesting chapter in her new book *Inclusion and Democracy*, Iris Young explains convincingly why segregation is bad for democracy. If people want to live in a democratic community it is paramount that they inhabit the same public spaces, that they can relate to one another's experiences, that they know how 'the other half' lives. If a society is characterized by ethnic (or racial) segregation, white middle-class families will never realize how privileged they are: 'Life does not feel privileged for the white family with two working adults paying a hefty

²⁷Cf. Gutmann 1987.

²⁸People who dislike the whole Walzer approach might point out that shared understandings cannot fulfil such a critical function. If white middle-class parents choose white schools, then apparently these parents are committed to some sort of racism, which has become part of their shared understandings. Following this line of argument, Walzer's theory of justice could not properly be called a theory of justice. Cf. Barry, 1990.

²⁹Young would perhaps argue that among ethnic minority groups selecting a school or a neighbourhood on the basis of group affinity could be part of their shared understandings. However, in her opinion, this affinity group clustering should not and could not be part of the shared understandings of the dominant white majority. However, once we allow for that kind of difference between groups, it no longer makes sense to talk about 'our shared understandings'. The Walzer approach presupposes that shared understandings are to be found among (almost) all citizens of one state. Should we conclude that such shared understandings no longer exist because people share their most important values with others in the same affinity group, and these same values should by definition not be shared by citizens in some other affinity group, then we would have to give up the whole Walzerian shared understandings approach. (Cf. Trappenburg 2000.)

mortgage and dealing with the hassles of child care, freeways, and too many demands at work'.³⁰ From a different angle, but otherwise similarly, Brian Barry writes: 'we cannot expect the outcomes of democratic politics to be just in a society that contains large numbers of people who feel no sense of empathy with their fellow citizens and do not have any identification with their lot'.³¹ According to Young, people in a political community do not necessarily have to like one another, empathy seems a bit too much to ask, but they should share one another's fate. And how does one make sure that people remain citizens in a community of fate? Barry emphasizes that they should share common institutions, and that people should not be so rich as to be able to buy their way out of these common institutions. Young considers a desegregation policy, but in the end decides against that, because it would be too much of an infringement on people's right to cluster in 'affinity groups'. In Young's opinion, what is wrong with ethnic segregation can be remedied by providing better public services: better housing, transportation access, public parks, better schools and so on. Young believes it is possible to distinguish between illegitimate segregation and legitimate clustering in affinity groups. I do not share that optimism. Given the wide variety of causes that caused the present segregation (an intricate mixture of voluntary clustering in affinity groups, patterns of discrimination, and culturally induced choices), I doubt if something like freely chosen ethnic clustering could ever be recognized as such. In Young's opinion, we should not aim for ethnic mixing but for an ideal called 'differentiated solidarity'. I suppose one could say that the black and white schools in the Netherlands give shape to this ideal of differentiated solidarity, black schools being much richer than white schools due to huge amounts of government funding. Still, most black schools perform markedly worse than white schools, and one might suspect that a further enlargement of their budget would not remedy that. If people are to be a community of fate, they ought to share public spaces and common institutions and sharing schools and neighbourhoods would seem to be even more important than sharing a National Health Service, Social Services or a police force.

The only possible drawback to the mixing-for-the-sake-of-democracy argument is what one might call its outsider perspective. Let me clarify that. Young's theory deals with citizens who rule themselves in a democratic community. They supposedly share one another's fate, and they create common institutions. This is a very appealing picture of life in a modern democracy, largely because it is not at all a top down perspective. It is not a picture of a benevolent government choosing effective policy instruments in order to reach certain valuable goals, it is a picture of self-governing citizens giving shape to their political community. It is an Aristotelian, Rousseauian or Arendtian picture. It also resembles the picture of neorepublican citizenship, drawn up by

³⁰Young 2000, p. 208.

³¹Barry 2000, p. 79.

Herman van Gunsteren, with its emphasis on ruling cocitizens in a community of fate.³²

However, the insights leading to a dispersal policy are those of an outsider reflecting on the preconditions for democratic republics. One is reminded of a teacher who is wondering where he should place his pupils in order to create a harmonious atmosphere in his classroom: if I make unruly Jane sit next to sweet and obedient Mary, Jane will hopefully behave much better. And perhaps it will also benefit Mary, it will teach her how to deal with difficult people, that may be an invaluable lesson for life. And if it does not benefit Mary, so be it, it is bound to enhance the general atmosphere in class, that is a goal that is worth a few minor sacrifices. Can such an outsider/benevolent teacher perspective be combined with the perspective of self-governing citizens in a democratic republic? Although there is obviously some friction here, on the whole, I think it can. In a democracy of self-governing citizens there are two logical things to do for policymakers (citizens in public office). First they should carry out the will of the people (Rousseau's *volonté générale*) and second, one might expect them to maintain the preconditions for democracy (or, in republican terms: the preconditions for a good functioning republic). We may think of traditional republican insights such as: a large middle class is terribly important for a good functioning republic. Rich people are footloose, they can take up residence anywhere. Poor people do not have the time to reflect on the wellbeing of their republic, they have their own survival to consider. But the wellbeing of middle-class people is connected to the welfare of the republic. Or: republics should be defended by an army of citizens, not by professional soldiers. Or: republics benefit from a large amount of intermediary organizations where people can learn and practise their citizen skills. One can imagine citizens in office designing policy measures based on these kind of insights: a policy of income redistribution so as to create a large middle class, sticking to military service, even if there is not much enthusiasm for the army among citizens, and stimulating the creation of associations of all sorts.

Likewise, if segregation is bad for democracy, one can imagine ruling citizens designing and implementing a policy of desegregation.

F. CREATING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN

In April 2001 a Dutch weekly portrayed a school class in a black school and one in a white school.³³ There were 21 pupils in the black class and two teachers. The white class had only one teacher for 35 pupils. Almost all black children came from big families. Their parents sometimes worked as cleaning staff, but most of the parents were unemployed. Almost all white children came from small

³²Van Gunsteren 1998.

³³Wytzes 2001.

families. Their parents were doctors, journalists, teachers, and so on. At the age of twelve, Dutch children are enrolled in a system of higher education. Talented children are admitted to VWO-schools which will eventually prepare them for university. Children who do not get good grades in primary school are enrolled in less demanding VMBO-schools, which do not prepare for university. Almost all white children planned to go to VWO-schools. Almost all black children would continue their education at VMBO-schools. It does not seem fair that these 21 black children have grown up in an environment that showed so few possibilities. Their school has more money than the neighbouring white school, their unemployed parents get a relatively decent continental European-style welfare allowance, they have not been deprived of basic necessities, but it still does not seem fair. It seems reasonable to assume that the black children would have had a broader range of opportunities had they been educated amidst white children and middle-class parents. The simple fact that they would have met with higher educated parents would have broadened their horizon. Their teachers might have treated them differently; many teachers in black schools have low expectations of their pupils, and these expectations tend to become a self-fulfilling prophecy.³⁴ Immigrant children would have learned better Dutch had they been enrolled in white schools, and this would have been another major asset for their career in higher education. Segregation is a major obstacle for equal opportunities for children.

Let me sum up. Although some arguments for desegregation (notably the burden-sharing argument and the protecting-national-culture argument) do not quite stand up to critical scrutiny, other arguments do: desegregation is a means to enhance economic growth, desegregation is good for democracy, and desegregation opens a broader range of opportunities for children in minority groups. Moreover, desegregation might be a means to save that part of our national culture that could be described as sphere-specific shared understandings.

In the next section I will address the question of who is to be mixed, and who has to do the mixing: the white majority? Members of minority groups? Or the government? In order to find answers to this question, I will use elements of G. A. Cohen's book *If You're an Egalitarian, How Come You're So Rich?* as well as parts of Ian Shapiro's theory about parental and state responsibilities for the education of children.

III. WHOSE MORAL OBLIGATION SHOULD IT BE?

A. THE WHITE MIDDLE-CLASS DILEMMA

In his funny as well as fascinating book, *If You're an Egalitarian, How Come You're So Rich?*, G. A. Cohen presents egalitarian citizens in general and

³⁴Cf. Blom 1998, p. 76.

egalitarian-oriented political theorists in particular with a thorny dilemma.³⁵ Most of these egalitarians give a small part of their income away. They will hardly ever donate as much as their political convictions or their philosophical beliefs would warrant. If they are convinced that incomes should be distributed much more evenly than they are at present, why do they not give a substantial part of their own money to less fortunate fellow citizens or to less fortunate fellow human beings in other parts of the world? The foreseeable reply of rich egalitarians is that this would never solve the world's poverty or diminish one's country's inegalitarian income distribution substantially. One could never contribute more than a drop in the sea or a drop in the ocean. This reply does not satisfy Cohen. He has two more counter-questions to rebut it: 'One is: Why should you expect single-handedly to make a massive global difference? You are in a position to make a huge difference to many people, and that is surely enough. And the other is: You do after all give something. At present, you give a smaller drop in the ocean than the one you affect to deride as negligible. So how can you justify giving only that even smaller drop?'.³⁶ Cohen argues that if a fair distribution of income is a just goal for society to strive for, it should also be considered a personal goal for individuals. The only line of defence rich egalitarians are entitled to take, according to Cohen, is the following: At present we are not living in an egalitarian society. It does not seem very likely that we will accomplish an egalitarian society in the near future. My fellow rich men (my fellow middle-class women) will not be prepared to give up their luxurious lifestyle. Given that, I would take a big risk if I gave away a large part of my income or savings. I might lose my job, and then I would end up as a poor citizen in a non-egalitarian society. I do not want to risk that, especially since there is not just my wellbeing involved here, but also that of my children. For the sake of my children Cohen even allows me to say that it would be very harsh on them if I were to deny them the privileges of their peer group (such as tennis lessons, a pianoforte or a pony).³⁷ The structure of Cohen's position is clear: Income redistribution is not a moral project which has to be taken on by the state only. As an individual I have a moral obligation to give away a large part of my income, but I can be excused if I do not fulfil this obligation.

³⁵Cohen 2000.

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 162. As a matter of fact, I think there is a plausible answer to these questions. If we make a minor sacrifice and thus contribute a drop in the ocean, there seems to be a good balance between our contribution to the solution of societal problems and the size of our sacrifice: minor—minor. Whereas if we make a major sacrifice and still contribute a drop in the ocean, that would seem like doing something for almost nothing. There is an even better answer. If I am an egalitarian, I believe that massive income redistribution is a matter of justice. I do not want poor people to depend on the whims of private charities, I think they are entitled to an income large enough to meet their basic needs (or some similar line of argument). If I donate part of my income voluntarily, that is a charitable act, no matter what I believe about justice and just distribution. And I hated charities, which was the reason I became a Rawlsian or Dworkinian egalitarian in the first place.

³⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 175–6.

I want to transfer the question that Cohen has asked for income distribution to the desegregation issue discussed in this article. Suppose I am a white, middle-class, native Dutch parent. I am convinced by the arguments in favour of desegregation put forward in the second part of this article. Desegregation is good for democracy, it is in line with our sphere-specific shared understandings, it is good for the life chances of immigrant children and it enhances economic growth. I agree. And now for some action. My son is almost four years old and will have to go school shortly. Let us say that there are two primary schools relatively near my house. One is predominantly black and frequented by children of Moroccan descent. The other is predominantly white. The choice is up to me and my husband. As I said, I am convinced by the arguments against segregation. Does this mean that I should take my child to the black school? And if not, can we say that my position resembles the position of Cohen's rich egalitarian, in other words, should we say that I am indeed morally obliged to send my child to the black school, but that I can be excused if I do not live up to my obligation because other white parents will very likely not fulfil their moral obligations?

I think a Cohen-like presentation of my position does not quite catch the difficulties of my dilemma. On the one hand, in purely economic terms, doing the 'morally right thing' in this situation, taking my child to the black school, is not as trying as giving away half of my income. On the other hand, the only one who bears the consequences of my morally right decision in the school situation will be my son. My husband and I will continue our professional life as we did before, we will meet the same friends and stick to our favourite forms of recreation. Our son, however, will be put in a classroom full of little Moroccan children, who speak Moroccan to each other, who may not want to include him in their games because he does not speak their language, or because he looks different and does not watch the same television programmes. Granted, there is no guarantee that my son would be happier or more popular at the white school. Still, I would take a bigger risk sending him to the black school. And then, chances are that he will learn less about geography, history and arithmetic at the black school, because his teachers will be busy teaching Dutch to his non-Dutch-speaking classmates. Will this not hamper his future career? In short, I cannot help thinking that doing the morally right thing (for society, for democracy, or the national economy) might be morally wrong for my child.

The Cohen dilemma (doing the right thing or being excusably selfish) does not fit my black versus white school choice, because I have the feeling that I have to choose between two moral obligations: my obligation toward my political community and my obligation toward my son. Let us therefore consider another moral perspective. A sophisticated view on parental obligations toward children is put forward in Ian Shapiro's *Democratic Justice*. Shapiro argues that states and parents are both responsible for the wellbeing of children. States are responsible for the children's basic interests and parents are responsible for the child's best interests. Or, in the terms of Shapiro: states are primary custodians

of children's basic interests and parents are primary custodians of the children's best interests. That means states should make sure that all children receive food, basic education, and medical care. Parents on the other hand should make sure that children find out what they want to be in later life, provide music lessons and sports training, and take their children to museums. Moreover, they will make the children feel wanted, loved and valued as little irreplaceable individuals. Whenever parents' attempts to take care of their child's best interests harm the child's basic interests, the state may intervene in its role as primary custodian of the child's basic interests. For example: when the child needs a blood transfusion and its parents refuse to give their consent because they are Jehovah's Witnesses and they think the child will lose his place in heaven when he has had a transfusion, the state may order the transfusion despite the parents' wishes. Basic interests trump best interests. Whenever parents fail to take care of their child's best interests, the state has to intervene in its role as secondary custodian of the child's best interests. When parents are drug addicts or criminals, they may be deprived of their parental authority and their children may be put in foster homes or raised by the state in institutions.

Parents on the other hand are secondary custodians for the child's basic interests. If the state does not provide a decent education, parents will have to step in and make sure that the child will somehow learn to read and write.

Does this elegant theory provide me with insights with which I can handle my black and white school dilemma? I am not sure. Following Shapiro's analysis we should argue as follows. The state is primary custodian of children's basic interests. Primary education is definitely a basic interest. Unlike best interests (which have to be understood in a pluralist fashion) basic interests are the same for everyone. Hence the state ought to make sure that all children receive the same primary education. So far so good. Now what am I doing when I try to choose a school for my son? I may be operating as a parent who has the best interests of her son to consider. In that case I should probably choose the white school without further ado. However, I may also conclude that the segregation in the education system is a clear sign that the state has not taken good care of our children's basic interests. Some children receive a notably better primary education than others and that is a shame. Does this mean that I should be acting as a secondary custodian for my child's basic interests? Perhaps, although my son's basic interests are not really at risk. Shapiro argues that parents in their role of fail-safe fiduciaries to children's basic interests have to take a broader perspective: 'When acting as fiduciaries of their child's best interests, parents need not pay particular heed to the interests of other children. When parents act as delegates of government in the protection of basic interests, however, attention to third party effects is obligatory'.³⁸ We might argue that I am to act as fail-safe fiduciary for the basic interests of children in my neighbourhood. I would then

³⁸Shapiro 1999, p. 93. Parents are not just fail-safe fiduciaries for their own children's basic interests but for other children's as well.

probably have to try to persuade other white parents to send their children to the black school as well, because my four-year-old son would not make much of a difference on his own. Obviously, five or ten white children in a black school would not produce a major turning point either, but, to paraphrase Cohen, it is awfully conceited to assume that one could make a large-scale moral change with just a few people. There is enough evidence to suggest that mixed schools are better for black children's basic interests. Basic interests trump best interests, so if many children's basic interests are at stake, sacrificing part of my son's best interests would probably be the morally right thing to do.

But can we really expect parents to say that other children's basic interests ought to trump their own children's best interests? In a very limited way, we can. I am fully prepared to pay any amount of taxes so as to ensure that all children in my country are properly fed, and if that means I will not be able to buy a pony or even afford piano lessons for my son, so be it. The same goes for medical care: I do not want children in my country to die when this could be prevented by medical care and again, if that means I can no longer afford a flight to a sunny holiday spot, my son will have to learn to be happy in the rain. And if for some bizarre reason my government would turn libertarian and would discharge me of the obligation to pay taxes, I would feel morally obliged to make sure that hungry children in my neighbourhood are fed properly. But I am no longer so sure when we get to the school problem. Is this because the school problem involves a real sacrifice for my son? Have I given up the pony and the flight to the sun gladly, because I did not think it was in my son's best interest to be spoiled rotten? Or is it because I am not sure that the government has done a terrible job in looking after the children's basic interests (after all, it is not so that black children are deprived of proper primary education, is it?). But the trouble is, if I would be totally sure that the government was failing utterly, I would probably have even more qualms about sending my son to the black school and persuading other white parents to do the same. All in all, it would probably be much easier to conclude that the government has done a reasonable job, stick to my role as primary custodian of my son's best interests and send him to the white school.

This rather disappointing conclusion captures an important truth about moral life. People may agree with all arguments about segregation and desegregation in their role as citizens (or, in Shapiro's terminology: in their role as secondary custodian of children's basic interests). However, one's moral perspective as citizen does not necessarily override other moral perspectives. It seems to do so only when the situation is extremely grave. If the country will perish, and children will starve or die because of a shortage of medical resources, we will be prepared to act and think as citizens. But if there is no such impending emergency, we will tend to give priority to other moral perspectives: to our roles as professionals, workers or parents.³⁹

³⁹Cf. Trappenburg 2000.

B. MINORITY GROUPS AND THE GOVERNMENT

For members of minority groups the dilemma is a little less complicated. If they were living at equal distance from a black school and a white school, many of them would choose the white school (the white school might then turn black, cause white flight, thus leaving minority parents with no choice after all). Usually the dilemma is: do I send my child to a nearby black school along with his neighbourhood friends or do I send him to a school in a white neighbourhood?⁴⁰ The latter might be better for his future career, but it would become much more difficult to meet his friends after school. If there were friends to play with in the first place, since the native Dutch children might also decide to exclude him from their games. Would he not be happier in our immigrant (Turkish, Moroccan) community? Would it not be better for our community if we kept the children close to home? Do we want them to become little Europeans, or would we rather have them remain partial Arabs like we are? Moreover, it is quite a lot of trouble to send a child to school outside his immediate neighbourhood in the Netherlands. The country does not have a school bus system. Children normally walk or cycle to school, or their parents take them by car. Sending a child to a faraway school is quite a strain on a poor family. And last but not least, some ethnic minority parents probably do not see much profit in a good education at all.

The choice for minority parents is different from the white middle-class dilemma. It involves balancing the child's long-term interests versus his short-term ones and probably weighing some inconveniences as well (like the long ride to school every day). Minority parents can choose either way, and no option could clearly be characterized as morally wrong for their child.

Obviously, only a few minority parents decide to send their children to the white schools. Otherwise we would not have the school segregation problem. In the first part of this section we concluded that it would not be wise to argue that white middle-class parents are morally obliged to send their children to black schools and use this moral obligation to accomplish desegregation. Thus, neither black parents nor white parents are going to solve the segregation problem on their own. Hence the situation seems to ask for governmental intervention. But what kind of intervention? Should the government enrol black children in white schools or vice versa? Iris Young argues that one of the main disadvantages of a desegregation policy is that almost always the relatively disadvantaged groups will have to change their ways. Their children will have to be transported to another neighbourhood in order to learn to fit into mainstream societal culture. This seems a correct observation. Can we design a busing policy that would be the other way round? Would such a scheme be morally acceptable? At first sight

⁴⁰Theoretically the white school at issue might refuse the black child, though not because of his ethnic background. I shall disregard this possibility, and take it for granted that this ought to be made impossible.

I think it would not. We characterized the dilemma for black parents as a choice between two rights. Forcing or enticing these parents to take one of these two rights seems a proper line of action for a government. In terms of Shapiro: the government would take its task as primary custodian of the child's basic interests seriously, and would point out that the best way to realize the child's basic interests was to send it to a white school. The dilemma for white parents was a choice between what was best for the child and what was best for society. Forcing these parents to disregard the best interests of their child would be quite drastic and perhaps morally wrong. Normally, in terms of Shapiro, the state intervenes in a parent-child relationship if parents infringe on the basic interests of their child whilst taking care of its best interests (the blood transfusion example). It would be very hard to think of any example where the state would legitimately intervene in a parent-child relationship without having the interests of the particular child at issue at heart. (True, there is the taxation example. But taxing parents is not normally perceived as governmental intervention in parenting, and rightly so.)

If we want to defend a busing system for white children we should take a less child-centred approach, as it is defended by Shapiro in an article about *Wisconsin versus Yoder*, a famous Supreme Court decision in the United States. *Wisconsin versus Yoder* dealt with Amish parents who intended to keep their children at home at age fourteen. Education past that age would serve no purpose, according to their parents. It would even be counterproductive, as it would make children unsuitable for the simple farm work that they would be doing for the rest of their lives if they chose to stay in their Amish community. Wisconsin law stated that all children should go to school till they were sixteen. The Supreme Court ruled for the parents. In their article on this court case, Arneson and Shapiro argued that the Court should have ruled for the state. Not primarily because the parents' conduct would harm their children, but because the state needs citizens who are able to engage in critical discussion so as to keep the republic (or democracy) alive and functioning.⁴¹ Similarly, one might perhaps argue (following the desegregation-for-the-sake-of-democracy rationale) that the republic needs citizens who can cope with plurality and variety. In order to accomplish that, the state might order a basic education in a context of plurality and variety, and install a busing policy for white children in order to educate them in the appropriate way. Would that be alright? I keep having doubts. I think the education for citizenship argument against the *Wisconsin versus Yoder* decision is a very good one, but I doubt if it could stand on its own. That is, I think the education for citizenship argument holds partly because it is also very much in the interest of the Amish children to be educated properly. It is not just in their interest as potential future citizens, it is also in their interest as human beings to learn as much as possible, to be able to discover and use possible talents

⁴¹Arneson and Shapiro, 1996.

for astronomy, theoretical physics or Heideggerian philosophy, no matter how useless these talents may be from a state interest's point of view. If this were not the case, I doubt if one could argue that the children should nevertheless go to school, merely for the sake of the republic.

All in all, despite the obvious disadvantage pointed out by Young (why target the most vulnerable groups and make them change their ways?), I would say that a governmental desegregation policy would have to move black children to white schools and not vice versa.

C. NEIGHBOURHOOD MIXING

With regard to housing, things are completely different. The choice of a place of residence is not normally perceived as a moral choice.⁴² As stated in the second part of this article, one may choose a place of residence for all sorts of reasons: because it is close to work, close to the railway station, close to one's parents, because one likes the houses and can afford the rent, because there are many other parents in the area and many children with whom one's child could become friends and so forth. The only possible moral limitation here is that one should not be blatantly racist and search a place to live among people of similar colour or ethnic descent.⁴³ Given this preference structure, one might expect that local governments can accomplish a lot of natural ethnic mixing by offering a rich variety of houses in every neighbourhood: small and cheap houses next to large mansions, apartments next to family houses, and so on. They might go further and order that villa neighbourhoods should not contain more than, say, twelve villas, or that cheap houses should not be concentrated in more than one block. Local governments might also consider using a variety of carrots and sticks, offering premiums if people would decide to move to another neighbourhood if that would make for a better ethnic balance in this neighbourhood. But what if that would not lead to ethnically mixed neighbourhoods? What if people chose to cluster in 'affinity groups' instead? What if some of them would point out that they wanted to make a living as ethnic entrepreneurs catering for an ethnic clientele? Would it be morally acceptable to install a housing quota if that would happen? Of course a housing quota would restrict people's freedom in choosing a place to live, but governments already restrict this freedom for all sorts of reasons, especially in a densely populated country such as the Netherlands.

⁴²Could we not say that choosing a good neighbourhood is a moral obligation toward our children? After all, their neighbourhood will be their peer group, and peer groups can be crucially important. Although we probably weigh our children's interests when choosing a place to live, we do not see this primarily as fulfilling an obligation toward our offspring. It is a bit like teaching one's child religious values by going to a church. This may also affect the child's wellbeing in important ways, but very few of us would argue that people are morally obliged to visit a church for the sake of their children.

⁴³Young would probably say that searching a place next to one's own people is also morally acceptable. In her opinion one has the right to cluster in 'affinity groups'.

There are quite a lot of places where people are not allowed to live because these are supposedly natural recreational spots. Other areas are destined to remain rural or reserved for industrial activities. If governments are allowed to restrict people's freedom for the sake of the economy, a clean environment or recreational space, why should they not be allowed to do the same thing for the sake of democracy?⁴⁴ With regard to children, governments usually take measures that are presumably in their own interest, as I pointed out in the previous section. But with regard to adults, governments take all sorts of measures on behalf of the general interest, without any hesitation. The only drawback here is that a quota system entails differentiated legislation. At a certain point a local government or housing corporation would have to say: no, we are sorry, you cannot live in this neighbourhood, the remaining houses in this area are reserved for native Dutch citizens. Or, alternatively: no, we are sorry, these houses are for members of minority groups only. If a population is inclined to be racist (or, more correctly, but much more difficult to pronounce: 'affinity groupist') in its home-seeking behaviour, one cannot fight that with affinity group blind policies only. Still, it would be difficult to defend such a system in court. It would be very difficult to prove that native citizens who flee their neighbourhood are guilty of discrimination, but it is very easy to point out that a differentiated housing quota system is discriminatory, not in its purposes, but in its form. Hence it would be much better to lure people into mixed neighbourhoods, without having to take recourse to legal instruments.⁴⁵

IV. CONCLUSION

We may characterize the line of argument followed in the preceding sections as at least a moderately convincing case for desegregation. Desegregation would enhance economic growth, it would be good for democracy, it would contribute to equal opportunities for children and it might do justice to important shared understandings in our community. It seemed impossible to construe a moral obligation to desegregate for individual citizens in minority or majority groups, but there was a lot to be said for a governmental desegregation policy that would aim at ethnically mixed schools and ethnically mixed neighbourhoods. So why do we not have an ambitious desegregation program in the Netherlands? I think this may have something to do with the fact that desegregation would demand a real sacrifice from white middle-class citizens. It is easy to talk about toleration, minority rights and the blessings of multicultural society when you can afford to live apart from that society. It is easy to hear every minority spokesman who maintains that his ethnic group prefers to be on its own and that ethnic

⁴⁴This was very aptly pointed out by the Dutch television host Marcel van Dam in a television debate on multiculturalism.

⁴⁵In the 1970s and early 1980s, some local governments in the Netherlands adopted a dispersal policy with regard to housing, but these policies were struck down in court, cf. Mik 1991.

entrepreneurship is a sure route to economic success. It is easy to view segregation as the result of voluntary choices made by ethnic minority citizens. It is easy to pay taxes in order to accommodate more teachers in black schools. It would be much more difficult to have to share one's public space, one's neighbourhood, and one's children's primary school.

Obviously a desegregation programme would not be a magic wand that could transform heavily segregated countries overnight into multi-ethnic republics where everybody would happily interact with everybody else. No public policy programme works miracles, that is true for environmental protection, for economic policy, for social security; it will undoubtedly also hold for a desegregation policy. However, the fact that we cannot accomplish a multicultural heaven or a true multi-ethnic republic does not entail that we may settle for desegregation and gross inequality instead.

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