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### Residential practices of middle classes in the field of parenthood

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# 1 Introduction

Over the past decades, the urban geography of many Western cities has fundamentally changed. Many cities, including Amsterdam, have witnessed a transformation from working class-dominated spaces of industrial production to middle class-dominated spaces of services and consumption (Lees et al., 2008). This transition is linked to demographic changes such as postponing marriage and childbearing (Bondi, 1991, 1999) and to structural economic transformations such as the professionalisation of the work force, the transition to a service-based economy (Butler et al., 2008; Hamnett, 1991), and the reorientation of capital towards central cities (Smith, 1996a). There is a common understanding that these transformations should be linked to changes in social class structure, which has led to the emergence of new urban geographies of class in major urban centres across the world (Atkinson and Bridge, 2005; Bridge, 1995, 2001a; Butler and Hamnett, 2009; Butler et al., 2008; Butler and Robson, 2003b; Savage et al., 1992).

The concept of gentrification has come to symbolise many of these transformations. Although gentrification is clearly associated with reinvestment in urban cores and the closing of rent gaps, the main agents of gentrification are the gentrifiers. Drawing on the work of Bourdieu (1984, 1999, 2005), several scholars argue that gentrification is part of the distinction strategies of 'new' middle classes which set them apart from the 'old' middle classes and are reflected in various aspects of consumption, including housing (Bridge, 2001b; May, 1996; Watt, 2005). Living in the inner city has become part of a particular lifestyle and the fulfilment of a particular self image, and it is linked to particular middle-class habituses (Bridge, 2006; Butler and Robson, 2003a, b; Ley, 1994, 1996; R erat and Lees, 2010).

Although it is debated whether gentrifiers constitute a *new* middle class, there is a common understanding that urban *middle classes* are the agents of gentrification. Some studies have extended the concept of gentrification beyond the urban (Bridge, 2003; Phillips, 1993; Smith, 2002), but generally, gentrification is very closely associated with the transformation of urban neighbourhoods, often in large metropolitan areas. Correspondingly, gentrifiers are argued to 'possess' a metropolitan habitus (Butler, 1997; Butler and Robson, 2003a). The urban geography of western metropolises and the formation and reproduction of specific middle-class groups are thus intrinsically connected.

The specific urban habitus of the new middle classes, however, is challenged by events in the life course. In demographic literature, the transition to parenthood is typically associated with residential mobility, and more specifically, with moving to spacious dwellings in suburban areas (Bell, 1968; Rossi, 1955). When urban middle classes have children and settle down, many suburbanise or move to the countryside, while only a minority remains urban. The differentiation of

the residential practices of gentrifiers when they become parents are associated with various time-space trajectories and strategies for the reproduction of class in various life stages (Bridge, 2006). The residential practices of *new* middle classes could thus prove to be only temporarily distinct from those of the traditional middle classes in the suburbs. Butler and Robson (2003) connect this differentiation of residential practices with specific habituses within the middle class and, more specifically, with how various middle-class households assume different positions in the fields of consumption, education, employment and housing. Therefore, the main question of this dissertation is as follows:

**How do residential practices of urban middle classes change when they have children and how are their residential practices informed by their habitus?**

## Theory

To address these questions, this dissertation integrates perspectives on class with perspectives on the demographic transition to parenthood. It makes use of four key concepts: field, capital, habitus and practice, which are derived from the work of Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1984, 1990, 2000, 2005) and of scholars that have used and developed his concepts (i.e. Bridge, 1995, 2001a, 2002; Butler, 1997; Butler and Robson, 2001; Calhoun, 1993; Ley, 1996; Robson and Butler, 2001; Savage et al., 1992; Savage et al., 2005). This study focuses on what middle-class households actually do when they have children: the main subject of study is, therefore, their practices. More specifically, it focuses on those practices that are directly and indirectly associated with their place in space: their residential practices.

### *(residential) Practice*

Following Bourdieu's theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1977, 1990), this study looks at the behaviour of households when they become parents for the first time. Rather than merely analysing attitudes, intentions or preferences, the aim here is to focus on how having children affects the behaviour of middle-class new parents in various aspects of their lives. The term "residential practices" refers to residential mobility and to practices in other aspects of life that are directly and indirectly related to how the place of residence structures daily spatial routines.

Practices should, however, not be mistaken for rational action on the part of agents who wittingly and willingly choose the directions of their lives. Parents are the main actors in this study, but their practices are only partially the products of their own making and even less of their own choosing. To a large extent, the structural contexts of their existence determine their choices and their imagined alternatives. Furthermore, their practices are also the outcome of previous experiences, which have been embodied and become part of one's social nature.

Practices are thus often habitual and are carried out unconsciously. This is not to say that practices cannot be reflexive. Nonetheless, even if behaviour is conscious and reflexive, it is still informed by an embodied scheme of making sense of the world. This practical sense is rooted in what Bourdieu calls the 'habitus'.

### *(middle class) Habitus/Capital*

Although the concept of habitus has been criticised for various reasons (Calhoun, 1993; Jenkins, 2002), it is still a useful concept to transcend ongoing discussions of structure and agency. Maintaining that it is the mechanism through which structure and agency are brought together and reconciled, the habitus is both structure 'at work' and the social production of structure. For Bourdieu, the habitus is the set of embodied dispositions that have been formed during previous experiences. The habitus is "*the active presence of the whole past of which it is a product*" (Bourdieu, 1977: 56). Although these historical experiences could encompass nearly everything, Bourdieu's own analyses often emphasise how the habitus has been shaped by the context of social class. Even though the habitus should be understood more broadly, it is often interpreted as an expression of class position and, simultaneously, a vehicle for class reproduction.

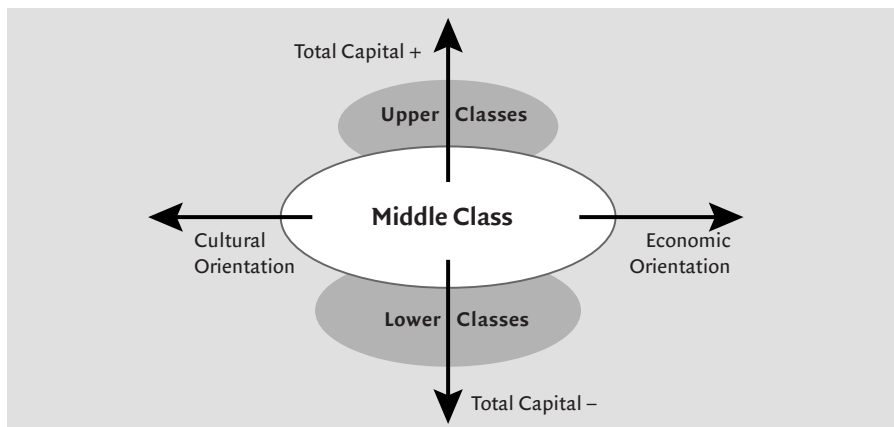
Class reproduction is associated with the positions that people occupy and their possibilities of maintaining these positions through the deployment of capital. For Bourdieu, class is an advantaged position in social space, which is 'materialised' in various forms of capital. He defines four different main types: symbolic, social, economic and cultural capital. In defining social space, however, economic and cultural capital are considered the most important. It is the total quantity of capital and its orientation on a cultural-economic axis that constitutes one's position in social space: social class. This capital orientation is often expressed through occupation. In *Distinction* (1984), social space on the basis of capital is mapped through the various positions that people occupy in the labour market and how this is associated with their incomes and cultural consumption.

Bourdieu divided social space into three vertically positioned strata: the working classes at the bottom, the bourgeoisie on top and the petit-bourgeoisie as a middle stratum. The terms he used to describe these strata do not always translate well to other contexts. Although British understandings of social class, on which this dissertation draws heavily, also use employment status as a primary indicator of class, they often divide social space into working/lower classes, middle classes and an aristocracy that is not always explicit. What is referred to as middle class in British class literature (Bridge, 1995; Butler and Robson, 2003a; Devine et al., 2005; Savage et al., 1992) appears to encompass Bourdieu's concepts of the bourgeoisie and the petit-bourgeoisie simultaneously, in which the bourgeoisie coincides with the upper middle class and the petit bourgeoisie with the lower middle class. In the Dutch context, understandings of class tend to differ again from both the Bourdieuvian and British classifications. In common discourse,

the Dutch concept of *middenklasse* is often juxtaposed with both ‘the poor’ and ‘the elite’. Although Dutch social stratification studies also apply occupational status (Güveli et al., 2007), social class is often measured by income levels and educational attainment.

In this (Dutch) study, middle-class position is defined by the interaction between economic capital (income) and cultural capital in institutionalised forms (level of education) and embodied forms (taste). It defines the middle class according to its intermediary position in terms of total quantities of capital between the lower and upper classes. Within the middle classes, a differentiation is made between relatively high volumes of economic capital versus relatively high levels of cultural capital and between the upper and the lower.

FIGURE 1.1. **Class position and orientation of capital**



Based on Bourdieu’s ideas of social space, the various orientations of capital produce different practices. Only practice generates the social interactions in which certain dispositions (the habitus) acquire meaning. Capital and its value are thus only established meaningfully in the interaction between habitus and field.

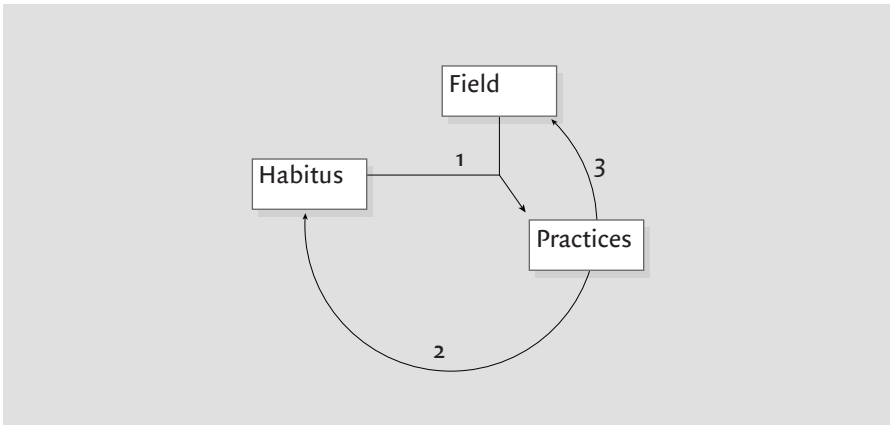
### *Field*

The concept of field refers to a *relatively* autonomous social world. Fields are battlegrounds on which actors compete for the specific forms of capital that are at stake in that field. Fields have their own specific logic and symbolic forms of capital. Nevertheless, fields are interconnected. In the first place, the habitus translates into practices in fields that are, in Bourdieu’s words, homologous. This means that although fields have different rules and function differently, the social position one occupies in the field of power (class) still operates in various fields. Cultural and economic capital are useful resources in many social contexts.

Middle classes share a similar (homologous) position on the vertical axis of social space, but they are differentiated by their orientations in, for instance, the fields of housing, employment, education and consumption.

Because these fields are also connected, practices in one field have consequences in another. The chart below shows how this study conceptually approaches these interactions: in interaction with a field, the habitus produces practices (1), which, in turn, inform the habitus (2) and shape the contours and rules of the field (3); eventually, these factors produce new practices together (1). This continuous feedback loop presents a conceptual model that can make it difficult to separate cause and effect. The habitus, however, is like a super oil tanker: it changes course very slowly.

FIGURE 1.2. **Schematic interpretation of interactions between habitus, field and practices**



In this study, the habitus is treated as a relatively stable factor: by and large, it remains the same over time. The transformations of becoming a parent and the new experiences contribute to a slight reformation of the habitus. However, the reformation of the habitus is not the primary subject of this study. The main topic of this study is how the residential practices of urban middle-class households change when they have children and how the interactions of habitus and field are altered in this new stage of life.

Following the work of Butler and Robson (Butler and Robson, 2003a, b), this study will analyse how the residential practices of middle-class households are related to four fields: the field of consumption, employment, education, and housing.

### *Middle-class families in the field of consumption*

One of the crucial aspects of contemporary studies of social class is the focus

on consumption as a defining variable. The 'new' middle classes are defined according to their distinctive consumption practices, which does not only set them apart from working classes, but also from 'traditional' middle classes (Devine et al., 2005). To a large extent, the consumption practices of the new middle classes are associated with their urban character, or at least, the spatial concentration of particular forms of consumption in cities. This includes consumption at high-threshold facilities such as theatres, cinemas, or delicatessens and the symbolic aspects of consumption of specific material goods and services (Bell, 1968; De Wijs-Mulkens, 1999; Zukin, 1998). Furthermore, apart from consuming services or goods in urban space, the consumption of urban space is also an aspect of the repertoire of distinctive practices. Therefore, urban middle classes seek distinction through two dimensions of consumption (Zukin, 1987, 1995, 1998).

However, when people have children, these patterns of consumption are altered. In particular, activities such as dining out or clubbing are generally much less important for parents than they are for singles or couples. Due to the lack of time and logistical constraints, young families are more geographically bound to their homes and their direct residential environments. In addition to changes in the consumption of services and goods, the relationship with the residential environment as such may also change. Some families remain urban, but for others, the consumption of urban space may not be as important as it previously was (Karsten, 2007). Therefore, both the meaning of the consumption of particular goods and services and the consumption of urban space itself that may differentiate the residential practices of middle-class households when they become parents.

### *Middle-class families in the field of employment*

The rise of the middle classes in urban areas around the world is strongly associated with changes in the labour market. The rise of the service economy and the decline of industrial production in most Western urban centres have changed the social makeup of these cities. It is the change in employment sectors that has made scholars reason that the new employees of inner cities constitute a new middle class. It is argued that many new occupations, such as consultants, IT-personnel, and fashion designers, do not belong to the elite or working classes, but they do not fall into traditional middle-class positions either. Drawing on Weberian perspectives on class, scholars such as Butler, Robson, Savage and Bridge have used Bourdieuvian methodologies of class to define the new social class hierarchies. Although they are aware of some of the disadvantages of using employment as an indicator for class, Butler and Robson use employment categories as a way of marking the transformations in London's class structure. They emphasise that occupation should not be seen as an independent variable that determines consumption patterns; the choice of a particular occupation is informed by previous dispositions that are learned in middle-class education

(Butler and Robson, 2003a). Employment should therefore be seen as a field in which the habitus produces particular outcomes and in which new experiences are accumulated.

The field of employment is a site at which skills and knowledge are 'transformed' into economic capital. The position in the labour market largely determines the degree to which households can afford various forms of consumption, including those of housing and private education. Furthermore, employment is a powerful source of identity and an important factor that shapes daily routines. The location and conditions of a job have an impact on the time-space budget through commuting time and the possibility of combining various activities in multi-purpose trips (Jarvis, 2005; Karsten, 2003). The concentration of particular types of employment in cities, notably financial services and creative and knowledge-intensive jobs, binds many members of the middle class to urban regions, although not necessarily inner-city areas (Bontje and Musterd, 2005). Furthermore, the positions of households in the field of employment are related to the division of paid and unpaid work within households.

Having children often has repercussions for the new parents' positions in the labour market. In most Western contexts, having children provokes a starker contrast between male and female practices. Perhaps the most important transition is the gendering of the division of work within households. In many countries, new mothers tend to become concerned with 'the private' and 'the home', while men continue in the public sphere of work (Elshtain, 1981). In the Netherlands, new mothers generally start working fewer hours or quit altogether, while men work even more hours when children are born. Among middle-class couples with children, the division of labour is less gendered, but among these same couples, men tend to be the primary breadwinners (SCP, 2008). However, the Dutch context of part-time work allows for a much wider range of possible arrangements for the division of labour. Particularly among the middle classes, it is also quite common for men to work part-time.

### *Middle-class families in the field of education*

The educational system is particularly crucial for the middle classes in maintaining and legitimising class differences (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Reay, 2001). For the middle-class family households in this study, two related but quite distinct aspects of the educational system are important: for themselves, higher education, and for their children, primary education.

Institutions of higher education and cities are intrinsically linked. The rise of middle classes in inner cities is closely associated with the simultaneous trend toward professionalisation of the labour market and the growth in tertiary education (Hamnett, 1994b). Many scholars have indicated the importance of students in the pioneer stages of gentrification (Clay, 1979; Gale, 1980; Ley, 1996; Smith and Holt, 2007). Moreover, students are the high-skilled workers of the

future. The professionalisation of the labour market has created a demand for more highly educated workers, which are delivered by universities, colleges and polytechnics. Both high-skilled work and tertiary education facilities tend to be concentrated in cities.

In addition to the qualifications that university graduates acquire through their study, their study period is also an important phase in the accumulation of other forms of capital. In many ways, studying at university is grooming for a position in the urban middle class. The social networks established in this period, the durable relationships that are formed, and the building up of a relationship with the city all contribute to the development of what is referred to as a metropolitan habitus (Butler and Robson, 2003a).

When members of the middle classes become parents, their own educations have usually been completed. This does not mean that they no longer assume a position in the field of education. Many scholars view the struggle to find suitable primary and secondary education for children as central to the residential practices of urban middle classes. Butler and Robson (2003a) describe how the middle classes use a mix of economic, cultural and social capital to gain access to good schools in what they call an almost frantic manner. In the context of London, this is primarily achieved through the deployment of large sums of money, either to buy into the right catchment area or by paying high fees for private schools. As other scholars have also shown, other forms of capital can also play an important role in access to schools. The middle classes, for example, use their social capital to inquire about schools and gain access to good schools (Ball and Vincent, 1998). In addition, cultural capital in the form of taste influences outcomes in the field of education. The preferences of specific middle-class families for diverse school contexts and a focus on specific learning methods (for instance, Montessori, Steiner) also leads to differentiation in school choices (Ball et al., 1996).

### *Middle-class families in the field of housing*

Housing plays a key part in the transformation of the geography of cities. Classic urban social ecological studies reserved a crucial role for housing as they sought to understand who is sorted into which areas (Park et al., 1925; Wirth, 1938). The key variables for most social-ecological studies are demand, which is primarily associated with income, ethnicity, and life phase, and supply, which includes the price, size and tenure of housing (Michelson, 1977; Robson, 1975). Although these key factors still play an important role in the housing choices of the urban middle classes, other dimensions of housing also play an important part. Various scholars have shown that housing, like other types of consumption, has symbolic dimensions and can be used for distinction. This applies to the aesthetics of housing and to its location and tenure. (Bridge, 2001b; De Wijs-Mulkens, 1999; Jager, 1986). Furthermore, living at a particular location shapes the use of time-space as it structures the pathways of everyday life (Hägerstrand, 1970). Housing

represents an anchor in time and space, structuring the routines and rhythms of everyday life but is also follows the tides of the life course. Positions in the housing field change over time, but they are also contingent upon previous positions, leading to the development of housing pathways (Clapham, 2005).

Following the work of Butler and Robson (2003a), this dissertation proposes that housing should be understood as a field with particular investment costs, notably economic capital, while simultaneously providing various benefits, including aspects of the dwelling itself, such as the number of rooms and the outdoor space, and aspects of the location of the dwelling, as they provide access to jobs and other amenities. To dwell at a particular location is an expression of taste and serves as the stage for the accumulation of various forms of capital: symbolic capital, social capital through the local networks that are accessed, and economic capital through returns on housing value.

It is argued here that when members of the middle classes have children, their positions in the field of housing change. Some aspects of housing, such as size, may become more important, while other aspects, such as access to urban amenities (bars, cafes, etc.), may be considered less important. A vast number of studies show that the transition to parenthood for middle classes in most western countries is associated with residential mobility, and more specifically, with the tenure transition into home ownership and moving from the city to a suburb (Bell, 1968; Mulder, 1996, 2006; Rossi, 1955). However, a substantial group of middle-class families stays in the inner city.

This study considers the interaction between the middle class habitus and its various forms of capital and the field of housing as crucial for an understanding of who stays in the city and who moves out. It is the combination of what housing provides and costs in an economic, social, and symbolic sense, as well as the management of time-space, that is expected to determine which middle-class families stay and which move.

### *Connecting the fields*

As the previous paragraphs may have made clear, the fields of consumption, employment, education, and housing are highly integrated. Changes in one field may affect the positions in another. For example, housing influences access to schooling, shapes consumption patterns and affects commuting times and job access. Occupations and divisions of paid work within households determine purchasing power and thus influence housing access and consumption. This interconnectedness between the fields exacerbates differences in practice between middle classes. Urban middle classes may appear to have relatively similar practices in the various fields in the period before they become parents. However, the transition to parenthood may emphasise and exacerbate existing differences within the middle class. Having children may trigger a differentiation of the residential practices and, hence, of the time-space trajectories they choose between

middle classes with different orientations of capital and habitus.

Moreover, the rules of these fields and the way in which they are connected to each other are specific in both time and space. Many of the interactions of these fields, the positions of the middle class families and their responses to the transition to parenthood are specific to the Dutch and the Amsterdam-based context of the research period. The following section will discuss the most relevant specifics of the four fields in the context of Amsterdam.

## **Amsterdam Case**

### *Amsterdam's Employment Field*

As a second-tier global city, Amsterdam has some important control functions in the international economy (Taylor, 2005). This is reflected in the concentration of headquarters of international corporations in the city and its region and its high proportion of expatriates. To some extent, Amsterdam's labour market shows signs of social polarisation associated with these control functions: a growth of both high-skilled and low-skilled jobs takes place (Burgers and Musterd, 2002). However, middle-skilled jobs have not disappeared and still comprise an important segment of the labour force.

The vast majority of the Amsterdam labour force works in the service sector. Its largest sectors include finance and other business services, ICT, higher education, healthcare and retail (Musterd and Deurloo, 2006). Jobs in industry have largely disappeared from the city, yet in the region of Amsterdam, some areas still have concentrations of industrial jobs. Another characteristic of the Amsterdam labour market is its (inter)national position as a centre of creative industries (Kloosterman, 2004; Peck, 2011). Although strictly speaking, approximately 20% of the work force works in what Florida (2002) calls the creative core, if knowledge workers are included, a more substantial part (approximately 40%) of the Amsterdam labour force works in these sectors (Trip, 2007).

A second important characteristic of the labour market is its flexibility, which is related to the fact that a significant part of the workforce is self-employed (11%)—in the central areas, it rates as high as 19% (O&S, 2011)—and to the fact that a very high proportion works part-time. In the Netherlands, approximately 75% of all working women work part-time (32 hours or less), along with approximately 25% of all men (SCP, 2008). In Amsterdam, these figures are somewhat less gendered. Furthermore, a large number of women in Amsterdam (66%) have paid work. The high female participation and the large share of part-time jobs and the self-employed create a labour market that is both flexible for employers and allows for a wide variety of labour market arrangements and divisions of labour between partners, particularly within family households.

### *Amsterdam's Consumption Field*

Recent comparative studies on various forms of consumption in the four largest cities in the Netherlands (DROAmsterdam, 2011) have confirmed earlier research that Amsterdam has maintained and even strengthened its position as the consumption capital of the Netherlands (Musterd and de Pater, 1992). Restaurants, hotels, bars and cafés are strongly overrepresented in Amsterdam, and the performing arts, as displayed in concert halls, theatres and museums, are clearly concentrated in Amsterdam.

This supply of consumption spaces results in a large stream of short-visit (inter)national tourists. It also contributes to the attractiveness of the city as a place of residence for specific types of households. According to the Atlas of Municipalities, Amsterdam ranks first on the list of most attractive cities in which to live in the Netherlands, mainly because of its wide range of consumption possibilities (Marlet and Van Woerkens, 2011). As studies on the middle classes in Amsterdam have suggested, the consumption of various services and goods and the consumption of Amsterdam's urban space itself are among the most important factors that make specific areas of Amsterdam attractive for middle-class households. From a consumption perspective, it is logical that gentrification processes in the Netherlands have materialised most clearly in the inner-city boroughs of Amsterdam. (De Wijs-Mulkens, 1999; Vijgen and Engelsdorp Gastelaars, 1991, 1992; Wagenaar, 2003).

### *Amsterdam's Educational Field*

The Amsterdam educational context differs significantly from most other urban regions across the western world. Partly due to the fact that private education is practically nonexistent, in Amsterdam, fees do not determine access to schools. This greatly reduces the direct role of economic capital. Furthermore, in the Netherlands, parents have free school choice, which means that officially, no school catchment areas exist; therefore, the need to buy oneself into a particular neighbourhood is less urgent than in the UK. One might expect that in this context, it is less necessary to bring a neighbourhood and school into correspondence and, thus, that school choice is less of an issue than, for instance, in the UK.

There are, however, two important aspects of the Amsterdam field for (primary) education that ensure that the issue of schooling is connected to residential choices. 1) Amsterdam has witnessed an increasing interconnection between school and neighbourhood because schools increasingly adopt policies that prioritise children from the neighbourhood, and 2) middle-class parents appear to be increasingly concerned with the social, and particularly with the ethnic, composition of schools.

Debates about so-called 'black' schools in popular media and among parents are often concerned with negative socialisation and issues of 'school atmosphere'.

In Amsterdam, as in other multicultural urban contexts, class is often mediated by race (Byrne, 2006, 2009). Obviously, school populations tend to reflect the population of the neighbourhoods in which they are located. Living in an area with many highly educated parents also increases the possibility of having access to schools with high performance scores (Karsten et al., 2006; Karsten et al., 2003). The ethnic composition of the neighbourhood is also directly related to issues of school choice. The fields of housing and education are therefore strongly connected to one another.

In the intertwined contexts of education and neighbourhood, economic means do play a role. Affluent households may not be able to directly buy good educations for their offspring, but indirectly, by being situated in more expensive areas, schools are primarily accessed through sufficient monetary means. Moreover, making use of other forms of capital may compensate for the less-powerful role of economic capital. The selection of specific types of education (Montessori, Dalton or other special learning methods) or 'mixing' schools to transform local schools into middle-class schools emphasising cultural forms of capital are among the strategies that members of the middle classes in Amsterdam use to obtain access to education.

### *Amsterdam's Housing Field*

The Amsterdam metropolitan housing market is characterised by a large social rental sector in the municipality and a relatively high level of owner-occupied housing in the suburban fringes of the region. Although a similar suburban-urban dichotomy exists in most other urban regions in Europe and the US, Amsterdam's case is extreme. In Amsterdam, despite recent significant deregulation of the social housing sector, state-owned housing associations still own and allocate approximately 50% of all Amsterdam dwellings (Van der Veer and Schuiling, 2005), which are largely inaccessible to middle-class family households because of their excessively high incomes.

On the other hand, processes of gentrification and other forms of neighbourhood upgrading commonly occur in the central boroughs of Amsterdam, mainly in areas in which the private sector is large (Teernstra and Van Gent, 2012). Correspondingly, most of the centrally located private housing is or is becoming relatively expensive, particularly when measured per square metre. Dwellings in the central city of Amsterdam are often small and only rarely have a garden. Family housing in the owner-occupied or private rent sector in the central boroughs is expensive and is concentrated in the (upper)middle-class districts. Most of the larger affordable family dwellings are situated in the suburban areas of the municipality, which are generally considered less attractive by middle-class households, and in the region containing a wider variety of suburban milieus.

This housing context requires that family households that wish to stay in the inner city but also want to own and live in a relatively spacious dwelling command

considerable economic capital. Households that do not have these forms of capital may have the opportunity to access housing in another way (i.e., inheriting, connections, or cheating). However, the majority of these families will need to choose between moving to spacious homes in cheaper (suburban) areas or content themselves with less space in a more central location.

### *Time frame*

The fieldwork for this study took place in the period between 2008 and 2010. However, the housing conditions of the respondents were also shaped by the years preceding 2008. The year 2008 represents a watershed between the economic prosperity before 2008 and the years that followed the biggest economic crisis since the 1930ties. The impact of what began as a real-estate crisis in the US had not yet been felt directly in Amsterdam at the beginning of this study. However, insecurity in the housing and job market has increasingly cast a shadow over the context of this study. The Amsterdam housing market has stalled as banks have become increasingly reluctant to provide mortgage loans. This might have affected the residential mobility of the respondents negatively in the period of this research. However, considering the strong position of most households in the housing market, the impact of the crisis has been relatively low.

## **Data and Methods**

### *Research design*

This research was designed to answer the main research question:

**The overall research design focuses on two aspects: 1) how the transition to parenthood affects the residential practices of urban middle-class households, and 2) how these changes in practice are related to the habitus.**

To answer this question, this study makes use of longitudinal survey and interview data that were collected over a period of two years, from 2008 to 2010. This longitudinal design consisting of two waves of data collection allows a detailed analysis of the way the practices in various fields change when urban middle-class families become parents for the first time. Furthermore, this dissertation analyses the various aspects of the habitus of these households in depth to investigate how the residential practices of the urban middle classes change when they become parents.

### *Self-collected data*

To study the impact of becoming a new parent, this research has sampled urban middle-class households that were expecting a first child. The respondents were required to meet the following criteria: at least one of the future parents had

completed higher education (HBO or University) and the household had at least an income of 30,000 Euro annually. Furthermore, all of the households had to live in the area that was defined as central Amsterdam (see Figure 1.3). This group was sampled by approaching pregnant women at 14 midwife clinics<sup>1</sup> in the central parts of Amsterdam to fill out a questionnaire. Two of the 14 midwife clinics did not participate in this study, but their catchment areas overlapped with those of other clinics.

#### *First wave*

I collected most of the questionnaires personally by approaching all of the pregnant women in the waiting rooms of the clinics (with a research assistant). Nearly all the women who were approached complied (approximately 95%). Some questionnaires were completed by acquaintances of the respondents who also met the criteria. In total, a sample of 468 questionnaires was completed. Most of these questionnaires were filled out by women who were expecting a first child, but a considerable number (165) were pregnant with a second or third child. These women were removed from the sample. Other households were also removed from the sample because they did not meet the criteria of either not being middle class or not living in the central boroughs of Amsterdam. Eventually, a sample of 291 households was collected for the first wave (see Table 1.2).

At the end of the first questionnaire, the respondents were asked whether they would like to participate in an in-depth interview. Of the 291 respondents, 122 indicated that they agreed to participate. Of these 122 households, 36 couples were selected and approached for an interview; 28 such interviews were performed in 2008. The interviews took place at the homes of the respondents, except for one, which took place in a café. The interviews were conducted with both partners simultaneously, except for one in which only the mother participated. Most of the interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes, ranging from one hour to almost three hours.

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1 Midwife clinics are the principal system in the Netherlands for overseeing pregnancies. For medical reasons, pregnant women may be transferred to hospitalised care, but nearly all pregnant women (initially) attend a midwife from the early stages of pregnancy. These clinics have a particular geographical catchment area based on postal code. Although it is possible to choose another clinic, the majority of women visit the clinic in her neighbourhoods. This made it possible to make a first selection of women that lived inside the inner-ring road.

### Second wave

The second wave of questionnaires was collected by contacting the respondents of the first wave via the contact details they had provided in the first questionnaire. Of the 291 households, 254 could be contacted via email or phone; the rest had not provided (working) contact details. Eventually, 234 (92% of 254; 80% of 291) of the first-wave respondents completed a second electronic questionnaire.

After two years, the same 28 couples were approached for a second interview. One couple had divorced and did not participate again; two more couples also discontinued. The second interviews were somewhat shorter. Again, the interviews took place at the respondents' homes except for one; this time, all interviews were held with both partners.

	Original Sample	Approached	Complied	response %	non-middle class households pregnant with first child	middle class households pregnant with second or third child	middle class household pregnant with first child
First wave (2008)	500	500	468	94%	12	165	291
Second wave (2010)	291	254	234	94% of approached; 80% of original sample	-	-	234

FIGURE 1.3. Amsterdam area and location respondents in 2008



FIGURE 1.4. Amsterdam area and location respondents in 2010



### *Representativity of Sample*

The exact size of the population of Amsterdam cannot be established, as educational levels and income census data are not available on the required level. Nevertheless, the population can be estimated as follows: in the municipality of Amsterdam, 5459 first children were born in 2008. Of these children, approximately 1365 were born in the three-month period of the data collection.

Of these 1365 children, it was estimated that 867<sup>2</sup> were born in the research area of central Amsterdam. Based on SSB data, 50% of these children were born to middle-class parents. This would imply that the population of first-born children of middle-class parents in central Amsterdam would be 433. Although the research mainly sampled women in the final stages of their pregnancies (32-40 weeks) with the result that the difference between births and pregnancies is relatively small, the number of children is actually greater than 433. However, it can be concluded that the 291 households collected in the first wave of 2008 could be expected to represent a considerable segment of the population. The very low level of non-response makes it likely that the sample is representative of the population of members of the urban middle classes who became first-time parents in Amsterdam during that period. The second wave of the sample had a response rate of 80%. An analysis of the non-response showed that no bias should be expected compared to the first wave.

## Sub questions and data

To answer its main question, this dissertation addresses five sub questions that deal with the various aspects of residential practices. Together, the answers to these sub questions will be synthesised in the conclusion, where the main research question will be addressed. Table 1.2 summarises the research questions and shows what data are used to address them.

The first sub question focuses on the general patterns of family households and housing in Amsterdam:

*What spatial patterns and trends in middle-class family settlement can be identified in Amsterdam neighbourhoods in the period 1995–2007 and how can these patterns and trends be explained?*

To identify the scale and scope of middle-class families in Amsterdam, this dissertation draws on statistical neighbourhood data from CBS and O&S Amsterdam and on data from the Living in Amsterdam Survey (WIA). The WIA survey, which is conducted every two years by the Statistical Office Amsterdam among randomly selected adults (N=14,019, 2007), contains data on educational levels. Data from 1995 to 2007 have been recalculated to provide data on the spatial patterns and trends of middle-class families in Amsterdam.

The second sub question is concerned with the relationship between residential environment, housing and practices in the field of employment:

*How does the division of paid work correlate spatially within an urban context and how can we explain these patterns?*

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2 Of the total of 10,660 children, 63.5% were born in the research area. Because no data on whether they were firstborn exist at the neighbourhood level, the same proportion was used.

The second question is addressed by making use of register data from the 2005 and 2006 Social Statistical databases (SSB) and survey data from the Dutch Labour Force Survey (EBB, 2006). Among other things, the EBB dataset (n=82,697) contains national data on working hours and income. This allows for the construction of data on the division of paid work between spouses within family households with at least one working partner. The SSB dataset contains register data on work, income and residential areas, which allows for a detailed division of the data at the level of the neighbourhood.

The third sub question focuses on the roles of various forms of capital that provide access to housing:

*How do middle-class households use various forms of capital to find a home in different housing fields?*

This question is addressed by making use of the interview data from the first and second waves of the self-collected sample of urban middle-class families. Additionally, data from 20 interviews conducted for my master thesis in Copenhagen are used. A total of 75 interviews (from 49 different households) were analysed to determine the ways in which the middle classes navigated the Amsterdam and Copenhagen housing markets.

The fourth research question addresses the relationship between habitus, housing and the field of education:

*How does the meaning of diversity change for urban middle-class households when they orientate for primary schooling for their children?*

What are the socio-spatial strategies for school choice of white middle class parents in the context of Amsterdam and how are they informed by their habitus?

These questions are answered with the use of longitudinal interview and survey data from the self-collected sample. The interviews are first analysed to determine how the respondents' attitudes towards diversity changed and how this is related to issues of school choice. Secondly, information from the interviews is combined with data from the questionnaires to establish which socio-spatial strategies middle class families use when dealing with urban diversity.

The fifth sub question addresses the relationship between the orientations of capital and residential mobility:

*How can the residential mobility of urban middle-class households be explained by the orientation of their capital when they become parents for the first time?*

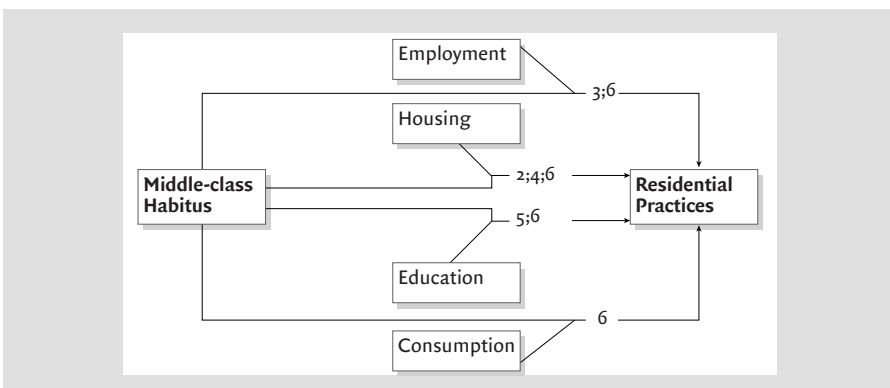
This question synthesises insights from previous chapters by combining longitudinal data from the questionnaires of the self-collected sample and neighbourhood characteristics (data from CBS or O&S) in a multi-level regression analysis.

TABLE 1.2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND DATA	
Research questions and data	Data
Sub question 1: What spatial patterns and trends in middle-class family settlement can be identified in Amsterdam neighbourhoods in the period 1995–2007 and how can these patterns and trends be explained?	WIA data, 1995–2007; CBS data, several years; O&S data, several years
Sub question 2: How does the division of work correlate spatially within an urban context and how can we explain these patterns?	SSB and EBB data, 2005, 2006
Sub question 3: How do middle-class households use various forms of capital to find homes in different housing fields?	Interview data, fieldwork Amsterdam 2008–2010 and Copenhagen 2004
Sub question 4: How does the meaning of diversity change for urban middle-class households when they orientate for primary schooling for their children? What are the socio-spatial strategies for school choice of white middle class parents in the context of Amsterdam and how are they informed by their habitus?	Interview data, fieldwork Amsterdam 2008–2010
Sub question 5: How can the residential mobility of urban middle-class households be explained by the orientation of their capital when they become parents for the first time?	Own survey data, 2008–2010
<b>Main question:</b> How do residential practices of urban middle classes change when they have children and how are their residential practices informed by their habitus?	all data used for sub questions + additional analyses of own interview and survey data

## Reading guide

The chart below specifies how the relationships between habitus, the various fields and residential practices are conceptualised and which chapters of this dissertation address the various aspects of these relationships.

FIGURE 1.5. Conceptual scheme of relationships and corresponding chapters



This dissertation will first take an introductory approach by considering the spatial patterns of urban middle-class families in Amsterdam and determining what trends can be identified. Chapter 2 addresses the relationship between habitus and residential practices without looking into the various fields. It provides an answer to the sub question *What spatial patterns and trends in middle-class family settlement can be identified in Amsterdam neighbourhoods in the period 1995–2007 and how can these patterns and trends be explained?*

Because the empirical work for Chapter 2 was carried out in 2008, this chapter is followed by Box 1, which presents some of the updated findings for the period 2007–2011.

Chapter 3 analyses the relationship between habitus and specific residential practices that are related to the field of employment. It addresses the sub question *How does the division of work correlate spatially within an urban context and how can we explain these patterns?*

This chapter is followed by Box 2, which connects the findings from Chapter 3 with the results from my own sample. This Box shows how the division of labour among the couples in the self-collected sample is organised.

Although all the chapters cover practices in the field of housing, Chapter 4 specifically looks into the relationship between middle-class habitus, the field of housing and residential practices. The sub question here is *How do middle-class households use various forms of capital to find a home in different housing fields?*

Again this chapter is followed by an addendum (Box 3) that provides additional information about the housing situation of households in the self-collected sample.

The fifth chapter addresses the relationship between middle-class habitus, the field of education and residential practices. More specifically, this chapter provides an answer to the following questions: *How does the meaning of diversity change for urban middle-class households when they orientate for primary schooling for their children?*

*What are the socio-spatial strategies for school choice of white middle class parents in the context of Amsterdam and how are they informed by their habitus?*

The final empirical chapter (Chapter 6) provides an integrated analysis of practices in the four fields simultaneously. Apart from the practices in the other three fields, it also takes the field of consumption and its relationship with residential practices into account. This chapter answers the sub question

*How can the residential practices of urban middle-class households when they become parents be explained by their orientation of capital?*

Therefore, this chapter prefaces the conclusions that will integrate the findings of the chapters of this thesis with existing theories and findings from the literature.

As a final supplement, Chapter 6 is followed with Box 4, which provides some additional information on the consumption patterns of the families in the sample.

The final chapter (Chapter 7) presents an integrated perspective on the differentiation of middle-class residential practices in the various fields and describes how this is not related only to orientations of capital but also to other variations in middle-class habitus. The findings from this dissertation are connected back to the literature. Finally, the study concludes with an agenda for future research.