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Inequality in the gentrifying European city

Hochstenbach, C.

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CHAPTER 8 – Conclusions: Growing social-spatial inequalities

Gentrification processes are by now commonplace in most major cities, and may have significant implications in terms of social composition and geography. Gentrification is often considered the spatial expression of class inequalities (cf. Lees et al. 2008) and therefore assumed to be at odds with the ideal of the ‘undivided city’. This dissertation has sought to establish how and to what extent gentrification processes actually influence urban social-spatial inequalities. It has done so by investigating the following overarching dual question: *How has gentrification been able to expand across space? And what is the impact of gentrification processes on social-spatial inequalities in urban regions?* In order to be able to answer these questions, it is necessary to look beyond the gentrifying neighbourhoods themselves, and instead focus on the role of gentrification within the broader urban-regional landscape.

Gentrification does not occur uniformly across space, but comes in a range of forms and expressions. Yet even though the process is able to take on different guises as it travels across space or time, its basic logics and the outcomes it produces may be highly similar; although the exact workings differ, the various forms of gentrification by definition contribute to a decreasing availability of affordable housing. It is therefore important to capture these different processes that fall under the banner of gentrification. Only by adding up the impact of the different forms of gentrification does it become possible to understand the process at the urban-regional level. Analyses that combine an urban-regional focus with a concomitant focus on the diversity of gentrification processes are therefore necessary to understand the impact of contemporary gentrification on social-spatial inequalities.

This dissertation has shown that gentrification influences social-spatial inequalities in a host of important ways. Based on comprehensive studies of gentrification in Amsterdam and Rotterdam, the preceding chapters have shown that social-spatial inequalities are indeed shifting, and increasing, in both cities. Broadly speaking, gentrification processes play an important role in growing social-spatial inequalities, as centrally located neighbourhoods are remade into increasingly upmarket areas, while urban peripheries and suburban cores struggle. This dissertation has in particular focused on four specific dimensions of the link between gentrification and social-spatial inequalities, discussing the key findings and their theoretical implications. This conclusion therefore focuses on the following four key points. First, it considers the various roles of urban setting and policy context in either amplifying or mitigating the impact of gentrification. Second, it highlights the necessity of taking into account, from a demographic point of view, the various mechanisms that play a role in producing and reproducing social-spatial inequalities. Third, it stresses the increasingly pressing issue of divides that run along generational lines, but which are also handed over across generations. Fourth, it turns to a key challenge in gentrification scholarship by discussing the crucial but also complex role of displacement in its various forms.

The importance of urban and policy context

At various points in this dissertation, Amsterdam and Rotterdam have been compared. The two cities serve as contrasting cases: simply put, while Amsterdam constitutes a booming city, Rotterdam still struggles somewhat in the post-industrial economy. Consequently, the Amsterdam housing market is considerably tighter, which is also reflected in the magnitude and expression of gentrification processes. These different urban settings have an impact on the link between gentrification and social-spatial inequalities. To complicate matters, it is also important to acknowledge that the influence of urban context differs over time. Specifically, the difference between economic boom and bust periods comes to the fore. Finally, in assessing the role of urban context, it is key to zoom in on the role of urban policies, as Chapters Two and Three of this dissertation have done.

Urban context

In well performing urban contexts, high demand pressures and overspill ensure that gentrification progresses from one neighbourhood to the next. Consequently, gentrification spreads outward from the city's core like an oil stain – as the commonly used metaphor goes. Here, ongoing gentrification processes minimize housing affordability to such an extent that middle income households are also necessitated to opt for residential niches, propelling the spatial expansion of gentrification. In contexts of lower demand like Rotterdam, gentrification does not so much spread out across urban space but occurs much more unevenly and seemingly erratically, creating 'patchwork quilts' of gentrification (Chapter 4). Here it remains easier for households to adjust their housing situation to changes in socio-economic status, implying that households that achieve a higher income are better able to buy themselves into the city's already in-demand neighbourhoods. This limits the spatial reach of gentrification to those areas that possess the 'right characteristics' such as an attractive housing stock, or which are subject to intensive restructuring.

This matters for the link between gentrification and social-spatial inequalities. Because gentrification is spreading more vigorously in Amsterdam, it has a comparatively strong effect on the availability of affordable housing. This in turn confronts households with relatively strong exclusionary forces as the accessibility of the housing stock rapidly decreases, especially for outsiders to the housing market who struggle to get in (cf. Kadi & Musterd 2015) or for households that need to move, for instance due to an altered household composition or employment situation. Spatially, this leads to divides between an upgrading core and a struggling periphery. In Rotterdam, the patchwork form of gentrification processes leads to social-spatial divides that are not as clearly demarcated – there is no clear centre-periphery divide – but exist at finer grained scales nonetheless. In fact, because households in low demand contexts are better able to match their housing situation to their socio-economic status, this leads to starker differences between neighbourhoods – i.e. to more homogeneous areas in terms of income.

As this dissertation has shown, contextual differences regarding the effects of gentrification on social-spatial inequalities most clearly crystallized

in the post-2008 crisis landscape (Chapter 7). Although gentrification in Amsterdam was certainly not immune to the global financial crisis, it did prove relatively crisis resistant in terms of ongoing exclusionary displacement, despite plummeting real estate prices. Even during the crisis when unemployment and poverty levels rapidly increased in the Netherlands overall, the influx of low income residents into Amsterdam's gentrifying neighbourhoods either remained stable or decreased even further. This points to the structural and crisis resistant underpinnings of gentrification in contexts where demand for housing is high. Individual downward mobility here does not so much translate into neighbourhood level downgrading, but instead triggers a spatial shift of such households to the remaining reservoirs of affordability, such as post-war housing estates or suburban new towns. In lower demand contexts, gentrification processes typically have a weaker foothold and are therefore more prone to cyclical trends – as is the case in Rotterdam. More relaxed housing markets and lower prices may make neighbourhoods susceptible to crisis shocks, which might set in motion socio-economic downgrading processes that overtake incipient gentrification processes. This would allow low income residents to again move in in greater numbers.

Policy context

This dissertation confirms the crucial importance of gentrification as state policy. Housing interventions frequently play a central role in state policies that aim to spark or spur gentrification processes, especially in contexts where a large portion of the housing stock is regulated (Van Weesep 1994). How state involvement in gentrification *changes over time*, and how this has *variegated spatial impacts*, is, however, rarely considered. Chapter 2 provided a rare insight into how gentrification as state policy is able to mutate. In Amsterdam, a triple shift in urban policies was found. First, the demise of social rent has accelerated over time, indicating that gentrification as a state-led process has become more forceful. Second, policy focus has shifted from urban renewal and the accompanying demolition of older social rental stock, to the sale of existing social rental dwellings. This shift has become especially apparent since the onset of the crisis, though it had been set in motion beforehand. Third, and perhaps most importantly, these shifts are accompanied by a changing geography: urban renewal strategies were typically concentrated in post-war neighbourhoods, while social housing sales are increasingly concentrated in centrally located neighbourhoods where demand for housing is high. This documented change relates to broader questions regarding the contextual and temporal contingency of state-led gentrification.

In addition to social housing sales, housing associations are increasingly renting out dwellings in the rent liberalized housing sector, as Chapter 2 has highlighted. This constitutes a rapidly growing niche in the tight Amsterdam housing context and contributes to rental gentrification. The sale or rent liberalization of former social rental dwellings is frequently legitimized by pointing to the need to cater to an otherwise underserved group of middle income households, as discussed in Chapter 3. In policies and public debates, these households are often portrayed as highly educated, young, and

upwardly mobile, and which are ineligible for social rent but do not (yet) earn enough to buy into Amsterdam's more expensive owner-occupied segments. Such a conceptualization is reminiscent of the 'marginal gentrifier', which Rose (1996: 134) has defined as "certain fractions of the new middle class who [are] highly educated but only tenuously employed or modest earning professionals". By selling off social housing at comparatively low prices or by renting it out in the liberalized sector, the local state and housing associations argue that they are helping a population group otherwise struggling on the housing market. In a way, the relatively marginal character of these new in-movers – young but upwardly mobile – is used by policymakers to downplay the intensity of the gentrification processes taking place. This allows stakeholders in Amsterdam to explicitly represent gentrification as a positive policy instrument that contributes to a normalization of the housing stock, is important for Amsterdam's attractiveness as a place to live – especially for the middle classes – and increases the city's international competitiveness (cf. Harvey 1989).

National policies play an important role in prompting these shifts, producing spatially uneven impacts despite nationwide application. Under crisis conditions, states in a range of contexts have discontinued, or seriously cut back on, funding for integrated renewal. Other austerity measures further chip away at the heart of social housing by imposing restrictions and financial burdens on social housing providers, pushing them to scale back their operations. Across countries, such political and austerity decisions have triggered a shift away from integrated renewal. This points to a broader trend: cash-strapped states, unable to undertake capital intensive integrated approaches, may instead feel that they have to resort to efforts to accommodate and accelerate 'positive' market forces in order to be able to intervene at all. Gentrification is seen as one of the few policy options that is still affordable as a means of creating social mixing in disadvantaged areas. Likewise, the liberalization or sale of social housing is presented as a pure necessity for the financial continuity of social housing providers and the viability of social rent. Austerity and state restructuring therefore in fact push gentrification as a 'no alternative' policy instrument (Chapter 3). This is, however, also related to the Dutch urban context. As Chapter 3 has shown, in Berlin gentrification is a much more contested term and as such is downplayed as an important policy instrument by local actors.

These different types of policy privilege different areas. Urban policies that seek to capitalize on market processes will by definition be more oriented towards areas where market demand is already burgeoning. The likely consequence is that already existing gentrification processes will be accommodated and amplified. There is of course also a spatial flipside to this, as governments increasingly struggle to intervene in disadvantaged, low demand areas because funding for renewal has dried up. These spatially uneven policies are liable to have particular consequences on social-spatial inequalities. Certainly, regardless of location, state-led gentrification will by definition lead to a loss of affordable dwellings. Policies that focus on accommodating gentrification in already in demand areas will, however, also amplify already

existing or emerging divides between areas of privilege and disadvantage; in other words, producing notably sharper social-spatial divides (cf. Uitermark & Bosker 2014). This particular shift, as documented in Amsterdam, may hold true for a wider range of contexts where market forces can easily be mobilized to spur gentrification. Here, gentrification can be accommodated through low cost interventions such as the piecemeal sale of social housing or the support for specific amenities. Findings from Rotterdam signal that in lower demand contexts, such low cost market-enabling policies are insufficient to spark gentrification. This potentially makes state-led gentrification efforts in low demand contexts more vulnerable: the greater the reliance on intensive interventions, the more prone state-led gentrification is to crisis effects and austerity.

Understanding variegated population dynamics

Gentrification processes are commonly conceptualized as materializing primarily through residential moves, as higher income residents move in at the cost of displaced or excluded lower income residents. The dominant perception is that new waves of in-movers possess notably higher incomes than the neighbourhood average. Using novel methods to unravel population composition change, this dissertation challenges this perception. Chapter 4 of this dissertation ‘anatomized’ neighbourhood population composition change in order to establish the isolated influence of residential moves, *in situ* social mobility, and the ageing of successive population cohorts. It showed that there is not one decisive mode of neighbourhood population change; rather, residential moves tell only part of the story. Only by looking beyond residential moves does it become possible to understand the true spatial reach of gentrification.

A variety of gentrification processes coexist within a city, producing a spatially variegated gentrification landscape. In already expensive or gentrified neighbourhoods, residential moves are the most important drivers of socio-economic population composition change, thus staying closest to dominant perceptions of gentrification processes. Due to the exclusive character of these neighbourhoods’ housing stock – high levels of homeownership combined with high house prices – new residents must have access to substantial economic capital in order to buy into these neighbourhoods. In cities’ most exclusive residential spaces, this may ultimately result in forms of ‘super gentrification’ (cf. Butler & Lees 2006), where the hottest property is snapped up by the wealthy elites and those with top incomes. Longer-term residents leaving these neighbourhoods more often have lower incomes.

In low status gentrifying neighbourhoods, however, residential moves are typically not the driving force behind gentrification. Instead, *in situ* social mobility and demographic shifts are more important mechanisms. *In situ* social mobility – income gains achieved while staying within a neighbourhood – play a particularly prominent role in driving early gentrification in erstwhile low status neighbourhoods. Such social mobility should not, however, be attributed to changes in the situation of long-term residents who were previously living in poverty; instead, they should be considered the consequence of selective mobility patterns. These neighbourhoods are a common destination for

upwardly mobile residents, who nevertheless earn a low income upon entering the neighbourhood (cf. Rose 1984, 1996). Once achieving mobility, these residents will typically move on. Such gentrifying neighbourhoods therefore function as escalators for such residents, partly because of selective residential mobility, but also because these neighbourhoods may endow inhabitants with locational advantages such as proximity to jobs and amenities (Rérat & Lees 2011). These advantages do not exist for all, with the long-term population generally unable to benefit. Hence we should understand neighbourhoods of (early) gentrification as *selective* escalators, accommodating and facilitating the upward social mobility of a select group of residents. Chapter 5 explained how specific groups of low income but upwardly mobile residents are able to acquire housing in such neighbourhoods, a point I will return to below.

Demographic shifts, notably the gradual phasing out of ageing working class residents from gentrifying neighbourhoods, are particularly important in driving socio-economic population change in a select number of low income neighbourhoods dominated by social rental housing and an elderly population. Because residential turnover rates in such areas tend to be low, neighbourhood change often takes place through demographic succession: through deaths and moves into retirement homes, social rental dwellings are vacated in dribs and drabs. The subsequent sale or liberalization of these dwellings (see Chapter 2) facilitates market dynamics to take hold in such neighbourhoods, gradually driving gentrification combined with a quite literal rejuvenation of the neighbourhood population. This demographic mode of neighbourhood population change constitutes a concrete spatial expression of ‘professionalization’ (Hamnett 1994a, 1994b, 2003). Older blue collar workers ‘disappear’ from the labour force and are succeeded by younger age cohorts that are by and large higher educated, have a higher income, and/or are more upwardly mobile.

Studies that focus only on neighbourhoods where affluent residents move in and disadvantaged residents move out capture only part of the gentrification processes taking place. Even though this form comes closest to the popular understanding of gentrification and may indeed produce the ‘harshest’ outcomes in terms of displacement, failing to incorporate other forms leads to a serious underestimation of the total footprint of gentrification. Other forms of gentrification may in fact be more common and as such have a more pronounced effect on the social geography of cities. Conceptually, this implies that debates about whether gentrification processes reflect displacement or replacement (see Hamnett 2003; Butler et al. 2009; Slater 2006, 2009) are not mutually exclusive. Instead, this study has shown that displacement and replacement occur alongside each other, at the same time but in different neighbourhoods. Likewise, it is imperative to consider the intersection of demography, life course, and class to understand the key role of young upwardly mobile residents in driving specific forms of gentrification that are not directly visible when comparing the income levels of in-movers, non-movers, and out-movers (see Van Criekingen & Decroly 2003).

It is not only gentrification processes but also social-spatial inequalities that are shaped and reshaped by the different mechanisms of population

change. The downgrading processes that take place in downmarket neighbourhoods also occur through various mechanisms. As gentrification expands and permeates into ever more neighbourhoods, the remaining struggling low status neighbourhoods increasingly come to function as reservoirs of affordability. They absorb the low income residents displaced or excluded elsewhere. Relatively often, these are the low income residents that are also the most vulnerable – in times of economic crisis, for example – and hence prone to downward mobility. Social-spatial polarization between successful gentrifying areas in urban cores and struggling peripheral locations is becoming increasingly accentuated; and if not always in terms of static analyses of indicators such as housing prices or population composition, then certainly in the direction of development. But this is not simply due to residential moves and displacement; the spatially uneven impacts of demographic change and social mobility also play their part.

Growing generational divides

Inequalities between generations

This dissertation has shown that increasingly prominent social-spatial inequalities are emerging along generational lines. In the last decade, intergenerational disparities are reported to be on the rise, especially since the onset of the global financial crisis. Housing markets are increasingly geared towards serving ‘prime households’ (Forrest & Hirayama 2015), i.e. those households that have a high income, are securely employed, and in possession of other assets. Such prime households disproportionately belong to older generations that have on average a more secure labour market position and have been able to access housing in general, and homeownership specifically, under better terms and conditions. Those that bought have often been able to accumulate substantial housing assets through long-term house price inflation. Young people, on the other hand, struggle to enter homeownership (McKee 2012) and increasingly end up experiencing complex and insecure housing pathways (Clapham et al. 2014). Labour market restructuring has exacerbated employment insecurities, especially among younger generations, and these are amplified by the global financial crisis. These developments pose barriers for young middle class households to suburbanize or buy into gentrified segments of urban housing markets. Early life course and residential trajectories are thus further destabilized, resulting in the extension of a transitory life phase. Under such conditions, processes of marginal gentrification thrive. Despite heightened insecurities, young middle class households are often able to negotiate access to housing in desirable neighbourhoods, for instance by trading in security of tenure or by sharing housing (Hochstenbach & Boterman 2015). This dissertation therefore shows that the concept of marginal gentrification can usefully be linked to debates about intergenerational inequalities and the rise of a ‘generation rent’ (McKee 2012; Pattison 2016).

Chapter 6 established the rise of new forms of rental gentrification in Amsterdam, as the private rental sector increasingly serves those – often young – households unable or unwilling to buy. This sector has come into the crosshairs of investors looking to supply more upmarket rental dwellings.

This trend is also pushed by states seeking to accommodate middle income upwardly mobile households (Chapter 3). While the role of rental housing in gentrification has long been recognized, and is closely related to marginal gentrification (Van Criekingen 2010), the emerging situation in Amsterdam is different. The current rise of rental gentrification is, in a way, a new phenomenon that follows in the footsteps of homeownership gentrification – long the dominant and expanding mode of gentrification in Dutch cities due to the highly regulated character of rental housing. It is part of a broader reversal of fortunes for market rent that has been taking place since the global financial crisis. In fact, up until the crisis, private rental housing had been subject to decades of decline. Market oriented restructuring has made rental housing more attractive for investment, for individual households and larger investors alike (cf. Fields & Uffer 2016; Beswick et al. 2016; Ronald & Kadi 2016). Furthermore, contemporary rental gentrification should be linked, on the one hand, to the growing demand from young middle class households unable or unwilling to buy, while on the other hand, tenure is increasingly expensive, as it is repackaged and promoted as part of a flexible urban lifestyle aimed at a higher income clientele (cf. Davidson 2007). The spatial dimensions of the rise of expensive private rental housing clearly exposes its links to mature forms of gentrification.

We have thus arrived at a new housing situation: private rent is becoming increasingly upmarket and exclusive, but it also makes use of households' inability to buy. This dissertation has shown that some households can be considered marginal gentrifiers despite their relatively high income due to their insecure employment relations. Although employment insecurities and low wages often go hand in hand, this thesis has shown that temporary contracts have also become more common among higher income gentrifier households – especially younger households – suggesting that intergenerational inequalities cut through other dividing lines. Such insecurities impede access to homeownership despite otherwise high incomes. Likewise, young single person households earning a relatively high income are unable to compete with dual-earner households or the older prime households on the housing market. Thus despite their relatively high income, such households may be pushed into the rental housing market.

The intergenerational transmission of inequalities

Growing generational divides are, in turn, also translated into the increasing prominence of the reproduction of such divides across generations. Chapter 5 singled out the fact that relatively many young people leaving the parental home – so-called 'fledglings' – manage to gain access to housing in some of the most expensive or rapidly gentrifying neighbourhoods in urban areas. This is despite their predominantly very low incomes, raising the question of how this is possible. Although the chapter focused on a very specific group, this question resonates more broadly: how do young 'marginal gentrifiers' on a low income gain access to gentrifying neighbourhoods in the first place, prior to achieving upward mobility? Apart from the provision of regulated housing as well as the sharp trade-offs young people are often willing to make, this

dissertation highlights the crucial importance of parental background, and particularly parental wealth. The majority of fledglings with wealthy parents move to Amsterdam's high status or gentrifying neighbourhoods, while many fledglings with asset-poor parents move to the city's low status peripheral neighbourhoods. This intergenerational transmission of inequalities takes place through various direct and indirect mechanisms. For one, parental, class, and neighbourhood background shape dispositions and expectations related to urban space (Smith & Holt 2007). In other words, background shapes preferences for certain types of living and certain residential environments. Furthermore, parents can lend non-financial support, e.g. by providing access to resourceful social networks. And last but not least, parents can provide substantial direct financial support. It is particularly this latter mechanism, I argue, that should be given more consideration in gentrification research.

Parental wealth constitutes an increasingly crucial factor that enables young people to acquire housing in gentrifying or gentrified neighbourhoods, as Chapter 5 has shown. Parents may provide financial support to help their children get ahead on the housing market. They can do so through the purchase of property, by making a down payment to help in the acquisition of a mortgage, or by helping to cover monthly rent or other living expenses. When parents (help) purchase property, this not only constitutes a social reproduction strategy or a form of intergenerational solidarity, but is a financial investment strategy as well. Households are increasingly regarded as 'investor subjects' for whom housing is an important financial asset to be strategically managed, and serves to augment other incomes (Langley 2006; Doling & Ronald 2010). An ageing group of 'prime' households is channelling accumulated capital into the urban housing market, for example in the form of buying property for their children. The purchase of urban apartments for *pieds-à-terre* or holiday rentals reflects the same strategic value. States facilitate such investments as part of strategies aimed at what has been dubbed 'privatised Keynesianism' (Crouch 2009): by making investments more attractive – e.g. by providing tax exemptions for intergenerational support – states attempt to unleash private wealth onto housing markets to spur investment. Given the crucial and growing importance of parental support for first-time buyers, the magnitude of such financial strategies should not be underestimated. Furthermore, because young middle class households are increasingly prolonging an urban orientation, parental support will often be directed towards urban areas, especially gentrifying neighbourhoods. These are the types of neighbourhoods typically preferred by the young middle classes, but are also the most attractive for investment due to anticipated house price inflation. The household as an investor subject should be considered a part of fourth wave gentrification, which is characterized by, among other things, the financialization of housing (Lees et al. 2008).

In sum, this study has innovatively shown not only how parental support lends access to certain housing segments, but also how it has clear spatial repercussions. Crudely put, it forges spatial segregation between young people based on class background, producing divides between the 'opportunity poor' and 'opportunity rich' already early on in the life course. It is

time for gentrification research to engage with intergenerational capital flows, considering the fact that they have become an important contributor to the exacerbation of social-spatial inequalities. Parental wealth thus flows via their children into gentrifying neighbourhoods, directly contributing to rising real estate prices and rent levels, and thus advancing gentrification processes. Acknowledging the importance of parental support also requires making further amendments to the figure of the marginal gentrifier. Although marginal gentrifiers typically start off on a relatively low income, this dissertation has shown that they may have other important sources of economic capital to draw on – especially if they are from well-to-do backgrounds. Parental capital augments the relatively low incomes of the young marginal gentrifiers themselves, allowing them to shoulder higher housing costs. This in turn enables them to outbid other households in a weaker socio-economic position. If access to homeownership becomes even more restricted – e.g. due to house price increases, stricter mortgage lending practices, and/or labour market flexibilization – the importance of parental support will increase along the life course. In that case, it will not only be students, recent graduates, or other still relatively marginal households that will have to draw on parental support, but also households in a more mature phase of life.

The social-spatial impacts of displacement

Displacement

A longstanding and elusive concern of gentrification research is what happens to lower income residents confronted with different forms of gentrification-induced displacement (cf. Marcuse 1986). Through displacement, gentrification has a deep and disruptive impact on the lives of disadvantaged populations. Although Chapter 4 has shown that residential moves do not necessarily drive neighbourhood change, they do represent the nexus where constraints related to displacement, exclusion, and housing affordability and accessibility take centre stage and have their strongest potential impact. Displacement – direct as well as exclusionary – not only impacts the life courses and residential opportunities of low income residents, but is also a crucial concept to understand how and to what extent neighbourhood-level gentrification processes reshape the social geography of entire city regions. To understand the scale, role, and impact of displacement, Chapter 7 analysed the effects of gentrification on the residential behaviour of low income residents, providing novel insight into how displacement processes map out in urban space.

Gentrification reshapes urban-regional social-spatial inequalities in profound ways. The overarching trends that we found are best described as the suburbanization of poverty (Hulchanski 2010; Cooke & Denton 2015). This is, however, far from a uniform process; rather, various subtleties are at work. Importantly, the suburbanization of poverty is not only a direct process of poor residents moving from the city to the suburbs. Gentrification also influences residential moves within or to urban regions through exclusionary effects. As central city locations grow increasingly unattainable, lower income households will increasingly opt to move to suburban locations in the first instance, bypassing the central city altogether. In a way, gentrification sets in

motion both a direct suburbanization of the poor and a broader more indirect shift of poverty towards the outskirts of cities. It should be emphasized that in both cases indirect exclusionary displacement is likely to be the main driver – especially in highly regulated housing contexts like the Netherlands, where tenant rights are well enshrined, tenancy thus more secure, and evictions relatively limited.

A variegated suburbanization of poverty

It should be emphasized that low income residents constitute a heterogeneous group that is affected by gentrification and displacement in various ways. Chapter 7 distinguished between unemployed, working poor, and low-to-middle income households; different socio-economic sub-groups that show divergent residential moving patterns. Working poor households in both Amsterdam and Rotterdam typically do not suburbanize to the region but instead are increasingly moving to peripheral locations, often post-war housing estates. They also frequently employ coping strategies that allow them to remain in the central city, for instance sharing a dwelling among multiple households. Such strategies and moving patterns relate to Sassen's polarization thesis (1991): working poor households are frequently in rather precarious employment positions, and consequently seek to locate close to opportunity rich labour markets, even if this means high rent burdens or precarious living arrangements. Furthermore, the relatively young working poor often do not have a sufficient number of years on the waiting list to be able to acquire secure social rental housing. Unemployed households in contrast *are* increasingly suburbanizing to the region, and especially to already struggling areas that were hit hardest by the crisis. These are often higher density satellite and new towns, originally built for the middle classes. Low-to-middle income households are also increasingly moving to such areas but, taken as a whole, are more spread out across the region, reflecting their slightly better socio-economic prospects, which allow them to buy property in certain areas where the housing market is more relaxed.

The question is whether shifting social-spatial inequalities – e.g. the suburbanization of poverty – translate into *worsening* social-spatial inequalities. Gentrification may, at least initially, dampen segregation, as it entails the middle classes moving into erstwhile low income neighbourhoods and thereby mixing the neighbourhood (cf. Musterd & Van Gent 2016). Likewise, suburban locations in many ways remain comparatively middle class, despite signs of downgrading. The suburbanization of poverty will therefore often lead to a more even distribution of low income households across space, implying that the aggregate scores on segregation indicators will go down. I would argue, however, that segregation indicators are not up to the task of gauging social-spatial inequalities, especially in the face of neighbourhood gentrification. Decreasing segregation levels, as measured by such indices, may suggest that gentrification functions as a great equalizing force, obscuring the fact that it does so by constraining the housing position of low income residents, diminishing their overall housing opportunities. Segregation indices also obscure the fact that even though gentrification may initially suppress

segregation levels, after a certain turning point it will produce starker spatial divisions – all the while constantly reducing the housing options available to disadvantaged residents.

I argue that it is more fruitful to establish whether lower income residents are able to access or remain in neighbourhoods with high or rapidly increasing housing values, as this provides better insight into the extent to which emergent areas of privilege remain accessible to lower income residents despite encroaching gentrification. Following this approach, this dissertation illuminates how social-spatial inequalities are in fact worsening, with lower income residents increasingly moving into struggling areas in the urban fringes or suburban cores. These are far from absolute trends, with some low income residents, in particular the working poor, aiming to remain in more expensive central locations. The enduring presence of low income residents, however, does not signal that the harmful effects of gentrification are absent or limited (Newman & Wyly 2006). For one thing, while social rental housing and protective policies do enable low income groups to stay put, it is nevertheless these very protective measures that are being undermined by contemporary urban policies that seek to spur gentrification through housing liberalization and re-regulation (Wyly et al. 2010). Furthermore, in order to stay put or to acquire housing in particular areas, low income residents must employ various coping strategies, accept precarious living arrangements, and/or shoulder increasingly high rent burdens. Their enduring presence in gentrifying areas then is *despite* the exclusionary and displacement effects of gentrification, not evidence against the existence of displacement (cf. Newman & Wyly 2006).

The findings from this study highlight that it remains difficult to establish the extent to which gentrification processes actually contribute to shifting social-spatial inequalities. Although this dissertation has shown that gentrification constitutes an increasingly forceful process of urban change with notable exclusionary effects, it must also be acknowledged that a degree of uncertainty regarding the precise effects continues to exist. Gentrification is not the only process influencing these inequalities. A host of other processes are also at work, producing and reproducing social-spatial inequalities in often complex ways. Furthermore, gentrification has both direct and indirect effects, which remain difficult to disentangle. It therefore continues to be important to conduct research into the key links between gentrification and social-spatial inequalities within urban systems. Doing so will require us to develop new approaches to track gentrification over space and time, and to follow those residential groups excluded or displaced due to gentrification.

In sum, this dissertation has shown how city centre neighbourhoods are increasingly becoming areas of privilege. The city, and in many ways also contemporary urban policies, are becoming ever more accommodating to middle class residential trajectories. Spatially, this is expressed in the form of variegated gentrification processes that expand across urban space. It should be stressed that not one form of gentrification is necessarily *softer* than another. Although the different gentrification processes are underpinned by different logics, a common denominator is the decrease in housing opportunities for lower income groups. Only by considering the different forms and expressions

of gentrification in conjoint fashion can the substantial impact of gentrification on the reshaping of social-spatial inequalities come to the fore.

The social-spatial consequence of ongoing gentrification in different forms is that low income residents increasingly have to resort to the remaining bastions of affordability in the urban peripheries, or leave the city altogether to settle in struggling new towns. Although poor residents may very well appreciate living in these locations, the changing residential moving patterns should primarily be considered the outcome of a decrease in housing options. Those low on the socio-economic ladder have to settle for less, for what is left behind. In classic models of filtering and middle class suburbanization, this used to be the struggling inner cities. With the deck of cards reshuffled, central areas have now become zones of privilege, while peripheral estates and suburban new towns are struggling. Gentrification has indeed become so influential that it does not merely lead to the reshuffling of urban social geographies, but it also deepens social-spatial divides in various profound ways.