



Gentrification of Place: Neighborhood perceptions of Amsterdam North

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Abstract

Within the context of over-saturated cities and global exponential urban growth, the context of Gentrification has gained increasing academic and interdisciplinary momentum. This ethnographic research engages with the notion of the Gentrification of Place, by analyzing the way redevelopment programs are experienced by neighborhood inhabitants of Amsterdam North. The research encompasses a multimodal approach, as both literary and audiovisual component encompass the way inhabitants of historic neighborhoods experience urban change bound to Gentrification. The findings suggest that institutional place-making practices bound to the past, have generated collective notions of disregard, and stigmas that are accentuated when experienced through new place-making practices today, employed as part of ongoing neo-liberal policies, manifested through Gentrification. To further engage with the political aspects of the Gentrification of Place, Lefebvre's urban spatial theory will be engaged with. Urban changes crystalize through altered notions of livability of neighborhood inhabitants, that lead to the experiencing of a precarious state of experiencing Place. The audio-visual component, composed by a collaborative photo project and by the ethnographic film *Tijd voor Noord* (Time for North) engages with similar notions, and functions as an ethnographic bike ride through Amsterdam North. The film explores perspectives of neighborhood brokers, who are affected by the changes bound to their neighborhoods.

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Introduction

Yet again, I unchained my bike and looked at the clouds above me. A series of heavy storms had blown over Europe, hitting the Netherlands in the last few weeks. I was a few weeks into my fieldwork period, as I had started to grasp some notions about ongoing urban developments, and through my friend Sam, I had heard of Lucas. Lucas was born and raised in Amsterdam North, as were his parents. His grandfather had moved to Amsterdam North from the city center, as he had worked as an upholsterer for the ships at the old KNSM ship wharf. As I boarded the rusty ferry from Central station to North, I gazed upon the large stretch of water, separating this space from the rest of the city. Arriving in Amsterdam North, I biked past the EYE film museum, as most ferry goers were biking towards it. Passing the old bridge on the way to my destination, I biked onto the Vogel neighborhood, continuing to the nearby previously industrial area in development. Separated by a long boulevard like road, the historic Vogel neighborhood was located next to this region, where I was supposed to meet Lucas. This area used to be home to some industrial factories and workshops, as today hotels are starting to rise from the ground, arching over the nearby neighborhoods. I arrived at the café there and met with a young, brown/long-haired, moustache wearing man in his early twenties. We sat down and discussed how the neighborhoods and nearby areas had changed increasingly over the last years. Lucas seemed calm and somewhat reluctant to my questions, but it did not take long for him to open up, and explain me his critical perspectives in how the region was changing so much, at such a fast pace. We discussed the ongoing urban changes in Amsterdam North, as I was curious to the way he perceived them, growing up in North. He seemed highly critical towards the developments, as he argued the historical neighborhoods and the surrounding industrial areas were being developed for a select few, mostly who could still afford to live in them. My curiosity was raised, as we agreed to meet up a few days later to bike through what he perceived as the Amsterdam North he grew up in.

Entering North

Looking back at this moment, I realize it was highly determinant in my engagement with the upcoming research, as Lucas's perspectives would be of large influence on the way I would perceive Amsterdam North in the upcoming two months. I learned that Lucas was part of an activist group called Verdedig Noord¹ (Defend North) which was actively engaging with the raising of awareness towards the urban development's ongoing in Amsterdam North. Personally, being born in North, but not growing up in it, and later coming back to living in Amsterdam, I cultivated a certain interest and attachment to this space regarding ongoing urban development's². In recent years, somewhat alternative venues to those in the city center had started opening up in Amsterdam North, such as night clubs, cafes cinemas, bouldering gyms, attracting mostly young adults. Before starting this research, my academic focus on the notion of urban change had long been awakened, as the city of Amsterdam, like many large cities had noticeably been affected by an exponential growth in population, tourism, and a related disproportionate rent growth (Sequera, Nofre:2008). As an important element of this expansion, several urban renewal programs had already affected other previously peripheral areas such as the working-class neighborhoods of the 'Pijp' in Amsterdam south or the 'Jordaan' in the center, in an effort to revitalize these areas through increased development and urban renewal programs (Boer 2005). I quickly realized Amsterdam North had also been affected by urban renewal programs for the last twenty years (Boterman et. al. 2010). The way neighborhood inhabitants like Lucas experienced changes in Amsterdam North became a starting point. How do neighborhood inhabitants of Amsterdam North experience the Gentrification of Place? This will be the central question addressed in this research. My arguments fill an academic gap by drawing upon place-making policies in time in regard to influencing the experience of Gentrification. Firstly, the main concepts will be defined in the context of my upcoming arguments. Then, there shall be a methodological reflection on the different used modalities. Followed up by several sections of theoretical engagement in which I will relate these concepts and their connections on the basis of ethnographic interviews, vignettes and literary research. Finally, there will be an overview of the arguments brought forward and a discussion on possible further research on Gentrification in Amsterdam North.

¹ The stencils and texts of Verdedig Noord were strongly present and noticeable during few of the first exploratory bike rides in Amsterdam North, as I would find them throughout several different neighborhoods.

² When mentioning areas in development in Amsterdam North there is always a direct relationship between an industrial past and a now developing region, prone to urban change and re- development programs.

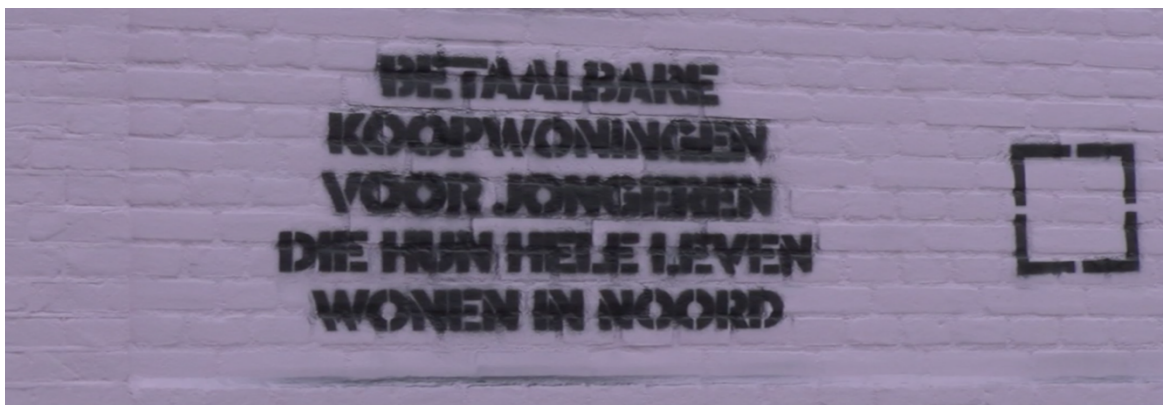
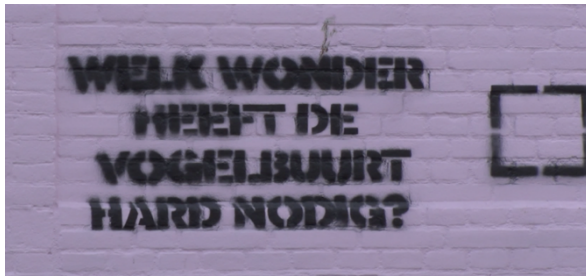


Image 1. Stencil messages by Activist group Verdedig Noord (Defend North) Placed at the recently opened 'Wondr' pop up museum in the Vogel neighborhood. Translated from top right to bottom: What wonder does the Vogelbuurt need? Building of new social housing; Affordable housing for youngsters who have grown up in North. Video stills by author.

Framework of Analysis

Place and Place-making

Before engaging further with active processes of urban redevelopment programs in Amsterdam North (Boterman et.al. 2010), it is important to take a few steps back and define where these developments occurring. Studies on Space and Place within academic research have been analyzed by a broad variety of disciplines ranging from philosophers, sociologists and anthropologists to urban geographers, amongst others. Considering I will analyze the way place is related to in the context of social change, I will recall on Munn's (2003:360) definition of place as a shifting and dynamic notion: "Places in this sense should be understood as significant, meaningful forms in process rather than static givens, since their existence is ongoingly subject to the varied ways they enter into human practices - into people's actions, expectations, pasts and sense of their pasts, into a particular social and cultural milieus".

Within the context of understanding the way neighborhood inhabitants relate to the changing space they inhabit, Low (2009) argues for the inclusion of space by anthropologists as a theoretical construct. This, to further uncover hidden systems of exclusion, inequality and aesthetic restrictions amongst communities. He argues then that these systems are often reproduced by institutional bodies and governmental control of the environment. It thus becomes important to differentiate notions of space and place in understanding the way inhabitants relate to their changing neighborhoods. I will do so, by analyzing the way the municipality influences imageries and collective notions related to Amsterdam North. These notions are bound to the past and manifest in the present through place-making practices. Lew (2017:451) defines place-making practices as events that generate or accelerate the attachment of certain values to a space from a state or socio-political actor, often with market-driven interest. Consequently, I will argue that the influence of institutionally used place-making practices has become crucial in understanding the way neighborhood inhabitants relate to the places they inhabit, in the context of ongoing urban renewal programs. When describing institutionally led place-making practices I am thus referring to governmentally led place-making practices manifested through policies. Nofre (Nofre et.al. 2017) explains a similar case in the city of Lisbon where a previously institutionally neglected neighborhood becomes "rebranded" and gains new value associated with it through the income of Erasmus students. These students have become new consumers as part of the region's

transformation. Therefore, catalyzing physical and institutional transformations as a consequence of its growing popularity. Blokland (2008) raises a similar argument in her ethnographic research, as she describes the process of neighborhood imageries connected to urban renewal programs in a neighborhood in Connecticut. This neighborhood has been home to a large concentration of Italian American migrants that have created individual histories bound to their neighborhoods, to which they relate and identify with. Reinforced through institutionally led place-making practices, the neighborhood has been branded and known as Little Italy. Collective manifestations of identification thus overshadow individual notions of what the neighborhood used to be known for, as is the case in Bairro Alto, Lisbon, but also in Amsterdam North. Here, specific place-making practices have had an everlasting impact on the image associated with the past of the region, manifesting in collective notions of identification. Research done by Robertson assimilates these practices. In his book, Robertson (1994) expands on a similar process occurring in the Japanese city of Kodaira. The notion of 'furusato' keeps being reinforced through events, festivals and associations. The author defines it as village-making and is thus highly prevalent in understanding place-making practices that manifested in the past of Amsterdam North. Benedict Anderson (1983:6) identifies these notions of collective imagination through his research: "it is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear them, yet in the midst of each lives the image of their communion". In this sense, I will argue that these forms of Place-making have transcended into imagined collective notions. These notions are brought up and intensified by inhabitants in the light of social changes related to ongoing Gentrification in Amsterdam North.

Gentrification through Livability

When referring to Gentrification, I am directing towards the physical and political manifestation of urban redevelopment programs in Amsterdam North, led by a culmination of reforms and permits granted by the municipality as part of "redeveloping" the region of Amsterdam North. Many anthropologists have analyzed and produced rich and extensive research to make sense of the way neighborhood inhabitants experience Gentrification in their neighborhoods. Ruth (Glass 1964 in Brown Saracino 2010) was one of the first scholars to coin the term of Gentrification to describe the: "residential movement of middle-class people into working class neighborhoods". When referring to working class neighborhoods in the continuation of this research I am indicating places that have been inhabited by and have been built for workers of the old ship wharf industries.

Arkaraprasertkul (2018:1562) defines classic studies on Gentrification about power relations: “where old inhabitants are often overshadowed by fears of displacement and economic exclusion, targeted by new inhabitants whose arrival socially, economically and physically restructures notions bound to that place”. Within this research similar notions will be analyzed, drawing upon the transformation of old historic places into new cultural institutions, catered towards the attraction and income and thus also to the manifestation of a new socio-economic middle-class lifestyle the municipality is wanting to attract (Herzfeld 2010). Gentrification in this sense can be understood as the transformation of previously neglected historic neighborhoods and surrounding industrial areas in Amsterdam North. Lees (2008:3) describes similar cases in few of the firstly gentrified neighborhoods in New York and London as he argues: “We tell the stories of how these two inner-city neighborhoods became devalorized/disinvested and how the subsequently became revalorized/reinvested”. There is thus an ongoing transformation/reinvestment of neighborhoods taking place in Amsterdam North, as it has been for more or less the last twenty years (Boterman et.al. 2010:710). The previously institutional negligence of neighborhoods and the income of artistic and cultural venues are thus strongly related in the understanding of the Gentrification of Amsterdam North. Ley (2003) describes this in his research as he comments on the symbolic roles new often temporary institutions (Hentila et. al 2003:6) take on within gentrifying neighborhoods. Thus, being part of the rebranding and revaluing of neighborhoods, as is happening in Amsterdam North (Van de Kamp :2008).

Institutional Place-making (Lew 2017) practices will then take on a central role when making sense of the way neighborhood inhabitants experience Gentrification. This, as I will explore the way institutional place-making practices of the past stand in contrast to place-making practices in the present as experienced by inhabitants. These notions are then strongly bound to the transformation of often industrial places in the light of Gentrification, as new institutions deploy a rhetoric of values based on historic conservation (Herzfeld:2010), transformation through aesthetics (Matthews:2010) and Sustainability (Checker:2011). The author Arkaraprasertkul (2018) describes similar notions in his ethnographic research on Gentrification and conservation of historic housing projects in Shanghai, as he clarifies the strong relationship between the political usage of notions of historic conservation within the ongoing Gentrification of that region as inhabitants make use of that notion to their benefit.

To understand the way changes bound to Gentrification effectively materialize into the lives of older neighborhood inhabitants, I will use Lefebvre’s (2003: 79, 80) notion of the three different levels of

socio-spatial analysis. The Global Level, he describes as the way in which politics of space are manifested. He argues that in western societies neoliberalism is often a dominant or present ideology, characterized by: “a form that maximizes the amount of private enterprise, and with respect to urbanism to developers and bankers” (Lefebvre 2003:78). The urban level he defines as the intermediary level. This level of analysis he defines as the social characteristics of the really real, characterized by public spaces excerpt of ideologies. He argues the urban level is a mix between the state, global power, knowledge, institutions and ideologies. This level offers a terrain for defense or attack and possible changes of the manifestation of policies before entering the private level (Lefebvre 2003 in Davidson 2007:49). This level is characterized by the personal experience of individuals drawing on the notion of habiting. By analyzing the way market-oriented housing policies (Hoschtenbach 2010:413) as manifested in the global level, transcend into the urban and the private level, there will an increased understanding of lived experiences of neighborhood inhabitants. By doing so I will use the notion of Livability, as defined by Leby and Hashim (2010) to analyze what makes a place attractive or not to live in. In this sense, changes in notions of Livability will be used to analyze the profound impacts of Gentrification led policies. I will argue for the increased experienced notions of uncertainty and precarity in housing situations as older inhabitant’s face fear of housing demolition (Munn 2013:369) and fear of displacement. This again, being a recurring phenomenon within Gentrification debates (Sakizliog’lu 2013).

Methodological Reflections

Navigating the field

Through a combination of this article and the usage of audio-visual methods, on which I will elaborate in this section, I intend to bring the reader or audience closer to my experience in the field, relocating him or her within the process of my research, as it unfolded as a process. As I went deeper into the field of Amsterdam North, biked through it, meeting neighborhood inhabitants and cultural entrepreneurs, all of whose lives were being influenced by ongoing urban renewal programs. In this sense, I will practice in what Pink (2008) defines as Ethnographic Place-Making, describing it as a way to locate myself within the research, as well as reflecting on my positionality within the research, by following routes, walks and trajectories previously taken by respondents. However, when recreating this journey through both literary and audio-visual components I recall on using Eisenstein's notion of intellectual montage (Nielsen: 2009 in Suhr Willerslev 2013: 4). I will thus not create a historical timeline of what happened, by placing event after event. By juxtaposing the several different moments in time, moving and still images, ethnographic recollections in asynchronized manners, I have recreated and reconstructed my ethnographic findings through the culmination of several modalities, including writing, photography and moving images manifested in the ethnographic film *Tijd voor Noord*.

Collaborative methods and Brokerage

During the fieldwork, notions of Collaboration and Collaborative Ethnography quickly became integral to this research. There was already a certain interest in engaging with respondents in a way that exceeded the traditional separation between researcher and researched (Merriam et al. 2001:416), along with its implicit boundaries of conduct, to enhance perspectives and strengthen social relations (Raheim et. al 2016). When starting my research, brokers became a starting point in developing networks and learning about ongoing transformations. Stovel and Shaw define brokerage as: "One of a small number of mechanisms through which disconnected or isolated individuals can interact economically, politically, and socially" (Stovel, Shaw 2012: 140). I became increasingly aware of these individuals through Facebook groups, formal and informal interviews. The role of brokers was crucial as it was through their organizations that I developed my initial

network and started to meet interlocutors. Now, I have cultivated an awareness of how this may have shaped or influenced my research, as most of my interlocutors were connected to these brokers in some sort of manner, thus implying a direct connection with the events or ideologies that these brokers were manifesting through their practices of connecting inhabitants.

Lucas however, I met through Sam, whom I already was acquainted with, as both happened to be filmmakers living in Amsterdam North, and having developed projects in and about this region. Sam gained interest in the research project and asked to film some of the segments, he told me about Lucas who was actively engaged with the creative side of the activist group Verdedig Noord (Defend North) who were campaigning for the detriment of Gentrification in Amsterdam North (Image 1).. He agreed to work collaboratively through filming, as he recorded most scenes with Lucas. This manifested visually when analyzing the footage later, as both have known each other for years, and the footage and filming style reveals that intimacy between them. Mark and Eef were also two individuals engaging with brokerage practices as they have developed a podcast revolving around the connection between old and new inhabitants in Amsterdam North. In their podcast there is a constant constructed dialogue centered around Gentrification, as Mark and Eef go on into the streets informing on the questions old inhabitants want to ask new inhabitants, and vice versa creating an invisible dialogue. Mark is also working at the sustainable hub the Ceuvel (Lata Duineveld:2009), and Eef is an artist at the N.D.S.M. region, both places I will elaborate on further.

As we sat down before our interview started, Eef notably mentioned: "Ah how I like this, you are interviewing us, and we are interviewing you!" Whilst saying this, she smiled mischievously and pointed her long directional microphone in my face. Mark also laughed about and shouted: "It's a continuous loop, we are creating a loop of information!"

I interviewed Mark and Eef, but they also interviewed me. Pink (2007:27) describes this relationship as "a continuous flow of information and objects between the ethnographer and informants. This might include the exchange of images ideas, emotional and practices exchanges and support, each of which are valued in different ways." The role of brokers within my ethnographic film took on a central stage as I will expand upon this notion and the film itself. As the notion of brokerage remained central in the initial phases of my research, I discovered most cultural institutions in Amsterdam North, and most brokers I had found contact with, were located on the south side of Amsterdam North. However, dispersed amongst this region are a multiplicity of historic working-class neighborhoods and industrial grounds now prone to development and urban renewal

programs. However, as I further engaged within my fieldwork, most ongoing developments and respondents were located in the Vogelbuurt, Vogeldorp, and Ijplein regions, which turned to be the main focus of my research population as seen in Image 2. Eventually interviewing 14 inhabitants who lived in Amsterdam North for over ten years, the main theoretical body of this research will thus be oriented towards these inhabitants to which I will refer to as older inhabitants. However, also artists, cultural entrepreneurs and brokers were interviewed, through formal and informal conversations happening on streets houses, cafes or community centers. Besides, many hours were spent going through archival photos, news articles, Facebook groups, and documents provided by the municipality, as well as a extensive reading of Jan Donkers (2013) memoire on his childhood spent in Amsterdam North as well as his recollection on the past of this region.



Image 2. Southern part of Amsterdam North, with in dark grey the region of Ijplein/Vogelbuurt of which neighborhoods of Vogelbuurt, Vogeldorp and Ijplein are part of. By the municipality of Amsterdam.

Engaged Anthropology and Visualizing Place

When learning about the ongoing renewal programs reinforced by forms of collaboration with neighborhood brokers, I practiced what some scholars would define as Engaged Anthropology. This notion then becomes central in recognizing my positioning within the field, and in making sense of the Place I was doing research in. Low (2009) argues for an engaged anthropology defined as: “those activities that grow out of a commitment to the informants and communities with whom anthropologists work with through a values-based stance that respects the dignity and rights of all people having a beneficent effect on the promotion of social justice” (Low and Merry 2010 in Low 2009). She argues that spatial analysis can be a powerful tool of the engaged anthropologist, to uncover social injustice due to the fact that so much inequality is enforced through governmental control of space. It is thus through the spatializing of Gentrification that I have employed an engaged anthropology to uncover hidden systems of exclusion as influenced by the profound effects of neoliberal and market driven policies (Herzfeld 2010). Throughout the film, notions of the past are reinforced by archival photos as inhabitants are constantly reminded of the past of the region by the ongoing transformations of place. The strongest form in which this happens is through the income of new institutions who draw upon values of sustainability and past industries through symbolic and visual representation of their place (Savini Dembski 2016:15) (Image 3).

The analyzed methods were accompanied by the development of the ethnographic film titled *Tijd voor Noord* (Time for North). Through the film I bike through North with Lucas and interconnect perspectives of different brokers and neighborhood inhabitants that are affected by the changes bound to their neighborhoods. Inspired by Michael Glawoggers (1998) film *Megacities*, I show a small part of my respondents’ neighborhood as well as a connection they maintain with it. Highlighting the immensity of cityscapes in development, there is a recurring visual representation of change. At times, this continuous flow of information or moving images is halted in ways that engage the reader or audience in an active way, sensitizing certain moments, and feelings experienced by respondents (Salamon, K. L. 2009 in Suhr, Willerslev 2013: 160). In regards to my positionality within the film, the work of Agnes Varda (2000) more specifically the film *Gleaners and I*, as well as the classic ethnographic film by Jean Rouch and Edgar Morin (1961) with their work *a Chronicle of a Summer*, were of great inspiration. Both films distill the boundaries between film maker and characters, as the authors are actively involved in their films, and become a character in it. Smith reflects on the film by Agnes, as she argues: the author interweaves her own identity as a gleaner into the lives of others” (Smith, C.N. 2014:24).

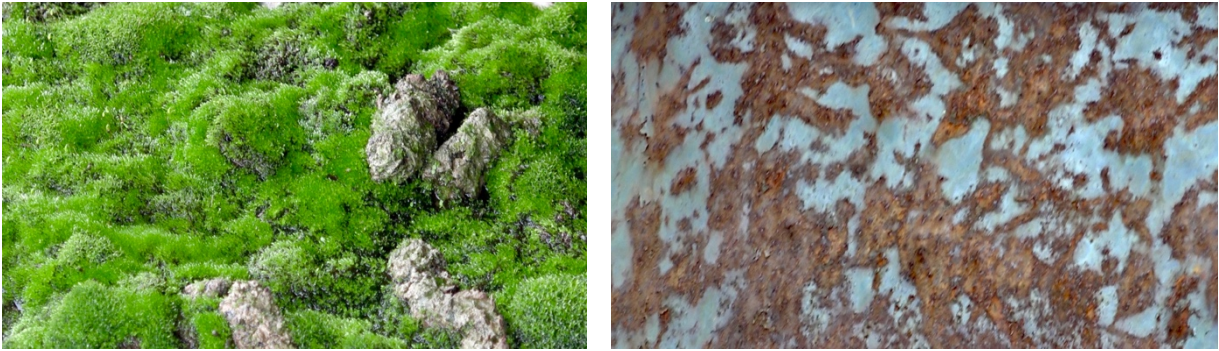


Image 3. Moss and rust are visual textures strongly present at the Ceuvel Café. Stills by author.

In the ethnographic film, visualization of places bound to urban developments is often interrupted through what Nielsen (2013:41) defines as disruptive montage. He argues this form of montage: “allows for a series of volatile connections to be established between images without committing the cinematic composition in which they are inserted in. In the gaps between images lies a peculiar nervous energy that continues to produce new constellations of meaning that transcend the context of each individual image”. By doing so I have also used a collaborative photo project with five neighborhood inhabitants, as I have handed them disposable cameras and the liberty to capture the places, they ought relevant within the context of a changing future. Loescher (2005) engaged with similar project, handing cameras to children, as they portrayed aspects of their lives in spaces unavailable to her. This component prevailed within this research, as inhabitants captured places I would not have captured, therefore stimulating collaboration and a broader conceptualization of place in Amsterdam North.

Place-Making in Time

As agreed, Lucas, myself and Sam who was filming, continued on our route along some of the places Lucas deemed worthy of attention. It was yet another gloomy day, as in-between rain falls, we ventured out on the Meeuwenlaan, the road separating a historic neighborhood and previously industrial areas now in development. On one side were standing historical looking houses, some newer than others, with small gardens often with scattered toys or bikes standing about. On the other, the previously industrial area of Gedempt Hamerkanaal, filled with large old warehouses, now home to startups, nightclub's, cinemas and restaurants. Whilst biking along, suddenly we stopped at a large red square structure circled by a small wooden fence. -Here it is. Lucas hummed, as he parked his bike along the road. I looked up at the red structure and realized I had biked across this structure almost every day in the last few months. I had not noticed it, as it seemed to have blended in almost entirely with its surroundings: green moss and graffiti had covered most of its surface. – She is not looking great, is she? Lucas explained this was one of the few structures or artworks depicted in the new magazine³ depicting Amsterdam North we had read a few days ago. It reminded him of his grandparents that had lived in the area for a while. Why would this somewhat odd and decayed piece of work be represented in a magazine mainly focused on the new and modern housing projects in Amsterdam North? Maybe it filled in a void of nostalgia that new inhabitants might look for when visiting the previously industrial region of Amsterdam North. It was these precise industrial regions, that had then in the last fifteen years, been bound to large real estate developments. And what marked this development? Perhaps the transformation of old industrial into new and attractive. By looking up at the large red graffiti-filled structure, I started to understand Luca's perspective somewhat better. I looked across the road, and two big towers of the newly built "Holiday Express Inn" hotel filled up my eyesight, with a strong sun glare that reflected off their golden windows.

³ https://vr.aanhetij.com/aanhetij_1.0.php?versie=1.0

Drawing on the past

In the following section, I will highlight different ways in which a culmination of economic events and institutional place-making practices of the past have manifested into collective notions of negligence amongst older inhabitants of Amsterdam North. In order to understand how these inhabitants, perceive Amsterdam North in the light of ongoing urban developments, there are a combination of historic, economic and socially relevant moments worth analyzing. First of all, it is determinant to understand this region used to be an area of grasslands and small villages. After the first world war, new housing started being built and rapid expansion developed in the midst of an ongoing housing shortage in the Amsterdam center region. The city of Amsterdam expanded, and during the first half of the twentieth century, Amsterdam North became home to the largest shipyard industry of the city, characterized by the N.D.S.M. and the nearby K.N.S.M.⁴ companies. The latter is the company where Lucas's grandfather worked, as well as large petrochemical factories such as Fokker and Ketjen were developed (Ypeij et. al. 2002:36).

With a demographic increase of the city of Amsterdam, housing scarcity was real as many families migrated to Amsterdam North. Architects and city planners, such as Kepler and Wibaut left their mark on the unmistakable Tuindorp villages. These neighborhoods with small, but at the time very well appreciated houses, with a proportionate amount of open space and a small garden attached to it, meant to improve the livability (Leby, Hahsim:2010) of the industrial workers (Van de Kamp: 2018). Many of these houses still prevail and have underwent renovations. Such is the case of Vogeldorp and Tuindorp Oostzaan. The neighborhood cafes were exchanged with neighborhood associations, enhancing a strong fortification of family values. This led to an increased sense of community and social cohesion within the Tuindorp neighborhoods⁵ (De Regt:1995 in Van de Kamp, Welschen: 2019). At the time, housing associations were part of the state and controlled most social housing as part of housing programs. However, for the families or individuals that were not deemed economically or socially trustworthy of such a new house, the urban planner Kepler initiated the social community project and neighborhood of Asterdorp, constructed in 1927, as seen in Image 3. This was then the culmination of the Tuindorp villages, however, surrounded by walls, supervised

⁴ Translated as: Netherlands Drydock and Shipyard Company, one of the biggest industrial ship wharves of Amsterdam that started in 1894 as the NSM, Dutch Shipyard Company and later fused with the NDM, the Dutch Dry Dock Company.

⁵ When referring to the Tuindorpen, I am referring to the historic neighborhoods of Tuindorp Oostzaan, Vogel neighborhood, Floradorp amongst other other neighborhoods established primarily for industrial workers in Amsterdam North.

and securitized, this village was considered a form of temporary social re-education for those who did not fit in the rest of the housing market, deemed inappropriate by the housing associations, labelled with the notion of “antisocial”. This would be highly determinant in the imageries surrounding those living in Amsterdam North in later years to come, as it resulted in stigmas and stereotypes (Steinmetz: 2016). The culmination of state led housing projects for factory workers, assimilates a process Robertson (1994) defines as “village making” in his research, as it consisted of collective forged notion of identifications lodged in the past, to which inhabitants would recall upon in later times, as reinforced through governmental practices. This is recurrent in understanding how notions of institutional place-making practices became lodged the collective imagination (Anderson: 1983) of older neighborhood inhabitants.

The decline of the big industrial factories in the economic crisis of the 80’s led to an enormous growth in unemployment within the working-class neighborhoods in Amsterdam North. This, leading large groups of workers to being dependent on social welfare programs, stimulating socio economic scarcity (Ypeij et. al 2002: 32). These economic transformations led to large demographic restructuring over the years yet to come, as many factory workers migrated to surrounding rural areas. The working-class neighborhoods underwent quite the demographic shift as the previously homogenous and predominantly Dutch workers were now accompanied or replaced by mostly migrant Moroccan, Turkish and African migrants. Unemployment and economic dependency on welfare programs have also risen substantially in that period (Welschen 2014). Today, according to the municipality of Amsterdam (2019) around 70% of housing in the Vogeldorp, Vogelbuurt and Ijplein region is social housing. Elise, an inhabitant who has lived in the historic neighborhood of Vogeldorp for around thirty years, reflects on the state of houses in the past:

Firstly, the houses were owned by the municipality. Then they wanted to demolish them, as they knew they were built as temporary emergency housing for the factory workers. But it really is just built on a cement plate. The quality is really not sufficient. Then, there were protests to maintain the buildings, as people opposed the demolition, eventually winning the argument, as the municipality decided to keep them. It was then declared a historic monument. I was totally against that.

I reacted surprised, why would you be against it? I asked. She replied that the buildings were simply not worthy of renovating in the first place, as she argued she would rather have them demolished and have built new. Elise explained the houses were built out of necessity, and have never been renovated not being worth the renovation anymore. Elise considered her own opinion as somewhat

extreme, as she explained there had been large protests campaigning for the maintenance of Vogeldorp, which the inhabitants managed to declare as a historic monument in order to prevent demolition. Similar notions arise in Arkaraprasertkul's (2018) research on the Gentrification of a neighborhood in Shanghai. This neighborhood had been neglected for years as the area was prone to disregard, poor housing maintenance and thus hazardous living conditions. However, the author presents a counter perspective on general notions of Gentrification debates, as inhabitants took it into their own hands to take advantage of the heritage status, attributed to their historical houses to prevent demolition and thus displacement. In the Vogel neighborhood, Elise described similar notions, as there had been constant ongoing tension between the inhabitants of the Tuindorpen and the housing associations who owned most housing (Van de Kamp, Welschen 2008: 370). When I asked other respondents, who had grown up or lived in the area for more than ten years, neglected housing maintenance, and notions of institutional exclusion were recurring themes of conversation. I asked Hans, a neighborhood resident of Ijplein in this case, about how North used to be seen. He commented:

It annoys me that the municipality was never really involved with Amsterdam North. Amsterdam North was a lot of times not even shown on television, or on maps or in the newspaper or something. North always used to be cut out. I think it was never really considered as part of the city, and that was fine for me, I am living fine here, but it is interesting that suddenly it has become so hip. It is just strange, I think.

When firstly navigating the field, one of the first institutions I was recommended to visit, was the hardware shop 'Burger Ijzerwaren' a shop open for more than 40 years. Ingrid Burger, who worked at the family shop, commented the following when asked about the ongoing developments in the region:

We were always the neglected region. And now suddenly they have decided that we are some sort of Manhattan. It really makes me laugh, but ok. So that is something the municipality could have done better. The maintenance should have happened way earlier. In the 80's most people started to move to Almere and Lelystad, to buildings with good insulation and thicker walls.



Image 3. Enclosed children playing in Asterdorp, photo by Mulder J.H., Swaager, Nico.

Annemiek recently moved to Amsterdam North, and she described me an interaction she had with her neighbor John, an older inhabitant:

So, I introduced myself to him, and told him that I loved this place, to which he immediately responded: Why do you love it here?! Look where we are living, a few years ago no one wanted to live here. No one wanted to be found dead here, and now everyone wants to move here. To which I responded, yes well that is how it works, the center is getting busier and people are migrating to its borders. That is how I see it.

All mentioned inhabitants refer to a past of institutional negligence and disregard of housing maintenance, a recurring process within neighborhoods prone to be Gentrified (Arkaraprasertkul:2018, Lees et.al. 2008:3, Sakizliog'lu:2013). The Institutional place-making practices bound to the development and creation of the Tuindorpen, focused on binding structures and family values amongst a demographic group of old industrial workers and migrants and have led to strong collective identification and cohesive ties. Van de Kamp and Welschen (2019) have developed an extensive understanding of these notions through their ethnographic research. The scholars argue that many older neighborhood inhabitants have developed strong connections to their neighborhoods and with each other, but that these feelings are being questioned due to the arrival of new and different inhabitants, who are migrating from the city center to Amsterdam North, attracted by the active ongoing redevelopment programs (Van de Kamp, Welschen 2019: 378). Hans commented on the fact that Amsterdam North was often not shown in maps as he had the feeling this region did not belong to the city. This connects to the notions of exclusion from this by water separated part of the city. "People did not want to be found dead in Amsterdam North" also became a recurring statement that interlocutors mentioned when asked about how Amsterdam North used to be viewed by outsiders. Noordhoff goes further in his ethnographic research on this theme, as through interviewing inhabitants, stigmas and negative connotations are constantly reinforced through collective stories (Noordhoff, 2008:111).

Older neighborhood inhabitants have thus generated collective notions of identification and social cohesion bound to the past of Amsterdam North. These notions are comprised of feelings of disregard, negligence, but also strong social cohesion as reinforced through institutionally led place-making practices and fights against authorities in the conservation of housing. In the following section I will explore further on how some new urban development's manifest physically and symbolically through cultural and artistic institutions. These institutions will be a starting point in

grasping the ongoing symbolic transformation of Amsterdam North through new place-making practices.

Symbols of New North

It is not as we actively wanted to find something in Amsterdam North, we were looking around in other neighborhoods, but it was hard to find an adequate space up for rental. And then we found it. The rental owner was able to temporarily rent it out for a few years. Sometimes it is as simple as that.

This statement was made by Robert, one of the founders of the Ruimte, see Image 4, a recently opened temporary artistic hub or concert venue that is hosting music nights, mainly classified as experimental jazz, musical performances, but also hosting school workshops for children amongst an array of other events. Annemiek, a before mentioned new inhabitant, recently moved to North, and today lives next to the Ruimte. In a series of walking and sit-down interviews, I got to know Annemiek a bit better, as she explained what she liked about living in the area. As a graphic designer and mother, she had lived in the city center region for years, but moved out, in search of a new house and lesser tourists. Multiple times she mentioned being attracted to the alternative spaces, or cultural breeding grounds present in the area. These spaces often have temporary permits, generally lasting around four to five years, and can be found mostly scattered throughout the side of Amsterdam North that borders with the IJ channel, and the city center. Annemiek mentioned she does not even frequent these spaces that often, but the institutions reminded her of the old Amsterdam, as in her words, the renewed city had become so organized and predictable.

All the islands next to North used to be places where you would go and have fun. And today that is all newly developed and neat. And here you still have those rough edges of the city. You still find those here. You could just hop into a funky looking store or a café where they make some sort of vegan food. In a certain way there is a lot going on. There still is some kind of momentum to this area.

What Annemiek refers to as momentum, connects back to the process of urban renewal in the area of Amsterdam North. Van de Kamp (2018:272) extensively goes further in the analysis of the transitioning of Amsterdam North to be considered a “disregarded drain of Amsterdam” to a growingly popular creative hub, filled with temporary cultural spaces, hubs, start-ups and nightlife

venues. Mathews (2010:661) connects these developments with cultural production and analyzes the relation between the arts and cultural consumption: “The artistic mode of production represents the use of culture by investors to attract capital in the built environment.” This relates strongly to ongoing tenure mixing policies established by the municipality of Amsterdam. These policies are then oriented towards accommodating a middle-class in the city and dispersing highly concentrated areas of lower-class inhabitants (Hoschtenbach 2017:401). The transformation of these policies into a physical manifestation of practices, is what Lefebvre (2003) clarifies as the transition of values from the global into the urban level of spatial analysis. This process can be then contextualized through a spatializing of neoliberal market driven ideologies, as they manifest in the physical space of changing neighborhoods (Herzfeld:2010).

One of the biggest symbolic examples of spaces in this transformation is the previously mentioned industrial space of the N.D.S.M. ship wharf. The shipyard industry went bankrupt around 1984 and only years later (Ypeij et. al. 2002:36) it got squatted by artists, who maintained this space only later to be granted a temporary contract. The neighborhoods of Tuindorp Oostzaan and Disteldorp were built for its industrial workers who lived close by. Lucas comments on the role of the N.D.S.D.M. as a social institution that was such a large part of the lives of its workers:

N.D.S.M. has done a lot for the people living in the neighborhood of Tuindorp. It was their life. It was also a place that funded local institutions like the building of a church for example. Community centers. There was a lot of investment from the N.D.S.M. for the inhabitants and also workers. It was a very social place.

Today this area consists of one of the largest artistic and cultural breeding grounds of Europe. Eef, an artist involved in the squatting in the early stages, has had her workshop there for years. Still there is a level of insecurity involved in the way she works there:

I do not feel supported by the municipality. You know we have developed a certain level of resilience here, but there are a lot of cultural breeding grounds that are disappearing. And it is difficult if you work in a temporary breeding ground. How temporary is temporary? It is hard to build up something, not knowing when you will have to move.

In her film series, I am a Tool of Gentrification Lyuba Matyunina (2019) discusses the precarity Eef is bound to, as an artist working under temporary contracts and inserted in urban regenerative

programs. The artist and film maker give a broad overview, discussing and visualizing the role of the artists within the notion of urban redevelopment and Gentrification. The series offer a rich insight into different perspectives, to examine the role of the artist in the processes of Gentrification bound to Amsterdam North. Many artists argue to be aware of the role they play within this process, but take advantage of opportunities, considering how rare they are.



Image 4. De Ruimte. Photo by Annemiek as part of collaborative photo project.

The Ceuvel has also become an institution worth analyzing within this context. It can be defined as an ecological hub and café, focused on recycling and nurturing polluted industrial ground (Lata, Duineveld:2009). The Ceuvel works on a temporary contract as well as the nightclubs Skatecafe and Garage Noord, the boulder gym Monk and the cinema FC Hyena, in the region in development of Gedempt Hamerkanaal. The author Hentila (2003:10) draws upon a thorough analysis of the usage of various temporary artistic spaces within large European cities, as she argues that these spaces are often filled with centers or institutions that take on a secondary use. These places within are often

associated with: “start-ups, event production, art, leisure activities, services, media education, film industry, tourist services etc.”

These new institutions are frequently filling in a void left open by soil contamination, as is the case with the Ceuvel cafe, left open through the de-industrialization of factories, like the old N.D.S.M. ship wharf. Their insertion into these spaces coincides perfectly with the rhetoric of symbolic redevelopment and rebranding of the areas. Savini and Dembski (2016) argue that: “spatial interventions in North underline a symbolic link between the present and the past, between the industrial and the informational, between the manufactured city and the self-made city” (Savini, Dembski 2016: 15). In their research on the usage of symbols within re-generational policies used within the spatial reorganization and rebranding of Amsterdam North, the authors conclude with the fact that Amsterdam North used to be home to the main industrial motor of Amsterdam in the twentieth century, and now has become the heart of the creative economy housing artists, activists, environmentalists and starters. This reflects on the usage and transformation of these symbolic spaces as they are part of urban renewal programs (Van de Kamp: 2018).

The author Van de Kamp (2008) argues that creative entrepreneurs are deployed as part of institutional place-making practices and that the redevelopment programs are focused too much on economic growth rather than on social capital (Bell, Oakley: 2014 in Van de Kamp:2008). The *Verbroederij* however, offers an alternative. It is a temporary café/restaurant that organizes events and offers discounts to those restricted economically. It employs local inhabitants in ways to further social connections and establish an inclusive notion of space. It also possesses a community garden in which residents can participate with and learn about sustainable means, whilst farming in a urban setting. Novak (2019) writes a in depth ethnographic account of a similar institution in the neighborhoods of Kamagasaki in Osaka Japan. In his research he analyses the way a cultural space defined as *Cocoroom* took on many forms of representation within ongoing and shifting dynamics of urban regeneration programs. Being granted a permit as part of a neighborhood renewal program just like the *Verbroederij*, *Cocoroom* started as a place to bring together artists and poets, promoting literature and art in a at the time marginalized neighborhood. The author argues that the Gentrification of a neighborhood is often branded by artists looking for affordable spaces, as the artists mark the beginning of that symbolic change. This carries out a certain social responsibility with the artists who feel the need to resist the Gentrification and create awareness through events, and organizations. *Cocoroom* changed throughout its existence as the owner decided to cater its space to those who most needed it ranging from the homeless, unemployed to other marginalized

neighborhood inhabitants. This worked. However, by doing so, Cocoroom eventually attracted the same self-reflective and socially aware middle class it was attempting to resist attracting by offering a alternative space. Thus, unavoidably taking part in the political change of the Gentrification process. Similar arguments can be made in regard to the Verbroederij who are doing their best in connecting old and new inhabitants. However, by doing so, also falling in the fallacy of promoting the distinction between new and old inhabitants and the promoting of a self-reflective awareness inherent in the new middle classes that are attracted through these exact institutions through urban renewal programs (Savini, Demski: 2016).

In making sense of the income of some of these new symbolic cultural institutions, several conclusions can be drawn upon. The role of artists in the re-imagining of space becomes a crucial tool in the way urban redevelopment is manifested (Matthews 2010) in Amsterdam North⁶. The recurring granting of temporary contracts (Hentila et.al. 2003:6) in previously industrial places connects with the ongoing urban renewal programs and the attraction of new middle-class inhabitants. The transformation of these spaces through the symbolic theme of an industrial past used within governmentally deployed place-making practices (Savini Demsbki:2016) reinforce a dominant framework between the distinction of old and new values (Van de Kamp 2008: 281). These new institutions are often promoting values catered towards a new reflective creative class, attracted by urban development's playing into what Herzfeld (2010) defines as a combination of neoliberal, market-oriented policies that manifest into the urban level of space, commodifying it for the lifestyle of the middle classes (Lefebvre:2003). A collective identification based upon a past of disregard and negligence is strongly contrasted with a wide array of new cultural institutions. Consequently, there can be found an underlying tension in the constantly juxtaposed place-making practices of the past and present, oriented towards the development of a future city. As this section focused mostly on the process of symbolically transforming the neighborhood through the influence of policies and values, the next section will lend itself to exploring the ways inhabitants experience these changes and how these new developments manifest into changing notions of livability.

⁶ Part of the redevelopment programs that has remained somewhat untouched within this research consists of the long-awaited metro connection between North and South Amsterdam, as well as the increase in ferry's connecting central station to Amsterdam North.

Living through Gentrification

My bike ride excursion with Lucas through North, passed by the ferry located next to the EYE film museum. Our path had taken us through some of the new building sites of Overhoeks, as big gaping crater like structures were visually dominating my eyesight, accompanied by loud sounds of machinery and tools that echoed across the space. A big structure right next to it was a vast composition within this growing tall landscape of buildings, as big neon letters identified it as the soon to be Hyperion school. A fitting name, I wondered, whilst my gaze got absorbed into one of the big cranes that had started to move from one corner of the building pit to another, carrying in what seemed to be a large cement filled like bucket. Small yellow heads illuminated as we biked across the pit, as the sun reflected on those at work. - What a pit. Lucas, drily commented. As we locked our bikes, we walked past the other end of the pit, that seemed to represent the future of that exact pit: large new housing complexes that had incorporated a small portion of plants in each balcony, perfectly draped in front of the glistering new walls and windows. After a walk of in the seemingly abandoned new streets of Overhoeks we decided to bike through to the nightclub Skatecafe, passing by the historic Van der Pek neighborhood. This being the neighborhood mostly renovated or gentrified already. Most houses in the main street are of a bright red orange like color. However, going into a side street, we got confronted with huge metal racks, that seemed to encapsulate the entire street. – Look, if you look closely you can see the difference. The bright red roofs have been renovated, and the lighter ones are about to be. Lucas mentioned looking over his bike. I looked up and saw a banner saying: Just a moment please, this street will be more beautiful once we are done with it.

Life in Renovations

Having analyzed the way some notions bound to ongoing urban renewal programs in Amsterdam North manifest through place-making policies, the following segment will rely more on the physical manifestations of these policies into neighborhoods. By analyzing notions of livability there will be a deeper insight into the way these developments are experienced by neighborhood inhabitants. Switching from a primary focus on the global level, in which policies manifest into the urban level, the private level as place in the neighborhood will be more prominently discussed within these sections. The focus will be more on the relationship between the urban and the private level of perception as well as the personal experience of inhabitants (Lefebvre 2003).

The before mentioned region of Overhoeks where I biked with Lucas, today is almost entirely developed with new building projects as seen in Image 6 and can be constituted as one of the first regions of Amsterdam North to be considered part of Amsterdam. Van Alphen (2017) explores historical layers of development in the area. Being one of the area's most visible parts of North from Amsterdam Central station, it has always carried a symbolic meaning in the perception of Amsterdam North. In around 1409 this area was characterized by the large field of gallows that the municipality used to deploy here as a way to signal incoming boats, but later also becoming a family outing for the upper middleclass Dutch families who missed the executions. This is telling on the imageries associated with Amsterdam North during past times. Coming closer to the present day, the year 2000 marked the development of this region as Shell moved its headquarters to Overhoeks, and later also accompanied by the installation of the E.Y.E. film museum. This would immediately become an iconic landmark in the development of Amsterdam North. Located next to this area today is the growingly gentrified neighborhood of Van der Pek (de Kort:2019)



Image 6. "The Grid" and "The Wave" as seen on Ij magazine's Virtual Reality tour of Overhoeks.

When acknowledging that Gentrification in Amsterdam North manifests into the public space that is composed of historic and new neighborhoods, as well as surrounding previously industrial areas, the personal space of housing takes on a central stage. Van den Gent (2013) describes Gentrification in Amsterdam to have been confined to the city center until the 1980's, only later expanding to the cities peripheral regions. In order to comprehend the multilayered-ness bound to the several actors and stake holders as part of this process (Smith 1997), housing associations in Amsterdam North must be considered. In 1991 Amsterdam's social housing sector encompassed 54% of the housing stock. A liberal shift in Dutch policy-making pushed for more housing ownership and control, leading to the privatization of social housing through the 1901 housing act (Aalbers et al. 2008:17). This led to the detachment of social housing and thus housing associations from the state. Consequently, this provoked the opening of social housing to the free market, pushing market driven policies by associations and real estate speculation (Hoschtenbach 2017 and van Gent:2013). From 1990's onward, institutional developments catered a housing market boom in the Netherlands, leading to the expanding mortgage markets, in fact embracing a pro-growth and pro-gentrification strategy. This has opened up possibilities for institutional and private investors in the chances offered by regeneration programs. As a result of these policies the total amount of affordable dwelling is meant to decline by 18.7% this year, 2020. Accordingly the amount of middle and expensive dwellings is meant to increase by 23.4% (Van Gent 2013). This has profound impact on a population in Amsterdam North largely dependent on social housing. As seen in image 7, the 'Corporatiewoningen' translated as housing owned by housing associations, of which social housing is predominantly part of, has declined with 7.4 % in the last 8 years.

Figuur 1 Woningvoorraad naar eigendom Amsterdam, 2011-2019

aantallen	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Koopwoningen	119.500		125.600		127.500		139.300		136.200
Corporatiewoningen	195.600		193.200		189.900		184.300		179.600 *
Particuliere huur	91.600		92.300		99.700		104.300		125.700
	406.676	408.750	411.087	413.490	417.096	423.785	427.858	432.632	441.468
percentages	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Koopwoningen	29,4		30,6		30,6		32,5		30,8
Corporatiewoningen	48,1		47,0		45,5		43,1		40,7
Particuliere huur	22,5		22,3		23,9		24,4		28,5
	100		100		100		100		100

Image 7. Housing availability in Amsterdam, by the Municipality of Amsterdam (2019).

Along my process of fieldwork, the large number of historic neighborhoods left my research population and region of focus large and unfocused. Access to connections surged in the light of several community events taking place in the southern part of Amsterdam North. Eventually contacts started being more and more concentrated in the neighborhoods of Vogelbuurt, VogelDorp (Image 8) and Ijplein, as this led to an increased depth and focus of the research population, as I restricted the research to these neighborhoods. Along several interviews and informal conversations as well as on community facebook groups, I kept being redirected to Janine. I contacted her as she agreed to meet up at her home. Arriving into the neighborhood of Vogelbuurt I was immediately confronted with large road blocks and signs, indicating ongoing construction. As I entered further in the Zwanen square I quickly understood why the road was partly blocked. The entirety of the back street of the square was encapsulated in metal structures that would aid construction workers in the renovations of the houses. As I searched for Janine's door number, peeking through the metal gate like structures, I realized I had come to the right place. I rang the doorbell. – Come in! She shouted from upstairs, as the intercom did not seem to be working. – Leave the door open, so the workers can walk in! I walked up and met a bright smiling lady with colorful clothes and bright pink highlights in her hair. As I sat down in her colorfully and densely decorated living room, she asked if I wanted tea and started knitting right away, only sometimes stopping during the interview.

You know the renovations are good. There is a lot to be done, and it is good the housing corporation is doing something about it. But in the end, it is really just delayed maintenance. This could have been done thirty years ago. In the thirty years that I have been living here, nothing has been done on the interior, only the outside was painted once. And you know some things are fine like that, but it just should have been done earlier.

Janine has now lived through two and a half months of renovations ongoing in her social housing, as for most of the time she was not able to sleep in her own bedroom due to the constructions. This state of delayed and now intensified maintenance then strongly relates back to the previously acknowledged collective notion of institutional negligence. These notions are intensified today through altered notions of livability (Lees et. al. 2008:3, Lew 2017). There is the notion of delayed maintenance now accompanied by a sense of social justice. This, as Janine was fully aware of the insertion of renovation in the ongoing Gentrification of her neighborhood which was being transformed for new inhabitants, affecting her notions of livability in a long term positive, but short-term negative manner. She recommended talking to Hans, another neighbourhood inhabitant who lives at Ijplein, a combination of flats located near Vogelbuurt, where he had been living in the same house for thirty-three years. Hans also lived in social housing, just as Janine, as he explained that his house was also owned by a housing association, a different one from the one Janine was living in.

Last year however, the municipality had decided to start the demolition of his flats. Apparently as it was not deemed representable as a first sight when entering Amsterdam North. This meant an uncertain return, with possible displacement for Hans, as there were no institutional guarantees that he would be able to live in the same region or even in North when allocated a new house. That is why, together with other inhabitants they started campaigning for the maintenance of their flats, involving some political parties and getting some press attention, through their activist group and demonstrations. However, there was still quite the uncertainty regarding their institutional campaign win. When asked if he was reassured with the decision of the association to not demolish the flats, Hans replied:

Reassured? No. I trust the municipality more than the housing corporations in that sense. I really hope I don't have to leave this place, for this rent I cannot find something else. Of course, they will have to place you somewhere for the same amount of rent, but where you can only wonder. A beautiful place like this I will surely never find again.

A similar case was occurring in the neighborhood of the Kleine Die, located in the upper part of Amsterdam North. I was redirected to this neighborhood by Lucas, as his activist group Defend North was actively present in the neighborhood, campaigning for the stopping of its demolition by housing association Ymere. The association controlled most of the housing which happened to be social housing as well. As we arrived in the neighborhood, all of the houses were adorned with banners from the organization, all stating: "NO TO DEMOLITION". As we stopped our bikes, an older Dutch lady came out of the door, and asked us what we were doing. Sam turned on the camera and filmed me and Lucas whilst talking to Marijke. She indicated having lived in her social housing for over the majority of her life, as the neighborhood was being threatened to be demolished. The reason, she explained to be the delayed maintenance of a few of the houses, which made it more affordable for the association to demolish the entire neighborhood and construct new flats. The plans were uncertain, but Marijke's determination to stay in her house was certain as it could be. – My house is fine! I am simply not leaving it. She stated reassured and frustrated.



Image 8. Vogeldorp neighborhood by Hans as part of collaborative photo project.

Reflecting on the threat of demolition in ongoing urban renewal Munn's work gains relevance. In her work on space-time and memory in the nineteenth century of New York, in the considerate expansion of the city's districts at that time, Munn (2003:365) reflects on similar processes. Drawing upon influential New Yorkers of that time, she reflects on Henry Tappan's positionality on the cycle and loss of memory, bound to demolition and improvement of residential areas. Tappan's framework is used within perspectives on a continuous symbolic loss and regeneration of the city's identity. When a place becomes demolished, it makes way for a new space, exempt from the socio identity that was attributed to it from the inhabitants who gave it their identity. The new space then becomes prone to monetary investment and the cycle continues. This ongoing loss and disappearance of places in the city, brings forward a sense of disturbed mnemonic relations between persons and places. This become visible through the fear of demolition in Amsterdam North, as market driven interest and notions of "improvements" overshadow the intrinsic relations of identification inhabitants have developed with their homes.

As concluded, changes in housing policies and the successive liberalization of the housing market and in particular of social housing (Hoschtenbach 2017 and van Gent:2013), owned by social housing corporations have manifested in notions of insecurity and uncertainty. A large part of Neighborhood inhabitants in Amsterdam North like Janine, Hans and Marijke (Noordhoff:2008) are using social housing and are all facing housing insecurities. These inhabitants are now facing the consequences of living in a long institutionally neglected area, prone to a past of delayed housing maintenance. Now in the context of neoliberal reforms and the commodification of the social housing market (Van Gent:2013), the availability of social housing has declined exponentially as well as it being prone to market driven speculation. As these inhabitants have lived in Amsterdam North for the majority of their lives, fears of displacement through demolition or renovations are intensified, as the local rents have risen increasingly. This means that they most likely will not be accommodated in North, as they are offered a new house for a similar rent cost, most probably found outside of Amsterdam. There is then a systematic demographic push towards these inhabitants as they are indicated to leave the places to which they have developed deep connections and family ties with. Activism and campaigning take on a central role (Hamilton, Curran 2012) as they can generate awareness and initiate social movements, possibly preventing displacement. However, uncertainty remains, as chaotic and unclear communication from housing associations leads to fears of demolition and a constant state of precarity (Sakizliog'lu 2013).

Gentrification as a state of Precarity

Within the following segment I will round up arguments in regard to the influence of Gentrification into the lives of neighborhood inhabitants and the way it has influenced notions of experienced precarity regarding shifting notions of livability. Reconsidering the bound materializations of neoliberal policies in the place-making of the institutionally neglected region of Amsterdam North, new institutions have marked the transformation within urban redevelopment programs. Considering the influence of Gentrification, certainly there have been inhabitants who have felt increased notions of livability. Some older inhabitants also greatly enjoy the income of new institutions as the region has been neglected of investments in this sense for a large amount of years. Saskia has lived in the historic neighborhood of Vogeldorp⁷ for the last fifteen years. When I asked her about some of these venues, she replied the following:

⁷ Both historic neighborhoods of Vogel Dorp and Vogel Buurt, often referred to as Vogel neighborhoods, within this text, are located above and next to the region of Gedempt Hamerkanaal. This region is now home to many start-up businesses, night clubs and venues, and used to be a shipyard related area.

I highly enjoy going to the Ceuvel and to the flea market in the N.D.S.M. There is always something going on. That is also why it is such a shame that all those hotspots will disappear again, as they are replaced by more commercially oriented venues. The same counts for the Verbroederij, as they won a contest for the idea of their project, then the municipality places them there so they have some income. And then they start building and developing the area and then they have to leave.

Elise, also inhabitant of the Vogeldorp neighborhood raised a similar opinion:

We are really starting to become an enclave. Everywhere those big buildings are starting to rise up, it is horrible. I am not scared of it, but curious how it will all develop. I do think right now we are in the nicest phase of it, as there are so many restaurants and cafes and nice hotspots. But look at the NDSM, it is becoming one giant Hilton area. And it is a shame, but it always happens in this way.

The often-temporary cultural institutions (Hentila et. al. 2003:6), as part of place-making processes which in itself are inherent in urban regeneration programs (Nofre et.al. 2016) manifest as the materialization of a new lifestyle. This lifestyle then accommodates a predominant new self-reflective middle-class to Amsterdam North that are attracted by new alternative places (Bridge 2001 in Bordieu 1984). The precarious housing situations and a fear of displacement by renovations, led by changing neoliberal policies, manifest in what Lefebvre's (2003) defines as the private level of perceiving space, influencing changing notions of livability of older inhabitants. Rossiter and Nielson analyze the origin of the notion of precarity in academic debate as they argue was firstly introduced in the backdrop of disappearance of stable jobs, but then later also applied to: "questions of housing, debt welfare provision and the availability of time for building affective, personal relations" (Foti 2004 in Rossiter et. al. 2008). This state of uncertainty is highly connected to what Tsing (2015) defines as a state of precarity in her ethnographic monograph. Drawing upon the political multisided analogy and process of following the matsutake mushroom, she draws upon the influence of a shifting neo liberal, growingly interconnected world that instigates a constant state of precarity to all. Precarity is thus defined life without the promise of stability. She further engages with matsutake mushroom pickers, drawing and analogy between the moss and shade of trees in which the mushrooms grow, and the ruins of a society that has led them to search for the mushrooms in the first place.

However, merely claiming the negatively experienced changes bound to urban renewal programs in Amsterdam North would not do justice to the complexities involved in the multi-layered process of Gentrification (Smith 1997). Older neighborhood inhabitants also greatly appreciate the income of new inhabitants, and value the new cultural institutions now available in Amsterdam North. However, the inherent temporary element bound to these urban changes are strongly insecure. This, as neighborhood inhabitants are aware that the new institutions in previously industrial grounds will eventually make way for large scale housing development as indicated by the municipality. As is the case in the Gedempt Hamerkanaal, where many of these new institutions are located at. All of these places have temporary contracts and will have to make way for the building of large-scale new housing projects. According to the municipality of Amsterdam (2020) 70% of the housing in the Vogelbuurt and the Ijplein region is social housing. In a specifically oriented document regarding the future plans of this region about to be developed, the municipality aims to also cater to the to the older inhabitants of the historic close by neighborhoods of Ijplein, Vogeldorp and Vogelbuurt, arguing to make sure housing corporation do not sell more social housing, as inhabitants from these neighborhoods will have priority over housing in the new buildings. In the following and last two sections I will sum up the main arguments brought forward in this research, as well as reflect on the political spectrum influencing and underlaying these developments.

Conclusion

The Commodification of Place

Drawing on this multimodal ethnographic research and the various outcomes of these modalities, several conclusions can be taken when analyzing the way inhabitants experience the Gentrification of their neighborhoods and surrounding industrial areas. I will do so by going back to Lefebvre's three levels of spatial analysis to structure my findings (Lefebvre 2003: 79, 80). Starting at the Global level and addressing the notions, policies and politics of space have led certain developments to remain crucial. Reforms within the Dutch state have influenced a market driven neoliberal turn of policies (Van Gent 2013, Hoschtenbach 2017). This has manifested in the liberalization of previously state controlled housing associations, that owned most of the social housing. In continuation, this has triggered market speculation of social housing and a decrease in housing availability, often being engulfed within the private sector. Fueled by an ever-expanding city center (Sequera, Nofre 2008) policies of urban renewal have targeted previously neglected historic neighborhoods and industrial areas in Amsterdam North (Boterman et. al. 2010, Boer 2005). These reforms and programs serve the cause of transforming and rebranding previously neglected regions in Amsterdam North. Thus, it aims to improve the regions livability, accommodate a new middle class and dispersing a large concentration of lower socio-economic classes amongst Amsterdam North (Hoschtenbach 2017:401).

In the past, an array of economic and historic contingencies has been reinforced by institutional place-making practices in order to house a working-class industrial demographic. Place-making practices bound to create social cohesion through Tuindorpen and to the strengthening of family ties have influenced strong notions of collective identification amongst neighborhood inhabitants (Anderson 1983, Blokland 2008, Robertson 1994). Delayed housing maintenance and institutional neglect as well as stereotypes have accompanied these notions of identification lodged in the past, that are reinforced in the context of ongoing redevelopment programs (Noordhoff 2008).

These neoliberal policies manifest from the global into the urban and physical level of analysis (Lefebvre 2003) composed of an interplay between places, policies and ideologies. These changes are characterized through the transformation of industrial places into alternative and artistic venues,

aimed at symbolizing the transformation of Amsterdam North, and increasing livability to accommodate a middle-class lifestyle. These new cultural institutions often draw upon aesthetics of an industrial past, now reflected through means of promoting sustainability, self-reflectiveness and cultural production catered to the new demographic of inhabitants (Savini and Dembski 2008, Van de Kamp 2008). The industrial is thus used as a marketable tool in the regeneration programs of Amsterdam North, reminding old inhabitants on collective notions of a shared past of negligence and exclusion. This generates an ongoing tension between place-making practices in the past and the present. Older inhabitants are confronted with the past of the region as they experience these developments to be catered to those who can afford it economically and identify with them culturally.

The transformation of neighborhoods and industrial grounds in the consequential attraction of a new middle-class demographic has led to profound changes in notions of livability. Consequently analyzed through Lefebvre's (2003) private level. Influence from the global level of housing policies transcends into the private level of experience. Inhabitants face fears of displacement due to the influence of delayed maintenance by housing associations and to new aesthetic (Matthews 2010) representation of neighborhoods. The temporary cultural institutions and increased awareness of future large-scale housing projects accompanied by insecure housing conditions, has led neighborhood inhabitants to experience the ongoing commodification of their place as a continuous state of Precarity (Tsing 2015).

The municipality has in fact delivered several documents in regard to the taking in account of neighborhood inhabitants within the development of the industrial area of the Gedempt Hamerkanaal. Strong communication and a fixed attention on social housing policies, between different inhabitants, policy makers and housing associations is needed in order to prevent displacement and counter increasing notions of precarity. In this sense, finally improving notions of livability for older inhabitants. This would counter one sided institutional investment and open up possibilities of collaboration between neighborhood inhabitants and municipalities within the context of urban renewal programs.

Looking Beyond

When reflecting on the further notions that open up possibilities for research many concepts lay at the ready. When reflecting on notions bound to the past the concept of belonging would in fact be useful to decipher the way inhabitants relate to the changing space they inhabit. Notions of lost belonging could be used in the understanding of the way older notions are being challenged in the face of social change manifested through urban renewal programs. Cultural capital seems to be a concept of use within the understanding of new cultural venues that accommodate a new sub urban lifestyle. The cultural values these venues promote might not entirely be possessed by older inhabitants who often do not identify with these institutions and cannot afford them economically. It would be thus at the interplay of cultural and economic capital that further research could be expanded in this sense.

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