



LUNDS
UNIVERSITET

Urban Renewal of Bijlmermeer

*A qualitative approach on consequences of urban
renewal in Bijlmermeer, Venserpolder and Holendrecht*

Jan-Fredrik Wahlin

Abstract

Based on the concept of gentrification and its consequences this thesis audits the case of the urban renewal of Bijlmermeer. Situated in Amsterdam South-East (Netherlands) it was pre-dominantly a social housing neighbourhood. This thesis through a qualitative approach presents new knowledge on the renewal of the area but also the consequences of the same in the adjacent neighbourhoods; Holendrecht and Venserpolder. The thesis attempts to link the intentions of the renewal to concepts on gentrification, displacement and the nature of the neo-liberal city. Evidence shows that there are signs that can be related to gentrification and that the renewal is spreading its original social problem to the badly planned neighbourhoods of Venserpolder and Holendrecht.

Keywords: Bijlmermeer; urban renewal; gentrification; displacement; social housing

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	6
1.1 Purpose	7
1.2 Scope & Limitations.....	7
1.3 Research Questions	8
2. Theory	9
2.1 Gentrification	9
2.2 Overcoming the Spatial Qualifications of Gentrification.....	10
2.3 Causes of Gentrification.....	11
2.4 Gentrification and Neoliberalism	11
2.5 Gentrification and Displacement.....	13
2.6 Gentrification in Housing Policy.....	13
2.7 Segregation.....	14
2.8 Social mixing	14
3. Method	15
3.1 Primary Sources	15
3.1.1 Observations	15
3.1.2 Semi-structured interviews	16
3.2 Secondary & Tertiary Sources	17
4. Window into the Netherlands.....	18
4.1 Spatial Planning Policies and the Effects on Housing	18
4.2 From Renewal to Regeneration.....	19
4.3 National Spatial Strategy.....	19
4.4 Segregation in The Netherlands	20
4.5 Character of Segregation.....	20
5. Window into the Bijlmermeer.....	22
5.1 Utopia became Dystopia	23
6. Results	26
6.1 Understanding the reconstruction of the Bijlmermeer	26
6.2 Concerning Gentrification.....	27
6.2.1 Bijlmer ArenA & Amsterdamse poort.....	28
6.2.2 Urban Imagery	30
6.2.3 Private-Public Partnership	32
6.3 Displacement from Bijlmermeer	33
6.3.1 Venserpolder.....	34
6.3.2 Holendrecht	38

6.3.3 The Barbershop Episode in Holendrecht.....	40
6.4 Changes in the Dutch Housing Market	41
6.4.1 The Changing Housing Demand	41
6.4.2 Social Housing Sector	42
6.5 Social Mixing in Policy.....	43
6.5.1 Problem: Skewness in the housing stock.....	44
6.5.2 Solution: Social Mixing.....	44
6.5.3 Did social mixing work?	45
7. Analysis	46
7.1 Policy effects at Bijlmermeer	46
7.2 Urban Renewal leading to Gentrification at Bijlmermeer?.....	47
7.3 Experts perceptions on the displacement of people from Bijlmermeer	47
7.4 The character of Venserpolder and Holendrecht and their fate.....	48
7.5 Signs of Neoliberalism in the Renewal of Bijlmermeer.....	49
Conclusion.....	51
References	52
APPENDICES	55
APPENDIX A: Example of Interview Questions	55

List of Tables

Tables

5.1 Bijlmermeer neighbourhoods.....	23
6.1 Dutch housing stock according to sectors.....	41
6.2 Development of number of households.....	42
6.3 Tenure Matrix.....	44

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my family; my mother for motivating me, father for keeping me calm and collected and my two older sisters for all their help and engagement in this project. The idea for this thesis would have never been conceived hadn't I spent half a year in Groningen at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen. From my time there I would like to thank my second family from Blekerslaan and my mentor and supervisor Paul van Steen. I'd like to extend my gratitude to Sällskapet Ölänningarna for the grant that made it possible for me to go to the field. It is an honour indeed.

From my time at Lund University I thank The Department of Human Geography (KEG) for making studying fun and interesting and my friends and fellow peers at Klustret. Thanks to my supervisor Anders Lund Hansen for his contagious enthusiasm and words of wisdom. Last but not least I would like to thank my first ever supervisor Alícia Bauzà Van Slingerlandt who is no longer with us. Thanks for teaching me how to be a detective. Your memory remains.

1. Introduction

During 2011 I spent half a year living and studying in Groningen in the northern part of The Netherlands. During an excursion we were going to observe ongoing restructuring projects at Bijlmermeer south east district of Amsterdam. I exited the buss. Same steps my body took down to the ground were in sync with the motion of my jaw. It just dropped slower and slower with every step. I had never seen such an enormous development before. High-rise buildings were identical and stretched in a zigzag fashion as far as my naked eye could see. I was consumed by this place. I had to know more about this place. From that day on my curiosity about the urban renewal of Bijlmermeer entered my mind. I started to forage for information about the renewal of Bijlmermeer so as to understand how they would achieve this.

The renewal of Bijlmermeer is a popular reference in Dutch urban planning and architecture discussions. In discussions it was often promoted as a good example of urban renewal. I started gathering information about Bijlmermeer and understood that there were some issues that needed to be addressed in this thesis. In relation to this, I believe that the topic has been researched on and I don't think that it has been dismissed. However I have not come across any attempts to connect the restructuring of Bijlmermeer and its consequences to gentrification.

The main conclusions of this thesis in relation to the research questions are the following. Urban restructuring policy has impregnated the renewal of Bijlmermeer with the emphasis on the importance of attracting a middle class, promoting the de-concentration of urban poor i.e. displacing people and the need of mixing housing. The renewal has relocated some of its original residents to other badly planned areas. Evidence has shown that the displacement of the people to places such as Venserpolder and Holendrecht has led to these areas becoming problem areas themselves. These areas are also expecting a renewal. It can be problematic to assume that social mixing eradicated the problems of Bijlmermeer or if it's simply relocated them. The renewal of Bijlmermeer shows signs of gentrification. It is hard to say surely if gentrification is being kick-started by the renewal. More evidence would be needed to say more about it. The conclusions of this thesis are limited to the case itself but do enhance the understanding of social mixing and urban renewal.

Furthermore, this thesis wants to contribute with a qualitative approach on understanding the restructuring of Bijlmermeer and its consequences and to complement quantitative research. For reasons of triangulation previous quantitative research has been used.

During my research I conducted fieldwork at Bijlmermeer as well as the adjacent neighbourhoods of Venserpolder and Holendrecht¹. I started to think about what makes this thesis important. I came to the conclusion that human geographical methods can help us comprehend the consequences related to urban renewal and how they affect the people on the ground as well as understanding what changes in the built environment can mean.

¹ This thesis is complemented by a video slideshow featuring the author's photo documentary during the fieldwork. *Bijlmermeer Fieldwork Documentation* can be searched and found on YouTube. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EkQsvsQSn5I&feature=youtu.be>>

1.1 Purpose

The purpose is to focus on the consequences of renewal in Bijlmermeer but also how the renewal has affected parts of Venserpolder and Holendrecht.

Firstly the thesis seeks to briefly introduce recent developments in spatial planning in The Netherlands. This will give us the strings to which we can attach the renewal of Bijlmermeer to. Finally the case of the renewal of Bijlmermeer will be presented with all the authors' findings. The findings will be analysed from a critical perspective by challenging the notion that the renewal of Bijlmermeer is a good example of urban renewal. The final destination of this journey is to uncover some of the consequences that renewal of Bijlmermeer has had for the people living or that used to live in the area.

The reader will be confronted with some problems that resulted from the renewal of Bijlmermeer: The issue concerning the displacement of deprived inhabitants from the area when it was going to be demolished; were the changes in the housing stock and housing differentiation a way of kick starting a middle class gentrification? Also the renewal depends on the use of social mixing as a tool to change and ameliorate socioeconomic composition of the neighbourhood.

1.2 Scope & Limitations

This thesis focuses on the restructuring of Bijlmermeer and its consequences. The main aim is to identify if there are signs of a process of gentrification of the neighbourhood reflected in the prevailing ideas in the restructuring process and the displacement of peoples to the adjacent neighbourhoods of Holendrecht and Venserpolder.

The geographic perspective is very important in this case since the renewal of Bijlmermeer has had spatial consequences in other neighbourhoods apart from its own. I have reflected over the spatial qualification of gentrification in the theoretical part. The method seeks to contribute with new qualitative primary material on the study object.

I would first like to clarify for the reader about the scope of my research. What will and what will not be examined. The scope is to problematize four topics in this case:

- Firstly the thesis aims to audit the urban renewal of Bijlmermeer to see if a process of gentrification of the area as well as looking into the impact of policy. Tertiary and primary sources are used here
- Secondly the problem of displacement has been one of the main issues of the consequences of the renewal of Bijlmermeer. This thesis wants contrast the character of Venserpolder and Holendrecht with qualitative methods.
- Thirdly I aim to discuss the implications of the use of social mixing in the renewal of the area.
- Finally I will investigate if some actions are connected to the neo-liberal city idea.

The problems identified above are not isolated but act interdependently and are related to the renewal.

The disposition is the following. In Ch.2 the theoretical framework will be presented, defined and discussed upon. Then the methodological approach (Ch.3) will be

described, motivated and discussed. A presentation of the context and societal connection will be exhibited through background information on The Netherlands (Ch.4) and Bijlmermeer (Ch.5). The material gathered will be presented (Ch.6), then analysed (Ch.7) and concluded.

1.3 Research Questions

The questions that this thesis poses to the material are focused in three themes: gentrification, displacement and housing policy. These are:

- How has policy affected Bijlmermeer renewal and has it intensified the gentrification of the neighbourhood?
- Is urban renewal of Bijlmermeer leading to a process of gentrification?
- How is the displacement of people from Bijlmermeer perceived by experts?
- What is the character of the neighbourhoods the displaced moved to and will there be a renewal there as well?
- How can the character of the renewal of Bijlmermeer and its actors conduct be understood by theory on the neo-liberal city?

2. Theory

To answer the questions above and audit the renewal of Bijlmermeer well established theoretical concepts in the field of urban social geography will be used. The idea is that by searching the bookshelf for theoretical knowledge about certain processes can assist the research process and help create an understanding about what is going on. But for this to be done an understanding of these theories must be defined so as to be applicable to the case of Bijlmermeer.

This chapter is all about clarity so that the reader knows which path we will be following and what we will be looking at.

2.1 Gentrification

The concept of gentrification is underpinning the whole study. But it is not a simple task to explain exactly what gentrification is and what causes gentrification. Actually the questions concerning the nature of gentrification are still being asked in the academic sphere (Clark 2005:256). There have been different schools over the understanding of gentrification which must be kept in mind even though this thesis will not be focusing on that issue.

The term first originated from Ruth Glass in 1964 who observed changes in the class composition of neighbourhood areas in London. Since Glass termed the process the meanings of gentrification the world has changed. From the beginning the process entailed the renovation and upgrade of housing. Recently the re-development of not only residences but also commercial real estate is seen as part of the phenomenon (Hammel 2009).

The use of other terms instead of gentrification such as renewal, re-development, restructuring, revitalization, renovation and more is something we see in the political context today. This has to do with the fact that gentrification is intrinsically linked to class relationships which may cause some distaste and therefore gives it a negative clang in the professional and political sphere. Also academia has become more and more critical towards gentrification calling for resistance against this process (ibid). But some may see it as something positive.

Researchers have connected the structural theoretical perspectives of gentrification theory to perspectives on the individual via the habitus concept developed by Bourdieu (Hammel 2009). It is argued that gentrifiers, as they are called, are a “transformed middle-class who seek to identify themselves through the process of gentrification.” (ibid:365). Gentrifiers are defined as highly educated professionals. They are singles or couples with no children and are in their young/early maturity stages in life (Atkinson & Bridge ed. 2005). The theoretical understanding of society differs depending on the perspective of gentrification being used. But the common denominator for all perspectives is that “any definition [of gentrification] must have some emphasis on the class dimensions of urban change” (Slater 2002).

2.2 Overcoming the Spatial Qualifications of Gentrification

There are different spatial qualifications by which gentrification can be understood from. Some definitions put a geographical boundary on the process by defining it as the restructuring of derelict inner-city environments (Knox & Pinch 2006). Gentrification's attributes and what it often leads to are defined as:

The renovation and renewal of run-down inner-city environments through an influx of more affluent persons such as middle-class professionals. Has led to the displacement of poorer citizens. Associated with the development of gay areas in some cities. (Knox & Pinch 2006:319)

Can gentrification happen everywhere and anywhere? According to Knox & Pinch the answer was no. Bijlmermeer isn't part of the inner-city of Amsterdam rather it is part of the south east of Amsterdam.

Previous findings didn't identify or even relate Bijlmermeer's restructuring and its effects to the concept of gentrification. I searched the *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography* and found Hammel's (2009) article on gentrification. It gives an overview of the theory and is assumed to be objective, since it is in an encyclopaedia. Hammel's definition is broader than Knox & Pinch and gave an answer to the spatial boundary of gentrification. Hammel unlike Knox and Pinch write:

Gentrification is the displacement of working-class residents of a neighborhood by wealthier professionals [...] Gentrification is controversial because it can create rapid neighborhood change and may cause significant displacement and housing affordability issues. Despite its problems, it has become a key feature of much urban policy [...]. (Hammel 2009:360)

A broader definition of gentrification makes it simpler to analyse the causes of the renewal of Bijlmermeer. Indeed Eric Clark argues that most literature give gentrification a narrow definition making it chaotic. A narrow definition turns the focus on particularities rather than the causes of gentrification (Clark 2005:256). Clark gives his definition which in some ways is similar to Hammel's.

Gentrification is a process involving a change in the population of land-users such that the new users are of higher socio-economic status than the previous users, together with an associated change in the built environment through a reinvestment in fixed capital. [...] It does not matter where, and it does not matter when. Any change fitting this description is, to my understanding, gentrification. (Clark 2005:258)

Unlike Hammel, Clark focuses on the core mechanisms behind gentrification. Hammel names policy as one of its medium. But both identify two characteristics of gentrification: change in the neighbourhood composition and the built environment of the neighbourhood itself². Clark with his broader definition dismisses the use of boundaries on where and when the process of gentrification takes place. Clark asks

² For further reading on differences perspectives on gentrification see Ley (1996) and Smith (1996). Since the thesis isn't focusing on the polemics over the theoretical understanding of the concept.

himself why we should regard gentrification solely as an inner-city process when it takes place in many other places such as “Scandinavian fishing villages” (Clark 2005:258). I also take the line of Clark saying that gentrification can occur anywhere at any time. The question of where we draw the line; is every change in the built environment part and parcel of a process of gentrification? That could be an interesting debate but I choose to leave this debate out of this thesis. I will focus on one case; Bijlmermeer restructuring which qualifies spatially as a study object by the broader definitions of Hammel and Clark.

2.3 Causes of Gentrification

Before 1979 theories on the causes of gentrification weren't satisfactory in connecting and linking themselves to urban, well established, theory. Previous explanations had a demographic character but when Neil Smith introduced his rent-gap hypothesis, the focus changed to a focus on production and a supply-orientated causal explanation of gentrification. In juxtaposition to Smith's theory came David Ley with his “liberal ideology explanation” that focused more on consumption rather than production. Ley's and Smith's explanations were seen as a debate between capital (production) and culture (consumption) as the main explanation of the causes of gentrification. In the 90's though recession hit the western world and degentrification started to be observed, some even went so far as to say it was the end of gentrification. But degentrification didn't last long and gentrification resurfaced again during the 90's and was according to some connected with the uprise of neoliberalism and the growth of policies that provided the nourishment for neoliberalism to expand. Neoliberalism, with its belief in the free-market, was seen as a way to solve urban problems ironically with considerable help of the public sector (Hammel 2009:362-365).

According to Clark the causes are the “commodification of space, polarised power relations, and a dominance of vision over sight characteristic of the ‘the vagrant sovereign’.” Simply put Clark means that space becomes open for “conquest”. The previous nature of the space is changed into what is seen as more fitting by people with visions who are willing to pay and seeking to exploit space. They function in a set of power-relations with other actors which are polarised. If polarisation is strong the dynamic of the process of gentrification is much stronger. Conflicts are not uncommon in areas affected by these processes. The reactions depend on how the nature of “social polarisation and practices surrounding property rights” of the context are (Clark 2005:261). Regarding the causes of gentrification this thesis accepts the importance of Ley's and Smith's ideas but will be looking at other factors as well.

2.4 Gentrification and Neoliberalism

[...] the new market-orientated formulations associated with neoliberalism have given rise to a new role for cities in managing the relationships between global flows and networks and local economies and societies. In turn, this has had major implications for urban governance, the urban landscapes, the

built environment, and urban subjectivities. (Larner 2009:385)

Hence the conception of the neoliberal city which is based on David Harvey and Manuel Castells work during the 70's (Larner 2009). David Harvey points out that a reorientation of attitudes of urban governance from a managerial to a more entrepreneurial and initiatory urban governance has been taking place, this shift has been a continuous theme ever since the 70's (Harvey 1989:4-5). The economical and social changes of society have been the key factors that advanced capital economies have been battling with since the 70's (Harvey 1989:5). Also called urban crises, a result of de-industrialization and economic restructuring (Mukhtar-Landgren 2005:121). The state and corporate world are the actors seen as the constructors of neoliberalism (Larner 2009) through what Harvey calls public-private partnerships in his idea of urban entrepreneurialism. David Harvey captures the characterization of urban entrepreneurialism in a way I could never be able to, when he writes:

The new urban entrepreneurialism typically rests, then, on a public-private partnership focusing on investment and economic development with the speculative construction of place rather than amelioration of conditions within a particular territory as its immediate (though by no means exclusive) political and economic goal. (Harvey 1989:8)

What role does gentrification play in the context of neoliberalism and the neoliberal city? Clark cites Neil Smith when he talks about the spread of gentrification on a global level. Clark writes that “the generalization of gentrification as a global urban strategy”, based on ‘the mobilization of urban real-estate markets as vehicles of capital accumulation”. This is done to legitimate all actions that would help cities to become winners in an inter-urban competition for almost everything from tourists to business locations. This is visualised with urban development projects and renewal of areas that supply everything the targeted people need. These strategies are harsh because the “social costs ...are, if at all recognized, deemed necessary and unavoidable.” (2005:260)

Urban entrepreneurialism and the resulting urban development is not a natural development of urban place rather a political steered process (Mukhtar-Landgren 2005:130) which has the power, through the production of an urban image to create and give meaning to space that can be excluding to some and including to others (Mukhtar-Landgren 2005:122). Socio-spatial inequality is intensifying as an impact of neoliberalism. This is the main idea of Neil Smith’s “revanchist city” description (Larner 2011:364)

Gentrification in the neo-liberal city can also be interpreted through urban images, as Harvey puts it, which is important for the city to sell itself and promote its activity (Harvey 1989:13). If successful, urban imagery can create a sense of belonging and social control of its population (Harvey 1989:14). Urban imagery is creating a raised attraction of residential areas for bohemians, aesthetics, gays and students which are keeping the wheels of gentrification turning which will in turn result in a socio-economical polarisation through the real-estate market (Swyngedouw 2002:195).

2.5 Gentrification and Displacement

Tom Slater (2009), a gentrification researcher, uses Chester Hartman's description of the phenomenon displacement. Displacement "describes what happens when forces outside the household make living there impossible, hazardous, or unaffordable" (2009:294-295).

The connection between the displacement of residents from a neighbourhood and gentrification has been discussed at length in academia. Displacement is seen as a consequence of gentrification by some (e.g. Hammel 2009, Slater 2009). Factors that have played a role in displacement are economic, class and neighbourhood changes. Research has shown that lower-income neighbourhoods are more prone to out-migration and residential mobility. At the same time studies have shown that gentrification leads to a reduction of dwellings that are affordable for lower-income inhabitants (Hammel 2009).

There are different forms of displacement. In this thesis I will be concentrating on trying to find out which sort of displacement has taken place and why. To do that I will be using different types of categories of displacement inspired by Peter Marcuse but presented in Slater (2009).

The following types of displacement exist "direct-last displacement", "direct chain displacement", "exclusionary displacement" and "displacement pressure". Since the thesis is interested in the effect of the renewal of Bijlmermeer displacement pressure is the most relevant. Displacement pressure is when a neighbourhood is changing and the residents suffer in the form of dispossession (2009:303). Such as when an area is demolished and people are forced to relocate.

2.6 Gentrification in Housing Policy

Apart from displacement an additional consequence of gentrification is its influence on housing policy and urban restructuring, especially public housing (social rented housing). In the 90's gentrification was associated with substantial redevelopment plans that were kick-started by policy. The rise of the creative class hypothesis has also escalated the role of redevelopment and restructuring to attract the creative class (Hammel 2009).

Therefore gentrification has become implemental in development policymaking. In public housing policy in The United Kingdom gentrification had a large influence on the improvement of public housing areas. In The United States of America and The United Kingdom public housing was seen as problematic due to the observation of high concentrations of poverty. The introduction of gentrification into housing policy had major consequences in socio-spatial terms. In Chicago in The USA areas were demolished and replaced by a housing stock consisting of "50% market rate housing". Relocation of previous residents was also a big issue in Chicago, which wasn't dealt with in a good manner at the time (Hammel 2009:366-367).

2.7 Segregation

Here the concept of segregation will be presented. Segregation and the concentration of poverty are terms that are frequently used as social problems defining areas that need restructuring. Also these discourses are used to legitimate the renewal and regeneration as will be shown when we go deeper into the Bijlmermeer case.

Segregation in the urban milieu is interpreted as the “spatial organization of communities” or the “residential clustering of social groups”. In this thesis this characteristic will be referred to as concentration and segregation interchangeably. Segregation acts as a preservation of this group’s norm and a mean to social control within the group. There are negative reasons as to why segregation is still persisted and is seen as the “product of various processes of exclusionary closure and institutional racism.” (Knox & Pinch 2006:186).

Members of ethnic minorities in The Netherlands are defined by Bolt et al (2002) as people born, or having one parent born, outside from The Netherlands. Segregation and concentration can also be seen from another more structural angle. Bolt et al (2002) write that concentration and segregation are the “(unintended) consequences of the housing market behaviour of individuals and households within the opportunities and limitations of the societal and spatial context.” Policy is merely seen as one of many contributors to these “processes of segregation and concentration”.

2.8 Social mixing

CECODHAS Housing Europe the federation of public, cooperative and social housing brings forth social mixing policies as a way of fighting segregation and ghettoization in concentrations of poverty i.e. social housing areas. Social mixing refers “to a mixing of people in a given space (country, region, city, neighborhood, housing estate) on the basis of diverse or different: social classes or socioeconomic statuses; social categories, e.g. ethnicity, disability; stages in their life cycles, e.g. younger, older; or household or family types.” (Cecodhas).

3. Method

For the research an intensive approach was used. An intensive approach means that the study focuses and limits itself to one example of a phenomenon and tries to examine the causes and effects of the phenomena. In terms of limitation, observations from such an intensive approach cannot be generalized or represent other examples. But in turn it yields a thicker description, trying to uncover the relationship between moments, “mechanisms and structures” (Clifford & Valentine 2003:10).

Regarding displacement the thesis will primarily focus on giving a more qualitative approach on the neighbourhoods of Venserpolder and Holendrecht where displacement has been observed by previous research (den Uyl 2008). Regarding housing policy the thesis will use already existing tertiary sources in the form of policy reviews from other researchers.

The research aims to generate primary material about the situation in Bijlmermeer, Venserpolder and Holendrecht. Primary material in the form of interview transcripts, field-notes and observations can fill in gaps of existing knowledge making it very valued (Clifford & Valentine 2003). Primary material was collected during a field study to Amsterdam and the South East District. The trip was funded by a grant received by Sällskapet Ölänningarna which covered all costs.

Stringency is important when collecting research material and this should be presented. Official secondary sources such as information from the Bijlmermeer Project Renovation Office and tertiary sources in the form of articles from established international journals have been used.

3.1 Primary Sources

My individual fieldwork started from the 29th of November until the 7th of December. I therefore focused my resources on trying to get in touch with people I could interview before departure via e-mail. In addition to interviews I have conducted observations and documented at Bijlmermeer, Holendrecht and Venserpolder.

Clifford and Valentine (2003) emphasize the issues of safety, risk and realism concerning the practice of fieldwork. Loneworking can be very risky if not thought through and downright dangerous if overrated. To reduce risk, precautions were taken such as not overdressing and knowing my limitations.

3.1.1 Observations

In this part, the qualitative approach will take the form of observations of Bijlmermeer, Holendrecht and Venserpolder.

This has been done by taking field notes and pictures. Participant observations put emphasis on participating and observing everyday life (see Clifford & Valentine 2003; Flowerdew & Martin 2005). My observations aimed to give my understanding of the places through my direct experience of them by observing and participating in the

consumption of these places. The results of the observation have helped illustrate the feeling of the Bijlmermeer.

During my last days of observations at Bijlmermeer, Holendrecht and Venserpolder I went to a barbershop in Holendrecht and got a haircut and had conversations with the people working there while I got my haircut. This meeting was very interesting and was worth including in this thesis to triangulate with my observations. Triangulating by using multiple sources on an issue can strengthen research results (Clifford & Valentine 2003). The respondent is presented in anonymity since the hairdresser was not asked for permission neither is the name of the respondent known.

3.1.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are “conversational and informal in tone” (Clifford and Valentine 2003:119) that aim, as any interviews, to gather information from a target. They are “conversations with a purpose” (Cloke et al 2004:149). The interviews were conducted with individuals. The aim was to find people that worked with the renewal of Bijlmermeer and had experience from being part of the planning of the neighbourhood. I wanted to understand the respondents’ personal point-of-view on the renewal of the area and their “experiences” (Cloke et al 2004).

This form of interviewing has a strong value in multi-method studies (Clifford and Valentine 2003) such as this and must not be underestimated. This method is popular in human geography and has been used to collect information and more intensive individual meanings of different topics.

The respondents were Evert Van Voskuilen and Annemieke Molster. Voskuilen is an urban planning expert for South East Amsterdam working for Bijlmermeer renovation project office. Molster is an urban designer who previously worked on the renewal of parts of Bijlmermeer neighbourhood, she has also made a tour guide for the whole Bijlmermeer area. I also asked the respondents for further leads about residents of the area that would be willing to talk to me but with no luck. I tried contacting residential networks before the fieldwork but didn’t manage to get any contact.

As Cloke et al point out the results of the interview should not be taken as truths just because they come from the mouth of the respondents. The information is a product of the conversation between two people and is affected by the surrounding, atmosphere, culture and the individuals involved. The information is also affected by me during codification and analysis therefore intersubjectivity is important (Cloke et al 2004).

The interviews were guided by different thematic questions (see Appendix A). I had these with me during the interview so as to be sure that all questions were checked, but I also left room for the conversation to develop and probed for more detailed answers. The questions were a mix of factual, ethic, professional and problematic. I recorded the interviews and took notes about the sign language and the reactions of the respondents. I later transcribed the interviews and matched them with notes.

Confidentiality and anonymity are very important when interviewing people (Clifford and Valentine 2003). For these reasons I asked about the possibility of referring and citing respondents as well as recording the interview. Also I informed about the aim of the study, the interview and how this information would be stored and handled.

I printed transcripts out and then cut parts out and labelled them with a code depending on what the respondent was talking about. This is called open coding. To the code I made a “theoretical memo” as a reminder. I later grouped the cuttings in themes. This process of labelling and encoding is called sifting and sorting (Clarke in Flowerdew and Martin 2005). By organizing the cuttings into themes it helps assist the task of interpreting the material when looking back to evaluate research questions (Clifford and Valentine 2003). The information cannot be generalised for others, they are not representative, this is important to remember when conducting interviews (Clifford and Valentine 2003). The interview respondents were quite opinionated which was positive.

3.2 Secondary & Tertiary Sources

In this part the methodological approach is more empirical. By empirical it is meant that is concerned with presenting evidence that can explain the ‘reality’ (Allmendinger 2009). Here it has taken the form of analysing previous research on this subject. The motivation for this choice is the importance of knowledge about underlying structures if statements about the causes will be made (Cloke et al 2004). It starts from previous research on the effects of urban restructuring policies in The Netherlands then effects on Bijlmermeer. A triangulation will be introduced to this information in the form of fieldwork and interviews. Triangulation is a way of ensuring reliability when a mixed-method approach is used (Clifford and Valentine 2003). It is positive since it can add to knowledge gaps.

Two issues are of concern with the official sources; objectivity and the sources reflection on reality. I have used other sources to verify some information such as the number of demolished houses. The interviews have been helpful to complement the official planning documents and show what has not been presented.

Concerning tertiary sources many academics have critically reviewed urban restructuring policies in The Netherlands (e.g. Bolt et al 2009; Hulsbergen & Stouten 2001; Ostendorf et al 2001; Priemus 2003). Along with these people Ronald Van Kempen (e.g. Bolt et al 2009; Van Beckhoven & Van Kempen 2010) has been very active in the research of urban renewal policies and practice as well as its effects. I entrust these researchers works because they have been very active in the field and have enriched the debates concerning urban renewal and urban restructuring polices via their critical perspective. Most of the articles have also been published in international journals such as *City, Housing Studies* etc. I consider this an important token of credible research.

4. Window into the Netherlands

An introduction of the contextual arrangements The Netherlands follows. For the Netherlands, with a high population density, space is important (Beets & Nimwegen 2000). Population dynamics show that the Netherlands is already experiencing a population decline on a regional level. The population stagnation will have effects on physical landscape and values as well as social effects. Planning for quality rather than quantity and measures in the housing market are seen as core areas for combating the anticipation of a population decline (Haartsen & Venhorst 2010).

4.1 Spatial Planning Policies and the Effects on Housing

Housing in the Netherlands is part and parcel of macro-economic politics and has become an important instrument in the same sphere. Since 1951 the Prescriptions and Hints for Housing entitled the ramifications for the quality of housing. The projects that complied with these prescriptions could then be financed by government. The resulting dwellings in the housing areas were identical in style. Due to an acute shortage in housing the Ministry of Housing promoted the intensification of industrial-like constructions of dwellings (van Dijk 1999).

Due to the high density in urban centres the housing has become important for planning and housing policy. This has been the case for quite a long time and has gone hand in hand with policies that have tried to control urban sprawl. The first attempt to control suburban sprawl was made in the *Second Report on Physical Planning* in 1966 from The Ministry of Housing and Physical Planning (Geurs & Wee 2006). This policy resulted in a “bundled deconcentration” by creating over-spill cities, “growth municipalities” and expanding existing towns where new housing would be situated (van Dijk 1999). These designated areas would become new places of urban growth away from the dense urban areas of The Randstad (Geurs & Wee 2006).

The gap between vision and reality was present in the negative outcomes of this concept. The job opportunities didn't follow to these spill-over areas. Instead the planning resulted in the rise of commuting which went hand in hand with the rise in automobile usage. Families moved out of the cities. These families left behind them cities with a population composition of elderly, youngsters and groups living in low-cost housing. Therefore, the policy was halted (AEDES 2007). During the 80's inner-city areas were experiencing a decline and the concept of concentrated deconcentration was changed in 1991 by The Ministry of Housing, Physical Planning and the Environment in the *Fourth Report on Physical Planning Extras*. The renewed effort on urban development was the compact city concept. The compact city concept entails characteristics such as high density, mixed uses, non-sprawling, preservation of the countryside and lower automobile dependency. The government via the compact city concept wanted to increase cities' capacities instead of intervening into the countryside. The compact city concept propagated that new developments would be in or around cities, not in the countryside, and in Greenfield or Brownfield locations. These were called the VINEX locations. These were areas of hefty investments to improve the housing stock through urban renewal (Geurs & Wee 2006).

4.2 From Renewal to Regeneration

A classic simple explanation about the difference between urban renewal and urban regeneration is that renewal is about stones and regeneration is not only about stones but also about people. It points towards the shifting ideology and approach of urban restructuring. Urban regeneration was introduced in Dutch policy in 1997 in the Revitalising Policy for Major Cities (referred to as Big Cities Policy from now on). It propagated a more integrated planning approach by emphasizing focus on social, economic and physical aspects in renewal. Priemus (2004:232) writes that “The basic idea of the Major Cities Policy is to integrate subsidies as much as possible in one new urban renewal fund. By consolidating subsidies more scope would be created for decision-making at local level”.

A new renewal policy followed. In 2000 the WSV urban renewal policy was introduced. It urged upon the renewal of neighbourhoods, Brownfield and Greenfield areas with this new set of ideas as the guiding principle. These renewal projects would receive funding by the government. They would be in the big cities called G4 (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Den Haag and Utrecht) and 26 medium sized cities called G26 (KEI 2011).

The integrated approach of urban regeneration includes the following parts in what can be seen as a system. Maintenance is the fundamental part of this system. Maintenance can guarantee sustainability and continuity. On this foundation three pillars rest: Social renewal, physical renewal and economic renewal. Social renewal means that education, safety, social mix and other social aspects of a neighbourhood are improved. Physical renewal implies urban regeneration. Economic renewal entails economic improvements such as work and income (Priemus 2004).

The task of formulating the physical pillar was achieved by an Urban Renewal Memorandum in 1997 by The Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment. The aim was to “redifferentiate the housing stock in such a way that the number of owner-occupied dwellings increases, the price and quality of some of the stock is pushed up, and small dwellings are combined or enlarged. [...] it aims to bring about a better structure in urban planning, better facilities for cars, better quality of public space and more greenery. [...] efforts will be made to determine whether the business community and the economic, social and cultural amenities can be strengthened in the neighbourhood.” (Priemus 2004:232).

4.3 National Spatial Strategy

NOTA RUIMTE is the National Spatial Strategy. In relation to this study the first and second objective of the strategy are of importance. The first objective stresses that competitive position is going to be strengthened. The goals for this objective are removing spatial obstacles to economic growth, tackling traffic congestion, innovation clusters and promoting attractive places for business. Further the strategy formulates these goals to achieve the second objective of promoting strong cities and dynamic countryside. The goals are to respond to socioeconomic problems in big and medium cities, prevent an unbalanced population, a variation in housing, urban renewal, urban

service facilities and the development of rural areas (Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment 2006).

As the previous chapters have shown, urban renewal and urban regeneration has been actively promoted by the Dutch state through the National Spatial Strategy and spatial and housing policies. Now the thesis will continue to draw the relation between renewal of social housing and a “de-concentration of urban poverty” (Stal & Zuberi 2010:3).

4.4 Segregation in The Netherlands

The governments view on the concentration of poverty and segregation has been changing from policy to policy. In 1997’s White Paper these factors were not seen as “urban problems” but as problems for social cohesion (Bolt et al 2009).

The strongest concentrations of ethnic minorities are found in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht (i.e. the four biggest cities). Rotterdam and The Hague have the strongest concentrations. Turks and Moroccans are the biggest groups. Then come Surinamese and Antilleans. Turks and Moroccans don’t move out of the cities as much as Dutch due to their weak income and market positions. The same groups are more segregated than the Surinamese and Antilleans but none of the minorities are confined to some housing areas, they are dispersed over the cities. The connection between the concentration of ethnic minorities and social-rented housing is strong. Post WWII neighbourhoods (1945-1975), with a large amount of social rented units, are the main housing areas of ethnic minorities. Turks and Moroccans are prominent dwellers in the social rented sector (Bolt et al 2002).

Bolt et al (2002) argue that a range of negative factors are leading housing areas with high concentrations of ethnic minorities and low-income groups into a negative spiral making segregation even more prominent. They point to social, physical and economic problems. Higher income groups are relocating thus intensifying the concentration of lower-income groups with new people moving in.

According to Bolt et al (2002) the segregation in Amsterdam (as well as Utrecht) is increasing more than the other two big cities. When it comes to where in Amsterdam the growth in concentration of ethnic minorities has become higher. More and more ethnic minorities are settling in Amsterdam West in houses built during the 60’s – 70’s but generally in post WWII housing areas.

4.5 Character of Segregation

Bolt et al (2009) write that ethnic minorities are over-represented in low-income housing. These areas are subject to social problems. Crime rates and fear of crime is high, the quality of housing is low and there are stigmatized public spaces. On the whole these housing areas are referred to as deprived environments.

Ostendorf et al (2001) on the other hand make it clear that there are no big concentrations of poverty in The Netherlands. The Netherlands as a welfare state makes the discussions of the neighbourhood effect a bit weaker since, unlike the USA, government interventions in the market are more common. Thus “segregation with respect to housing is often reflected in the level of social participation in other spheres”. The authors (2001:373) explain that there is a growing fear amongst politicians about the presence of ghettos in urban lower-income residential areas. This threat is rendered unrealistic by the authors pointing out that the formation of ghettos such as the ones in The USA is not a possible outcome. Nevertheless, this fear has been helped along by the media and has in turn sparked political reactions, policy actions and debates. During the past years the debates have concentrated on the negative effects of the segregation of income and the concentration of lower-income people. These negative effects of the spatial concentration of the poor are defined as the negative influence on the “social upward mobility” (2001:373) of the people.

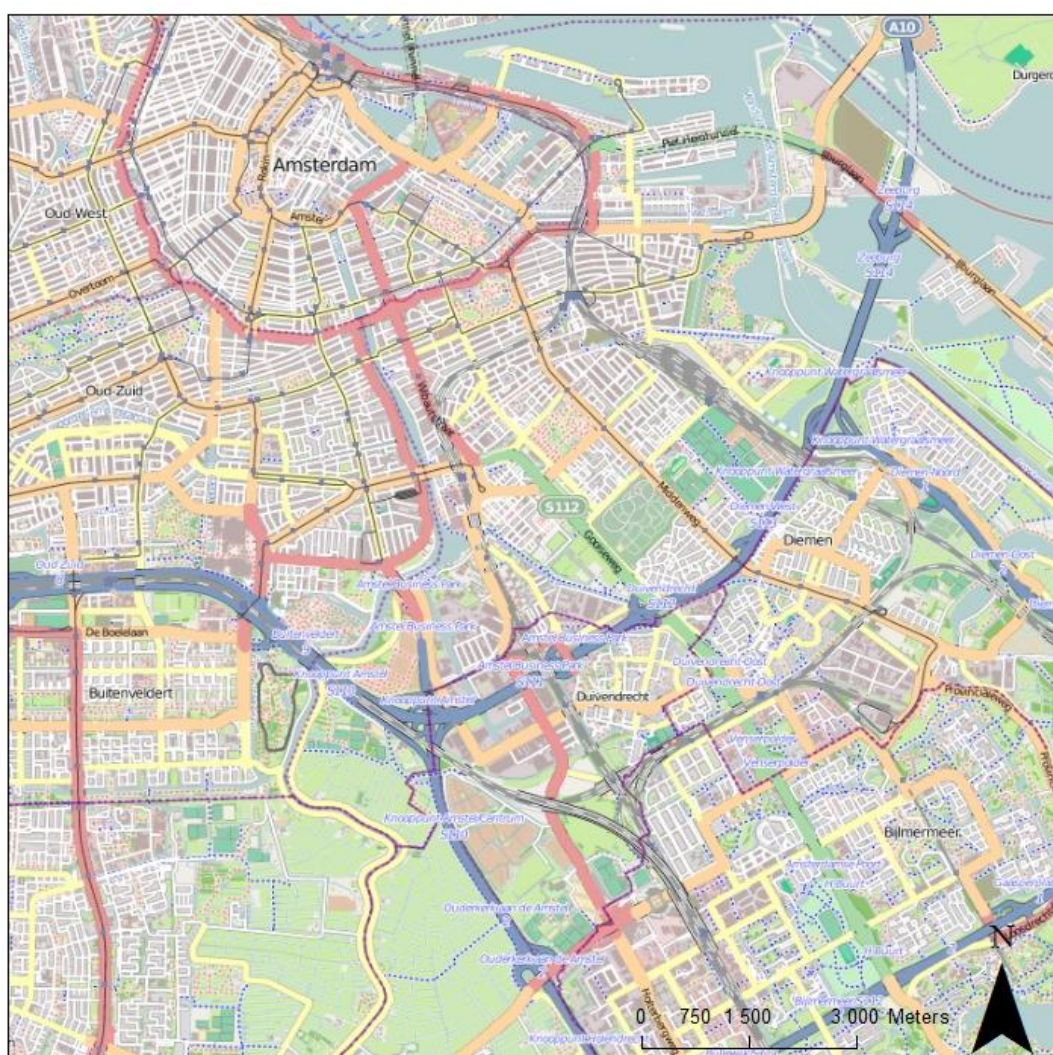


Figure 4.1: Amsterdam (OpenStreetMap)

5. Window into the Bijlmermeer



Figure 5.1 Bijlmermeer Area Source OpenStreetMap (2011) edited by author

Bijlmermeer is one of the four areas of the South East district in Amsterdam (within purple zone on Fig 5.1). It was built in 1966 on a polder, reclaimed land from the water. After WW II the role of the housing corporations turned into that of administrators of state and helpdesk for municipalities to build housing, which was desperately needed. In 1966 the foundation for Bijlmermeer was laid down by the acting mayor at the time, Mayor Van Hall. The interesting fact is that housing corporations were not part of the development of the area itself. Instead “The Bijlmer was built *for* and not *by* the corporations” (Paulen et al 1992).

The neighbourhood was a result of a development plan from the Urban Planning Division of the Amsterdam Department of Public Works. In the beginning the neighbourhood provided 40 000 dwellings, majority of them (90%) in high-rise flats in the original honeycomb structures (Bruijne et al n.d). The guiding principles for this project were modernist at the time with the segregation of functions and the uniformity of the high-rise buildings in honeycomb shape (Fainstein 2009; Bijlmermeer Renovation Planning Office 2008). It was constructed as a “rational arrangement”

(Bruijne et al n.d). Work, living, transport and recreational space all strictly separated from each other. Roads were on a higher level isolating the road network from the ground level which was a huge park area, that was strictly for pedestrian, bicycle infrastructure and residential access (Bruijne et al n.d).

The conclusion after the failure of the first Bijlmermeer was that housing corporations would always be involved at all times in the development of housing and neighborhoods. They took the initiative directly. Housing corporations became leaders in the urban renewal that would take place in the 70's on the housing stock. Renovating, building new, buying new dwellings was their new role. They were providing cheap and affordable housing with a decent quality. In terms of urban renewal they understood the need for listening to the residents and understanding that communities had developed in the residential areas and these people had to be taken seriously. The quality of dwellings in Bijlmermeer was very high for the time. Because society had started to become more prosperous the criteria for social housing became higher. The Bijlmer dwellings were big and comfortable (Paulen et al 1992).

When reconstruction was prescribed the problems that were diagnosed by housing corporation Nieuw Amsterdam were high vacancy, high costs of management and high turnover. Also Bijlmermeer's reputation and image as an insecure neighbourhood was seen as a problem that had to be revitalised for a broader audience and not only the residents. In 1992 reconstruction took form of demolition of the high-rise honeycombs. They would be replaced by spacious single family housing. From the beginning a quarter of the high-rise buildings would be demolished, now the number has risen to 60% (Bruijne et al n.d). Bijlmermeer consists of numerous smaller neighborhoods (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1:

Bijlmermeer neighbourhoods

Low-rise family neighbourhoods	Geerdinkhof, Nieuw Grunder, Kantershof, Koningshof, Klieverink Kouwenoord, Nieuw Kempering, Laag Kralenbeek, Kelbergen, Gooise Kant, Huntum
Low-rise urban neighbourhoods	D-buurt, F-buurt, E-buurt, Gerenstein, Geinwijk, Gulden Kruis, Kortvoort, Vogeltjeswei
High-rise and pedestrian	Rechte H-buurt, Hakfort Huigenbos, Gravestein Geldershoofd, Gouden Leeuw Groenhoven, Bijlmer Museum

Based on Projectbureau Vernieuwing Bijlmermeer (2011)

5.1 Utopia became Dystopia

The results of the first project were intended to attract the Dutch middle class; ironically the majority didn't find it appealing. Instead the area experienced a growing composition of ethnic minorities. In the middle of the 70's Surinam, a former Dutch colony, gained independence and a large influx of Surinamese moved into the neighbourhood along with other ethnic minorities, former Dutch colonies and Dutch people. Apartments were generous in size and housed large families. Aid from national government in the form of housing allowance was given to those who couldn't pay the rent. The project came under heavy scrutiny before it even reached maturity. Vacancy rates were high and the planning principles had become out-dated and didn't conform to

the Dutch way of living. The faults weren't only restricted on the physical aspects of the built environment but included the resulting social aspects of the area. Drug-trade which had been vanquished from the inner-city emerged at Bijlmermeer (Fainstein 2009).

The problem was that in the Bijlmer you could buy the best drugs in Holland. That was in the 90's. When an area is under construction and there are empty houses not used public spaces. The drug dealers and the users look for these places where they have no problems with the police in these areas, they hope. (Voskuilen 2011)

Bijlmermeer's reputation was tainted and time had come to put new planning ideas and principles into practice with a reconstruction of Bijlmermeer. Mixed uses and mixed incomes was the prevailing ideas at the time. This called for the tearing down of high-rise blocks, replacing them with owner-occupied low-rise buildings, halting the separation of functions and increasing the accessibility of the area (Fainstein 2009). The figures below can give an idea over how much was and is being demolished (Fig 5.2). But also what will take its place (Fig 5.3). Compare the differences in the buildings, from uniform large building to smaller and different sizes.



Figure 5.4: Demolitions until 2010

Source Projectbureau Vernieuwing Bijlmermeer (2011b)



Figure 5.5: New constructions from 1992 – 2012

Source Projectbureau Vernieuwing Bijlmermeer (2011c)

6. Results

In this chapter empirical results of this thesis, mostly in the form of primary but also secondary and tertiary sources, will be presented that will be the focus of the analysis.

Here I provide excerpts from my field-diary to give an idea of how the place was perceived from my point of view. Together with that I will include some photographic documentation and relevant citations from the interview respondents. This chapter is divided into subchapters depending on the areas observed and the topics related to the research questions.

6.1 Understanding the reconstruction of the Bijlmermeer

The main reasons to why the renewal took place at Bijlmermeer in 1992 have been summarized by Molster Stedenbouw (2010) as follows:

- *managerial issues*: due to the large nature of the public space creating huge costs and difficulty of physical maintenances.
- *Social issues*: due to the supply only of social housing led to a concentration of low-income dwellers. Out-migration of people who had managed to climb the social ladder due to lack in the neighbourhood. In 1985 the rate relocation was at 28% (7% was normal in Amsterdam at the time) and one in four dwellings was vacant.
- *Physical issues*: the honeycomb high-rise structures made orientation difficult. The separation of traffic functions from the ground level to a higher level motorway system created feelings of fear of crime at certain places.

The solution to these problems was to focus on “spatial redevelopment, social redevelopment and managerial redevelopment” (Molster Stedenbouw 2010) a three system planning approach much similar to that of urban regeneration (Ch 4.2). When asked about the planning process Voskuilen (2011) emphasized how important social renewal (social redevelopment) has been in this three-way approach. “Now the renewal of the Bijlmer has three parts, social renewal maybe is the most important aspect of the renewal, I think. Cause when the people are good than the space is also better. What you do is for the people, the inhabitants, not for the houses.”

According to Molster Stedenbouw (2010) the plan for the renewal would mean a demolition of 7 000 dwellings. 7 200 according to Bijlmermeer Renovation Planning Office (2008). They would be replaced by 8 000 new dwellings and renovation of the high-rises that would not be demolished. 70% of the new dwellings would “be offered for private sale and higher rent and 30% for council rent” (ibid 2010). From the beginning there were 12 500 housing units and all where council rent. In total when the housing demolition and constructions are finished, Rochdale commissions new housing, half will be subsidised social rent and the other free market rate. Also new constructions in this district will be the same as others at 30% social rented housing and 70% in the free market and home-ownership (Bijlmermeer Renovation Planning Office 2008).

The Bijlmermeer Museum is one of the high-rise areas that would not be demolished. Annemieke Molster (2011) in the interview was asked about her perspective on the

future of Bijlmermeer and how it would develop. She answered “But I do think from what I hear from one guy from Rochdale who I know pretty well. He says that this part, the Bijlmer museum is still not really working. There is a chance that they will demolish even more in twenty years, I think.”

6.2 Concerning Gentrification

In the interview with Voskuilen urban designer at Bijlmermeer Renovation Planning Office: I asked if he was acquainted with the concept of gentrification, something he was not. After explaining what gentrification is he answered:

The middle class. We have no place for the higher class due to the reputation of Bijlmermeer is not good enough except here [points to the eastern part of Bijlmermeer] close to the water and near the park. But maybe in the future we want the middle class to come. When you have a good mix it works good for the level of the jobs and the level of education and I think this is a good thing. (Voskuilen 2011)



Figure 6.1: Low-rise housing Source author

The middle class is seen as something needed for the development of the area. When asked about the differentiation of housing in the renewal and how it can be considered as an effort to attract another class Voskuilen answered:

Now the strategy of the government is to find new people to come to the Bijlmer. It is green, very good houses for relatively low prices to come to South East but we have still the reputation, is not the best of Amsterdam. But practically we are better than West and a lot of other places. [...] I think the image of the South East is that it has black inhabitants but the black inhabitants are working inhabitants and they are working everywhere and they are not different from the Dutch people.

6.2.1 Bijlmer Arena & Amsterdamse poort

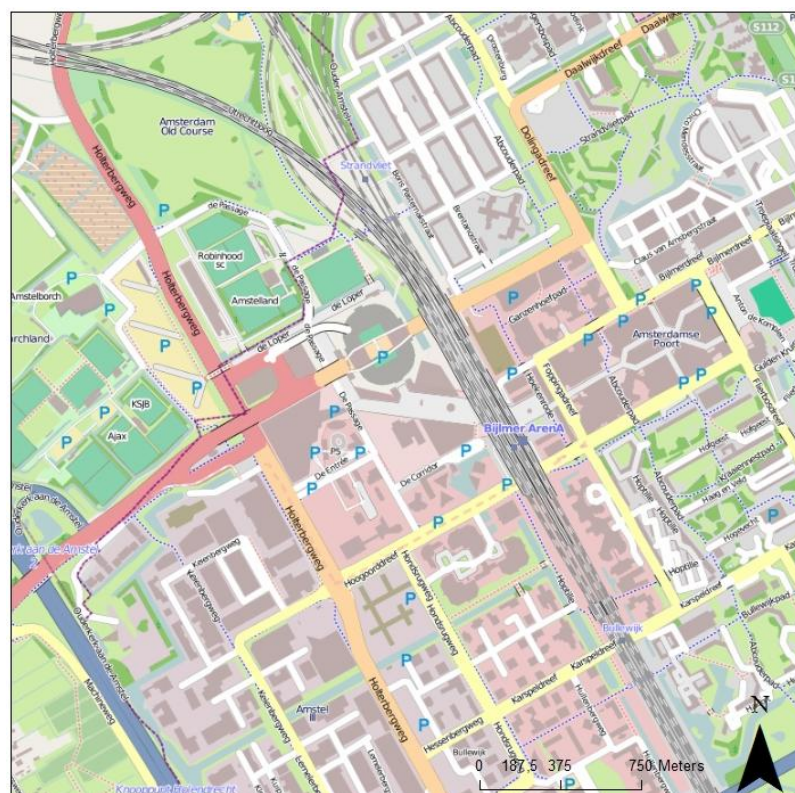


Figure 6.1: Arena & Amsterdamse Poort (OpenStreetMap 2011 edited by author)

30th of November Fieldwork-Diary Extract

Took the metro-line 54 to the Amsterdam Bijlmer Arena. Amazing modern station and on the left side (facing north) you have the Arena park. Businesses, cultural amenities, megastores and on the right Bijlmermeer shopping area. I thought I was going to come to a derelict, shabby and forgotten part of town. I was prepared for the worst. I believe the perception of this place affected my expectations. Always enlarging everything. Painting a negative picture. I walked through the shopping area and I was amazed. Is this Bijlmermeer? It's nothing like I expected. I thought I was going to be robbed, looked at, feel uncomfortable but no! I felt great. Especially at the market area. People from all walks of life living here. Diverse shops. I wonder what the upgrading of the place will mean. They want the middle class. What is that going to affect how the shopping area will change and its character.

Actually from what I've heard there are not so many people living in Bijlmermeer working in this, well, office district or shops [...]. But here it's larger businesses so in that respect it's not really helpful for the people of Bijlmermeer to come and work here, I think, and not that much. (Molster 2011)

The Arena area a business, entertainment and shopping area according to Molster, didn't benefit the people of the area in the sense of job opportunities. But the

Amsterdamse Poort (shopping area) is benefitting from the location of businesses as Molster (2011) further developed.

But I think the Amsterdamse Poort shopping area is really profiting from all the people who come and work here [the office district]. Because they do go shopping there and they do spend their money there or have their lunches their so in that way I think it does help them [...]. The area works really well. (Molster 2011)



Figure 6.2: Amsterdamse Poort Source author



Figure 6.3: Arena Area Source author

6.2.2 Urban Imagery



Figure 6.4: Heineken Music Hall at ArenaA Source author

It is of specific interest to inform how Bijlmermeer and South East district are being marketed and portrayed as the up and coming place to be. Iamsterdam.com promotes the south east as a place with lots of cultural amenities when it comes to living:

Zuidoost has evolved into a major entertainment centre. Along with the Ajax ArenA, there's Heineken Music Hall, Pepsi Stage, Pathé Cinema, Bijlmerparktheater and Kratertheater. There are also some excellent festivals such as the iconic Kwakoe that combines food and football, the music and arts Breathing Bijlmer and the new urban arts festival Metro54. Centrum Beeldende Kunst (CBK), as well as cultural 'breeding grounds' that are located throughout Zuidoost, organise many community-based arts projects and events. (Iamsterdam 2009b)

Iamsterdam brings forth Bijlmermeer's multicultural and contrasting character. The first sentence of the pitch is unforgivable. "Every city has an area that they have a love-hate relationship with. In Amsterdam this area is the Bijlmer." (Iamsterdam 2009a) Later the text goes into the history behind the construction and the issues faced after its completion, the resulting renewal and the football, entertainment, business and shopping opportunities. It is promoted as the place to see if a tourist wants to see "a uniquely



Figure 6.5: Bijlmer Metro Station Source author

contrasting side of Amsterdam”. It is portrayed as an unusual exotic part of Amsterdam. “Bijlmer’s inhabitants have tropical ethnic roots, and so it is home to exotic food, rhythmic music and colourful scenes.” (Iamsterdam 2009a)

The district municipality of the South East markets the district not as a district but as a city with a plethora of place branding on their website. We have brands such as the hospitable city, extravert city, innovative city, knowledge and entrepreneurial city, shopping city, residential city, festival town that boasts culture, talent, creativity, accessibility and diversity. South East is promoted as a talent factory with pure talent for the creative industry (original “een talentenfabriek pur sang waar talent van de creatieve industrie”) (Stadsdeel Zuidoost n.d).



Figure 6.6: African clothing store at Amsterdamse Poort Source author



Figure 6.7: Higher education at Bijlmermeer Source author



Figure 6.8: Shops at Amsterdamse Poort Source author

6.2.3 Private-Public Partnership



Figure 6.9: City District office – Bijlmermeer Renovation Planning Office Source author

Voskuilen - We had the idea to renew the Bijlmer and that inspired me after that moment. We had a lot of problems, financial and other, Rochdale had introduced new ideas for what kind of types of houses they wanted and that made it difficult.

Wahlin – They had other ideas?

Voskuilen – The idea was inter-mingling of functions and what Rochdale said in 2005 was we only want houses like Almere or in the suburbs, not inter-mingling of functions and the money was leading and not the idea of how to make a city. That was difficult for me but it's a personal idea that's not the idea of the organisation.

Wahlin – So the organisation followed Rochdale?

Voskuilen – Yes, but the director of the Planning Office was payed by Rochdale as well as the government. He has to inter-mingle with both ideas. Personally, I was not lucky with some things but that's what I see.



Figure 6.10: Rochdale Housing Organisation at Bijlmermeer Museum Source author

The renovation of Bijlmermeer involves Rochdale Housing Organization, Amsterdam South East and the Municipality of Amsterdam. Together they finance the Bijlmermeer Renovation Planning Office (Bijlmermeer Renovation Planning Office 2008).

6.3 Displacement from Bijlmermeer

Yes they [people] are not critical, they accept the house but they don't see what is bad on the area. (Voskuilen 2011)

Bolt et al (2009) apart from describing the development of urban restructuring policies, look at what happens after urban restructuring. Emphasis is put on relocation and segregation in Dutch Cities. They show that the 1997 restructuring policy has managed to move people out of "relatively poor" neighbourhoods. But that these households move horizontally from relatively poor neighbourhoods to other poor or even poorer neighbourhoods showing that displacement doesn't lead to places becoming less segregated. Segregation can only be solved through urban restructuring when the majority of social rented households are replaced by owner-occupied and understanding the mobility of the households that have been displaced. They advise that low-income households are emerging in other areas than the target areas. Displacement in general can for most people lead to better living conditions.

Fainstein (2008:779) reflects over the displacement of the people during the reconstruction as merely a solved issue when she writes: "Residents displaced from the original buildings either were relocated to suitable accommodation or purchased residences among the newly constructed homes." She further goes on to write "Unsurprisingly, given that most housing remained in the social rented category, crime and unemployment continued to be problems."

Molster in the interview says when asked if renewal even if targeted on social renewal isn't solving problems but rather shifting problems spatially due to the displacement of people she says:

You can ask yourself the question: Is it even possible to solve the whole problem? I mean that is something that is part of every country also every city but every country has their poor people with their problems. They do go to another part and another part. I guess, if you spread them out a little bit more than at least your problems are spread out also which is probably more little problems, little problems are better to handle. It's probably better to spread it out a little instead of having so many people with problems together. You do relocate the problem. You get a little bit smaller and the rest what you still have, well you do relocate it and you do have a problem somewhere else and you try to solve it there. But some of it you just cannot solve. Well you can say it's a bad thing but it's just something maybe we just have to say it's unsolvable. But I just think areas on this scale with so many of the same dwelling with so many people with problems made all the problems together just too large to handle so you had to do something here. If that means relocating part of them so be it. I know that there are problems now in Holendrecht and Venserpolder. (Molster 2011)

In contrast to Molster's perspective Slater on the "Gentrification Web" (2002) writes "Either disinvestment and decay or gentrification and displacement is a false choice for low-income communities". Molster continued and talked about the peoples choices:

[...] well actually I think people who wanted to stay in the Bijlmer but just had to leave their flat because it was about to be demolished. They thought well the Venserpolder, that's close enough. Maybe they wanted to come back because all the people who had to leave their flat because it was going to be demolished had the right to come back to a new house. But of course not all of them did that because they already had a new house. They didn't feel like moving again a few years later. (Molster 2011)

Molster has already in here answer introduced us to the next subjects. Observations from the neighbourhoods of Venserpolder and Holendrecht will now follow. These are neighbourhoods that people relocated to during the renewal of Bijlmermeer. It is also worth remembering how policy has been used to break-up the concentrations of the urban poor and combat segregation.

6.3.1 Venserpolder

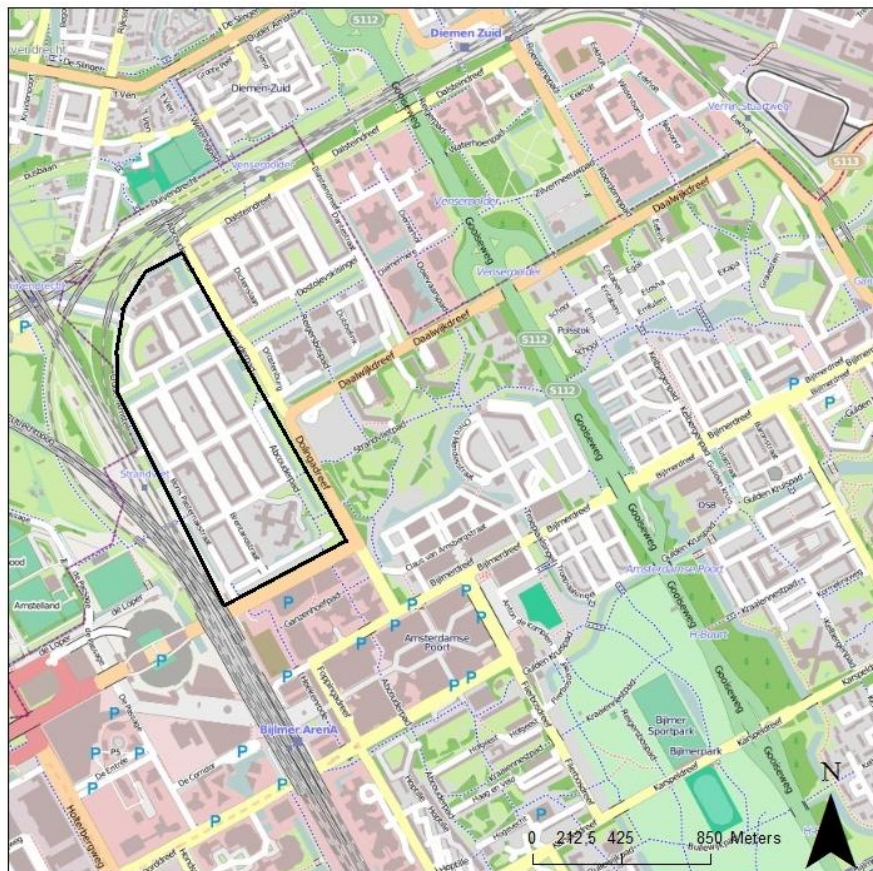


Figure 6.2: Observed part of Venserpolder (OpenStreetMap 2011 edited by author)

Discussing about Venserpolder with the urban designers gave a glimpse into their understanding of what they saw were the main faults of the area and their own role.

Backside or front side is a very important thing in public space and in Venserpolder it goes wrong. [...] Also Holendrecht and Venserpolder have the same problem, there is only one type of housing, social rent. And when you can mix the housing types, some are on the corner, top, ground level. When you can use those things then maybe some people can buy them. (Voskuilen 2011)



Figure 6.11: Venserpolder from inside the block out to the street Source author

By backside and front side Voskuilen means where the public space is facing. In Venserpolder public space is within the blocks. Also here we see how the social mixing technique which he talks about is used. When asked if he believed that social mixing worked he answered “Yes”. He further goes on to list some more urban design problems with the Venserpolder area:

A very important thing is the zone between the public and private, the zone before the house. In Venserpolder it's wrong. [...] The designer looks very well on how you go out of the house and how the entree is, what the social control is, can you live in the street or in the house. The encroachment zone, it is a very important part of the urban design and has a big influence on how the people live in the streets and how to live together and make a community. (Voskuilen 2011)

First of all the dwellings are more monotonous and their all cheaper and that does mean something for the people who come to live there of course and these (blocks) are not closed so everyone can come there and hang out and make noise, shoot drugs or whatever. From what I hear the crime rates are pretty high there. (Molster 20011)

Voskuilen and Molster make it very clear that planning and design mistakes are well represented in Venserpolder. They both identified cheap housing as an issue. When asked on her view of the Venserpolder Molster answered "Well I wouldn't want to live there so that probably says something about my opinion of what it looks like there."



Figure 6.12: Venserpolder shops Source author



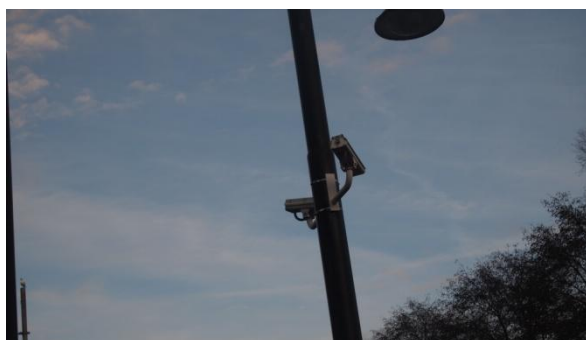
Figure 6.13: Venserpolder facade Source author

Molster then went on to argue how much urban designers have to blame for the problems in Venserpolder.

Well partly you can I think. Because if you feel cramped and you don't think its nice to be there you probably don't care what happens to the neighbourhood. [...] I mean there are of course neighbourhoods where poor people live and there is a sense of community and there are not so many problems. I guess it does have to do with how you build things and if you make it in such a way that people love their neighbourhood that does make a difference I think. Here they probably don't. You could probably ask 50 people how do you like it here what do you think about your environment, about the buildings, about the green, the streets, are there any benches is there any filth on the street or not and they will probably say they don't really love their neighbourhood. [...] On the other hand you cannot blame everything on the urban design because it does have to do with the people that come and live there. [...] So some things are out of your hands as an urban designer. You can blame it for a part but not everything.



Figure 6.14 & 15: Venserpolder surveillance and alcohol restrictions Source author



1st of December Fieldwork-Diary Extract

Today I went back to Bijlmermeer to go check out Venserpolder. I observed the mono-functional way it was planned for. Only residencies and lack of urbanity. Surveillance was much more than in other Bijlmermeer neighbourhoods. Two police on bicycles patrolled as well. The state of Venserpolder isn't that bad it's just that its very basic. There are no public spaces due to the public areas being inside the block, surrounded by the house making it a hideout from the road outside. Not so welcoming. When I came deeper into Venserpolder over the canal I felt a bit tense. There I realised the old and harsh state compared to many other parts of Bijlmermeer. Cameras were ever more present here. No alcohol consumption was allowed either on the streets.

6.3.2 Holendrecht

To be able to suck up residential flow from the renewal of Bijlmermeer contractors built housing that was cheap and fast to build in Holendrecht West (Paulen et al 1992).

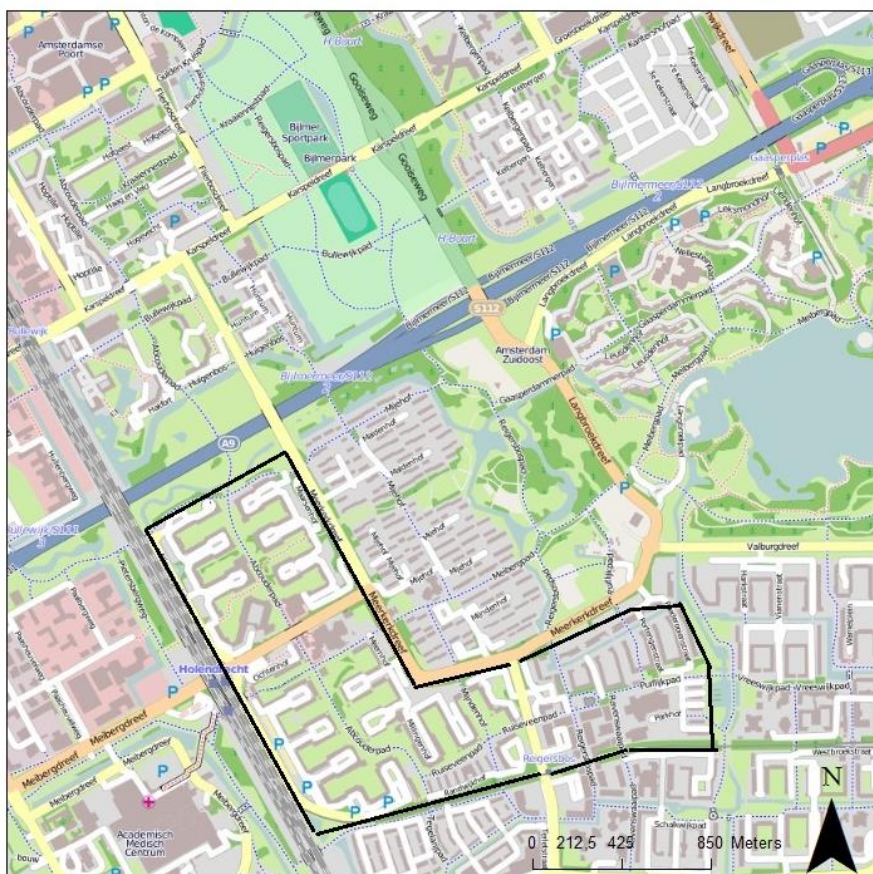


Figure 6.3: Observed part of Holendrecht (OpenStreetMap 2011 edited by author)

When the renewal of Bijlmermeer started we had to move the inhabitants. [...] When people are not critical, they accept not the best housing and they come here. This area now is a problem area. This is Holendrecht. (Voskuilen 2011)

The people that were relocated during Bijlmermeer reconstruction moved to bad housing. As declared previously by Voskuilen, Holendrecht along with Venserpolder “have the same problem there is only one type of housing, social rent.”. When asked about a potential renewal of the area he described the plans for Holendrecht.

[...] we are thinking about how to change the public space and the renewal of the public space. How to renovate the shopping centre at the middle of it. How to make the area possible to be used for old people. How to make it nicer for looking and more aesthetic. (Voskuilen 2011)

So there are plans for the renewal of the area something that was reflected during the observation at the area.

I felt shocked when I entered Holendrecht from the north. Holendrecht was a construction site though people still lived here, no roads were done. From an accessibility and safety point of view Holendrecht was neither when it came to transporting oneself. One bicycle path was full of mud. Kids where running around playing in the mud while big JCB's and tractors where driving around. Whole areas between housing blocks were excavated. How nice could it be to live here? There was a small shopping centre in the middle, it was very simple. The public and private separation was not as bad as in Venserpolder the public areas were more accessible here. The housing area was quite empty but at no moment did it feel threatening. Graffiti was pretty much everywhere.



Figure 6.16: Holendrecht excavations Source author



Figure 6.17: Holendrecht conditions Source author

6.3.3 The Barbershop Episode in Holendrecht

During the last day of observation I felt entitled to a haircut and a shave. While I was walking around in Holendrecht I spotted a barber shop, went past it, stopped and took a moment to decide. Turned around and marched inside. I entered the door and stood there looking a bit lost. One person started talking Dutch to me I listened and answered back in English. The usual procedure took place which is not what is of interest here. The interesting thing wasn't the haircut; it was the barbers, the barbershop and the people in it. Three male barbers were working and one woman was sitting at the register, the shop was very plain and had only the necessary things. My barber was a young Surinamese man.

An old man was walking around the barbershop talking loudly about something to the barbers, he was passionate. I understood that he wasn't here for a haircut he was here to philosophize and splurge out opinions left, right and centre. His hands were flying all-over the place his fingers pointing in all directions. He went to grab the door, stopped and then continued his banter and went another tour of the barbershop. Laughter, arguments, comments and all kind of expressions the others replied with. This isn't normal conduct in The Netherlands. I was somewhere else. I was enjoying it, this place had soul. Would this place still be here after they refurbish the shopping mall of Holendrecht? As mentioned by Voskuilen. This place came to represent something more.

I started to feel comfortable and asked questions. He felt quite taken aback that I knew what was going on in these parts of town. I asked about the renewal of Bijlmermeer and if Holendrecht should be renewed. He said "If you're going to renew it, renew it all!". I thought this was interesting. I asked where he lived, maybe he lived outside town, he lived in the Amsterdamse Poort where the shopping area is in Bijlmermeer area. I liked that shopping area, I said and continued, it's really cool. He stopped again. I thought he was going to ask me what was wrong with me instead he praised me for being open-minded and tolerant and talked about how other Dutch people weren't.

I said I was here for research and that I did some interviews with urban designers and they said, with some hesitation, that Holendrecht is a problem area, I don't live here but maybe you know, how do you feel about that? My barber asked a question so fast that I was caught off guard. "What colour were they?" Ehhm, white I replied in a desolated manner. He knew the answer already. "They are racists! Just because black people live here." He concluded.

I asked my barber; you feel Dutch or Surinamese? The answer was simple "I'm Surinamese". Even though he had been living here a long time he was Surinamese. "We're talking a mix of Dutch, English and Surinamese". That's cool. The Surinamese community is very strong here as mentioned by Molster (2011).

The hair was done, the beard was gone and I was ready to go. After thanking everyone I walked towards the door and before stepping out my barber shouted "Hey!! Don't forget to like us on Facebook!" I laughed and walked out.

6.4 Changes in the Dutch Housing Market

The Netherlands has a population of 16, 847, 007 (CIA World Factbook) and has a housing stock above 6.9 million, 80% of it was built after World War II. The structure of the housing stock is comprised by three sectors: the social rented sector (housing organisations), the private rented sector (privately owned) and home ownership (owner-occupied) (AEDES 2007). *Aedes vereniging van woningcorporaties* (AEDES) is an organization that represents social housing associations.

As Table 6.1 indicates there is a steady increase in the home ownership sector, a decreasing social rented sector (since 1992) and a decreasing private rented sector. The increase in home-ownership is caused by the selling off of landlords housing stock that was previously for rent, the construction of owner-occupied housing and “fiscal subsidising” (AEDES 2007).

Table 6.1: Dutch housing stock according to sectors

Sectors	1993	1997	2001	2006
Home Ownership	47%	50%	53%	56%
Private rented	15%	13%	11%	10%
Social rented	35%	37%	35%	34%
Total (x 1000)	6,044	6,366	6,649	6.913

Based on AEDES (2007)

There are different definitions of what the social rental sector is. The AEDES defines it as affordable dwellings for households who earn below average incomes. In this sector the housing is usually below market levels and should have good and decent quality.

In Amsterdam social rented sector went from 18% of total Amsterdam housing stock in the 1950 to 52% in 1991. The South East district had in 1991 the highest average amount of people per dwelling and the lowest average time of stay per dwelling in Amsterdam (Paulen et al 1992).

6.4.1 The Changing Housing Demand

The demand for housing is on a steady rise which is due to some specific factors. The prognosis for the population growth is said to reach stability in 2030 with around 18 million inhabitants. More people will need housing. The most important factor is the rise of the number of households and their shifting composition. This has to do with the wider process of individualization in the Dutch society which is affecting the composition of the households. The Dutch are living longer and they are single longer resulting in a decreasing number of people per house in The Netherlands (see Table 6.2) (AEDES 2007).

Table 6.2: Development of number of households (Pop & House x 1000)

Year	Population	Households	Average number of persons
1900	5,104	1,113	4.51
1930	7,832	1,958	4.00
1960	11,417	3,171	3.56
1680 (!)	14,091	5,006	2.97
2000	15,848	6,824	2.32
2006	16,357	7,146	2.29
Prediction 2012	16,497	7,450	2.21

Based on AEDES (2007)

The growth of home-ownership is across all of the western countries. Policies have stimulated home-ownership because it is the view, by governments with Keynesian approaches, that it brings social and political stability and stimulates the economy. Subsidies help the growth of this sector (Knox & Pinch 2006:122-123).

6.4.2 Social Housing Sector

Alongside the Netherlands; Denmark and Sweden supply social housing by co-operatives. The actors in the housing sector are the housing managers and the housing associations. The power transferred to these actors, by controlling the housing supply, shapes people's lives. They are "actors in the social production of the built environment" (Knox & Pinch 2006:122-123).

The Amsterdam Federation of Housing Corporations was formed in 1917. It was founded due to the need for a network and better communication between the corporations. In the Housing acts the housing corporations, as authorized institutions, have played a very big role in the housing question. Housing corporations together with Amsterdam's city housing department own more than half of the housing stock in the city. The Housing Act arrived in 1901 there were 14 housing corporations with approximately 4 000 houses (Paulen et al 1992).

The Housing Act meant a great deal of responsibility for those institutions that were authorized to be called social housing corporations. The standards, regulations and rules as well as the conditions for receiving financial aid from the state for building new housing along with more were laid down in the Housing Act. In 1903 Rochdale cooperative building association was founded. By 1925 there were 58 corporations and in 1992 there were 17 left, result of mergers and foreclosures (Paulen et al 1992).

Social housing organisations are seen as social entrepreneurs with the ability to offer good quality and affordable housing to a broader group of consumers, especially the middle and lower-income population that need affordable housing. They are organizations with social objectives that follow their own code of conduct. They have also been allowed to grant loans to lower-income families in order to be able to purchase a house (AEDES 2007). These organizations together with the state brought together a National Agreement for Housing that articulated the upcoming objectives of these organisations in the housing sector (AEDES 2003).

They have an important role in the nation-wide investments for the urban renewal of public housing since they own a substantial amount of the post WWII housing stock. The government has seen the organisations as an instrumental actor in the allocation of funding for urban renewal projects that aim to increase liveability in otherwise derelict neighbourhoods and urban areas. The housing organisations are setting up funds to attract investments. The future role of the housing organizations will be to provide care centres for the elderly. Thus a new set of regulations have been implemented for housing organisations to be able to provide housing for this sector (AEDES 2003 & 2007).

The core function of the social housing organisations is strongly affected by the governments rent policy. The policy keeps the rental rate at a low level. This is seen by social housing organisations as unnecessary because of the stagnating housing market as well as the fact that artificial lower rent levels are encouraging misuse and not benefiting any social purpose. Instead the organisations advocate a market-orientated rent rate that reflects housing quality and market position (AEDES 2003). In 2007 the Answer to Society framework put forward by the AEDES association proposed an exception for them to manoeuvre within rent policy in exchange for “improving housing affordability for tenants” (AEDES 2007).

The allocation system in the social housing sector is similar to a priority system, with a catalogue of all the available housing and criteria for who can apply for these dwellings. If urban restructuring is undergoing then the displaced people receive a certificate of urgency giving them priority as well as the right for assistance from the housing associations. If the displaced households have a low income then they can receive compensation (housing allowance) if the rent is higher than before, households with moderate income doesn't get this compensation (Bolt et al 2009).

6.5 Social Mixing in Policy

Hulsbergen and Stouten (2001) argue that there has been a divergence between social and physical views within Dutch urban renewal throughout the 70's and onwards. Furthermore the divergence was even greater in the 90's with different approaches of the policies and financial flows in the same. In the Netherlands knowledge about urban renewal and practice has also been diverging due to the emergence of different discourses from different disciplines with emphasis on different aspects. This in turn has affected the formulation of urban renewal policies and its practice negatively since problems are not defined holistically resulting in a limited “problem definition of urban renewal”(2001:328).

Today, building social rented housing is something that has been forsaken since the 90's (Bolt et al 2009). The 70's and 80's urban restructuring policies had housing and social goals, their aim was to stabilize the concentration of low-income households in specific areas by building for the neighbourhood but in the present there has been a shift towards market orientated neighbourhood building (Huslbergen & Stouten 2001:327).

6.5.1 Problem: Skewness in the housing stock

Through government subsidising it became cheaper for the households to stay after the reconstruction of post World War II social housing. The people affected by the reconstruction also had the right to be re-housed in the same area. But a problem appeared afterwards. The middle-class was capitalizing on the opportunity of living in renewed social housing. This problem created “skewness in the housing stock” (Bolt et al 2009). This skewness is illustrated in the matrix below showing a hypothetical tenure pattern in the social rented sector. Higher income groups were taking place in the subsidised cheaper housing. The higher-income groups could move into the expensive part of the housing stock but not the lower-income groups. These situations become political dilemmas.

	Cheap housing	Expensive housing
Lower income group	OK	Problem
Higher income group	Problem	OK

This tenure pattern, with middle class living in subsidised housing, was observed after the renewals in the 70’s and 80’s. To solve this dilemma, a change from affordable to market rates in the social rented sector was made. Assuming that the higher-income groups would move and free up the stock in the social rented sector for lower-income groups. There is evidence that the resulting tenure pattern did change but with a bi-effect: the influx and concentration of ethnic minorities in the areas (Bolt et al 2009).

6.5.2 Solution: Social Mixing

Social housing areas in The Netherlands were subject to a new wave of restructuring by the government through a policy that was adopted in 1997 that aimed to break up segregation and the concentration of low-income households which was the unintended effect of the urban restructuring policies of the 70’s and 80’s (Bolt et al 2009). The White Paper of 1997 was the new policy that would stop the concentration of the poor in the housing areas built after WW II. This policy wanted to reform “the urban housing market at the neighbourhood level in order to prevent the spatial concentration of low-income people” (Ostendorf et al 2001:372). The goal was to mix the population by another intervention in the housing stock as well as physical intervention. This time the shift targeted the composition of the housing area. The assumption here was that the middle class was needed. Therefore by shifting cheap social rented housing in becoming more expensive, the middle class could be enticed to move in. This was done physically by renovating, selling, demolishing and constructing new expensive housing (Bolt et al 2009).

In the 1997 policy a sign of the social mixing concept appears. Why was the middle class needed? Ostendorf et al (2001) examine the empirical evidence behind the 1997 urban restructuring policy that promoted the restructuring of the housing market, especially areas with concentrations of poverty. They highlight that the essence of the housing policies are, (1) in new developments, to diversify the “housing stock” making

it possible for the same development to have mixed price levels and different property owners. In older developments the policy is aimed to (2) replace the housing stock by demolishing parts of the construction and renewing with a variety of property owners and price levels. Such urban restructuring policies are summed up by the authors as “mixing as a solution for poverty” (ibid:373) by targeting neighbourhoods and changing their composition. The ambition is to help people move up the social ladder and thus cure poverty and deprivation by social mixing. But did the social mixing succeed?

6.5.3 Did social mixing work?

In Ostendorf et al (2001), their study defined poverty as an underprivileged person with low education, no work or a partner with a job. These factors can aggravate the chances for upward social mobility. This definition showed that 4% of Amsterdam’s population could count as underprivileged with a dispersed spatial distribution creating “pockets of poverty”. These statistics were taken from a sample with 4000 residents from the age of 18 and older in 1994. The areas with the highest rate of underprivileged people had 17% and the middle ones had 12.5%. Then they tested the proportion of underprivileged people with statistics for the quality of the housing stock which showed that mixed housing does not result in a decrease of the number of underprivileged people. Thus there was no strong empirical evidence that mixing would lead to the reduction of poverty. Instead, the authors recommended that interventions should be focused on the causes of social inequality, such as labour market access and education, rather than its effects. This study was done during the implementation of the policy and thus didn’t evaluate the policy with its visible effects. Nonetheless it evaluated the empirical evidence justifying social mixing.

In the case of Bijlmermeer, the attention on mixing by focusing on the physical aspects has been done to the cost of the position of the deprived residents (Hulsbergen and Stouten 2001).

7. Analysis

The interpretation of the collected material will now take place. The research questions will be used to structure this chapter. In each subchapter the empirical results that coincide with the theme of the question will be bridged together and interpreted so as to yield a better understanding.

7.1 Policy effects at Bijlmermeer

Policy has an important role to play on a neighbourhood level. It lays the foundations for urban renewal and reconstruction. Since the shift to a market orientated neighbourhood building and the growing home-ownership sector the neoliberal ideas seem to be driving. Did policy affect the restructuring of Bijlmermeer? Yes and in a substantial way.

The Urban Renewal Memorandum in 1997 promoted housing differentiation and social mixing as a way of solving poverty. Even though renewal of Bijlmermeer started earlier the ideas of that policy can be seen today. This is evident from the observations of the built environment and the interviews but also from official documents promoting housing differentiation and social mixing. By housing differentiation the housing composition of the area is altered.

Has the policy intensified the gentrification process? What can be said is that it (1) assumes the importance of attracting a middle class, (2) promoted the de-concentration of urban poor i.e. displacing people and (3) implies the need of mixing housing. These have been important ambitions for urban renewal at Bijlmermeer.

Attracting a middle class can be argued to be a new group of gentrifiers to the area. As Voskuilen said the middle class is highly important and the local government is trying to attract them. The resulting displacement together with the change of the neighbourhood and the built environment are what Hammel (2009) and Clark (2005) see as the main consequences of gentrification. By mixing the housing this implies that the composition of the area is also changed. Bijlmermeer had 12 500 housing units which were for council rent (Bijlmermeer Renovation Planning Office 2008). 7000 dwellings will be demolished which will be replaced by 8 000 new dwellings, 70% of these are to “be offered for private sale and higher rent and 30% for council rent” (Molster Stedenbouw 2010). This would mean halving social rented housing in Bijlmermeer, a serious reduction of housing in the subsidised social rented sector.

7.2 Urban Renewal leading to Gentrification at Bijlmermeer?

Is the renewal of Bijlmermeer part of a process of gentrification? The following can be said. There are signs of a gentrification.

Firstly the renewal is leading to a neighbourhood change due to the effects of social mixing and the differentiation of housing types by halving the amount of social rented housing in Bijlmermeer and the changes in the built environment. Previous studies have shown that gentrification does lead to a reduction of dwellings that are affordable for lower-income inhabitants (Hammel 2009). Something that is striking in Bijlmermeer is the great change in the built environment as shown in the renderings (see Ch 5.1).

Also the aim of social mixing and the intention to attract the middle class can be connected to the rise of the creative class hypothesis which has also escalated the role of redevelopment and restructuring to attract the creative class (Hammel 2009).

Secondly, attracting the middle class is seen as critical for the future of the renewal as expressed by Voskuilen at the Bijlmermeer Renovation Planning Office which is evident in the foundations that are being laid (ArenA area) to attract the middle class and which are informed outwards through urban imagery. This middle class has been argued to be the gentrifiers who want to identify with the process of neighbourhood change. Those that want to become part of the changing modern Bijlmermeer, the attractive, creative, multi-cultural and exotic Bijlmermeer.

Voskuilen clearly said and not only once; the middle class are needed. The middle class are definitely the socio-economic group that the Bijlmermeer had always wanted to house but never managed to. Housing organisations have been promoting the change of rents to a more “fair” market orientated rental rate raising the question of how these changes will affect the neighbourhood, because they most certainly will. Bijlmermeer will go from originally supplying housing entirely in the social rented sector to just half. The Bijlmermeer renewal has a more holistic planning approach and lifts the importance of social renewal. Voskuilen welcomes the middle class to Bijlmermeer and promotes the opportunities for talented people to live and work in the area. Something Molster also agrees with but sheds light on the situation when she explains that not a lot of people living in the Bijlmermeer work at the office district. Also Voskuilen, after promoting schools for higher education at the area, explains that the area doesn’t have a gymnasium to offer the large population of the Bijlmermeer. This alongside with the fact that there is no gymnasium where so many people live can be the needle that bursts the social renewal hypothesis.

7.3 Experts perceptions on the displacement of people from Bijlmermeer

The renewal of Bijlmermeer must be praised for directing emphasis on social renewal as Voskuilen says. From the beginning, with the three part approach, social renewal was deemed important. The way of thinking about the reconstruction became more similar to that of urban regeneration, not only about bricks and stones. Residents were not forced to move out from Bijlmermeer. They had relocation choices. Urban renewal has become more humane, or has it?

Voskuilen summed up his opinion on the displacement of people from Bijlmermeer in the following way. “When the renewal of Bijlmermeer started we had to move the inhabitants. [...] When people are not critical, they accept not the best housing and they come here. This area now is a problem area. This is Holendrecht.” These places are becoming headaches deeming them “problem areas” due to the fact that they are areas that only have social rented housing. The study has made aware the strong relationship between social housing areas and the concentration of ethnic minorities. What I find thought provoking and which I credit the barber from Holendrecht who enlightened me is that the perceptions of Voskuilen reproduce the racial and class differences between place when they discuss and talk about Holendrecht and Venserpolder.

Molster chooses to argue that displacement is a necessary step that cannot be avoided. Her perspective has much in common with the ideas in urban restructuring policy which promote the “de-concentration of urban poverty” (Stal & Zuberi 2010) as a way of combating segregation. Molster accepts that renewal may be shifting problems spatially but at the same time renders it a necessary evil. But as Ley writes “Either disinvestment and decay or gentrification and displacement is a false choice for low-income communities” (Slater 2002). When we contrast the appeal for rethinking the choices for low-income neighbourhoods in Ley’s words with Molster’s when she says “I just think areas on this scale with so many of the same dwelling with so many people with problems made all the problems together just too large to handle so you had to do something here. If that means relocating part of them so be it. I know that there are problems now in Holendrecht and Venserpolder.” We can clearly distinguish a differing point of view about the consequences of urban renewal. The words “so be it” in Molster’s answer are alarming. Did people willingly want to be sacrificed for the greater good?

The perception of the neighbourhoods illustrates a duality in juxtaposition to Bijlmermeer which the barber shows when reacting to the label the experts had put on Holendrecht as a problem area. What is also evident in the material are the vast differences between Bijlmermeer and the adjacent neighbourhoods of Venserpolder and Holendrecht. The contrast between these places is big with Bijlmermeer boasting over a business district, shopping, sporting and cultural goods and large investments whereas Venserpolder and Holendrecht consist mainly of housing.

The experts do not neglect the displacement of people to these areas and are open in saying that these places have issues. Molster and Voskuilen are not afraid to criticize their professional sphere when they talk about why these areas are problematic which is good. They seem to have come to an understanding that planning and architecture has had a major role for the lives of the displaced people.

7.4 The character of Venserpolder and Holendrecht and their fate

In regard to displacement pressure, when a neighbourhood is changing and the residents suffer from those changes in the form of dispossession (Slater 2009:303) it has to be said that yes, the residents were inevitably dispossessed by the demolition but they were offered to return to a house in Bijlmermeer when the construction would be finished.

Amongst several choices the people that were affected by the renewal had the option to relocate to Venserpolder and Holendrecht. Voskuilen and Molster as well as

Fainstein (2009) emphasized that the dwellings in these areas aren't that bad. But the areas themselves are badly planned and designed according to Voskuilen and Molster. As Voskuilen explained people were not critical as to how the place was when they moved there. Considering the understanding amongst professionals of how much the built environment can affect people it should be taken into consideration where people are being relocated to.

During my observation I show the character of the two neighbourhoods from my point of view (see Ch 6.3). I also showed how Venserpolder evoked feelings of insecurity. What places are people relocated to? Not only does the study show that people were displaced from Bijlmermeer which was seen as the main problem area but the same renewal has created two new problem areas. It seems that urban designers and planners can in some way be blamed for this as Molster (2011) also says. But they are not entirely to blame. Bolt et al (2009) show displacement doesn't lead to places becoming less segregated and that low-income households are emerging in other areas than the target areas.

Voskuilen also points out that "Holendrecht and Venserpolder have the same problem there is only one type of housing, social rent" and later says how mixing housing could solve it. When asked if there would be a renewal of Holendrecht he said that there were some ideas about a renewal of the area.

It is alarming that people were moved to areas that were as temporarily planned and badly thought through as Bijlmermeer was when first constructed. Now these areas will be in desperate need of renewal due to their deteriorating built environment and social issues which according to Voskuilen is due to the fact that these areas only have social rented housing.

But people live their lives despite the conditions but as the barber in Holendrecht felt, the place would need a renewal, as if it was excluded. But would the barbershop still be there after a renewal?

7.5 Signs of Neoliberalism in the Renewal of Bijlmermeer

The role of housing organisations has become much stronger since the evolution of urban governance. What Harvey calls "public-private partnerships" resembles the partnership between Rochdale housing organisation (the main developer) and the city (the landowner). The partnership commissions the work of the Bijlmermeer Renovation Planning Office whose role is to coordinate the renewal of the area.

This study shows how the above-mentioned partnership can have inner conflicts. This is expressed by Voskuilen (2011) when he talks about how Rochdale's ideas went before the planners and urban designers and that in the end the money was leading instead of the idea of how to build a city. Even though it was a conflict on a personal level it shows what power the housing corporation can exercise as "actors in the social production of the built environment" (Knox & Pinch 2006:122-123) and the mechanisms within public private partnerships which in this case entailed conflicting ideas and a show of power when it came to influencing the end result of the built environment.

It would not be an understatement to claim that the renewal of Bijlmermeer hasn't led to the changing image of the neighbourhood. As shown in the renderings and in the

sub-chapter on urban imagery the new ArenA area and the modern train station are sending signals outwards to higher socioeconomic groups about retail, consumption, entertainment and work opportunities in this area. In my opinion these places are a major pull factor in trying to attract the middle class to Bijlmermeer. The ArenA, business district and Amsterdamse poort areas are the first areas you meet when you arrive in Bijlmermeer by train or metro. These are the new face of the area and as my diary excerpt shows the experience is seductive.

The neighbourhood reputation is tarnished and Voskuilen signals the need for a change in perception of the area. When looking at how these areas are promoted on “Iamsterdam” and “Stadsdeel Zuidoost” the areas promoted are mostly around the ArenA area. The area is promoted with a plethora of attractive adjectives and contrasted to the rest of Amsterdam depicting Bijlmermeer as exotic and attractive to new talented people. As it is argued the consequence of such urban imagery is that it creates a raised attraction of residential areas new groups of people which are keeping the wheels of gentrification turning (Swyngedouw 2002:195). Urban images in this sense can also create and give meaning to space that can be excluding to some and including to others (Mukhtar-Landgren 2005:122).

Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis is to focus on the consequences of urban renewal in Bijlmermeer but also how the renewal has affected parts of Venserpolder and Holendrecht. The approach of this thesis uses the concept of gentrification combined with theory on displacement and neoliberalism.

This thesis wants to contribute with a qualitative approach on understanding the restructuring of Bijlmermeer and its consequences and to complement the, already in majority, quantitative research. Empirical evidence derives from primary sources; interviews, participant observations, field-diary triangulated with secondary (official documents) and tertiary (previous research) sources on the subject.

The main conclusions of this thesis in relation to the research questions are the following. Urban restructuring policy has impregnated the renewal of Bijlmermeer with the emphasis on the importance of attracting a middle class, promoting the de-concentration of urban poor and the need of mixing housing. The renewal has relocated some of its original residents to other badly planned areas. Evidence has shown that the displacement of the people to places such as Venserpolder and Holendrecht has led to these areas becoming problem areas themselves. These areas are also expecting a renewal. It can be problematic to assume that social mixing in policy eradicated the problems of Bijlmermeer or if it's simply relocated them. The renewal of Bijlmermeer shows signs of gentrification. It is hard to say surely if gentrification is carried out by the renewal. More evidence would be needed to say more about it. But the signs point to that there are characteristics of gentrification in the renewal of Bijlmermeer.

The conclusions of this thesis are limited to the case itself but do enhance the understanding of how social mixing is being enforced in urban renewal. The private public partnership of the renewal and the urban imagery of Bijlmermeer bear characteristics to the ideas of the neoliberal city.

It would be interesting to look more into Venserpolder and Holendrecht in the future and conduct group interviews.. The question for further research may be an evaluation of the end-result or to find anti-gentrification movements in the neighbourhood.

References

- AEDES (2003). *Dutch social housing in a nutshell*. Hilversum: Aedes vereniging van woningcorporaties
- AEDES (2007). *Dutch social housing in a nutshell*. Hilversum: Aedes vereniging van woningcorporaties
- Allmendinger, P. (2009). *Planning theory*. 2. ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan
- Atkinson, R. & Bridge, G. (ed.) (2005). *Gentrification in a global context: the new urban colonialism*. London: Routledge
- Beets, G. & van Nimwegen, N. (2000). *Population issues in the Netherlands*. Review of Population and Social Policy 9, p. 87-117
- Bijlmermeer Renovation Planning Office (2008). *The Bijlmermeer Renovation: Facts & figures*, retrieved from:
<http://www.vernieuwdebijlmer.nl/bijlmer11/index.php/component/docman/cat_view/39-english-summary>
- Bolt, G., Hooimeijer, P. & Van Kempen, R. (2002). *Ethnic Segregation in the Netherlands: New Patterns, New Policies?*. Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie, 93: 214–220
- Bolt, G., Van Kempen, R. & Van Weesep, J. (2009). *After urban restructuring: relocations and segregation in Dutch cities*. Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie, 100: 502–518
- Bruijne, D, van Hoogstraten D.W. & Kwekkeboom Luijten, A. (ed.) (n.d). *Amsterdam Southeast*. Bussum: Thoth Publishers
- Cecodhas (n.d). Housing Europe The federation of public, cooperative and social housing. *Fighting segregation*. viewed 28 December 2011 <<http://www.housingeurope.eu/policy-actions/cohesion-and-urban-policies/fighting-segregation>>
- CIA World Factbook (2011). *Netherlands*. Central Intelligence Agency, United States of America, viewed 5 December 2011 < <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/nl.html>>
- Clark, E. (2005). The order and simplicity of gentrification – a political challenge, In: Atkinson, R. & Bridge, G. (ed). (2005) *Gentrification in a global context: the new urban colonialism*, p. 256-264. Abingdon: Routledge
- Clifford, N. & Valentine, G. (ed.) (2003). *Key methods in geography*. London: SAGE
- Cloke, P.J. (ed.) (2004). *Practising human geography*. London: SAGE
- Crang, M. (1998). *Cultural geography*. London: Routledge
- Den Uyl, M. (2008). *Solving Problems – or Merely Shifting them Elsewhere? Contradictions in Urban Renewal in the Bijlmermeer, Amsterdam*. Global Built Environment Review, Vol.6 No.3: 15-33
- Fainstein, S. S. (2009). *Mega-projects in New York, London and Amsterdam*. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 32: 768-785
- Flowerdew, R. & Martin, D. (ed.) (2005). *Methods in human geography: a guide for students doing a research project*. 2nd edition. Harlow, England: Prentice Hall
- Geurs, K.T. & van Wee, B. (2006). *Ex-post evaluation of thirty years of compact urban development in the Netherlands*. Urban Studies vol. 43, no. 1, p. 139-160
- Haartsen, T. & Venhorst, V. (2010). *Planning for decline: Anticipating on population decline in The Netherlands*. Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie 101 (2), p. 218-227
- Hammel, D. J. (2009). *Gentrification*, In: Kitchin, Rob and Thrift, Nigel (ed.) (2009). International Encyclopedia of Human Geography, Elsevier: Oxford, 360-367
- Harvey, D. (1989). *From managerialism to entrepreneurialism: the transformation in urban governance in late capitalism*. *Geografiska Annaler*. 71B, 3-17.
- Hulsbergen, E & Stouten, P. (2001). *Urban renewal and regeneration in the Netherlands Integration lost or subordinate?*. City, 5:3, 325-337

- Iamsterdam (2009a). *Amsterdam's Bijlmer – A multi-cultural facet of contrasts*, Amsterdam Tourism and Convention Board (ATCB) viewed 28 December 2011 <<http://www.iamsterdam.com/en/visiting/placestogo/bijlmer>>
- Iamsterdam (2009b). *Zuidoost*, City of Amsterdam and the Expatcenter viewed 28 December 2011 <<http://www.iamsterdam.com/en/living/city-of-amsterdam/amsterdam-city-districts/stadsdeel-zuid-oost/zuid-oost>>
- KEI (2011). Kenniscentrum stedelijke vernieuwing. *English Summary* viewed 28 December 2012 <http://www.kei-centrum.nl/view.cfm?page_id=1949>
- Knox, P. L. & Pinch, S. (2006). *Urban social geography: an introduction*. 5. ed. Harlow: Prentice Hall
- Larner, W. (2009). *Neoliberalism, Urban*. In: Kitchin, Rob and Thrift, Nigel (ed.) (2009). *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, Elsevier: Oxford, 385-390
- Ley, D. (1996). *The New Middle Class and the Remaking of the Central City*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lund Hansen & Wennerhag (2011). *David Harvey: Ojämlighetens nya geografi: texter om stadens och rummets förändringar i den globala kapitalismen*. Stockholm: Atlas
- Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (2006). *National Spatial Strategy. Summary. Creating space for development*.
- Molster Stedenbouw (2010). *De Vernieuwing van de Bijlmermeer*, Vooijs, Bert (ed).
- Mukhtar-Landgren, D. (2005). *Den delade staden – välfärd för alla i kusnapsstaden Malmö. Fronesis*. 18, 120-131.
- OpenStreetMap (2011). © OpenStreetMap contributors, CC-BY-SAMap data retrieved: 21 December 2011 <<http://www.openstreetmap.org>> <<http://www.creativecommons.org>> Edited by author on ArcMap and Paint.
- Ostendorf, W. Musterd, S & De Vos, S. (2001). *Social Mix and The Neighbourhood Effect. Policy Ambitions and Empirical Evidence*, *Housing Studies*, 16:3, 371-380
- Paulen, F & Amsterdamse Federatie van Woningcorporaties. (1992). *The Amsterdam social housing atlas*. Amsterdam: Amsterdamse Federatie van Woningcorporaties
- Priemus, H. (2004). *Housing and New Urban Renewal: Current Policies in the Netherlands*. *International Journal of Housing Policy*. 4:2, 229-246
- Priemus, H. (2004). *The path to successful urban renewal: current policy debates in the Netherlands*. *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 19, 199-209
- Projectbureau Vernieuwing Bijlmermeer (2011). Kaart 4 woonomgeving, viewed: 21 December 2011 <<http://vernieuwdebijlmer.nl/bijlmer11/index.php/kaart/woonmilieus>>
- Projectbureau Vernieuwing Bijlmermeer (2011b). Demolitions until 2010, viewed: 28 December 2012 <http://vernieuwdebijlmer.nl/bijlmer11/index.php/kaart/totaaloverzicht-sloop>
- Projectbureau Vernieuwing Bijlmermeer (2011c). New constructions from 1992 – 2012, viewed: 28 December 2012 <<http://vernieuwdebijlmer.nl/bijlmer11/index.php/kaart/totaaloverzicht-nieuwbouw>>
- Slater, T. (2002). *Gentrification Web*. Lycos viewed: 20 December 2011 <<http://members.multimania.co.uk/gentrification/>>
- Slater, T. (2009). *Ghettos*, In: Kitchin, Rob and Thrift, Nigel (ed.) (2009). *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, Elsevier: Oxford, 492-499
- Smith, N. (1996). *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. London: Routledge.
- Stadsdeel Zuidoost (n.d). *Ontdek Zuidoost als*, Department of Communications South District, City of Amsterdam viewed: 28 December 2011 <http://www.zuidoost.amsterdam.nl/ontdek_zuidoost_als/>
- Stal, G.Y. and Zuberi, D.M.(2010). *Ending the cycle of poverty through socio-economic integration: A comparison of Moving to Opportunity (MTO) in the United States and the Bijlmermeer Revival Project in the Netherlands*. *Cities*. 27, 3-12
- Swyngedouw, E., Moulaert, F. & Rodrigues, A. (2002). *Neoliberal urbanization in Europe: large scale urban development projects and the new urban policy*. *Antipode*. 34, 543-577.

- Van Beckhoven, E. & van Kempen, R.(2003). *Social effects of urban restructuring: a case study in Amsterdam and Utrecht, the Netherlands*. Housing Studies, 18:6, 853-875
- Van Dijk, H. (1999). *Twentieth-century architecture in the Netherlands*. Rotterdam: 010 publ.

Interviews

- Molster, Annemieke. 2011-12-2 Urban Designer worked previously at Kraaijvanger Urbis and now self-employed at Molster Stedenbouw.
- Voskuilen, Evert Van. 2011-11-30 Urban Designer at Bijlmermeer Renovation Project Office.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Example of Interview Questions

Questions for interview:

Bijlmermeer

- ✓ Which is the expected outcome?
- ✓ Which are the main challenges?
- ✓ Which is your planning approach, methods & processes?
- ✓ How does the Bijlmermeer look like in 20 years?
- ✓ How many have moved during the renewal?

Venserpolder & Holendrecht

- ✓ Could you describe the neighborhood?
- ✓ Is a renewal of the area expected?
- ✓ According to research it shows that urban renewal is shifting problems rather than solving them, what is your take on this?
- ✓ What are the limitations of renewal?
- ✓ What is your view on social mixing?

Good examples

- ✓ Where has inspiration been taken for the renewal?
- ✓ What makes this project special in terms of planning practice?

Displacement

- ✓ Reference to statement from article. There is critique towards the project that it has lead to the displacement of low-income households from the hood to other deprived environments and the dissolve of communities, what do you say towards this?
- ✓ Have the social objectives become subordinate?

Structure & Agency

- ✓ What were your influences when you were going to approach your task of renewing the neighborhoods?
- ✓ What was the plan a reflection of? (needs of society, local desires or central government, powerful economic forces)

Role of planner

- ✓ Would you consider yourself as a planner, a political and neutral?
- ✓ What benefits does your professional status give you?
- ✓ What are your most important roles as a planner?