Disentangling processes of neighbourhood change: Towards a better understanding of upgrading and downgrading of neighbourhoods in the highly-regulated context of the Netherlands
Teernstra, A.B.

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Contextualizing state-led gentrification: goals of governing actors in generating neighbourhood upgrading

This chapter is conditionally accepted by Environment and Planning A

Abstract
This study provides insight into the way in which state-led gentrification has unfolded in three neighbourhoods in Amsterdam and The Hague. Although Dutch gentrification has been comparatively mild, state actors have increasingly adopted gentrification as a policy tool. However, the Netherlands provides a particular context for state-led gentrification. Firstly, the national government plays a key role, as regeneration policies increasingly promote gentrification as a tool for differentiating the housing stock and as a necessary requirement for preventing social problems and decline. These goals were adopted by local governments in neighbourhood regeneration. Secondly, housing associations are important stimulators of gentrification. They are hybrid organizations: although their primary task is providing affordable housing, they are also market-oriented actors that generate income from market activities. However, power inequalities between actors, different objectives and priorities of actors and different local contexts have resulted in processes of negotiation and, consequently, diverse regeneration strategies. Although interventions have moved into a neo-liberal direction, governments and housing associations still form a strong buffer between market-interventions and neighbourhood development.

4.1 Introduction
Until the early 2000s, academic attention for the role of state actors in gentrification was limited, even though some authors urged for more attention for the relationship between gentrification and public policies (Marcuse, 1986; Van Weesep, 1994). The focus was mainly on explaining neighbourhood change from a demand-side or market-
oriented supply-side perspective. Lees (2000, p. 390) argued that through this ‘theoretical logjam’, important issues, such as the role of public policies, have been sidelined. In the past decade, however, governments around the world have increasingly adopted gentrification as a regeneration strategy (Smith, 2002; Wyly and Hammel, 2005). Consequently, academic research on the relationship between gentrification and policy has increased significantly (e.g. Special Issue “Gentrification and Public Policy”, Urban Studies 45 (12), 2008; Uitermark et al., 2007; Van Gent, 2013; Andersson and Turner, 2014). Although there were already policies stimulating gentrification in the 1960s and 1970s, such as the provision of improvement grants in London (Hamnett, 1973), state actors usually impeded gentrification, as policies mainly had a redistributive character (Ley, 1996). In the 1990s, state actors started to encourage gentrification more assertively and “more than ever before, gentrification is incorporated into public policy” (Wyly and Hammel, 2005, p. 74).

Although it is nowadays commonly understood that state actors play an important role in gentrification throughout the world, several gaps in our knowledge remain. Firstly, although many studies illustrate that gentrification is ‘a global urban strategy’ (Smith, 2002), our understanding of how and why state actors encourage gentrification in different contexts remains limited (Doucet et al., 2011). The way in which state actors stimulate gentrification is context-specific, as different institutional and housing market structures affect patterns of neighbourhood development differently (Van Weesep, 1994). Lees (2000, 2012) therefore urged authors to pay attention to the ‘geography of gentrification’, i.e. the spatial and temporal dimensions of gentrification. However, most studies focus on Anglo-Saxon contexts, which are characterized by liberal and laissez-faire attitudes towards housing and neighbourhood development. In countries with stronger welfare states and interventionist policies, such as the Netherlands, gentrification has been milder and more regulated (Van Gent, 2013; Doucet, 2014). Insight into the way in which state-led gentrification unfolds and the goals of the actors involved in such contexts may contribute to our understanding of the ‘geography of gentrification’.

Secondly, most studies on the relationship between state actors and gentrification treat state actors as one group of actors which are assumed to have similar perceptions and follow shared objectives in neighbourhood development. However, neoliberalization resulted in the development of new governance arrangements and multiple actors are nowadays often involved in neighbourhood regeneration, each with their own goals and agendas, and also varying by country. For instance, in Anglo-Saxon
contexts private actors often have a central role and governance frameworks are consequently often more ‘free-market’ oriented and focused on profit maximization (Doucet, 2013). In contrast, neighbourhood and housing development in the Netherlands is more regulated and managed by the government. In addition, housing associations are important actors of regeneration, and are at the same time public and private actors (Uitermark et al., 2007). The actors involved all have their own goals and agendas in neighbourhood regeneration, which results in varying outcomes in neighbourhood change (Kokx and Van Kempen, 2009).

The aim of this study is to contribute to the literature on the relationship between state actors and gentrification, by providing insight into the way in which state-led gentrification unfolds in a context where gentrification has been comparatively mild and regulated, but where gentrification has increasingly been adopted as a policy tool (Uitermark et al., 2007). The study focuses on three centrally-located neighbourhoods in Amsterdam and The Hague (the Netherlands) which have been subjected to state-led gentrification initiatives; the aim of the regeneration was to differentiate the housing stock in order to attract/retain higher-income households. The study raises the questions about what the goals of the actors involved are for policies and interventions in generating neighbourhood upgrading, to what extent these vary among actors and how this results in neighbourhood regeneration strategies. In the Netherlands, the “state” in state-led gentrification represents the national and local government, but there is also a strong role for housing associations. Housing associations are hybrid organizations: although they are non-profit organizations, subject to government supervision and with a primary task of providing affordable housing (a task which is compulsory and imposed by the state), they are also market-oriented actors which have to generate income from market activities. So, they are important stimulators of gentrification (section 4.3). This paper demonstrates that each of the actors involved in neighbourhood regeneration have their own goals and agendas, which have resulted in processes of negotiation between actors and, consequently, very different neighbourhood regeneration outcomes.

The study is structured as follows. Section 2 evaluates literature on the relationship between state actors and gentrification, followed by a discussion of the Dutch context. Then, the research design (section 4) and neighbourhoods (section 5) are discussed. Section 6, 7 and 8 examine the neighbourhood regeneration goals of different actors in Transvaal, Oosterpark and Rustenburg. Section 9 discusses this study’s findings and,
finally, section 10 reflects on the results and places the findings within the wider context of state-led gentrification.

4.2 The relationship between governing actors and gentrification

4.2.1 Towards state-led gentrification
Gentrification was originally defined as a spontaneous process in which homeowners revitalized dwellings in disinvested inner-city neighbourhoods (Glass, 1964). Over the past decades the definition of gentrification has significantly evolved and nowadays, it involves all processes related to creating affluent space and upward class transformation in urban neighbourhoods (Smith, 1996; Davidson and Lees, 2005). One of the ways in which gentrification has mutated is the emergence of state-led gentrification, in which gentrification is used as a policy tool to create more expensive housing in (low-income) neighbourhoods (Hackworth and Smith, 2001; Uitermark et al., 2007; Lees, 2008). By distinguishing three ‘waves’ of gentrification, Hackworth and Smith (2001) demonstrate how the relationship between state actors and gentrification has changed.\(^\text{15}\) In the first wave (1950s until the economic recession of 1973), ‘risk-oblivious pioneers’ renovated dwellings for their own use in disinvested neighbourhoods, often with public support. In the second wave of gentrification (post-recession 1970s/1980s) the role of state actors was termed ‘laissez-faire’. Gentrification expanded and there was increased connection with the global systems of real estate and banking finance. In the third wave of gentrification (mid-1990s), state actors increasingly adopted gentrification as a policy tool.

4.2.2 Third-wave gentrification in different contexts
The promotion of gentrification by state actors has been linked to systemic changes in the relationship between state, market and individuals as a result of neo-liberalization since the 1980/1990s (Hackworth and Smith, 2001; Smith, 2002). Neo-liberalization was characterized by a shift towards market-oriented and market-dependent approaches and rescaling of state power: financial power was transferred upwards to higher governmental levels, while responsibilities for direct collective consumption and social reproduction were transferred to lower levels. This led to increased state support of gentrification: policies shifted towards liberalization and reductions in funding for

\(^{15}\) Although it mainly draws from the context of the United States.
welfare and affordable housing. Many ‘obstacles’ which originally impeded gentrification were eliminated (Hackworth and Smith, 2001; Smith, 2002). However, although neo-liberalization is clearly at work in many countries, “we should not expect this to lead to a simple convergence of outcomes […] The process of neo-liberalization, then, is neither monolithic in form nor universal in effect” (Peck and Tickell, 2002, p. 383). So, neo-liberalization varies between contexts in terms of pace, intensity and effects. Consequently, the way in which state-led gentrification unfolds varies between contexts too. In this respect, Lees (2000, 2012) urged authors to pay attention to the ‘geography of gentrification’: the spatial and temporal dimensions of gentrification.

Despite growing attention to the context-dependency of gentrification, most studies focus on Anglo-Saxon contexts, especially the US and UK, which are characterized by specific institutional arrangements that differ from Continental-European countries such as the Netherlands (Doucet, 2014; Hochstenbach et al., 2014). Anglo-Saxon contexts are characterized by more liberal and laissez-faire attitudes towards housing; private capital in housing and neighbourhoods often plays a central role. In contrast, many Continental-European countries have stronger welfare states, interventionist governments with their urban and housing policies and the presence of social housing (Van Kempen and Murie, 2009). This leads to milder forms of gentrification (Doucet, 2014; Hochstenbach et al., 2014), as its intensity is mitigated by instruments such as rent control and tenant protection (Van Weesep, 1994).

Nevertheless, state actors, again in these contexts, increasingly stimulated gentrification: the policy focus moved away from affordable housing towards promoting more expensive dwellings (Uitermark et al., 2007; Van Gent, 2013; Andersson and Turner, 2014). In the US, local governments play a central role in state-led gentrification, as they are pressed to generate tax revenues through attracting higher-income households (Hackworth and Smith, 2001; Lees, 2008). However, local governments receive financial resources from the national government in many Continental-European countries. Instead, gentrification is often stimulated by policies of the national government on the assumption that it leads to less segregated neighbourhoods (Lees, 2008). In this respect, Uitermark et al. (2007) demonstrated that the first priority of regeneration actors in Hoogvliet (Rotterdam), was to create social order through gentrification, while profit margins were subordinate to this. They argued that “gentrification is a means through which governmental organisations and their partners lure the middle-classes into disadvantaged areas with the purpose of civilising and controlling these neighbourhoods” (p. 127).
In addition to pro-gentrification policies, housing associations have also been identified as stimulators of gentrification. A well-documented example was found in the UK, where housing associations stimulate homeownership through the privatization of social housing, made possible by the Right-to-Buy legislation (Van Gent, 2010b). Similarly in Sweden, housing associations invited residents to collectively buy their homes. Homeownership is seen as a superior form of tenure and the proportion of social housing has significantly decreased (Andersson and Turner, 2014). In the Netherlands, housing associations are also important stimulators of gentrification (Teernstra and Van Gent, 2012).

4.2.3 Multiple actors in regeneration

Another important reason for paying attention to the ‘geography of gentrification’ is that state actors are often treated as one group of actors, which are assumed to follow shared objectives in neighbourhood development. Nevertheless, due to neoliberalization, reductions in funding resulted in the increased dependency of local governments on the cooperation of other actors, such as housing associations and private developers (Hackworth and Smith, 2001). Nowadays, multiple actors are involved in neighbourhood regeneration, each with their own goals and agendas, and the shift towards governance “…moves away from fixed ideas about power as a commodity rooted in particular institutions to more fluid ideas of power developed and negotiated between partners” (Taylor, 2007, p. 299).

Yet, there are differences between contexts in the composition and influence of actors involved in regeneration, which might lead to varying outcomes in neighbourhood change. For instance, Doucet (2013) observed in Glasgow that government frameworks often include private actors and are thereby more free-market oriented. In contrast, Dutch neighbourhood development is more regulated by the government and hybrid housing associations are important regeneration actors (Teernstra and Van Gent, 2012). Doucet (2013) concludes that strong leadership is essential in governance frameworks, as it combines different goals of actors into a cohesive strategy, but he also stresses the importance of understanding goals of individual actors. However, we know little about goals of different actors in neighbourhood regeneration, to what extent these vary and how this results in different strategies.
4.3 The Dutch context

As mentioned, in the Netherlands, gentrification has been mild compared to for example Anglo-Saxon contexts. Dutch state-led gentrification stands out for two reasons: (1) the role of housing associations as stimulators of gentrification and (2) the presence of pro-gentrification policies.

The Netherlands are characterized by a large social housing stock, owned by housing associations: 31 percent of the housing stock is socially rented, while respectively 13 and 55 percent are privately rented and owner-occupied (2011), although these percentages vary between cities. The quality of social housing is considered high; so poor neighbourhood quality is not directly related to social housing, but mainly to high proportions of low-income households and related social problems. Since the 1990s, however, the position of housing associations changed considerably, which can be related to neo-liberalization.

Until the 1990s, the government financially supported housing associations in providing affordable housing. Between 1945 and 1970, the percentage of social housing increased significantly (Uitermark, 2009). However, subsidies put pressure on the government’s budget. An important shift towards neo-liberalization came with the deregulation of housing associations into private organisations in 1995. Financial support for constructing social housing and management of the existing stock disappeared (Priemus, 2003). And continuing rent regulation meant that maintenance and construction of social housing were unprofitable investments for housing associations. Deregulation also meant that they have to finance these investments themselves. Consequently, housing associations had to generate income from commercial activities. For instance, housing associations were able to generate income by selling off social housing, converting social housing into privately rented housing\(^{16}\) and constructing owner-occupied housing\(^{17}\). Deregulation also meant that housing associations had to compete with each other (Priemus, 2003) and they thus became important stimulators of gentrification.

\(^{16}\) When a socially rented dwelling is vacated, the rent price is recalculated on the basis of dwelling characteristics (e.g. quality, surface, location). When the new rent price is above the ‘social housing boundary’ (€664.66 in 2012), the dwelling is transferred from the social to the privately rented sector. The housing association still owns the dwelling, but there are no longer any allocation rules in terms of income.

\(^{17}\) However, at least 30 percent of the housing constructed in housing projects in some cities must be designated social housing.
However, deregulation did not imply that housing associations became private actors. Their rights and obligations are established in regulations based on the Housing Act. Their primary task is still providing affordable housing and the government closely monitors their activities and finances, and controls rent levels. For instance, regulations compel them to maintain the quality of dwellings; when maintenance is put off for too long, technical deficits have to be eliminated. Moreover, housing associations are legally obliged to invest surpluses in social housing. Furthermore, there are limits to the number of dwellings which can be differentiated and housing associations have to request permission from the local government for demolition and construction of new housing. This demonstrates that housing associations became hybrid organizations: while performing market activities, they can also be public actors.

A second shift towards neo-liberalization came with changes in regeneration policies in favour of gentrification in the 1990s. The government saw differentiating the housing stock as necessary for a number of reasons. Firstly, the focus on affordable housing between 1945 and 1970 resulted in the realisation of a limited number of owner-occupied dwellings. Moreover, suburbanization meant that many higher-income households suburbanized. By providing a differentiated housing stock, the government aimed to retain higher-income households in cities (Van Kempen and Van Weesep, 1994; Musterd and Ostendorf, 2008). Secondly, the government aimed to stimulate the urban economy: by attracting higher-income households, the government assumed that they would spend their money here as well (Musterd and Van der Ven, 1991). Thirdly, gentrification was promoted in order to improve the competitiveness of cities (Doucet et al., 2011). Finally and the most important in this study, social housing was increasingly seen as problematic: it had weakened the position of many urban neighbourhoods (Uitermark et al., 2007). Social problems were assumed to be caused by concentrations of low-income households and ethnic minorities.

The new urban renewal policy was set out in the Urban Renewal Memorandum, which is part of the Big Cities Policy (BCP). The key objective was differentiating the housing stock into neighbourhoods with ‘one-sided’ housing, in order to create socio-economic upgrading – thereby promoting gentrification. Since social housing is owned

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\[18\] This is established in agreements between housing associations and the local government. There are agreements, for instance, that determine the number of social housing units to be sold-off by housing associations, and they include quota’s per district. In Amsterdam, for instance, there is a threshold for social housing of 33 percent of the total stock in the central urban district and 25 percent in the other districts. In addition, 50 percent of the converted dwellings should be sold to middle-income households.
by housing associations, they became important actors of regeneration. In addition, the
government increasingly expected housing associations to invest in the liveability of
neighbourhoods. Within the guidelines for regeneration, which are dictated by the
national government, local governments and housing associations developed their own
visions. As this chapter demonstrates, this resulted in diverse regeneration strategies.

4.4 Research design

4.4.1 Data and methodology
This study draws on semi-structured interviews with 24 actors involved in
regeneration. The respondents were employed by the Municipality of Amsterdam
(four), the Municipality of The Hague (seven) and housing associations (thirteen
respondents). The interviews were held in 2011/2012. The focus was on the period 1999
to 2011 and four topics were addressed: (1) neighbourhood development over the past
decades; (2) policies and interventions of the actors involved; (3) the goals and
motivations for these policies and interventions; and (4) the perceived effects of their
policies and interventions on the neighbourhood and those of other actors. Of course,
these perceived effects were coloured because of their position. So, they needed to be
reflected with the statistical analyses of income and real estate data (Teernstra and Van
Gent, 2012) and other neighbourhood statistics (Table 4.1).

The interviews were coded and analysed with the software programme Atlas.ti. In
addition, policy documents concerning the regeneration of the neighbourhoods were
analysed, as well as policy documents of national and local governments.

4.4.2 Case selection
This study provides insight into the way in which state-led gentrification has unfolded
in Transvaal and Oosterpark in Amsterdam and Rustenburg in The Hague. The
neighbourhoods were selected because they had – in a certain respect – similar
positions in the 1990s: they were characterized by a weak position in the housing
market, low socio-economic status and they had consequently been subjected to state-
led gentrification initiatives. However, Amsterdam and The Hague represent different
urban contexts. This raises the question to what extent there are variations between the
cities in the way in which state-led gentrification occurs. It is argued that the process of
gentrification is rooted in the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial urban
economy, based on financial, business and creative services, and accompanying changes in earnings and lifestyles (e.g. Ley, 1996; Hamnett, 2002). In the Netherlands, this transition is best seen in Amsterdam: manufacturing industry jobs have largely disappeared and, nowadays, the largest sectors include finance and business services, ICT and creative industries. Amsterdam is seen as an attractive place for economic activities. Not surprisingly, the housing market is characterized by high demand and high prices. Consequently, many centrally-located neighbourhoods have experienced gentrification (Teernstra and Van Gent, 2012). On the other hand, The Hague is the Dutch governmental centre. The labour market is characterized by an extensive public sector and there are several international organizations in the fields of human rights. The Hague is one of the most segregated cities in the Netherlands, with both poor neighbourhoods and affluent villa parks (Bolt et al., 2002). Compared to Amsterdam, The Hague’s housing market is characterized by lower demand and lower prices. This study aims to understand to what extent the way in which state-led gentrification unfolds varies between the two urban contexts.

4.5 Research neighbourhoods

4.5.1 Transvaal and Oosterpark

Transvaal and Oosterpark are centrally-located, adjacent neighbourhoods and part of Urban District East of the Municipality of Amsterdam. The municipality has a particular administrative structure: there are seven relatively autonomous districts, which have their own budgets and are responsible for tasks such as land-use planning.

Oosterpark and Transvaal are densely-built neighbourhoods, but their construction periods differ: Oosterpark was developed in the late 19th century, Transvaal in the early 20th century. While the development of Oosterpark was largely unplanned, Transvaal was constructed after the Housing Act of 1901. Transvaal was among the first neighbourhoods (partly) built by housing associations, in the expressionist and characteristic style of the Amsterdam School, which explains the presence of social housing19 (Table 4.1). The socially rented dwellings from that period are relatively large and many low-income families with children live here.

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19 The large housing stock is also the result of urban renewal policies in the 1970s and 1980s, when many privately rented dwellings were converted into social housing.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Transvaal</th>
<th>Oosterpark</th>
<th>Amsterdam</th>
<th>Rustenburg</th>
<th>The Hague</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population (2012)</strong></td>
<td>9,190</td>
<td>10,287</td>
<td>790,044</td>
<td>6,052</td>
<td>502,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Housing stock (2012, in %)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially rented</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Privately rented</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner-occupied</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Construction period (%)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1945</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946-1990</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&gt;1990</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Real estate value (euro)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>162,704</td>
<td>185,625</td>
<td>198,173</td>
<td>65,223</td>
<td>113,957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>199,325</td>
<td>234,776</td>
<td>293,499</td>
<td>114,824</td>
<td>207,362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change 1999-2009</td>
<td>+22%</td>
<td>+27%</td>
<td>+48%</td>
<td>+76%</td>
<td>+82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income¹ (euro)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>12,248</td>
<td>12,996</td>
<td>14,302</td>
<td>14,117</td>
<td>14,888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>16,079</td>
<td>17,539</td>
<td>19,294</td>
<td>18,158</td>
<td>19,566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change 1999-2008</td>
<td>+31%</td>
<td>+35%</td>
<td>+35%</td>
<td>+29%</td>
<td>+31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education level² (2008, in %)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnic background (2011, in %)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>51</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-Western</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Residents’ opinion about neighborhood</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>6.5⁺</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subjective safety index³</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objective safety index³</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Standardized net household income from work, benefit and pensions.
² Education level of individuals above 15 years old
³ The index is based on police data (objective index) and survey data (subjective index). All scores are relative to the average city index in 2003, which was 100. A score higher than 100 means the neighbourhood is relatively unsafe, a score below 100 means the neighbourhood is relatively safe.

*Source:* Statistics Netherlands, Kadaster, O&S Amsterdam and municipality of The Hague.
In Oosterpark, the large social housing sector is partly the result of regeneration in the 1970s/1980s, when 35 percent of privately-owned housing was replaced by social housing. These dwellings are generally smaller, built for singles during an era of suburbanisation. In addition, many privately-owned dwellings were converted into social housing. From the 1970s, many native-Dutch families left Transvaal and Oosterpark to go to new towns; they were replaced mainly by immigrants. Nowadays, the majority of the population is of non-Dutch origin.

While many centrally-located neighbourhoods in Amsterdam experienced upgrading in the 1990s, Transvaal and Oosterpark had comparatively low real estate values and socioeconomic status (Table 4.1). Despite their proximity and similar position, however, the neighbourhoods vary from each other: problems relating to social deprivation, crime and nuisance are of minor importance in Oosterpark.

4.5.2 Rustenburg
Rustenburg is located to the west of The Hague’s inner-city. Unlike Amsterdam, The Hague’s districts have little autonomy. Rustenburg was constructed for low- and middle-income households in the early 20th-century. The architecture is largely preserved and the housing stock is characterized by small apartments and a few single-family dwellings. In contrast to Transvaal and Oosterpark, Rustenburg has a large owner-occupied housing stock. About half of the households are of native-Dutch origin, while about one-third has a non-Western background. In 1999, Rustenburg’s socioeconomic status and real estate value were below average (Table 4.1).

4.6 Transvaal, Amsterdam
In the 1990s, Urban District East of the Municipality of Amsterdam noticed a downward development in Transvaal: the housing stock and public space were in poor condition. This was related to the presence of a large social housing stock, which was considered as ‘one-sided’ with small and inexpensive apartments. The downward development was also related to technical deficits in privately rented housing. It was assumed that these aspects resulted in selective migration:

“...What happened was that more and more underprivileged families, non-native families, settled down. [...] So, the neighbourhood acquired poorer reputation,
and when something [a dwelling] became vacant, there were no long waiting lists of privileged people to settle down.” [District manager, Urban District East]

According to the respondents, this led to further decline: a weak neighbourhood economy, high unemployment levels, crime and nuisance. In 1999 the district therefore developed a regeneration strategy; the aim was to turn the downward spiral in cooperation with housing associations. The strategy marked the first (although marginal) steps towards state-led gentrification, as the central aim was to retain and attract higher-income households. In 2004, the plan was further intensified, but it was not until 2007 that downgrading was actually turned; this was when the national government launched the Forty Neighbourhood Programme and selected Transvaal as one of the Netherlands’ forty ‘worst’ neighbourhoods. So, Transvaal’s regeneration was characterized by different phases in state-led gentrification.

4.6.1 Preventing further decline

Transvaal’s regeneration is strongly influenced by policy objectives of the national government. As mentioned, in the 1990s there was a major shift in national regeneration policies. For Transvaal, this implied that the regeneration strategy was focused on stimulating gentrification in 1999, as the key objective was to create more owner-occupied and large socially rented dwellings, in order to retain and attract higher-income households and families with children, counteract decline and halt selective migration. This is in line with Uitermark et al. (2007) who showed that regeneration actors aimed to create social order through gentrification, while profit margins were subordinate. Furthermore, in Transvaal, technical dwelling deficits had to be eliminated and interventions to improve safety levels and neighbourhood economy were formulated. However, regeneration was not solely focused on stimulating gentrification: a limited share of the housing stock would be differentiated, while the majority would be preserved as social housing. Moreover, the district formulated interventions to stimulate socio-economic improvement of residents. In other words, interventions supporting gentrification co-exist with interventions stimulating socio-economic improvement of incumbent residents. So, the impact of gentrification is mitigated, which was also demonstrated by Doucet (2014) and Van Gent (2013).
4.6.2 **Interventions in the built environment**

Although the aims of regeneration were clear, the implementation of the interventions was far more complex because it involved a variety of actors, which each had their own agendas. The district aimed to establish a coalition with four housing associations active in the neighbourhood, but initially three of these associations had other objectives than the district authority. As mentioned earlier, housing associations became deregulated in 1995. Consequently, they have to generate income from commercial activities in order to finance investments in social housing. They could not therefore financially be ‘active’ in all neighbourhoods simultaneously. This implied that some housing associations prioritized interventions in neighbourhoods other than Transvaal, where the housing stock was in a worse condition. Only one association was willing to cooperate, and consequently only part of Transvaal’s housing stock was renovated. So, different actors do not necessarily have similar perceptions: although according to the district government, Transvaal was a prioritized neighbourhood, for most housing associations interventions were initially less urgent. This shows how the shift towards governance leads to more ‘fluid’ ideas of power and negotiations between actors, which is in line with Taylor (2007, p. 299).

In the course of the 2000s, the housing associations which initially did not participate, developed a sense of urgency to intervene: they realized that downgrading had not turned. Although housing associations are legally obliged to maintain the quality of dwellings, maintaining – or increasing – real estate values of dwellings is important for their financial sustainability. So all associations started to renovate their housing stock in the course of the 2000s. Moreover, differentiation of the housing stock became a prominent strategy and housing associations consequently became stimulators of gentrification. Like the government, housing associations differentiated housing, as they saw concentrations of low-income households as a cause of decline:

> “One of the reasons for intervening physically is that it is often an instrument to create more differentiation in the neighbourhood. […] Dwellings are not always in a poor condition, but there are especially too many underprivileged people in one place, causing huge problems.” [Local manager, Housing association A]

So, five years after starting ‘negotiations’, the district and housing associations now have similar agendas concerning the housing stock.
However, an important difference between housing associations and district is that for housing associations differentiating the housing stock is important to generate income. In Transvaal, housing associations sold off a part of their housing stock, converted social housing into privately rented housing and constructed new (owner-occupied) housing. Housing associations determine strategically in which neighbourhoods they differentiate. These are generally neighbourhoods where they see potential for raising real estate values; they are often centrally-located neighbourhoods, which were constructed in the early-20th century, such as Transvaal. However, the revenues are not necessarily spent in the neighbourhood, but are spent citywide. This demonstrates that, for housing associations, the aim of differentiation is not solely to stimulate gentrification. However, it does trigger gentrification, as conversion of social housing into condominiums attracts higher-income residents.

4.6.3 Interventions beyond the built environment

In addition to interventions in housing, the district formulated interventions to improve social and economic neighbourhood aspects. As mentioned earlier, the government increasingly expects housing associations to invest in the liveability of neighbourhoods. The district therefore aimed to cooperate with housing associations in order to implement the interventions. However, the associations did not prioritize investments in other aspects than housing. Consequently, the district implemented only a few social and economic interventions. It was mainly interventions to improve safety that were implemented, as this was considered urgent:

“We had to, because there were shootings every week… So to say. There was something going on every week. There was a lot of nuisance with drug addicts. […] It was terrible.” [District manager, Urban District East]

This demonstrates that a sense of urgency among actors is important in implementing interventions.

However, in the course of the 2000s it became clear that the focus on housing and safety issues had been insufficient to turn downgrading. Furthermore, the district and housing associations mainly worked in isolation from each other, which was seen as another cause of the failure of regeneration.
4.6.4 An integral approach, but multiple agendas

The selection of Transvaal in 2007 as one of the forty neighbourhoods in the national regeneration programme brought the neighbourhood under the renewed attention of actors. The national government provided funding in order to tackle decline; the aim was to create close cooperation between local government and housing associations. The government dictated the implementation of an integral approach of social, physical and economic interventions. The programme therefore included a broad range of interventions: interventions to stimulate socio-economic improvement (e.g. coaching disadvantaged youth) and participation of incumbent residents (e.g. involving residents in the decision-making processes), improve the neighbourhood economy (e.g. attracting entrepreneurs) and increase safety levels (e.g. reducing crime) and physical interventions (housing and public space). Interestingly, the focus of regeneration shifted towards socio-economic improvement of incumbent residents. However, pushing forward gentrification was still key objective. This – again – demonstrates that multiple goals can be pursued within one neighbourhood.

A coalition between district and housing associations was established. Most associations indicated that they participated because it was dictated:

“It is interesting that because a minister suddenly determines that housing associations and governments have to sit together... That was a good one of Vogelaar [Minister of Housing, Neighbourhoods and Integration]. Otherwise it would not have happened.” [District manager, Housing association D]

This demonstrates the strong role of the national government in regeneration. Although a coalition was established, individual actors still have their own priorities: they do not participate in the same degree and do not focus on the same aspects.

Firstly, in contrast to the district, financial motives are important in determining the degree to which housing associations participate. They determine strategically how much money and time they invest in aspects beyond housing. The housing association with the most dwellings in Transvaal invested the most and vice versa:

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20 Although local governments and housing associations were expected to contribute financially too.
“The more property you have [in a neighbourhood], the more important it is to make the neighbourhood healthy in all regards.” [Area developer, Housing association C]

Housing associations with fewer dwellings in Transvaal take a more marginal role in the coalition and invested less in neighbourhood aspects beyond housing. Instead, they focused on neighbourhoods where they own larger numbers of dwellings. Here, it is clear that neo-liberalization makes housing associations competitive and aspire towards strengthening their economic position. In line with Priemus (2003) and Van Gent (2013), this demonstrates that housing associations have two ‘faces’: although they are public organizations, they are also market-oriented actors and maintaining – or increasing – real estate values is important for their financial sustainability. Their market-oriented role is also clear in that they indicated that they participated in the coalition because they saw a potential for increasing real estate values in Transvaal.

Secondly, the type of interventions implemented by housing associations in aspects beyond housing vary. For instance, one association focuses on the socio-economic improvement of residents, while others invest in economic or safety issues. This is partly the result of a division of ‘tasks’, but, more importantly, partly the result of different ideas about their role:

“Actually, I was confronted with the role of a housing association. Because, if you look at the chances of children receiving a good or bad education... Everybody understands that. And investing in education is a good thing. But, does a housing association have to do that? Yes, [Housing association X] is doing that. But we don’t.” [District Manager, Housing association D]

So, differences between housing associations concerning ideas about the role they should fulfil result in different types of interventions. Yet, this is also related to their financial position: associations with the strongest position are most able to invest. Since the associations are not able to intervene in all neighbourhoods and neighbourhood aspects simultaneously, they strategically determine in which neighbourhoods and in what types of neighbourhood aspects they want to invest most.
4.7 Oosterpark, Amsterdam

Like Transvaal, the adjacent neighbourhood Oosterpark has been subjected to state-led gentrification initiatives. However, the respondents argue that the neighbourhoods vary from each other despite their proximity and similar socio-economic and real estate position. The problems observed in Transvaal, such as social deprivation, crime and nuisance were of minor importance in Oosterpark. An important difference was that in Oosterpark an upward development had to be stimulated, while in Transvaal a downward spiral had to be turned. This was related to on-going gentrification of the inner-city, from which Oosterpark benefitted more than Transvaal owing to its proximity:

“Expansion of the city has meant that neighbourhoods in the 19th-century ring are becoming more popular: they are centrally-located, accessible and have a clear urban character. [...] Oosterpark is becoming an increasingly strong housing market area.” [Urban District East, 2004, p. 6]

4.7.1 Stimulating marginal upgrading
A barrier to ‘spontaneous’ gentrification in Oosterpark was its housing stock: it was characterized by technical deficits, but moreover, it was considered one-sided, which did not “meet the demand of current and future residents anymore” (Urban District East, 2004, p. 6). It was assumed to result in selective migration. So in 2004, Urban District East formulated a regeneration strategy and received funding from the Big Cities Policy. The strategy reflected key objectives of the national government: the aim was to stimulate gentrification by differentiating the housing stock, in order to retain/attract higher-income households, halt selective migration and increase Oosterpark’s competitiveness. Furthermore, interventions to stimulate the economy and improve public space were formulated. However, the implementation of the interventions unfolded differently than in Transvaal.

4.7.2 A profitable neighbourhood
As in Transvaal, the district aimed to establish a coalition with four housing associations that were active in the neighbourhood in order to improve the housing stock. However, as said before, for most associations, both establishing a coalition and
interventions in Oosterpark were not initially a priority. A local manager of Housing association B recalls:

“I think because the problems were less urgent. […] There was not a lot of nuisance or other problems which would necessitate to sit together around the table, I guess.”

Some associations prioritized other neighbourhoods, because they were financially unable to be active in all neighbourhoods simultaneously.

Yet, the associations felt the urgency to renovate and differentiate housing in the course of the 2000s. So the district and housing associations now had similar agendas, although the associations intervened at different moments and in isolation from each other. As in Transvaal, housing associations differentiated social housing through selling off and conversion into privately rented housing. In addition, some associations proposed demolishing social housing blocks in a poor condition. Replacing these blocks with newly-constructed dwellings was cheaper than renovation and provided more opportunities for differentiation. As mentioned earlier, housing associations legally have to request permission for demolition (section 4.3). However, the local government does not often favour demolition of early 20th-century architecture and residents protested against demolition. This resulted in long processes of negotiation between housing associations, local government and residents and, consequently, some demolition plans were cancelled, while others were delayed. This demonstrates how negotiation and conflicts between actors can change regeneration strategies (Kokx and Van Kempen, 2009).

While differentiation of the housing stock in Transvaal was a strategy to decrease both social problems and generate income, generating income in Oosterpark seems to be the dominant reason for housing associations. This can be explained by two reasons. Social issues are of minor importance and the demand for owner-occupied dwellings is comparatively high:

“We notice that the sale of dwellings in other neighbourhoods is not always going very well. But in Oosterpark, it is still going good.” [District Manager, Housing association A]

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21 Here, the District Manager refers to the impact of the economic crisis on the sale of dwellings.
The respondents relate this to Oosterpark’s proximity to the inner-city and low real estate values. Oosterpark is therefore a profitable neighbourhood for selling off and converting social housing. This demonstrates a shift towards a liberalization of policies and again shows the hybridity of housing associations (Van Gent, 2013). In Oosterpark, the respondents argued that they have to generate income:

“Of course, we are not real estate agents, we are a housing association. […] But in the end, money is important, of course. Because if you don’t have it, you cannot continue, no matter how idealistic you are.” [District Manager, Housing association A]

Resulting displacement is not considered problematic by the district and housing associations, firstly because direct displacement is limited by tenant protection. Social housing can only be converted into owner-occupied or privately rented housing when vacant – i.e. after tenants leave voluntarily. In addition, the respondents justified displacement due to demolition by arguing that households were placed on top of waiting lists for social housing and received financial compensation:

“When a dwelling is demolished, people always have the opportunity […], if they want to stay in the neighbourhood, to wait until another dwelling becomes available.” [Former district manager, Urban District East]

In addition, the respondents argued that there was still sufficient social housing, despite long waiting lists. Finally, newly-constructed housing projects in Amsterdam have a quota of on average 30 percent of social housing. So while social housing is declining through differentiation, new social housing is added at the same time. As direct displacement is limited, the total decline in social housing is not perceived as problematic.

4.7.3 The hybridity of housing associations
Although social problems were of minor importance, the district formulated interventions to stimulate socio-economic improvement of incumbent residents.

In Oosterpark and Transvaal, respectively 61 and 67 percent of the housing stock consists of social housing (2012). The average waiting period for a social housing unit in Oosterpark and Transvaal was respectively 11 and 9 years in 2009 (O&S Amsterdam).
Similar to Transvaal, this demonstrated that multiple goals could be pursued within one neighbourhood, which mitigated the effects of gentrification (Van Gent, 2013; Doucet, 2014). However, these interventions were only implemented marginally as they were considered less urgent. The district refurnished public space and reduced crime. In contrast to Transvaal, housing associations in Oosterpark limited investments to housing, except for the investments made in economic aspects by two associations. In cooperation with the district, these associations attracted more ‘upscale’ entrepreneurs, as they owned a substantial proportion of housing in (this part of) Oosterpark and therefore have an interest in increasing real estate values. This – again – shows that housing associations can take different positions within neighbourhoods.

Moreover, the same associations in Transvaal and Oosterpark (except for D and E) took different positions in both neighbourhoods. In Transvaal, they established a coalition with the district and implemented an integrated approach. Here the focus was on improving the socioeconomic position of residents and attracting higher-income households. In contrast, housing associations in Oosterpark intervened in isolation from each other and focused on housing. Here the emphasis was solely on attracting higher-income households. The different position taken by the associations can be explained as follows. Firstly, the problems in Oosterpark were considered less urgent. Secondly, the establishment of the coalition and the integrated approach in Transvaal was dictated by the national government.

4.8 Rustenburg, The Hague

In the 1990s, Rustenburg was characterized by a similar position as Transvaal and Oosterpark: a low socioeconomic position and poor housing condition. In contrast to Transvaal and Oosterpark, Rustenburg’s housing stock was largely owner-occupied; it was also considered one-sided, as it consisted of small and cheap apartments: 77 percent of the housing stock consisted of apartments, with an average size of 72 square metres and real estate value of 114,824 euro in 2009. This was assumed to result in selective migration:

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23 In The Hague, 77 percent of the housing stock consists of apartments, with an average size of 89 square meters, and an average real estate value of 207,362 euro.
“There were processes of selective migration, which were mainly caused by the quality of dwellings. People who could afford to do so moved out and people who could not afford to do so moved in. What was originally a very nice neighbourhood... Well, there was a different type of resident entering the neighbourhood.” [District manager, Municipality of The Hague]

With ‘a different type of resident’, the respondent implies residents with low incomes and non-Dutch background. These households were assumed to in-migrate because of a lack of alternatives, leading to further decline: physical decline and lack of social cohesion. This demonstrates that respondents portrayed Rustenburg’s downward development mainly in terms of mobility. Identifying a neighbourhood’s residents as a main cause of decline was termed the “Camden Syndrome” by Smith et al. (2001): they argue that this systematically disguises the importance of the migration of capital, which precedes residential choices and possibilities on the housing market. However, the municipality developed a regeneration strategy for Rustenburg based on their observations. The municipality had similar ambitions as Urban District East in Amsterdam: a key objective was to stimulate gentrification through differentiating the housing stock.

4.8.1 Endogenous upgrading

However, the implementation of regeneration was entirely different in nature than in Transvaal and Oosterpark because of the large owner-occupied housing stock. In addition to three housing associations, the municipality had to deal with owner-occupants. The municipality aimed to demolish a significant part of the owner-occupied housing, which would be replaced by larger dwellings, in order to attract/retain higher-income households. This would improve the neighbourhood’s socioeconomic position, real estate value and social cohesion. However, this resulted in a large demonstration by residents. A district manager recalls:

“We thought we could do this as the government, as we also did this in Schilderswijk [...]. But there was one big difference which was not taken into account: the housing stock was different. [...]Schilderswijk consisted mainly of social housing. So there you had control over the housing stock. And here there was no control, as they were all owner-occupants, who said: what’s all this about?”
So, the municipality experienced that owner-occupants are able to resist gentrification, while renters are not. The municipality was unfamiliar with regenerating owner-occupied housing, as previous regeneration had addressed neighbourhoods with social housing. Consequently, a new plan was developed in cooperation with residents, which was a compromise between the agendas of the municipality and the residents. Similar to Kokx and Van Kempen (2009) and the findings in Oosterpark and Transvaal, this demonstrates how negotiations and conflicting objectives could change regeneration strategies.

Instead of stimulating gentrification through demolition and construction of 'upscale' dwellings, the strategy was to create socioeconomic upgrading 'endogenously' by retaining upwardly-mobile households in place. The assumption was that they would stay if they were offered larger dwellings. The strategy was implemented by stimulating homeowners to enlarge their dwellings, by providing subsidies. This method of differentiation was acceptable to residents, as it was voluntary. Furthermore, the municipality urged homeowners to eliminate technical deficits, in order to improve Rustenburg’s competitive position. The municipality also refurnished public space, because:

“We wanted to restore the confidence of homeowners. We as municipality, it [public space] is our domain, we take care of it and make it nice. [...] It was also intended as a sort of ‘flywheel’: we take care of the public space, so homeowners, take care of your dwellings.” [Project Manager, Municipality of The Hague]

So state-led gentrification took place in a quite different way than in Transvaal and Oosterpark. The respondents argued that this way of regeneration was new and they described the process as intensive and challenging, as they were dependent on the willingness of homeowners to invest.

4.8.2 Negotiation between the municipality and housing associations

Owner-occupants were not the only actors involved in regeneration: the municipality also wished to renovate the social housing stock, however small. Yet, in contrast to Transvaal and Oosterpark, the aim was to maintain social housing – instead of converting such housing into owner-occupied or privately rented housing. This can be explained by the presence of a small social housing stock in centrally-located neighbourhoods in The Hague, which the municipality aimed to preserve. Similar to
Transvaal and Oosterpark, the municipality was dependent on the cooperation of housing associations. Some of them were reluctant.

One housing association prioritized renovations in other neighbourhoods. This – again – demonstrates that different actors do not necessarily have similar perceptions. The other associations were willing to invest, but did not have similar goals to the municipality. They preferred demolition and construction of new housing. A part of the newly-constructed dwellings would be sold off, in order to generate income and create socioeconomic differentiation. The municipality, however, did not favour demolition of early 20th-century architecture and decreasing social housing was (politically) sensitive. The municipality therefore negotiated with the associations, and this resulted in a compromise:

“Because the municipality wished to maintain social housing, we decided to go along with it. However, we told the municipality: ‘it’s okay, but we want to develop this area [respondent points at another district]. So we want more tolerance there.’ That’s the card game that is played. […] It is a very strategic process.” [Local manager, Housing association G]

So, the association agreed to preserve social housing in Rustenburg in exchange for the opportunity to develop another district. The municipality agreed with the third association that they would be allowed to demolish social housing, as it was in a poor condition, but newly-constructed housing would converted into socially rented housing. Furthermore, the association was allowed to construct additional dwellings on a vacant area in Rustenburg.

In short, Rustenburg’s regeneration was the outcome of complex processes of negotiations:

“Between policy and the actual implementation…that is a difference of almost 180 degrees. Policies have been implemented nowhere for 100 percent. It is often negotiated and changed and things like that.” [Local manager, Housing association F]
4.9 Discussion

This study’s findings demonstrated that the promotion of gentrification was a key element in the regeneration of Transvaal, Oosterpark and Rustenburg. Yet, the implementation of the strategies was difficult: different actors were involved, each with their own goals, and multiple goals were pursued. This raises the question of to what extent goals have been achieved.

In Transvaal, the respondents argued that the Forty Neighbourhood Program halted the downward spiral and stimulated marginal upgrading: the neighbourhood has become more ‘liveable’, as the quality of public space and neighbourhood economy have improved. Furthermore, the population has become socio-economically more mixed and safety levels and residents’ opinion about the neighbourhood have improved. This marginal upward development is reflected in the statistics (Table 4.1). The respondents mainly related the marginal upward development to their joint efforts and integrated implementation of social, economic and physical interventions. Nevertheless, they acknowledged that Transvaal also benefitted from increasing popularity of Amsterdam’s inner-city. However, regeneration has not finished yet, as there are still problems related to youth and nuisance. The coalition therefore continued its interventions.

In Oosterpark, the respondents indicated an upward development. In contrast to Transvaal, they related this mainly to on-going gentrification in the inner-city and assumed that Oosterpark would have experienced upgrading without regeneration. However, the interventions triggered upgrading and created a ‘domino-effect’: renovations of housing and public space and attraction of up-scale entrepreneurs created a spin-off, as these aspects attracted new entrepreneurs and residents to Oosterpark. The upward development is reflected in the statistics: residents’ opinions about the neighbourhood and safety levels improved significantly (Table 4.1). Furthermore, the number of owner-occupied dwellings increased from 569 (2002) to 1215 (2012). Nevertheless, real estate values did not increase as fast as citywide increases (Teernstra and Van Gent, 2012). These statistics only account for the period until 2009, so the upward development may not be visible yet.

24 However, 2013 was the last year of the implementation of the Forty Neighbourhood Program in Transvaal, (partly) because of budget cuts of local government and housing associations as a result of the economic crisis. Until 2013, the impact of the economic crisis on Transvaal’s regeneration has been relatively small, as Transvaal has been spared in many of earlier budget cuts.
In contrast, respondents of Rustenburg acknowledged that the objectives to create socioeconomic and real estate upgrading were not realized. Instead, they were only able to halt downgrading. The respondents argue that only a small number of residents were willing to enlarge their dwelling, as it was expensive: even though households could get subsidy, they still had to pay a significant share. This demonstrates that stimulating gentrification is difficult when actors do not own the housing stock and do not therefore have control over the housing. Furthermore, the respondents stated that the presence of neighbourhoods in The Hague with higher-quality dwellings – which many households chose in preferences to Rustenburg – prevented upgrading. This shows the importance of the ‘geography of gentrification’ (Lees, 2000; 2012), as the urban context in which the neighbourhoods are located influences regeneration outcomes. The halt in downgrading is reflected in the statistics: the socioeconomic status and real estate values showed neither upgrading or downgrading, but followed citywide increases (Table 4.1 and Teernstra and Van Gent, 2012).

4.10 Conclusions

This study focused on the way in which state-led gentrification unfolded in three neighbourhoods in Amsterdam and The Hague, by examining the goals of the actors involved in neighbourhood regeneration. Although neo-liberalization has been comparatively mild in the Netherlands, it is certainly occurring and it has increasingly supported gentrification. An important shift towards neo-liberalization came via changes in regeneration policies in favour of gentrification in the 1990s. At that time, the research neighbourhoods had a weak position, which was assumed to be caused by a one-sided housing stock. State actors therefore pursued gentrification: the housing stock had to be differentiated in order to attract/retain higher-income households. Gentrification was seen as a medicine to avoid decline.

This study aimed to provide insight into the way in which Dutch state-led gentrification stands out compared to – for instance – Anglo-Saxon contexts. Firstly, while state-led gentrification is often seen as a municipally-led goal (to generate local tax revenues for instance; see Hackworth and Smith, 2001; Lees, 2008), the national government plays a key role in Dutch gentrification. The government increasingly saw social housing as problematic: social problems were assumed to be caused by concentrations of low-income households living in social housing. Differentiating the housing stock was seen as necessary to prevent further decline and create social order –
in line with Uitermark et al. (2007, p. 127), who demonstrated that gentrification is used as a strategy to ‘civilize’ and ‘control’ the neighbourhood. These goals were adopted by the local government in the regeneration of Transvaal, Oosterpark and Rustenburg.

Secondly, housing associations are important actors in regeneration. As is the case with national and local governments, gentrification is a solution for housing associations to prevent decline and ‘control’ the neighbourhood. However, the generation of income is a dominant reason as well; this relates to the deregulation of housing associations in 1995. They became hybrid organizations with two ‘faces’: although their primary task is still providing affordable housing, they also became market-oriented actors who have to generate income in order to exist.

This study demonstrated that the actors involved all had their own objectives and priorities, resulting in processes of negotiation and different outcomes in interventions. Goals of housing associations did not always match those of the government. As housing associations have to strengthen their economic position, they determine strategically in which neighbourhoods they differentiate and invest in aspects beyond housing. Moreover, they take different positions in different neighbourhoods, as the cases of Transvaal and Oosterpark illustrated. Although local governments aimed to bring together the goals of actors involved into a cohesive strategy (similar to findings of Doucet, 2013), the eventual interventions were a compromise between goals of the government and housing associations, which resulted in diverse strategies to create upgrading.

Moreover, this study demonstrated the importance of the urban contexts in which the neighbourhoods are located. Firstly, Amsterdam’s housing market is characterized by high demand. Its central location meant that Oosterpark (and Transvaal to a lesser extent) benefitted from the on-going gentrification of Amsterdam’s inner-city. In contrast, The Hague is characterized by lower demand and the presence of higher-quality housing around Rustenburg impeded upgrading. Secondly, this study showed the importance of tenure structures in regeneration. In contrast to Transvaal and Oosterpark, differentiating the housing stock in Rustenburg was difficult as the housing stock is largely owner-occupied and housing associations and government did not have control over the housing stock.

In conclusion, although gentrification is relatively mild in the Netherlands, both governments and housing associations increasingly aim to generate neighbourhood upgrading and change the population composition. Nevertheless, neighbourhood
interventions are not implemented in the same way everywhere, and this did not result in similar outcomes. Varying actors, operating at different spatial levels, together determine and implement regeneration strategies. The study showed that within the ‘intervention space’ that is available for these actors within the set of government rules and regulations, power inequalities, different objectives of actors involved and different local contexts are of key importance. This is ultimately reflected in a range of regeneration strategies and very different outcomes. This includes gentrification by selling off social housing, conversion into privately rented housing, constructing owner-occupied housing, investments in socio-economic improvement of residents and attracting entrepreneurs.

However, even though the interventions are moving into a neo-liberal direction, the government and housing associations simultaneously form a strong buffer between market interventions and neighbourhood development. Social motives remain important drivers, which impede harsh forms of gentrification. Housing associations are still obliged to realize social objectives by law. Furthermore, the government provides extensive regulations to reduce negative effects of the functioning of the market, such as rent regulation and maintenance requirements. As Newman and Wyly (2006) argued, these bodies and regulations can still make the difference.

In summary, the gentrification debate should take into account the roles of national and local governments in stimulating gentrification; and in addition other actors such as housing associations. All actors have their own intervention goals, which vary between but also within contexts. Insight into goals of actors in different contexts contributes to our understanding of the ‘geography of gentrification’. In the end, neighbourhood change is the outcome of negotiation between actors, resulting in varying regeneration strategies and consequently, diverse processes of neighbourhood change.