“TOGETHER AND APART: DYNAMICS OF PREJUDICE AND SOCIAL COHESION AT THE INTERSECTION OF ETHNIC DIVERSITY AND RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION”

How do people react when their communities, towns and cities become more ethnically diverse? Studies suggest such demographic shifts can trigger a cultural backlash: that as the size of the ethnic minority population increases, ethnic majority residents feel increasingly threatened by minorities, fostering prejudice, support for far-right parties, reduced social cohesion and racism. I argue that such work overlooks a potentially critical driver of inter-ethnic attitudes: the role of residential segregation. In particular, I suggest that ethnically diverse communities will only generate prejudice where ethnic groups are segregated from one another. In fact, in diverse, integrated communities, attitudes towards minorities will improve. I draw on several cross-sectional and longitudinal datasets from Germany and the UK to test this idea. The findings show that how segregated a community is determines when increasing diversity has a positive or negative effect on inter ethnic attitudes. It is only in communities becoming more ethnically diverse *and* segregated where people’s attitudes towards ethnic minorities worsen. In communities that are becoming more ethnically diverse *and* residentially integrated, prejudice actually decreases. This appears to emerge because segregation limits opportunities for positive social contact between ethnic groups and hardens perceived boundaries between groups. These findings show there is nothing inherently antithetical between diversity and social cohesion; instead, people’s reactions to diversity are dependent on how spatially segregated they are.