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A different place to different people

Conditional neighbourhood effects on residents' socio-economic status

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CONCLUSION

Many scholars in the social sciences have studied neighbourhood effects on economic prospects - that is, the idea that the socio-economic composition of a neighbourhood influences its residents' work aspirations and employment opportunities. The premise that residence in affluent neighbourhoods enhances the economic prospects of residents while living in deprived neighbourhoods is detrimental is at the core of many urban policies. Place-based urban renewal strategies and mobility programmes aim to deconcentrate poverty, with the goal to avoid negative socialisation and enhance resources in networks in the neighbourhood (Andersson and Musterd, 2005). Political debates on deconcentration of poverty thus reflect the academic idea of neighbourhood effects. The logic of socialisation and social networks prevails in these debates; social interaction in the neighbourhood is believed to induce neighbourhood effects and either limit or enhance economic opportunities of its residents.

The socialisation and social networks pathways fall under the banner of social-interactive mechanisms and are endogenous as they are about social processes that occur within the neighbourhood (Galster, 2008). They contrast with external processes that might hamper residents' economic self-sufficiency, such as lack of accessibility of work opportunities and insufficient institutions in the residential area, that might be better dealt with on a municipal level (Pinkster, 2014). Instead, endogenous effects revolve around local social interactions and the informal social context in the neighbourhood. This endogenous impact can potentially be tackled by neighbourhood interventions that alter the spatial distribution of disadvantaged residents, either by moving disadvantaged residents out to less deprived areas or by replacing low-rent social housing by upmarket dwellings, thereby attracting more affluent residents.

Yet, these presumed social-interactive neighbourhood mechanisms remained a black box in most empirical models on neighbourhood effects; in academic studies the causal pathways underlying the neighbourhood effects hypotheses are often implicit. Although scholars

agree on which causal pathways are out there and the social-interactive mechanism is dominant in the field, it has not been empirically unravelled whether, how, and for whom these mechanisms come into play (Galster, 2012; Sharkey and Faber, 2014).

To lift the lid off of this black box and to understand neighbourhood effects better, this dissertation focuses on the conditionality of neighbourhood effects. As the most frequently employed social-interactive mechanism on individual socio-economic outcomes builds on local contacts and interactions and residents are socially differently embedded in the neighbourhood, it is unlikely that these social-interactive mechanisms pertain to all residents of a neighbourhood to the same extent. The neighbourhood affects the socio-economic status of some people more than others depending on the degree to which the individuals are constrained to their neighbourhood of residence. The social-interactive mechanism thus implies effect heterogeneity: neighbourhood effects are likely to be conditional upon several individual features related to social interaction in the neighbourhood.

Increasingly, some scholars have started to more explicitly propose this idea of effect heterogeneity - that is, that the neighbourhood is likely to affect the socio-economic status of some people more than others (Tienda, 1990; Ellen and Turner, 1997; de Souza Briggs, 1997; Buck, 2001; Lupton, 2003; Galster, 2008; Small and Feldman, 2012; Sharkey and Faber, 2014). But despite these theoretical refinements, the quantitative research field on neighbourhood effects has been subject to a dominant one-size-fits-all discourse where quantitative research still revolves mainly around the question whether the neighbourhood matters or not, while individual differences in how residents relate to their neighbourhood are being ignored. Recently, Sharkey and Faber (2014, p.561) have stressed "(...) how limited, and distracting, the dichotomous perspective is for the advancement of the field." The default has been to rely upon unconditional neighbourhood effects, with the implicit assumption that neighbourhood effects are homogeneous across different residents within a neighbourhood (Small and Feldman, 2012). This is surprising given the aforementioned increasing call in the literature to incorporate conditional effects (e.g Small and Feldman, 2012; Sharkey and Faber, 2014) and, moreover, the fact that studies on neighbourhood effects are inconclusive in Europe, and in particular, in the Netherlands only small neighbourhood effects on residents' economic chances in life have

been found (Musterd et al., 2003; van der Klaauw and van Ours, 2003). Neglecting conditionality might have resulted in a misestimation of neighbourhood effects for certain subgroups in the neighbourhood.

This dissertation formulated clear and testable hypotheses on the conditionality of the neighbourhood effects for specific subgroups in light of the social-interactive mechanisms, thereby setting forth a research agenda that aims to establish both a theoretical and a methodological framework for the neighbourhood effects heterogeneity. Residents differ in their characteristics (e.g. their social embeddedness in the neighbourhood, residential history, household configuration, and relocation destination choices) and as a consequence have differential responses to residing in certain neighbourhoods. This heterogeneity suggests that neighbourhood effects arise under specific conditions which in turn has repercussions for the field of neighbourhood effects research that so far has predominantly focused on a limited unconditional set of mechanisms through which the neighbourhood is assumed to affect individual life chances.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER FINDINGS

The aim of this dissertation was to answer the question to what extent the impact of the level of deprivation in the neighbourhood of residence on residents' socio-economic outcomes is conditional upon neighbourhood-specific social contacts and interactions, residential histories, household configurations, and relocation destinations after urban renewal.

The first empirical study found that the magnitude of neighbourhood effects is not higher for residents who have more neighbourhood-specific social contacts and interactions in their current neighbourhood of residence. These contacts and interactions are considered to be a minimal condition for the social-interactive mechanisms to come into play. The finding that the impact of the neighbourhood is not conditional upon social embeddedness therefore undermines the social-interactive mechanisms behind neighbourhood effects.

In this first study, however, the conditionality upon social embeddedness is only examined within the current neighbourhood of residence at one point in time, neglecting the residential histories of res-

idents. Residents who move can be exposed to different neighbourhoods at the same time, social ties with the former neighbours might remain and social influences from the previous neighbourhood can still continue after the move (Hedman, 2011). Once residential histories are included, the results showed that an exclusive focus on the current residential neighbourhood misestimates the impact of the current neighbourhood: having lived in a deprived neighbourhood also has a detrimental effect on an individual's current income and diminishes the influence of the current neighbourhood. This impact of preceding neighbourhoods suggest that there are relevant lingering effects regardless of the residents' income at the start of the current residence spell and length of residence in the current neighbourhood. The impact of the current neighbourhood of residence also diminishes with the number of times that residents have moved.

These results are, however, not unequivocal and not always in line with the social-interactive mechanisms: while neighbourhood effects of the current neighbourhood are often stronger for those who have lived there for a longer period of time, this does not pertain to all varieties of residential histories. Furthermore, the findings on the temporal conditionality of the lingering effects (impact of former neighbourhoods of residence interacted with the length of residence and time elapsed since moving) are inconclusive and counterintuitive in light of the long-lasting socialisation or continuing social networks mechanisms. This casts doubt on the relevance of the social-interactive mechanisms in which effects transpire through local contacts: rather, neighbourhood effects seem to be persistent and occur beyond the current neighbourhood of residence. This reveals a larger structure of temporal and spatial (dis)advantages for residents which could be the result of insufficient local institutions or a scarring effect of poor labour market histories. Alternatively, this outcome might reflect (pre-existing) individual deprivation (Bailey, 2012).

In the third empirical study, the core hypothesis was that individuals within different household configurations bear different levels of involvement in the neighbourhood which should reveal differential neighbourhood effects. Indeed, it was found that the impact of the neighbourhood is different for residents with differential household configurations. Only for partnered mothers with a young child and single mothers of primary school aged children, who are assumed to be more socially embedded within the neighbourhood, it was found

that residing in a disadvantaged neighbourhood hampers the transition to work. Contrary to expectations, however, partnered mothers with primary school-aged children and fathers, who are also expected to be more involved in the neighbourhood, were not found to be affected by their neighbourhood of residence.

In addition, the results in this study do not fully comply with processes of socialisation and social networks. In general, living in a deprived neighbourhood means being restrained to limited local labour market opportunities, and mothers might be less willing to commute. Furthermore, the availability and costs of child care might be a barrier to employment for single and partnered mothers in deprived neighbourhoods. There are, however, also place-specific processes that might explain why single mothers remain on welfare benefits in deprived neighbourhoods: an in-depth case study by Pinkster (2014) shows that it is more generally accepted within the community of disadvantaged neighbourhoods for single mothers to stay at home to monitor their children as there are more social control issues within the neighbourhood. These processes might be less apparent in more affluent neighbourhoods, where single mothers might be more eager and confident to make the transition to work.

The final empirical chapter found that individuals differ greatly in their relocation destinations after urban renewal interventions. Forced relocatees have the chance to move to more affluent neighbourhoods with better perspectives but about half of the group of forced relocatees moved within the origin neighbourhood. Even for those who moved to a more affluent neighbourhood who are hypothesised to benefit from the presence of more middle-income neighbours (role models, resources and job information), no improvement in economic prospects was found. While it was possible to follow up on residents only (up to) a few years after the forced move, this seems to suggest that relocatees do not benefit from the forced move. Neighbourhood interventions are about more than residential moves, however, in the words of Bond et al. (2013, p.942): "It comprises multiple, interrelated activities (demolition, new builds aimed at tenure diversification, housing improvements, and social and community interventions), delivered in different ways to different people in different places and at different time points", making it a challenging task to pinpoint the consequences for the forced relocatees.

In sum, the empirical chapters showed that the magnitude of the impact of neighbourhood level of deprivation on individual socio-economic outcomes is rather variable and that not every modifier is of equal importance. These findings show that neighbourhood effects arise under specific conditions and circumstances: these effects are not homogeneous across different residents within a neighbourhood, but mainly depend on the specific individual residential histories and household configurations.

RETHINKING THE MECHANISMS

The systematic test of the association between the neighbourhood's socio-economic composition and individual socio-economic status through the four modifiers challenges conventional ideas and has given further reason to rethink and reconfigure the mechanisms behind neighbourhood effects. The conventional mechanisms behind neighbourhood effects that rely on social interaction in the neighbourhood, often assessed in unconditional models, are shown to be insufficient. It is difficult, however, to isolate the mechanisms behind neighbourhood effects and it could not be concluded either that neighbourhood effects through social-interactive mechanisms are not present at all.

The lack of unambiguous proof for the most often employed social-interactive mechanism, which posits that other neighbours might provide job information and serve as role models and that residing in a disadvantaged neighbourhood might limit a resident's work aspirations, can also be explained by an ambiguity in this mechanism. While it was expected that neighbourhood effects would be more pronounced for those who are more exposed to the neighbourhood, no empirical support was found for the hypothesis that neighbourhood effects are stronger for residents who have more contacts and interactions within their current neighbourhood of residence. The impacts of the current and former neighbourhood of residence are not always stronger for those who have lived there for a longer period of time either.

This line of reasoning could also be reversed, though: short-term residents could be more vulnerable to the level of deprivation in the neighbourhood because they lack social networks and access to re-

sources in the neighbourhood. The social network mechanism could contradict the socialisation mechanism: residing in a deprived neighbourhood might actually be less detrimental to residents who are more embedded because their more extensive local social networks might deliver other valuable forms of social capital (Crowder and South, 2003). This was also found by Pinkster (2007, p. 2596), who investigated the existence of informal job networks in distressed neighbourhoods: "From this perspective, interrelations at the neighbourhood level do not result in limited opportunity structures to the degree that residents are unemployed and unable to find work due to a lack of information." She also found drawbacks to these processes, though: accepting a job through local networks in disadvantaged neighbourhoods means residents with a migrant background do not overcome substantial language deficiencies because most of the co-workers in these local jobs are from the same ethnic background. Another downside is "(...) the limited scope of the job networks both in terms of career opportunities and in terms of acquiring a variety of work experience and of developing work-related skills. Job seekers always end up in the same type of unskilled job, quite often with the same companies" (Pinkster, 2007, p. 2596).

Most importantly, the one-size-fits-all approach in the field does not hold and we can at least not fully assign the (conditional) neighbourhood effects to the frequently employed social-interactive mechanism. The conclusion that the neighbourhood is a different place to different people has profound consequences for the field. The fact that residents shape, select and are affected by the neighbourhood in different ways (Harding et al., 2011b) calls for a broader perspective on the potential pathways behind neighbourhood effects and brings to light other mechanisms besides socialisation and social networks, such as (endogenous) relative deprivation and stigmatisation effects as well as exogenous structural forces that affect residents' outcomes, such as lack of accessibility to job opportunities, local institutional resources and services. Living in a disadvantaged neighbourhood with poor quality services and inadequate institutions negatively affects an individual's job and earning opportunities. These external impacts have been coined as correlated effects as they are hypothesised to affect all residents within a neighbourhood to the same extent, resulting in correlations between neighbours' outcomes (Galster, 2008). This is unlikely, however, because a potential source of neighbourhood ef-

fect heterogeneity is the variation in family capacities and the access they have to opportunities outside the neighbourhood (Pinkster, 2009; Harding et al., 2011b).

Although resources and institutions might be lacking within a neighbourhood, an individual or family might be able to access resources beyond the neighbourhood, implying that individuals are differentially affected by their neighbourhood of residence. Harding et al. (2011b) refer to 'high capacity families' that can minimise the possible detrimental impact of deficiencies within their neighbourhood of residence. On the other hand, even if resources are available, not all individuals are able to capitalise on the opportunities within the neighbourhoods. The idea that accumulating disadvantage in certain neighbourhoods might reproduce inequalities in the form of neighbourhood effects — but that these effects differ for different residents as they emerge from a complex relation between individual and household characteristics, job seeking efforts and motivations, public policies, regulations, local institutions, services and local labour market opportunities — demands an "expanded research agenda focused on the questions of where, when, why, and for whom do residential contexts matter." (Sharkey and Faber, 2014, p. 572).

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The question whether and how the neighbourhood matters has kept scholars busy for the past few decades and instigated innovative research designs such as the Moving to Opportunity housing experiments. Too often, however, these neighbourhood effect studies based their theoretical models on early ethnographies that treated these neighbourhoods as case studies of local communities. The neighbourhood and community itself were taken as the unit of analysis rather than the individual residents within a variety of neighbourhoods. This narrow focus on poor, disadvantaged neighbourhoods provided a one-sided view of the neighbourhood effects argument.

Small and Feldman (2012, p. 74) review the bulk of earlier neighbourhood effects studies and conclude that "much of this work would be better served if informed by clearer theories and stronger fieldwork, and that the greater empirical payoffs would have been found in the search for conditional relationships" and therefore "call for plac-

ing heterogeneity at the centre of the research agenda". I can only agree. Comprehensive ethnographic research should be conducted to explain earlier inconsistent findings and formulate new hypotheses. More concrete in-depth studies should investigate why neighbourhood effects are observed for certain individuals and in some settings but not others. Furthermore, ethnographers should also explore other potential modifiers and hypothesise for which subgroups and under which circumstances the neighbourhood's level of deprivation will affect its residents' life chances. Neighbourhood effects scholars should go beyond the notion that they are studying "universal social processes" and instead focus their attention on heterogeneity: "ethnographers generating new hypotheses should abandon altogether the effort to produce hypotheses about how neighbourhoods (universally) affect life chances, and instead hypothesise for which kinds of individuals and in which kinds of neighbourhoods or cities neighbourhood poverty should matter" (Small and Feldman, 2012, p. 73).

Accounting for heterogeneity also means widening the scope and adopting a comparative design: researchers should focus on a variety of neighbourhoods and reach out to differential groups within those neighbourhoods. The present study was able to do so, as register data has coverage on a wide variety of Dutch neighbourhoods and information on residents' socio-economic and demographic characteristics. This came with a trade-off, however, as register data lacks in-depth information on social processes within those neighbourhoods. Here, then, lies a challenging – but necessary — task for qualitative researchers: "since no city, neighbourhood, or individual is assumed to capture the essence of neighbourhood effects, the ethnographer would abandon the notion that any site or kind of actor is representative" (Small and Feldman, 2012, p. 73). Taking into account differences should be the starting point for selecting cases and formulating new hypotheses.

This need for qualitative in-depth case studies does not mean that quantitative scholars are being sidelined, but capturing the heterogeneity of neighbourhood effects does require quantitative scholars to rethink the data they are using. This data should go beyond simply being a resident in a certain neighbourhood to also include how residents use their neighbourhood and how, with whom, and where they spend their time (Sharkey and Faber, 2014). Although the use of register data in this study pointed to empirical evidence that the

neighbourhood has a different impact on different people — the wide range of neighbourhoods and information on residents' differential socio-economic and demographic characteristics within those neighbourhoods enabled interaction effects between the residential context and individual and household features — the present study still lacks a comprehensive conceptual framework that explains how different features of neighbourhoods affect some individuals and others not.

To achieve a fuller understanding of neighbourhood effect heterogeneity, the neighbourhood should not only be measured in aggregated socio-economic compositional measures; residential records in register data should be enriched with additional in-depth information on the neighbourhood — such as data on the density and use of public institutions and residents' requests for municipal services — as well as more detailed information on the residents. Ideally, time use diaries including residents' use of space and time, their networks and their social interactions in and beyond the neighbourhood should be linked to longitudinal register data to paint a clearer picture of how and to what extent residents are actually exposed to their neighbourhood of residence (Sharkey and Faber, 2014).

This dissertation employed longitudinal data and advanced methods that moved beyond the most commonly applied models. Nevertheless, we cannot rule out that the neighbourhood effects found are due to selection into neighbourhoods based on unobservables. This issue of selection bias haunts the field of neighbourhood effects studies, as residents cannot be randomly assigned to neighbourhoods, making it very challenging to isolate causal effects. Another challenge associated with the identification of causal neighbourhood effects through the social-interactive mechanism is the fact that the socio-economic measures of and behaviour within the neighbourhood are not independent from the socio-economic characteristics and behaviour of its residents (the simultaneity of interactions, coined as the 'reflection problem' by Manski, 1993). Furthermore, this dissertation assessed linear neighbourhood effects, while recently scholars have propagated studying threshold points in neighbourhood effects; some residents might only be affected by the neighbourhood environment after a certain critical mass of disadvantaged or affluent neighbours is reached (Galster, 2012; Musterd et al., 2012b). In addition, it could be that a resident is only influenced after residing in that area for a long time and this might impact decays again (Musterd et al.,

2012b). The observation of thresholds and other non-linear decaying effects advance the field and should be further explored.

Nevertheless, even the most rigorous research designs — be it quasi-experiments, matching, instrumental variables or fixed effects — as well as the assessment of non-linear effects are not able to provide clear answers on why the neighbourhoods matters; these approaches still do not reveal which causal mechanisms are underlying the neighbourhood effects (Sampson, 2008; Galster, 2012). More than ever, there is a tremendous need for further exploration of how modifiers condition the association between neighbourhood characteristics and the resident's socio-economic status. This is more fruitful than aiming to capture a causal unconditional effect of the neighbourhood using very stringent research methods. Not only has this quest for causal inference resulted in neglect of the mechanisms, it has also led scholars to assess neighbourhood effects in isolation from other contextual effects such as the household and the school (Sharkey and Faber, 2014, p. 561), thereby possibly overstating the relative importance of the neighbourhood. The neighbourhood is not a static entity that can be studied on its own at one point in time and that impacts its residents in a universal way: "Rather, a single neighborhood is experienced in different ways by groups of individuals who have lived there for varying lengths of time, and who spend their time within the neighborhood in different ways and in their own spaces, carving out unique social worlds from the common environment that surrounds them." (Sharkey and Faber, 2014, p. 562).

Future research should therefore combine these methodological advancements with further exploration of the theoretical mechanisms. Researchers should not lose sight of the causal pathways; a systematic test of the conditionality of the association between the neighbourhood and individuals' outcomes upon a wide range of individual and household characteristics guides further refinements of potential mechanisms. An assessment of central premises behind hypothesised causal pathways — that is, under which conditions these mechanisms come into play — assists scholars in gaining insight into how and for whom the mechanisms work. The aforementioned enriched data can be used to explore the conditional neighbourhood effects under a wide variety of neighbourhood and individual conditions.

Lastly, researchers have increasingly started to study neighbourhood effects over an individual's life course and across generations. In

the United States, the intergenerational persistence of (dis)advantage was found to diminish for individuals that moved to a low-poverty area during their early childhood in the Moving to Opportunity experiment (Chetty et al., 2015). In Sweden, research showed that individuals tend to end up much later in life in neighbourhoods similar to where they grew up (van Ham et al., 2014). Furthermore, individuals early in their labour and housing careers might only live in disadvantaged areas for a short amount of time. Overall, for some individuals, living in a deprived area can be persistent and inherited, while others might be exposed to a deprived neighbourhood for a short time. This further emphasises the need to adopt a life course, conditional, and intergenerational approach to studying neighbourhood effects (van Ham et al., 2014).

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

To cater to the needs of disadvantaged residents and to augment policy effectiveness of urban renewal strategies, it is essential to obtain more know-how on the variation in the impact of residential neighbourhoods on individual outcomes. The empirical findings of this dissertation do not fully comply with social-interactive mechanisms; neighbourhood effects are not always higher for residents who are hypothesised to be more involved in the neighbourhood, either by more neighbourhood-specific social interaction in the current neighbourhood, having lived in a former neighbourhood for a longer period of time, or by different household configurations. The lack of consistent proof for neighbourhood effects could, however, also be because social interaction between various social groups (transmission of resources and norms from the middle class to lower class) is not self-evident and often lacking. This is referred to as social tectonics: residents in mixed neighbourhoods move past each other without socially interacting (Robson and Butler, 2001). Especially in mixed-tenure neighbourhoods limited cross-tenure interaction undermines the potential of positive role models and resourceful contacts (Kleinhans, 2004). If the explanation for individual disadvantage in deprived areas is that residents lack resourceful networks with information about job opportunities, policies should not only focus on establishing socio-economically mixed neighbourhoods but have as

a core goal the augmentation of contacts between low-income and more affluent neighbours (Galster, 2012).

Regardless of the lack of social interaction between neighbours, increasing the socio-economic mix in the neighbourhood might still have beneficial side effects, such as a better reputation of the neighbourhood and an increase of higher-quality institutions, facilities and organisations in the neighbourhood that might advance an individual's opportunities (Galster, 2012). It is important to realise, however, that not every resident is affected by the availability of resources and institutions in the neighbourhood in the same way, either because it is unneeded as they can draw upon resources and opportunities outside the neighbourhood or because they do not have the ability to actually capitalise on the resources available. This implies that assisting disadvantaged families in deprived neighbourhoods by increasing the availability of resources (be it in terms of more affluent neighbours or public services) is not enough and some residents might need additional assistance in taking the fullest advantage of those resources in the neighbourhood (Harding et al., 2011b). These differences in the capacities of residents suggest that a general area-targeted policy intervention might be ineffective. Above all, neighbourhood effects turn out to arise predominantly under specific features of the residents of these neighbourhoods, such as their residential histories and household configurations, which makes it a challenge to assign neighbourhood policies.

Still, policymakers seem to strive for neighbourhoods that are socio-economically balanced, in which individuals with different backgrounds live alongside, and with, each other. To achieve this, there have been widespread and large-scale investments in Dutch cities to restructure homogeneous and disadvantaged neighbourhoods into mixed-tenure and socio-economically mixed neighbourhoods (Kleinhans, 2003; Musterd, 2005). There is actually no evidence that mixing is beneficial to the original residents (Kleinhans et al., 2014). Furthermore, this study showed that forced relocatees could also not improve their economic prospects; transforming deprived areas into average, life course-proof neighbourhoods thus results in forced relocations that might only transfer the initial problems of relocated residents.

In addition, although lower incomes and slower transitions to employment are most apparent in neighbourhoods with local concentrations of socio-economic deprivation, this does not mean that these

poorer economic prospects are caused by the neighbourhood composition. The societal context and cities and neighbourhoods as well as individual resources and motivations are interrelated social systems (Musterd, 2002). Policymakers should therefore also focus their attention on heterogeneity; individuals are differentially embedded in (local) institutional structures and their neighbourhoods and therefore, in the words of Musterd (2002, p.140), "policy strategies should be highly sensitive to the multi-layered context."

Instead of striving for mixed neighbourhoods, recent research advises policymakers to maintain a variety of neighbourhoods in which different types of residents in different stages of their lives can live (Musterd et al., 2016). Residence in a deprived area might only be temporary and residents, especially those early in their housing career, can also experience social mobility within those disadvantaged areas (Teernstra, 2014). Neighbourhoods need to be assessed in a dynamic way, particularly because in an egalitarian society as the Netherlands, residents are often able to adjust their residential area to their needs and preferences (Musterd et al., 2015). Furthermore, recent research in the Netherlands shows that households whose incomes deviate largely from the median income of the neighbourhood (either higher or lower) are more inclined to move, often to a neighbourhood with a median income closer to the household's income. Residents thus seem to adjust their housing situation to their own resources, either resulting in an upward move (for the socio-economically stronger households) or a downgrade as the neighbourhood becomes too expensive (Musterd et al., 2016).

The empirical evidence on neighbourhood effects in the Netherlands is still few and far between. The urban renewal strategies can therefore not be justified based on current evidence; negative neighbourhood effects are not self-evident and might only occur under specific circumstances. In studying and possibly resolving the potential negative implications of residing in disadvantaged areas, both scholars and policymakers should keep in mind the bigger picture beyond a single neighbourhood. Future research and policy should focus on the diverse set of neighbourhoods that accommodates different types of households in different life stages. Moreover, policymakers should be prepared to create more tailor-made solutions for specific situations of residents living within certain neighbourhoods. After all, the neighbourhood is a different place to different people.