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FROM YUPPIES TO YUPPS: FAMILY GENTRIFIERS CONSUMING SPACES AND RE-INVENTING CITIES

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ABSTRACT

This is a study of family consumption in an upgraded Amsterdam neighbourhood. It aims to unravel the relationship between the increase of middle-class families and the establishing of new family-related consumption spaces, both commercial and public. Based on observations and interviews in Amsterdam, we identify an increase in family and child directed consumption spaces. They reflect parental wishes to continue their former childless lifestyle, the need to combine work and care, and the wish to educate children in a wide range of skills. The more intensive consumption of parks and sidewalks reveals new practices of public parenting in urban contexts. It is argued that the transformation from childless yuppie to young urban professional parent (yupp) not only goes along with new consumption cultures but also with the production of a new city. This re-invented city has potentials for age and gender equality, however unequal class relations appear to continue.

Key words: Middle-class family, consumption cultures, family gentrification, children's spaces, public space, shops

INTRODUCTION

Cities are growing in popularity. The global renaissance of the city as a place to live has been widely covered in the geographical literature. Gentrification publications describe the upgrading of particular neighbourhoods near the city centre in terms of increased household income, improvement of the housing stock, new consumption spaces and ultimately the rise of property prices. This process of upgrading can be considered an articulation of class inequality and it is this class dimension that is broadly referred to in the gentrification literature (Smith 1996; Slater 2009). So far, however, socio-demographic dimensions of upgrading have received only limited attention (Caulfield 1994).

The socio-demographic changes form the point of departure for this paper. While the majority of the residents who engaged in gentrification processes can be described as yuppies or young urban professionals (Short 1996), the young and the childless are not the only ones involved in new urban life styles. Families are increasingly visible in the inner-city areas from Amsterdam to Berlin and Stockholm and even in Manhattan/New York.¹

Families that decide to stay in inner-city areas largely belong to the well-educated middle classes with enough resources to buy themselves an urban family home. They combine the professional careers of both parents with the daily care of children and in that position family gentrifiers differ greatly from childless yuppies (Boterman 2012). They are referred to

as yupps: young urban professional parents (Karsten 2003). It is precisely the daily combination of tasks and their tight time-spatial budgets that motivates families to opt for an urban residential location close to many facilities, including work (Brun & Fagnani 1994; Hjorthol & Bjornskau 2005). Yuppies are settling down, but in their new position of yupps they are seriously under-researched.

The connection between the newly arrived gentrifiers and the opening of new consumption spaces has been widely studied (Bridge & Dowling 2001; Deener 2007; Zukin 2009, 2010). This paper first aims to supplement the existing literature by focusing specifically on family-related consumption spaces. The second aim is to demonstrate that the consumption of specific family-related spaces contribute to the production of a new re-invented city. The rise of the yupps is a major change, not only for the families involved – many parents have themselves been raised in traditional families in the suburb – but also for the city itself, as will be argued.

The point of departure for the following literature section is the ‘general’ gentrification and consumption literature that only fragmentarily provides glimpses of the new family consumption cultures in cities. Literature on family consumption, parenting cultures and the commercialisation of childhood is added to fill that gap. From there the empirical work is introduced. Fieldwork is carried out in an upgraded neighbourhood with a high increase of family households known as Middenmeer in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Results are described in terms of three-fold changes in neighbourhood consumption spaces, namely family directed commercial spaces, child directed commercial spaces and public spaces. This paper ends with conclusions and some reflections on the nature of the new re-invented ‘family’ city.

GENTRIFICATION AND CONSUMPTION

Gentrification literature largely emphasises the detrimental effects of gentrification, although the empirical basis is not always clear (Atkinson 2004). Transformation processes related to gentrification are generally thought to destroy diversity and village-like behaviour. Upgraded

neighbourhoods are supposed to develop from diverse and poor to homogenised and rich, fading away from community life. Zukin (2010) describes the gentrified city as a city that has lost its soul. The urban discourse of loss is spelled out in four dimensions: population, commercial spaces, public space and community spirit.

Gentrification studies demonstrate the growth of the urban (higher) middle-classes at the expense of the lower classes, including immigrants. The conclusion is that cities lose their ‘native’ population. As a result of either displacement or replacement, it becomes difficult for lower income groups to continue living in central urban areas, let alone settle in gentrified districts (Smith 1996; Slater 2009). This applies particularly to family households that need large residential spaces. Yuppies, singles and childless couples dominate gentrified areas and the fact that their households are smaller contributes to an overall population loss in gentrified neighbourhoods (Atkinson 2004).

A second dimension of loss is the decrease in ‘ordinary’ commercial consumption spaces and the rise in commercial chains in shopping streets (Deener 2007; Zukin 2009). The so called ‘mom and pop’ (convenience) shops are disappearing and, as a consequence, so is their supposed ‘authentic’ character. On a global scale, shopping streets are being redeveloped to feature an overrepresentation of food and fashion stores of big global companies. This process leads to a homogenisation of urban streets to the point of them losing their locally distinctive character. Whether you look at Stockholm or Madrid or New York, central districts are full of the same kinds of globally known stores and restaurants. Diversity is decreasing.

A third dimension of loss related to the upgrading of cities is the growing privatisation, aesthetisation and regulation of public space and their exclusionary effects. Studies that proclaim the end of public space reveal the inaccessible character of many renovated public spaces for alcoholics, park sleepers, homeless people and other ‘marginal’ urban citizens (Sorkin 1992).

A last dimension of loss referred to in the literature is the shrinking sense of community in upgraded areas. Newly arrived middle-class

residents only marginally participate in neighbourhood life. They do not know who their neighbours are and they avoid the local shops and schools (Butler & Robson 2003). Literature on urban mix reveals the often difficult communication between the newly arrived middle classes and their native lower-class neighbours (Blokland 2003). Taken together, the four dimensions of the city of loss reveal a nostalgic urban discourse expressed as 'it all used to be better'. But, however true, painful and unequal changes are, we cannot describe and understand new developments with theories that primarily focus on what has been lost.

New cultural developments, including changing gender, age and household relations, are revealed better in another strand of gentrification literature which highlights potentially positive effects of upgrading. Some authors talk about the emancipatory city, as a way of emphasising the new opportunities of social mobility, tolerance and gender equality (Warde 1991; Bondi 1999; Lees 2004). Gentrifiers bring cultural capital to the neighbourhood that stimulate emancipatory processes in different ways. Ley (1996, p. 210) refers to the gentrified neighbourhood as 'oppositional' space countering 'hierarchical lines of authority'. This view comes close to the feminist literature that describes the suburb as an oppressive space for women and proclaims the city to be a woman's place (Wekerle 1984; Rose & Chicoine 1991; Wilson 1991). Several studies indicate that females have better employment chances in the city and that the city offers more facilities to support family life (Caulfield 1994; Jarvis 2005; Karsten 2007; De Meester 2010). And it is gentrification processes that stimulate the establishment of new facilities, small businesses and other consumption spaces, including renewed public space, that together make living urban more attractive (Jacobs 1961). Cities are changing towards landscapes of consumption (Zukin 1995).

The supply of new consumption spaces can be explained by the particularities of the households engaged in the process of upgrading and is related to financial, practical and identity factors. New urban middle classes have good incomes and can afford to buy goods, services and memberships. Middle-class working parents are time-constrained and that will

stimulate practical solutions like outsourcing. They may hire specific services for the children that bring some relief to daytime pressures. Besides child care, eating out and eating in (use of catering) are other examples of services that save time. However, the consuming of commodities may be even more important for the building of identities (Jackson 1999). By buying certain types of commodities people express who they are and to whom, what or where they want to belong (Bourdieu 1984; Giddens 1991; Bell & Valentine 1997). Consumption-related choices reflect a specific – capital informed – taste. This becomes clear when we examine cultures and practices of raising children. Lareau (2003) shows that middle-class families shape their children's lives in purposeful ways. Middle class parents are engaged in a process called 'concerted cultivation' in order to pass on the 'right' life skills, clothes, food, and ultimately friends to their children. What is considered to be 'right' depends on the cultural, social and economic capital of the family involved. The whole process of creating the middle-class child starts at a very young age (Vincent & Ball 2007). Children's needs have gradually become commodified and commercialised and children are increasingly central to contemporary consumer culture (Martens *et al.* 2004; McKendrick *et al.* 2000; Cook 2003). Children's development is being seen as a family project that has to ensure that they acquire a range of learning, social and sportive experiences (Van der Burgt & Gustafson forthcoming). In so doing, parents make sure that families' status is accumulated, or at least transmitted to the next generation.

This whole process of raising children intrinsically has a strong spatial dimension (Karsten 2002). Educating children is a task which not only takes place in the family home, but also in the neighbourhood and beyond. Family outings have grown in number and importance (Hallman & Benbow 2007). The increased presence of children in the neighbourhood affects the neighbourhood consumption infrastructure, particular if the children have well-to-do middle-class parents. In school yards, in neighbourhood stores and at children's leisure clubs, parents inform each other about the what, where and how of children's activities and needs. The neighbourhood becomes both

functionally important and symbolically owned with specific social and spatial boundaries (Savage *et al.* 2005). When the upgraded neighbourhood becomes the territory of the new middle-class families, this will have exclusionary effects on others, particularly older, native and working-class families (Deener 2007). They see their shopping streets and familiar businesses disappearing or changing character towards a different and more upscale commercial scene. Entrepreneurs start to accommodate the commercial needs of the family gentrifiers with new family consumption spaces as a result. What this family-specific consumption infrastructure looks like has not yet been explored in great detail. This paper is meant to take some first small steps (see also Butler 2003; Bridge & Dowling 2001; Zukin 2010).

LOCATION AND METHODS

This study of family consumption spaces was carried out in the spring of 2012 in the Amsterdam neighbourhood of Middenmeer. Middenmeer (numbered as M56 in local statistics) is located in the eastern part of Amsterdam, inside the ring road, and was largely built before the Second World War (1928). It has some 13,500 residents and a density of around 70 dwellings/ha (for this and all other local figures see: www.os.amsterdam.nl). It is a largely native Dutch (70% in 2011) neighbourhood with a slowly increasing percentage of migrants. Over the years the percentage of social housing (18%) has remained stable, but there has been a sharp decrease in the private rented sector and a related increase in the percentage of owner-occupied housing. In 2011 the percentage of owner-occupied housing was 43 per cent (Amsterdam: 27%). These figures reflect something of an invasion of well-to-do households in search of privately-owned housing. Dwellings are relatively large with two thirds of the housing stock having four or more rooms (Amsterdam: 35%). Middenmeer is a mixed use neighbourhood. It has a busy central shopping street (Middenweg), ample access to green areas (Park Frankendael), four primary schools and sports fields nearby (Sporting Park Middenmeer). On the outskirts of the neighbourhood the new University of Amster-

dam campus is being built on a former green-field area. The former Ajax stadium (football), in the southern part of the neighbourhood, has been re-built along with new housing in 2004.

Middenmeer was chosen for two reasons. First, it is one of the Amsterdam neighbourhoods with the highest increase of middle-class family households over the last decade (Boterman *et al.* 2010) and, as such, it is an ideal case for this paper. Middenmeer has never been a deprived neighbourhood, and in that sense it is not a gentrified area in the classical sense. However, it has undergone serious upgrading over the last decade both in the rise of owner-occupied housing and in the number of middle to higher income households. In 2011, the mean income per household was 40,400 euro compared to 31,500 euro for Amsterdam as a whole.

The second reason for choosing Middenmeer as a research location is personal. As a mother/citizen/researcher of Amsterdam, the author has lived in Middenmeer for over 25 years and she has witnessed the changes that have taken place during the last few decades. During that period she had three children, and raising children turned out to be an excellent way of remembering how the neighbourhood used to function for families. Daily trips to school, to the park, to the greengrocer's and to the sports fields are all recorded in family's stories and photographs.

This study benefits from the long-term observations of an insider. That position, however, needs some analytical distance to counterbalance that 'insider perspective'. With a view to providing an update on the present family status of the neighbourhood, two junior researchers carried out a careful stock-taking of family-related consumption spaces today (see Tables 1 and 2). This was followed by 19 interviews with entrepreneurs (including waiters/salesmen). Topics were the year they started the business, motivations to do so, family related products and services and descriptions of the (changing) client group. In some of the shops/restaurants family customers added spontaneously information. Those short conversations with residents were complemented with street interviews held with young families walking in the neighbourhood, particularly in park Frankendael (N = 10). Within the limited scope

Table 1. *Family-directed commercial consumption spaces.*

Commercial type	Address	Former land use	Started	Resident Entrepreneur
Food				
Café/ coffee bar ^a	Middenweg	Shop	2000	No
Café /Restaurant	Hogeweg	Old men's pub	2007	Yes
Catering plus (coffee/ breakfast/lunch)	Archimedes plantsoen	Pet shop	2008	Yes
Café /Restaurant	Sciencepark	Green field	2008	Yes
Organic snack bar.	Wethouder Franckenweg	Ordinary snack bar	2009	Yes
Restaurant	Buys Ballotstraat	Football pub	2011	Yes
Ice cream shop ^a	Middenweg	Office building	2012	No
Non food				
Bookstore	Middenweg	Shop	1991	No
Second hand store mother and children clothes/toys	Newtonstraat	Dwelling ^b	1994	No
Bicycle store	Helm Holtz straat	Grocery	2002	Yes
Bicycle store	Middenweg	5 euro shop	2005	No

Notes : ^a Commercial chain; ^b dwelling that used to be a shop in the 1950s.

Source : Fieldwork spring, 2012.

Table 2. *Child-directed commercial consumption spaces.*

Type	Address	Former land use	Started	Resident/ entrepreneur
Shops				
Toy shop ^a	Christiaan Huygenplein	Shop	1996	No
Shoes, clothes, toys	Middenweg	Shop	2005	No
Clothes ^a	Middenweg	Shop	2009	No
Services				
Piano lessons	P.N. Artzeniusweg	Dwelling ^b	1995	Yes
Arts/craft club	Fraunhoferstraat	Dwelling ^b	2000	Yes
Cooking studio	Laplacestraat	Dwelling	2003	Yes
Leisure				
Hockey/after school care	Sportpark Middenmeer	Football	2004	Yes
Baby/toddler music	Lord Kelvinstraat	Dwelling ^b	2009	Yes
French classes/ cooking studio	Middenweg	Dwelling	2010	Yes
Tennis	Linnaeushof	Adult only court	2010	No
Yoga	Fraunhoferstraat	Dwelling ^b	2010	Yes
Homework institute	Hogeweg	Dwelling ^b	2011	Yes
Judo, ballet, zumba ^a	Helmholtzstraat	Office building	2012	No

Notes : ^a Commercial chain; ^b dwelling that used to be a shop in the 1950s.

Source : Fieldwork spring, 2012.

of this study we tried to include the full range of family related consumption spaces and a variety of family households (different ethnicities/ different ages of the children). All interviews

and conversations are fully transcribed. Small observations of family life in the neighbourhood were written down in field notes. Both research-assistants, one male and one female,

Table 3. Residential population of Middenmeer.

	Family households	(%)	Children < 14	(%)	Total population
1995	1,361	26.5	1498	14.4	9,814
2000	1,398	27.2	1630	16.3	9,994
2005	1,771	30.0	2330	18.8	11,890
2010	2,041	29.9	2468	18.2	13,526
2011	2,118	30.9	2541	18.5	13,759

Source: O&S, Amsterdam (<http://www.os.amsterdam.nl>).

were not at all familiar with Middenmeer and started their research fresh and without any preconceptions.

Family-related consumption spaces are grouped into three categories: family-directed commercial consumption spaces, child-directed commercial consumption spaces and public consumption spaces. Family-directed commercial consumption spaces are open to broad groups of clients, but they particularly facilitate families by taking account of family needs like children's chairs in a restaurant open to anyone or by selling family products as a substantial proportion of their merchandise. Child-directed commercial consumption spaces have children as their customer group, as is the case with children's clothing stores and children's leisure clubs. The third category of consumption space is public consumption spaces which are either directed only at families and children (playgrounds) or which facilitate families as one of the users groups (sidewalks/parks). Each of those three categories of consumption spaces have been the subject of observations and interviewing that together formed the material for 'thick' descriptions per space (Gerring 2007). In addition to the gathering of primary data, neighbourhood statistics and data collected from the Amsterdam newspaper (*Het Parool*) and local newsletters (Dwarsweb.nl; Oost.Amsterdam.nl; meer-online.nl) were also used.

The limitations of this study are its focus on the entrepreneurial position. Parental reflections are only included in the short conversations with customers and the brief street interviews with residents. This shortcoming is partially compensated for by the relatively high percentage of resident-entrepreneurs who are parents themselves (see Tables 1 and 2).

The results of the Middenmeer study are presented in the following sections. First, we receive insight into the population changes that have taken place since 1995 and second its impact on the supply of three types of family-related consumption spaces is described.

FAMILY POPULATION CHANGES

When my family came to live in Middenmeer it was a somewhat sleepy place with a large number of elderly residents. At the beginning of the 1990s five young families lived on our side of the street (a total of 40 addresses) and we were surrounded by older residents and families with grown-up children. Today, on our side there are 11 young families; our street has clearly rejuvenated. This personal impression is shared by some of the interviewees, who themselves have lived in the neighbourhood as a family for quite some time, like the female shopkeeper who said, 'I have lived here for around 15 years and I have witnessed a development in that period. We were one of the first young families here. At that time many elderly people lived in Watergraafsmeer (popular name for Middenmeer, LK). Either they eventually passed away or they moved to a nursing home. Their homes are now available to younger people. I have seen plenty of young families move into the neighbourhood.'

Official population figures confirm the estimated statistics of residents, namely that the number and percentage of family households have grown and accordingly so has the number of children (Table 3). In terms of age (more young people) and household type (more families), Middenmeer has diversified.

Additional data reveal that in Middenmeer, between 1996 and 2009 the number of births

per year has more than doubled, from 112 to 237. At the same time the percentage of elderly people fell to 10%, lower than the figure for Amsterdam as a whole (11%). Based on both level of education (beyond Bachelor degree) and income (beyond modal income) the growth of middle class family households is evidently clear. In 2007 the number of middle-class family households had increased to 21.8 per cent of all households in Middenmeer compared to 7.7 per cent for Amsterdam as a whole (Boterman *et al.* 2010). In the next sections of this paper it will be revealed whether this changing neighbourhood population is reflected in the rise of new consumption spaces and if so, how?

FAMILY CONSUMPTION SPACES

An examination of the neighbourhood consumption infrastructure discloses the same development as in many other upgraded neighbourhoods, namely the disappearance of mom and pop stores and the replacement of traditional food stores. Our greengrocer, milkman and butcher have disappeared and now we have catering companies, an organic wine store, a bio-butcher, international restaurants and even haute (and bio) cuisine. Those transformations are related to the growth of higher income groups in Middenmeer, including the new middle-class families. However, the new family households have also contributed to the growth of consumption spaces specifically directed at families (Table 2).

The importance of new food consumption spaces in upgrading neighbourhoods has been documented widely and turned out to be the most dominant ($N = 7$) in the new commercial consumption infrastructure facilitating families, too. In 2000, the Coffee Company, a Dutch coffee chain, opened their doors on the main shopping street, Middenweg. Before opening they wanted to make clear that they were willing to become part of the neighbourhood. As their welcoming strategy, they gave coffee presents to the members of active neighbourhoods groups, among them myself. Within a few years they had developed into a meeting place for many residents, including young parents and their children. Gradually they broadened their supply of drinks for children: tea with milk and

babycinno (not on the menu card) and they started to accommodate children's needs with the supply of toys and children's books. The entrance is sometimes blocked by prams and strollers, particularly on Wednesday when many Dutch working parents have a day off, and in the weekend: 'It's very busy. I count 12 children between 3 and 10 years old. There are lots of parents as well, but it's difficult to distinguish which parents belong to which children. There is a lot of conversation between the clients. Besides the families, I count four young people and one older man' (Field note, Saturday, 28 April 2012).

When the Coffee Company opened in 2000, the neighbourhood had already slightly changed character. However, according to residents and shopkeepers the Coffee Company set the trend for a more family friendly food infrastructure. It took seven years before a second family-directed enterprise opened its doors. In 2007, some residents took over the former old men's pub and transformed it into a neighbourhood restaurant. The owners facilitated families from the very beginning and created a special playroom for children (in the basement), organised Sunday family brunches, and started offering children's favourite foods. According to one of the waitresses, eating out by families has considerably increased over the last decade. On neighbourhood parties the restaurant organises special events for children in co-operation with another entrepreneur in the neighbourhood who provides arts and craft workshops (see Table 2). However the restaurant does not want to be associated only with families. 'We do not want to focus purely on families, we want to be a place for all residents of the neighbourhood. We have a lot of older visitors. They prefer our place to the Coffee Company, which is more focused on young people' (waiter). The owners of the restaurant emphasised the neighbourhood function by starting a neighbourhood blog on the internet. They want to sustain new initiatives like that of the building of a new fountain on the plaza in front of the restaurant. This new fountain turned out to be heavily used by children during nice summer days (see Figure 1).

Entrepreneurs and residents emphasised in different ways the importance of the new family-related consumption spaces for social



Source: Author.

Figure 1. Children use the new fountain at the corner of Hogeweg as a water playground.



Source: Author.

Figure 2. Young parents and their children meet at park Frankendael.

networking of families. Working parents take their children with them and use the new restaurants to combine good food with social talk and a nice outing for the children. In the new restaurants, family needs are served as a matter of course. On weekdays the family meal may as well be consumed at the lower-priced catering or snack bar, as long as it offers healthy food and other practicalities, as a catering-mother explains: 'There are lots of kids here. We are a neighbourhood shop and children come to buy bread and other stuff. We don't have specific children's food, but when a father asks for a slice of bread and cheese, that's not a problem at all. We serve what families want'. The owner of the new organic snack bar started his business because he thought there was something missing for families in the neighbourhood, namely both quick and healthy food service. In his opinion, this would be ideal for time-struggling young families.

Besides food spaces, a modest number of non-food family directed shops started businesses in Middenmeer (N = 4). Until 1991 Middenmeer did not have a bookstore apart from a commercial chain book shop (AKO) with popular books only. When the new independent bookstore opened on the Middenweg it became a success within no time and one of the best-selling bookstores in town. Over the years children's books acquired a special and prominent corner in the shop. 'The number of child clients in our store has increased consid-

erably. The parents have a lot of money to spend and do not argue about buying a book. Often when a parent and a child enter the shop and the child asks for a particular book, they leave the shop with three' (saleswoman). With the Dutch bicycle culture, it is no surprise that the number of bicycle stores has increased. In addition to the two existing ones, two more bicycle shops have opened for business. They are both focused on fulfilling family needs with their supply of children's bikes, children's bike seats and the edgy car bike that has become the symbol of urban parenthood in Amsterdam (see Figure 2).

CHILD CONSUMPTION SPACES

Shops selling only children's goods were very rare at the beginning of the 1990s and they are still exceptional (N = 3; Table 2). At that time there was no toy shop in the neighbourhood and my children used to go to a tobacconists (today a silversmith) that also sold little items like Pokemon cards and Kinder Surprise Eggs. There used to be a children's clothes store (commercial chain: C&A) that closed down at the beginning of the 1990s.

A shop for children's toys opened in 1996 on the Cristiaan Huygenplein and more recently two new children's clothing shops opened for business. One of the children's clothing stores is part of a commercial chain that sells exclusive

labels for children. However things turned out to be different in Middenmeer: 'The parents in this neighbourhood are not inclined to spend much money on children's clothes. They are not greedy, but they spend their money in very conscious way. They are hardworking people who rather would spend money on sports or books that contribute to the personal development of their children. Expensive labels do not match their profile' (saleswoman). They changed their supply of goods and also their advertisement strategy: 'Publicity in the form of advertisements in newspapers and so on, does not have much effect. I noticed that loyalty and sympathy is more important. There are strong social networks in the neighbourhood. Any client who is treated well will tell their friends in the Coffee Company about their purchases. In this neighbourhood personal contact is important and when they are content they spread the word'. Entrepreneurs know that it is not only economic capital that counts in Middenmeer. Clients use their cultural capital and social network in their family consuming activities.

Over the last decade, the number of children's leisure spaces, in particular, has grown (N = 10; Table 2). Traditionally in the Netherlands, many subsidised associations with lots of volunteers facilitate children's after school time. My children were members of a football club, a gymnastics club, the scouts, a tennis club and a chess club, all offered by non-professionals and without commercial aims. They also played music but, at that time, that was already based on private initiatives by music teachers who gave music classes at commercial rates at home. The leisure clubs attended by my children still exist, but new private initiatives flourish particularly after 2000. Children's after school time is catered for by several new businesses and ranges from children's yoga to children's creative clubs and children's cooking classes. Compared to the past, new types of children's leisure have emerged and memberships start at an earlier age. Together the new spaces reflect the emphasis on the learning capacity of children and the accumulation of cultural capital referred to in the literature.

The interior and lay-out of the new consumption spaces indicate further the importance of creating home-like-environments for children. Entrepreneurs are eager to emphasise that they

don't want children to feel pressured. The recently opened homework support service stresses its homely character by highlighting the presence of lounge seats to relax in between study moments. And as the piano school teacher assures: 'Lessons are given in a way that very much resembles a private family home, and not really a school'. She is a mother herself and she knows what parents and children look for. As Table 2 reveals, the teaching and service entrepreneurs include a high percentage of residential entrepreneurs, particularly mothers. Some of them start work from home and re-locate when business starts improving. They use their personal network of neighbouring families to create a group of clients. They know perfectly well what is missing and how to facilitate parents and children. As the piano teacher again explains, 'My piano school is located very close to three primary schools. Children can take lessons during lunch time. They can walk to the location without any interference from their parents'. Another mother/entrepreneur tells that she knew from personal experience that children's cooking classes were a niche in the market. She adds: 'These cooking classes give me the opportunity to combine my qualities with the care of my children and the earning of an income'. Setting up children's services seems to be the ideal work-care combination for mothers.

Parents' initiatives not only stimulated small scale initiatives, but also the founding of a complete new hockey club. Within a couple of years this sport club had over 70 youth teams with children from the neighbourhood and beyond. Last year they opened a new after school care facility at the premises of the club, meant to establish a more convenient combination of children's sports and child care for the many working parent members. The enlargement of the tennis club is another successful example, although not initiated by parents themselves. It used to have adult membership only, but has now focused on children as a new target group. Children can take tennis lessons from the early age of 5, and attend tennis clinics during summer holidays.

Children's services in the neighbourhood are also visible in the growing supply of child-care facilities (not in tables). Twenty years ago only one childcare facility existed: *Telraam* on

the Linnaeusparkweg. Today, there are eight locations, including Telraam, which still exists and has been enlarged. Besides that, the number of kindergartens offering after school care for primary school children has considerably increased. This increase reflects the growing number of working families in Middenmeer and their varying needs for child-care. Today's differentiated supply of child care spaces needs further investigations (I'm not going to do it myself).

PUBLIC CONSUMPTION SPACES

As in many other cities, Amsterdam's physical appearance as regards streets, squares and parks has improved considerably over the last few decades. In Middenmeer, streets have been repaved (Middenweg), parks replanted (Frankendael), squares aestheticised (Hogeweg water fountain) and new playgrounds built or old ones renovated. Changes in the public space of the neighbourhood are best illustrated by the enlargement and renovation of Frankendael park. This used to be a green space linked to the municipal greenhouses for the growing of trees, bushes and plants, only partially publicly accessible. My children did not, in any event, think of Frankendael as an attractive park to visit. In general, the number of visitors was very low. Today the number of square metres has doubled (the municipal greenhouses have been removed), a children's playground has been built and a new nature playground was recently added with water, sand and climbing trees.

The number of visitors to Frankendael has increased tremendously and groups of families are some the park's heaviest users (Smeets & Gaddet 2008). As a mother of two children aged 10 and 12 enthusiastically tells, 'The neighbourhood really feels villagey, with lots of families. The neighbourhood has changed in a positive way. When my children were young, we never went to Frankendael. Today, however, there are lots more children. It is much more attractive for them and they are always willing to visit, even now that they are older'. The new association, called Friends of Frankendael, is an active voluntary association and organises both regular maintenance workshops and park



Source: Author.

Figure 3. *Families consuming the sidewalk.*

events. The most noticeable event is the monthly 'Pure Market' which offers organic food and related items delivered directly by regional farmers: 'The market is for the whole family. You can sit outside on our patio and taste our products while your children play' (www.dwarsweb.nl). During summer times, a small merry-go-round is one of the attributes specifically added for children.

Families have a long tradition when it comes to visiting parks. But our observations show that the way families 'consume' parks has changed. Instead of being used by families for nice walks and perhaps an outdoor game together, these days middle-class families are occupying public space in more flamboyant ways. Families and groups of families can be seen sitting with their children on rugs with their picnics and toys. Family celebrations like birthday parties are held in the park. Private family life is brought into the public space and public parenting is widely on display (see Figure 2).

Families' consumption of public space is not confined to the park. Over the years, sidewalks in Middenmeer have changed character. When my family walked to school in the 1990s, the sidewalks in Middenmeer were empty spaces. That situation started to change in around 2000. Today, some streets have completely changed character. They are a hustle and bustle of plants, toys and benches, children playing around and neighbours keeping an eye on each other's children (see Figure 3). There seems to be no evidence of a loss of

community. Instead, new forms of 'villagey' networks seem have developed. It has become perfectly acceptable for middle-class families to hang around in front of their homes, engage in short conversations with their neighbours and help their children play. As a female resident explains, 'I like living here a lot and that has much to do with the broad sidewalks in Middenmeer. There are no high buildings, so it's light and sunny. There is lots of green and that makes people happy. You can easily make contact with people here. Everybody knows everybody. It's like a village, but in a very relaxed way. Neighbours sit in front of their homes on benches and children can easily walk around, because there is no danger from traffic'. A Moroccan women we met with her children (11, 8 and 6 years old) had a slightly different story: 'We like living here a lot. It's a quiet neighbourhood with lots of children and the neighbours are very nice. We often chat in the street'. When we asked her whether she also sits on the sidewalk in front of her home, she answers, 'No, I don't do that. I prefer sitting indoors. We invite my friend who lives two streets from here to have dinner with us and then she comes with her husband and children to our place'. This quote, together with our observations, suggest that the new outer-directed family culture is a white middle-class culture. Our empirical data do not tell us whether ethnic differentiation only manifests different tastes or masks exclusionary drives.

All those transformations in public space have changed the daily movements in the neighbourhood with children and families becoming more prominent. In Amsterdam, as in many other large cities, children have lost their independent freedom of movement (Karsten 2005). That is certainly a loss. However, their visibility in the city has increased by the new practices of families colonising the sidewalk, the high number of families visiting the urban parks and, most recently, the urban beaches like the temporary one that has been constructed just across Middenmeer, in Oostpoort. As a young father in the newspaper *Het Parool* (2011, p. 15) explains: 'I appreciate this new initiative of creating a little beach. We have a young family and we do not want to move out of the city. We will certainly come here more often. The article is

entitled, 'East is becoming the Brooklyn of the city'. This newspaper article highlights the increase of young families in East Amsterdam (Middenmeer) and some areas in Brooklyn/New York: an example of the globally informed local media that (re)produces images of the city as a place for families to live.

CONCLUSION AND REFLECTION

Global processes of gentrification are producing new inner-city consumption infrastructures (Zukin 2009). This development is often described in terms of 'the city of loss'. This paper tries to counterbalance and supplement the existing literature by focusing specifically on the effects of a growing number of middle class family households on the establishment of a family-related neighbourhood consumption infrastructure. Empirical examples are drawn from a small scale study in an upgraded Amsterdam inner-city neighbourhood known as Middenmeer. So far, the focus on the upgrading of family and children consumption spaces has not received much academic attention. As such, this paper reports on a topic that needs further exploration, particularly when it comes to parental narratives on their choices of specific consumption spaces.

The growing number of middle class family households in Middenmeer is clearly reflected in the increase in the number of family-related consumption spaces, both commercial and public. Commercial family directed consumption spaces have enlarged, particularly in the food sector, with an emphasis on healthy and organic food. Lifestyles that people developed before they became parents appear to continue (Guthman 2003). We identified the opening of family friendly restaurants and coffee bars that facilitate eating out with children in various ways, ranging from offering children's menus to children's furniture and the accommodation of play. Family needs and children's wishes are better catered for in various shops that have started to supply family consumption goods in prominent ways.

Parallel to the family-directed consumption spaces we discovered various new children-directed consumption spaces. Besides some new children's stores, the number of children's leisure spaces has grown and commercialised

(McKendrick *et al.* 2000; Martens *et al.* 2004). The rise of new after school locations for children is related to both parental time stress and income levels that are high enough to buy outsourcing services. It also reveals high levels of parental concern about the fostering of children's talents and the improvements of personal skills (Vincent & Ball 2007; Lareau 2003). In that process, parents and entrepreneurs are keen on developing home-like environments for out-of-home childhood spaces. Too much pressure on children has to be avoided. Services must also provide fun.

We learned that it is often residents (parents) themselves who open the new family-related businesses. They know from their own experience what is missing in the neighbourhood and they use their social network to build a circle of customers. Bottom-up inventiveness accompanies the need to earn a living. Women, in particular, use their knowledge and skills as mothers to start new businesses. This leads to personalised relationships between customers and entrepreneurs who both belong to the same social strata. Economic, social and cultural capital all mediate access to the growing number of commercial family-related consumption spaces.

Commercial dimensions are absent in the third category of spaces, namely public space. As is the case in many gentrified areas, the physical appearance of Middenmeer has improved. The renovated neighbourhood park, the new playgrounds and the broad sidewalks are more intensively consumed and have therefore become locations where the new middle-class families demonstrate forms of public parenting. They bring private family life into public space and, as such, they contribute to the new family identity of the neighbourhood.

The growing number of family gentrifiers and the related rise of a new consumption infrastructure contribute to the re-inventing of the city away from the dichotomously conceptualised city of the past. Masculine cities and contrasting feminine suburbs are continuing to fade away (Saegert 1980). Family suburbanisation has lost its dominance and that is resulting in less sharply traced gender and age divisions of urban space (McDowell 1983). By their presence alone, families and

children reflect a demographically more diverse city than in the past. Their visibility in the urban arena has further grown due to their family-related ways of consuming the city that now has improved conditions to foster new urban family life. Central urban areas are transforming in places to raise children as used to be the case before the massive family suburbanisation. In this respect it is interesting to see that dwellings that used to be shops in the 1950s today are returning to their original function of small neighbourhood businesses. In this Middenmeer case we have demonstrated how families re-invent the city, not only in the consumption of new places but also in the production of a new ordering, mixing and blurring of traditionally contrasted concepts such as family-city, adult-child, public-private and work-care. In this small scale Amsterdam study, we recognise potential gains for age and gender equalities related to the emancipatory city (Bondi 1999; Warde 1991; Lees 2004; Ley 1996) that receives wider research.

New consumption infrastructure supports working families, women and children in a way that resembles the 'old' feminist ideals of collective kitchens, local childcare and social supporting networks (Jarvis 2011). In the upgraded family city, food, services and goods are well provided for by neighbouring mothers and fathers and social networking is part of the everyday family life. Children are not only raised in the private sphere of the family home and public parenting is part of this new family consumer culture (DeVault 2000). But, however positive the observations are, the re-invented city also leaves us with mixed feelings. Family-related consumption is becoming big business. Cultural capital is slowly being replaced by economic capital. The communal kitchen (restaurants/catering) has to be paid for. The more popular Middenmeer becomes, the more expensive and exclusive it will be. The next stage of upgrading will stimulate a further specialisation of class (Lees 2003; McDowell *et al.* 2006). Family gentrification goes along with both gains and losses.

Note

1. Census data indicate that the number of toddlers (0–4) in Manhattan has increased greatly.

Between 2000 and 2004 their number grew 26 per cent (Bowles *et al.* 2009).

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