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Residential practices of middle classes in the field of parenthood

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7. Conclusions

For most Amsterdam parents in this study, having children meant a fundamental change in their lives. Many described becoming a parent as entering a new world. This dissertation proposes that the period in which middle-class couples become parents could be conceived of as entering a new field: *the field of parenthood*. Entering the field of parenthood implies a range of new practices, such as caring for a child, but it also causes major changes in old practices, such as the task divisions of paid and unpaid work, seeing family and friends and activities undertaken in spare time. In the field of parenthood, differences within the middle classes that may not have been visible in the pre-parent phase become articulated. The new social realities young middle-class parents face in the field of parenthood are not dealt with in the same way. The main research question of this study was:

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

This concluding chapter will address this question in the following manner: First, I will demonstrate how residential practices in the field of education, consumption, employment and housing change in the transition to parenthood. Secondly, I will establish a link between residential practices and the variegated habituses of the middle classes. The third part of this chapter will bring the findings into perspective and present an agenda for further research.

Changes in the fields

Changes in the Field of Housing

The most obvious example of the way having children affects the residential practices of urban middle classes are changes in the field of housing. As shown in Chapter six, 45% of all the families in this study moved in the first two years of their parenthood, and 39% intended to move (again) in the next two years. Only 23% of all households in the study did not intend to move. In spite of this high residential mobility, only 25% of all families left the central city areas.

Even so, nearly all the households that had moved managed to improve their housing conditions in terms of square metres. In addition, most of the moves coincided with a transition from renting to homeownership. Of the middle-class parents who still lived in the city, 67% owned their home, which is very high in the Amsterdam context, where only 26% of the dwellings are owner-occupied (O&S, 2008). A significant minority still lived in the rental sectors.

As was suggested in Chapter 4, the various forms of capital that households command are associated with different strategies and tactics for obtaining a home. Households that live in social rental housing, for instance, do not accumulate economic capital (or lose it, for that matter) through homeownership. In the booming Amsterdam housing market before the economic crisis, this meant that it was harder for social tenants to ‘get out’ of this sector and move into homeownership (should they want to). Their choices of housing are relatively limited, which also affects the area they can live in. On the other hand, cheap housing (often social rent) may enable these households to organise their lives in other ways. Low rents may provide the opportunity to work fewer hours, make less use of formal child care and spend more time with their children than households with high monthly housing expenses (often homeowners). Housing trajectories are shaped by the habitus and the positions in various fields, which, in turn, reinforce particular aspects of the habitus. Specific middle-class habituses are therefore associated with various housing pathways (see Clapham, 2005).

The role of housing as an investment and a stage for the accumulation of particular forms of capital should always be linked with broader time-space trajectories through physical and social space. Hence, they are also about the location of the housing and how the home positions the households in other fields, such as education and employment. Housing also shapes everyday routines in time and space. Family households, particularly dual-income households who have to juggle various responsibilities, generally have tight time budgets. The location of the home is crucial to the way they organise their lives around work, care and other obligations.

In Chapter 2, it was shown that the increase in the number of middle-class families in Amsterdam is taking place in the central parts of the city. It suggested that this increase should be linked to the time advantages the central location offers to a specific type of middle-class family household. The emergence of urban-orientated dual-income households is the result of demographic changes, such as the postponement of childbearing, the rise in higher education and the emancipation of women on the labour market. Moreover, the growth in middle-class families should also be linked to the gentrification of the central parts of Amsterdam. The findings of this study support the idea that the gentrification of the city also spreads into subsequent stages of the life course.

Although in Amsterdam, most middle-class families live in the most suburban parts of the municipality and the suburban communities in the region host many more, the central areas of Amsterdam appear to offer particular residential environments that are increasingly popular among specific middle-class groups. Although most of the families considered in this study seem to prefer larger dwellings with private outdoor space, the behaviour of the respondents deviated in one important respect from the literature on middle-class families: a large majority remained in the central parts of Amsterdam, and approximately 50% of

them expressed the intention to stay in the future as well. Despite the tight housing market and high prices for centrally located, larger dwellings, many households continued to be urbanites.

Changes in Consumption

The families in this research indicated that the things they did in their spare time and the places they went were different after having children. Obviously, many of these changes are associated with the lack of time and the fact that not all activities are suitable for children. If partners want to do something by themselves, it automatically involves some kind of negotiation. Some households buy time through the consumption of particular services such as child care, delivery, or babysitting. Other parents invoke the help of others, such as neighbours, friends and family, to take some time for themselves.

In spite of monetising and outsourcing strategies, most parents spent less time on their own 'private' activities. Box 4 provided an overview of some of these changes in consumption. For example, most spent less time on (fun) shopping, theatre and museum visits, sports, going to the movies and other forms of consumption. Consuming less of particular services and goods has also implications for the use of (urban) space. Many of the places associated with particular consumption activities, such as clubbing or eating out, are frequented less. The use of urban space has also changed: many new parents indicated that they spend more time in their own neighbourhoods and visited other parts of the city much less frequently.

Changes in the Field of Employment

Most of the respondents in this study, both men and women, worked at full-time or large part-time jobs before they became parents. When they had their first child, most mothers reduced the number of hours that they worked, albeit with a much smaller reduction than the Dutch average. Correspondingly, most men also reduced the number of hours that they worked. Generally speaking, most of the families in this study maintained a more symmetrical division of labour than is common in the Netherlands as a whole. Nevertheless, divisions of labour also differed among the middle-class families in Amsterdam: some couples chose a traditional male breadwinner model; most had some kind of semi-symmetrical model in which men worked more hours than women while both had serious careers; and a few households were dual full-time.

A family's particular methods of labour division are the result of the interplay of, among other things, ideas about gender, the sector of employment, and economic behaviour at the level of the household, optimising the household income and time budget for other tasks. Working in the public sector, private sector or being self-employed influences how easy it is in financial, practical and symbolic terms to work fewer hours. On the other hand, the division of labour

has consequences for the household's income and, therefore, for opportunities in the housing market and other forms of consumption. Chapter 3 has shown that the division of labour is associated with the sorting of households into different neighbourhoods. Dual full-time families tend to be overrepresented in the affluent areas of the central city, while dual part-timers can often be found in the gentrifying neighbourhoods of the 19th century and early 20th century belts. The most common Dutch arrangement (man full-time, woman 16-24 hours a week) is highly overrepresented in the suburban fringes of Amsterdam. It is suggested that in Amsterdam, families tend to be sorted geographically according to the division of paid work.

Chapter 2 also provided evidence that particular middle-class households sort into different areas. Much of this pattern can be explained by the households' incomes and purchasing power on the housing market. Notwithstanding the impact of economic capital, it is important to realise that gender ideologies and consumption patterns via the division of labour impact on economic capital itself. Economic capital is at least partially the result of other practices that are informed by the habitus. Prior decisions about education and job type strongly affect income, as does the role that work plays in one's identity. Furthermore, embodied ideas about how to be a good parent affect work practices and the use of childcare, division of caregiving tasks, use of parental leave arrangements and so forth. The division of labour within households is therefore a nexus for the way the practices of urban middle classes may diverge once its members have children.

Changes in the Field of Education

When members of the middle classes become parents, they must eventually think about where their children will go to school. For many parents, the field of education is very new; others may already have a level of personal experience with the Amsterdam educational landscape. Chapter 5 has shown that schools are an important topic for Amsterdam parents. Most of the parents in this study were already gathering information on schools via the Internet, official sources and their social networks. Some had already taken action by enrolling their children. Although many parents were interested in the location and quality of the schools and their learning methods, the crucial concern of most of the respondents was the issue of 'black' and 'white' schools in the city. Although the majority genuinely seemed to prefer mixing at the level of the school, they also saw ethnic and social class diversity as a threat to the intergenerational transfer of their own class position through good education. All families expressed that they wanted an environment that would enable their child to thrive academically and socially. However, the degree to which they experienced the necessity of compromises toward this ideal and their willingness to make those compromises differed.

In the Amsterdam context of free school choice, the neighbourhood and school are less tightly interconnected than, for example, in the UK. However,

in response to increasing demand, particular schools have tightened their enrolment policies, strengthening the ties between the neighbourhood and the school population. This dawning system of school-catchment areas is changing the rules of the field of education and housing in Amsterdam. Furthermore, the absence of an alternative circuit of private education makes the choice of the right public school a precarious affair that is closely linked to the choice of the right neighbourhood.

Chapter 5 has shown how middle-class parents have various strategies for dealing with different neighbourhood contexts in Amsterdam. Five types of strategies utilised by middle-class parents were identified. The first strategy involves moving to another municipality with good schools. A similar strategy involves moving into an Amsterdam neighbourhood where access to good schools is almost guaranteed. Middle-class parents who are not able or unwilling to pursue the first two strategies can act in three other ways. They either choose the most suitable local school or they can choose a school elsewhere, which implies commuting to school. The fourth strategy is to actively shape the conditions of education by ‘mixing’ the school population by canvassing for support among middle-class peers to send children to the same neighbourhood school. The last strategy is to send the children to a local ‘black’ school for ideological or practical reasons.

Although Amsterdam currently has a relatively free school-choice context, it has become evident that school choice is a very precarious affair for middle-class families. Its interconnectedness with neighbourhood choice means that assuming a position in the field of education has important repercussions for residential practices. How these practices become differentiated, however, is related to positions in the other fields and the habitus.

Residential Practices and Middle-Class Habitus

The second part of the overall research question is concerned with the role of habitus in explaining the various residential practices. It was expected that when middle-class couples have children, the differences between the habituses will become much more apparent than before. In other words, the middle-class habitus is articulated very differently in the new field of parenthood. This is particularly associated with the fact that in the field of parenthood, the main stake becomes ensuring that children attain at least the same social position in life as the parents. Ideas about how to achieve this are strongly related to residential practices.

Capital and Residential Practices

This study has provided evidence that middle classes with different orientations of capital have various residential practices in the field of parenthood. Chapter

6 has shown that the time-space trajectories of members of the middle classes diverge when they become parents, differentiated by their orientations of capital: reproduction of class through economic capital appears to be more associated with suburbanisation, whereas strategies that emphasise cultural capital seem to thrive in urban environments. These findings confirm other studies that have emphasised that various class reproduction strategies are associated with different residential environments (Bridge, 2003; Brun and Fagnani, 1994; De Wijs-Mulken, 1999).

However, a suburb-city dichotomy as maintained in Chapter 6 does not entirely reflect the nuanced ways in which habitus and the residential environment are brought into accord. Although the suburb-city dichotomy plays an important role for those households that stayed in the city to create distinction, various neighbourhoods within the metropolitan area make up a much more kaleidoscopic image. It would go too far to argue that households 'naturally' sort out into different areas. This type of ecological determinism is not suggested here. However, as Savage and others have argued, people seek to bring their habitus into correspondence with their residential environments (Savage et al., 2005).

As Butler and Robson showed for London, residential practices are the outcome of the interaction between the habitus and various fields (Butler and Robson, 2003a). The previous paragraphs have suggested that the position of middle classes in the field of education, employment, consumption and housing changes when its members become parents. The empirical chapters suggested that the changing positions in the various fields should be linked to the amount and orientation of their capital. It is mainly by considering the flows of various forms of capital that we can understand how the various fields are interconnected. The positions of men and women in the labour market, for example, have a powerful impact on the amount of economic capital. Although other forms of capital also explain access to housing, economic capital is the key currency that determines who lives where. As Chapters 2 and 5 have suggested, the position in the field of housing has, in turn, repercussions for access to good schools, distance to work and other amenities. Furthermore, positions in the housing field also shape patterns of consumption, and vice versa.

Therefore, the residential environment is selected for what it provides in a practical and symbolic sense and according to the financial and other forms of capital that the household commands. Capital is clearly an important factor for explaining residential practices. However, these practices are also the outcome of decisions related to bodily experiences: feelings of trust, security and belonging. Feelings of place are very closely related to historically embodied experiences contained in the habitus. Clearly, they have class dimensions as well and are therefore correlated with capital, but the experiences of place are also gendered and related to spatial histories.

Gender and residential practices

The residential practices of two-parent family households are informed by the habituses of both partners. Although parents still have their individual practices, which are informed by their own personal experiences, residential practices in the field of parenthood are the outcome of negotiations at the level of the household. Residential practices are not just influenced by the position of the household in various fields; they are also informed by the positions of the members of the households and the negotiations between them. When children get older, they also become stakeholders in this process.

The outcome of these negotiations depends on many specifics of the particular households. This study has only briefly touched upon the negotiations within households and the possible conflicts between spouses. Furthermore, the study has gathered more detailed data on mothers than on fathers, which would bias the findings. Nevertheless, several findings presented in this study indicate the gender dimension of residential practices. It is known from the literature that class and gender are interrelated, but it appears that entering the field of parenthood accentuates specific aspects of the habitus that cannot be attributed to social class alone. Entering the field of parenthood may have consequences for the balance of power within households. This shifting balance within households results in a repositioning of men and women in various fields. For example, different gender ideologies result in various divisions of paid and unpaid work. Although men are most commonly the main breadwinner, compared to the Netherlands as a whole a large share of the parents in this study divide labour symmetrically. This the result of a high share of mothers with serious working careers (large part-time or full-time jobs) and a high share of part-time working men. Also a significant group chooses the most common Dutch task division in which women work in smaller part-time jobs and men work fulltime. These different divisions have consequences for the financial and time-space budget of families and thus influence residential practices, but also for the position of men and women in other fields. For example, during the interviews, decisions concerning child care and school choice seemed to be made primarily by the mother when she was primarily responsible for caring tasks. Hence, it appears that becoming parent has different effects on households with various ideas about gender.

Spatial aspects of the habitus

Another aspect of the habitus that is linked to both gender and class but also has an independent effect on residential practices is the spatial dimension. The development of the spatial aspects of the habitus, that is, embodied dispositions accumulated in spatial contexts, are the product of historical practices in space. For some of the respondents, living in the city implied having new experiences; for others, the urban context implied a continuation of previous experiences. Generally, changes in employment and a rise in higher education have created

an ever-larger group of middle-class people who live in cities for a considerable part of their lives. Over a long period of time, these people have accumulated experiences in the city and could be claimed to have built up an urban habitus. However, most members of the urban middle classes are not originally from Amsterdam or another larger city and also have embodied experiences from other stages of their lives. Their habitus may have become somewhat 'urbanised' by their stay in Amsterdam, but it is also informed by their previous experiences (Blaauboer, 2011; Blaauboer et al., 2011). Furthermore, the fact that many have accumulated experiences in Amsterdam does not inherently predispose them to stay.

Although the analysis in Chapter 6 did not demonstrate the independent effect of residential background, other factors that affect the chance of moving out of the city are related to housing histories. People that grew up or lived for long periods in Amsterdam are more likely to have family and friends in the city, which makes them less likely to leave. Correspondingly, people that have only relatively recently moved to the city are more likely to have social networks elsewhere. Generally, the longer one has lived in the city, the more tacit and explicit knowledge one possesses about that city. It could be argued that this knowledge of the city constitutes a specific form of cultural capital, which shapes the practices of every life. This feel for the city has both practical and symbolic aspects.

Another aspect of housing history that influences residential mobility is tenure. People who grew up in Amsterdam are more likely to have established a good position in the field of social housing. Most people that move to Amsterdam during their studies or for work have primarily been engaged in private housing sectors. The housing price booms of the late nineties and mid two thousands have enabled some of the homeowner households in this study to accumulate considerable sums of economic capital. To some extent, this is an effect of economic cycles, but as suggested in Chapter 4, attitudes towards homeownership are also influenced by the habitus. The housing pathways of the respondents are shaped by the dispositions, which are learned in the social environment and influenced by the spatial context.

Perspectives

Amsterdam perspectives

As a second-tier global city embedded in a strongly regulated free-market regime, contemporary Amsterdam is shaped by forces of globalisation and, for the past century, by a rather socialist local and national governance. Its post-war socio-political history, in which housing was treated as a public good, has given way to more pro-growth-oriented policies. Gentrification has been integrated into official housing policies (Van Gent, forthcoming). Partly due to the deregulation of

the rental housing stock, the inner-city boroughs of Amsterdam are increasingly inhabited by young middle-class households. When these middle classes have children, most of them still suburbanise, but this study has shown that, in particular, the centrally located areas are increasingly inhabited by middle-class families.

This increase in middle-class family households is fuelled by demographic and socio-economic changes. The pool of potential middle-class families has increased significantly over the past decades as rising numbers of higher-educated young singles and couple-households have moved into the city. When these households move on in the life course, most of them will leave the inner city. Nonetheless, because the middle classes are generally growing, more middle-class families are also staying in the city.

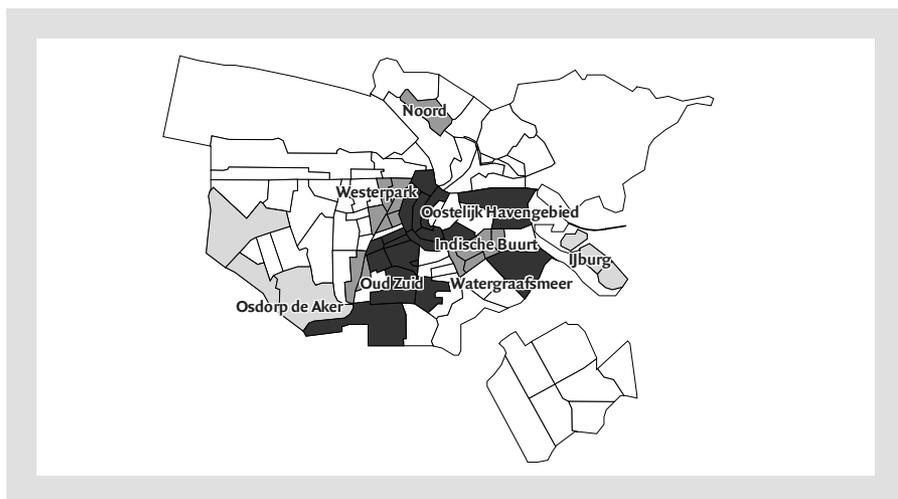
Apart from the simple matter of numbers, there seems also to be a stronger penchant among these families to stay in the city. This should be linked to the general process of gentrification, which has literally and figuratively created more space for the middle classes in the city. Many working-class and immigrant districts are both increasingly populated with the middle classes and are symbolically being redefined as middle-class territory. This is perhaps most visible in the changing consumption spaces, in the explosion of the number of coffee bars, delicatessen, and restaurants and in practices such as claiming the sidewalk (Karsten, 2008), changing transportation practices (cycling!) (O&S, 2011a) and increasing attention to urban design and maintenance. The changing symbolic landscape of the inner-city districts of Amsterdam affects the residential practices of members of the middle classes when they enter the field of parenthood. It may tip the balance for some middle-class households that may have previously decided to leave the city. Correspondingly, the gentrification of the city may cause various types of displacement of other households (Slater, 2009). Lower-class households may experience displacement pressure due to the changing symbolic landscape: they no longer feel at home in their neighbourhoods. Moreover, rising housing prices and the reduction of the social rental sector create both direct displacement and exclusionary forms.

Displacement is not only an issue for lower class households; displacement of middle-class households is also taking place. In particular, single-parent families and other single-earner families may have difficulty affording the increasingly expensive housing in the private sector in the central parts of the city. Paradoxically, however, while the poorest families may be able to occupy family housing in the social sector, middle-income families are often unable to access this type of housing because their incomes are too high. Some of these families, described elsewhere as middle-middle classes (Watt, 2005), are squeezed in the middle. Although Chapter 4 showed that the middle classes also have other forms of capital that they use to find and occupy a home, some middle-class families do not have enough economic capital to afford a suitable dwelling in the central part of

the city or to access other housing through the deployment of social and cultural capital. Although these processes have larger repercussions in some areas than others, the central boroughs of Amsterdam are all affected by it to some degree.

The social geography of Amsterdam's middle-class families is therefore shaped by contradictory forces. On the one hand, it is increasingly difficult for middle-class families to access the social rent sector, but on the other hand, the processes of gentrification lead to decreases in the affordability of centrally located family housing in the private sector. The structure of the Amsterdam housing market contributes to a further differentiation of middle-class habituses in the field of parenthood: households with high shares of economic capital and cultural capital appear to prefer to settle in the expensive and centrally located areas of Watergraafsmeer, Oud Zuid, Oostelijk Havengebied and the Historical Centre, whereas households with high levels of economic capital but less cultural capital tend to leave the city and settle in various suburban municipalities. Households with high levels of cultural capital but a lack of economic means tend to 'colonise' non-middle-class areas within the city, either by moving into lower-class family areas such as Amsterdam Noord or by staying in (marginally) gentrifying areas such as De Baarsjes, Indische Buurt, and Westerpark. Finally, the middle-middle classes appear to have the most difficulty finding suitable accommodations in central Amsterdam. Some of them may move to newly developed areas at the fringes, such as De Aker and IJburg, while others leave the city and suburbanise (see Figure 7.1).

FIGURE 7.1. Amsterdam family gentrification neighbourhoods



Theoretical perspectives

This study of urban middle classes in the field of parenthood has contributed to 1) demographic literature on the life course and, more specifically, the relation between the transition to parenthood and residential mobility; and 2) the more general discussion of the transformations of urban space associated with the reorientation of the middle classes towards the city and, more specifically, on gentrification and the life course.

Residential Mobility and Parenthood

In demographic literature, the transition to parenthood is typically associated with residential mobility (Clark and Dieleman, 1996; Rossi, 1955). This study has confirmed that most newly formed families experience new housing needs, of which the size, location and tenure of the dwelling are important factors. A significant segment of the respondents moved out of their dwellings, and the majority moved into homeownership. At the second measurement, another group of families intended to move, of which a significant part wished to suburbanise. Eventually, the majority of the studied households was residentially mobile in the first years of their parenthood, although a considerable group stayed in the central parts of the city.

However, although all the households experienced the same demographic transition and all belonged to the middle classes, their residential practices were still differentiated. This is partly explained by known factors, such as tenure (Mulder, 1996, 2006), economic and social connectedness (Van Diepen and Musterd, 2009) and individual characteristics such as age, number of children, and income (Clark and Dieleman, 1996). However, this study has also identified the strong effect of the role of cultural capital on residential practices. The different residential practices of middle classes should also be attributed to various forms of taste, which have become embodied through the habitus. This embodied taste is primarily associated with the meaning of living at a particular location and how it provides symbolic capital. Moreover, many of the variables included in residential mobility studies are treated as independent. This study has shown that housing is a field that is interconnected with other fields in which middle classes assume positions in line with their habitus. Historical practices in various fields are accumulated in the habitus which inform new practices. Housing choices in the field of parenthood are part of historically developed pathways that are chosen according to the capital people command. This study suggests that to understand residential practices in the field of parenthood, the entire set of historically embodied experiences should be considered.

Class and Urban Space: Family Gentrification

Various scholars have shown that the urban lifestyle of new middle-class households is challenged by the birth of children (Bridge, 2006). Many of

these gentrifiers suburbanise when they have children, often due to changing housing needs and concerns with the quality of primary education (Butler and Hamnett, 2007; Butler and Robson, 2003a). This study has provided evidence that many middle-class families do suburbanise or intend to do so. However, a considerable number of middle-class households continue to be urbanites when they have children. This group, which has been referred to as *family gentrifiers* (Karsten, 2003), is growing both absolutely and relatively in Amsterdam. Family gentrification, however, comes in various forms.

Some gentrifiers settle down in the areas that they had inhabited previously. The households that entered particular neighbourhoods in Amsterdam when they were still singles or couples entered their parenthood in those neighbourhoods. When these people have children, they may decide to stay in the area, with or without making changes to their housing conditions. This incumbent form of family gentrification fits into stage-model conceptualisations of gentrification in which urban areas are gradually transformed from working-class districts into middle-class areas with increasingly risk-averse populations (Clay, 1979; Gale, 1980). This type of neighbourhood transformation is associated with increasing real estate values, rising rents, and an increasingly affluent population. Evidence from research in progress suggests that most of the gentrification in Amsterdam is associated with incumbent upgrading (Teernstra, research in progress). The maturing of gentrification in these areas should therefore be understood both figuratively and literally as the population 'matures' and settles down. This type of family gentrification may be taking place in neighbourhoods like Scheldebuurt and Oosterparkbuurt.

A second understanding of family gentrification is associated with direct middle class migration. Gentrifiers who have children and cannot or do not want to stay in the area may consider moving into other urban areas as families. Some of these areas may be working-class areas in which lower-class families are being replaced or displaced by more affluent middle-class family households. Examples of this direct family gentrification can be witnessed in Amsteldorp and in parts of Amsterdam Noord.

A third form of family gentrification is related to the migration of middle-class households into traditional middle-class areas, augmenting the concentrations of middle-class families in specific areas. This phenomenon of moving into areas that are relatively homogeneous in terms of class and ethnicity should, perhaps, not be labelled gentrification, as it does not refer to the processes of invasion of lower-class areas by middle-class groups. However, because this process takes place in central urban areas and is accompanied by the replacement and (exclusionary) displacement of the lower classes, it is at least closely related to gentrification. The areas of Middenmeer, Willemspark and Museumkwartier could be viewed as the clearest examples of this phenomenon.

Agenda for Future Research

By conceptualising parenthood as the interaction of habitus and fields, this dissertation has proposed viewing the transition to parenthood as entering a new field: the field of parenthood. Although this study has explained how positions in the field of housing, education, consumption and employment change in the field of parenthood and how they are related to residential practices, the field of parenthood extends much further than is covered in this study. I would like to emphasise three aspects of the relationships between habitus, practices and the field of parenthood that deserve further attention in future research: 1) The relationship between parenthood, housing pathways and habitus; 2) the relation between gender and urban space and how this changes in the field of parenthood; and 3) the concept of parenthood as a field as children grow older.

A first issue that emerged from this study is the relationship between habitus and housing pathways. The residential choices of middle-class households in the field of parenthood are strongly influenced by historical events. Not only are ideas about good parenting practices and residential environments informed by the household members' own childhood experiences, the choice of particular types of housing, tenure and residential environment is also strongly affected by historical practices in the field of housing. This dissertation has tentatively explained how various forms of capital play a role in different strategies and tactics used to gain access to housing. By integrating this perspective more closely with research on the life course and the intergenerational transfer of capital –in both its economic and cultural forms– we could arrive at a more comprehensive account of housing pathways and their relationships with social class. Some of the data that were collected for this study could be used to identify how ideas about housing and parenthood are influenced by residential and social backgrounds.

The second issue that deserves future attention is the gendered aspect of the habitus and the relationship between gender and urban space. This study has suggested that gender ideologies influence ideas about good parenting and, therefore, ideas about suitable residential environments in which to bring up children. Furthermore, the findings of this dissertation suggest that the urban environment is particularly suitable for households that have a relatively symmetrical division of labour. The causality and direction of the causal relationship have not been thoroughly established in this research. Future research should investigate the extent to which this is related to selection effects or whether independent area effects exist. The SSB dataset utilised in Chapter 2 is currently being used in analyses that will provide more definite information on the direction of this causality. Furthermore, some self-collected but underexploited data contain more detailed information on the labour market positions of men and women

and how these positions are altered in the transition to parenthood. The structure of the local labour market and the training and sectors in which middle-class households are active appear particularly important in this respect.

However, the most apparent question that is raised by this study is: is the presence of middle-class families in the inner city a temporary or a more permanent phenomenon, and further, how do middle-class parents deal with their residential environment when their children grow older? In both time and scope, the middle-class parents in this study have only taken their first steps into the field of parenthood. The fact that a relatively large group of middle-class families stayed in the city in the first years of parenthood does not necessarily mean that they will remain there for the rest of their lives. The factors that may lead to a reconsideration of their residential context are associated with the compatibility of housing and household size. As many parents in this study expressed, their current housing situation may be adequate when the first child is still young, but when the family expands and the children grow older they may need more (other) space. Some of these issues could be explored by drawing on previously unused data collected during this study based on questionnaires given to women who were pregnant with a second or third child.

As households proceed in the field of parenthood, many new aspects of the relationship between parenting and the environment will become apparent. Parents will, for instance, need to relate to the changing geography of education in Amsterdam, initially in primary education but later in secondary education as well. Furthermore, as children grow older, their own consumption will become increasingly important, and they will use urban space in a different and increasingly independent way. How the use of space is negotiated within the family depends on ideas about good parenting, which are directly related to the habitus.

Future research should include further longitudinal studies of how middle-class family households' positions in the fields of employment, education, consumption and housing change when they advance in the field of parenthood. Long-term longitudinal studies would enable a further understanding of why, when and how the urban middle classes change their residential practices when they become parents.