BOOK REVIEW

Gwen van Eijk: Unequal networks, spatial segregation, relationships and inequality in the city

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Unequal networks ties together two strands of research: relational sociology and urban geography. Van Eijk addresses the question whether and how neighborhood composition affects the formation of personal networks. As such, this dissertation contributes to a growing literature about the consequences of spatial segregation and the meaning of neighborhood in everyday life. In her case study, Van Eijk uses mixed methods to explore whether, how and for whom living in a resource-poor, resource-mixed or resource-rich neighborhood in Rotterdam matters for access to social resources. A survey based on the name-generator method for social capital was conducted to measure the degree of local-ness, resourcefulness and homogeneity of personal networks. This method confronts respondents with the exchange of information, advice or support with other people and then categorizes and places these others. Additional in-depth interviews provide insight in the origin and nature of local relations and in the residents' appreciation of the population composition of their neighborhoods. Chapters 5 through 7 form the core of the book. In these chapters, the author discusses three different ways in which neighborhood composition might be relevant to personal networks: by potentially providing meeting opportunities with others; as a frame of reference for drawing boundaries between and (dis)engaging with neighbors; and as an expression of individual lifestyle or taste.

Chapter 5 focuses on Wilson's social isolation hypothesis Wilson and studies variations in the resourcefulness and localness of respondents' networks. The author finds that network quality, measured as the number of higher-educated ties, is influenced by network localness and network size. However, on average, only a small share of the personal networks are located in the neighborhood and half of these relations are not locality-based (defined as ties that originate in the neighborhood versus other local ties, such as family and friends). Moreover, differences between the neighborhoods in network localness disappear after controlling for class differences as well as for neighborhood use and neighborhood choice. In addition, the study shows that the larger share of local ties among resource-poor residents is not the result of more local network members but of the smaller

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number of ties *outside* the neighborhood. The author therefore concludes that it is not neighborhood composition or a greater orientation towards the neighborhood that determines the high degree of localness and thereby low resourcefulness. Rather, it is the limited extent to which residents maintain ties in other settings, such as work. An unanswered question is how this can be explained. Possibly, this is related to processes of informal social control and socialization among these local ties, whereby it is the strength of local ties that keeps residents from venturing out.

Chapter 6 further explores the locality-based relationships of the respondents and questions how neighborhood composition and reputation affect the residents' tendency to engage with neighbors at the micro-level. The empirical evidence suggests that neighborhood composition does not affect maintaining superficial relations with neighbors, but it does affect the transformation of superficial neighboring relations into more meaningful relationships. In the resource-poor and mixed neighborhood, neighboring remains relatively superficial as a result of ethnic differences, whereby neighbors are seen to have little 'friendship potential' due to their different lifestyles. In contrast, in the affluent neighborhood, neighbor relations are much more likely to develop into friendships. A particularly interesting aspect of this chapter is the discussion about different forms of neighboring, ranging from more fleeting, non-intimate interactions to friendship or even family relations. This does raise the question to what degree network analysis tools are suitable to 'catch' the more superficial and fleeting contacts between neighbors and other fellow residents. In many ways, fellow-residents form the ultimate weak tie. They are contacts that one is least likely to think of in questionnaires such as the name generator, unless these neighbors have also become friends. This might explain why respondents in the affluent neighborhood report more neighbors in their personal networks.

Chapter 7 discusses how the choice of a specific neighborhood composition can be an expression of lifestyle or taste and how this might then translate into the composition of personal networks. Interestingly, while many resource-rich residents in the mixed neighborhood consciously choose diversity, few actually 'practice' diversity by developing relationships with resource-poor residents. The author concludes that residents of the new urban middle class form few relationships in the neighborhood, except when they actively choose to associate with residents of similar social positions, as is the case in the more affluent neighborhood.

These chapters offer a thorough, well-written and nuanced discussion of the different ways in which neighborhood composition influences personal networks. It is particularly valuable for the systematic and careful way in which theoretical ideas are linked to different types of empirical data. In addition, the extensive description of the methodology in the appendix and the chapter on how to measure social capital would be very interesting to researchers who study personal networks. Nevertheless, as any good study should do, it also raises some questions. Most importantly, although the author supports a contextual paradigm, she does not always put this into practice. In multivariate analyses, the author controls for the core variables of neighborhood and class instead of studying how the meaning of a specific neighborhood composition differs for personal networks depending on class position or studying how differences in neighborhood composition matter to residents with a similar class position. By looking at it this way, resource-rich residents in the affluent neighborhood might hold a relative advantage over others (at least compared to affluent residents in the other neighborhoods) because they profit from their surroundings in terms of the resources provided by neighbors.

Similarly, the author concludes that the neighborhood where people live does not influence network localness and network quality, controlling for other variables. However,

these 'other' variables include neighborhood-related characteristics. One such is choosing the neighborhood for the presence of friends and family. Another is neighborhood use, which might vary for different social groups within and between the three neighborhood settings due to differences in the nature, availability and quality of local services, institutions and public space as well as differences in the social composition of the neighborhood in relation to one's own social identity. In other words, and to be more concrete, an unanswered question is whether resource-poor residents in the poor neighborhood might not, *cumulatively*, still have lower network quality or higher network localness because they choose the neighborhood for social reasons and use the neighborhood in a particular way. This more holistic perspective is missing due to the author's choice not to write a 'traditional' case study. Nevertheless, even though such differences between and within the research neighborhoods remain somewhat hidden, this certainly does not detract from the overall analytical quality of the work and the fact that this dissertation offers many valuable insights in the ways in which place matters for personal networks.