

Social and Spatial Mobility and the Quest for Normalcy

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‘Social Mobility: Individuals, Groups, Neighborhoods’

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1 Introduction¹

Social and spatial mobility have always been a source of concern, but more recently in advanced economies it got a special twist, due to various political, economic and social transformations. The decline of manufacturing industries and the rise of service industries have coincided with structural changes of the institutional landscape in the form of economic deregulation and welfare state reform. The globalization of the economy and the shift to ‘creative’ and ‘cultural’ industries in combination with these institutional changes are producing a growing and—to some extent—ethnically specific divide between highly educated, well-connected and well-paid knowledge workers on the one hand, and poorly educated, poorly paid and sometimes unemployed workers on the other (see for instance Castells xxxx; xxxx; Kloosterman 2013). Those who are internationally connected and possess or have access to relevant human, social, cultural and economic sources, thus those who find themselves—in Castells’ terms—in the ‘spaces of flows’ rather than in the ‘spaces of place’, are counted as being in the vanguard of the new urban economy. This especially holds for those who are active in the more creative and entrepreneurial parts of today’s service industries. But those who are educationally less successful and active in the secondary tiers of the labor market—if economically active at all—are seen as drop-outs or at least members of a category of seriously advantaged people. They are facing uncertain and unsettling times and a rough road toward a bright future: indeed, in these gloomy economic times the gap with more successful people is ever wider and harder to overcome. In this juncture, the welfare state makes less services available to those in need, and is becoming more demanding and intrusive at the same time.

Scholars and policymakers have often argued that this disparity is aggravated when a divide in social and economic position gets spatially imprinted on urban neighborhoods, marking out geographic boundaries between, what could be seen as, the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’ (Doucet xxxx; Bridge, Butler and Lees 2012). The continued existence of such boundaries is then conceived as a spatialized sign of bifurcation and—perhaps typical for the Dutch welfare state—a sign of the failure of the government and other welfare-state agents to seriously deal with disadvantage and impoverishment.

Whichever way one looks at it, these neighborhoods as well as their population have—once again—become the foci of serious political and social concern. Multiple strategies have been designed and implemented to promote upward mobility for individuals *and* revitalize the neighborhoods they reside in—trajectories that are assumed to be closely entangled. The strategies have direct implications for the immediate social environment of the people involved. How they readjust to new situations, reposition themselves vis-à-vis others, and deal with their own senses of normalcy tend to be taken for granted.

Individual social mobility is perceived as less likely—if not impossible—in working-class areas, or more specifically in neighborhoods that public discourses and policy initiatives have captured in terms of ‘socially deprived areas’, ‘problem areas’ or—to use the euphemistic lingo of policy makers—*krachtwijken*, ‘neighborhoods of strength’. Paradoxically enough, a more optimistic alternative discourse about the dynamics of urban renewal has spilled into the public arena as well with increasing intensity in recent years. In this discourse, it is assumed that individual social mobility will automatically follow spatial proximity of residents with higher social and economic capital. This is often caught in phrases about ‘revitalization’, ‘livability’, and—especially—the ‘social mix’. With such socially acceptable goals in mind, large amounts of money have been invested in and a great deal of manpower has been allocated to the ‘restructuring’ of blighted neighborhoods. Indeed, the housing sector in many Dutch cities is currently being restructured to provide more room for the private sector, and highly-educated professionals consequently flock to private rent or purchase apartments. Interestingly enough, the movers and shakers of these interventions tend to have a specific ‘ethnic’ slant on the population dynamics that are affected by them: the interventions will promote ‘immigrant integration’. A ‘convenient’ side effect namely is that the share of immigrant ethnic minorities will decrease due to the fact that they are overrepresented among the lower classes and underrepresented in the tiers of middle class professionals. These strategies, to be sure, are not motivated by concerns of social mobility or ‘immigrant integration’ only. They are assumed to have economic merit as well. Higher-income groups are perceived to boost the new urban, service-oriented economy, which is based on creative inputs and driven by highly educated professionals. As a consequence, inner-city neighborhoods are gradually becoming the turf of highly-educated professionals (of mainly native white Dutch origin), a development that is heralded by political constituencies (Boterman xxxx). How spatial

boundaries and social positioning are actually linked, if interrelated at all, is a matter of academic and political debate (Bridge, Butler and Lees 2012; Uitermark xxxx; Veldboer xxxx).

Interestingly, while these development impact vernacular routines and everyday relationships in a big way, the social and spatial mobility is rarely reconsidered in the light of the interest of people to be ‘normal’ or to be treated as ‘normal’. Social mobility is typically conceived of as the process of social advancement of individuals or groups, thus on acquiring a ‘better’ social-economic position. Various parameters (or combination of them) may serve to measure this, such as the acquisition of better educational qualifications, better housing, more attractive and more rewarding jobs, or more political clout. Spatial mobility is then seen as concomitant to social mobility, sometimes as an outcome of it, at other times as a precondition. There are indications, however, that this is not the whole story:

- The social bonding and binding of upwardly mobile Turkish and Moroccan second generation immigrants in working class neighborhoods are obviously contingent on their connections to ethnic and mainstream social networks, but also to feelings of solidarity and other emotional sentiments. Sloodman (xxxx) demonstrates that the two do not always go hand in hand, resulting in various forms of alienation. A striking feature is that the upwardly mobile youngsters display a distinct longing for normalcy, albeit that the interpretations of normalcy may be different than expected.
- Moving to other neighborhoods or even to suburbs are not just the spatial manifestation of social mobility consequent to improved educational qualifications or higher salaries; the act of moving itself may be experienced as a quest for one’s own kind of people. Tzaninis (xxxx) argues that this may even be the case when other people style that new neighborhood or town as having low status.
- The livability and popularity of inner-city neighborhoods are not just the product of attractive architecture and well-designed public spaces or even the ‘right social mix’, but also of the preservation of normalcy. Van de Kamp (xxxx) finds that some residents even prioritize the latter to the former.

For all the merits associated with social mobility, notably its material components, these findings suggest that one’s social positioning is also related to the satisfaction of being surrounded by one’s own kind. Social mobility may be aspired and even materialized, it may also come with loss and alienation from familiar environments as well as

readjustment to new situations. It seems worthwhile to further explore the intricacies of social positioning and normalcy.

Human beings are social beings. Except for the proverbial hermit perhaps, people always interact with other people and tend to form collectivities. The social orientation and especially the form and intensity of social interaction and group formation may vary from time to time, place to place, and culture to culture, but the desire to be involved in a collectivity that is more than the sum of its part is unmistakable. Collectivities constitute one's identity, provide resources of all sorts, give meaning to life, and give more or less predictable directions for social action. Collectivities cherish routines and a certain sense of predictability and that is why they foster the assimilation of their members (Moss Kanter xxxx). This is even the case in contexts in which individualism seems to be *de rigueur*. As Duyvendak (xxxx) convincingly demonstrated, people tend to lean towards groups, despite the proliferation of individualist life styles.

This social orientation is palpable at various scalar levels and in various institutional arrangements. At the micro level, people tend to orient themselves to their own kind. The quest for one's own kind—in Dutch: *Ons Soort Mensen*, *OSM*—is reflected in the orientation towards particular life styles, dress style, eating habits, political orientation, ethnic or religious backgrounds, and so forth, in the way people develop trust and friendships, and in the communities they live in. The latter pertains to the development of subcultures and life style communities. These can be interpreted as manifestations of the social at the meso level. These subcultures and communities may be spatially concentrated, although the availability of low-cost and low-barrier means of transportation and the rise of communication technologies enhance the formation of heterolocal communities (Wood xxxx; Zelinsky and Lee 1998). Through mechanisms of bounded solidarity and enforceable trust, these collectivities foster normalcy and promote assimilation (Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993). Castells (xxxx) points to the relation of class, access to resources, and connectivity to the global economy on the one hand, and the tendency to promote and protect local identities and local communities on the other. In those cases, the quest for normalcy is included in the weapons of the weak.

At the macro level, there is the formation of the nation-state, another project aiming at the creation of real or alleged coherent communities (Anderson xxxx). The 'imagined

community’ of the nation-state is based on the assumption that all member have something in common that distinguished them from other nation-states. The sense of solidarity and belonging revolves around specific symbols and social patterns, and is embedded in a particular division of social resources. The symbolic and material implications make the formation of the nation-state practically relevant. The creation of insider/outsider distinctions is inherent in this process, and so are the mechanisms to enforce group loyalty. This is the more true in advanced welfare states that are based around the re-division of social resources among its members. The recent policies to promote the ‘integration’ or ‘assimilation’ of immigrant ethnic minorities can be seen in that light (Rath 1999).² They also demonstrate the awkward relationship of the normalcy of minority groups vis-a-vis the state and the wider community.

This paper explores the dynamics of social positioning and the quest for normalcy in a continuously changing urban environment. It engages with broader questions on the relationship between neighborhood careers, individual social mobility, and the loss and adaptation involved in these processes of change on different scales. What is gained and lost in processes of spatial and social mobility, and what are the implications for the social positioning of individuals, social groups and further urban developments?

2 Big Cities, Big Issues, Big Policies

Already in the second half of the nineteenth century, the state in tandem with private institutions—or: private institutions in tandem with the state—tried to improve the common good. They boosted the economy, interfered in housing, promoted education and public health, reorganized the political system, and helped foster particular middle-class life styles. There was evidently an urgent need to take these actions.

Proletarianized peasants flocked massively to the centers of industrial manufacturing and worked and lived under sometimes appalling conditions, a situation that begged for immediate and robust interventions. A ‘radical’ working-class movement emerged and knocked on the doors of the powers that be. Whether the political leadership had enlightened ideas, was inspired by notions of Christian charity, dreaded the ‘dangerous classes, or was only pragmatic, it rolled out a series of new laws and intervention

programs, and a host of other initiatives to improve the quality of life not just for the well-to-do, but for the entire community. Slowly but gradually, the contours of an advanced welfare state took shape.

Big urban issues stayed in the political spotlight and social engineering continued to be the order of the day in ever changing conjunctures. In the reconstruction period after the Second World War, cities grew rapidly in size and complexity and this came to be seen as a problem. In a Simmelian way, it was feared that cities and the rational and anonymous urban way of life were developing beyond the human scale and that this process would create multiple social problems. Downscaling would bring the solution. Small-scale urban boroughs and neighborhoods were seen as loci where civilized communities would flourish and where the new urbanite would come into being.

Since then, an ongoing series of interventionist programs has been launched so as to improve the urban condition. The 1970s and 1980s were the times of ‘urban renewal’, i.e. of programs that primarily targeted the quality of the housing stock. Under the banner ‘building for the hood’, huge subsidies were made available to thoroughly refurbish dilapidated social houses or even to clear and replace them. Securing the availability of inexpensive houses for the poor and the preservation of—what were seen as—coherent working-class communities were explicit and widely accepted political goals.

The late 1980s and 1990s witnessed a growing dissatisfaction with programs that were biased towards bricks and mortar only. Centripetal forces were released so as to enhance community development and upward social mobility. Initially under the label of the ‘problem accumulation area policy’ and later under its own name a ‘social renewal’ agenda was launched. The Urban Policy (*grotestedenbeleid*) emerged out of this in another attempt to address urban issues including the urban morphology, social cohesion, economic participation, and social security in a more ‘integrated way’, and so on and so forth. With each new intervention scheme—commonly introduced as the cure-all for social malaise—the emphasis shifted a bit.

Governmental interventions were obviously not limited to these specific programs. A wealth of rules and regulations, interventions, programs and schemes have been

launched to strengthen educational opportunities, to promote immigrant integration or to enhance public safety. A few stand out, including policies to improve the local economy, the local housing situation, and social integration. Let us examine them in somewhat greater detail.

First, the economic outlook was fairly bright at the turn of the millennium, but turned rather gloomy only a few years later. After an unprecedentedly long period of economic boom, job growth and increase of wealth, an economic crisis has set in resulting in a serious reduction of jobs (and thus a decrease in opportunities for job mobility), dramatic disinvestments (in all sectors, but especially finance, culture, and construction), and a near standstill on the housing market. It has been more than three decades since the previous economic crisis. In the 1980s, the manufacturing industries offering jobs to numerous low-skilled blue-color workers disappeared due to a rationalization of the production process or to the relocation of these labor-intensive parts to low-wage countries. Many workers were laid off, immigrant workers in particular. But since then, profound structural changes took place. Manufacturing has slowly but surely been replaced by service industries, and consumption rather than production has become the engine of many urban economies. This holds particular for industries based on the production, circulation and consumption of goods and services that are seen as creative and knowledge-based and that offer added cultural value. In many cities, cognitive-cultural economies of some sort have emerged and, to be sure, this is exactly what these cities endeavored (Kloosterman xxxx; Scott xxxx). These structural changes are being propelled by a particular type of workers: highly skilled, independent, and creative, thus by those workers whom Florida (xxxx) captured in terms of the ‘creative class’.

These changes coincided with transformations of the accumulation regime. The state has given more space to the private sector by relaxing rules and regulations, on the one hand, and by promoting self-employment as a convenient and commendable way to be economically active, on the other hand. While the regulatory system has become more conducive for a particular type of entrepreneurial activities, notably those that foster the cognitive-cultural economy, the state expects the new cultural entrepreneurs to play social roles that go way beyond the everyday management of their enterprise. The entrepreneurs are expected to contribute actively to the branding of the city, the

restructuring of blighted neighborhoods, the enhancement of public safety, and the strengthening the sense of community.

These socio-economic developments have interesting implications for the way urbanites position themselves vis-à-vis others. Cities and neighborhoods prioritize particular economic developments to others, and present themselves as ‘catchment areas’ for highly educated professionals, underserving those who do not seem to fit these higher goals (Uitermark xxxx; Hagemans, Hendriks, Rath and Zukin xxxx). The arrival of highly educated professional obviously affects other residents and interferes in their sense of normalcy.

Secondly, many years of urban renewal notwithstanding, both quality and quantity of the housing stock in many working-class neighborhoods are still regarded as substandard. Next to that, it is believed that relatively inexpensive housing serves as a breeding ground for unwelcome developments. Such neighborhoods tend to be disproportionately populated by poorly educated people—often of immigrant origin—who find it hard to connect to the new urban economy and who sometimes display rowdy and un-Dutch behavior. These neighborhoods are typically characterized by substandard educational achievement and high number of high-school drop-outs, high levels of welfare dependency, low levels of public safety, and low land values (*WOZ waarde*), and are often regarded as places in which livability is under severe pressure. Changing the population by restructuring the rental home sector is seen as one of the ways to reverse this. Bringing the middle-classes into these neighborhoods would yield a ‘better’ ‘social mix’ (in this case: a mix of lower and middle classes). The middle classes would mind the misfortunes of the lower classes, and the lower classes would rely on the middle-class role models for their own wellbeing and upward mobility. Whether these assumptions are convincingly substantiated by empirical research remains to be seen (RMO xxxx; Bolt and Van Kempen xxxx; Doucet xxxx), but a great deal of the measure in the housing sector are justified by them.

This situation has been accelerated by two specific political developments. To begin with, in the mid-1990s, the central government decided that housing associations, that assume ownership of the bulk of social houses, were to be privatized. Established as semi-public institutions to serve the interest of the working man—often along religious

and denominational lines, as was common practice under the prevailing system of consociationalism³—housing associations were prompted to operate as private companies. They were encouraged to cater to the housing needs of working-class residents, but explicitly also those of higher social classes, and that is exactly what they set out to do. Housing associations started to act as real estate project developers, borrowed large amounts of money from financial institutions, and invested huge sums in the construction of new housing projects, middle-class apartment blocks in particular. They, moreover, assumed responsibility not just for housing per se, but also for the wider environment including the development of retail landscapes, public spaces, residents' school and employment trajectories, and even delivering social services.

The other political development that spurred housing associations to shift gears was the governmental decision to reduce the social housing sector. It was believed that renters should spend a larger part of their income on housing and this would especially apply to the category of renters whose income was high enough to do so. Social houses, it was argued, were built for the poor, not for people with middle-class incomes. It is a fact that a substantial number of renters—the so-called *scheefwoners*—are living in 'inexpensive' subsidized housing despite earning a 'high' income. (Which income level warrants the labels 'inexpensive' and 'high' is obviously a somewhat arbitrary and contentious issue).

Anyway, the government and housing associations teamed up to target the housing situation with the explicit aim to seriously reduce the social housing sector. This was to be accomplished by selling low-income apartments on the private market or even by demolishing entire blocks and replacing them wholly or partly by middle-class apartments. It is clear that these interventions are fundamentally different from the 'building for the hood' kind of urban renewal policies of the 1970s. This especially holds for the population changes that are consequent to these. Thirty years ago, the motto was servicing and preserving working class communities, but today the number one priority is servicing and attracting the middle classes.

Thirdly, the economic and housing policies articulate with another important policy line, namely the set of interventions targeting immigrant ethnic minorities. After a long period, in which newcomers were seen as mere sojourners and not as members of the

national community, the government shifted gears around 1980. It then embarked on a policy that promoted their ‘integration’ in Dutch society. The so-called *Minorities Policy* had been implemented as of 1983, but within a few years a growing number of people loudly complained why newcomers were still not yet fully integrated. Vocal opinion leaders as well as political entrepreneurs fanned a smoldering discontent and this served to swell enormous criticism at the closing years of the millennium: a great deal of this discontent pertained to seemingly perennial problems associated with the presence of immigrant ethnic minorities, Islam, the advocates of multiculturalism, the central government, the withering away of the public sector, the waiting lists in hospitals, the lousy service of Dutch rail, the European project, and whatever. The Dutch government had never really pursued multiculturalism—on the contrary (Rath xxxx)—, but many echoed each other claiming that the ‘multicultural model’ had failed and loudly demanded a more robust ‘integration policy’. Twenty years after the introduction of the Minorities Policy, the government shifted gears again to embark on a tougher ‘integration policy’ this time, placing increasing emphasis on native norms, values and behavior and on disciplining the Other. One could argue that this urge to mainstream minorities is not just another form of social engineering, but actually a case of imposing a state-approved form of normalcy. The spatial dimension of this is observable in the wish to spatially disperse immigrant ethnic minorities

Let us now examine how these dynamics play out in three different situations that in an intriguing way reflect *exit*, *voice*, and *loyalty* options. How does the gentrification of working-class neighborhoods influence everyday experiences of normalcy of so-called ‘old’ residents, and how do they react upon these gentrifying pressures? How do individuals position themselves vis-a-vis others in situations of spatial mobility in general and in processes of suburbanization in particular? Which senses of normalcy are put to the test when immigrant residents of working-class neighborhoods move up the social ladder?

3 The Death and Life of Great Dutch suburbs

Yannis Tzaninis

The traditional form of post-WWII social mobility involved a society-wide ‘elevation’ of people from working-class to middle-class status. This elevation manifested in two rather contrasting processes between the U.S. and Northern Europe: in the former the realization of the ‘American Dream’ for many, embodied in the abundance of consumption goods, opportunities according to achievement and secure suburban environments, and in the latter a social project by the welfare state through egalitarianism, universal rights and social provisions for all (including housing). Both processes entailed urban growth through suburbanization, with the ‘middle-class’ itself emerging together with the development of the suburbs. With the boom of western capitalism and the increasing emphasis on the consumption by the socially mobile, newly formed middle-classes, consumption paradises were embodied in the suburban settlements. Soon mobility to the suburbs grew from a middle-class dream to a general trajectory for most, perpetually incarnating the seemingly unending aforementioned class elevation. Despite the diversity of such communities, from the mass-produced housing in Long-Island’s Levittown in the U.S. to the utopia-driven ‘new towns’ such as Milton Keynes in the U.K. and Almere in the Netherlands, a common dream of escaping the city towards community-oriented settlements predominated. Driven away from run-down, unsafe inner-city neighborhoods, the continuously forming middle class flocked to the suburbs massively. Commonly observable in suburbanization is a quest for living in proximity to like-minded people, a quest for ‘normalcy’.

There are indications, however, that the above trend is radically changing, if not reversing altogether. The 2011 U.S. census showed that American cities are currently growing faster than suburbs, while in Europe inner-city gentrification and successful city branding have rendered the urban environment popular again. Research shows for instance that the suburban population itself is transforming from ‘middle-class, family-oriented whites’ into international migrants (Lichter and Johnson 2006; Alba 1999). Next to that, today’s suburbs are increasingly becoming more ‘urban’.

Sand castles

One of the most discussed suburban towns in the Netherlands (if not the most discussed) is Almere, a settlement 35 kilometers east of Amsterdam which has grown from a few dozen individuals in 1976 to almost 200,000 today and possibly 350,000 in 2030. When planned (engineered one might argue) Almere was to accommodate young

families moving out of the city. A certain kind of ‘normalcy’ was pursued, following the example from that of typical suburban populations across the Atlantic, namely that of white, middle- and low-class families. The main vehicle for this pursuit was social housing, 64 percent of which was allocated during the first years to Amsterdammers. A major difference with the U.S. of course is that this was rented housing and not owned. Ironically enough the current visions of a ‘normal’ Almere, and Dutch society at large for that matter, are privately-owned, owner-occupied homes. Coherent with neoliberalism, these trends place particular importance in the privatization of housing as a strategy for individual responsibility and community-building.

In American literature there is a sort of either/or discussion on how suburbs have evolved. On one hand a lot of emphasis is paid to decline in the form of rundown neighborhoods with unemployed populations, while on the other hand the ‘suburbanization of migration’ is often perceived as a positive process in the trajectories towards the smooth integration of the immigrants (Waters 2005). The assumption is that suburban mobility still signifies social mobility, like during the post-war period. An interesting question is whether this new phenomenon suggests an upward mobility of the migrants or a downwards mobility of the suburbs. Such mobility may run parallel to dropping land/housing values, ‘white flight’ and the aspiration for eventually moving to the city by the newcomers themselves. But Almere is neither run-down nor simply a locus of immigrant/socio-economic integration.

Social and spatial mobility—a homology

When investigating such spatial transformations, we need to problematize the relationship between spatial and social change. In simple words, when space changes, society changes (and vice versa). In terms of personal social mobility, there have already been arguments about the connection of mobility in space with mobility in socio-economic terms (Savage 1988). Such arguments are primarily based on an analysis of the effects of spatial mobility on social mobility, isolated from each other. However, as in the words of Kaufmann, Bergman and Joye (2004: 749), ‘the reasons, constraints and effects upon larger societal processes will remain obscured if the geography of flows is considered in isolation, i.e. if we fail to examine the modus operandi of the societal and political logic of movements in geographic space’. Kaufmann et al. are problematizing the binary social/spatial mobility and bringing

mobility to the fore as a sort of capital which can be potentially utilized (adopting the term ‘motility’ from biology). This approach is rather new, and Flamm and Kaufmann (2006) have experimented with it, albeit without extensively contextualizing their analysis. Rerat and Lees (2011) show the approach’s potential by analyzing the inequalities in how such spatial capital can be mobilized by demonstrating the hyper-mobility but also the hyper-fixity of gentrifiers in Switzerland.

What has been attempted in the current study is to similarly consider spatial mobility as homologous to social mobility. On the one hand, this heuristic tool is employed to study a whole town in terms of longitudinal demographical changes, discussing the changes of the social positioning of space and place as a result of the spatial mobility of thousands of persons. On the other hand, the nexus of social and spatial mobility is analyzed in depth in terms of individuals’ experiences discussing the possible changes in a person’s social position when she is spatially mobile. And instead of thinking of ‘social ladders’, the changes are analyzed relationally, focusing on two main intersecting dynamics: the types of new settlement and the wider regional and global flows of movement to and from Almere.

The role of Almere’s space in the process of (urban) growth in the region is complexifying (be it in demography, planning, land uses). To study its transformations one would need to understand the reasons why people move to and from Almere, always reflecting back to its relationship to Amsterdam and international migration flows. Is the traditional suburban quest for normalcy still driving migration trends to and from Almere and how is such a quest restricted due to possible socio-economic constraints?

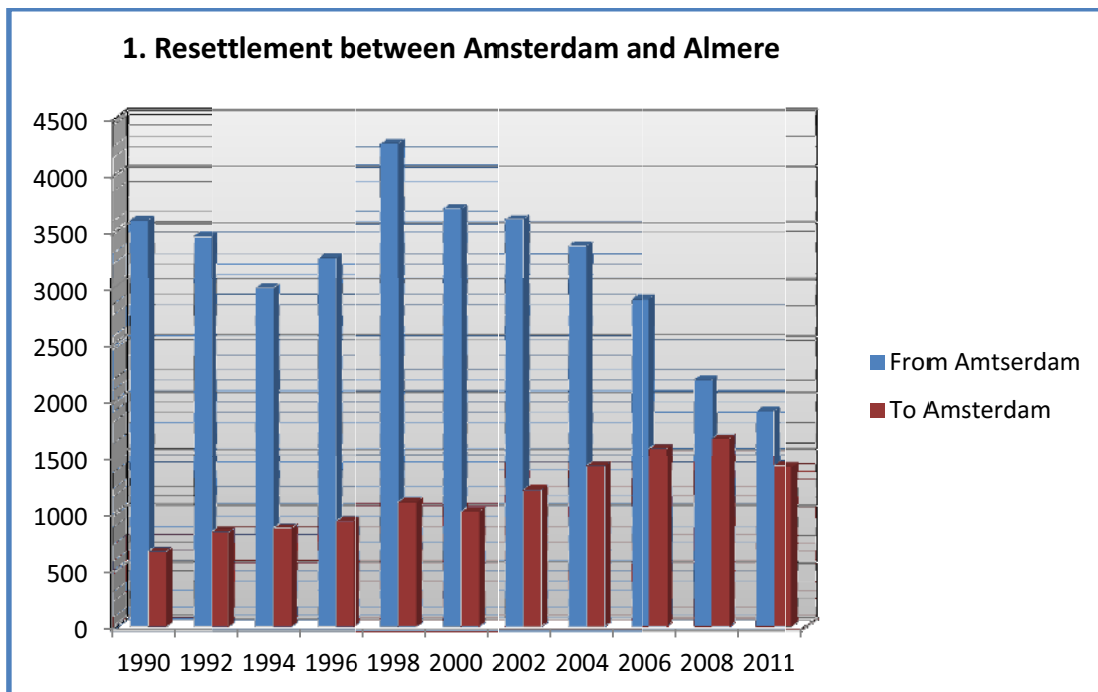
To answer this question municipal demographical data regarding the mobility to and from Almere for the past two decades were analyzed. Particular attention was given to the family composition of migration and the place of origin. Next, interviews were held with a number of individuals who moved to Almere (from anywhere) and from Almere to Amsterdam. These interviews revolved around the individuals’ aspirations and expectations when moving, as well as the experience of mobility in terms of possible trade-offs, accessibility and feelings of home. These methods were employed with regard to the three types of migration that prevail in Almere: i) the old ‘pioneers who

moved to Almere during the very first years, ii) the white low-middle class families who suburbanized later, and iii) the more recent international migration inflows.

From Amsterdam to Almere... and back again

Almere has been one of the fastest growing new cities in Europe and its population has not stopped growing since the first houses were built. From 25 families in 1976, to 6,872 persons in 1980, almost 40,000 in 1985 and almost 150,000 in 2000. Today there are 194,950 persons living there, making Almere the 7th largest city in the Netherlands. Since the early 1980s the town's population was increasing steadily, averaging around 6000 inhabitants per year but lately people are increasingly moving out and for the past six years the town's population is barely increasing. The average yearly increase of 6000 persons for almost twenty years (1982-2001) has dropped to fewer than 800 average since 2006. In addition, since the late 1980s when the Dutch economy started to recover, Amsterdam have become a popular destination again. Throughout the 1990s the Almere-to-Amsterdam migration rose considerably, while the reverse movement was gradually declining (see Graph 1).

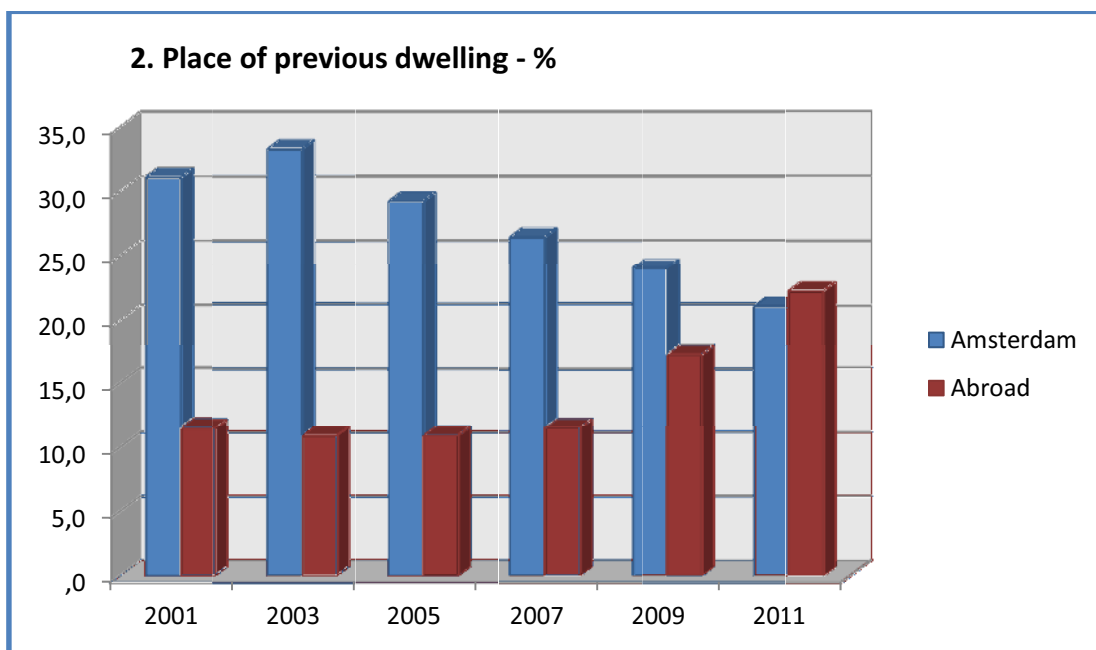
Graph 1



Almere was planned to be an 'arm' of Amsterdam, accommodating young low- and middle-class families. In fact during the initial stages, houses were allocated primarily

to people from Amsterdam (64 percent) and Het Gooi area (16 percent) (Constandse 1989). In 2011, however, the relative majority of the 9,000 newcomers to Almere came directly from abroad (22 percent) instead of Amsterdam (21 percent) (see graph 2) . Despite the marginal difference (around 130 persons), what should not be missed here is the substantial alteration of demographics. Regarding their previous location, these new settlers moved from a very diverse pool of sending countries: Suriname, Poland, Spain, the U.K., Somalia, Germany, Belgium and China are just a few of those places. As has been stated earlier, recent literature suggests that generally suburbs are increasingly entry points for new arrivals (Dawkins 2005). Similarly Almere has changed from an extension of Amsterdam, having received young families since its beginning, to a city of international immigration from all over the world.

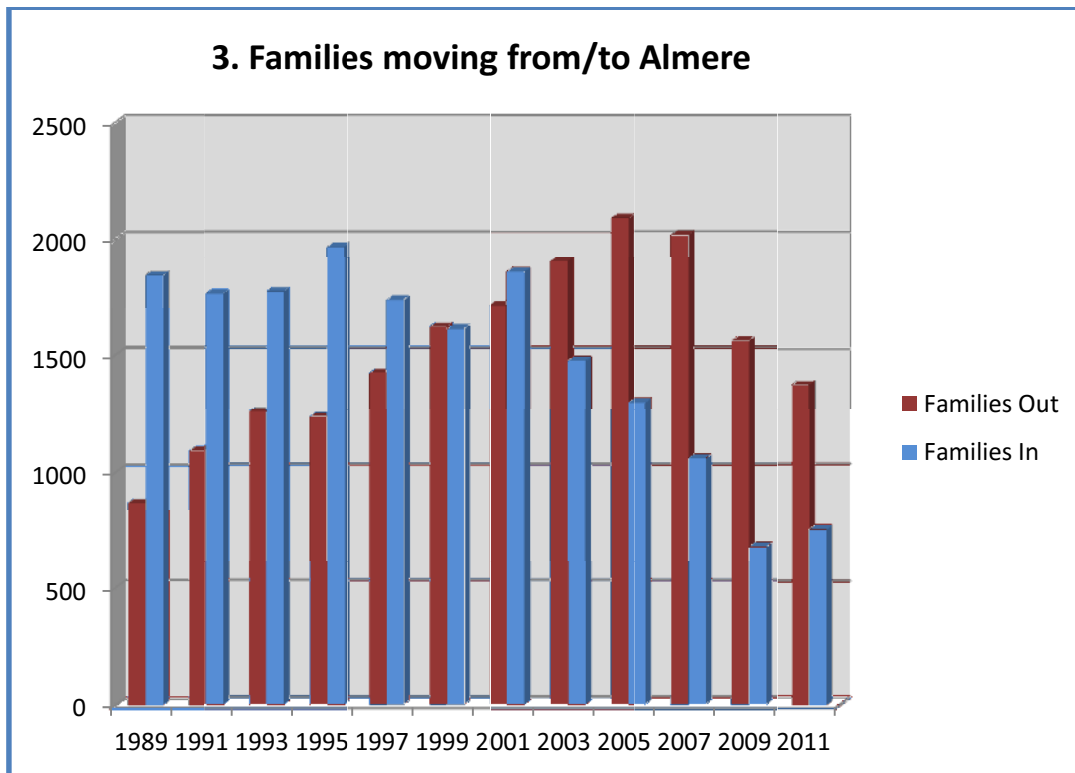
Graph 2



Almere is a special case for yet another reason. The new city appears to be a magnet for people who are predominantly single. In 2011, almost 70 percent of all the new settlers of Almere did not have a registered partner, a result of a consistent trend for more than 20 years in the town; already in 1989 more than 55 percent of the new settlers were single. Currently around a third of the town's adult population has no registered partner, raising questions about the traditional suburban ideas of 'family' or 'bedroom' communities, and particularly about the scope of the whole modernist project which culminated in Almere. Rather striking is the family composition of those who leave the

town compared to those who arrive. The traditional image of the suburb as the home of ‘white, upper- and middle-class families’ (Knox 2008) evidently does not apply (anymore) to the case of Almere. This is underscored by another development, namely the outmigration of families: since the late 1980s, registered families of Almere have increasingly moving out and in the last decade they even outnumber the ones moving in. (See Graph 3).

Graph 3



One Almere, many Almeres

These changes are more than just demographic changes. Its population is becoming increasingly single, a long-running trend which brings to question the idea of the town as a suburban village. In fact the whole project of the initial utopian ideas for a garden city seems obsolete. Taken one by one, the shifts discussed above point to the probability of a fundamental social transformation. Decline is far from prevalent in Almere, although there are pockets of poverty and social problems. What comes to the fore is Almere’s complexification and transformation beyond the typical urban/suburban understandings. These processes do not have neat, integrated dimensions, but display discontinuities and fragmentations. Let us now explore the

motives behind these shifting dynamics, notably how the quest for normalcy leads to new spatial mobilities and how social mobility is experienced in the context of suburbanization.

Davy Crockets in Flevoland

Amber and *Laura*—now in their fifties—were among the very first movers to Almere and they are typical representers of the generation of young families that suburbanized in the 1970s and 1980s. Amber still considers herself as a ‘pure bred’ (*rasecht*) Amsterdammer. Notwithstanding their common beginnings, their motivations differed. Amber and her family were looking for alternatives to the unsafe, child-unfriendly, and expensive city. Her choice of Almere was not straightforward; first she lived with her partner in the Bijlmermeer for a while, and after having children they checked several other areas in Amsterdam. When they realized that any of the preferred neighborhoods was too expensive, a friend of Amber suggested to explore Almere. A few years later they moved to social housing indeed. For years her family lived a typical suburban life: her husband was the breadwinner and commuted to Amsterdam every day, and she first quit her job to raise the kids and later went back to part-time and volunteer work. Some ten years ago, she was made redundant and she has been without a salaried job since then. Her husband, who is in his early sixties, was fired at the age of 56. He now has a poorly paid job with a private company, the same as his neighbor’s. Their relatively poor economic status is not reflected in their big, single-family detached home. It is obvious, however, that they cannot easily return to Amsterdam, should they wish so.

Contrary to Amber, *Laura*’s socio-economic resources have always been plenty. Quite mobile herself before getting married—from Groningen to Paris to Tanzania—she followed her equally mobile husband wherever he found employment as a doctor/surgeon, from Tanzania to Groningen to Lochem to Almere. In the latter, she was among the initiators of the local branch of a prominent Dutch political party. Emphasizing that she has been a real ‘pioneer’ in Almere, she criticized the later-comers to Almere who were—in her eyes—inactive and without initiative. She also referred in more general terms to Dutch people as being ‘dissatisfied’ (*ontevreden*) and always whining, in particular about foreigners. She nonetheless explicitly expressed her own skepticism for policies of ‘social mix’ based on different ‘social styles’. Regarding her material conditions, it might be telling that she does not remember if she ever lived in a

social house. She recently bought a flat in De Pijp, formerly a working-class neighborhood in Amsterdam, now one of the gentrifying areas.

The suburbanization process of the 1970s and 1980s in the Netherlands is embodied in Amber as a transition from the unsafe urban environment into a proper space for raising a family, a sort of imagined idealism of home ('village atmosphere'). Laura however expresses this process as praxis, 'we were the pioneers, we would work and build and do...' in contrast to those who came later. Their quest for normalcy when moving to Almere was manifest in two distinct ways, one based on family-raising in a community-knit environment and another on community-building together with like-minded 'pioneers' ('people with the same ideas'). Eventually both respondents became nostalgic, Amber about her old neighborhood in Amsterdam (which she now describes as 'a very good neighborhood') and Laura about good, old pioneering Almere, lost to the excessive diversity of Almere's residents. Neither of them is currently living in the areas they are nostalgic about.

But their access to socio-economic resources is crucially different and this impacts their (potential) mobility in a big way. Amber is currently unemployed and her husband has only half the salary he had a few years back. Moving to Amsterdam's rapidly gentrifying neighborhoods is consequently impossible, her husband's desire to do so notwithstanding. In contrast, Laura's understanding of normalcy was relatively easy to realize. She never had to worry about resources and could even afford to buy an expensive flat in Amsterdam away from touristic areas. She is active and productive, and mainly mingles with family and close friends. She is no more a pioneer, but her quest for normalcy brought her to Amsterdam, once again in proximity to like-minded people.

New Almere, escaping to-escaping from

The two other respondents discussed here moved to Almere around 2000: *Hamid*, an Iranian refugee who came to the Netherlands when he was 11 and stayed with his aunt in Almere till he finally moved to Amsterdam,; and *Janneke*, a young mother who moved to Almere with her husband and child. Hamid was sent by his mother to the Netherlands by plane to be eventually collected by his aunt from a Dutch asylum center. He grew up around the center of Almere Haven, among male Caribbean mates. He

recalls how desperately he wanted to be black himself, because he found them ‘so cool’. Instead they often chided him for emulating their thick accent. He did have the reputation of the ‘smart guy’. He helped others with their homework, and this helped him get through what sounded like a rough teenage hood. Nowadays he appreciates his aunt’s strict attitude towards him, posing her as an example against his friends’ upbringing which he found too liberal and ultimately unproductive. He claims that one half his former friends are criminals and the other half are metal welders (both trajectories often explicitly dreamed by them during teenage hood). Eventually he left for Almere Buiten: ‘just [to] find shit out by myself, that’s when I stopped seeing them, this is when I realized this is not me, I am not this guy who just fixes shit’. He currently lives in Amsterdam, and aspiring a career in econometrics, he sees himself attuned to the city and ‘active life, production’, which were missing for him in Almere.

Janneke moved from Amsterdam to Almere Stad with high aspirations for a quiet, safe and familiar environment, escaping from a city which ‘is not Amsterdam anymore because there are so many people there who are not from Amsterdam’. She is very proud of her house (‘nicest view because it’s a corner house’) and her neighborhood (‘it is really like a little village in the city and everyone knows who lives in this area’). She specifically referred to the neighborhood’s ‘grass that is like a border and we are surrounded by things you have to cross to get in my area’. Nonetheless after a few years her fears started re-emerging, due to ‘foreign people’ hanging around, especially young persons, who ‘are looking at you’ and ‘give you an uncomfortable feeling’. She graphically mentioned Moroccan kids crossing the bridge from the other side of the canal, ringing the bell and asking to do chores for money (*heitje voor een karweitje*). That upset her as they ‘do not belong in her neighborhood’.

These two recent stories of the quest for normalcy demonstrate how Almere provides hyphenated experiences and how its urban dynamics are complexifying. On one hand Hamid’s socio-spatial mobility shows a shifting quest: his initial normalcy was among groups he saw as dissimilar to him but to which he strongly wanted to belong. Eventually he went to ‘find himself’ in Amsterdam’s milieu of ‘productive’ people and completely cut his ties with Almere: he hardly ever goes to Almere, does not see any of his old friends, and rarely visits his aunt. On the other hand Janneke seems to have contrasting experiences in Almere, sharing with Amber both her nostalgia about old

Amsterdam, and the typically suburban lifestyle. But the demographic transitions of the town are particularly felt by Janneke who feels exposed to people whom she perceives as not like her.

According to Hamid, being able to escape was largely possible due to the provisions of the Dutch welfare state, namely social housing and subsidies for being an orphan, and even then he is relatively late in his trajectory compared to the university-educated Dutch population at large (around 24 years old and finishing a BSc in Economics). Janneke's material conditions would not allow her a move anytime soon if she desired. That is not improbable as the form of normalcy that made her move to Almere is now under threat by the presence of dissimilar persons around her.

Doe Normaal!

The multi-layered socio-spatial transformations were experienced by all the respondents regarding Almere itself ('not pioneering anymore'), in relation to Amsterdam (full of 'active life and production' in contrast to Almere) and in relation to global mobilities and migration flows (people who 'don't belong' in a space whose ownership is claimed). Here the analysis is in accordance with Harvey (1973: 56) who argued that the rate of adjustment in our rapidly changing urban systems is different for different categories, depending on their material conditions. Hence certain people may exploit this advantage due to such difference and adapt more rapidly, leading ultimately to inequalities and stratification; in other words there is a 'permanent state of differential disequilibrium in any urban system'. This points to the magnifying impact of (the potential for) spatial mobility on social mobility for those who adjust more or less effectively (a sort of a virtuous/vicious cycle). The focus in this study has been on the experience of normalcy and social mobility, and to an extent all the respondents had such an experience in relation to their mobility potential, even when they were 'stuck' so to speak (like Amber).

During the post-WWII boom of western capitalism the city-escaping aspirations of the low or middle class were manifesting through mass suburbanization. The perception of normalcy was then often driven by utopianist ideas or consumerism and single-mindedness towards an ideal vision. Currently however, relevant urban-suburban mobilities are emerging in a neoliberal context: a more individualist and often

pragmatist vision. Such strategies of mobility are internationally-bound by highly diverse categories in the context of the current crisis-prone globalized economism. The main point of this analysis is related to such change from homogeneity towards complexification. Despite the common, diachronic strive for normalcy through spatial mobility, there is variability in how the latter is performed. From the 1960s till the 1980s the escape from the city was achieved through housing provision which was based on the welfare system. Currently, however, the regional housing market, together with the stagnating social housing system, hinder spatial mobility for many. And once someone cannot adjust rapidly enough to the urban dynamics, their sense of normalcy is challenged and may potentially need to adapt to new conditions.

4 The Ups and Downs of Neighborhood Revitalization

Miriam van de Kamp

The revitalization of pre-war working-class neighborhoods is a popular strategy to alter the population composition in parts of the city where livability is believed to be under severe pressure. However, an analysis of such interventions in three neighborhoods in The Hague (*Regentessekwartier*), Utrecht (*Zuilen*) and Nijmegen (*Willemskwartier*)—all part of larger urban renewal programs—shows that there is no simple recipe for revitalization. The lower social classes do not automatically benefit from the presence of the middle class. The local government, housing associations and other institutions obviously envisage a particular neighborhood with a particular type of urbanites, and their attempts to this engineer this is associated with attempts to shape new forms of normalcy. In this section, we explore how individuals in working-class neighborhoods deal with the forms of normalcy imposed on them and their neighborhood.

Various research methods have been applied: archival research on the history of the neighborhoods, analysis of municipal statistical data, policy documents, and news coverage, as well as interviews with residents and professionals in the neighborhood.⁴ In what follows, we primarily discuss the findings derived from the policy analysis and interviews in Zuilen and Willemskwartier. Zuilen is a neighborhood at the outskirts of Utrecht with traditionally a mix of pre-war private sector housing and pre-war and post-

war social housing. Small branches of the neighborhood were constructed for white-collar workers and company directors. Willemsskwartier is a pre-war neighborhood in the city fringe of Nijmegen with historically primarily social sector housing.

Aspired forms of normalcy

A combination of public housing of poor quality and livability problems (e.g. street litter, criminality, lack of experienced safety) urged municipalities and housing corporations to intervene under the frequently used slogan: ‘demolition, construction and mix’. They aimed for more variation in housing (private and social sector, family homes and apartments), better quality housing and a more heterogeneous residential community in terms of income, status and training, all contributing to a more pleasant social climate. A key priority was to change the unspoken rule that upwardly mobile people would move out of the neighborhood, leaving behind then a growing group of ‘socially vulnerable’ people. The latter encompassed people with poor educational qualifications, a low income or just welfare benefits, a poor mental or physical health condition, and suffering from various other sorts of social deprivation. Residents looking for more spacious accommodation or senior apartments were encouraged to move within the area instead of leaving it, while middle class families or individuals from outside the neighbor were encouraged to move into it. Houses were demolished or refurbished, public spaces renovated and transformed into ‘real meeting points’, the local economy was boosted and public and social security improved. This should enable the neighborhood to climb the urban hierarchy of neighborhoods.

In so doing, the lower classes were represented as the problem and the middle classes as the solution. What is more, in a rather paternalistic way the lower classes were regarded as a category unable to decide what is good for them and their neighborhood and thus as a category that needed care. Local government and housing associations therefore designed these plans to restructure the neighborhood, taking the real or alleged way of living of the middle-class as the norm.

Perverse effects

When implemented, the urban renewal programs brought about a number of perverse and unintended effects.

The municipality of Utrecht, housing associations and urban project developers, for example, designed a master plan to improve the material and social conditions of Zuilen. Gallery flats and porch houses constructed directly after the Second World War were in such a terrible technical condition that demolition was the only solution. They were replaced by luxury apartment buildings and social sector and private sector single-family dwellings. A part of the pre-war social housing was in a bad condition as well due to overdue maintenance. They were saved from demolishing and renovated as to preserve some unique local heritage. The maintenance of the pre-war private sector housing was left aside as a matter for its owners.

Willemskwartier already had had two rounds of renewal (one after the Second World War and one in the seventies) when in the new millennium, large-scale demolition and construction plans were designed to replace large parts of the remaining pre-war social housing that was in a bad condition. The new construction project supplied mainly spacious owner-occupied properties for families and young urban professionals. A small part of the traditional pre-war housing was declared a local monument to be renovated. Next to the demolition and construction, some renovation thus was planned to keep some of the dwellings that have historical value for the neighborhood.

So far, so good.

Local authorities perceived the arrival of new residents, preferably middle class, as a positive sign for the neighborhood. It gave an impetus to the area and a financial boost. The existing ‘old’ residents, however, did not always share the opinion that this is a good development. Sometimes they felt less at home or even alienated in the area they knew so well. Friends and acquaintances moved out to be replaced by higher-skilled and more prosperous neighbors, and it was often believed that the latter would look down on the old working-class residents. The chairman of the residents’ association in Zuilen stressed:

‘If your new neighbor walks past you with a number of shopping bags full with groceries from a quality supermarket, while you can only go once a week to a discount supermarket such as Lidl and spend 25 euros on groceries, the situation is quite difficult. It does not create bonding. Instead, it causes distance.’

Attracting more prosperous people to a neighborhood in a renewal process is one thing, but social relationships and feelings of solidarity is something else. Our interviews show that some of the new arrivals quickly moved on to a newer of more luxurious house or to a neighborhoods with better schools. And for as far as they continued to stay in the area, they did not participate intensely in the community's social life. The old residents did not appreciate this: being neighbors and strangers at the same time. Someone commented: 'That they also move into this area is fine, but if they like to live here then they have to be joint owner of this neighborhood as well.' A mix of social housing and private sector housing have regularly resulted in different social islands.

Working-class neighborhoods are often in poor condition, but interestingly enough many old residents appeared to be satisfied with the situation. Having lived there for a long time, they did not want to move for all the tea in China (*voor geen goud*). They liked the location (close to downtown), appreciated the specific atmosphere and character of the neighborhood, such as a mixed population (ethnic or socio-economic or both) and the social activities. These residents found it hard to understand why their houses were to be demolished to make place for new private sector houses. They did not deny that there were problems, but most of them believed these were part of the urban condition and that the situation elsewhere was not much better. A woman in Zuilen stressed: 'There are certainly dangerous or awkward sides of living in this area, but it is not intolerable such as the situation is in Kanaleneiland.' A resident of Willemskwartier concluded: 'I think that ideal neighborhoods do not exist. There are ones struggling with problems, but this is no problematic neighborhood.' The inhabitants actually liked the vibrancy in the neighborhood, and preferred this to what they saw as a 'boring' new area where nothing happened. The small number of unpleasant incidences were no reason to move to another neighborhood. 'This area is alive, a lot of things happen, positively as well as negatively.' They only wish that the municipality and housing association would keep their social housing and public spaces in a good state of repair (no street litter and no weed).

The main pull factor for new residents (usually starters) for the neighborhoods in the research project was that they were not high-status areas, but areas that enabled an urban way of life as well as affordable housing. They actually appreciated the

historically grown social structure of associations and traditions and the ethnic population composition as reflected in the retail landscape. In these neighborhoods the character of a working-class area gave it a specific and attractive atmosphere. Some of that gets lost, however, due to urban restructuring. Residents and professionals cautioned that the shakeup of the district should not go too far. According to them, it would be a pity if the neighborhood would transform into a yuppie magnet. They preferred a neighborhood with a heterogeneous population and in which old traditions would not completely vanish.

According to the optimistic view of the municipality and the housing associations, upwardly mobile residents would be able to buy their own apartment in their favorite neighborhood. However, reality is more complex. Not everyone can afford it or will be able to get a bank loan.

‘Dwellings of 300.000 euros certainly change the appearance of the area and increase its status, that is true. However, people who have already difficulty with paying 500 or 600 rent a month, are not able to buy a relatively expensive accommodation because they like to stay in the same neighborhood.’

in the same vein, not all old residents were able to move into the new social housing as the rents were much higher than the ones they used to pay. As a woman in Willemskwartier explained:

‘I have heard that they will build new apartments in the Tollensstraat. The rent will be six or seven hundred euros a month. We are not able to pay that. I have always said “When I turn 65 and there is a small apartment where I can move in, I will go there”. But I have changed my mind. I will stay here.’

The question thus arises whether everybody in the area would benefit from its revitalization. There were positive evaluations, such as after the first development phase in Zuilen, suggesting that unemployment rates were declining. But this was not the result of a rise of the number of jobs. In fact, these were just composition effects. Some of the unemployed were forced to move out because their houses were demolished, while middle-class professionals entered the neighborhood. Our findings suggest a less optimistic take on the situation.

The aim of the demolition of old and low quality housing and the construction of new and better quality accommodations was to improve the value of the housing stock and to contribute to solving livability problems. However, rumors about demolition of a part of the neighborhood in the future may first result in negative developments such as residents moving away and the arrival of temporary residents as well as buildings that have been broken into by squatters. Besides, in the period between demolition and construction—that may sometimes last much longer than planned—other new problems might emerge that may worsen the existing situation. Uninhabited houses and wasteland frequently attracted obscure persons who may develop criminal activities or cause trouble and give the area an awkward (*unheimisch*) atmosphere. Therefore, housing corporations sometimes chose to offer the houses that will be demolished for the meantime to temporary residents, mostly students. Residents in Willemsskwartier in Nijmegen complained that they deal carelessly with their environment. They let their garden go and did not contribute to a positive image of the neighborhood. They even stated that it was an important cause for local problems. These findings indicate that the period around the demolition of housing caused unrest and might even worsened the situation before the construction—conceived as improvement—started.

Often an area is labeled as problematic when plans are designed to transform it. In the case of national urban renewal programs it is even essential to stress the severity of the situation to increase the chance governmental grants. However, the unintended side effect might be that progress made in preceding long-term or continuing local programs gets wiped out. It is also a sharp contrast to the promotion brochures of the new construction projects that give the impression that it is an area with a lot of potential and that may be published at the same time. Working on the social mobility of residents is of course a noble ambition. A local official, however, warned for unintended effects. He suggested that some people have a low social economic position, are low-skilled and that there is only a small change that they will ever become more socially mobile. Of course they need housing too. By focusing on the attraction of residents with more professional and economic capital in neighborhood development plans, policy makers seem to give the impression that they, the financially weak, are the problem. Inhabitants frequently get the feeling as well that the professionals think they are not capable and therefore patronize them. According to a woman in Willemsskwartier—having a

university degree in language psychology herself—there is a large difference between the doers in the district and the thinkers at the municipality:

‘Residents have the feeling that policy is poured out on them and that the makers look down on them. That causes frustration. People are not interested in why a decision is taken. They like to hear how they have incorporated their suggestions.’

Because of these feelings municipal social initiatives—regardless of their intentions—are not always enthusiastically welcomed and usually only attract a very small number of people. The contrary happens when an activity is organized by people living in the neighborhood.

‘When people hear that something is organized by that one and that one from the area, then people easily respond “nice, let’s go there”. To make the event a success, but also to meet new people.’

In both cases (Zuilen and Willemskwartier), a couple of residents presented themselves as local experts and communicators of what goes on in the neighborhood. They follow the municipal plans for the area carefully and remember well what agreements have been made in the past between the city and the residents. Public servants and policymakers, on the contrary, usually do not have that knowledge. This can hamper the co-development of new plans and support, especially in situations when residents already have the feeling that they are not taken seriously.

Conflicting senses of normalcy

The focus on middle classes in urban renewal programs is salient. The revitalization of a neighborhood refers to the process in which an area regains vitality and where residents start to perceive the environment as livable again. It would be logical to choose for measures that improve the quality of the daily surroundings for the current residents and their successors.

Taking middle-class normalcy as a starting point produces a number of perverse effects. It undermines the self-esteem of traditional lower-class residents (‘the weakest link’), enhances the ignorance of hidden opportunities in the area (misjudging the knowledge

and effort of residents), and overlooks social structures and initiatives that traditionally provide social cohesion. The arrival of new middle class neighbors may, moreover, contribute to a sense of loss or even alienation and also the fragmentation of social support structures. The patronizing attitude of the local government and housing associations discourages old residents to collaborate with them, something that may confirm the negative perception of the government and housing associations.

Being unable to fully benefit from better quality housing evokes dissatisfaction. Passing over residents' initiatives and their knowledge of the urban planning of the area arouses feelings of incomprehension and gives active residents the idea that all their efforts for the improvement of the area are not recognized, and some therefore decide to bail out.

The physical interventions in Willemskwartier and Zuilen did improve the quality of the houses, intensified police control did result improve public security, and the establishment of a community center did offer an opportunity to meet and socialize with others. In practice, however, a distance between old and new residents is still palpable.

5 Soulmates: Normalcy and Similarity Among Socially Mobile Turkish and Moroccan Dutch

Marieke Sloodman

Second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch are not as class-uniform as their parents. Their parents migrated to the Netherlands as 'guest workers' in the seventies and eighties to work in the lower tiers of the manufacturing industries. Their lack of educational qualifications did not constitute a problem at the time, on the contrary. As a result, the vast majority of foreign-born Turks and Moroccans belong to the lower social classes. Their children, or at least a growing number of the second generation, have performed much better: they show higher levels of educational achievement and find themselves in a variety of class positions. Considering the poor educational attainment and the lower-class position of their parents, this class diversity is surprising (see e.g. Crul et al. 2009). What does it mean to be upwardly mobile? Which trajectories of mobility were followed? And how is this related to experiences of normalcy?

This section focuses on the higher educated rather than the usual suspects: the lower-class (problematized) segments of the second generation. It describes how experiences of normalcy, related to perceptions of difference and similarity, played a large role in personal trajectories of university educated second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch. Feeling different, in contexts where one feels deviating from the norm, and feeling similar, among people who share your worldview and thereby validate your normalcy, were crucial for their personal development, for the development of their identity, and for the formation of social networks. This section will challenge the taken-for-granted assumption that people of the same ethnic background are largely ‘similar’, and argue that similarity is not necessarily shaped by ethnic background (only), but also and perhaps even more by sharing high levels of education. However, for university educated Moroccan and Turkish Dutch, their real soulmates are those who share *both* ethnic background and high levels of education. This is where minority middle-class spaces develop.

The current study applied a mixed methods approach. This section partly relies on the database of the TIES project, which for the Netherlands is the first large-scale study focusing specifically on second generation youths, but especially on in-depth interviews that were conducted with second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch of thirty years and older and with a university degree.

Importance, substance and axes of similarity

In describing his experiences in the two neighborhoods in which he lived, Berkant illustrates two of the main findings of this section. He explains what he finds crucial for having pleasant social interactions with neighbors (‘having similar experiences’ and ‘sharing things’), and what shapes this sharedness (social class rather than ethnicity). This account resonates the stories of several other participants about their experiences in their neighborhoods.

‘I have to tell you something that is kind of funny. When we [Berkant with his wife and children] were living in Zeeburg [a yuppie neighborhood at the outskirts of Amsterdam]—I think we were the only Turkish family there—but we interacted with EVERYONE. Because they constituted the same ‘social layer’. These were people who had similar experiences and with whom we could

share ours. Ethnicity was not an issue whatsoever. But later we moved to Amsterdam-North, there we ended up in an immigrant neighborhood. And there we interacted with NO ONE. Because we were just in a separate social layer. Highly educated... and my wife did not wear a headscarf at all—she even is antipathetic to headscarves. And then... after day ONE—it's that quick—even the neighbor across the street, who was a Moroccan man, would not even look at us! This makes you think: based on ethnicity we are supposed to fit in here. But you have NOTHING to share. That makes you think: wow, ethnicity is much less important than one would think, much less than the social layer.' (Berkant, Turkish Dutch male)

This description of what makes social interactions valuable does not only apply to interactions with neighbors. In various interviews, the essence of valuable friendships is described in similar terms:

'(...) people with whom I share my frustrations and ambitions about changing the world. With whom I talk about fundamental things, with whom I sharpen my thoughts.' (Hicham, Moroccan Dutch male)

'(...) a certain social stature, which enables you to share things with one another. Because, that's what it is about: sharing one's fascinations. Because indeed, when you do not have anything to talk about, there is nothing that bonds.' (Berkant, Turkish Dutch male)

'Well... friends... I realize that I need some kind of companions; meaning higher educated. You know, women I can have sharp conversations with. But also men. (...) those few people who are very important to me—let's say, with whom I get this flow of fresh insights, this provocative interaction. I like having those inspiring friends around me—companions, to reflect on having a career in this world, in this context.' (Ayşel, Turkish Dutch female)

Not very surprisingly, it appears that sharing experiences and worldviews gives substance to conversations, and likewise to social relations and friendships. This is not an uncommon notion; the idea that '(attitudinal) similarity attracts' has been accepted in social psychology for a long time (Byrne 1961, Berscheid and Walster 1969). One of the reasons is that people seek validation of their attitudes; and people who hold similar opinions and beliefs provide this social validation. In fact, the confirmation that your own attitudes (which are related to who-you-are) are correct, that they are not labeled as deviant, affirms one's normalcy. Bourdieu describes a similar mechanism, when he argues that having a similar 'habitus'—a set of grown, personal dispositions that guide

one's behavior—increases attraction, because it leads to a confirmation of one's attitudes (Web, Schirato and Danaher 2002).

With regard to the principle that 'similarity attracts', there is the related idea that 'birds of a feather flock together'. However, it needs caution when this adage is blindly applied to entire social categories, such as ethnicity. Without exception, the participants report that their close friendships are almost exclusively with highly educated ('co-educated') people; and not exclusively with people of the same ethnicity ('co-ethnic' people). Apparently, similarity in terms of relevant experiences and worldview, is to a very large extent shaped by education level; more so than by ethnicity.

This is supported by our quantitative data. Turkish and Moroccan Dutch respondents with university education (either attending or having completed their studies at the time of the survey), have more often only co-educational best friends rather than only co-ethnics best friends. When asked about the ethnicity of their three best friends, 19 percent of the Turkish Dutch university-educated respondents answered they had only Turkish-Dutch best friends (see the Table 1). When asked about the educational level of their three best friends nearly half of them (42 percent) indicated they had only highly-educated friends (higher vocational training and university). Among the Moroccan Dutch university educated respondents these shares were 26 percent and 45 percent.

Table 1

Percentage of university educated respondents with three best friends that are all (a) co-ethnic and (b) co-educational.		
University educated respondents (at university or having completed)	% that has three best friends that are all	
	co-ethnic	co-educational
Turkish Dutch	19% (N=37)	42% (N=36)
Moroccan Dutch	26% (N=34)	45% (N=33)

Source: TIES data

Co-ethnic, co-educational soulmates

Clearly, it is not that all birds with the same ethnic feathers flock together. Not all close friends are co-ethnic and not all co-ethnics are friends. However, this does not mean that ethnicity does not play an important role. The interviews show that the role ethnicity

plays transforms during lifetime and is strongly related to norms of normality and therefore to self-confidence. Let us listen to Emir's story:

'Well, I think, when you look back... Yes, I think, reflecting on the period at elementary school: that you discover that you are actually different. In a negative way. Because I remember—quite bizarre—I remember that I... yeah, sometime was not allowed to play at a friend's house. That's something that, of course, you don't understand at that moment. So, then you find out you are different. That is phase one.

Then, let's say, this period at high school, where you, let's say, SEE the opportunities and seize them, and where you realize that you're talented. You know, that you say to yourself: this is GOOD for me. It sounds weird—no, it doesn't—that at the age fourteen/fifteen you notice the difference between you, the higher educated [VWO] pupil, and the lower educated [LTS] pupils in the building nearby. There is a huge difference—with those children smoking pot. So you notice THAT. And that makes you realize: I want to stand out positively, I really do not want to be like them. So, basically—you then learn about your... identity—I don't know. But what you learn is indeed: no negative association with your own identity; in that secondary school period. That was a really fantastic period. I so much enjoyed it. And what is important, is that I there—well—there I met with friends who did NOT see you as THE Moroccan, or whatever. It is really important—well, there you COULD play at their homes: sit... you know... sleep... That was a really comfortable period. Really great. Good memories. There I did not feel different AT ALL. Of course, you realize you have a different background, but who cares! You know. Enrichment. Whatever. But that wasn't the focus.

The funny thing is—at university you find out—Yes, there I started to interact more with—In fact, your whole life you did not do that. And since the start at university you DID relate more to, well, Moroccan Dutch students. However—they were at your own wavelength, let's describe it this way. So, apparently you ARE looking for people who match you, or something. Interestingly, there were incredible levels of mutual understanding. Of course, that is fabulous, you know. We surely all were... this outsider, you know. So that was a fantastic period, indeed. I primarily related to Moroccan Dutch people. Students. They were my best friends. Look, I also participated in a normal student fraternity, so there I did interact with other—But when you ask me: who did you mostly relate to, then it is primarily.' (Emir, Moroccan Dutch male)

Even though the stories of the different participants show a variety of experiences and developments, many parts of Emir's story parallel the accounts of others. What Emir

describes, is a somewhat ‘typical’ or standard trajectory. During his childhood he felt ‘different’ from his (native, lower-class) friends. He mentions that his parents did not allow him to play at friends’ houses, they did not have a ‘reading culture’ at home like others had, and he was bothered by shortcomings in his vocabulary. Because of his ethnic background and the accompanying sociocultural arrear, he felt he deviated from a certain norm, making him an outsider. Other participants, with similar childhood experiences, describe that they did their utter best to be ‘normal’ and to downplay their ethnicity. In high school, Emir did not feel an outsider, which helped him develop self-confidence. What was crucial in this phase, is that his ethnicity did not set him apart now—his Moroccan background simply felt irrelevant—and that he derived self-confidence from his educational achievements. We could argue that both aspects contributed to feeling ‘normal’ and accepted: he did not feel the ethnic ‘outsider’, and his high education level helped him feel more ‘normal’ and accepted. Some participants had very different experiences during this phase, as for them ethnicity played an important role. They account of a struggle, because they felt pressured to choose between identifying as Moroccan/Turkish or Dutch. This was impossible for them, as they clearly felt both Dutch and Moroccan/Turkish, but at the same time did not feel that the labels ‘Moroccan’/‘Turkish’ and Dutch (as they were generally used) applied to them. Emir’s experiences in the next phase, at university, are shared by many participants. (Note that nearly all participants went to secondary schools with a relatively high share of native Dutch students). Many narrate in similar emotion-laden terms of their interaction with co-ethnic students, see for example the quotations of Mustapha and Berkant:

‘So, when at university I did meet Moroccan students, for me that was a relief. Yes, there was no need any more to explain myself. About why this and why that. So, at that moment I started to explore my roots, also via my studies, as I did a research project in Morocco. And I became active in the student environment. Yes, I did—Muslim, Moroccan, whatever, youth association as well—I have since then been very busy with the Moroccan community. I very much enjoyed it. It gave me heaps of energy, and it really made me grow as a person, in that period.’ (Mustapha, Moroccan Dutch male)

‘Then, you suddenly ARE at university, you ARE together with people—Well... from the second year, when I became involved in the Turkish student association—that was a PEAK experience. Suddenly, a whole new world unfolds, ehm... with an urgent need to share your experiences with somebody

who went through the same as you did. So that was really a peak, my time at the Turkish student association. Really a peak.’ (Berkant, Turkish Dutch male)

This particular setting of meeting *co-ethnic co-educational* peers at university and the positive terms in which this was described, come up in many of the interviews spontaneously. And this appears to be not unique for these participants nor for this Dutch case. Young Asian-American professionals report similar experiences (Min and Kim 2000). These young professionals indulge in the company of co-ethnic peers in college in similar ways. Min and Kim seek explanation for this in the way colleges nurture Asian ethnicity. However, my findings point to another, very general but seemingly powerful explanation: the importance of mutual understanding and the level of mutual understanding that is found among co-ethnic co-educational peers. Apparently, experiences are strongly influenced by ethnicity (stemming from Moroccan and Turkish parents in the Netherlands) in combination with being highly educated. Apparently, it takes being co-ethnic *and* being co-educational in order to share experiences on the deepest level. More so than natives with the same educational background and more than lower educated co-ethnics, these co-educational co-ethnics understand the experiences of the higher educated second generation; they are real soul mates.

It seems that they jointly find ways to come to terms with their ethnic background. The interaction with co-educational co-ethnic peers at university seems to help shape ethnic and national identifications. It helps foster the development of a fit with the ethnic and national labels and a satisfactory self-identification. Nearly all participants display a dual identity: both Dutch and Moroccan/Turkish. And all regard this as a valuable asset.

Minority middle-class spaces

Other authors described and explained the urge of ‘ethnic minority climbers’, i.e. highly-educated people from a lowly educated minority background, to seek the company of co-ethnic co-educational peers. Neckerman, Carter and Lee (1999) argue that this group faces particular challenges. They argue that middle-class people from low-class ethnic minority background face specific challenges in two environments, that are related to i) interactions with the native middle class who set the sociocultural norms

in the native middle-class environment, and ii) to the relative frequent interactions with lower-class (co-ethnic) people, who set the sociocultural norms in their ethnic minority environment, for example about who is ‘authentically’ Moroccan/Turkish. These circumstances set them apart from middle-class natives and lower-class co-ethnics. In these different fields a totally different sets of skills is required. Different sets of cultural capital are needed for respectable positions in the different environments (Carter 2003).

These challenges lead ethnic minority climbers to develop their own solutions. This is argued by Neckerman et al. (1999) and illustrated by several empirical studies on minority middle classes (all in the United States; see the studies of Mehan, Hubbard and Villanueva (1994), Carter (2003, 2006), Lacy (2004, 2007), Agius Vallejo (2009a, 2009b, 2012), Torres (2009), Orly and Clerge (2012)). They show that minority middle-class spaces emerge, such as gatherings, networks, and organizations, in which elements of a ‘minority culture of mobility’ are formed. These are places where minority middle-class members are protected from discrimination. Stories are shared about discriminatory encounters with people who personally recognize what you are talking about. Here, they can ‘derobe’, switch to co-ethnic interactional and symbolic styles, styles and preferences that are familiar to them because they grew up with them (e.g. for Mexican American middle-class members this is speaking ‘Spanglish’, dancing salsa, watching Spanish movies). Professional minority associations can offer ways to increase middle-class cultural and social capital, offering all kinds of (business) trainings and access to (minority and majority) networks. And they can foster ‘ethnic’ cultural capital, by offering a place where minority climbers can jointly develop fitting ethnic identifications and pride with regard to their ethnic background.

When we look at the stories of the participants, several elements hint to the emergence of such a ‘minority culture of mobility’ in the Netherlands. Firstly, there is the importance of co-ethnic co-educational peers (which have become ‘co-ethnic co-middle-class peers’). This not only appears from interviews, but is also shown by the popularity and emergence of ethnic minority student associations. Secondly, there are several recurring themes in the interviews, which could be seen as indicators that elements of minority middle-class culture are developing in the Dutch case. The evidence in the Dutch case is still relatively thin, but the parallels with the literature are striking and they strongly support the hypothesis that a ‘minority culture of mobility’ is

in the making. Recurring themes (which partly resonate with the international literature) are: the way ethnic and national identifications are described; involvement in co-ethnic co-educational organizations and networks; feeling a societal responsibility to build bridges and to counter negative stereotypes; expressing a mentality of ‘giving back’, materializing in support of co-ethnic youths; cherishing the bond with family and parents; but also experiencing a huge gap in real life with them; emphasizing the gratitude and respect they feel towards their parents for all sacrifices they made to enhance the opportunities of their children (Agius Vallejo [2009a] calls this ‘the immigrant narrative’); the awareness that some kinds of behavior can lead to the accusation of not being an authentic ‘Moroccan/Turk’; solving the ambiguity with regard to ethnic identification in the work environment with emphasizing one’s professional identity or personal uniqueness; the emphasis on language as an important form of cultural capital.

Discussion

Do these findings only apply to highly educated second-generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch? Many of these experiences of university educated second generation Moroccan and Turkish Dutch are not unique, as some of the experiences are shared by people in general. Most people as adolescents go through a phase when they start wondering about who they are, when they feel insecure about themselves, and look for ‘normality’ and mutual understanding. For people of minority categories (whether because of one’s sexual preferences, physical handicaps, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic background, or because of some other characteristics that are regarded as somehow ‘particular’ or ‘standing out’) this phase might be more of a struggle, especially when there is no one around to share these rather specific experiences with. Additionally, when the social category is regarded as ‘inferior’—and its members are regarded as ‘inferior’—it might be even a harder struggle to develop a positive self-image. Depending on background, interests and the environments in which one moves, one experiences a smaller or larger mismatch between his or her cultural capital, and the cultural capital needed to function in the surrounding environment. The larger the mismatch, the greater the need for people who share one’s experiences and to validate the ‘normality’ of one’s life world. This is true for many of the ethnic minority ‘climbers’ of this study, but it is also true for native Dutch climbers whose experiences are remarkably similar (Brands 1992; Matthys 2010). The parallels with the literature on

different minority middle classes in the United States (e.g. black, Haitian, Mexican). At the same time, the experiences of the participants of the current study are to some extent idiosyncratic. Their specific situation does not necessary apply to poorly educated people in general, to people of other ethnic groups, and not even to the younger members of the Moroccan and Turkish second generation raised in the same families, but in totally different discursive and familial climates.

6 Conclusions

In advanced welfare states such as the Netherlands, the situation at the bottom of the social ladder is a matter of most grave concern. There, at the lower strata, we find an overrepresentation of people with substandard educational attainment, poor proficiency in the Dutch language, failed connections to the urban labor market, disproportionate high levels of welfare dependency, life styles deviating from the mainstream, and so forth. Everyone deserves a place under the sun, of course, and the state in concert with an array of semi-private institutions have set out to tackle these problems. Actually, that is what they have been doing for quite a number of decades, and although much has been accomplished, the gap between the haves and have-nots is still very real and very wide (Cf. Salverda xxxx). This especially holds for the category of immigrant ethnic minorities whose position is complicated by real or alleged ethnic, religious and cultural features as well as racist responses towards them. The—again: real or alleged—tendency of immigrant minorities to stick to their own kind supposedly aggravate their upward social mobility. These phenomena have spatiality and, true enough, social problems do accumulate in lower-class neighborhoods in general and immigrant working-class neighborhoods in particular.

Underserved neighborhoods and the people therein have been targeted, and in so doing attempts have been being made to kill two birds with one stone. Heaps of resources have been poured into these neighborhoods to improve the quality of houses and public spaces, boost the local economy, strengthen the educational and social-support systems, and in so doing improve the living conditions and opportunities that all deserve to enjoy.

Paradoxically enough, attempts to lift the lower classes into the middle class imply that the middle class represents the norm. While middle-class standards of living and middle class life-styles are to be aspired, the standards and life-styles of the lower-class are problematized. This is even more true for situations that involve immigrant ethnic minorities, as their presence is often associated with poverty, disconnection and decay. In fact, immigrant ethnic minorities often serve as a proxy for urban problems.

Helping lower-class people to find their way into the mainstream (amongst others by tackling deficiencies) is one way to alleviate these problems, the other is simply diluting the problem. Encouraging lower-class residents to move to ‘greener pastures’ and encouraging middle-class newcomers to settle constitute important and popular strategies. These strategies obviously impact each’ sense of normalcy. How people deal with these changing situation, how they reposition themselves vis-à-vis others, and deal with their own senses of normalcy have been explored in the current study.

We first explored these questions in a context of *created normalcy*. The ‘new town’ of Almere—non-existent half a century ago—is a ‘designer city’. It had been planned as a place that would overcome the usual urban problems and that would offer a home for all residents. Today, however, we can observe the proliferation of various forms of social bifurcation. Besides, different and unexpected mobility become manifest. Almere started as a catchment area for socially mobile Amsterdammer who wanted to put the big city with its poor housing conditions, its multicultural population and social problems behind them. But more recently, this inflow seems to have dried up. Instead, a new type of newcomers started to settle in Almere. These people are not so much bothered by disassociating themselves from Amsterdam; on the contrary, they see Almere as one of Amsterdam’s suburbs—it is only a twenty-minute train ride to downtown Amsterdam. These changes are an indication of the transformations that Almere is currently undergoing and propels them at the same time, and impact senses of normalcy. Residents cope with these urban transformations in different ways and there seems to be a relation with their material conditions: some aspire to go back to Amsterdam, but only those who can afford it are able to materialize that dream. Others may feel stuck. This may strengthen the emerging bifurcations, certainly in emotional terms.

We then explored the questions in a context of *imposed normalcy*. A large number of blighted working-class neighborhoods are now being restructured and promoting a ‘social mix’ is a central feature of these programs. Social houses are refurbished and sold on the private market to whoever can afford the prices, or they are leveled and replaced by new apartment blocks that attract middle-class professionals. These programs have been accompanied with interventions in the retail landscape and so forth. The government and housing associations apparently bet on the (culturally and economically) strong and take their normalcy as a starting point. This understates the capacity of the lower-classes to build a livable community and undermines existing support structures. It also contributes to a sense of loss or alienation and discourages them to collaborate to enthusiastically collaborate with the movers and shakers of these developments.

We finally explored the questions in a context of *emerging new normalcies*. The latent talents of native Dutch working-class children were awakened during the post-war democratization of the higher educational system, enabling them to become upwardly (and spatially) mobile. Nowadays, a similar process is occurring among immigrant children. A growing number enroll in higher educational institutions and this helps foster the development of an ethnic minority middle class. That process, that is not automatically translated in spatial mobility, raises questions about normalcy. Many take it for granted that these higher educated second-generation immigrants ‘still’ identify themselves primarily in ethnic terms, which would mean that their professional capacities are underplayed. In reality, however, they tend to identify with c-educational peers. Normalcies associated with higher education do not replace those associated with the ethnic group, but are combined into a new kind of ethnic middle class normalcy. The question remains whether or not the (Dutch) environment gives them sufficient space to be middle class *and* ethnic at the same time.

The three cases demonstrate that social and spatial mobility is not just a material process, but that it has a marked emotional component. It is important to acknowledge that component, so as to be better able to grasp what is happening on the ground.

7 Policy Recommendations

The results of this study trigger the following policy considerations.

Promoting a social mix is often presented as a universal remedy for all social problems, but the social, cultural, political and economic consequences are manifold, and not automatically in agreement with the intentions.

The relation between social mobility and housing is evident: those who can afford it are able to move into more attractive neighborhoods, including gentrifying working-class neighborhoods. But the reverse is problematic; moving out of upcoming neighborhoods does not necessarily enhance the chances of upward mobility.

The self-evident relationship of social and spatial mobility, as used to be manifest in suburbanization, is under pressure, and this impacts existing suburban normalcies and existing social cleavages, and may lead to new forms of mobility.

Involve *all* stakeholders in the revitalization process, not just at the level of implementation, but also at the level of decision-making.

Avoid taken-for-granted notions about blighted neighborhoods and seriously investigate existing opportunities and social support structures.

In the same vein, avoid take-for-granted notions about middle-class normalcy , and wonder who's right to the city is in stake.

Ensure a transparent, accessible and non-paternalistic management structure for neighborhood restructuring.

See to it that the city is visibly present in the neighborhood and cares and takes responsibility for all residents.

Judge immigrants and any other resident primarily on the basis of their individual skills, competences and capacities rather than the real or perceived membership of a particular category.

Avoid treating immigrant ethnic minority associations as tokens of segregation and the unwillingness of minorities to become part of the mainstream, but appreciate and involve them as vehicles for the social engagement of educated minorities as well as the development of an ethnic minority middle class ■

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Notes

- ¹ In 2009, a consortium with partners from the University of Amsterdam and the University of Leiden at The Hague, the cities of Amsterdam, Almere, Delft, Nijmegen and Utrecht, the Utrecht housing association Mitros, and Platform31 (formerly known as NICIS) started a joint research and knowledge program on the interrelationship of social mobility and urban neighborhoods (project code 2008-01). The program revolved around such question as how do processes of social mobility and neighborhood change take place, are they related and—if so—how, what are their structural determinants, and what are the implications for the opportunities of individuals and social groups and further urban developments? The research team included Juno Blaauw (UvA, till 2011), Maurice Crul (UvA, later EUR), Jan Willem Duyvendak (UvA), Miriam van de Kamp (UL), Jan Rath (UvA), Marieke Slootman (UvA), Yannis Tzaninis (as of 2011, UvA), Lex Veldboer (UvA), Wim Willems (UL), and Iris Hagemans. The consortium also included Mies van Niekerk (NICIS/Platform31), Jan Rossen and Berny van de Donk (Mitros), Jeroen Slot (City of Amsterdam), Marian Huisman and Gerhard Dekker (City of Almere), Maria Berger, I. Spannenburg and M. Wardenaar (City of Delft), John Waalring (City of the Hague), Igor van der Vlist (City of Nijmegen), and O. van de Vijver (City of Utrecht). For more details, go to <http://imes.socsci.uva.nl/sociale mobiliteit/nieuws/index.html>
- ² The same holds for the political predecessor of the integration policy', i.e. the anti-social behavior policies.
- ³ Aka 'pillarization', see van Schendelen 1984.
- ⁴ For this case study, in total 79 interviews were conducted. In Regentessekwartier, 15 residents and 12 professionals were interviewed between December 2010 and April 2011, in Zuilen 12 residents and 14 professionals between March and June 2011, in Willemskwartier 13 residents and 13 professionals between May and November 2011. Municipal officials involved in the research project helped identifying key figures such as neighbourhood managers, welfare professionals, local entrepreneurs or board members of residents' associations. All interviews were semi-structured. Regentessekwartier is an inner-city neighbourhood with a large share of pre-war private sector housing and traditionally a mix of dwellings for the working-class, white-collar workers and public servants. Given the large share of private sector housing and a cautious urban renewal programme, this case is less discussed in this contribution.