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Living in concentrated poverty

Pinkster, F.M.

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1. Introduction

Current neighborhoods of poverty in cities in advanced societies are argued to be decidedly different from the lower class or working class neighborhoods in Fordist times. Wacquant (2008) maintains that in the last three decades a new advanced marginality has emerged which is more structural, long-term and disconnected from macro-economic trends and increasingly concentrated in specific, stigmatized neighborhoods rather than dispersed across working class neighborhoods. This 'advanced marginality', Wacquant argues, is not only brought forth by economic restructuring but also by political restructuring of the welfare state. As these processes take on different forms from country to country and city to city, the distinct socio-spatial configuration of the proposed neighborhoods of poverty varies (Musterd, 2008). Nevertheless, the social consequences of concentrated poverty are a recurring theme in urban policy throughout Europe and North America and various social mixing and dispersal-of-poverty programs have been developed to deconcentrate poverty (Andersson and Musterd, 2005; Goetz, 2003).

A key concern of social mixing policies is that being poor in a disadvantaged neighborhood context is worse than being poor elsewhere. In this debate, 'worse' not only refers to day-to-day livability problems and relatively high crime rates in these areas (Uitermark, 2003; Uitermark, Duyvendak, et al., 2007), but also to a long-term perspective of limited social mobility of residents (Andersson and Musterd, 2005). In the Netherlands concerns about the relationship between segregation and a lack of integration of low-income and often ethnic minority households have recently culminated in the formation of a Directorate for Housing, Communities and Integration at the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, that directly links the process of integration to the neighborhood scale: *"Integration begins close to home, in your own neighbourhood [...]. There are neighbourhoods in our country that are in a poor state. The cabinet is launching a large-scale offensive to give these neighbourhoods a new outlook, which will encourage integration"*. The 'new outlook' involves area-based programs of large-scale restructuring that replace a large share of the social housing stock in low-income neighborhoods by owner-occupied housing and more upscale rental units, as well as efforts to improve livability in the area and programs that stimulate individual social mobility directly.

The consequences of living in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty have also received much attention in the academic world in the form of neighborhood effect studies. The neighborhood effect thesis assumes that our direct social and physical surroundings contribute to individual outcomes such as our cognitive and moral development as a child or our mental health and employment situation as adults. Where we live influences whom we might meet, where our children go to school and play, and how we view the world. As such, our residential context structures the resources and opportunities that are available to us and the choices that we make to shape our lives. However, this relationship between residential context and individual outcomes cannot be reduced to a deterministic relationship whereby A -> B, i.e. the neighborhood 'causes' unemploy-

ment. Rather, the hypothesis is that existing social inequalities resulting from macroeconomic, social and political configurations at a higher scale can be exacerbated at the neighborhood level as a result of unequal neighborhood conditions and resources (Musterd, Murie, et al., 2006), which themselves are influenced by these same macro-structural processes.

The political and academic debate about the role that spatial inequalities play in reproducing social inequalities form the inspiration for this dissertation. The aim was to study the causal pathways or mechanisms through which living in a low-income neighborhood restricts residents' opportunities for social mobility. There are good reasons for questioning the relationship between neighborhood disadvantage and socio-economic outcomes. Labor markets function on a regional scale and few people work where they live. Given that many of us commute on a daily basis, the question is why this would be different in disadvantaged neighborhoods? Nevertheless, a review of Western European evidence for neighborhood effects on labor market participation reveals that living in a low-income neighborhood over longer periods of time does have negative consequences for the economic prospects of residents (Galster, 2007). This dissertation therefore studies potential explanations for such spatial variations in socio-economic outcomes.

1.1 Studying neighborhood effects

The basic premise in neighborhood effect research on socio-economic outcomes is that the residential context contributes to residents' aspirations and preferences with respect to work as well as their (perceived) employment opportunities, which in turn leads residents to make certain life choices that subsequently influence their social position (Galster and Killen, 1995). A broad distinction can be made between two different types of research that address the way in which neighborhood context contributes to residents' social positions, namely research focusing on the magnitude of neighborhood effects and research focusing on explanations of neighborhood effects.

A first set of studies focuses on the relationship between individual outcomes such as children's educational performance, teenage pregnancies, long-term unemployment or criminal behavior, and a variety of neighborhood characteristics such as population composition or the presence of social problems (for an overview see for example Ellen and Turner, 1997; Galster, 2007; Sampson, Morenoff, et al., 2002). These studies aim to isolate neighborhood conditions from other social contexts and individual characteristics and estimate how much neighborhood matters for individual development. Most of these 'classic' neighborhood effect studies concentrate on negative outcomes for disadvantaged residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods. This has to do with the fact that disadvantaged residents are expected to spend more time in the neighborhood than affluent residents and are thus potentially more strongly affected by negative externalities in this social context. In addition, housing mobility studies address the question of how a change in residential context – from disadvantaged to advantaged – might provide positive externalities for disadvantaged residents.

A second set of studies focuses directly on the causal relationship or linkages between neighborhood and individual behavior. The aim of these studies is to uncover the social mechanisms through which neighborhood influences individual action. In the research literature these studies

are often described as 'qualitative' as opposed to the previously described 'quantitative' studies on the magnitude of neighborhood effects. This categorization is misleading, as studies on explanations for neighborhood effects can (and do) employ quantitative research techniques. This also applies to the present study.

1.2 Explanations for neighborhood effects

In recent years many researchers have identified a need for more research on the daily lives of residents in low-income neighborhoods in order to understand the causal pathways behind neighborhood effects (Buck and Gordon, 2004; Ellen and Turner, 1997; Galster, 2003). Various hypotheses have been developed on the social mechanisms that lead to spatial variations in socio-economic outcomes. A distinction is made between two types of mechanisms. On the one hand, residents might be negatively influenced by mechanisms outside the neighborhood such as external stigmatization by employers, a spatial mismatch between neighborhood location and employment opportunities and inferior local public services such as schools and public transportation as a result of political arrangements at a higher scale. On the other hand, residents' socio-economic prospects might be negatively influenced by mechanisms within the neighborhood relating to the specific social composition of the area. In light of the current social mix programs in the Netherlands, as well as other countries, this research focuses on such endogenous explanations for the negative effects of living in concentrated poverty. Endogenous explanations focus on processes whereby the social identity or behavior of one resident has a direct effect on the social identity or behavior of every other resident. Specifically, empirical evidence has been found for three hypotheses about negative social processes in disadvantaged neighborhoods. These hypotheses are summarized here only briefly since they have been reviewed extensively (for example by Dietz, 2002; Sampson, Morenoff, et al., 2002; Small and Newman, 2001) and are discussed in more detail in the empirical chapters of this dissertation.

Hypotheses about endogenous mechanisms behind neighborhood effects start from different perspectives on social relations. Two hypotheses use an individual perspective and focus on the role that meaningful social relations in the neighborhood such as relatives, friends or acquaintances, play in shaping whether and how residents look for work. First, negative socialization hypotheses suggest that residents might develop deviant norms, values and behavior through interaction with others. With respect to work negative socialization might result in lower aspirations and expectations about one's career opportunities or deviant work ethics that have elsewhere been described as cultures of poverty or cultures of unemployment (Engbersen, Schuyt, et al., 1993; Lewis, 1968). Generally, a distinction is made between negative socialization through peers and negative socialization through adult role models (Briggs, 1998).

Second, the social network hypothesis focuses on the role local that social relations play in providing social resources and access to information and formal institutions. This hypothesis for neighborhood effects on socio-economic outcomes uses an individual social capital approach (Lin, 2001; Wellman and Wortley, 1990; Wellman, 1992). The assumption is that residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods lack the necessary social resources and information to improve their social

position as a result of contacts with disadvantaged co-residents. This explanation for neighborhood effects has been called the social isolation hypothesis when applied specifically to job search strategies and employment outcomes (Elliott, 1999; Wilson, 1987).

Both the social isolation and socialization hypotheses are based on the assumption that local social contacts make up an important part of residents' social networks. However, it has long been acknowledged that physical proximity does not necessarily lead to social relations (Schnell and Yoav, 2001; Tienda, 1991; Wellman, 1996). Moreover, as Ellen and Turner (1997, p. 810 - 811) explain: *"The importance of [...] neighborhood-based networks depends on a person's connection outside the neighborhood boundaries. Individuals who have strong family, friendship, or collegial networks that extend beyond the community in which they live are less likely to be influenced by their immediate surroundings [...] But people who lack these larger networks may be much more dependent on services and supports within the neighborhood. As a result, vulnerable individuals may be severely constrained by a neighborhood in which few people work in decent-paying jobs"*. Consequently, in order to establish the relevance of local social relations for labor market prospects, one should study neighborhood contacts in relation to people's social network outside the neighborhood (Friedrichs and Blasius, 2003; Kearns and Parkinson, 2001).

A third explanation for the negative impact of neighborhood poverty on individual outcomes focuses on (the lack of) social interaction between residents in the public domain. The social disorganization model explains neighborhood effects on the basis of physical and social disorder in disadvantaged neighborhoods which is facilitated by a lack of informal social control and collective monitoring in public space (Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999). In the research literature this is also referred to as a lack of collective efficacy, social cohesion or structural social capital. Although the social disorganization model does not explicitly focus on economic outcomes, it can be hypothesized that neighborhood disorder in disadvantaged neighborhoods resulting from a lack of social control might cause residents to retreat from the public realm into their private homes, limiting their contacts with other residents and thereby limiting their access to informal social resources. This might result in a lack of social resources rather than ineffective social resources as described by the social isolation hypothesis. In addition, it can be hypothesized that negative socialization might occur by seeing how familiar strangers – that is, other residents that are not part of one's network but that one nevertheless recognizes by face - behave in the public domain (Lofland, 1973). An example frequently referred to with respect to work ethics is how seeing local drug dealers flaunt their money and emphasize their social dominance in the neighborhood might lead children growing up in the area to glamorize criminal careers over a career in the formal labor market and to develop different aspirations about their own careers.

1.3 Contextuality of neighborhood effects

Most empirical evidence for neighborhood effects and their underlying mechanisms has been found in the United States, but recently neighborhood effect research has gained ground in Europe as well. The general assumption is that neighborhood effects are smaller in the European than the American context due to the substantial differences in welfare state interventions aimed at reduc-

ing inequalities between people and between neighborhoods (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2001; Musterd and Andersson, 2005; Musterd, Murie, et al., 2006). It has therefore been suggested that the relatively heterogeneous population composition in low-income neighborhoods in European cities and the living conditions in these neighborhoods might not reach the necessary thresholds of concentrated poverty to evoke neighborhood effects. This argument is thought to be particularly relevant for social welfare states such as the Netherlands. Levels of socio-economic and ethnic segregation in Dutch cities have been traditionally low (Aalbers and Deurloo, 2003; Laan Bouma-Doff, 2007; Pinkster, 2006) as a result of a large supply of affordable social housing, extensive redistribution programs of the central government and active involvement of the central and local government in low-income neighborhoods (Arbaci, 2007; Musterd and Ostendorf, 1998).

Nevertheless, in recent years a number of European studies have found significant evidence for small negative neighborhood effects on socio-economic outcomes. The most convincing evidence comes from a number of recent Swedish studies (Andersson, Musterd, et al., 2007; Galster, Andersson, et al., 2007; Musterd, Andersson, et al., 2008). These studies are also of interest to the Dutch context because one would expect that neighborhood effects are even less likely to occur in Sweden in view of the specific configuration of the Swedish comprehensive welfare state. The researchers show that a certain degree of socio-economic mix can generate positive effects for the earnings of low-income residents as long as the social distance between residents is not too great. These neighborhood effects vary on the basis of gender and employment status. For example, low-income males who are not fully employed benefit from living amongst middle-income neighbors, while low-income males who are fully employed benefit more from living amongst high-income neighbors. With respect to ethnic neighborhood composition the findings indicate that living in own-group concentrations initially benefits immigrants' income. However, over time this has a negative effect on their income. In addition, living in a neighborhood context which is dominated by ethnic minorities of different backgrounds also negatively impacts residents' income, except when the vast majority of residents is employed. The magnitude of these negative neighborhood effects differs from one ethnic group to another.

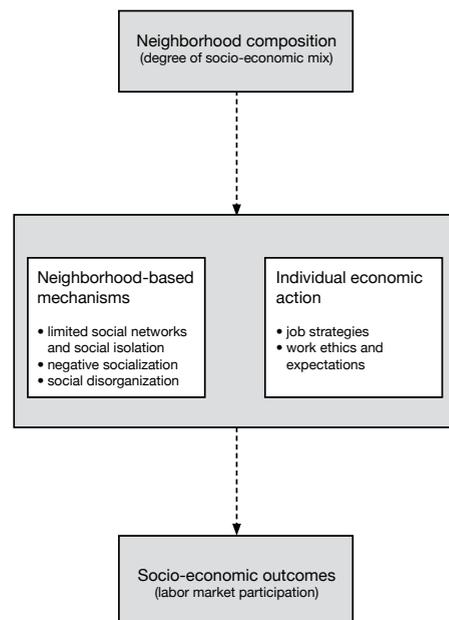
Empirical evidence from the Dutch context is less systematic, but nevertheless revealed small but significant neighborhood effects on socio-economic outcomes in neighborhoods with high concentrations of poverty (Klaauw and Ours, 2003; Musterd, Vos, et al., 2003) and in neighborhoods with high concentrations of ethnic minorities (Laan Bouma-Doff, 2005, 2008; Uunk, 2002). In line with the Swedish studies, negative neighborhood effects seem to differ for different groups of residents. For example, Van der Klaauw en Van Ours found that living in a neighborhood with high levels of unemployment had negative consequences for the transition from welfare to work for young native-Dutch residents, but not for older native-Dutch or immigrant residents. So far no studies have been done that explain the differential effects on socio-economic outcomes in the European and specifically the Dutch context. It is therefore unclear how these effects should be interpreted.

1.4 Research approach

The present study aims to understand how differential neighborhood effects on socio-economic

outcomes can be explained. The central research question is: *How do social processes relating to the population composition in low-income neighborhoods shape the socio-economic prospects of individual residents?* A basic assumption is that unfavorable socio-economic outcomes over time in areas of concentrated disadvantage result from concrete economic actions of individual residents and that these actions are influenced by the actions and the social position of other residents. These ideas are visualized in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual model for neighborhood effects



As shown in the conceptual framework, the present study explicitly makes a distinction between on the one hand socio-economic outcomes such as labor market participation and on the other hand individual economic behavior in the form of job search strategies and the attitudes with respect to work that shape this behavior. This distinction between outcomes and behavior reflects a problematic issue in neighborhood effect research about how to conceptualize the relationship between residential context and individual action. In general, neighborhood effect studies tend to represent disadvantaged residents as passive objects of detrimental neighborhood-based processes and ignore how concrete actions by residents (re)produce and transform such processes (Gotham, 2003). For example, the described hypotheses on the endogenous mechanisms behind neighborhood effects emphasize the social pathologies of disadvantaged neighborhoods, whereby individual residents are the 'victims' of mechanisms of socialization, social networks, etc. However such representations disregard the fact that a lot of residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods form a meaningful attachment to their residential surroundings through diverse social activities such as the creation of local social networks and the construction of 'safe' places in the neighborhood

(Gotham and Brumley, 2002; Manzo, Kleit, et al., 2008). While such individual actions might – consciously or unconsciously – reproduce detrimental local social practices, they nevertheless serve a purpose in residents' daily lives. One criticism of neighborhood effects studies on explanatory mechanisms is therefore that they ignore the spatial dimensions of residents' actions and the way in which they engage and disengage in social life. Consequently, the spatiality of residents' social lives is a central theme in the present study.

The research uses an exploratory case study approach which can be particularly valuable for studying the causal pathways behind systematic social phenomena and developing new ideas or adapt existing theories about these social phenomena (Gerring, 2007; Yin, 2003). The neighborhood of Transvaal-Noord¹ in The Hague was selected as an extreme case to study the previously described endogenous neighborhood effect mechanisms. Transvaal is one of the most marginalized areas in the Netherlands in terms of both poverty concentration (SCP and CBS, 2007) and ethnic concentration and the expectation was that, if neighborhood effects and their underlying social mechanisms occur anywhere in the Dutch context, Transvaal might be a likely candidate. At the same time, it represents a mild case from an international perspective and can thus provide an interesting viewpoint on the question of how severe neighborhood conditions need to be to generate neighborhood effects.

The neighborhood of Transvaal is compared to the adjacent socio-economically mixed neighborhood of Regentesse. A combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was used to study potentially detrimental social processes at the local level (Yin, 2003). A survey on social networks was out carried in 2006 in the two neighborhoods (see paragraph 1.4.1). In addition, intensive qualitative fieldwork was conducted in Transvaal over a period of nine months in 2005 and 2006 to study local job search strategies and work ethics resulting from local processes of socialization (see paragraph 1.4.2).

1.4.1 Survey

The survey on social networks of residents in the low-income neighborhood of Transvaal and the mixed neighborhood of Regentesse was carried out amongst potential labor force participants in the age group 18 – 65. Because individual income data are unavailable and a selection question for respondents at the beginning of an interview about one's personal income was considered to be problematic, the selection criterion of living in social housing served as a proxy for having a low income. Respondents were selected randomly from an address database of social housing units in the two neighborhoods provided by the local government. The survey questionnaires were collected face-to-face in residents' homes by experienced interviewers from the research office Labyrinth. They specialize in conducting interviews with respondents of ethnic minority background, who also form the majority of social housing residents in this study. Respondents were approached by interviewers of different and where possible matching ethnic backgrounds. The response was 56 % and similar in the two neighborhoods.

¹ In the rest of this dissertation 'Transvaal-Noord' will be abbreviated to 'Transvaal' as the residents call it.

The structured survey questionnaire (see Appendix I) included a number of questions about respondents' employment situation, their job search strategies and the role of neighbors in their search for jobs. In order to study the relationship between social networks and labor market participation, the survey distinguished between social networks as potential job information networks and social networks as actual support networks. Residents' potential access to job information was measured using the position generator method (Gaag, 2005; Lin and Dumin, 1986). This individual social capital tool measures the socio-economic diversity of respondents' networks. Actual support that residents receive from network members to deal with problems in everyday life was measured using the resource generator method, an individual social capital measurement tool that focuses on practical support and advice (Gaag and Snijders, 2005). Finally, to acquire some insight into selection mechanisms between the two neighborhoods the survey also included questions about people's residential history, their appreciation of the neighborhood and their wish to move out of the neighborhood. The survey data were analyzed using the statistical software program SPSS.

Practical problems encountered in conducting a survey amongst low-income residents

Low educated and ethnic minority respondents are notoriously problematic categories in most survey-based research. In view of the population composition in Transvaal several measures were therefore taken to ensure the validity and response-rate of the survey. First, during the test phase of the questionnaire it soon became apparent that the original choice of the name generator method for individual social capital was not suitable for this research population. Not only did the principle of asking respondents for their friends' and relatives' names raise privacy issues, the method is also very time-consuming. These two factors caused half of the thirty test respondents to quit halfway through the questionnaire. Consequently, the choice was made to switch to the anonymous resource generator method. Nevertheless, the resource generator method also raised an unforeseen problem. The questions are formulated hypothetically, i.e. do you know anybody who might be able to lend you a large amount of money, for example 2500 euros? In comparison to the Survey of Social Network of the Dutch (SSND, Volker and Flap, 2002) that served as a reference for the questionnaire in this study, a relatively large proportion of respondents would answer that they would never borrow money. Even after explaining that the question was hypothetical (what if?), some respondents would still say that the question did not apply (17% compared to 1% of the SSND respondents). Apparently, it is much harder for the uneducated and low educated respondents in this study to envision such hypothetical situations than it is for the 'average' Dutchman or woman. As a result, a relatively large number of values were missing for each resource item. Besides adapting the content of the questionnaire, several measures were taken to raise the response level. The choice was made to collect the survey face-to-face in view of the fact that a lot of social housing residents in Transvaal do not have landline phones and quite a number of them do not read Dutch well enough to answer a written survey. Potential respondents were approached by young interviewers with ethnic minority backgrounds which matched those of the respondents whenever possible. An announcement letter was sent in four different languages (Dutch, English, Turkish and Arabic) and interviewers would slip an I-came-by note under the door if they did not find anyone at home. Nevertheless, even when respondents were home, some were (initially) hesitant to open the door out of safety concerns or because they were worried about privacy issues. For example, one resident sent an e-mail to explain that he was willing to participate, but only if an appointment was made by the phone. He never responded to the door bell out of concern that the visitors were the social services or a debt collection agency. All of these factors made the process of collecting 400 questionnaires a time-consuming and intensive exercise.

1.4.2 Qualitative fieldwork

The qualitative fieldwork consisted of formal interviews with neighborhood experts and low-income residents. Additional research material took the form of numerous chance conversations with residents, for example in the local public park and playgrounds, attending a large number of neighborhood meetings, child-related activities and local festivities and secondary sources such as local newspapers, websites, etc.

The interviews with 24 neighborhood 'experts' provided insight into the informal social structures within the neighborhood, the role that local social contacts play in residents' social lives, with particular attention for work-related support, the degree to which the neighborhood experts had encountered processes of negative socialization with respect to work and the degree of neighborhood disorder and social disorganization in the area. The experts were professionals such as neighborhood managers, local social workers, local educational workers and law enforcement officers, as well as 'professional' residents such as neighborhood representatives, members of informal neighborhood organizations, cultural organizations, volunteer workers and other informal key figures.

The expert interviews were followed by 46 interviews with low-income residents of Moroccan, Turkish and Surinamese-Hindustani origin of the first and second generation, about half of whom were employed. These groups are the largest in the area and were recognized by the professionals as displaying strong localized networks with varying degrees of self-organization and social control within these networks. Residents were approached in local playgrounds and parks and through various formal and informal organizations, quite often with the help of key figures in the community. To engage respondents who otherwise would not have committed to an interview and to overcome potential language problems some interviews were conducted by research assistants of Moroccan and Turkish backgrounds. In order to reduce researcher biases, the assistants were trained during a number of sessions how to work with the interview topic list and sat in on a number of interviews by the primary researcher.

The semi-structured in-depth interviews focused on three different topics (see Appendix II). In order to acquire more insight into selection mechanisms in the neighborhood, questions were included about people's residential history, the positive and negative aspects of living in the neighborhood and their wish to move out of the neighborhood. A second topic was residents' personal social networks. A distinction was made between contacts that originated in the neighborhood and relations that resulted from other shared characteristics such as extended family connections, work relations or shared cultural or religious affiliations. Questions were included on the extent to which residents had social contacts with their close neighbors and other people in the neighborhood, and on their perception of their fellow residents. Questions were also included on the actual content of these relations, from recognizing each other on the street to different forms of social support. Similar questions were asked about people's personal backgrounds, family situation and extended family and friends networks. The final section focused on the residents' employment situation and history, their job search strategies, the importance attached to work and, more generally, their perceptions of the importance of work and education. The qualitative fieldwork data were analyzed using the statistical software program Atlas.ti.

Practical problems in conducting fieldwork in a disadvantaged neighborhood

It is worthwhile devoting a few informal words on the process of doing fieldwork in Transvaal. Many residents in Transvaal are distrustful of strangers in general and outsiders in particular, a category that I as a young, high-educated, native-Dutch, blond female unavoidably fit into (This outsider status was not only explicitly referred to by numerous interviewees but also illustrated by the fact that I was approached in the second week on one of the local playgrounds by a young Moroccan. Within 20 minutes he asked me whether I was married and was I maybe looking for a husband? He was, so he explained, looking for a residence permit). Being unfamiliar with the concept of academic research a lot of residents were initially quite suspicious and reticent about participating and providing referrals. A contributing factor were concerns about further stigmatization of the neighborhood and/or ethnic minority residents and concerns about anonymity with respect to social services and housing associations (as illicit work and illegal subletting often form a source of additional income). This was not only the experience of the researcher, but also of a number of key figures who had considerable social standing in the area and an extensive local social network that they tried to 'tap' for potential respondents. As a result, it soon became apparent that conducting interviews with the least integrated and most disadvantaged residents did not just require passing through the neighborhood, but hanging around, being seen and engaging in a lot of informal chats as preparation for 'real' interviews. As a result the fieldwork became more and more 'ethnographic' in nature, resulting in a wealth of additional research material. Nevertheless, 'hanging around' for nine months does not make one an insider and I doubt whether living in Transvaal would ever make me one. Yet, becoming a familiar stranger also had benefits, as acquainted residents increasingly seemed to feel a need to explain 'how things worked'. For example, a somewhat tense interview with an unemployed resident of Moroccan descent left me wondering why he was so reticent about his employment history and about the education and employment situation of his children. However, an acquainted resident had seen me with the interviewee and provided me with the missing background: yes, the interviewee received welfare benefits, but he actually illegally owned the job agency just around the corner, where one of his sons also worked illegally driving employees to large food production centers. The other son was currently in jail for drug dealing. In ways like this I thus became part of the local gossip chains which provided access to secondary and sometimes unforeseen research material that would have otherwise remained hidden.

1.4.3 'Bounding' the neighborhood

An important issue in neighborhood effect research concerns the question of how to conceptualize or 'bound' the neighborhood. Most quantitative neighborhood effect studies have used administrative boundaries to define neighborhoods. However, the relatively large geographical units rarely correspond to the area that residents identify as their neighborhood (Galster, 2008). Various researchers have therefore argued that neighborhood studies should discriminate between multiple scales of neighborhood, depending on the attributes that one is looking at (Galster, 2001; Kearns and Parkinson, 2001; Suttles, 1972). For example, when studying local social relations or residents' daily activity patterns, the 'home area' (an area that lies within a 5 to 10 minutes walk of residents' home) or the 'defended neighborhood' (an area that residents identify with and distinguish from other 'neighborhoods' on the basis of morphological boundaries such as roads or canals) might form a more relevant neighborhood scale than the geographical units for which statistical data on population composition are available. Moreover, to complicate things further, even when conceptualizing neighborhood as a home area or a defended neighborhood, determining what constitutes such neighborhoods is a highly subjective process. The fact that neighborhoods are not 'neatly

segregated geographical spaces' means that they cannot be identified with single types of people and activities and that they are experienced differently by individual residents (Sayer, 2000, p. 114). Such conceptual difficulties with respect to neighborhood scale and interpersonal differences in neighborhood boundaries apply equally to qualitative studies, which unavoidably have to select respondents for interviews or choose locations for observations. The value of a qualitative research approach, however, is that such different interpretations as to what neighborhood and neighbors mean can be made explicit. As a result, while living within the administrative area of Transvaal was the selection criteria for respondents in this study for both the interviews and the survey, what constituted the neighborhood was not prescribed and left to the perception of the respondents. Nevertheless, the interviews show that for many residents this area functions both as a 'home area' - one can walk from east to west or north to south in approximately 10-15 minutes - and as a 'defended neighborhood' with which they identified. The research area is clearly bounded by large thoroughfares in the east, west and north and was recognized by many residents as 'their' neighborhood (see Figure 2). This is probably also partly due to efforts by the local government to create a unique local identity and to get residents to participate in local activities.

Figure 2: The neighborhood of Transvaal-Noord



1.5 Reading guide

Chapters 2 through 5 use the qualitative and quantitative data to study different aspects of the causal pathways in low-income neighborhoods that might lead to unfavorable socio-economic outcomes. These chapters represent four empirical papers submitted to international journals. The papers use different perspectives to provide more insight into the meaning that the local social context has for concrete economic behavior and long-term socio-economic prospects of residents (see Figure 3).

A basic assumption behind endogenous explanations for neighborhood effects is that the networks of residents in disadvantaged neighborhoods are locally oriented. This assumption is tested in Chapter 2, which focuses on the social network hypothesis. The survey data are used to compare the locality of residents' social networks in the low-income neighborhood of Transvaal and the mixed neighborhood of Regentesse and show the degree to which local social relations provide access to resources. The findings of the two individual social capital measurement tools indicate that social housing residents in the low-income neighborhood do not differ from their counterparts in the mixed neighborhood in the degree to which they receive social support to deal with the problems of everyday life. However, small differences were found in the socio-economic composition of their networks and access to different social positions.

Chapter 3 further explores the consequences of the differences in network composition of social housing residents in the two neighborhoods for their employment situation. The findings show that having a constricted social network limits residents' access to job information and negatively affects labor market participation. At the same time, the constricted social networks of social housing residents in the low-income neighborhood cannot simply be explained by the high degree of neighborhood orientation of their networks. Rather, an explanation should be sought in the nature of local social relations.

Chapters 4 and 5 use the qualitative research material from Transvaal to further explore which mechanisms constrict residents' social networks and influence their job search strategies and work ethics. While Chapter 4 focuses on intra-group processes - that is processes within residents' social networks - Chapter 5 focuses on potentially detrimental mechanisms associated with the public domain in disadvantaged neighborhoods. In addition, these chapters provide insight into the question of how the differential neighborhood effects found in quantitative studies might be explained.

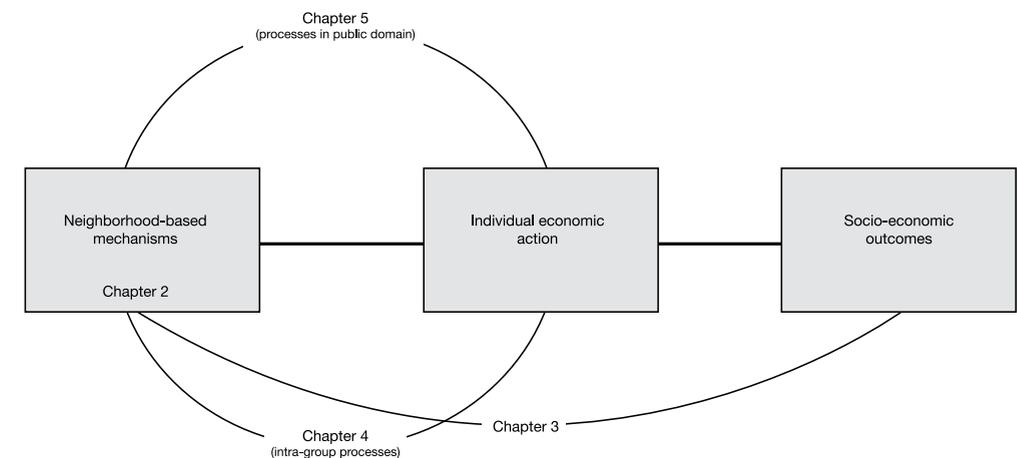
Chapter 4 explores how the job search strategies and work ethics of residents are influenced by the local social context. With respect to job search strategies the fieldwork material indicates that informal job networks in Transvaal constitute an important source of employment. In addition, residents also find work through familiar social institutions in the neighborhood. However, while such local job search strategies might be logical behavior from a short-term perspective, findings indicate that they can have negative long-term consequences for residents' employment opportunities. In addition, with respect to work ethics the chapter shows how socialization processes within local informal social structures might shape residents' work ethics and expectations, thereby potentially contributing to unfavorable socio-economic outcomes. At the same time, these processes of negative socialization and the negative processes related to residents' local job search

strategies are selective rather than generic and long-term negative outcomes are often obscured by the short term benefits of such actions.

Subsequently, Chapter 5 explores processes of social disorganization, neighborhood disorder and socialization outside residents' own social network that might negatively influence the long-term socio-economic prospects in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Because such potential negative influences are thought to be particularly relevant for children growing up in disadvantaged neighborhoods, the question is raised to what extent parents in Transvaal regard their neighborhood as a problematic place to raise their children and which negative influences they identify as a threat to their children's development. Although parents do not explicitly connect mechanisms of social disorganization, neighborhood disorder and socialization to economic behavior of their children, the associated antisocial behavior such as dropping out of school or pursuing criminal activities undoubtedly have negative long-term consequences for children's work ethics and employment opportunities. At the same time, the findings indicate that residents develop a variety of strategies to guide their children safely through the neighborhood, which potentially contributes to the long-term differential effects found in quantitative studies.

Chapter 6 synthesizes the findings in the previous chapters. It presents some hypotheses about the way in which the different mechanisms interact and lead to differential neighborhood effects on socio-economic outcomes. In addition, the case of Transvaal is put into a comparative perspective. Finally, the findings are used to formulate a number of suggestions for future research and reflect on current urban policy practices in the context of the Netherlands.

Figure 3: Research perspective of different chapters



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