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Introduction

In the contemporary landscape of gentrification the politics of class and belonging take on a renewed sense of urgency. With the strategic restructuring of urban space and the influx of middle-class people in former working-class areas, gentrification sees a complex territorial and cognitive process of sorting and sifting in which social groups position themselves towards co-residents. Research on gentrification has until recently largely been dealing with the ‘hard’ politics of social displacement, class struggle and strategies of capitalist intervention (Smith & Williams 1986, Smith 1996, Lees 2000, Butler 2003, Atkinson 2006), but has surprisingly little to tell about the ‘soft’ meanings of home and attachment. Despite recent attention to questions of belonging (Savage et al 2005, Martin 2005, Watt 2009, Savage 2010) there is still a lack of more detailed ethnographic studies on the cognitive and cultural practices of living together in differentiated space. This paper wants to contribute to the debate on issues of class and belonging in gentrifying areas by exploring narrative constructions of home among established and incoming residents in the Rosmolenwijk, a neighbourhood near the Zaan River in the Dutch city of Zaanstad. This neighbourhood has in the last 15 years been subjected to a process of redevelopment with industrial sites at the waterfront area being transformed into luxury apartment complexes and parts of the working-class district restructured to attract a middle-class public. In this paper we show how these

changes in the demographic composition and physical arrangement of neighbourhood space inflect upon relations between an established working-class community and the new urbanites entering the area. Using in-depth interviews and narrative maps, which picture urban space from the viewpoint of residents themselves, we seek to demonstrate how both middle-class residents living in the redeveloped waterfront area and people living in the nearby working-class district make emotional claims to place and community. Questions of home and collective belonging prove to be important in the daily lives of the established community as well as the middle-class entering the area, as both groups adapt to the changing residential landscape and reshape the cultural and symbolic boundaries of neighborhood space. As we will discuss below, there are, however, subtle differences as well as crossovers in the normative evaluations and sentimental attachments to place among both groups of residents.

This paper is an ethnographic study on narratives of home and attachment to place as they relate to physical remnants and symbolic spaces of the industrial past of the city as well as to the infrastructure of intermediate spaces as areas of sociability. It shifts focus from the larger processes of capitalist investment to the ‘ordinary’ micro-locals in the city, and thereby aims to develop a more detailed and ambivalent understanding of notions of home and belonging as they intersect with the manifold tactics through which people put up boundaries between themselves and others, between inside and outside, and between what is seen as close and distant. In the first section of this paper we aim to incorporate the concepts of home and place attachment into research on gentrification. We argue for grounding the theorization of gentrification and questions of attachment to place in concrete perceptions and experiences and the precise enactments of ordinary people. Next we discuss the choice of the research setting and the methods we used for exploring the intersecting dynamics between home, class and collective belonging. Through a reassessment of the method of mental mapping, we use ethnographic description and analysis to contextualize the process of gentrification as it operates on the everyday environment of micro-locals, the sometimes contradictory desires and fears they stimulate, and the feelings of attachment and identification they generate. In the third section we then discuss empirical findings in which we confront the place attachments and notions of home among established and newcomers. We end this paper with a concluding

paragraph in which we link emerging topics and approaches to the study of gentrification to issues of home and place attachment.

Gentrification and the micro-politics of home and belonging

Home is generally referred to as a special kind of place with which people experience a strong social, psychological and emotional attachment (Easthope 2004:136). In a phenomenological sense, home is seen as a private, safe and familiar locale where people find an opportunity to relax and retreat from public surveillance. Home places are defined by a sense of distinctiveness, continuity, self-esteem and self-efficacy it offers (Twigger-Ross & Uzzell 1996). In this sense, feelings of home are taken as a primordial sentiment which persists and is expressed through familiar routines and regular settings (Fried 2000). These forms of attachment to place derive from a human longing for familiar closure and closeness (Hidalgo & Hernandez 2001:274). As Peter King (2008) reminds us, the practice of home making is centered round the act of dwelling, which is created through the familiarity of everyday routines and identification with the in-group as an extension of home and family. “Dwelling is about settlement”, King writes, “about moving in the environment, about making and keeping community, and about finding our place and keeping it” (2008:pp). This notion of home as a reiterative and circular practice of settling is based on distinctions and demarcations between private and public and between inside and outside. The practice of making home, as King argues, is concerned with the drawing and marking of boundaries and the way people are able to prevent ingress and interference. “To close something is to put a boundary around it, to limit it, and so to intensify it. Dwelling, to be and remain as dwelling, has to remain closed, shut up and out of general view. If it is not closed it is not dwelling, it is a performance, a show, a game” (2008:pp).

Home as a cultural concept does, however, have its rough edges. The connotations of intimacy, comfort and security attached to notions of home are receptive to change. This is expressed in metaphors used in popular language, such as the castle, fortress, shelter or safe haven, which hint at the way home is seen as a domain which has to be protected from outside forces. Western conceptions of home, for example, are strongly linked to the privilege of acquiring a feeling of place in a world of alienation. As we will discuss below, homes are porous places where feelings

of intrusion and estrangement, such as they are awakened by changes in the physical arrangement and social composition of neighbourhood space, may lead to regressive forms of territorial closure and strategies of hegemonic control and surveillance (Low 2004). Feelings of nostalgia often originate in periods of abrupt change in the social and physical environment, as is expressed in cultural notions like the *casita* and the Japanese concept of *furusato* (Robertson 1994) and its references to the history, familiarity and naturalness of familiar places. These notions anticipate experiences of loss of home and diffuse feelings of nostalgia, as these are driven by unease with a present time and place. Disruptions of place also enhance collective forms of belonging and the recollection of old certainties marked by memories or objects of nostalgia (Buttimer 1980). In a modern sense, the sheltered realm of home is taken as a phantasmagoric space in which, as Morley writes, “the far away is now irredeemably mixed in with the space of the near” (2001:428). This understanding of home as an enclosed space which is receptive to change and intrusion is related to periods of disruption during which the conflictive and contradictory nature of identity are revealed. Research on the intersections between home, identity and belonging among transnational migrants shows that the associations and meanings people attribute to place are often complex and ambivalent. Notions of home here come to refer to physical spaces as well as clusters of social relationships or the realm of imaginations (Gupta & Ferguson 1997, Rodman 1992, Fortier 1999, Blunt 2005). People not inhabit physical structures of houses, cities and neighbourhoods, but also live in words and images.

Home places thus are produced in a dialectic between who belongs and who does not, what is perceived as mentally near and distant, what feels like ‘inside’ and what feels like ‘outside’, who we call ‘we’ and who we call ‘others’. As Mallet notes, “homes always involve encounters between those who stay, those who arrive and those who leave (...) There is movement and dislocation within the very forming of homes as complex and contingent spaces of inhabitation” (2004:79). The soft notions of home, attachment and belonging thus are implicated in ideological processes and power relations through which people localize themselves and others, often in paradigmatic oppositions between us and them (Dixon & Durrheim 2000). Home places are linked to personal biographies as well as the forming of collective identities, the marking of social boundaries and the construction of categorical identities. Homes thus are not

'places' that are and stay the same, but rather are part of an enduring process of construction, negotiation and redefinition. Making home is linked to a pursuit to achieve a sense of continuity between past and present, and to transitions in personal life histories as well as the forming of social identities. As will be discussed below, narrative constructions of home are inherently linked to physical spaces and social relations, as well as the less tangible realm of emotions, memories, tastes and sense of textures.

The affective notions of home are also incorporated into the concept of place attachment, which is defined as an emotional and symbolic bond between people and places (Low 1992, Hidalgo & Hernandez 2001). These attachments include notions of cognition and affect as well as social relations (Altman & Low 1992). Theories of place attachment thus not only focus on the physical spaces ('rootedness') but also on 'bonding' or the places of relational interaction (Hidalgo & Hernandez 2001, Gram-Hanssen & Bech-Danielsen 2004). "Home is a place", as Mallet writes, "but it is also a space inhabited by family, people, things and belongings" (2004:63). Or, as Altman and Low claim, "Places are repositories and contexts within which interpersonal, community, and cultural relationships occur, and it is to those relationships, not just to place qua place, to which people are attached" (1992:7). Attachment to place concerns emotional and cognitive experiences, but also cultural shared practices through which people position themselves to others. Low thus defines 'place attachment' as a symbolic relationship through which people inscribe cultural meanings on the base of a collective understanding of place (1992:165). This cultural definition implies a transformation of personal perceptions into shared stories and symbols, which derive from collective systems of representation that manifest themselves in public discourses and the discursive realm of stories, categorizations and typifications. The concept of home here thus is removed from the cocoon of personal experience and into the collective practices through which people shape, reproduce and modify group identities. As Blokland (2001) shows, places are an active part of the repertoire of local myths and public representations which create and restructure social relationships. The social construction of home is not the end result of fixed and lasting relationships, but rather an intermediate factor in the ongoing formation of social groups. By incorporating physical spaces and social relations as well as the imaginary realm of stories and memories, we are able to stretch the concept of home to not only refer to

the fixed geographical space of house and yard, but also the collective domain of memories, atmospheres and nostalgic longing.

A perspective on home as continual and conflictive presents us with questions on how people create a meaningful place amidst a changing environment through collective and inter-subjectively shared conceptions of place. Although the fragmented and disrupted experience of space occurs in extreme forms in the case of political refugees, migrants and stateless people, these issues of home and belonging force themselves in all kinds of places where the illusion of a natural and self-evident relation between place and culture has been disrupted. As we will see below, notions of home also become prominent and are magnified in the little tactics of a gentrifying neighbourhood. The process of gentrification evokes pertinent questions on the meanings of home and place in everyday life. Changes in the physical structure and social composition of neighbourhood space start off social processes in which urban space is being reordered and inscribed with new meanings and social relations. Gentrification inevitably forces people to revise and redefine their personal and social relation to places, peoples and communities. The transformative nature of gentrification, however, sits uncomfortably with notions of home and belonging which deal with continuity and security instead of change and transformation. As Janz states, “Place that is based on dwelling tends to be static rather than the dynamic, the reactionary rather than the progressive, the apolitical rather than the politically engaged, and the uncritical rather than the reflective” (2007:13). It highlights how the everyday spaces of home and place are a porous domain in which the erosion of neighbourhood facilities, the symbolic take-over of space by new groups of residents and the loss of a sense of neighbourhood identity impinge upon the everyday life worlds of groups and individuals and their sense of local attachment and territorial embedding.

Gentrification refers to a process of middle-class colonization which in a narrative sense deals with living in a heterogeneous and inclusive space but which in a practical sense turns out to be an exclusive form of settlement. Butler (2003) shows how incoming middle-class residents in a gentrifying London neighborhood express a sense of attachment to place but in practice chose to distance themselves from the established working-class community. Their narratives of belonging deal with a heterogeneous, diverse and multicultural setting which is not lived out in everyday life,

“blinking out those who are not like themselves” (Butler 2003:2484). Thus we are told that gentrifiers are using the surrounding community as “social wallpaper” (Butler 2003:2484) or, as Prince claims with regard to gentrification in Harlem, a “colourful background” (Prince 2002:pp). Lees (2008) argues that gentrification is part of an aggressive and revanchist strategy of middle-class colonization which leads to the negative effects of social segregation, social polarization and dislocation.

Gentrification in practice is not about social mixing but rather concerns the tendency of self-segregation of the middle-class. There is by now a large body of empirical studies which shows little to no mixing between classes, let alone the transition of social capital from higher to lower class people.

Gentrification research has, since the more positive oriented studies of Ruth Glass and David Ley, tended to expose a discourse on belonging and anxiety in urban neighbourhoods which deals not with interactions and transgressing relationships but with practices of division, exclusion and segregation. Late modern urban society has seen the rise and spread of gated and fenced neighbourhoods and of strategies of surveillance which are seen as indicators of middle-class distraction from lower class groups. This is the citadel of control and surveillance, as Los Angeles is described by Mike Davis (1992) or Sao Paulo by Teresa Caldeira (2000): a city in which wealthy people are able to separate themselves physically and socially from other strata of society. Atkinson (2006) argues that the desire for a protected environment reflects a strategy of escaping contacts with other resident groups. Patterns of self-imposed segregation and disaffiliation are a product of structures of feeling which bring social groups to live close to like-minded people. Social groups are sorting themselves out based on categories of income, class and social identity. Paul Watt refers to a process of ‘flocking’: “a spatial expression of a collective taste for certain locales” (2009:2876). Atkinson himself refers to this as ‘bubbling’, a strategy used by social groups to protect themselves through their choice of residential location and their use of urban space (2006:828). This need for a safe and controlled environment reflects what he calls a ‘typology of disaffiliation’ by higher-income groups who want to express their withdrawal from society as well as their need for social affinity with people like themselves. These strategies of withdrawal reflect the social and spatial arrangement of urban space into homogeneous localities in terms of class and social composition.

This paper aims to follow in the wake of recent studies on belonging in gentrifying urban neighbourhoods. Despite the attention to questions of belonging as they relate to processes of gentrification, there is, however, still a lack of insight on the micro-politics of home as well as to processes of neighbourhood transformation in smaller cities than the globalized cities of New York, Los Angeles, Sao Paulo or London. In this paper we want to distract somewhat from the darker narratives of gentrification by exploring resident perceptions of home, belonging and attachment to place as they reveal themselves in the context of neighbourhood gentrification. By looking at the intersections between personal inscriptions and collective belongings, we conceptualize home as a relational field of action which links the private world of houses to the micro-locales of neighbourhood space. We look at home as part of the 'little tactics of the habitat' (Morley 2001:428), that is: locating home in the practices and perceptions of everyday life. As Rodman states: "An anthropology whose objects are no longer conceived as automatically and naturally anchored in space will need to pay particular attention to the way spaces and places are made, imagined, contested and enforced" (Rodman 1992:18).

Gentrification mid-size

The gentrification literature has particularly been focused on the trendy sites of globalized capitals. There is a notable misrecognition of how processes of capitalist intervention, urban restructuring and neighborhood gentrification are affecting cities in the lower ranks of the global city index (Bell & Jayne 2006, Savage et al 2005). Small and mid-size cities have somehow tended to fall of the map of mainstream urban studies. In this paper we shift the study of gentrification from the hot spots of the global city to a small neighborhood in a mid-size city. The Rosmolenwijk is a working-class district in Zaanstad, a city of 147.000 inhabitants located 15 kilometers



Figure 1 Local vernaculars: Intell Hotel and inner-city redevelopment.



Figure 2 Local vernaculars: restoring green wooden house. Photograph from informant's collection.



Figure 3 Café Zaanzicht: symbolic paraphernalia in a neighbourhood bar.

to the north of Amsterdam. The city of Zaanstad comprises seven villages all bordering the Zaan River, which in 1974 were combined into one administrative unit. During the 19th century the city developed into a regional centre of food industries, chemical and wood processing factories. The waterfront was lined with industrial sites and packing houses, scattered around the surrounding landscape were thousand industrial windmills built for the refinement of staple products stored in the global trading centre of Amsterdam, and several leading companies located in the city, such as the retail concern of Ahold. During the 1970s Zaanstad, like many cities in the industrialized world, faced a gradual process of industrial decline and economic restructuring which saw a varied manufacturing sector removing from the banks of the river. Although most industries left the city, the riverside area still bears witness to its industrial past with some operating factories, such as the cocoa industry and a large manufacturing firm in linoleum, and 16% of the current population still working in industry.

Because of a lack of space in which industries could expand their production and storage activities, the city has been emptied out of its economic base and also

missed out on the opportunities for stable manufacturing work. Zaanstad has since been struggling with a split image. The city is known as a small town which, although geographically close to Amsterdam, for many remains a non-descript place rarely frequented by outside visitors. Despite its peripheral location, however, the city contributes several iconic images which are part of a highly medialized landscape of 'traditional' Dutch culture, such as wind mills, green wooden houses and industrial products. This is, for example, displayed in the Zaanse Schans, a tourist village of well-preserved historic windmills and wooden houses, which is part of the European Routes of Industrial Heritage and attracts approximately one million visitors each year. Today, the city shows many signs of regeneration which aims at positioning Zaanstad in the wider metropolitan region of Amsterdam. The redevelopment of the central city started in 2000, when a plan was commissioned to redirect the city's vulnerable economic situation towards a more varied knowledge based economy. This plan aims to transform the inner city into an area of office buildings, retail spaces and luxury apartment dwellings. It also prescribes that the architecture makes reference to the vernacular building traditions of the region, which is explicitly shown in the facades of a recently finished hotel and town hall that have attracted attention of national media and architectural magazines as new icons of postmodernist, neo-traditional design (figure 1). Together with the reintroduction of canals in the city center and the conversion of industrial sites into luxury development, these projects highlight a strategy of re-profiling a peripheral, de-industrializing city into a trendy site which attracts shoppers, tourists and new residents.

These inscriptions of industrial history and vernacular traditions onto the urban landscape make Zaanstad an interesting setting to explore the implications of gentrification on notions of home, class and community. In this paper we focus on the Rosmolenwijk, a former working-class neighborhood closely linked to the industrial past and located on the riverbank on the opposite site of the inner city. During the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century industries located at the Oostzijde, a dike which now is a three kilometers thoroughfare separating the riverside from the residential neighborhood which accommodated many people working in the local factories. In the 1920s catholic, protestant and socialist housing co-operations built low row housing which filled up the empty spaces of the Oostzijde and its side streets. Until the recent past, the Oostzijde acted as an important boundary which marked the

residences of industrialists and blue-collar workers. Lining the thoroughfare are several detached and private build houses, once occupied by factory managers but some of these now vacated and in decay, a few retail shops, a sports and community centre, a protestant centre for old people, a supermarket, a café and a temporary neighborhood museum called 'I Did It My Home', which has closed down. In 1989 the local government started the Zaan Banks Project, which aimed to "stimulate and direct the changes at hand" along the river, accompanied by the slogan "Return the Zaan to the people" (Municipality of Zaanstad 2006). Between 1997 and 2003, in accordance with local government attempts to "make better use of the potential of the riverside area", most industrial sites on the waterfront were converted into residential space. The conversion of industrial into residential buildings mostly took the form of razing sites and building high-rise housing, with two notable exceptions. A former catholic boys' school was converted into an art house cinema and in 2004 a 1913 functionalist grits husking factory building, called the Sword Maker, was redeveloped into a luxury 36 apartment building. In addition to the construction of new dwellings a walkway along the river and play areas bordering the Zaan were created. Recently, also the older part of the neighborhood has been subjected to redevelopment with several tracts of working-class houses already demolished to be developed into 40% rental and 60% owner occupied dwellings. Many of these houses were vacated by their renters and then rented out on a temporary basis while awaiting their demolition. During our fieldwork the renewal program was half way. A delay in the process of restructuring, caused by the economic recession, has left the neighborhood with a large wasteland area, still waiting to be developed. Nowadays, the Rosmolenwijk houses some 3750 households with a 5% below average income level and a relatively old population. The largest groups are autochthonous Dutch (71%), Turkish (9%) and Surinam people (4%).

The redevelopment of industrial sites into residential space reflects a new mode of living in the city, whereby areas which previously were unreachable or unliveable are transformed into luxury housing. This process of economic reinvestment on riverside locations, instigated by the private capital of developers and housing corporations, transforms pockets of industrial land into pieces of real estate. Since the new apartment buildings located at the riverside area are built on former industrial land, the regeneration of the waterfront resembles, although in small scale,

redevelopments which are often hailed as part of the riverside renaissance, like the Thames River in London (Davidson & Lees 2005) and the waterfront in Brooklyn, New York (Curran 2007). This is, of course, not a straightforward example of gentrification. Since there are no residential spaces being demolished and no residents forced to relocate, the waterfront redevelopment could best be classified as a process of re-urbanization (Butler 2007). Instead of middle- and upper-middle-class residents as key actors in the changing class composition of the neighbourhood, these forms of gentrification are guided by the capital and policies of local governments, corporations and real-estate developers (Smith 2002:439). This process of ‘third-wave gentrification’ contains strategies of transforming large pieces of urban space into residential complexes which aim at changing the class make-up of parts of the city. Davidson and Lees (2005) argue for stretching the definition of the concept of gentrification. They identify four main ingredients: the reinvestment by capital, the social upgrading of space by higher-income groups, changes in the urban landscape and the built environment, and indirect forms of social displacement. Nevertheless, the redevelopment of the neighbourhood reflects some basic patterns of classical gentrification, as transformations in physical space are part of a wider and ongoing process of symbolic upgrading of the city which is also reflected in the redevelopment of the inner-city and the urge to make Zaanstad part of the Amsterdam metropolitan area (*cf.* Davidson & Lees 2005:1175). Furthermore, as we will discuss below, the redeveloped riverside also is emblematic of a loss of a link between two parts of neighbourhood space which once were connected but now are tending to grow apart.

Narrative mapping

The data used in this paper were collected between March 2010 and January 2011 as part of a larger research project on symbolic space and collective identity in four neighborhood sites in the city of Zaanstad. In this research we used a mix of ethnographic methods to explore the intersections between personal narratives on space and the collective realm of neighborhood spaces. In the first stages of our fieldwork we conducted interviews with 9 local professionals to make a rapid ethnographic assessment of the social composition and physical arrangement of neighborhood space. Interviews were held with housing corporation officers, a school headmaster, local government managers, an urban planner, a community artist, a

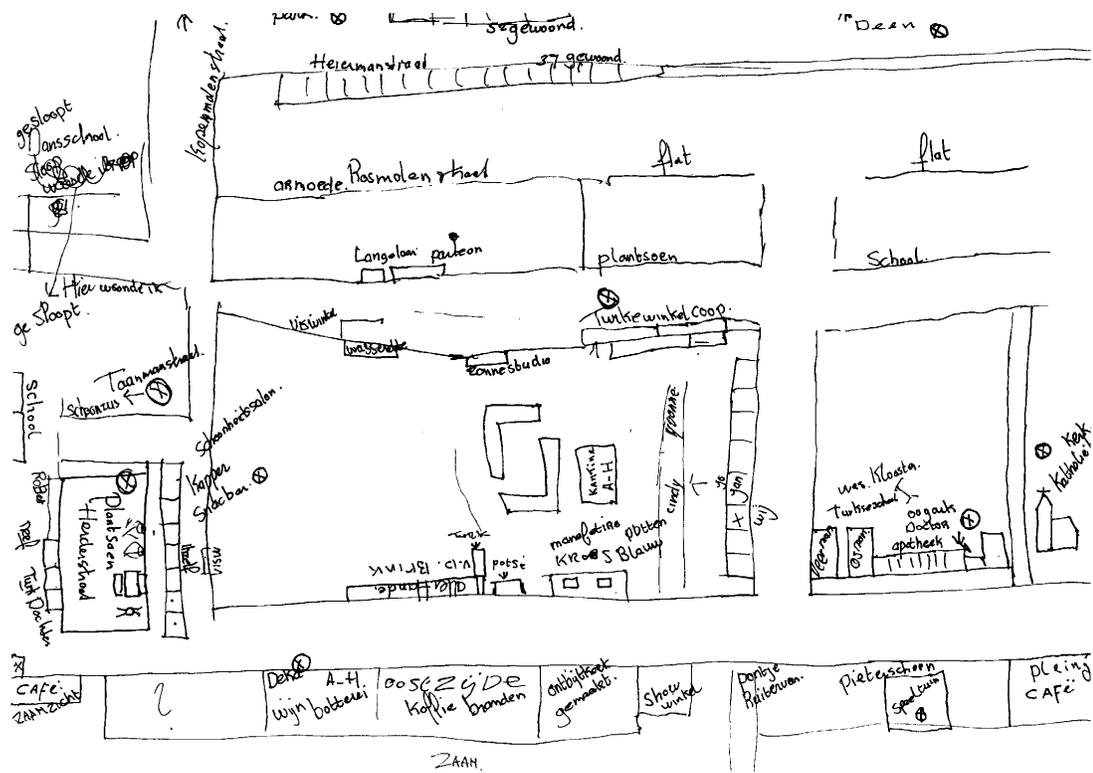
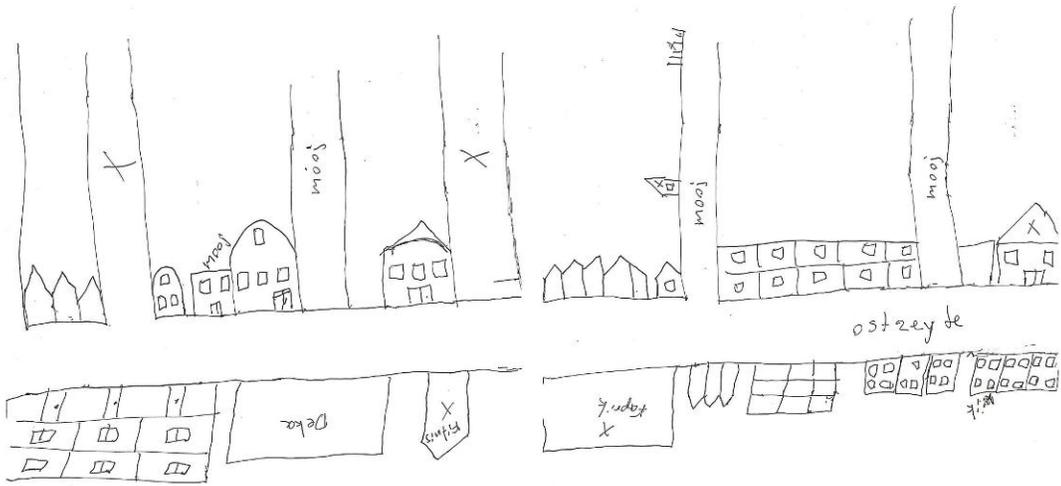
manager of a local sports hall and residents participating in community organisations. These interviews were either held in offices or while travelling through the city by car or on foot. Most interviews were set up as guided tours (Anderson 2004), which means that we led informants lead us through neighbourhood sites while they talked about what came to mind and into view. An advantage of these tours is that it allows informants to reflect on places and actions in situ, which is not possible in more conventional sit-down interviews.

These tours were also used for selecting a research site to do more detailed observations and interviews. Since our research was focused on personal geographies and how they translate to group identities and notions of class and belonging, we selected a small section of the neighborhood which comprises a redeveloped area of apartment buildings located at the riverbank and part of the working-class area. In order to prevent that our research sample would be biased by the preferences and networks of local professionals, we used a random sample in which we selected informants by ringing doorbells in each area and asking people to do an interview. Of the informants living in the old part of the neighbourhood all but two newcomers have been living in the area for at least 17 years. All interviews were held in people's homes and took between one and four hours. The interviews were taped and transcribed and at a later stage coded and analyzed using a qualitative software program suitable for open coding. Next to these interviews and walking tours we also studied policy documents, made observations of public sites and at the yearly neighborhood feast which was held in the spring of 2011.

During interviews we asked informants to draw a map of the neighborhood area and specific sites that were mentioned by them during the course of our conversation. We use these drawings to take an emic perspective on residential space, that is: we set out to cast a look at urban space through the eyes of our informants. For these mapping techniques a narrative approach was developed (Reinders 2011), which means that people were not asked to draw a neighborhood map and then discuss what had been pictured, but rather to let these drawings developed during the course of an interview. This narrative approach is a reassessment of the method of cognitive mapping used in human geography and environmental psychology for studying the mental phenomena that make up a place (*cf.* Lynch 1972, Downs & Stea 1973, Downs & Stea 1977, Gould & White 1974), which made it possible for informants to add

information or adjust their maps to the topics discussed in the conversation. In the end, a narrative map is a graphic summary of the interview itself, which not only represents the neighborhood as a physical space but also is filled with references to the symbolism of urban space, the social networks of informants, their personal histories, and their associations with moods and atmospheres. In this paper we use the maps as drawn by our informants to explore the relations between personal perception, collective identity and material setting.

A narrative approach thus allows us to explore the less tangible realm of meanings, stories, memories and local histories as the link with personal recollections of neighbourhood space. In this paper we thus follow a paradigm shift in the study of space and place, which moves away from a claim on space as objective, absolute and unproblematic, towards a constructionist approach to the ways places are interpreted, narrated, represented and culturally encoded. Rather than a physical setting or inert container of social relations, place here is understood as a socio-cultural construction intricately connected with the development of personal and group identity. In a fundamental way then, narrative maps points us to how knowledge of the socio-spatial environment is related to the forming of personal and collective identities. Narrative maps tell us how people move through space, as well as how people define status differences and social structures in urban space. A narrative approach directs us away from notions of home and belonging as being locked in private perceptions, to the discursive realm of telling stories. It relocates personal recollections of space by “removing it from the vault of the mind and returning it to the flux of human dialogue” (Dixon & Durrheim 2000:32). Narrative maps are social constructions that people create through talk, which connects personal geographies with the collective practices through which notions of place, home and belonging are formed. The spatial stories discussed below show how residents connect past and present, self and other in relation to the spaces that surround them (Mason 2004, Leach 2002). By foregrounding how people create a sense of processes of ‘selective memorialization’, these maps put personal representations of neighborhood space out in the “visible and audible world of defended typifications rather than in the subjective realm of individual sentiments” (Suttles 1984:302). Below we will use these narrative maps to show how people sort themselves and co-residents into the physical, social and symbolic realm of neighbourhood space.



Buying homes and keeping settled

Gentrification concerns a micro-political process in which different groups of residents make territorial and symbolic claims to space (Fraser 2004:454). Below we explore the social and territorial process of 'stalled gentrification (Williams 1988) in which resident groups unintentionally are forced to deal with each others presence. The paper aims to understand the texture of gentrifying neighbourhood space: the narratives, relationships and experiences of residential coexistence. Following the narrative paradigm outlined above, notions of home, attachment and collective belonging are analyzed as social constructions through which people draw connections and dividing lines. The neighbourhood is thereby shown as a social world in which groups and collective organizations use normative evaluations and social categorizations in framing their perceptions of co-residents. A central issue in the practices and mechanisms of social categorization is the consensus people generate through social interactions and practices of sociability (Southerton 2006:91). Inherent in these practices and evaluations are normative judgements negotiated in the routines of everyday life through which people frame, order and inscribe meaning to groups and individuals. In this section we will first discuss narratives of home and place among residents in the working-class district and then turn to the 'new classes' living in the redeveloped waterfront area of the Rosmolenwijk.

Working-class space: intimacy, decline and sociability

From our interviews with residents and local professionals a rather crystallized image emerged of the Rosmolenwijk as a vast one-class district defined by a specific sense of culture and community. Despite differences in age, profession and length of residence, people referred to the neighbourhood as a little village in the city where people have built up a shared world with a shared history. These characterizations resemble the images of urban working-class communities as studied by Young and Willmott (1970): a neighbourhood where people have associations of a lifetime in common and shared a sense of community identity and solidarity between people occupying a common space. This sense of neighbourhood identity springs from the fact that residents often have lived for a long time in the neighbourhood and have built up an intricate network of kin, friends and family relationships living in the vicinity. In fact, all informants,

except for two newcomers, had kinship networks in the Rosmolenwijk. These social networks contribute to feelings of attachment to the local neighbourhood and belonging in a familiar society.

Despite changes in its social-economic structure, most informants typified the neighbourhood as a working-class area. These emic typifications of 'working-class' do not directly refer to the income levels or occupational characteristics of the population, but foremost to a culture of frequent and intimate social interactions with neighbours (sitting, drinking, talking). Residents often talked about forms of street encounters and sociability the neighbourhood offers, many of them mention sitting out in the street with neighbours as an enjoying experience. This is, for example, said by Carrie who, after a sociable life as an inner-city market woman now lives in a 'quiet' side street.

C: "When I'm in my backyard, I often think: 'Damn, look at me, now I'm just sitting alone here in the back'".

R: "Like you're in jail".

C: "I'm looking up at this ugly backside of the house and then I easily take my chair and go sit in front of the house. Jan used to come over and he would say: 'Carrie...'. Cause somebody always needs to start the conversation, right? (...) And he would take a bottle of wine and a glass and I would sit down. And then this person would come along and then that person. That's me, I like to chat. Not all day though".

This sense of spontaneous interactions among neighbors is also expressed by Carmelita, a 35 year old housewife.

"This is like a working class neighbourhood. So it's always, like, when I go to my friends' place, who just lives a few blocks away, then people are always having a chat with one another. When I go visit my friends who live in the new area those things don't seem to happen that much".

Carmelia told us how she and her neighbours sometimes, especially in summertime, would put up chairs in the street to watch over their kids and organized joint barbecue parties.

"It's, like, I often chat with everyone, right? If we are all together standing outside in summer, when the weather is really nice, then we start here for instance with two or three people. A bottle of wine, it's

really nice. At a certain moment there would be a lot more people sitting here, sometimes until eleven or twelve a clock in the evening”.

Although these acts of street sociability are read as a working-class phenomenon, residents do not observe them as fixed and immune to change. Older residents, especially, make subtle differences between sections of neighbourhood space as they relate to forms of social interaction, class positions and religious affiliation. They reminisce of parts of the neighbourhood built for ‘better situated’ workers and teachers and also make references to dividing lines between protestant, catholic and ‘socialist’ families that reflect the pillarization along lines of faith and political affiliation characterizing Dutch society in the first half of the 20th century. Although these characterizations used to be more clear-cut because of the former work base of the population, people are still use them as meaningful categories for evaluating co-residents. Residents and local professionals also make differences between sections of the neighbourhood. One recurrent theme was a divide between the ‘sociable’ and cohesive northern part and the ‘apathetic’ southern part, where people are less active in voluntary work and more hesitant to participate in neighbourhood meetings. The northern part is described as a “Zaanse Jordaan”, a name which refers to an old ‘folky’ district in the inner-city of Amsterdam, which is also used on postings and flyers of the local residents association. In contrast to these feelings of connectedness and attachment, there is, however, also a strongly felt distrust and resistance to outsiders entering the neighbourhood. Although community organizations draw nostalgic comparisons with the sociability of an Amsterdam neighbourhood, they also express a sense of loss of neighbourhood identity because of ‘new’ residents from Amsterdam entering the area. Confronted with an increasing number of Amsterdammers, who are buying homes and occupy temporary rental houses waiting for demolition, people tell about a lack of identification between groups. This works both ways. For example, a community artist, who lives in Amsterdam, was surprised by a “strange sort of subjection” and lack of resistance to local government plans he encountered among local residents. He traces this attitude to a deep felt loss of pride derived from the once flourishing industrial economy of the city.

The relocation of industries has had serious repercussions on the relations between families, co-workers and neighbors. The neighbourhood is portrayed as a

white working-class community which is affected by de-industrialization and the influx of temporary residents. As Carrie reflects on the changing class composition of the Rosmolenwijk:

“My son in law was raised in a better milieu, so he thought of this neighbourhood as a shabby place. Well, I’m not that full of myself, but some day last week I was picking up my little man [grandson] from a school trip. And as we were standing at the playground in front of the school, near the busses, I was having a look at all these people around me. And then I thought: ‘He’s right after all’. I said to myself: ‘What a misery altogether’”.

Long-time residents, especially, refer to the process of urban renewal which has been underway for the last ten years, as creating upheaval and unrest which in their view is destructive to feelings of local solidarity. Others stress the growing detachment between neighbours caused by ongoing individualisation or cultural differences. Two older women, Rintze and Susanne, for example, both express the feeling that urban restructuring is impacting on the social cohesion in the neighbourhood. In their view, the demolition program of rental dwellings has caused a lot of people to move out of the neighbourhood, thereby making it “less cosy”. Rintze says: “People used to say ‘hey’ and ‘how are you doing’ and that doesn’t happen that much anymore”. Susanne feels that, since the restructuring program has taken so long, people who have been temporarily relocated are not likely to return. “It’s such a pity”, she says. “This used to be a neighbourhood where people mixed and talked and I don’t think that will return in the same way”. Jolanda, a 50 year old community nurse working and living in the Rosmolenwijk, talked about the direct effects of urban restructuring on community life. She works as a volunteer at the local sports hall, which was set up as a catholic playground in the 1920s and today is home to several neighbourhood based leisure clubs all run by volunteers. After many volunteers have moved to other parts of the city it has proven to be hard to find new volunteers “because the young ones are not showing any interest”. In addition, some informants feel that renters living in the houses scheduled for demolition do not commit themselves to neighbourhood life.

“This block is not up for demolition, so here the community is cohesive (...) We just go by each other’s houses and ... recently one of our neighbours died. Whether you were close to them or not, you

just go together as a neighbourhood. You place a little wreath at that family's house. You don't have to visit them, but you just let them know you care. The neighbourhood feels sorry as well. He died, we send a card. You don't see that there [in the blocks that will be demolished] anymore. It used to be there as well" (Rintze).

This loss of an intimate neighbourhood life is also felt to be caused by friends and acquaintances leaving the area. Since the dwellings in the older part of the neighbourhood are generally quite small, they are mostly inhabited by elderly people, who often move to senior homes outside the neighbourhood. Other demographic changes in the neighbourhood populations are noted as well, such as the arrival of non-native Dutch who are seen as hard to communicate with. Mark, a shopkeeper on the Oostzijde, who was born and raised in the Rosmolenwijk but has since been living in other parts of the city, describes the incoming renters who get a temporary tenancy lease as "mostly people with a dark skin", "who walk with their hoods pulled over most of their faces, gathering in groups on street corners and employing all kinds of activities that won't do the neighbourhood any good". Bert and Rintze both feel that their non-native Dutch neighbours are less prone to chat with them in the streets, which somewhat reduces their feeling of being at home in the Rosmolenwijk. Carrie on the other hand talks about less sociability due to declining tolerance among her ageing neighbours for noise caused by other neighbours. She also feels that youngsters are more prone to vandalism, partly because they receive less attention from their parents.

In response to these intrusions on notions of community identity, the neighbourhood sees several projects being developed which strive for reclaiming and preserving a 'lost space' (Boyd 2000:17) of working-class community. This is shown in a group of approximately 60 residents who are loyal visitors to community meetings and display what some refer to as a history of solidarity characteristic of the labour movement and communist party. Through these recollections of the neighbourhood's past people produce a shared sense of place which is socially coherent. This sense of collective identity is amplified by a social and spatial network of institutional arrangements, such as local bars, schools, sports clubs and the yearly neighbourhood festival. People would often refer to signs and images of a local 'community scape' (Wilson & Grammenos 2005), as expressed in the symbolic paraphernalia which

decorate the green wooden houses (figure 2), a neighbourhood bar (figure 3) or the representation of 'Zaanse' houses in the newly build inner-city hotel (figure 1).

The redeveloped waterfront and the old working-class district are generally seen as separate social worlds. A local government official says residents of the old part often use references to "us" in contrast to "them", which refers to people living near the riverside. Although, as will be discussed, the personal histories of residents in the new part of town often are intertwined with the old neighborhood, there is a generally felt sense of the waterfront area as a foreign place. A board member of the local sports club claims that the redeveloped waterfront area is "another world" peopled by "residents who don't integrate". This sense of otherness is framed in notions of class and income, as well as feel and atmosphere. The new part is described in terms of "different" and "anonymous". People are said to live solitary lives and to distance themselves from neighbors and local community life. The community artists cited above claims: "People from the old part are active when they want things to be done, but they never see people from the new part. They are what they call 'yuppies'". The manager of the local sports club says he regrets these forms of disaffiliation. "I would have liked there was a feeling of togetherness and commitment to the neighbourhood. Now, it's getting boring. We, people from the old part, are not used to this".

Middle-class nostalgia

Even if long-time residents in the old part express a nuanced view on its street and neighbourhood sociability, talking in terms of loss and discontinuity, to the informants who recently came to Rosmolenwijk, the neighbourhood seems a promising haven of working-class dwelling practices and social life. What follows are some examples of how newcomers narrate on their sense of place and community.

Bert, because his last house was too costly after his divorce, moved in from Amsterdam two months ago with his two daughters. He looked for a place that was affordable and also for a neighbourhood that was more quiet and intimate than the one in which he lived before.

"This is the kind of working-class neighbourhood that I am used to. I used to live in that kind of neighbourhood all my life, in Amsterdam

North, near the shipping company. My father was a shipbuilder. If the weather was nice, people sat outside in the street. The neighbours would sit in front too and have a talk. (...) And I missed that but that is here in this street. And you have it here, in the other street to the back. Even if you don't know them you just say good day and they say good day to you. Yes, why not, right? And in Amsterdam that's gone. One misses that. You used to have it in the Jordaan [neighbourhood in the centre of Amsterdam]. People are being selfish. And what the neighbours are doing people find a bit frightening, so 'leave it be'. 'We don't want to know'".

During his neighbourhood expeditions he undertook before buying his house, Bert noticed people chatting on the streets. When he moved in his now house he had a party in the street to celebrate his arrival and he very much appreciated the neighbours' "nice reactions" to this kind of street sociability. Now that he has been living in the Rosmolenwijk for two months he has regular short social contacts with the people in his street and talks to his neighbours over the hedge. He says he has found something he missed before.

Ad is in his mid 50s. He has recently bought a house in the old part of the Rosmolenwijk, where he and his two daughters have been living now for two months. He was born in the north of Amsterdam and has lived in many parts of the city. After his divorce, however, it was hard to pay the mortgage with only one income and after two years of searching he found a smaller and cheaper house in the Rosmolenwijk. Ad now works as a clerk at the municipality in Amsterdam, and his daughters go to high school in Amsterdam. Ad's map (figure X) shows not only a rough sketch of the northern part of Rosmolenwijk but also some streets on the other side of the Zaan ('Westzijde', 'Ooievaarstraat', 'Dam'). These are streets he would have preferred to move to, because they have less cars and have many old houses with green gables, which are typical for the Zaan area. But since these houses are more expensive and need new foundation, he opted for a house in the Rosmolenwijk. He got an instant good impression of the neighbourhood, which he describes as "quiet" and "old-fashioned". Ad likes the fact that the physical structure of the industrial waterfront zone was kept intact. For him, this makes the neighbourhood legible as a working class area. Also the social encounters he has in the old part of the neighbourhood help him to sustain this image. He enjoys being asked for a drink in the street or in the garden by his neighbours. For this reason he prefers his new "working class" neighbourhood to

Almere, one of Amsterdam's satellite cities built in the 1960s and 1970s, where he could have bought a more spacious dwelling for the same amount of money.

“I had a look in Almere [new town close to Amsterdam], my brother lives there – he said: come join us here. There are nice houses, really big ones. Only, it lacks a life. Look, this neighbourhood is what I'm used to. I used to live in a working-class neighbourhood all my life, in Amsterdam North, close to where the shipping company was located. My father was a shipbuilder. If the weather was nice, people would sit outside in the street. The neighbours would sit in front too and have a talk. And you don't really have that in Amsterdam anymore. My last house was an apartment. I didn't know who my neighbours were. People would say 'hello', but apart from that no one knew one another. And here it's like ... when I came to live here I rang the bells of my neighbours and introduce myself. And they would say: 'Come on in, have a drink'”.

Ad's story is one of loss and retrieval. When moving back to the neighbourhood of his youth he could not find the social climate he remembered it to have, whereas now, in Rosmolenwijk it is regained. Nevertheless, there threats to his preferred “easy-going” social climate of the neighbourhood. He feels that non-native Dutch residents of Zaandam do not mix so easily with others. They look the other way when he greets them.

“I said: 'Let's mix with each other, come on, let's get cosy together'. In these streets people greet each other, even if they don't know one another. After all, why not, right? In Amsterdam that's gone. So I missed that”.

For some 'newcomers' the Rosmolenwijk isn't really a new place. For seven years Nelly Merts has been living with her husband in a penthouse located on the waterfront and with a view on the river and the inner city. They were both born and bred in the Rosmolenwijk where, until their late twenties, they lived in various houses until they moved to other places in the city. After 32 years they returned to their neighbourhood of origin. Nelly worked for some time as an assistant attendant in a senior home. Her retired husband first worked in a factory located on the waterfront and later became a travel agent downtown. Nelly's map (figure X) shows nearly all streets in the old part of the Rosmolenwijk and in the waterfront area, as well as

references to neighbourhood sites which she visits frequently, such as the art house cinema, the Zaanzicht café and the local supermarket. During her childhood Nelly developed an intimate knowledge about the street plan as well the social composition of the neighbourhood, as for example, shown in her demarcations of separate areas of residential streets built by protestant, catholic and 'humanist' housing corporations. She explains that within these areas there were divisions according to wealth. Nellie's husband is still involved in a men's club that buys lottery tickets, set up by catholic workers from the area (he has maintained this membership through their 32 years of absence from Rosmolenwijk). Despite her roots to the old part of the neighbourhood, she is, however, not very nostalgic or particularly attached to it. Although she feels she belongs to the neighbourhoods in Zaanstad where she has lived during her life, she doesn't feel she has "any business" in the neighbourhood across the Oostzijde apart from visiting her daughter. She returned to the neighbourhood to be closer to city centre, which is across the bridge, and to have a house with a view on the Zaan River. She has her daily life and social contacts primarily in the apartment buildings on the waterfront. She is enthusiastic about the yearly barbecue that is organized for and by residents of the three apartment blocks that form a court and also has good memories of the lustrum party the residents of the apartment blocks held at the local cinema.

Peter Kluft and his wife are both in their mid-fifties. They were born and raised in Zaanstad and then moved to other places in the province of North Holland. Peter has worked as a manager of recreational areas for the provincial government and now is a district manager near the city of Haarlem. Seven years ago they noticed they spent a lot of time travelling to their friends and family living in Zaandam and decided to return. Peter expresses his emotional attachment to the city as a reason for moving back:

"This is where my roots are. I was raised here. I almost know every stone in the pavement in the centre of Zaandam. We went dancing, had our experiences. As you get older you want to go back to your roots".

After seeing an advertisement for the new apartment buildings build along the Zaan River they bought a four room maisonette. They were attracted to its feel of spaciousness and the view it offers on the river as well as its location near the city centre. On the map Peter drew (figure X) we see a long slice of the neighbourhood,

which is actually only the stroke of new apartment buildings build along the Zaan River with some side streets and facilities in the older part of the neighbourhood. Peter remembers the neighbourhood from his teen years because he went to high school nearby and had a girlfriend that lived there. He remembers the old neighbourhood as close knit and a place where people “knew everything about each other”. Although there were fractions of residents based on religious ties, the borderlines between groups were knit together through sports and other local clubs. For him the neighbourhood of today still has the “feel” of a working-class district, a place where, because of the small houses tightly packed together, people are encouraged to spend time in front of their houses and on the street. In contrast to the lively feel of the old part, Peter sees the courtyards of the new apartment blocks, even though there are children playing and people are aware of each other’s presence, as characterized by a quite atmosphere and almost non-existent public life. Because of his knowledge of neighbourhood life, he is not displeased by the sight of a busy neighbourhood community with people are sitting on stoops and, for example, celebrating the achievements of the national football team. But he also understands newcomers who dislike this kind of identity display and forms of sociability. Or as he had them thinking: “What do I have to do with that achenebbisj crap in front of my house”. There is, however, also a sense of loss of community solidarity as the neighbourhood lost most facilities, such as the dancing school “where many of love relationships were started”, and also has been subjected to the influx of non-native Dutch people “who are less social”, which is according to Peter a reason for people to flee “their neighbourhood”. These immigrants are also accused for “living outside”.

Some informants living in the waterfront residencies see the Rosmolenwijk as an ‘edgy neighbourhood’. Gemma Kwantus, a 28 year old PhD student and teacher of religion studies at the University of Amsterdam, is a new resident living in the redeveloped area near the waterfront. She was born in Wormer, a village five kilometres north of Zaandam, also located near the river. After living in Amsterdam as a student for a few years, she and her female partner decided to buy a house in Zaanstad, which according to them is “the best suburb of Amsterdam”. “It has its own theatre and facilities. Maybe it’s not as culturally rich as Amsterdam, but it’s a comfortable place to live”. Gemma’s narrative drawing (figure X) is a schematic map of the whole administrative unit of the Rosmolenwijk, with two arrows on both sides

of the Oostzijde. These arrows represent the routes to her most important destinations outside the neighbourhood in her weekly routine. One leads to Amsterdam, where she works a few days per week, and the other to the city hall, where she does voluntary work for a political party. The rest of the week she works at home (marked with a house shape and the text “this is where I am most of the time”). The other red lines indicate her jogging routes. Gemma says that jogging and biking make her happy. The bent shapes and swirls give the map a sense of motion.

Gemma says that it is the diversity of the built environment that makes the neighbourhood attractive to her. She likes the new apartments on the waterfront because she thinks they look “sturdy”, as well as the old houses with green facades that are scattered over the neighbourhood, as well as the 19th century workers housing that remind her of “old times”. These dwellings and the way they are adapted by the people who live there, remind her of the house and the neighbourhood in which she grew up. From her couch she sees the backside of a row of rental dwellings, and the wooden structures its tenants have built in the gardens, and comments:

“Some people who came to visit didn’t like the sight of this area. But I come from the Knollendammerstraat in Wormer, and if Wormer had a depressed neighbourhood then *that* would be the place for me to have a home. There used to be street, squeezed in between the paper factory of Remmert Dekker, a cacao factory and a wholesale business for building materials, and that’s where we spend a lot of time. It was like a poor street. So I’m very much used to these kinds of working-class neighbourhoods. I like them. (...) My grandpa used to have a wooden shed just like that. The backdoor was a cold place so he’d build himself a wooden shoe shack. That way he basically built wooden sheds all over our garden. So I’m used to the wood and the tinkering. It just felt really good when we came to have a look here. (...) It just gives the neighbourhood something of a special atmosphere”.

In her view the neighbourhood is more attractive than the more upscale neighbourhood bordering on Rosmolenwijk (marked as ‘VINEX’ on the map), which she finds boring because of its uniform design. Gemma and her partner decided to buy in this neighbourhood because it had more of the facilities of a city. Gemma hopes to build a window in the attic so she can “look out over the neighbourhood and enjoy the view”. “That’s a lot of fun”, she says. “That’s like what you see here in the streets as well, a lot of variation in building styles”. Gemma is attached to the physical structures of the

working class neighbourhood. They provide her with a sense of home and feed her nostalgia. She would like to join in the social structures of its older working class residents as well, but finds out that this is not as easy.

“I would love to be in contact with the veterans here, because I feel comfortable with them, but I also notice that they just don’t feel so comfortable with me. And in a way it’s weird that I didn’t realize this earlier, because that also goes for my own grandparents. They do not feel as connected to me anymore now that I work at the university and live a different kind of life”.

Gemma says she has now come to terms with the existence of separated social circuits of the neighbourhood, and realizes that her own social circle is quite homogeneous in terms of education, income and life phase. Her partner is a better socializer, according to Gemma, and is more successful at making contact with neighbours during shopping, gardening. Wishing to have more social ties to the neighbourhood, Gemma expects to be able to build durable connections mostly with other people who recently bought a house in Rosmolenwijk. These people live in new built blocks in the old neighbourhood and the apartments on the waterfront. However, she has noticed that she only sees the people living on the waterfront from afar during her jogging sessions, when they are sitting on their balconies. Her feeling is that it will be quite hard to meet them since “they have their own parking garages and a courtyard that leads to their apartments. They stick to their side of the Oostzijde and never go to the neighbourhood. And we have no business there either”. Gemma hopes that when she and her partner have a child, she will have more opportunities to meet others and “integrate” into neighbourhood life. For this reason, she especially embraces the plans for a school combined with neighbourhood facilities.

Physical boundaries are important landmarks in the perception and judgement of residential space. Crossing these boundaries leads to feelings of intrusion and suspicion. This is shown, for example, by the following narrative of Carrie.

“I do sometimes sit with my little man [grandson] on this piece of grass near the river [located between two apartment blocks on the waterfront]. Well, then I sit between these new buildings and then they [other women] are chatting [imitating a chic language] Then you notice you don’t really belong. I am a talker and I notice people who

don't want to chat with me. Well, I've had this several times. I start talking and then, after a long pause, they react. But that's all, nothing more. Then I think: 'Pff, let go'. Then I'm finished with it. I just stop talking".

These feelings of unease with cross-class talk and association is also expressed by Emma, a 29 year old newcomer living in the renovated 'Swordmaker' factory building.

"Sometimes, I feel I connect with people who live in the same kind of house as mine. People who are more recent and new in the neighbourhood. They have newer and bigger houses. It's like: 'Oh, yes, my kind of people. I would very much love to connect with the veterans because it makes me feel comfortable. But I also sense that they don't feel comfortable with me".

This lack of discomfort also is shown on the map drawn by Emma (figure X), which narrates on how her husband, by trying to distance himself from "other kinds of people", takes his car to drive through the neighbourhood. The way people conform and recreate these boundaries understates the importance attached to creating a form of residential unity and defining the borders and home range of adequate social control. The map of Emma exemplifies feelings of attachment as well as active and self-conscious strategies of avoidance. This 'blinking out' of other classes underscores how feelings of abjection are a basis for divisions of 'spaces of purity' and 'spaces of pollution' (Sibley 1995). Boundaries are physical as well as moral. These narratives show a discomfort with intermediate spaces where people from different classes and territorial groups are able to share boundaries that "open them to mutual inspection, thus giving the occasion for transient interaction between groups, for gossip, and for interpretive observation" (Sutcliffe 1970:73).

Conclusions

In recent years there has been a strong focus on the exclusionary practices of gentrification as they intersect with the hard processes of capitalist intervention and urban restructuring. Despite the rapidly expanding literature on gentrification there is limited ethnographic attention to the everyday tactics and notions of belonging that would constitute this exclusionary character. Especially, notions of home and attachment are an under researched theme in relation to gentrification. This is

surprising, since processes of gentrification concern houses as well as homes. While belonging is often formulated in connection to a community of (like minded) others, notions of home also refer to safeness, continuity, familiarity, control and escape from public surveillance in private space. Home therefore not only relates to physical spaces but also encapsulates social, symbolic and phantasmagorical attributes to places as well.

In this paper we explored the ways established and newcomers express a sense of home and belonging through the prisms of social class, cultural background and everyday experience. We have focused on narratives as ontological narratives through which people claim and mark space and tell who belongs and who does not (Bird 2002:523). “The drawing of a boundary around a particular space is”, as Featherstone argues, “a relational act which depends upon the figuration of significant other localities within which one seeks to situate it” (cited in Bird 2002:523). These narratives of belonging and distancing are an inherent part of the social organization of space. Gentrification, as stated above, concerns an intricate process in which people redraw physical, social and symbolic boundaries of neighbourhood space. Boundaries separate and distribute people and activities into social fields. As a conceptual tool for categorizing others, symbolic boundaries are object of a micro-political struggle over space. These boundaries become social when symbols are used for the objectification of social differences. In our interviews people would use different kinds of boundary work in order to set themselves apart from others. Southerton defines ‘boundary work’ as “the active maintenance and negotiation with others (whether imagined or in practice) of guiding frameworks for inclusion” (2002:175). This is, for example, shown in the way people mark and define boundaries of what they consider to be their home area.

Mike Savage has introduced the concept of ‘elective belonging’ to refer to “the way that middle class people claimed moral rights over place through their capacity to move on, and put down roots in, a specific place which was not just functionally important to them but which also mattered symbolically” (2010:116). This definition incorporates an aesthetic and ethic relationship with place, forms of residential attachment among gentrifiers which articulates a certain sense of belonging that does not relate to claims of history. Whereas the ‘old’ residents are “those fixed in place”, elective belongers try to “bracket out those who live in the place”. In other words, not

only do newcomers have no social ties to established residents, they also try to ignore the presence of those who can make historical claims to place. “Elective belonging pitches choice against history”, Savage writes, “as the migrant consumer rubs up against dwellers with historical attachments to place” (116). In the context of an English suburb, Paul Watt (2009) argues that newcomers attach importance to the symbolic expression of status and economic success, with the immediate locality being only of secondary importance. Using minimal empirical evidence (only two interview fragments), Davidson and Lees claim that ‘corporate gentrifiers’ have no sense of attachment to the locality. They are said to stick around their enclosed and contained residences instead of linking with the local neighbourhood. They are a transient people who “tend not to put down roots” and have only bought into the neighbourhood for displaying and consuming a particular lifestyle (2005:1183). In his analysis of the London Docklands, Tim Butler also states that for respondents “location might have been key but a sense of place was largely irrelevant” (2007:774). Our findings only partly support these observations, as incoming residents in the Rosmolenwijk express a profound attachment to the neighbourhood area and their sense of the Zaanstad landscape. Most of our informants made a conscious and emotionally driven decision to buy a house nearby a working-class area.

Our research shows that middle class newcomers as well as lower class newcomers and ‘established’ residents share attachments to symbolical representations of the neighbourhood, incorporating the history of the place. Although some middle class newcomers do try to ‘bracket out’ the established community, most informants are prone to live in a working-class neighbourhood and narrate on how the uniqueness of its industrial past and the intensive social life gives them leads for experiencing authenticity. Other than the elective belongers described by Savage, the gentrifiers of the Rosmolenwijk attach value to nature and landscape, as well as the social atmosphere of neighbourhood space. This is a gentrified landscape in which people are felt to belong to the sites and sights of the city but also where they bestow character and authenticity to place and the (imagined) sociability of a working class neighbourhood. Newcomers and established do live separate lives but, in their desire to create a spatially confined sphere of safety, their sense of home are more close than the practices of everyday life are suggesting us.

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