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## Views of gentrification from below: how Rotterdam local residents experience gentrification?

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**Views of gentrification from below: how Rotterdam local residents experience gentrification**

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**Abstract**

The paper starts with the observation that gentrification literature gives different accounts of the social consequences of gentrification. Whereas some observers underline the negative consequences of gentrification for indigenous residents or even equate gentrification with 'displacement'. If gentrification does not result in the actual out-migration of local residents, they often do not feel at home anymore in the neighbourhood that has changed due to the influx of middle class households ('displacement pressure'). Other authors relativize the negative consequences of gentrification arguing that indigenous residents benefit as well from improvements in gentrifying districts (more shops, more safety due to increased police supervision, etcetera). This theoretical discussion leads to the research question how local residents of three Rotterdam districts perceive and evaluate (starting) gentrification in their neighbourhood. Our findings are less unambiguous than these theoretical perspectives would suggest. On the one hand, indigenous residents appreciate what they see as improving living conditions in their neighbourhoods. These neighbourhood improvements are partly the result of a greater attention and stricter policies of public institutions in gentrifying districts. However, these improvements also result from single-handed interventions of local residents and community organizations themselves. On the other hand, some respondents regret what is seen as the loss of old habits and the traditional working class culture and identity of these neighbourhoods. The question is, however, whether the working class culture of these areas disappeared as a result of gentrification or following the earlier out-migration of native Dutch families from these areas and the influx of immigrant households.

## 1. Introduction

The international literature gives different perceptions of both the nature and the social consequences of gentrification. On the one hand there is the distinction between market-led and state-led gentrification, the latter also referred to as "social restructurering". The first is assumed to be typical for gentrification in the USA, the latter for gentrification in Europe. A similar distinction is often made about the social consequence of gentrification. Gentrification 'American style' is said to lead to mass displacement of the indigenous residents from the gentrifying areas whereas gentrification (or social restructuring) 'European style' is said to result in less (or less significant) processes of displacement. For instance, Hamnett (2003: 180-3) argues that the declining number of working class households in London is not so much the result of gentrification but from a more general transition from an industrial economy and labour market to a post-industrial economy and labour market resulting in a shift from manual to managerial and professional work. For Hamnett, the decline of working-class population in gentrifying districts is an issue of 'replacement rather than displacement per se.' Similarly, in the Netherlands, Kleinhans (2005) found that although the restructuring of Dutch inner-city districts often results in permanent out-migration of working-class residents of these districts to

other places in and around the city this is not to be equated with 'displacement' (in the sense of forced out-migration). Many of these former inner-city residents are quite happy in their new dwellings of unwilling to return to their former districts after having lived somewhere else for one or two years.

However, there are also divergent portrayals of the social consequences of gentrification in the USA and Europe. Whereas some European urban sociologists underline the detrimental consequences of gentrification for the indigenous residents of gentrified districts (*cf.* Atkinson 2002; Slater 2006), some American observers, on the other hand, show a far more positive picture of the social consequences of gentrification. Particularly, Freeman (2006) in his pioneering study about what gentrification means for indigenous residents of two gentrifying New York City areas (Clinton Hill and Harlem) argues that gentrification does not work out that bad for them. On the contrary, those residents that managed to stay in these districts are rather positive about the neighbourhood changes saying, among other things, that these areas became much safer places than before.

Freeman's work inspired us to examine how local residents in three Rotterdam districts (Spangen, Bospolder-Tussendijken, and Katendrecht) experience gentrification and related neighbourhood changes. In our research, we interviewed 54 indigenous residents of these districts – that is, persons that were either born in the area or lived there for ten years or longer (thus moved in before gentrification started). In this analysis, we will focus on two general issues: firstly, how indigenous residents of these gentrifying districts perceive and evaluate the changes in their district and secondly, what they think about the interventions in the neighbourhoods by the Rotterdam local government and other public institutions.

## 2. Gentrification, Displacement and 'Urban Revanchism'

Although there are several definitions of 'gentrification', we will here define this phenomenon as "..a process involving a change in the population of land-users such that the new users are of a higher socio-economic status than the previous users, together with an associated change in the built environment through a reinvestment in fixed capital" (Clarke 2005). This definition is 'open' in two respects. Firstly, this definition does not determine the cause of the process. Gentrification can be the result of blind housing market processes (middle class households moving into relatively cheap housing in or near the inner-city), but also of state interventions. Particularly in Europe, local governments stimulate renovation and building more expensive housing in deprived urban districts in order to create what they see as 'mixed neighbourhoods' with a 'balanced composition of the population'. These different faces of gentrification can be

called "market-led" and "state-led" gentrification (Uitermark, Duyvendak & Kleinhans 2007). Secondly, gentrification not only refers to residential developments but to more general economic, social and spatial changes in the areas. The in-migration of middle class households in previously deprived urban areas is often accompanied by commercial developments: the establishment of new shops, galleries, restaurants, bars, night life, and other cultural institutions, etc. (*cf*. Zukin 2010). Gentrification, in short, often implies a total make-over of the neighbourhood.

Our main research question is what all of this means for indigenous residents of gentrifying areas. The international literature about this issue heavily focuses on displacement.[1] Following the classical definition of Grier & Grier (1978) displacement refers to the forced out-migration of low-income households from gentrifying areas because forces outside the control of the household make living there 'impossible, hazardous, or unaffordable' (cited by Smith & Williams 1986). Households can be forced to move from their residence because they cannot afford the increased rent, because of physical decay of the dwelling (partly due to lack of necessary repairs by landlords) or because of harassment on the part of landlords that want to collect higher rents with new, middle-class tenants.

Marcuse (1986) extends this traditional understanding of displacement by adding social and psychological dimensions of displacement. Even if residents are not really displaced from their residences, they may not feel at home anymore in the changed gentrifying districts. Thus, next to actual displacement Marcuse distinguishes 'exclusionary displacement' and 'displacement pressure'. The former refers to the phenomenon that working class households are unable to move into the district because the rents become too high. This contributes to the decline of the working-class culture and identity of gentrifying districts and gives room for a new, middle-class identity of the area. More in general, indigenous residents may not feel at home anymore in the changed area. Marcuse calls this 'displacement pressure':

*When a family sees the neighbourhood around it changing dramatically, when their friends are leaving the neighbourhood, when the stores they patronise are liquidating and new stores for other clientele are taking their places, and when changes in public facilities, in transportation patterns, and in support services all clearly are making the area less and less liveable, then the pressure of displacement already is severe. Its actuality is only a matter of time. Families living under these circumstances may move as soon as they can, rather than wait for the inevitable; nonetheless they are displaced* (Marcuse 1986: 207).

Following Marcuse, displacement is not only the actual removal from low-income households from gentrifying areas but also the fact that indigenous residents do not feel at home anymore in the changed neighbourhood because of the general decline of working class culture and identity and all other changes in the district. This observation leads us to our research question how indigenous residents of gentrifying Rotterdam districts experience and evaluate changes in their neighbourhoods.

Some authors are more nuanced about the detrimental consequences of gentrification for the indigenous residents. We already mentioned Hamnett pointing out other causes of the decline of the working-class population in London. Hamnett (2003: 182) also observes the phenomenon that working-class home owners take advantage of the rise in property values in the cities: they "..sell out and move to the suburbs or beyond". For Hamnett, it is misleading to call this 'displacement'. He also argues that displacement is to be expected in the USA more than in Europe since European cities have far more social rent housing and less rent control than American cities such as New York (Hamnett 2003: 180).

But also in the USA, gentrification may have less negative outcomes for the indigenous neighbourhood population than is often assumed. In his qualitative study in two gentrifying New York City districts, Freeman (2005) found that indigenous residents are surprisingly positive about the neighbourhood changes. Freeman (2005: 60) also observes that homeowners benefit from gentrification, particularly because housing prices in these areas were extremely depressed due to previous disinvestment. Furthermore he argues that not only newcomers, but indigenous residents as well appreciate the improved shops, services and amenities in the gentrifying areas since there was so little commercial activity in deteriorated districts like Harlem and Clinton Hill (p. 62). Thirdly, also indigenous residents benefit from the increased police protection and improved safety in these previously crime-ridden areas – although Freeman also found resentment among indigenous residents complaining that the police only turned up when whites moved in and did not care as long as these districts were "all black" (p. 98)

The last remark refers to another topic in gentrification literature, namely the role of local governments and other public institutions in the gentrification process. Local governments not only actively stimulate and finance gentrification ('state-led gentrification'), but also facilitate market-led gentrification. An influential account of this is Smith' (1996) notion of 'urban revanchism'. Smith argues that gentrification in New York stalled in the 1990s because of the fear of middle class households to be confronted by the urban "dangerous classes" (*cf.* Morris 1994). For Smith (1996: 211), urban revanchism is the "..vicious reaction against minorities,

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the working class, homeless people, women, gays and lesbians, immigrants" – on behalf of the middle classes that want to ´recapture´ the city. Urban revanchism, then, is the strategy of local authorities not so much to reform, but to dispel these marginalized social categories from the city in order to make way for the returning middle classes (*cf.* Uitermark & Duyvendak 2008).

Smith' notion of urban revanchism fits into the more general argument in recent urban sociology about the repressive turn in urban policies (cf. Davis 2006; Waquant 2009; Cochrane 2005). However, also in the USA there is a more nuanced version of this argument. For instance, Zukin (2010: 107-8) argues that the violent vacation of homeless people from the Tompkins Square Park in Lower East Side by the New York police – for Smith (1996: 218) the example *par excellence* of urban revanchism – was actually greeted by local residents because the homeless gatherings in the park made the area a messy, dirty and dangerous place. For Zukin, the confrontation was not so much the NY police and authorities against the poor and homeless but local residents on the one side and 'anarchists, punks, and homeless' on the other (Zukin 2010: 108). Freeman (2005) also reflects on Smith' notion of the revanchist city. He acknowledges the oppressive element of gentrification. Neighbourhood residents report that in the wake of gentrification formerly acceptable behaviour ("Groups of black men congregating on the corner, loud music, or drinking outside..") is not acceptable anymore. However, as Freeman argues: "..this is only one aspect of the process. As the narratives (..) make clear, residents are quite capable of resenting the changes in what is considered acceptable and appreciating the access to improved amenities and services" (Freeman 2005: 201).

Freeman's study make us wonder how local residents in an European city, for instance the Dutch city of Rotterdam, perceive and evaluate gentrification. In our survey in three Rotterdam districts we asked indigenous residents about two topics. Firstly, how do residents perceive and evaluate the changes in their neighbourhood such as the in-migration of new middle class households, the out-migration of local residents and other neighbourhood changes? And secondly, how do residents perceive and evaluate the interventions of local governments and other public institutions (including the police) in their district.

## 3. Methodologies

This study is based on qualitative in-depth interviews with local residents in three Rotterdam districts. The fieldwork is done in the spring and summer of 2010 within the framework of three individual master theses. The interviews particularly focused on how local residents experience and evaluate gentrification rather than on the actual developments in their districts. We tried to reconstruct what gentrification implies for indigenous residents, what impact it has on their lives, and how they evaluate the changes in their neighbourhoods. During the interview

we asked respondents about what neighbourhood changes they perceive, what they think of the newcomers in their district and about those people that left, about social relationships in the neighbourhood, and about the role of local government and other public institutions in the area. The respondents of the survey were partly approached via local community organisations and partly via 'snowball sampling'. Quite often, it was hard to find a first respondent in the area but once some people were interviewed others followed soon.

All respondents lived in the area for at least ten years (or were born in the area): they all already lived in the area before gentrification started. In total, we interviewed 54 respondents. We interviewed a variety of people. Most respondents were 'ordinary' local residents, but some participated in local community organisations. We interviewed both native Dutch residents and residents with an immigrant background. Some respondents were born in the district, others had moved in. A few respondents have a similar background as the later gentrifyers (higher education, professional occupation), but all respondents already lived in the district before the Rotterdam local government started to stimulate gentrification in the area.

## 4. Gentrification in three Rotterdam districts

Our research took place in three typical pre-war working class areas in the Rotterdam inner-city: Spangen, Bospolder-Tussendijken and Katendrecht. The first two districts are situated on the north bank, the latter on the south bank of the river Maas that crosses the Rotterdam inner-city. All together the three districts house about 28,000 residents. Since the early 1990s, the population of the three districts fell with 13 percent (from 32,000 in 1993 to 28,000 in 2010; figures COS).

Until the late 1960s, early 1970s native Dutch working class families dominated the areas, although particularly Katendrecht was also well known for its nightlife and prostitution that were frequented by foreign sailors visiting the Rotterdam harbour. The 1970s were the years of urban renewal in Rotterdam. The catchword of the Rotterdam urban policies in those days was "building for residents" (in Dutch: 'bouwen voor de buurt') meaning that the renovation was meant for the current local residents. In Katendrecht, the urban renewal went hand in hand with the struggle of community organisations against pimps and the nuisance of prostitution. But as so often, things went different as anticipated by city planners. As their houses were renovated and their neighbourhoods were improved, many native Dutch working class families left the inner city for the outer post-war areas of Rotterdam or the suburbs. Immigrants, particularly so-called guest workers and their families, generally took their places in the old neighbourhoods.

As a result, urban renewal did not bring the neighbourhood improvement that was aimed for.
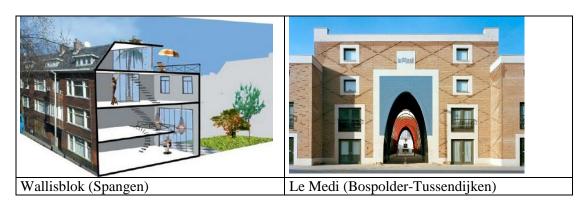
During the 1980s and 1990s, all three neighbourhoods degenerated. Particularly Spangen became well-known for its widespread poverty and unemployment, the influx of ethnic minorities (up to 75 percent in 2010), but also for a variety of urban problems (from crime, prostitution, homelessness and drugs trade to the nuisance of youngster hanging out on the streets). Many residents that had the financial means left the district. For the remaining residents, the social decline in Spangen – and to a lesser extent in the other two districts – caused feelings of displacement and resentment. They saw the area no longer as their neighbourhood, as their world  (Reijndorp 2004: 38; *cf.* Burgers & Engbersen 1994). However, some residents – and actually quite a few of our respondents – wanted to stay and to fight the problems in the area. In the late 1990s, community organisations and local residents from Spangen twice occupied the Rotterdam city hall to urge the local authorities to a tougher approach of the neighbourhood problems. This populist protest was one of the causes for the more repressive urban policies in Rotterdam after the Millennium Change (Tops 2007; Uitermark & Duyvendak 2008; Engbersen & Snel 2009).

More police and repression was not the only policy reaction to these problems. The Rotterdam local authorities also aimed for what they saw as a 'more balanced composition of the population' – meaning less concentrated poverty and more middle class households in districts like Spangen, Bospolder-Tussendijken and Katendrecht. Given available statistics, one cannot really call these districts gentrifying areas (table 1). Only in Katendrecht, the housing values and mean income per person increased somewhat more than average in Rotterdam. In both Katendrecht and Spangen, the share of low-income households in the districts decreased more than average in the city. Despite the policy to convert rented housing into owner-occupied property, the share of rented housing hardly decreased.

**\*\*\* Table 1: Indicators of gentrification in three Rotterdam districts (1995-2009)\*\*\***

There is nevertheless some state-led gentrification – or 'gentripuncture'[2] – in all three districts. In Spangen and Bospolder-Tussendijken, the Rotterdam administration sold so-called 'DIY houses' to young, middleclass households. These were cheap houses, refurbished from the outside, but to be renovated completely from the inside at the expense of the new owner-residents. To withstand speculation and to stimulate the intended population change, the new owners are also compelled to live there for at least some years. Examples of these 'DIY houses' are the Wallisblok in Spangen (started in 2005) and a similar project De Loper in Bospolder-Tussendijken. Another example of 'gentripuncture' in the latter district is Le Medi, an enclosed housing block in Mediterranean style that was opened in 2008. Katendrecht, finally,

experienced a more significant substitution of old working class housing by new apartments and to owner-occupied houses.


Wallisblok (Spangen)


Le Medi (Bospolder-Tussendijken)


De Loper (Bospolder-Tussendijken)


Project Laankwartier (Katendrecht)

Projects like the ones mentioned above were the starting point of our research in the three Rotterdam districts. When we interviewed indigenous local residents about how they perceived neighbourhood change and what social consequences of gentrification they experienced, we always referred to specific examples like these projects.

## 5.  How local residents perceive neighbourhood change

We asked the interviewees what changes they saw in their neighbourhood since new middle class residents started to move in. We particularly asked about four different topics: how they experienced the influx of newcomers in the neighbourhood, whether the area became cleaner, less deteriorated and a safer place to live.

### The influx of newcomers

As we argued before, the three Rotterdam neighbourhoods under examination are only relatively touched by gentrification. This may explain why our interviewees have relatively few stories about the newcomers in their districts. Yes, they noticed some middle class – or rather "white" – families moving into the neighbourhood, but this did not brush their lives greatly. When talking about

residential changes, their stories rather relate to the earlier episode: the out-migration of native Dutch residents and the arrival of ethnic minorities or 'foreigners' in the districts. Therefore, in their perception, gentrification is not only the influx of middle class residents in these traditional working class areas, but also the return of ´native Dutch´ – or simply 'white' – people.

*Positive! Only positive. Finally something human comes to live here! (BT?)*

*That is why we say, those yuppies over there. Not that they bother us(..).They are neat people. Look, for me it is great that they live here. You are not allowed to say so, but at least you see some fair-haired heads again. (S?)*

Also respondents with an immigrant background themselves see the influx of the mostly white middleclass families as a positive neighbourhood change:

Question: What do you think of those DIY-houses?
*I think it is a good idea. And that so many people choose to live here! I have seen that many of them are wihite people. I think that is good (S? Surinamese women)*

Of course, not all indigenous residents perceive the influx of the middle class newcomers in what used to be *their* neighbourhood as something positive. Some interviewees find the newcomers 'arrogant' and say they do not mingle with the original local population. Particularly in Katendrecht, with relatively many newcomers, we experienced some resentment against the 'arrogant' newcomers:

*But many of them are not worth to shoot at. So arrogant, this is their Katendrecht! They don't adapt themselves, they live their own life. Mind you, at seven in the morning they drive you from your socks. At a breakneck speed. Because they have to go to work and their children have to be brought to the daycare centre. But they don't say 'hello'. At the start, I'd say 'hello' but I stopped doing so (K3)*

*It is a different kind of people. You see a lot of white people, but as I see it, a different kind of people. I would say: those people that don't eat meat, you know (K5)*

Respondents have mixed feeling about the middle class newcomers in their districts. On the one hand they are glad that native Dutch people move back into these districts and that the circle of decline – in their perception closely related with the influx of migrants in the 1980s and 1990s – is broken. On the other hand, they see that the newcomers are a different kind of people, not the old working class people ("the real Capenese"[3]) that used to live here.

**"Cleaner, wholer, safer"**

Gentrification is not only a residential development. Local authorities stimulate gentrification because they think that the influx of higher socio-economic status groups in poor areas results in a more general improvement of the living quality – the 'liveability' – of the area. As the Rotterdam policy slogan goes, to make the area 'cleaner, wholer, safer'. The idea is that middle class households are more tidily, renovate and maintain their houses better, and are less prone to nuisance and delinquency; in short, that they are more civilized. 'Civilizing the city' is indeed a major policy objective of the Rotterdam local government in recent years (Uitermark & Duivendak 2008; Snel & Engbersen 2009). But, as Freeman (2006) argues with regard to the New York districts he examined, not only newcomers but also indigenous residents benefit from these neighbourhood improvements (more shops, less dirt and physical decay, less crime and other trouble due to increased police supervision) that occur in the wake of gentrification. This raises the question how our interviewees in Spangen, Bospolder-Tussendijken and Katendrecht perceive and evaluate the changes in their gentrifying neighbourhoods.

We first asked respondents what physical changes they perceived in their neighbourhoods since the start of gentrification. Many respondents mention a decrease of dirt and roaming garbage in the streets due both to new services (new garbage containers, more regular garbage collection) and to the behaviour of local residents:

*That has improved. Yes, particularly since we have those underground garbage containers. Before, there was garbage anywhere. Even at the inner courts. Every now and then, there is still some garbage but not as it used to be (K1)*

*It used to be normal, that if you wanted to get rid of your couch, you just threw from your balcony on the streets (K17)*

Other respondents underline that our research locations did not yet become neat middle class areas. Apparently, local residents still throw garbage on the streets:

*Street garbage is terrible. People throw anything on the streets, just terrible! It is also the mentality of young people. They stand with their bike against a wastebasket. They drink a can and when they have finished, they just throw it away. And if I say: Young lady, there is a wastepaper basket, why don't you throw your can in it, then they call me a whore! (S13)*

Many respondents observe less physical decay in the neighbourhood. Time and again they refer to earlier days when the district was were plagued by neglected or even abandoned and boarded up houses where the drugs trade flourished and homeless people slept:

*Things changed. When we came here, 19 years ago, there were bushes at the other side of the streets. And no street lights. We struggled for that. We removed those bushes ourselves (..). There were car tires, junks slept there, of course, that's why we wanted those bushes removed (S7)*

*When I came to live here, ten years ago, the worst was over. That's what my neighbours said. In former days, there were shootings and stabbings all the time. There was really much nuisance of junks, particularly, where I live, at Marconi Square. All those old buildings were still there that are now demolished. (..)All those junks lived in these buildings, that's where the drugs dealers were (BT5)*

*When I came to live here, there we still three pubs at Deli Square and a place to eat. All other houses were boarded up. Now, that is, of course, all refurbished. There are some companies in those houses and some restaurants (K12)*

Many respondents commented upon the local safety situation. Respondents recollect the times that prostitution, drugs trade and homelessness with all related nuisance flourished in the areas. Although some of them say they personally never felt unsafe, they generally agree that the districts under examination became safer in recent years:

*Spangen always had a bad name, but things have changed very much in the previous ten years. All drugs dealers and, how do you call them, junkies and prostitutes are gone. You hardly see any drugs dealers and drugs users and loitering youngsters anymore in Spangen. And the residents themselves are responsible for that (S18)*

*Difficult, man. Ten years ago, I was twelve. (..)I lived in Spangen in the time that there were many drugs dealers. They literally slept in my porch. We had to step over them. After that, they cleaned up Spangen. Yes, it now became a kind of neat neighbourhood. (S11)*

*Well, there were quite a few junks and, really, a mess anywhere. At some moment, one house burned down, just on the opposite side of the street. Then, they removed all people from that building. It was old and was to be demolished. Then it was an open area, and with a few residents we had that area turned into a playground for children. (S19)*

This is not to say that the interviewees only saw neighbourhood improvements. Some respondents underline the price they had to pay for the changes: the character of the area changed, it is not really 'their place' anymore. At least some respondents experience what Marcuse (1986) refers to as 'displacement pressure': they feel alienated from their own neighbourhood.

*Yes, that is quite lousy here. Deli Square has changed completely (..)There is a theatre, a videoshop, a snack bar, and a restaurant (..). Not bad, but very expensive. Very expensive. If you want to go shopping, you have go to another district. If you want to get some cash, you have to go to the next district. (K13)*

Particularly, bio-organic shops are a token of gentrification. Attractive for yuppies, but unaffordable for local residents. Some respondents mention more in general that the new services and shops in Katendrecht are not meant for indigenous residents.

*There is a new shop that seems to be very expensive. They sell biological products, biological bread and things like that. I don't want to pay five euro for a jar of honey only because those bees could flutter around so nively (K2)*

*At Deli Square, there are all kinds of new restaurants and so on. But you won't find a real Katendrechter there, because, firstly, they cannot afford it and secondly, an ordinary Katendrechter doesn't eat in a restaurant. He eats at home, with his children (K2)*

Some respondents regret that it is not allowed to drink alcohol in public anymore

*On a summer day, we used sit nicely outside with a beer and your neighbours, that was really a feast. But that is not allowed anymore. (K6)*

*In the evening, if you sit outside your house on a bench and a police officer drops by, you will get a ticket straight away*

The latter quotations show the other side gentrification in Rotterdam working class areas such as Katendrecht. Although respondents are generally positive about what changed in the neighbourhood, some of them regret the loss of the old working class habits and culture in these areas. Indigenous residents  evidently benefit from improvements in the neighbourhood ('cleaner, wholer, safer'), but some of them do not feel at home anymore. Things are not as 'cosy' as they used to be. These statements are clear examples of what Marcuse (1986) calls 'displacement pressure'.

**6.   What indigenous neighbourhood residents think about local government interventions**
Our second research question is how indigenous residents in gentrifying areas evaluate the interventions of local governments and other public institutions (housing corporations, police,

etcetera) in their district. The respondent's answers to our questions are far more mixed than we expected, given the dominant discourse about how harmful gentrification is for local residents. Our respondents' reaction, however, is comprehensible given the recent history of the districts under examination. During the 1980s and 1990s, all three areas were caught in a spiral of decay and marginalization. Local residents and community organizations reproached local authorities for neglecting the problems of Rotterdam deprived districts. In the perspective of local residents, the local authorities (including the Rotterdam police) rather looked away from the neighbourhood problems than solving them. In the late 1990s, Spangen residents even occupied the Rotterdam city hall twice to demand a stricter approach of crime and nuisance in the neighbourhood (Tops 2007; Snel & Engbersen 2009). Partly in response to these protests and the rise of populist parties ("Liveable Rotterdam"), the Rotterdam local authorities indeed choose for a much stricter approach of nuisance and delinquency in the city. "Safety" became and still is top priority of Rotterdam local politics  (*cf.* Tops 2007; Snel & Engbersen 2009; Uitermark & Duivendak 2008).

The stories of our respondents reflect the initially hesitant approach of nuisance and crime in areas like Spangen and Katendrecht. Some respondents recollect resident initiatives for more safety in the area.

*It is not as bad as it used to be. Recently, you hear little about burglaries (..). It used to be much worse. We even had a vigilance committee (burgerwacht) because it was that bad.. People were robbed in the streets, your head beaten up, cars forced open, you name it (K2)*

*Ten years ago, we had our own vigilance committee here because there were so many burglaries. Just residents together, four persons in a car with a walkie-talkie. That's how we delivered a lot of them (burglars) at the police station. It was such a mess… (K4)*

*There is more surveillance now. Neighbourhood fathers also walk around. They keep an eye on everything. But it is not yet a real solution. (BT2).[4]*

Particularly, Spangen was famous for the initiatives of local residents and community organisations against drugs trafficking and related crime and nuisance in the neighbourhood. Spangen was a spot where by so-called ´drug tourists´ from France came to buy dope. Local residents undertook action to chase off French drug tourists.

*We then joined the protests against those French drugs tourists. I also threw stones so that those French left. It took two or three years. It wasn't over like that. It took two years before the municipality went into action. (S15)*

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This quote also reveals the aversion of Spangen residents against local authorities that refused to take action against drugs trafficking in Rotterdam neighbourhoods. Another respondents recalls the same incident, but now with the message that the struggles of indigenous residents against drugs in Spangen enabled the arrival of middle class newcomers:

*The old residents (..), they have scuffled that the new residents could come and live here. If those junkies were still here, they had never bought a house here (S7).*

When asked what public institutions do in their neighbourhood, our respondents are particularly positive about the garbage collection, specifically the new subterranean garbage containers.

*Since we have those new garbage containers, it is a lot cleaner here (K13)*

*All that mess in the streets is from people. The municipality does what it can. Guys from the municipality walk around here everyday to keep the streets clean. But if they clean up, but people throw rubbish on the street all the time .... It is not the fault of the municipality (S14).*

Respondents are, interestingly, less positive about the police. Although safety became top priority in Rotterdam local policies, our respondents do not consider the Rotterdam police as effective in their struggle against delinquency and nuisance:

*I think the police drives around more often. Not that they stop, but they patrol. That is nice (BT2)*

*I think you don't see enough police on the streets. Or suddenly, you see six or seven police cars at the same time. If you see how they drive here. Sometimes they drive 80 or 100 kilometres' an hour. I even don't know how the police officer responsible for this area looks like (K6)*

Respondents are more positive about specific police actions to improve the safety situation in the Rotterdam districts, such as the introduction of CCTV-surveillance and of preventive body search to prevent that people carry arms. These measures increased the safety in the neighbourhood. Respondents generally do not see these measures as an infringement of their privacy. For them, the new surveillance methods are not directed against ordinary residents but only against those who have to hide something.

*The whole area is full of CCTV-cameras, but that doesn't bother me. If you haven't done anything, the cameras won't harm you. They already caught some guys with the help of the images of a camera, guys that were dealing in front of that pub… (K4)*

*Three years ago CCTV-surveillance was introduced (..). Whole families moved away then because they couldn't stand camera surveillance. Yes, if you want live in anonymity… (K7)*

*Yes, things have improved here. May be because of those CCTV-cameras they placed. And that unsocial bunch away from the Cape. (..)It is much quieter now. In the evening, I can go to the club by bike. I always went by car. (..)I didn't dare to walk (K8)*

Other respondents say, however, that CCTV-surveillance gives them '*a big brother feeling*' and are afraid that that 'the camera' results in 'automatic tickets' for minor offences such as throwing a cigarette fag on the street, dumping garbage wrongly or drinking alcohol in public:

*You can't just stand outside anymore or accidently throw a newspaper in a glass container, because you just get a ticket by way of the camera (K2)*


## 7. Discussion

The background of this paper were different accounts of the social consequences of gentrification, particularly for indigenous local residents. Some observers underline the negative consequences of gentrification for indigenous residents or even equate gentrification with displacement of local residents (Slater 2006). If gentrification does not result in the actual departure of local residents, they often do not feel at home anymore in the neighbourhood that has changed so much due to the influx of middle class households. This, again, results into a new pressure to leave the area ('displacement pressure'; Marcuse 1986). Other authors, on the other hand, relativize the negative consequences of gentrification arguing that indigenous residents benefit as well from improvements in gentrifying districts (more shops, more safety due to increased police supervision, etcetera) (Freeman 2005; Zukin 2010). This theoretical discussion leads to our research question how local residents of three Rotterdam districts perceive and evaluate (starting) gentrification in their neighbourhood.

Our findings are less unambiguous than these theoretical perspectives would suggest. On the one hand, indigenous residents appreciate what they see as improving living conditions in their neighbourhoods: less dirt and roaming garbage in the streets due to better services, less physical decay and boarded-up houses, less crime and nuisance related to drugs trade, prostitution and homelessness, etcetera. Respondents mention these issues when asked what changed in their neighbourhood in recent years,

since the influx of middle class households started. Of course, these neighbourhood improvements are not directly related to gentrification, but rather a spin-off of the enlarged attention and stricter policies of public institutions (including the Rotterdam police) in deprived districts.

We should underline, however, that these neighbourhood improvements are not just the result of local government policies. In fact, local residents and community organizations in areas like Spangen and Katendrecht demanded a stricter approach of urban problems since many years. In the late 1990's, Spangen residents even occupied the Rotterdam City Hall urging the Rotterdam local authorities not to neglect neighbourhood problems, but to act. As our interviews revealed, local residents of Spangen and Katendrecht also acted single-handed against burglars, pimps, foreign drugs tourist and others that negatively effected the 'liveability' of the neighbourhood. Indigenous residents, therefore, see the improved conditions in the neighbourhood at least partly as a result of their own actions.

Another way to understand the rather positive evaluation of gentrification by local residents is to put in into the perspective of the recent histories of the areas examined. Until the late 1960s, early 1970s all three areas were predominantly native Dutch (or 'white') working class areas. This changed in the 1980s and 1990s, when many native Dutch families left for the suburbs or outer Rotterdam districts. There placed were generally taken by non-Western immigrant families. By the year 2000, ethnic minorities were in fact the large majority of the population in these districts. Native Dutch local residents, but also individuals with an immigrant background themselves, tended to equate the social deterioration and expanding problems in these districts with the growing share of "foreigners" (although many of them have Dutch nationality) in the local population. The positive evaluation of gentrification by local residents is probably also related to the fact that gentrification changes the ethnic mix in these areas again (finally 'fair-haired children again' as one respondent stated).

However, on the other hand, some respondents regret the changes in the neighbourhood due to gentrification. For them, the neighbourhood is not theirs anymore. Cheap bars are replaced by expensive restaurants, new bio-organic shops (a token of gentrification) are unaffordable for most locals, some respondents feel being spied on by CCTV-surveillance (although many respondents say 'the camera' is not meant for them, but for others..) and some complain that, due to stricter police acting, they are not allowed to drink a beer outside with neighbours anymore as they were used to. These are all signs of what Marcuse (1986) calls 'displacement pressure', the experienced loss of the old working class culture and identity of these neighbourhoods. This may stimulate some local residents to leave the neighbourhood after all. Many others will realise, however, that the presumed working class culture and identity of these areas already disappeared in the 1960s and 1970s when many native Dutch working class households left the areas.

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[1] Atkinson (2002: 8) observes that "..displacement is the most dominant theme in the research literature.." about gentrification. More than half of the studies (71) he reviewed examined the issue of displacement..

[2] With this combination of 'gentrification' and 'acupuncture' local authorities describe the policy of specific local 'punctures' to make the area 'more healthy' (SEV 2005).

[3] Katendrecht is also called "The Cape". Katendrecht residents are therefore also referred to as 'Capenese'.

[4] 'Neighbourhood fathers´ is a voluntary residents initiative, initially started by Moroccan fathers, to patrol the streets in unsafe areas and to address youngsters causing nuisance about their behaviour.

**Table 1. Indicators of gentrification in three Rotterdam districts (1995/2003)**

| | 1995 | 1997 | 1999 | 2001 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Housing values (WOZ)** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bospolder | 21.016 | 37.831 | 38.329 | 57.099 | 57.450 (100) | 54.506 (95) | 109.993 (191) | 108.044 (188) | 124.311 (216) | 111.802 (195) | 118.417 (206) |
| Tussendijken | 24.506 | 38.023 | 38.097 | 52.057 | 52.111 (100) | 51.238 (98) | 86.661 (166) | 87.856 (169) | 103.347 (198) | 96.948 (186) | 104.258 (200) |
| Spangen | 19.747 | 35.494 | 37.594 | 55.606 | 55.613 (100) | 53.602 (96) | 89.233 (160) | 89.604 (161) | 103.691 (186) | 106.478 (191) | 109.736 (197) |
| Katendrecht | 29.270 | 46.283 | 46.306 | 63.056 | 63.056 (100) | 65.341 (104) | 108.904 (173) | 110.546 (175) | 123.648 (196) | 122.709 (195) | 134.744 (214) |
| Rotterdam | ? | ? | ? | ? | 84.031 (100) | 85.642 (102) | 137.299 (163) | 139.207 (166) | 151.821 (181) | 160.131 (191) | 164.166 (195) |
| **% rented housing** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bospolder | 92 (100) | 91 (99) | 93 (101) | 93 (101) | 92 (100) | 91 (99) | 90 (98) | 90 (98) | 87 (95) | 87 (95) | 84 (91) |
| Tussendijken | 92 (100) | 92 (100) | 94 (102) | 94 (102) | 94 (102) | 93 (101) | 93 (101) | 93 (101) | 93 (101) | 90 (98) | 90 (98) |
| Spangen | 93 (100) | 93 (100) | 95 (102) | 94 (101) | 94 (101) | 93 (100) | 89 (96) | 87 (94) | 84 (90) | 79 (85) | 76 (82) |
| Katendrecht | 99 (100) | 99 (100) | 99 (100) | 99 (100) | 93 (94) | 93 (94) | 90 (91) | 88 (89) | 87 (88) | 84 (85) | 78 (79) |
| Rotterdam | 80 (100) | 78 (98) | 79 (99) | 78 (98) | 77 (96) | 75 (94) | 74 (93) | 73 (91) | 72 (90) | 69 (86) | 68 (85) |
| **Mean income per resident (x 1.000 euro)** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bospolder | 6,2 (100) | 6,7 (108) | 7,7 (124) | 8,6 (139) | 9,9 (160) | 9,3 (150) | 9,1 (147) | 9,5 (153) | 9,8 (158) | ? | 14,4 (232) |
| Tussendijken | 6,6 (100) | 7,0 (106) | 7,6 (115) | 8,3 (126) | 9,3 (141) | 8,9 (135) | 8,7 (132) | 9,3 (141) | 9,5 (144) | ? | 13,1 (198) |
| Spangen | 5,5 (100) | 6,0 (109) | 6,5 (118) | 7,1 (129) | 8,2 (149) | 7,7 (140) | 7,7 (140) | 8,1 (147) | 8,6 (156) | ? | 13,2 (240) |
| Katendrecht | 7,0 (100) | 7,2 (103) | 7,7 (110) | 8,7 (124) | 10,3 (147) | 9,7 (139) | 10,2 (146) | 10,5 (150) | 10,9 (156) | ? | 17,3 (247) |
| Rotterdam | 8,2 (100) | 8,9 (109) | 9,6 (117) | 10,5 (128) | 12,2 (149) | 11,7 (143) | 11,6 (141) | 12 (146) | 12,5 (152) | ? | 19,7 (240) |
| **% low-income households** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Bospolder | 57 (100) | 56 (98) | 53 (93) | 53 (93) | 49 (86) | 50 (88) | 50 (88) | 49 (86) | 52 (91) | ? | 53 (93) |
| Tussendijken | 57 (100) | 57 (100) | 58 (102) | 58 (102) | 53 (93) | 52 (91) | 53 (93) | 50 (88) | 53 (93) | ? | 60 (105) |
| Spangen | 55 (100) | 58 (105) | 56 (102) | 55 (100) | 50 (91) | 51 (93) | 52 (95) | 50 (91) | 49 (89) | ? | 50 (91) |
| Katendrecht | 56 (100) | 57 (102) | 54 (96) | 56 (100) | 51 (91) | 49 (88) | 46 (82) | 47 (84) | 49 (88) | ? | 51 (91) |
| Rotterdam | 47 (100) | 47 (100) | 45 (96) | 44 (94) | 42 (89) | 42 (89) | 41 (87) | 42 (89) | 42 (89) | ? | 44 (94) |