Gentrification and those 'in between:' perceptions, meanings and interactions among those who are neither the gentrifiers, nor the displaced

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Abstract

Gentrification is often viewed as a process with distinct 'winners' – the gentrifiers, and 'losers' – the displaced. This is because most empirical work examines it from one of these two perspectives; the consequences of gentrification are, therefore, painted in very 'black and white' terms. However, there are many people who fit into neither category. Those who live through the process can have a more blurred, nuanced and, in some cases contradictory view of gentrification: some aspects they appreciated, while others frightened them. This paper will bring together more than seven years of work carried out in the Netherlands, Ireland and Scotland, with different groups of residents living through different types of gentrification. It will examine how people who are neither the gentrifiers nor the displaced experience the process shaping their neighbourhood. This paper argues for a more complete view of the impact of gentrification, one which takes into account the complex and varied meanings, perceptions and experiences that different individuals and groups have towards the same process of neighbourhood change. It will conclude by critically reflecting on the theoretical and conceptual meanings of gentrification, when examined from the perspectives of those who live through it.

Keywords: gentrification, cohesion, interaction, neighbourhood, experience, perception

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INTRODUCTION

Gentrification is one of the biggest forces shaping contemporary cities and, perhaps, the most politically-loaded word in urban geography (Davidson and Lees, 2005). The term, which was originally coined by sociologist Ruth Glass to describe the upgrading of old working-class housing in inner-city London, has evolved over the past fifty years to represent a much more complex process of class transformation and the creation of affluent space (Smith, 2002). This includes not only the upgrading of old working-class neighbourhoods, but new-build developments on brownfield sties as well (Davidson and Lees, 2005).

The gentrification debate is highly polarised. It is seen as either a positive or a negative. This is because many of the empirical studies tend to focus on one of two groups: gentrifiers, who are seen to be 'winners' in the process, and the displaced, who are the 'losers' forced to leave their homes as their neighbourhoods gentrify. But what about the many different types of people who, for various reasons, do not fit into one of these categories? Can they be so easily placed into either the winner's or the loser's box? How do they perceive of gentrification? Do these sentiments change over time as the process of gentrification evolves? What do we learn about gentrification when examining it from people who live with, or through gentrification in many different ways?

These are the questions that have been at the core of my research for more than seven years. While aiming to conduct critical empirical research, I have contributed to debates about the effects of gentrification by listening to perspectives of those who live through the process. These viewpoints do not often feature prominently in scholarly work. These discourses have forced me to challenge the dualistic view of gentrification so often seen both in the literature and in policy circles; in many cases, respondents who live through the process have mixed views towards its impact on them, their neighbourhoods and their communities. This research was conducted in Edinburgh, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and Dublin, either as part of my own work, or together with students. The aim of this paper is to bring together these different studies to examine more holistically what we can learn about gentrification by studying it from the perspective of those who live through it.

GENTRIFICATION: A BLACK AND WHITE DEBATE?

Early empirical work on the impact of gentrification, coming largely from critical and Marxist traditions, focused on resistance to displacement and on those suffering the consequences of gentrification. Gentrification quickly became a 'dirty word' (Slater, 2006), not just among scholars, but also in public and policy discourses. Critical scholarship focused on resistance to displacement as well as the conflicts and tensions which arose among low-income groups experiencing gentrification in their neighbourhoods (Newman and Wyly 2006; Smith, 1996; Spain, 1993; Robinson, 1995; Wilson, et al., 2004). Studies such as these used empirical data, usually in the form of interviews, which focused on the perceived

'losers' in the process: those households under threat of displacement because of gentrification. While less prominent today than in the 1980s and early 1990s, studies focusing on the displaced still exist, and they still portray gentrification in a very negative light (see Glynn, 2008; Paton, 2012; Sakizlioglu, 2011). This research is essential to our understanding of gentrification's impact and does often paint a very stark contrast with the gentrification discourses in policy circles. Yet, it only tells one side of the story; when researching those who are forced to leave their homes because of gentrification, it is virtually impossible not to be critical and conclude that the process has severe negative consequences.

More recently, academic studies have focused more on the perceived 'winners' in the process: the gentrifiers themselves. Pioneering work by Jon Caulfield (1994) saw the inner-city as an emancipatory space for gentrifiers, free from the constructs and constraints of the suburbs. Similarly, David Ley's work (1996) examined how the gentrifiers were linked to the 'new middle-class' which was emerging in post-industrial cities (see Bell, 1976) where a sharp rise in downtown, office-based employment created new types of households with new demands on home, work and leisure. Proximity to work, particularly in two-income households, became more important and was seen as one of the causes of gentrification. Consequently, many studies have focused on the time-space constraints of gentrifiers, focusing on how they balance work, home and leisure time (Karsten, 2003; Karsten et al., 2006). Schooling is another topic which has been studied, with an emphasis on how schools are used as a form of social reproduction among middle-class households (Boterman, 2013; Bridge, 2006).

Tim Butler's work has dealt extensively with gentrifiers in London. He examined the different narratives and discourses among middle-class gentrifiers which could be found in different types of gentrifying neighbourhoods (Butler and Robson, 2001). Some of his studies examined the ways in which gentrifiers interact with non-gentrifying groups in their neighbourhood (Butler, 2003). This led to the concept of 'social tectonics:' namely, that different groups living in the same space live separate or parallel lives (Robson and Butler, 2001). Also in the UK, Gary Bridge has used Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital to explain patterns and experiences of gentrifiers (Bourdieu, 1984; Bridge, 2006; 2001). This concept argues that gentrified spaces have become representations of the cultural and aesthetic values of the new middle-class. Sharon Zukin's (2008: 2009) work also examined gentrified spaces as representations of certain middle-class values; her work on commercial gentrification showed that the process often becomes entangled with a search for authenticity. While she is also critical of the effects this can have on working-class and ethnic-groups who do not share similar values, this is not part of the central focus of trying to understand the meanings of these spaces in a gentrified landscape for gentrifiers.

When focusing on the expectations, struggles and experiences of the gentrifiers, it can become difficult to see the inherent class conflicts and tensions at play with

gentrification. From this perspective, negatives associated with gentrification can include house price rises which price out some would-be gentrifiers, the struggle to get ones children into the 'right' school or the transition from independent cafés to chain stores. While this may be difficult for many gentrifiers, discourses on displacement of the original population or the closing of businesses and services catering to low-income groups get overlooked. Research on the gentrifiers does focus on class, but it focuses on the creation, reproduction and identity of the middle-classes and does not usually focus on the tensions between the middle-class and the working-class (Watt, 2011).

Research such as this is one of the reasons why Slater (2006) stated that critical scholarship has largely been 'evicted' from mainstream gentrification debates. Another reason for this claim is the policy turn towards promoting gentrification as an 'inclusive urban renaissance.' Public policy aimed at creating housing catering to middle-class groups has become a central aim of many cities (see Rotterdam, 2007). Loretta Lees (2008: 2003: 2000) and others have been critical of this policy strategy. Such positive discourse usually focuses on middle-class tastes and values, better amenities, rising property values and urban revitalisation, ignoring tougher social issues such as displacement and housing affordability (Doucet, et al., 2011a).

Research which focuses on neither of these groups has been less than forthcoming. Freeman (2006) examined groups living through gentrification in two New York neighbourhoods. He painted a mixed picture; in some cases, the largely African American low-income residents equated gentrification with the arrival of better services and amenities, some of which, including better policing and new stores, were welcomed. At the same time, they felt a loss of community and many of the practices which had been common before, such as sitting on stoops late at night talking, were seen as a nuisance by many gentrifiers. Other work by Sullivan (2006) showed similar results. Deener (2007) argued that the changes to the local retail strip in Venice Beach, California, came to represent the 'authentic' values of the gentrifiers, which excluded the low-income residents living nearby.

Contemporary and historic gentrification research has largely ignored the viewpoints of those who are neither the gentrifiers nor the displaced. Empirical studies are too focused on gentrifiers or the displaced, with little room in between. Research on the gentrifiers focuses on their experiences and habits and their authors' conclusions about the impact of gentrification, therefore, tend to be less focused on consequences for marginal groups, more positive, with less of a focus between classes. Likewise, research on the displaced leads to negative conclusions about gentrification's impact. There is a pre-selection bias in this type of research: by deciding to research the experiences of the displaced, it precludes authors from portraying gentrification's impact as negative and vice versa for those focusing on the gentrifiers. Questions on how different groups of people are impacted by the same process of gentrification, remain, up until now, sadly unanswered. These questions can be partly answered by focusing on groups which have remained as the neighbourhood gentrifies,

though this is still under-researched. The remainder of this article details different empirical studies where those living through gentrification have been the main subjects of the research and concludes with lessons of what we can learn by studying gentrification through this lens.

LIVING THROUGH GENTRIFICATION

Welcomed improvements, but not for us in Leith, Edinburgh

My first foray into examining those who live through gentrification was in Leith, Edinburgh, a rapidly gentrifying, yet still very mixed neighbourhood in Scotland's capital city (Doucet, 2009). Leith was a separate municipality until the 1920s and very much dependent on port activities. Gentrification began in the mid-1980s after a long period of economic and social decline, which saw many of the original tenement flats demolished and replaced by modernist high-rises, with some of the original, working-class population being rehoused on peripheral estates throughout Edinburgh. Before gentrification, particularly in the 1970s and early 1980s, the neighbourhood suffered from poor housing, unemployment and was the centre of the city's drug trade. This all created a reputation of a run-down area which was not attractive for the middle-class to live, work, play or invest.

However, by the mid-1980s, small signs of gentrification began to emerge. Some of the old warehouses and whiskey bonds were converted to shops and lofts and a few former dock workers' pubs went more upmarket. The Scottish Executive moved many of their employees to a new office on the waterfront and many new amenities have followed suit to cater to this new workforce in the neighbourhood. The biggest retail change was the opening of the high-end Ocean Terminal shopping centre in 2001, which is located on the waterfront, around one kilometre from the traditional shopping district of Leith, which retains a mix of stores and services. Tourism has also played a role in the transformation of Leith; the Royal Yacht Britannia is berthed at Ocean Terminal and is the most important, but by no means only tourist attraction now in Leith. Much of the remaining tenement housing stock has also been gentrified, particularly around Leith Walk, the main road connecting Leith with Edinburgh. Around the waterfront, new-build flats have been constructed to cater to younger, professional households, or middle-class retirees. But Leith still retains a large social housing sector, helping to maintain a socioeconomic mix within the neighbourhood, and the consequent diversity in retail and amenities.

Two quotations, the first from a newspaper article in 1985 and the second, from promotional literature about new waterfront flats from the mid-2000s, help to illustrate this transition:

Ask a Leither if there are tourists in Leith and he will think you are daft. (A Tide Turns, 1985).

On the fringe of the city centre and uncompromisingly cool, Leith holds its own day and night. (Strathclyde Homes, no year)

Research was conducted in the winter of 2006. My aim was to find respondents who were neither gentrifiers nor under threat of displacement. In total, forty-two residents of Leith were interviewed, with interviews largely taking place at the Foot of Leith Walk, the heart of the old shopping district of the neighbourhood. For further information about the neighbourhood, additional interviews were conducted with representatives from local housing associations, local councillors, estate agents and publicans.

This research examined these residents' perceptions and experiences towards three themes. The first was housing change. On the whole, respondents were more mixed, and less negative than is often assumed in the literature. There were genuine concerns about price and affordability, particularly for younger members of the community; these concerns, however, generally came from older respondents wondering how their children or grandchildren could be able to afford to keep living in Leith. There was little fear of direct displacement, but rather that future generations would be priced out of the neighbourhood. Most respondents did not see how the new-build waterfront flats could contribute to their own housing careers; the general sentiment was that they were too expensive for them and built to attract new, more affluent residents to Leith. This was the first instance where the 'not for us' sentiment emerged. But that did not necessarily mean that they were unhappy with the changes in the neighbourhood. Many respondents noted with pride that the area was becoming more attractive and desirable to live in. They also associated new and more expensive housing with other improvements to the neighbourhood, some of which could be enjoyed by all its inhabitants.

The second theme was retail and amenity changes. As was already mentioned, the biggest change to the neighbourhood's landscape in this regard was the arrival of Ocean Terminal. Because this shopping centre was situated some distance from the old heart of Leith and built on brownfield land, it did not displace existing retail businesses, nor did it directly compete with the area around the Foot of Leith Walk, as both places offered different types of amenities and services. Because it added new amenities to Leith – things such as a Mark's and Spencer's, cinema and other stores, it enabled Leith residents to do more shopping locally, rather than having to travel to Edinburgh City Centre for these facilities. Not far from Ocean Terminal is The Shore, a small road along the waterfront which historically housed many working-class pubs. Most of these are now upscale bars and restaurants, and The Shore has become a major destination for Edinburgh nightlife and restaurants; Martin Wishart's Michelin Star restaurant is situated on The Shore, and Kitchen, another starred establishment is situated a block away. Most of the residents took pride in the fact that their neighbourhood had become a destination, especially after many decades of it being a 'no-go area' amongst people from the rest of Edinburgh. The improved reputation which came about as a result of these new amenities was something which was

generally seen as positive. But just as with housing issues, there was a concern about the prices charged in these shops and restaurants. Many respondents said they could not afford to eat along The Shore. So while the changes were appreciated by local residents, there was still a sense that they were not really for them and intended for use by outsiders, including the gentrifiers. These sentiments were less strong towards Ocean Terminal than the upmarket restaurants, although here again, we have to take a nuanced view; to say that all non-gentrifying residents of Leith were poor is erroneous and some of the more affluent residents living through gentrification could certainly consume at all the new amenities which gentrification brought about.

The final theme in this research was the way gentrification impacted social interactions among those living through gentrification. Again, the literature points to divisive and sometimes hostile tensions between different groups in the gentrification process. Yet in Leith, while all respondents were aware of the differences, particularly between them and the new in-comers to the area, this did not manifest itself in animosity. Residents were far more ambivalent towards these divisions, with some noting that this has always been the case in society. Many respondents believed that the 'old Leithers' and 'new Leithers,' while living in the same neighbourhood, inhabited different worlds, much akin to Robson and Bulter's (2001) social tectonic concept. Pubs were a medium which many used to illustrate this point; with the trendy bars on The Shore being frequented by the gentrifiers and the older, working-class pubs were being used by them. However, other respondents did not want to separate the population in this way, stating that they visited both types of establishments and blurred the division between 'us and them.'

Leith changed from a middle-class no-go area to one in which many people aspire to live. For those living through this transition, there have been some tangible benefits – such as the new amenities – and other, intangibles – the improved reputation and image – of which they can be proud. Yet, there were many notes of caution to be considered as well; a strong 'not for us' sentiment was evident, with 'us' being defined as someone from Leith, rather than a gentrifier moving into Leith. In short, they were positive about the changes in *the* neighbourhood, though more cautious and pessimistic about the changes in *their* neighbourhood.

Missed employment and amenity opportunities in the Dublin Docklands

Most studies on the impact of gentrification deal with its housing implications. Far less is done on employment and amenity opportunities, particularly for those living through the process. This was the driving force behind work on the impact of the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) in the Dublin Docklands for long-term and lower-income residents living in a deprived community adjacent to this new flagship project. This research was carried out together with Enda Duignan, a former graduate student of mine (Doucet and

Duignan, 2012). By focusing on a new-build flagship, we also wanted to move beyond the traditional definition of gentrification, to better understand the impact of newer forms of the process such as flagships, which have come to dominate the redevelopment of prime, city-centre locations (Smyth, 1994; Moulaert et al., 2003). The Dublin Docklands represents a good example of this form of urban development (Moore, 2008).

As in Leith, the area which is now the IFSC was once home to Dublin's primary docks, with employment in the surrounding neighbourhoods based on port-activities. Because of the decline in the port, wider structural changes and a recession, the communities near the Docklands became among the poorest in Western Europe by the 1970s (Moore, 1999). Private-sector investment was non-existent and the population of inner-city Dublin declined by 52% between 1961 and 1996 (McGuirk, 2000). By the early 1990s, however, the Irish government began promoting the Docklands as a site for high-end financial services. Two different authorities have led the project; since 1997, this has been the Dublin Docklands Development Corporation, which has promoted both economic and social goals. In the years before the Great Recession, the Docklands was one of the main centres of inward investment in Ireland. New offices, shops, restaurants and flats were constructed along the waterfront.

We were concerned with how this impacted residents of the adjacent neighbourhood of Sheriff Street. We interviewed residents of this low-income area who had lived in the neighbourhood for at least twenty-five years. This was done in order to gauge the perceptions of long-term change. Many of the original Sheriff Street flats were demolished to make way for new, high-end flats as part of the Docklands project; within the flagship, no provisions were made for affordable housing. Our respondents, many of whom were re-housed when their homes were torn down, lived on adjacent streets surrounding Docklands. With no provisions for housing for these residents, we focused our research on two themes which have been a central part of the Docklands: employment opportunities and amenities. It should be noted that previous research found that while initial hopes were high among residents of these areas, they quickly soured and Docklands became an alien space for many residents living nearby (see Moore, 2008).

Unemployment did decline within the Sheriff Street community between 1996 and 2006, and many of our respondents were optimistic about employment opportunities for them within Docklands and the IFSC. They noted that there were far more jobs in the local area than before the IFSC was built. Some respondents worked on its construction or were currently employed at Docklands; others spoke of family and friends with jobs there. What became clear, however, is that the jobs they spoke of were low-wage, low-skill service jobs such as cleaners. Only one respondent worked in a higher-skill financial services job. Education was felt to be important; respondents believed that with the right qualifications, jobs would become available. But a low percentage of Sheriff Street residents obtained university degrees – seen as a necessity towards obtaining a good job in the IFSC – so some

respondents called for more educational opportunities for local residents, rather than just for jobs. There was, however, an undertone of negative sentiment among some, who felt that not enough of the promised jobs materialised and that the jobs which were created were unavailable to them – either because there were too few opportunities or they did not have the required qualifications.

While attitudes towards employment were mixed, our respondents were far more negative when it came to the new amenities which Docklands brought to this part of Dublin. In 2012, there were eighteen cafés and sandwich shops, seventeen restaurants, ten pubs but only one supermarket (a Mark's and Spencer's). A look at the menus of these establishments or a list of the products on offer at other shops, beauty salons, gyms and other amenities clearly shows that they are aimed at a higher-income clientele, specifically those living and working in Docklands. As a place to shop, consume or relax, our respondents from Sheriff Street felt cut-off and let down by the amenities on offer. In fact, these amenities, rather than employment or even housing, helped to further the sense of division between Sheriff Street residents and the Docklands.

There were two reasons why our respondents were so negative. The first is the supply of amenities; the bars, cafés and restaurants were of little use to residents who lacked even basic amenities in their neighbourhood. There are far fewer stores and services in the Sheriff Street neighbourhood than in the heart of Leith, so our respondents here felt even more isolated when it came to basic amenities such as grocery stores, post offices or other High Street shops and services. Residents wanted basic facilities like a Tesco or another mid-range supermarket, which would have been more affordable than the Mark's and Spencer's currently in Docklands. While Leithers could do more of their daily shopping in Leith, our respondents in Dublin still needed to travel to the city centre for many of these activities. The second reason has to do with price. Put simply, the amenities on offer in Docklands were too expensive for most of our respondents living in Sheriff Street. The bars, restaurants, cafés and shops were all priced beyond the means of most of our respondents. But they were never the target audience; these amenities are aimed at those living and working in Docklands, not, as was noted by many, at our respondents. This did lead to some feelings of resentment and being let-down and ignored by those who planned and built Docklands.

It is not that they disliked the amenities; they just did not feel that they were for them. Because of the lack of amenities catering to the needs and means of our respondents, they had no reason to go to Docklands, furthering the social and spatial divisions between their neighbourhood and the new flagship built next door to their homes. Because the new amenities are aimed at a much more affluent clientele, the daily lives of residents in Sheriff Street have changed very little because of them. As we will see when we examine a similar flagship in Rotterdam, this does not necessarily have to be the case if the right kind of amenities and services are incorporated into flagship projects and other forms of gentrification.

Small, but meaningful quality of life improvements on the south side of Rotterdam

Like Dublin's Docklands, the Kop van Zuid (*Head of the South*) project was developed on former port lands in Rotterdam which had become vacant through deindustrialisation and containerisation. The adjacent neighbourhoods, which used to house dockworkers, also experienced several decades of economic and social decline. In the mid-1980s, the city council stepped in with plans to redevelop a large site on the south side of the river, immediately opposite Rotterdam city centre. From the start, this flagship aimed to have social, as well as economic goals. The latter included the construction of new middle-class housing, which fit under Rotterdam's policy of attracting and retaining affluent households in the city, and creating a new, high-quality international business centre. The housing goals have been more successful than the aim to attract offices to the area; while the second half of the 2000s saw some large private-sector investments, most offices are occupied by government or quasi-governmental workers. The new retail and amenities are a mix of high-end restaurants and cafés, largely situated near the Entrepot-dock or on the Wilhelmina Pier, which is dominated by several high-rise flats and offices and an ordinary shopping street, the Vuurplaat, which is near some of the low-rise flats and single-family homes which were built further back from the river. This street contains supermarket chains and other 'High Street' shops, as well as ethnic businesses such as Turkish bakeries. It is situated towards the southern end of the Kop van Zuid, near the boundary with some of the working-class and largely now immigrant neighbourhoods which surround the Kop van Zuid.

In addition to economic goals, two socially-oriented ambitions were also prominent in the city's plans for the Kop van Zuid. One was the concept of social return – that local residents in adjacent areas should have new opportunities such as jobs, education and new amenities as a result of the project. In other words, while attracting businesses and middle-class residents was an important part of the development, there should be some direct benefit to those residents living nearby. A second objective was unifying the city. This can be read in many different ways: socially and economically (Rotterdam South is significantly poorer than Rotterdam North), psychologically (there is a strong mental division between the North, which has the historic centre and many of the wealthier neighbourhoods and South, which developed as a working-class area largely devoid of any city centre functions) and physically (with a large and busy river dividing the city, there are very few crossings between North and South). The key element of this goal was the iconic Erasmus Bridge. When it opened, new tramlines were constructed to link neighbourhoods in Rotterdam South with the city centre, located in Rotterdam North.

In 2008, a survey was conducted in six neighbourhoods throughout Rotterdam, including the Afrikaanderwijk, one of the low-income and largely immigrant neighbourhoods adjacent to the Kop van Zuid (Doucet et al., 2011b). It is located southwest of the flagship, close to the Vuurplaat. The boundary between the Kop van Zuid site (which used to be industrial and railway lands) and the Afrikaanderwijk was opened up with a new road,

footpath and cycle lane leading directly to the Vuurplaat. At the time of this research, the Afrikaanderwijk had an average household income of 21,000 Euros per year, which is well below the Rotterdam average of 24,600 (which itself is well under the Dutch average of 29,000. Only 7% of households were in the high-income category of more than 39,000 per year. In the Afrikaanderwijk, eighty-four surveys were collected, representing a response rate of 24%.

These respondents were far more positive about the Kop van Zuid than one would expect based on the international literature on flagships and gentrification. As in Dublin, many of the new amenities and most of the jobs do not cater to them. But there are some substantial differences between the two projects that yielded a much more enthusiastic response in Rotterdam than in Dublin. Within this context it is important to bear in mind that the Kop van Zuid is, to some degree, unique: it is largely municipally led with strong social goals. The Dutch context is important here too; social housing represents a large percentage of the housing stock in Rotterdam and the Netherlands, so even in the Kop van Zuid, there is affordable housing. With that in mind, there are three factors which are important in understanding why lower-income residents living adjacent to a flagship were more positive than expected.

The first has to do with the infrastructure, specifically the Erasmus Bridge. While there is a metro line running between Rotterdam South and the city centre, it does not serve all neighbourhoods and for pedestrians or cyclists coming from the Afrikaanderwijk, a long detour was necessary to reach the north side of the river. Two points about the bridge are worth noting. First, it is a source of pride for Rotterdammers. The survey found this in all six neighbourhoods. It has become the leading icon of the city, not just to an outside audience, but also within the city itself. But the significance of the bridge goes far beyond its iconography. It has become a useful piece of infrastructure which is used by the survey's respondents. It has changed their daily lives because it has made it easier for them to get around the city. The new tramlines which have linked Rotterdam South with the rest of the city run very close to the Afrikaanderwijk and are, therefore, key pieces of transport infrastructure for this area.

The second reason is the new shopping street, the Vuurplaat. As was already mentioned, this is an ordinary High Street, with a mix of retail amenities. The types of businesses situated on the Vuurplaat did not exist in the adjacent neighbourhoods before the arrival of the Kop van Zuid. Supermarkets were few and far between; chain stores were virtually non-existent in Rotterdam South apart from at the Zuidplein shopping centre, several kilometres further south. There is nothing extraordinary about the Vuurplaat; walking down it, you don't get the sense that there is something unique about it. Tourists would not come to this part of the Kop van Zuid, whereas they do go to the fancy restaurants on the Wilhelmina Pier. But what the Vuurplaat does is fulfil a role of providing ordinary shops that were not there before. In the survey, 41% of respondents in the

Afrikaanderwijk stated that they did their regular grocery shopping in the Kop van Zuid. So while residents of the Afrikaanderwijk may not go to cafés like Hotel New York, the fancy restaurants or art-house cinema on the Wilhelmina Pier, the Vuurplaat has become part of their daily lives and, in this sense, it provides them with more amenities which do cater to their needs and means. These are exactly the types of amenities called for by residents of the Sheriff Street community in Dublin and the opposite of what can be found in the IFSC and the Dublin Docklands.

The third reason is that gentrification has not yet spread to the Afrikaanderwijk. The neighbourhood still largely consists of social-rented housing and there have been fewer new developments aimed at bringing a greater social mix (i.e. state-led gentrification) compared to the Katendrecht peninsula located between the Afrikaanderwijk and the Wilhelmina Pier. Residents were 'living with gentrification,' but not in their immediate neighbourhood, which still remains largely social-housing. With a population which has remained largely intact and not under threat of displacement or removal, residents have been able to enjoy benefits, including better transport and more amenities, without fear that they will have to leave their neighbourhood. While the changes to Rotterdam South may not all have been for them, there have been many small-scale elements which have improved their quality of life.

Living through urban restructuring in Utrecht

In 2011, together with another former student, Matthijs de Boer, we examined the perceptions and experiences of residents living through a process of urban restructuring in the Utrecht neighbourhood of Ondiep (de Boer and Doucet, 2012). While studies on urban restructuring have done more extensive work on residents in these neighbourhoods than our small project (see Postumus, et al., 2012; van Bergeijk et al. 2008), this qualitative research helps contribute to the complexity and nuanced nature of contemporary gentrification. Twenty-two in-depth interviews were conducted with residents of social-rented housing who had lived in the neighbourhood before and after the restructuring process.

In the Netherlands, the distinction between urban restructuring and state-led gentrification is often blurred. Forty of the most problematic neighbourhoods in the country (including Ondiep) were given special attention and money for urban restructuring. Many of the social-rented dwellings were demolished and replaced with market-driven housing. The aim was to allow upwardly mobile families to remain in the neighbourhoods (which tended to be almost exclusively social housing) and also attract new, middle-income families to help create a social mix and differentiated housing stock. Our respondents lived through this process of gentrification.

The goals of the restructuring in Ondiep were better social cohesion, an improved physical environment and quality of life enhancements. One outcome was a decline in the

percentage of social housing units from 78% to only 41% of the total stock, with many renters being rehoused elsewhere in the city. Some sections of the neighbourhood were demolished and replaced by new housing, while in other parts, the housing stock was only refurbished. It is from here where most of our respondents came. One of the most striking elements of the research was that the respondents no longer saw their neighbourhood as a whole community anymore. There was little interaction between the new-build areas with owner occupied housing and the refurbished areas of social housing. They were not very willing to interact with the new residents, who they did not see as real 'Ondiepers,' but they also remarked that the new owner-occupiers were not very willing to interact with them. In this instance there was a decrease in social cohesion within the neighbourhood, though on their individual streets which were only refurbished for the same residents, our respondents noted very little change. But the respondents did not have any real complaints about these new residents; in some cases they remarked that the neighbourhood is safer and cleaner than before because there are now homeowners in Ondiep, who, according to some respondents, take greater care and responsibility for their properties. The main sentiment which emerged was an 'us and them' mentality, which did not exist before the restructuring. Respondents were positive about the improved quality of their houses, which included better windows and, in some cases, the installation of central heating which was absent from the original dwellings. They also appreciated some of the new amenities which were built, including a new medical centre and some new shops.

Like many of the other examples, the residents living through gentrification in social housing in Ondiep took a nuanced view to the process. They appreciated the improved physical quality of their social-rented homes, new amenities and increased safety in the area. However, they experienced new physical and social divisions in their neighbourhood. While some of the government's goals have been reached, it is also clear that others have not. And it should be noted that our respondents all lived through the process – others were displaced and given housing in other parts of the city as their properties were demolished and replaced with market-driven, owner-occupied housing. Interviews with these people would have yielded very different results (see Postumus, 2013 for more on research with those who have been displaced)

Pubs as a window on gentrification's impact in the Indische Buurt, Amsterdam

The final case study involved researching the experiences of pub-goers at traditional Dutch *brown cafés* – small, working-class pubs, in the rapidly gentrifying Indische Buurt neighbourhood in Amsterdam. This research was conducted with another graduate student of mine, Olaf Ernst (Ernst and Doucet, forthcoming). We were concerned with the effects of gentrification through the lens of the interactions taking place in these pubs and perceptions of their patrons as to the changes in their neighbourhood and their local pub. Interviews were conducted in four pubs in the neighbourhood – one of which has since closed – with a

total of twenty-two customers and the four pub owners. The Indische Buurt began as a working-class, lower-middle class Dutch neighbourhood. Beginning in the 1960s, the Dutch population suburbanised and was replaced by immigrants from Turkey and later Morocco, drawn to the area by low rents. Some of the housing was demolished and replaced in the 1980s, but much of the original housing stock from the early Twentieth Century remains. Seventy per cent of the housing stock is social-rented housing, but this is decreasing. Gentrification has taken place since the early 2000s and, in addition to the residential changes, new, higher-end amenities, particularly new restaurants and cafés have opened, making it, like Leith, somewhat of a new 'destination' for Amsterdammers.

Again, as in Leith, many of our respondents welcomed many of the changes to the neighbourhood, particularly improvements to the housing stock, the new 'buzz' about the area and new amenities. For the latter point, there were certain ethnic and racial overtones. Many respondents were happy that 'something Dutch' was coming back to the area after decades of immigration. There was a strong sense that replacing older places catering to the low-income immigrant community in the neighbourhood with newer, more upmarket businesses, was seen as a positive development within the neighbourhood. This was in contrast to the large number of shoarma take-aways, and other 'vague, Turkish restaurants,' as one respondent put it, which could be found throughout the neighbourhood. These were viewed by our respondents in much more negative terms. Ethnic restaurants (such as a new Thai place) which have upgraded to meet middle-class tastes and preferences, have, in the eyes of our working-class respondents 'de-ethnified' and become more 'Dutch,' something which was welcomed.

The pubs themselves were almost seen as separate entities, removed from the rapidly changing neighbourhood outside them. Our respondents perceived the effects of gentrification to drip slowly into their pub; they were seen as safe spaces largely immune from the new world surrounding them. The *brown cafés* were also a throwback to an earlier era: a reminder of what the neighbourhood used to be like before immigration. They were sources of community for many of the working-class residents, some of whom treated them like a second 'living room.' Within the pubs themselves, while they would not provide great friendships between gentrifiers and non-gentrifiers, they did offer small-scale opportunities for interaction, if the newcomers conformed to the norms and mores of the establishment. While not necessarily complete spaces of integration, they did challenge the idea that gentrifiers and non-gentrifiers live in completely separate worlds, though as some authors (see Zukin, 2008) argue, many gentrifiers may not be attracted to these particular places, so the amount of interaction is limited.

GENTRIFICATION THROUGH THE EYES OF THOSE WHO LIVE THROUGH IT

Gentrification is a complex and multi-sided process. There are many people who do not fit into the discrete categories of winners and losers, and when the process is examined from the perspective of those who live through it, a more nuanced approach is required. This is how many of the respondents themselves see the process: some things are positive while others are negative.

What can we learn about gentrification by studying it through the eyes of those who live through it? And how can we use this more nuanced information in order to mitigate some of the negative effects of gentrification on low-income groups and ensure that everyone has a right to the city? Below are six points which I have drawn from comparing these different studies described in this paper. These are a combination of lessons and policy guidelines which can help build more inclusive cities and neighbourhoods.

1. **There are some benefits which come about as a result of gentrification which all residents can enjoy.** This is a nuanced message which sometimes gets lost in the academic debates which force authors to take sides. In most circles, gentrification is seen as producing 'winners and losers.' This rather blunt dualistic perspective ignores many of the more subtle transformations and the fact that, as empirical work has shown, residents often do not see either themselves, or the process affecting their neighbourhood in such black and white terms. There are elements, such as better public space, safety and new amenities, which can be appreciated by non-gentrifying groups.

2. **The right kinds of amenities are important.** Having new shops, restaurants, bars and other amenities will be of little value to many residents if they are not spatially, socially and economically accessible to them. Neighbourhoods where the population is mixing through a process of gentrification also need to ensure that the supply of these amenities caters to the different groups of people living in the area. This does not necessarily mean a preservation of the current supply of amenities; residents in both Leith and Rotterdam welcomed many of the new stores and services brought about by gentrification because they had meaning for them – the new chain stores brought types of amenities which were previously absent from their local area. But they catered to the needs and means of non-gentrifying as well as gentrifying groups. This is in stark contrast to the Dublin Docklands, where price largely excluded lower-income residents from the neighbouring Sheriff Street area from using the new amenities in the flagship.

3. **Places need real meaning for the lives of ordinary residents in order for them to have value.** Something that is iconic but has little connection to ordinary residents will have little value for most people. Being iconic is not enough; they need to be part of the daily lived, or action space of residents. The Erasmus Bridge is iconic, but it is not the design which makes it so important to lower-income Rotterdammers on the

city's south side. It is the fact that their mobility around Rotterdam is greatly improved because this new bridge connects them to the rest of the city. It has had a profound impact on their daily lives, making travel around the city far easier. Iconic structures may evoke some sort of emotional response from residents, but it will fail to go beyond that unless they have a reason for visiting or using these new spaces. The Erasmus Bridge has shown that a combination of being iconic and having real meaning for the lives of ordinary residents can be possible.

4. **Mixed populations in a neighbourhood do not necessarily mean social mixing.** Many other studies on social mixing have examined this in greater detail (see Bridge, et al., 2012; Postumus, et al., 2012; Uitermark et al., 2007; van Bergeijk, et al., 2008). In my empirical studies of gentrifying neighbourhoods, most respondents did not indicate that they interacted with the incoming gentrifying population. We should take a slightly more nuanced perspective than much of the existing academic literature; it can be difficult to separate non-gentrifying and gentrifying residents into completely discrete socioeconomic and demographic populations. But we should not assume that a gentrifying neighbourhood with a mixed population will create a situation where rich and poor, gentrifiers and non-gentrifiers, all share the same social space and interact meaningfully amongst each other. This is, however, one of the pretexts of state-led gentrification, as has been noted by the recent book by Gary Bridge, Tim Butler and Loretta Lees (2012). Again, Robson and Butler's (2001) social tectonic argument shows that different groups can lead parallel lives in the same neighbourhood. But research in the Indische Buurt has shown that there is small blurring of these tectonic plates through the medium of local pubs, again questioning the 'black and white' nature of this process.

5. **Having a mixed population which does not interact does not need to be problematic if they can all live in their neighbourhood**. By living in their neighbourhood, I refer here specifically to housing, cohesion and amenities. If the local amenities only cater to one group (i.e. gentrifiers) then lower-income groups will need to go elsewhere for their shopping and leisure. Again, the difference between Leith, where local amenities cater to everyone from Michelin Star connoisseurs to those on fixed incomes, and the Dublin Docklands, where no basic amenities can be found, helps to illustrate this point. In the former, local residents were much more positive towards gentrification than in the latter example. The case study of the Indische Buurt in Amsterdam also underscores this point. Many of the working-class patrons of the *brown cafés* do not interact much with the incoming gentrifiers, but because they can still have a relaxing drink in familiar environs within their neighbourhood, they do not feel particularly threatened by the changes in their neighbourhood.

6. **Affordable housing is essential.** Without housing that allows those on different levels of income to live in a neighbourhood, any of the benefits of gentrification will quickly become available only to those fortunate enough to be able to afford market rates

for housing. In Leith, the main concern about gentrification was its impact on house prices and the fact that many of the respondents' children could no longer afford to live in the neighbourhood. Without safe and secure forms of affordable housing, a neighbourhood will quickly turn into a gentrified enclave, where lower-income groups, even if they have lived in the area for a long time, quickly become excluded and displaced.

The last point is perhaps the most important of all. Any conclusions drawn from this paper that gentrification is a positive for those living through the process should be weighed against the idea that, without affordable housing, these improvements will prove only to be temporary as the non-gentrifying population becomes displaced. Without some sort of affordable housing, any potential benefits from gentrification – more and better amenities, improved infrastructure, public space, safety – will prove only fleeting and will, over time, only be enjoyed by those privileged enough to afford to live in gentrified neighbourhoods.

This is perhaps why gentrification is generally seen as a negative process in the academic community: over time most or all of the low-income residents will be displaced. Ruth Glass mentioned as much in her original definition of gentrification back in 1964. And there are many cases where this does happen; many of the textbook examples of gentrification throughout the world contain very few non-gentrifiers or those 'living with gentrification.' They have almost all been displaced. Again, conducting research in Manhattan, Inner London or Vancouver, where most of the population is now gentrified might lead you to conclude that the process is characterised by discrete 'winners and losers.' The case studies I have presented here all focus on neighbourhoods or communities which still retain a large non-gentrifying population, hence, the more mixed and nuanced responses from these residents. They do so because of the presence of affordable housing in one form or another. In Dublin this was through a large housing estate situated adjacent to the new flagship. In Edinburgh, the presence of housing associations ensured a relatively large supply of affordable housing. In the Netherlands, the role of social housing is much greater than in other countries.

There is one final conceptual and methodological point which this research has raised. The answer to the question of the impact of gentrification depends on who you ask and where you ask it. Gentrification in Manhattan or Inner-London has a very different dynamic than in Rotterdam. Engaging with gentrifiers will lead to a very different response than asking those who have just been displaced. Even among the broadly defined group who 'live through' the process, the answer will vary according to respondents' specific circumstances; focusing on renters in the private market, who may be vulnerable to rent increases and displacement will yield different responses than renters with a secure tenure in social-housing. There is, therefore, a selection bias in all gentrification research which focuses on one particular group affected by the process; they all only tell one piece of the wider gentrification story. The next frontier in gentrification research should be to better

understand how different groups – gentrifiers, those vulnerable to displacement and those living through it – experience the same process. This would focus on different narratives, experiences and perceptions within the same space and, consequently, give us a more complete picture of how gentrification affects different people in different ways.

There have been recent calls by some of gentrification's most prominent scholars into exactly the type of research, including concluding remarks in the recent book by Gary Bridge, Tim Butler and Loretta Lees (2012). Similar calls for this type of research can be seen in Slater (2006). Moore's (2008) work on the Dublin Docklands also calls for more research into the impacts for long-term residents. In their recent article, Rose et al. (2012) (p. 18) 'endorse recent calls for critical gentrification researchers to pay more attention to how the power geometries of the latest incarnations of social mix will play out between the *different* groups in public space' (italics added). The starting point for my research has not been to show that gentrification is either positive or negative; rather, it has been to better understand its impact on different groups of people. I have tried to do this by engaging with people who live through different forms of gentrification, always striving to uncover new discourses which challenge our existing understanding of gentrification. For it is only with a greater understanding of gentrification's meaning for everyone that we can truly assess its overall impact.

With that in mind, this paper will end with a mixed message, one deriving from the people who I have spoken with in different cities over the past seven years. There are some things which non-gentrifying residents can benefit from as their neighbourhood gentrifies and others which can lead to tensions and problems. Having both relevant amenities and a sense of community are essential. But equally important is the idea of implementing policies and mechanisms which ensure an adequate supply of affordable housing. If residents are safe and secure in their housing tenure, they may be more able to see benefits from this process of change, or at least take a more mixed or nuanced view, as many of these respondents have. If, as is often the case in many other places, there is no housing safety net, and the constant threat of displacement looms above their heads, they will, as much of the other academic literature shows, display feelings of resentment, hostility, tensions and fear (See Paton, 2012; Sakizlioglu, 2011; Smith, 1996). And in the end, they too will be displaced and suffer the negative consequences of gentrification. Without housing forms and tenure which allow people to stay in their neighbourhoods while they are gentrifying, the concept of 'living with gentrification' will prove to be only a temporary phase of their lives, one which ends with their displacement from their homes and communities.

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