



*From Shop Fronts to Home Offices: Entrepreneurship and Small Business
Dynamics in Urban Residential Neighbourhoods*

E.C. Folmer

Emma Folmer

From Shop Fronts to Home Offices: Entrepreneurship and Small Business Dynamics in Urban Residential Neighbourhoods.

Summary

This dissertation is about neighbourhood economies of urban residential neighbourhoods: it is about the people, the places and the institutions that shape neighbourhood economies. The neighbourhood economy includes shops, offices and also home-based business. As such, these mostly involve small to medium-sized enterprises and a large share of self-employed, i.e. one-person firms. Changes in economic production processes in advanced urban economies have increased opportunities for small firms and the self-employed. A diverse firm population, in terms of sector, size and firm organisation, can be found in residential neighbourhoods. This research is about how different types of firms are socially, economically and institutionally embedded in the neighbourhood. Neighbourhood economies tell us important stories about entrepreneurship, processes of production and consumption, and their spatiality. This dissertation presents a comparative study of the economies of residential neighbourhoods in five Dutch cities; Amsterdam, Dordrecht, Utrecht, Leiden and Zoetermeer. The findings of the research show that residential neighbourhoods are important, and changing, sites of production. They accommodate an increasing share of cognitive-cultural economic activities, a sector that has significant growth potential in advanced urban economies. Not all neighbourhoods are equally successful in attracting business activity, since high-end, upscale business services and innovative activities tend to cluster in neighbourhoods of high social-economic status. Also, zoning plans display varying degrees of encouragement and restrictiveness when it comes to economic activities. Some municipalities are actively trying to upgrade commercial spaces in residential neighbourhoods. These processes of commercial gentrification can attract more upscale economic activities to the neighbourhood but at the same time can threaten economic diversity if revitalisation strategies do not include the existing local community of entrepreneurs.