# NAVIGATING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

*How youths deal with displacement and life in a deprived neighbourhood*

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# NAVIGATING THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

*How youths deal with displacement and life in a deprived neighbourhood*

## NAVIGEREN DOOR DE BUURT

*Hoe jongeren omgaan met gedwongen verhuizing en het leven in een achterstandsbuurt*

*(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)*

**Proefschrift**

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door

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geboren op 23 maart 1986
te Noordoostpolder

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

*Youths, neighbourhood effects and displacement*

## 1.1 Background

'Children in Rotterdam and The Hague are worst off' reads the title of a newspaper article about the results of the annual 'Kids count' study in the Netherlands (Pietersen, 2014; Steketee et al., 2014). According to the study, almost 200,000 children (0-22 years) in the Netherlands live in poverty, and a large proportion of them are growing up in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. According to many policymakers, this is a worrisome development as living in a deprived neighbourhood has a negative impact on children's and youths' wellbeing and social outcomes. Many scholars also point to the negative consequences of growing up in a deprived neighbourhood. It has been shown to have a negative influence on several social outcomes, such as education, behavioural problems, aspirations and job opportunities (Andersson, 2004; Kauppinen, 2007; Kintrea et al., 2011; Nieuwenhuis, 2014; Sykes and Musterd, 2010). Young people in deprived neighbourhoods do worse than their peers in 'better' neighbourhoods because of such factors as high levels of crime, negative role models, peer influences, the presence of negative social norms and values, stigmatisation and the lack of institutional resources (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Sampson, 2008).

As a reaction to these growing concerns about the negative consequences of living in a deprived neighbourhood, Dutch municipalities have adopted several policies to improve the living conditions of the youths and adults who live in these neighbourhoods. One such policy takes the form of urban restructuring: the demolition of inexpensive and often low quality social housing units and the construction of more expensive dwellings in order to achieve a 'better' social mix, particularly in terms of income (Galster et al., 2010; Uitermark, 2003). For youths, such a social mix is assumed to lead to more exposure to positive role models and less exposure to negative ones.

One of the consequences of this policy is the displacement of large groups of often low-income households. Studies among adults generally show that although such a move leads to better housing conditions (Brooks et al., 2005; Doff and Kleinhans, 2011; Joseph and Chaskin, 2010; Posthumus et al., 2013; Varady et al., 2001), it also has potential negative consequences such as disrupted social networks and difficulties integrating into the new neighbourhood (Clampet-Lundquist, 2004;

Popkin et al., 2004). Whereas a considerable number of studies have investigated the experiences of adults, we know little about how young people experience this policy of urban restructuring and the consequent forced relocation, or about how they perceive and use their neighbourhood. Policymakers and researchers often fail to include youths' perceptions about urban restructuring and their environment, and when they do attempt to do so, they frequently use adult views as proxies for young peoples' perceptions instead of asking the youths themselves.

Youths are a particularly important group in the neighbourhood, as they spend considerable time in the neighbourhood; maintain a large proportion of their social contacts there; and have a considerable impact on how people experience certain neighbourhood settings. Youths' perceptions, however, are largely understudied and misinterpreted. A person's teens are a period of increasing independence and autonomy (Matthews et al., 1998), and as such youths' interpretation of and behaviour in neighbourhood space differs from that of younger children and adults. In addition, youths are an important group to study since dominant social and political ideas, often represented through the media, impact upon youths' experiences and behaviour, for example though stereotyping and social exclusion (Weller, 2006). Paying more attention to the perceptions and needs of youths and the obstacles they face, could result in less problematic behaviour or improved social outcomes. Youths have the best understanding of the realities of their own lives and as such have much to offer policy makers. Developing youth policies together with the youths themselves has a much greater chance of success, as these policies will have greater ownership and legitimacy amongst youth (Youth Employment Network, 2007).

These concerns provided the rationale for this study, which had two aims. First, if we want to fully understand the complexity of the effects of the neighbourhood and displacement on youths, we need more knowledge about youths' perceptions about and use of their neighbourhood. Therefore, the first aim was to provide a *detailed description of how youths (12-21 years) perceive and deal with growing up in a deprived neighbourhood.* Secondly, it is important to recognise that the relation between youths and their neighbourhood is often not a stable one. Residential mobility, and particularly forced relocation, can have a large impact on youths' lives. Therefore, the second aim of this study was to provide insight into *how youths perceive and deal with displacement as a result of urban restructuring.*

## 1.2 Neighbourhood effects on youths

The consequences of living in neighbourhoods with a concentration of poverty have been studied extensively in recent decades. In these neighbourhood effect studies, the central question is the extent to which the physical and social characteristics of a neighbourhood influence an individual's social contacts, norms and values, opportunities and choices, and how this happens. Neighbourhoods are believed to be particularly relevant for young people, as most of them spend a considerable amount of their time in the neighbourhood (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1993; Sykes and Musterd, 2010). Moreover, the teenage years are seen as a period in which socialisation takes place; youths learn the social and cultural norms, customs and ideologies of the society of which they are a part (Erikson, 1968). Through socialisation, youths develop self-awareness, identity and personality; in other words, they develop a sense of who they are. Youths' environments are believed to be particularly important in this context. Harding (2009, p. 447), for example, describes youths' socialisation as a process whereby *'individuals learn from, react to, and interact with their environment, choosing whether to internalise certain norms and adjust their behaviour accordingly'*.

Several mechanisms behind these neighbourhood effects have been theorised and empirically tested. The most common mechanisms, and how they apply to youths specifically, are elaborated upon below. In the research literature on the way in which living in a deprived neighbourhood might negatively influence social outcomes, one mechanism that is mentioned is through social networks (Galster, 2005; Sampson and Groves, 1989). It is hypothesised that individuals in more affluent neighbourhoods are more likely to have access to beneficial social networks that can provide access to information, and educational and occupational opportunities, compared to people living in deprived neighbourhoods. Youths generally have a higher level of network-localness than adults, as their action space is often restricted by parental regulations or by financial or practical constraints, such as not having a car or the money to use public transport (Blokland, 2003; Valentine, 1997; Van Kempen and Wissink, 2014). The impact of a neighbourhood on the composition of youths' social networks is therefore likely to be larger than on that of adults.

The limited social networks of individuals in deprived neighbourhoods are assumed to result not only in less access to resources, information and opportunities, but also in the reproduction of certain norms and values. It is argued that people develop norms and values about what is appropriate behaviour through interaction with others. Neighbourhood socioeconomic characteristics can influence the type of role models to which individuals are exposed (Galster, 2005; Lupton, 2006). Youths living in deprived neighbourhoods that are characterised by social problems such as unemployment, high levels of school drop-out and crime might adopt similar deviant behaviours because they have come to view such behaviours as normal through their interaction with neighbours. This socialisation can occur within one's personal social network, but can also take place in the public domain. In other words, norms and values are assumed to be transferred not only through direct interactions, but also through sharing the same space with others and seeing their behaviour. Again, because youths have a high level of network localness as well as a relatively small action space compared to adults, the effect of the neighbourhood on youths' norms and values is likely to be quite large. Moreover, young people are generally highly vulnerable to peer pressure (De Jong, 2007; Steinberg and Monahan, 2007). Steinberg and Monahan (2007) indicate that as youths become independent of their parents they turn to peers to fill this void. This increased importance of peers induces youths to care more about what their friends think of them and to be more likely to change their behaviour in order to fit in and avoid being rejected. The impact of neighbourhood-based networks might therefore be higher for youths than for adults.

A third explanation focuses on neighbourhood disorganisation and lack of collective efficacy. Firstly, social disorganisation could lead to higher levels of risk amongst youths. A large body of research into neighbourhood effects has shown that living in disorganised neighbourhoods can lead to high-risk behaviours (Ingoldsby and Shaw, 2002; Kling et al., 2005; Oberwittler, 2004) as well as to being a victim of crime and violence (Sampson and Lauritsen, 1990; Van Wilsem et al., 2006). Further, social disorganisation might lead to restricted mobility and use of public space because of the fear of being victimised (Pain, 1991; Sandberg and Tollefsen, 2010). Secondly, the negative effect of living in a deprived neighbourhood is mediated by a lack of mutual trust and shared expectations

among residents; in other words, by a lack of collective efficacy (Morenoff et al., 2001; Sampson and Groves, 1989; Sampson et al., 1997). It is assumed that in the case of deviant behaviour, residents are less likely to intervene in neighbourhoods where people mistrust and fear each other (Sampson et al., 1997). Moreover, in neighbourhoods with high levels of disorganisation, adults might put less effort and time into stimulating young people to do well (Ainsworth, 2002). As a consequence, youths in such neighbourhoods are hypothesised to have fewer opportunities to engage in developmentally enriching experiences, and are more likely to engage in deviant activities (Wacquant, 1996). Furthermore, it is assumed that in neighbourhoods with limited adult supervision the social influences of peers may become stronger than parental influences, which might result in a higher chance of being influenced by possible deviant norms, values and behaviours of these peers (Ainsworth, 2002).

A fourth way in which living in a deprived neighbourhood can influence individual social outcomes is related to the institutional resources in the neighbourhood. Neighbourhood institutions can form a resource for residents in terms of support and education and can facilitate the formation of social networks. The quality of these institutions can vary with neighbourhood context. In the case of youths, the quality of schools is particularly important. In the Dutch context, Sykes and Musterd (2011) show that neighbourhood effects on educational outcomes are for a large part mediated through the school context, which means that schools can be seen as a pathway through which the influence of the neighbourhood is transmitted. In addition to researching the role of schools, many studies pay attention to other institutional resources and public services in the neighbourhood, such as community centres, welfare organisations and youth centres. In the American context, the focus generally is on the absence of good quality institutional resources in deprived neighbourhoods due to low investments in these institutions (Galster, 2012). By contrast, in countries with a more extensive welfare system, such as the Netherlands, access to resources is not always restricted in more deprived neighbourhoods (see Macintyre et al., 2008). Moreover, one can question whether the presence of many neighbourhood institutions is exclusively beneficial, as they can also lock residents into the neighbourhood and their own social networks, which again might reinforce the negative socialisation effects (Pinkster, 2009).

Finally, neighbourhood effects can work through the negative stereotyping of deprived neighbourhoods and those who live in them (Bauder, 2001, 2002; Wacquant, 1993). Institutions and employers may associate living in a deprived neighbourhood with social and cultural pathology, and might consider people from these neighbourhoods incapable of educational and labour market achievement (Bauder, 2001). These ideas may impact on employers' hiring decisions (Holzer, 1996; Moss and Tilly, 1996), may guide institutional practices, and may discourage young people from doing well at school or work (Bauder, 2001).

Although these mechanisms give a general overview of the ways in which neighbourhood effects might work, studies could benefit from more insight into the complexity of these mechanisms. Lupton (2003, p. 14) argues that so far neighbourhood effects studies assume '*similar impacts for individuals regardless of who they are and how they are connected*'. In the same line of argument, Small and Feldman (2012, p. 6) state that '*…researchers should assume that neighbourhood poverty has different effects not merely (as many have shown) on different outcomes but also, and more importantly, on different kinds of individuals …*'. They call for more attention to the heterogeneity of neighbourhood effects and the inclusion of ethnographic evidence. This thesis draws further on these ideas by acknowledging that the effect of the neighbourhood on youths' social outcomes is not as straightforward as is often assumed and that effects can differ between individuals, for example as result of their perceptions and use of space.

## 1.3 The knowledge gaps addressed in this thesis

The fact that outcomes of neighbourhood effect studies are heterogenic demands a more thorough understanding of the complex processes through which neighbourhoods influence the wellbeing of youths. This thesis provides insight into these complexities by addressing three gaps in existing neighbourhood effect studies: (1) youths' perceptions of forced residential mobility, (2) youths' negotiation of the neighbourhood and (3) the role of parents.

### 1.3.1 Youths' perceptions of forced residential mobility

Firstly, we cannot see neighbourhood effects as distinct from residential mobility. Families can move several times during the life course. These moves can be either voluntary or forced, as is the case with displacement resulting from urban restructuring. Furstenberg and Hughes (1997) suggest that residential mobility – and particularly reasons for moving, length of time in the neighbourhood and characteristics of the previous neighbourhood(s) – is crucial to understanding the effects of neighbourhoods on children. Moving complicates the studies of neighbourhood effects because it means that youths will get different 'dosages' of either positive or negative influences from different neighbourhoods (Galster, 2012). A young person who has lived in a neighbourhood for only a short period of time, is likely to be less influenced by that neighbourhood compared to a young person who has lived there all his or her life (Galster, 2012; Musterd et al., 2012). At the same time, youths and their families are likely to continue to be influenced by their previous neighbourhood, due to the lingering effects of previous socialisation or because they maintain social ties with people in the old neighbourhood (Hedman, 2011; Miltenburg and Van der Meer, 2014).

Secondly, one has to take into account the effect of the move itself. A move might lead to improved housing outcomes or better access to resources, but might also disrupt existing social networks (Clampet-Lundquist, 2007). Crowder and South (2003), for example, show that youths who had recently moved to a deprived neighbourhood were more likely to drop out of school than youths who had lived in that neighbourhood for a longer period. Their explanation for this outcome is that residential mobility had led to a disruption of the ties with people and institutions that had provided access to and support for educational opportunities. Fauth and colleagues (2007) further suggest that in the context of the housing mobility experiment in Yonkers, NY, low-income movers were more exposed to stereotyping and discrimination in their new, low-poverty neighbourhood than comparable families who did not move. It is therefore crucial to take the effects of such a move into account when studying neighbourhood effects on youths, especially from the perspective of youths themselves. Little is known about how youths experience their move or how they deal with this move (for example, whether they seek new activities in the new neighbourhood, or stick to activities

in the old neighbourhood). Particularly little is known about youths' experiences of displacement as a result of urban restructuring. The first two chapters of this thesis fill these gaps. They provide insight into how forced residential mobility is perceived by youths; how this influences their social outcomes in terms of housing, social networks and leisure; and how youths exercise bounded agency in the context of a forced relocation.

### 1.3.2 The negotiation of the neighbourhood

A second shortcoming of many neighbourhood effect studies is that they imply an unconditional, one-way relationship from neighbourhood to youths' social outcomes. Little attention is paid to the ways in which youths can negotiate neighbourhood influences and react to the neighbourhood in a reflexive way. I therefore argue that studies on neighbourhood effects on youths should pay more attention to how the development of youths is the result of an iterative process between youths and the settings in which they participate. This also means that the impact of the neighbourhood is not uniform across youths, but depends on what settings young people decide to use, how they use them and how they form social networks there.

Fortunately, in recent decades there has been an expansion of interest within geography in issues concerning children and young people. Particularly influential have been the ideas of 'children's geographies' and 'new' social studies of childhood. This new approach was a reaction against the dominant models in developmental psychology and sociology that saw adults as mature, rational and competent, and children as 'human becomings' rather than 'human beings' (Qvortrup, 1994) who lacked rationality, competence and autonomy.

Children's geographies and the new social studies of childhood recognise young people as active agents who have their own activities, their own spaces and their own perceptions (Corsaro, 2005; Qvortrup, 1994). Children and youths are increasingly seen as *'active in the construction and determination of their own social lives, of those around them and of the societies in which they live'* (James and Prout, 1997, p. 8) and as such seen as agents with valuable perspectives that should be the focus of social research (Holt and Holloway, 2006). These perspectives might

differ from those of adults. Matthews and Limb (1999) note, for example, public spaces such as parks, squares or street corners, can have a different meaning for youths than for adults: for a young person such a place might be a space for meeting friends and for self-display, while for adults it may merely be a place to pass through. Similarly, Emmelkamp (2004) states that certain places – such as places to spend one's leisure time – can be perceived by parents as unsafe, whereas youths experience them as adventurous or even safe places. These meanings can also differ between groups of youths, depending on factors such as age, gender and culture (Karsten, 2003).

One has to be careful, however, not to allocate too much power to the agency of young people. Many empirical studies provide examples of children and young people as competent social actors, but often do not question what exactly such agency entails for different groups of children and youths. Little is known about the degree, nature and impact of youths' agency (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin, 2007). Further, it is often overlooked that youths, like adults, do not escape structural constraints. When youths want to exercise their agency they have to deal with numerous obstacles. What makes youths an interesting group to study in this context is their multiple social positions within inter-generational and intra-generational relationships (James, 2009; Mayall and Zeiher, 2003; Tisdall, 2012). For example, power struggles often occur between groups for control over public space, including various neighbourhood settings (Sandercock, 2008), such as struggles between youths and adults, between groups of youths, or between boys and girls (Chapter 5). Moreover, power struggles also take place within the family between the child and the parents (Chapter 7). These theories about the difficulties that youths have to overcome have, however, been given less consideration in recent studies compared to the theories on youths' agency. The emphasis that is placed on agency potentially limits the analysis of the obstacles and the power relations that also influence youths' behaviour.

To sum up, although a considerable number of studies have shown that youths are potentially competent social actors, there is still a need to consider which factors enable and which factors limit their agency (Bordonaro and Payne, 2012). This tension between agency and structure is investigated in this thesis by focusing on how youths can negotiate neighbourhood settings.

### 1.3.3 The role of parents

A final factor that is missing from neighbourhood effect research on youths is the role of parents. Parents can play an important moderating role between the neighbourhood context and youths' social outcomes. Parents can adopt certain parenting strategies in reaction to perceived neighbourhood threats and opportunities and as such buffer their children against negative neighbourhood influences (Furstenberg, 1999; Jarrett and Jefferson, 2003). A study by Galster and Santiago (2006), for example, shows that the majority of parents in deprived neighbourhoods in Denver perceive negative neighbourhood effects on their children, and that these parents develop several strategies to protect their children from negative influences. Such strategies include protective strategies – such as solicitation and control – and promotive strategies, such as seeking opportunities outside the neighbourhood.

A number of mechanisms that explain the relationship between the neighbourhood and parenting practices can be distinguished. Firstly, children in deprived neighbourhoods are assumed to have a higher likelihood of coming into contact with negative adult and peer role models. This might result in parents being more worried that their child will develop deviant norms and values and engage in antisocial behaviour, which influences their parenting practices (Pinkster, 2009). Secondly, parents in deprived neighbourhoods might also worry that high levels of crime and violence in the neighbourhood could lead to their children being victimised, which again influences their parenting practices (Pinkster, 2009). Thirdly, the low levels of social control in the neighbourhood might make it more difficult for parents to monitor their children and reinforce desirable social norms (Pinkster, 2009; Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999). Finally, because the institutional resources in the neighbourhood are less available and of a lower quality, parents in deprived neighbourhoods might have fewer opportunities to find developmentally enriching experiences for their children (Galster, 2012).

Parents themselves can also be influenced by the neighbourhood, and as such mediate neighbourhood effects. First of all, parents may adopt parenting strategies that are consistent with neighbourhood norms. A study by Cohen (1981) shows that neighbourhood norms and values are among the most important

determinants of individual beliefs about parenting. This means that parents in deprived neighbourhoods that are characterised by numerous social problems, might transmit certain deviant norms and values and behaviour to their children because these norms and values are considered 'normal' in their neighbourhood. Secondly, living in a deprived neighbourhood may affect parent's physical and mental health, which is assumed to lead to more negative parenting practices (Simons et al., 2002).

Although several studies on parenting in deprived neighbourhoods have been conducted, little attention has been paid to the complexity of the relationship between parenting, the neighbourhood and youth outcomes. Based on their review of the literature on neighbourhood effects on children and youths, Burton and Jarrett (2000) conclude that the place of families in this field of study has remained 'on the margins'. In this thesis, two specific shortcomings are addressed. Firstly, the ways in which parents moderate or mediate the effects of the neighbourhood on their children are often seen as being quite homogenous. Many studies have ignored the diversity in perceptions of, and responses to, neighbourhood conditions (Roosa et al., 2003). Little attention has been paid to subjective neighbourhood perceptions, even though they are likely to play an important role in determining parenting strategies as well as the behaviour of children (Dahl et al., 2010; Silk et al., 2004). Secondly, these studies have failed to acknowledge that parents and children might perceive the same neighbourhood differently (Burton et al., 1997). Parental strategies might be in conflict with youths' ideas about their neighbourhood and their ability to navigate the place. Furthermore, perceptions of risk and safety are likely to be fluid rather than fixed, as they can be negotiated within the family. Youths often resist and find gaps in parental regulations, and as such should be seen as active agents within the family context.

In short, for a full understanding of neighbourhood effects on young people it is crucial to take into account the complex relationship between parenting, the neighbourhood and youths (see also Chaskin and Baker, 2006) and to approach this issue from the perspective of both the parents and the youths. It is thereby essential not to consider the family and the neighbourhood as two separate contexts influencing youth outcomes, but to be conscious of the interplay between the neighbourhood, the family, and the personal characteristics and agency of the

youths themselves.

## 1.4 Research approach

The aim of this study was to provide a more thorough understanding of the complex ways in which growing up in a deprived neighbourhood influences youths' lives, and to fill the three abovementioned knowledge gaps, namely about the role of residential mobility, the negotiation of the neighbourhood context and the role of parents. The central research question was:

> *How do youths perceive and deal with displacement and living in a deprived neighbourhood?*

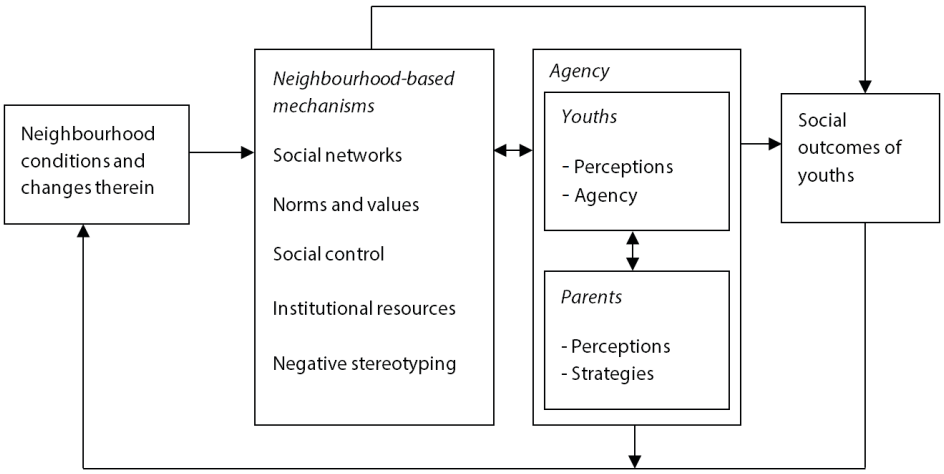


**Figure 1.1**: Conceptual model

Figure 1.1 shows the conceptual model underpinning this research. It is partly inspired by Pinkster's (2009) conceptual model for neighbourhood effects on labour market outcomes and Sykes' (2011) model on relations between youths, neighbourhoods and schools. The model shows how neighbourhood characteristics can influence the social outcomes of youths. Neighbourhood effects are assumed to work through neighbourhood-based mechanisms (social networks, norms and values, social control, institutional resources and negative

stereotyping). It is assumed that a changing neighbourhood will lead to a change in these mechanisms, and hence to a change in social outcomes. This can work in two ways: the same neighbourhood can change over time, and a young person's neighbourhood can change because of residential mobility. The latter is the focus of Chapters 2 and 3, which pay attention to the changes resulting from forced residential mobility.

The conceptual model further illustrates that the ways in which these neighbourhood mechanisms impact on youths' social outcomes are dependent on how both youths and their parents perceive and react to these mechanisms, as is indicated by the arrow between the mechanisms box and the agency box. Youths' social outcomes in a neighbourhood are thus the outcome of the complex interaction between neighbourhood-based mechanisms, youths' perceptions and agency, and parents' perceptions and parenting strategies. This complexity is untangled in Chapters 4 to 7.

Finally, our model adds a relational dimension to existing neighbourhood effect studies by including the reciprocal relationships between people and neighbourhoods. In other words, it includes how neighbourhood space is created through interactions between youths, their parents and neighbourhood settings. Through their agency and social outcomes, youths and their parents can change the neighbourhood again. This is indicated by the arrows going from the social outcomes and the agency box back to the neighbourhood conditions box. This reciprocal relationship between youths and their parents and the neighbourhood is also part of Chapters 4 to 7.

### 1.4.1 Defining 'youths'

In this study, 'youths' refers to young people in the 12 to 21 years age group. The term 'youths' instead of 'adolescents' was chosen because the latter places too much emphasis on developmental tasks and processes shared by all young people. Whereas studies into adolescence mainly see young people as 'adults in the making', this study conceptualises youths as an important group to study in itself and allows for differences between youths as well as for the important role of social and cultural context (Lesko, 2001; Skelton, 2002; Wyn and White, 1997).

'Youth' should thus be seen as a socially constructed concept of which the age markers might differ between cultures. Nevertheless, some age markers had to be chosen for youths to be included in this study. For the studies in the Netherlands the lower limit of 12 years of age was chosen, because at that age young people normally leave primary school and embark upon secondary education. This change is usually accompanied by a change in activity space: important activities and networks – such as school or friendships – are now likely to be located not only close to home, but also in a much wider environment. Such a changing perspective could influence youths' opinions about their neighbourhood and their displacement. In the Chicago study the lower limit was set at 14, as this is the age in which most youths enrol in secondary school. The upper age limit for the research group differed slightly between the various projects that made up the overall study. For the research on displacement the upper limit was set at 21 years, because especially after the age of 21 there is a fair chance that at least some will have already left the parental home and taken up employment or entered higher education. Such important changes may influence opinions on the housing situation. For the other projects in the study, the limit was set at 19 years as this is the age at which almost all youths would have left secondary school[1].

### 1.4.2 Doing research with youths

Within the new social studies of childhood, it is increasingly recognised that carrying out research with young people is different from doing research with adults. Punch (2002) identifies three differences. Firstly, because of young peoples' marginalised position in society, there might be unequal power relations between the researcher and the respondent, even more so than in studies with adult respondents. Secondly, since the researcher holds all kinds of assumptions about the position of young people in society, this can influence the methods that are chosen and the ways in which the data are interpreted. Thirdly, researchers have to keep in mind the intrinsic differences between young people and adults. For example, young people have a different experience of the world, they use a different vocabulary and have a different understanding of words, and they may have a shorter attention span.

A way to manage the gap between children and adult researchers is to actively involve children in the research process (Morrow and Richards, 1996). This can be done by using methods that allow young people to be active participants in the research process and that offer them the maximum opportunity to express their views (Davis, 1998). Particularly within children's and youths' studies, researchers have increasingly advocated the use of methods that are fun and appropriate for the research group (Punch, 2002). As a result, 'task-centred' activities, such as drawing and photography, have become common in qualitative research with children and youths.

Even though innovative approaches like drawing and photography offer great opportunities for data collection, some critical remarks have to be made. First of all, such an approach might position children as 'less than adults' by assuming that they are not capable of engaging with the methods used with adults. Punch (2002) states that it is somewhat paradoxical that researchers who embrace the new social studies of childhood have emphasised the competence of children, while highlighting the importance of special, child-appropriate methods, assuming that children would not be able to comprehend the methods used for research with adults. Secondly, researchers need to be careful not to misinterpret the drawings or pictures. Researchers should avoid adult interpretations and instead allow the young people themselves to talk about what the drawing means to them (Backett-Milburn and McKie, 1999). Rather than being evidence in their own right, drawings and pictures could best be used as ice breakers or to aid recall of an event (Harden et al., 2000; Veltman and Browne, 2002).

### 1.4.3 Methods

A multi-method design that combined qualitative and quantitative methods was used in this study (see Table 1.1). The two types of research are considered complementary, as each covers different aspects of how youths perceive, are influenced by and deal with their deprived neighbourhood and displacement.

*Quantitative data: survey*

The data for Chapters 2 and 3 were gathered by means of a survey carried out in seven neighbourhoods in Utrecht (the Netherlands) where urban restructuring[2]

had taken place. The database of the municipality of Utrecht and data from the Mitros housing association were used to find households that had been forced to move because of demolition activities in the period 1998-2009 and that included youths who had been between 12 and 21 years of age at the time of the move. The same municipal database was used to find youths from the same neighbourhoods who had not been forced to move to serve as our control group. The questionnaire contained questions about objective changes as well youths' opinions about these changes. Bivariate tests were used to compare the housing, leisure and social network situation of youths before and after the move, and to compare the research group and the control groups. Further, a number of logistic and multiple regression analyses were used to determine which factors influenced the changes in dwelling and neighbourhood conditions, social networks and leisure activities.

*Qualitative data: in-depth interviews, photography and mental mapping*
In addition to the survey, intensive qualitative fieldwork was conducted in deprived neighbourhoods in Utrecht, Rotterdam and Chicago in the period 2009-2014. The research sample for the qualitative part of this research can be divided into two groups: youths and parents.

*Youths:* In all three research areas (Utrecht, Rotterdam and Chicago), in-depth interviews among youths were conducted. The questions that were asked were dependent on the research aim in each city, but included such issues as youths' perceptions about forced relocation, their perception about their old and new neighbourhood, their socio-spatial behaviour, their peer group, their school and their family context. General questions about their individual and family background were also asked. Qualitative methods were chosen because such methods are the best way to investigate the perceptions of youths, the motives behind their behaviour and the role of context. Qualitative methods are more likely to reflect the life worlds of youths themselves compared to quantitative methods (Ungar and Nichol, 2002). The interviews were transcribed in their entirety and a standardised QDA program (NVivo) was used to code and analyse them.

Furthermore, the youths in Rotterdam and Chicago participated in a mental mapping exercise: they were asked to draw a mental map representing the places and people that were important to them. The advantage of mental mapping is that

it allows youths to express themselves with little intervention from the researcher. It also provides insight into the relative importance of places and people in their everyday lives (Young and Barrett, 2001).

Finally, the youths in Rotterdam were asked to use their camera phones to photograph the places that were important to them, and the places that they liked or did not like. There are number of advantages to using photography as a research tool. Firstly, it allowed the youths to show the places that they, rather than the researcher, thought were important. The absence of the researcher during the photography exercise also resulted in less self-consciousness among respondents compared to other methods. Secondly, using photography made the youths 'partners' in research as well as more aware of the social processes and problems in their neighbourhood. Finally, the pictures were used as a starting point in interviews and as such functioned as an icebreaker and helped to structure the interview (Lewis and Lindsay, 2000; Nic Gabhainn and Sixsmith, 2006; Skelton, 2007; Tunstall et al., 2004).

*Parents:* The data from the interviews with the youths helped to shape the interviews with the parents. The latter interviews explored their residential histories, their perception of neighbourhood threats and resources, experiences of parenting in relation to the neighbourhood context, how they perceived their children's personality, and how they made everyday decisions about safety and danger. In the interviews with parents, the focus was on their relationship with the target child or target children, who was/were aged between 13 and 18 years old.

Both youths and parents were assigned pseudonyms, which are used throughout this thesis to protect the participants' confidentiality.

**Table 1.1**: Overview of research context and data used in each chapter

| Chapter | Context | Data |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | Utrecht | Survey youths |
| 3 | Utrecht | Survey youths + interviews youths |
| 4 | Rotterdam | Interviews youths + photography + mental mapping |
| 5 | Rotterdam | Interviews youths + photography + mental mapping |
| 6 | Rotterdam + Chicago | Interviews youths + mental mapping |
| 7 | Rotterdam | Interviews youths + parents |

## 1.5 Outline of this thesis

This thesis consists of six empirical chapters. Because each chapter was written as a separate journal article, there is some overlap in the description of the methods, the theoretical background and the neighbourhood context. In Chapters 2 and 3, the main focus is on the effects of displacement on various social outcomes of youths. These chapters provide a first insight into the importance of the neighbourhood for youths by reporting on how the 'opportunity' to move to another, presumably less disadvantaged neighbourhood has an impact on their lives. Chapter 2 focuses on the satisfaction with the dwelling and neighbourhood after displacement. In this chapter, displaced youths are compared with a control group of 'other movers'. Chapter 3 focuses on how and the extent to which displacement affects youths' friendships and leisure activities, comparing the situation before the move with that after the move on the basis of a mixed-methods approach that combined survey data and in-depth interviews.

Whereas Chapters 2 and 3 focus on how a change of neighbourhood influences the lives of youths, Chapters 4 to 7 are centred on how youths who stay in the same neighbourhood perceive and navigate their neighbourhood context. We used in-depth interviews, photography and mental mapping exercises to gain an insight into how youths perceive, make use of and are influenced by different neighbourhood settings. Chapter 4 provides an insight into how youths growing up in a deprived area in the city of Rotterdam perceive their neighbourhood. The focus is on their subjective experiences: what do they perceive as problems and what as resources, and why? Youths' perceptions of their neighbourhood environment also influence how they can navigate public neighbourhood space, which is the focus of Chapter 5. In this chapter a relational approach is used to illustrate how youths construct socio-spatial boundaries through their encounters in public neighbourhood space and how this leads to the production of this space.

The importance of neighbourhood perceptions and youths' agency also comes to the fore in Chapter 6. Here, youths' perceptions of neighbourhood risks and risk management strategies are compared cross-nationally. Comparing two socio-demographically similar areas (one in Rotterdam and one in Chicago) shows that the nature of territoriality and the level of violence largely influence youths'

perceptions of their neighbourhood and the extent to which they feel they can negotiate neighbourhood space. Furthermore, parents play an important role in determining which parts of the neighbourhood their children have access to. Chapter 7 therefore focuses on how parents perceive their neighbourhood as a place for their children to grow up in and how this influences their parenting practices.

Finally, Chapter 8 concludes by summarising the key findings of this study, answering the main research questions, and reflecting upon the implications of this study for policy and future research.

## Notes

[1] Although in the study in Rotterdam we officially used the 12-19 age range during recruitment, only youths between 13-18 years ended up participating in the study. This might be related to the fact that we recruited mostly through secondary schools and therefore might not have reached the 12- and 19- year-olds. In addition, we conducted most of the interviews late in the school year, which meant that those that enrolled in secondary school at 12 already turned 13 during the school year (children still in primary school were excluded from the study).

[2] The aim of the policy of urban restructuring in the Netherlands was to achieve a socially mixed population in (deprived) neighbourhoods. One way in which this was done was by carrying out selective demolition and building more expensive dwellings (Kleinhans, 2003; Ministerie of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, 1997). The assumption behind this policy was that attracting middle-class households would reduce the concentrations of households with a low socioeconomic status and promote liveability and safety in the worst neighbourhoods (Van Beckhoven and Van Kempen, 2003).

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# 2 URBAN RESTRUCTURING AND FORCED RELOCATIONS: HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTHS?

## *A case study in Utrecht*

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### Abstract

The existence of deprived urban neighbourhoods leads many governments to adopt policies of urban restructuring aimed at changing the socio-physical structure of these areas. Such policies often take form in the demolition of social rented dwellings and the displacement of residents. Although we know quite a lot about the effects of displacement on adults, little attention has been paid to the effects on youths. This paper provides insight into the effects of urban restructuring on the dwelling and neighbourhood conditions of youths between 12 and 21 years in Utrecht (the Netherlands). The situation of displaced youths over the last 10 years is compared with a control group of other movers. The findings indicate that many youths who were forced to relocate perceive that they moved to better dwellings. However, the improvements were generally small and more than half moved to low-income neighbourhoods similar to those they had left.

## 2.1 Introduction

All cities have neighbourhoods with concentrations of low-income households. Many of these neighbourhoods also suffer from other social ills: high crime rates, loss of a sense of safety, a poor quality housing stock and derelict public spaces (Andersson and Musterd, 2005; Van Kempen et al., 2006). In an increasing number of countries, these deprived urban areas have been subject to urban restructuring, viz. a process in which the generally inexpensive housing stock is demolished and more expensive dwellings are built. This means that poorer households have to move away, whereas the more expensive new homes attract households with higher incomes. The area consequently ends up with a population that is more mixed in terms of household socio-economic status (SES) and often also in terms of household structure and ethnicity.

A lot of research into the effects of such policies has been carried out. In the Netherlands, for example, researchers have looked at the satisfaction of the 'stayers' with the changes in their neighbourhoods, at the satisfaction of the 'movers' with their new housing situations, and at the activity patterns and social contacts of the old and the new inhabitants of the restructured areas (cf. Bolt and Torrance, 2005; Kleinhans, 2005; Van Beckhoven and Van Kempen, 2003; Van Bergeijk et al., 2008; Veldboer et al., 2002). A lot of research has also been carried out in other countries with respect to these topics (e.g. Arthurson, 2002, 2007; Atkinson and Kintrea, 2000; Goodchild and Cole, 2001; Jupp, 1999; Kearns, 2002). Most studies that follow the displaced households report that movers are generally satisfied with their new dwellings and neighbourhoods. However, displacement has also been shown to result in the disruption of social contacts in the old neighbourhood, and to the forced relocation to a new neighbourhood with a new social structure. Research on neighbourhoods that undergo restructuring shows that the traditional inhabitants of these areas do not have many contacts with the new inhabitants, and that owner-occupiers and renters, as well as natives and ethnic minorities, live more or less parallel lives.

A major limitation of previous research is its almost exclusive focus on the experiences of adults. Youths[1] have received hardly any attention. This is a serious shortcoming, since young people are an important category in urban restructuring

areas. They tend to spend a lot of time in the neighbourhood; they maintain a large proportion of their social contacts around neighbourhood-based foci of activity; they sometimes make the area unsafe and they are not only the present but might also be the future inhabitants of the area.

Matthews and Limb (1999, p. 66) give several reasons why geographical research among youths is essential. First, we simply do not know enough about what young people want, need and think. Policies aimed at the neighbourhood are almost always implemented with visions in mind, but generally fail to take into account youths' opinions on how a neighbourhood should look like or the impact these policies have on youths. Second, young people usually use the neighbourhood and its amenities differently from adults. A park or a square often has a different meaning for a young person than for an adult: for adults, it may merely be a place to pass through, whereas for a young person it is a space for meeting and making contact. These meanings can also differ between categories of youths, e.g. between boys and girls and between different age groups (Karsten, 2003). Third, young people usually have less freedom of movement than adults, and thus fewer opportunities to use urban space. They generally have less money and, therefore, cannot use expensive forms of transport. Their movements may also be limited by adults, especially their parents, which results in some places being inaccessible to them, e.g. places that are considered dangerous or that are far from their homes (Karsten, 1998; Valentine, 1997).

The present research, therefore, focused on the effects of restructuring policies on 12- to 21-year-olds. The aim was to find out whether a forced move generates positive or negative effects for youths in terms of dwelling and neighbourhood conditions. The research question was:

> *What are the effects of displacement on the dwelling and neighbourhood conditions and satisfaction of youths?*

Here, we specifically focus on how youths feel about the dwellings and neighbourhoods they ended up living in after relocating. The research was carried out in Utrecht, the fourth largest city in the Netherlands.

## 2.2 Deprived areas, forced moves and young people: theoretical notions

With the increase in concentrated poverty in urban neighbourhoods over recent decades, and the associated rise in crime and violence, a growing interest has emerged in the impact of neighbourhoods on various social outcomes (for an overview: see Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn, 2000). At the same time, increasingly attention is being paid to the relation between young people and their environment. Especially in the British and American literature, 'children's geographies' and 'youth geographies' have become accepted terms for studies that focus on the description and analysis of young people's use of space and on their opinions about various aspects of their environment (Aitken, 1994; Ansell, 2009; Holloway and Valentine, 2000). These two developments have led to research on the effects of growing up in a deprived neighbourhood on several youth outcomes. The underlying notion guiding much of this research is that growing up in deprived neighbourhoods (defined as areas with a low SES) can be a risk for young people. It is assumed that exposure to neighbourhood disadvantage is one of the reasons that young people in deprived neighbourhoods score lower on various social and behavioural indicators than their peers in more affluent neighbourhoods (Jencks and Mayer, 1990).

A wide range of domains of well-being have been used to examine neighbourhood effects on young people, such as educational outcomes, behavioural and emotional problems, and sexuality and childbearing (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn, 2000). It is assumed that deprived neighbourhoods are characterised by negative role models, a lack of social networks that could be a source of social capital, a lack of social control, a lack of good quality institutional resources and a negative reputation, and that these aspects have a negative effect on a young person's social outcomes. Research on educational outcomes generally shows that young people in deprived neighbourhoods have worse results at school (Dornbusch et al., 1991), are more likely to drop out (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1993) and are less likely to end up with a high level of education (Duncan, 1994; Garner and Raudenbush, 1991). Moreover, living in a deprived neighbourhood is often associated with a variety of problem behaviours. Research by Simons and colleagues (1996) on youths in years 9 and 10, for example, indicates that living in a neighbourhood that has a

low SES is associated with higher rates of behaviour problems among boys and girls and of delinquent behaviour among boys. Finally, growing up in a deprived neighbourhood has been shown to be related to youths' sexuality and fertility outcomes, such as an earlier timing of first intercourse and an elevated level of teenage pregnancies (Anderson, 1991; Billy et al., 1994).

However, a growing number of scholars conclude that neighbourhood effects on young people are rather modest once individual and family-level factors are taken into account (see Elliot et al., 2006; Furstenberg et al., 1999; Jencks and Mayer, 1990; Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Especially European studies have identified only minor effects of the neighbourhood on young people's well-being; some even found no effects (see Friedrichs et al., 2003).

Although the effect of the neighbourhood on social outcomes has not been indisputably proven, it is widely assumed that being able to move away from a deprived neighbourhood increases a person's quality of life. From this perspective, displacement is believed to form an opportunity for residents to improve their dwelling and neighbourhood conditions. As the neighbourhoods where urban restructuring takes place are usually among the worst areas in the city, urban restructuring policies are likely to move people to less deprived neighbourhoods. In an overview of projects in 48 cities in the USA, Kingsley and colleagues (2003) found that most relocated households ended up in neighbourhoods that were less poor: the average poverty rate dropped from 61 to 27 per cent. Moreover, Ludwig, Duncan and Hirschfield (1998) showed in the context of the American 'Moving to Opportunity' experiment that among 11- to 15-year-olds who moved to less deprived neighbourhoods, crime rates for drug offences, truancy, running away from home, disorderliness and weapon offences were significantly lower than the rates for youths who remained in public housing in poor neighbourhoods.

In a study in the Netherlands, Posthumus and colleagues (2013) found that a large number of poor households that were forced to move from deprived areas to make way for urban restructuring ended up in equally deprived areas or in areas that were only slightly better in terms of SES and housing value.

### 2.2.1 Forced moving and housing choices

A household's relocation decision is generally the outcome of an interplay between preferences, resources, opportunities and constraints. The classic choice-oriented literature on residential mobility places much emphasis on preferences. The decision to move is taken when a certain level of dissatisfaction with the present situation is reached (Brown and Moore, 1970), but it may also stem from the aspiration to move up the housing ladder (e.g. to become a homeowner or move to a neighbourhood with a higher SES). For a move to actually take place, a trigger or motive for moving is a necessary condition. This can take the form of, for example, a change of job or a change in the household composition (Mulder, 1993).

Displacement does not seem to fit well within this framework. Because everyone is affected when the decision to restructure an area is taken, we cannot speak of individual triggers to move (Mulder, 1993; Popp, 1976; Short, 1978). However, although the forced movers have the obligatory character of their move in common, they generally react in different ways. In the context of forced moving, preferences can thus still play a role, albeit a less obvious one. Some households may have already decided to move for other reasons before they were served their eviction notices: for them, urban restructuring may present an opportunity (Kleinhans, 2003). Moreover, even households that would have wanted to stay are likely to have some preferences with regard to a new dwelling and a new neighbourhood (Bolt et al., 2009).

Housing choices are based not only on preferences, but also on opportunities and constraints at the macro level, as well as on the resources of households. A household's desire to move to a certain place can be constrained by such factors as shortages in the housing market or competition between households for the same type of housing, for example, inexpensive social rented dwellings. The availability and the affordability of dwellings are largely dependent on national housing market policies. The retreat of the welfare state since the mid-1980s in many West European countries has led to fewer additions to the social rented stock and consequently to fewer housing opportunities for low-income households. Moreover, a retreating welfare state might also result in declining

housing subsidies, which prevents low-income households from gaining access to housing that is more expensive than they could otherwise afford (Özüekren and Van Kempen, 2002). Furthermore, the housing opportunities of households are constrained by allocation rules: households are dependent on their position on a waiting list and need to meet the suitability criteria in terms of household size and income.

Households' resources determine the extent to which they can overcome housing market constraints (Rex and Moore, 1967). In the residential mobility literature, the emphasis is especially on material resources, since access to good housing and a good neighbourhood is largely determined by income. Resources are important for the final housing choice: households with higher incomes usually end up in better dwellings in better neighbourhoods than those with lower incomes. In the context of displacement, it may also be expected that households with higher incomes who still live in social rented dwellings are better able to move to other housing sectors, especially the owner-occupied sector. Households with low incomes generally have little choice and are consequently more likely to end up in deprived neighbourhoods after restructuring (Bolt et al., 2009). For youths who still live at home, their parents' low income reduces the probability of ending up in good housing in a good neighbourhood.

Cognitive resources can also have an effect on the housing choice. Knowledge of housing market opportunities differs between categories of people. Highly educated people may have more opportunities than those with a relatively low educational level, because they might be more capable of finding and using information, and of dealing with the complexity of the housing allocation system. This increases the probability of finding a new dwelling that meets the household's preferences. Some households also try to negotiate with the housing association for better housing conditions, and some succeed at this (Posthumus and Kleinhans, 2014). The ability to negotiate might also be related to the level of cognitive resources. Ethnic minority groups tend to be disadvantaged in terms of cognitive resources, because of the lack of information about housing opportunities in their languages (Kullberg, 2002; Van Kempen and Özüekren, 1998). To achieve equal housing opportunities for all groups, it is therefore crucial that housing associations provide sufficient support and assistance with moving and finding a new home.

Furthermore, the housing situation at the time of the move can be an important resource for households that are forced to move. In the Dutch housing market, households that are forced to move get priority over regular home seekers when suitable dwellings become available. However, in most cities – including Utrecht – they can only make use of this priority status for houses that are comparable to their current dwelling type (Kleinhans and Van der Laan Bouma-Doff, 2008; Posthumus and Kleinhans, 2014). The likelihood of moving to a single-family dwelling is, therefore, generally greater for households that are already living in single-family dwellings than for households in multifamily dwellings.

Thus, it is essential in the process of urban restructuring to take into account both the housing market constraints and the variation in resources between households. If there is insufficient appropriate housing, or households lack the necessary resources to find a suitable dwelling, it becomes hard to move people from the area.

### 2.2.2 Effects of forced relocation on young people

Not much knowledge is available on what young people think about the effects of a forced relocation. In the American context, some research has been done on the effects of the HOPE VI programme on young people. The programme aims at de-concentrating poverty, and is thus very similar to the Dutch policy of urban restructuring. The idea behind the programme is that households move to neighbourhoods with lower concentrations of poverty, where they will enjoy improved dwelling and neighbourhood conditions, and that through more contacts with positive role models they will strengthen their social economic position (cf. Popkin et al., 2004b).

Most evaluations of HOPE VI show that it has been successful in terms of dwelling and objective neighbourhood characteristics. Most households that were forced to move ended up in better housing and in neighbourhoods that were less poor and much safer (Gallagher and Bajaj, 2007; Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Popkin et al., 2004b). On the other hand, research by Clampet-Lundquist (2007) among 12- to 18-year-olds in a Philadelphia neighbourhood shows that this group did not always experience the move as positive. After living for a long time in a certain

neighbourhood, it was difficult to build a new life in the new neighbourhood. They had to get used to new values and norms, organised activities were still unknown and new friends were difficult to make. They experienced a lower feeling of being at home in their new neighbourhood. The move had a negative effect on the levels of social cohesion and control in the neighbourhood, and because of the youth's limited contacts with their new neighbours, the presumption that they would be influenced by positive role models is a dubious one.

Gallagher and Bajaj (2007) report similar findings. Over a period of 4 years, they followed 6- to 14-year-olds who moved from HOPE VI neighbourhoods, and found that children in displaced households showed a very high level of social isolation. However, Gallagher and Bajaj add that this does not necessarily have to be negative, since it could protect them from negative neighbourhood influences. In their study on the impact of moving on school-age children, Popkin and colleagues (2004a) indicate not only that the change of neighbourhood is sometimes experienced negatively by these children, but also that changing schools created stress and academic challenges.

A point that is implicitly made in the literature is that time can be an important variable. Just after moving, young people might be less satisfied with their move than they will be a few years later, as it takes time to get used to a new neighbourhood, find new leisure activities and make contacts with local people and local institutions. The research by Gallagher and Bajaj (2007) shows that even after 4 years, some of the youths (who were now between 10 and 18 years of age) were still not fully adjusted to their new neighbourhoods. Although many said that they had made new friends, many also indicated that they did not have close friends in their new neighbourhoods.

All in all, it seemed reasonable to expect that not all youths would be completely happy about moving to a new area. Even when the previous area was known as a poor or deprived area, the new area would not necessarily be a better place to live, at least in the eyes of youths. Moreover, residential mobility has generally been found to lead to a wide range of negative outcomes for youths, such as an increase in violent behaviour (Haynie and South, 2005), school dropout (Astone and McLanahan, 1994) and negative influences on long-term educational and

occupational achievements (Hagan et al., 1996). These negative outcomes are usually explained by the disruptive effects of a move on the social ties of both parents and youths.

## 2.3 The policy of urban restructuring in the Netherlands

The current policy of urban restructuring in the Netherlands originated in the 1997 White Paper on urban restructuring, which outlined a policy aimed at bringing an end to spatial concentrations of the poor in urban neighbourhoods, particularly those built between 1945 and 1965. In contrast to earlier urban renewal efforts, the objective of the Big Cities Policy (Grotestedenbeleid) was to achieve a socially mixed population (Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, 1997). At its core lay urban restructuring. The aim was to upgrade and sell off social rented dwellings, to carry out selective demolition and to build more expensive dwellings (Kleinhans, 2003; Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, 1997). Retaining and attracting middle-class households would increase the social and economic vitality of the city by reducing the concentration of unemployment and by promoting liveability, public safety and entrepreneurship in the worst neighbourhoods (Van Beckhoven and Van Kempen, 2003).

The latest incarnation of Dutch urban policy is focused on the country's 40 most problematic neighbourhoods. This plan also reveals the government's grim view of the concentration of low-income and ethnic minority households (Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, 2007, p. 3, own translation): *'Many districts have an overrepresentation of households that are clearly disadvantaged. Such districts mostly also have an overrepresentation of non-western minority residents.'* The official documents make it abundantly clear that one of the central aims of urban policy is to change the social mix in neighbourhoods through urban restructuring, which necessarily results in the displacement of a large number of households. This forms the background to the present research on the effect of urban restructuring policies on the dwelling and neighbourhood conditions and satisfaction of youths.

### 2.3.1 The allocation system

Before presenting the research design and results, a brief explanation of the Dutch allocation system is required. In most Dutch cities, the allocation of social rented dwellings is based on a choice-based letting system (Kullberg, 2002). A list of all the available social rented dwellings is published in a newspaper or on the Internet. Interested households may apply for these dwellings if they meet the suitability criteria, which are intended to ensure that households get the type of dwelling that is most suitable for them. More concretely, these suitability criteria mean that the household size must match the number of rooms and that the household income must match the rent level of the dwelling. The final procedure is straightforward: the household that has been on the waiting list the longest gets the dwelling.

For displaced residents, however, the situation is somewhat different, because housing associations offer them a certificate of urgency that gives them priority over regular house seekers who are looking for a social rented dwelling. If a regular house seeker and a forced mover both apply for the same dwelling, it is allocated to the latter. However, this priority advantage is generally limited to social rented dwellings that are comparable in size and type to the dwelling a household is forced to leave. The housing association demarcates the available options in the 'option profile'. For example, in most cases the priority status cannot be used to move from an apartment to a single-family dwelling (Kleinhans and Van der Laan Bouma-Doff, 2008). In general, urgency certificates are valid for a year; during this period, displaced households can apply for any dwelling that matches their option profile, belonging to any housing association in the city region. If a household has not found an appropriate dwelling within a year, the housing association will discuss with the household the dwellings that are available in an attempt to arrive at an acceptable solution to the problem. Furthermore, housing associations are obliged to compensate households for their moving costs. The amount differs per housing association, but is generally around €5000.

## 2.4 Research design

### 2.4.1 Research city

The research was carried out in Utrecht, which is the fourth largest city in the Netherlands (after Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague). It is centrally located in the country and has 316,277 residents (Municipality of Utrecht, 2012). There are considerable differences between its neighbourhoods in terms of socio-economic and ethnic compositions.

Compared to the other three large Dutch cities, Utrecht has a relatively low proportion of poor people: 12 per cent of children younger than 17 years live in families that are dependent on benefits, compared to 24 per cent of children in Rotterdam, 18 per cent in Amsterdam and 15 per cent in The Hague (Verwey-Jonker Instituut, 2008). In Utrecht, 35 per cent of children younger than 17 years live in deprived neighbourhoods. This is considerably smaller proportion than in Rotterdam, Amsterdam and The Hague, where the percentages are 63, 65 and 44 per cent, respectively (ibid.). Utrecht also has a relatively low proportion (21 per cent) of non-western immigrants compared to Rotterdam, Amsterdam and The Hague, where the figures are 37, 35 and 33 per cent, respectively (Municipality of Utrecht, 2010a). The segregation index of non-western immigrants in Utrecht (37.4) is similar to that in Rotterdam (38.5) and Amsterdam (36.3), and lower than that in The Hague (46.1) (Bolt et al., 2006).

There are about 49,300 dwellings in Utrecht's social rented sector, representing 42 per cent of the total housing stock (Municipality of Utrecht, 2010b). Although there is a shortage of social housing, since the year 2000 the municipality's policy has been to restructure early post-WWII neighbourhoods. The aim is to demolish 9500 social rented dwellings and build 9000 new dwellings; of these, 3000 will be for the social rented sector. This has resulted in the displacement of many households and a growing number of households with priority status on the housing list: between 2001 and 2009 the percentage of social rented dwellings allocated to households with a priority status increased from 21 to 35 per cent (Bestuur Regio Utrecht, 2011). In this paper, we look at how this policy of urban restructuring and the concurrent displacement affects youths who were forced to

move.

### 2.4.2 Research group

The research group comprised youths who had been aged 12 to 21 years when they had been forced to move because their dwellings were to be demolished. In general, their parents had been forced to relocate and they had gone with them. However, some of the respondents had already been living independently. We chose a lower limit of 12 years of age, because at that age young people normally leave primary school and embark upon secondary education. This change is usually accompanied by a changing spatial perspective: the young person's action space gradually expands, because important activity spaces are now located not only close to home, but also in a much wider environment. Our reasoning was that this changing perspective can influence a young person's opinions about their housing conditions. Moreover, as we used a retrospective approach, including younger children might have led to higher levels of recall bias, since it would have been more difficult for them to remember long-ago experiences. The upper age limit for our research group was set at 21 years, because especially among 18- to 21-year-olds there is a fair chance that at least some will have already left home and got jobs and their own homes. Again, such important changes may influence opinions on the housing situation.

Although the displaced youths were our main research group, we also identified a control group, namely peers who had not been forced to relocate. This group was divided into two subgroups: those who had moved voluntarily from dwellings that were not going to be demolished, and those who had not moved at all.

### 2.4.3 Data, measurements and methods

The data were gathered by means of questionnaires completed by members of the research group and the control group between June and December 2009. The Mitros Housing Association[2] had given us access to the names and addresses of households that had been forced to move between 1998 and 2009[3] because of demolition activities. These data showed that the rate of forced moves was

especially high in seven areas of the city. We, therefore, decided to select our respondents from these seven areas, most of which are characterised by large numbers of social rented dwellings, relatively low rents and a large percentage of low-income households.

A municipal database allowed us to find out which of these households contained children between 12 and 21 years of age at the time of the residential move. It also made it possible to find youths who had not been forced to move. We selected the respondents for the control group from neighbourhoods in which demolition activities had taken place and from which the research group had been selected. The respondents in the target group were all social renters; the control group consisted of residents of rented dwellings as well as owner-occupied dwellings. The target group (displaced youths) comprised 433 potential respondents and the control group comprised 859 potential respondents. The response rate of our questionnaire was 26.0 per cent (29.6 per cent for the target group and 24.2 per cent for the control groups). We finally ended up with 336 completed questionnaires.

We used both objective and subjective dependent variables in our research. Concerning the change in objective dwelling characteristics, we decided to use the characteristics of upward mobility in the housing market as outlined by the Dutch Council for Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM-raad, 2006) and to focus on moves from multifamily to single-family dwellings[4], from social rented dwellings to owner-occupied dwellings, and to dwellings with more rooms. We are aware that not all households consider these changes a step up in the housing market. Some categories of households, such as those with nest-leaving children, might prefer to move to a smaller dwelling. However, for our research group (mostly youths living with their families) moving to a larger, single-family dwelling with a garden is generally considered a step up in the housing market (Clark and Dieleman, 1996). Moreover, a study by Koster and Mulderij (2011) shows that most youths would also prefer to move to a single-family dwelling.

Objective improvements in the neighbourhood were measured by dummies indicating whether displaced households moved to another deprived neighbourhood. We defined deprived areas on the basis of housing value per square metre, percentage of households with a low income, percentage of pupils

in a disadvantaged situation and percentage of individuals on benefits. The combined scores on these variables determine the rank of each neighbourhood among Utrecht's 112 neighbourhoods. We defined the 15 areas with the worst scores as deprived areas. Five of the seven areas that were selected for our research (because of the high rate of displacement) belong to this group of most deprived neighbourhoods. The subjective improvements after moving were measured by the evaluation of the new dwelling and neighbourhood compared with the old dwelling and neighbourhood by the respondents themselves, ranging from much better to much worse. In our research, we used bivariate tests to compare the housing situation of youths before and after the move and compare the research group and the control groups. To establish which factors influence the objective and subjective improvements in dwelling and neighbourhood conditions, we conducted a number of regression analyses. Since the dependent variables were measured on a binary scale, logistic regression analyses were used to predict whether improvements had (1) or had not (0) taken place in dwelling and neighbourhood conditions and to find out which individual, household and neighbourhood characteristics play a role in predicting these outcomes.

## 2.5 Results

### 2.5.1 The characteristics of movers and stayers

Table 2.1 shows that there are some significant differences between our research group and the two control groups. The displaced youths more often belong to a non-western minority ethnic group (often Moroccan), and they, as well as their parents, often have a low level of education and they less often belong to the category of employed.

In the remainder of the paper, we focus on how the move was evaluated by both displaced youths and other movers. The stayers are excluded. Table 2.1 shows how the displaced youths and the other movers differ from each other on some core housing characteristics. It can be seen that most of the displaced youths had lived in multifamily dwellings, and that all of the displaced youths had lived in rented dwellings. This is not surprising, since these are the types of dwellings that are

typically slated for demolition.

### 2.5.2 Where did they move to? Dwellings

One step that can be taken on the housing ladder is from a multifamily dwelling to a single-family dwelling. The analyses (Table 2.2) show that a significant number of displaced youths were able to move to single-family dwellings. This indicates a significant improvement in their housing situation, in terms of the normal housing hierarchy. Another step up the ladder is the move to a dwelling with more rooms. Table 2.2 shows that displaced youths are largely able to move to dwellings with more rooms, more so than other movers. An interesting point here is that a large proportion of the other movers moved to dwellings with fewer rooms. A possible explanation for this is that some of these moves were triggered by a change in the family composition, such as youths leaving the home or a divorce. A final – and as it turns out, more difficult – step on the housing ladder is a move from a rented dwelling to owner occupation. It turns out that not many of the displaced youths were able to buy a dwelling. The other movers were better able to do so. It further turned out that particularly for youths who lived on their own, or moved to a dwelling of their own after displacement, it was more difficult to take a step upward on the housing ladder – that is to move to a single-family dwelling or to an owner-occupied dwelling – than for those that moved with their parents. This is probably related to the fact that this group has less financial resources and to the fact that they generally move alone and thus cannot apply for larger single-family dwellings.

We conducted a logistic regression analysis on the probability of moving to a single-family dwelling in order to gain insight into the factors that influence the possibilities for upward mobility in housing (Table 2.3). As mentioned, displaced youths are more likely than other movers to move from multifamily dwellings to single-family dwellings. It has to be noted, however, that this difference cannot be attributed to their priority status, since that status is valid only when a household moves to a comparable dwelling (i.e. another multifamily dwelling). There thus have to be other factors that explain this difference. The logistic regression analysis

**Table 2.1**: Descriptives of the research group

| | Displaced youths (1) | Other movers (2) | Non-movers (3) | Total non-displaced (2+3) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender (%) | | | | |
| Male | 45.7 | 41.5 | 40.0 | 40.8 |
| Female | 54.3 | 58.5 | 60.0 | 59.2 |
| Ethnicity (%) | | | | |
| Native, western ethnic group | 31.2 | 58.9 | 51.5 | 55.3 |
| Non-western minority ethnic group | 68.8 | 41.1 | 48.5 | 44.7 |
| Level of education (obtained or following, 2009) (%) | | | | |
| Low | 38.6 | 27.1 | 33.7 | 30.3 |
| High | 61.4 | 72.9 | 66.3 | 69.7 |
| Level of education of parents (2009) (%) | | | | |
| Low | 53.9 | 35.5 | 52.5 | 43.8 |
| High (at least one parent) | 32.0 | 47.7 | 31.7 | 39.9 |
| Unknown | 14.1 | 16.8 | 15.8 | 16.3 |
| Main activity (2009) (%) | | | | |
| Education | 60.0 | 29.2 | 60.0 | 44.2 |
| Work | 27.5 | 55.7 | 31.0 | 43.7 |
| Inactive | 12.5 | 15.1 | 9.0 | 12.1 |
| Mean age at time of research (2009) | 21.6 | 25.6 | 20.7 | 23.2 |
| Mean age at the time of move | 16.5 | 19.9 | - | - |
| Average length of residency in old dwelling[1] | 9.9 | 9.0 | 13.9 | - |
| Type of old neighbourhood[1] (%) | | | | |
| Deprived neighbourhood | 87.5 | 80.4 | 79.2 | 79.8 |
| Non-deprived neighbourhood | 12.5 | 19.6 | 20.8 | 20.2 |
| Type of dwelling: old dwelling[1] (%) | | | | |
| Multifamily dwelling | 74.0 | 62.3 | 34.7 | 49.0 |
| Single-family dwelling | 26.0 | 37.7 | 65.3 | 51.0 |
| Rental or owner-occupied: old dwelling[1] (%) | | | | |
| Rental | 100.0 | 88.7 | 80.2 | 84.6 |
| Owner-occupied | 0.0 | 11.3 | 19.8 | 15.4 |
| Household type in old dwelling[1] (%) | | | | |
| Without parents/family | 14.8 | 26.7 | 3.1 | 15.4 |
| With parents/family | 85.2 | 73.3 | 96.9 | 84.6 |
| | N=128 | N=107 | N=101 | N=208 |

Source: own fieldwork (2009)

[1] For the non-movers the old dwelling/neighbourhood is also the current dwelling/neighbourhood

**Table 2.2**: Changes in dwelling and neighbourhood characteristics (%)

| | Displaced youths | Other movers |
|---|---|---|
| Moved to less deprived neighbourhood | 35.7 | 49.1 |
| Moved to similarly or more deprived neighbourhood | 64.3 | 50.9 |
| | | |
| Moved from multifamily to single-family[1] | 52.1 | 31.8 |
| Did not move from multifamily to single-family[1] | 47.9 | 68.2 |
| | | |
| Moved to from rental to owner-occupied[2] | 6.3 | 28.7 |
| Did not move from rental to owner-occupied[2] | 93.7 | 71.3 |
| | | |
| More rooms[3] | 43.6 | 33.9 |
| Similar number of rooms[3] | 40.2 | 33.9 |
| Fewer rooms[3] | 16.2 | 32.3 |
| | | |
| Moved with parents | 94.4 | 61.4 |
| Moved to own dwelling | 5.6 | 38.6 |
| | N=126[4] | N=106[4] |

Moved to less deprived neighbourhood: $p<0.05$; Cramer's V = 0.135; Moved from multifamily to single-family: $p<0.05$; Cramer's V = 0.202; Moved to from rental to owner-occupied: $p<0.01$; Cramer's V = 0.304; Number of rooms: $p<0.05$; Cramer's V = 0.185; Moved with parents: $p<0.01$; Cramer's V = 0.407

Source: own fieldwork (2009)

[1] Only households that lived in multifamily dwelling in old neighbourhood

[2] Only households that lived in rented dwelling in old neighbourhood

[3] Only those who moved with their parents

[4] N = highest of all

**Table 2.3**: Logistic regression analysis on the probability of moving to a single-family dwelling

| | B | Sig. | | Exp(B) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Displaced | 0.860 | 0.033 | ** | 2.363 |
| Old dwelling was single-family dwelling | 0.667 | 0.070 | * | 1.949 |
| In new dwelling with parents | 1.794 | 0.000 | *** | 6.015 |
| New dwelling is owner-occupied | 1.245 | 0.010 | ** | 3.473 |
| Length of time in old dwelling | 0.076 | 0.004 | *** | 1.079 |
| Age at time of move | 0.032 | 0.602 | | 1.033 |
| Has followed/follows higher education | -0.135 | 0.704 | | 0.874 |
| Education of parents (ref=low) | | | | |
| High | 0.511 | 0.161 | | 1.667 |
| Unknown | 0.715 | 0.141 | | 2.044 |
| Non-western minority | -0.266 | 0.446 | | 0.766 |
| Constant | | | | 0.034 |

Source: own fieldwork (2009)

* = $p < 0.10$; ** = $p < 0.05$; *** = $p < 0.01$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.367$

reveals that the odds of moving to a single-family dwelling (versus a multifamily dwelling) is positively associated with already living in a single-family dwelling, with moving to an owner-occupied dwelling and with moving with parents (the displaced youths are underrepresented in all three of these categories; see Table 2.1). Furthermore, length of residence in the previous dwelling is positively associated with the odds of moving to a single-family dwelling. As explained, if no residents with a certificate of urgency apply for a social rented dwelling, allocation is based on the position on the waiting list. For those households already living in social rented dwellings, this position is based on the length of residence. It turned out that the average length of residence was a little longer for displaced youths than for other movers. However, even when controlling for the length of residence and the other factors mentioned above, the displaced youths still had a higher probability of moving into a single-family dwelling. Possibly, this is related to the fact that displaced youths are more likely than other movers to get assistance or advice from the housing association when they apply for a dwelling, which then leads to a larger range of alternatives. They might also have more bargaining power to negotiate a better quality dwelling: because the housing association wants them to move, they might offer a single-family dwelling in order to speed up the move (cf. Posthumus et al., 2012).

Although after controlling for a number of demographic and housing variables, ethnicity does not seem to have a significant effect on the probability of moving to a single-family dwelling, further analyses show that of the displaced youths, significantly more non-western minorities than native Dutch people were able to move from multifamily to single-family dwellings. Especially for non-western minorities, being forced to move thus offers an opportunity to take a step up the housing ladder: 57.1 per cent were able to move to single-family dwellings compared to only 37.5 per cent of native Dutch people ($\chi^2(1, N = 128) = 6.133, p < 0.05$). Another interesting point is the increase in the number of rooms. Within the group of displaced youths, especially those with non-western backgrounds were able to move to dwellings with more rooms: 51.3 per cent of the non-western minorities were able to move to dwellings with more rooms compared to only 28.2 per cent of the native Dutch people ($\chi^2(1, N = 128) = 4.638, p < 0.05$). These outcomes might possibly be explained by the fact that non-western minorities

generally have larger families and, therefore, prefer to move to a larger dwelling. Since the option profile of households is also partly determined by household size, having a large family might enlarge the choice set of these households and allow them to choose larger dwellings.[5]

### 2.5.3 The evaluation of the old and new dwelling

So far we can thus conclude that displacement leads to objective improvements in dwelling characteristics, but how is the change of dwelling experienced by the displaced youths? Table 2.4 shows that a large majority of the youths who were forced to move think that their new dwellings are better than their old dwellings. This is good news for policymakers, because it indicates that there has indeed been an improvement for youths with respect to their housing situation.

We carried out a logistic regression analysis to find out which factors influence the opinion of the new dwellings compared to the old dwellings (Table 2.5). This showed that a move from rented accommodation to owner-occupation and a move to a bigger dwelling are positively associated with satisfaction – which is not very surprising. The most interesting point here, however, is that even after controlling for a number of individual, household and neighbourhood variables, being in the category 'displaced' is still a significant variable in explaining the evaluation of the new dwelling compared to the old dwelling. Youths who were forced to move generally evaluated the change in dwelling conditions more positively than other movers. It has to be noted here that displaced youths generally come from the worst housing; therefore, the evaluation of the new dwelling compared to the old dwelling might be more positive.

**Table 2.4**: Evaluation of the new dwelling compared to the old one (%)

| | Displaced youths | Other movers |
|---|---|---|
| Much worse | 2.5 | 7.2 |
| Worse | 9.0 | 19.6 |
| Similar | 9.0 | 17.5 |
| Better | 39.3 | 33.0 |
| Much better | 40.2 | 22.7 |
| | N=122 | N=97 |

Source: own fieldwork (2009)

$p < 0.01$; Cramer's $V = 0.269$

**Table 2.5**: Logistic regression on the evaluation of the new dwelling compared to the old one (better/much better vs. similar/worse/much worse)

| | B | Sig. | | Exp(B) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Displaced | 1.246 | 0.002 | *** | 3.478 |
| Age at time of move | 0.016 | 0.803 | | 1.016 |
| Has followed/follows higher education | -0.064 | 0.860 | | 0.938 |
| Education of parents (ref = low) | | | | |
| High | 0.260 | 0.490 | | 1.297 |
| Unknown | -0.324 | 0.506 | | 0.724 |
| Non-western minority | -0.102 | 0.767 | | 0.903 |
| From rental to owner-occupied | 1.230 | 0.018 | ** | 3.422 |
| Difference in number of rooms | 0.197 | 0.093 | * | 1.218 |
| Old dwelling was single-family dwelling | 0.515 | 0.208 | | 1.673 |
| In new dwelling with parents | -0.086 | 0.865 | | 0.918 |
| Length of time in old dwelling | -0.011 | 0.712 | | 0.989 |
| Constant | | | | 0.831 |

Source: own fieldwork (2009)

* = $p < 0.10$; ** = $p < 0.05$; *** = $p < 0.01$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.197$

### 2.5.4 Where did they move to? Neighbourhoods

Quite a lot of the respondents moved with their families to other disadvantaged areas in the city (Figures 2.1 and 2.2). Especially the displaced youths relatively often ended up in one of the city's most deprived areas. The major destination areas were almost invariably the areas where the majority of all dwellings are affordable social rented dwellings. Although a larger proportion of the other movers were able to move to other areas in the city, quite a significant proportion of these households moved to disadvantaged areas. Sixty per cent of the displaced youths who moved out of deprived neighbourhoods moved to other deprived neighbourhoods, as opposed to 39 per cent of the other movers. In Utrecht, 21 per cent of residents live in deprived neighbourhoods: for both displaced youths and other movers in our selected neighbourhoods, the probability of moving to another deprived neighbourhood is thus higher than for households in average Utrecht neighbourhoods. Interestingly, youths who lived on their own, or moved to a dwelling of their own, were more likely to move to a less deprived neighbourhood than those who lived with their parents.

We conducted a logistic regression analysis in order to gain an insight into the

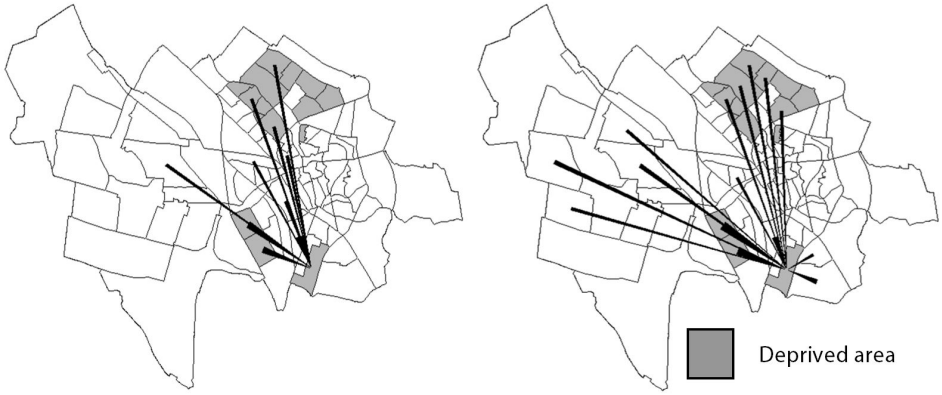


**Figure 2.1**: Destination areas of displaced youths (left) and other movers (right) from the urban restructuring areas of Nieuw-Hoograven (Utrecht)


**Figure 2.2**: Destination areas of displaced youths (left) and other movers (right) from the urban restructuring areas of Zuilen-noord (Utrecht)

factors that influence the probability of moving to a deprived neighbourhood (Table 2.6). The analysis revealed that the destination neighbourhood is largely related to SES (as measured by the level of education of both respondents and their parents) and ethnic background. Youths with a low level of education and those whose parents have a low level of schooling are more likely than others to move to deprived neighbourhoods. The same applies to youths from non-western backgrounds. As can be seen in Table 2.1, the displaced youths are overrepresented in both these categories. Whereas bivariate analyses show that displaced youths are more likely to move to other deprived neighbourhoods than

other movers, when the level of education and ethnic background are controlled for, the difference between the displaced youths and the other movers is no longer significant. This means that a higher percentage of the displaced youths ended up in deprived neighbourhoods not because the move was involuntary, but because households with a low SES and households that belong to ethnic minority groups are overrepresented in this group.

**Table 2.6**: Logistic regression analysis on the probability of moving to a deprived neighbourhood

| | B | Sig. | | Exp(B) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Displaced | 0.192 | 0.587 | | 1.212 |
| Old neighbourhood is deprived | -0.233 | 0.579 | | 0.792 |
| Length of time in old dwelling | -0.012 | 0.651 | | 0.988 |
| In new dwelling with parents | 0.441 | 0.337 | | 1.554 |
| Age at time of move | 0.047 | 0.425 | | 1.048 |
| Has followed/follows higher education | -1.159 | 0.000 | *** | 0.314 |
| Education of parents (ref=low) | | | | |
| High | -1.018 | 0.002 | *** | 0.361 |
| Unknown | -0.217 | 0.630 | | 0.805 |
| Non-western minority | 0.889 | 0.005 | *** | 2.432 |
| Constant | | | | 0.793 |

Source: own fieldwork (2009)

* = $p < 0.10$; ** = $p < 0.05$; *** = $p < 0.01$; Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.249$

### 2.5.5 The evaluation of the old and the new neighbourhood

Although forced moving generally resulted in greater satisfaction with the dwelling, the experienced improvement in neighbourhood conditions was rather modest. Quite a number of the respondents did not see an improvement when they compared their new neighbourhood to their old neighbourhood (Table 2.7). Unlike the results for the evaluation of the dwellings, there are no significant differences between displaced youths and other movers.

We also used a logistic regression analysis to find out which variables are responsible for the evaluation of the new neighbourhood (Table 2.8). As shown above, being displaced does not have a significant effect on the evaluation of the new neighbourhood compared to the old neighbourhood. Of the individual and

household characteristics, only age at the time of move has a significant effect: older youths generally evaluated their new neighbourhood more positively than those that were younger. Two aspects of the dwelling and neighbourhood characteristics emerge as being very important. First, if the move was to another deprived area, the probability of being positive is much lower than it is for those who moved to a non-deprived neighbourhood. This is not surprising, given the preferences of most housing seekers to move to the best possible neighbourhood in terms of SES. Second, there is a negative relation with the duration of stay in the previous situation: those who had been in their previous dwellings for a long time were less positive about their new neighbourhoods than those who had been in their previous dwellings for a relatively short time. This is probably related to the fact that the longer people live in a neighbourhood, the more they get used to the place, the more friends they make and the more they engage in all kinds of activities in that neighbourhood. Starting a new life in a new neighbourhood may then be more difficult (cf. Clampet-Lundquist, 2007).

We added a number of subjective variables to our logistic regression analysis in order to find out why the move to a deprived area is so influential in explaining the evaluation of the new neighbourhood in comparison to the old neighbourhood (Table 2.8, model 2). One of the most interesting findings is that the safety of the neighbourhood is a significant variable. Those who feel that they are now in a safer area compared to their previous neighbourhood were much more likely to evaluate the change in neighbourhood more positively than those who now feel that they are in a relatively unsafe neighbourhood. The lack of safety in deprived areas is also the main reason why people who had moved to these areas were much less likely to evaluate their new neighbourhoods positively than people who had moved to non-deprived areas. Once perceived safety is controlled for, moving to a deprived area no longer has an effect on satisfaction with the neighbourhood. Satisfaction with the dwelling, the population composition and the shops in the neighbourhood also increase the likelihood of being satisfied with the new neighbourhood.

**Table 2.7**: Evaluation of the new neighbourhood, compared to the old one (%)

| | Displaced youths | Other movers |
|---|---|---|
| Much worse | 4.2 | 4.1 |
| Worse | 22.5 | 13.4 |
| Similar | 27.5 | 35.1 |
| Better | 29.2 | 28.9 |
| Much better | 16.7 | 18.6 |
| | N=120 | N=97 |

Source: own fieldwork (2009)

$p > 0.1$; Cramer's $V = 0.127$

**Table 2.8**: Logistic regression on the evaluation of the new neighbourhood compared to the old one (better/much better vs. the same/worse/much worse)

| | Model 1 | | | | Model 2 | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | Sig. | | Exp(B) | B | Sig. | | Exp(B) |
| Displaced | 0.287 | 0.473 | | 1.333 | 0.164 | 0.732 | | 1.178 |
| Age at time of move | 0.108 | 0.096 | * | 1.114 | 0.083 | 0.281 | | 1.086 |
| Has followed/follows higher education | -0.343 | 0.374 | | 0.709 | -0.239 | 0.588 | | 0.787 |
| Education of parents (ref = low) | | | | | | | | |
| High | -0.277 | 0.450 | | 0.758 | -0.199 | 0.655 | | 0.820 |
| Unknown | -0.479 | 0.395 | | 0.619 | -0.172 | 0.770 | | 0.842 |
| Non-western minority | -0.263 | 0.474 | | 0.769 | -0.036 | 0.933 | | 0.965 |
| In new dwelling with parents | 0.724 | 0.158 | | 2.062 | -0.107 | 0.860 | | 0.899 |
| New neighbourhood is deprived | -0.982 | 0.010 | ** | 0.374 | -0.505 | 0.258 | | 0.603 |
| Length of time in old dwelling | -0.075 | 0.007 | *** | 0.927 | -0.044 | 0.204 | | 0.957 |
| New dwelling is better than previous dwelling | | | | | 0.970 | 0.044 | ** | 2.637 |
| Public transport is better in new neighbourhood | | | | | 0.408 | 0.367 | | 1.505 |
| Shops are better in new neighbourhood | | | | | 1.104 | 0.015 | ** | 3.018 |
| Higher safety in new neighbourhood | | | | | 2.008 | 0.000 | *** | 7.448 |
| In the new neighbourhood, people get better along with each other | | | | | 0.490 | 0.330 | | 1.632 |
| The population composition is better in the new neighbourhood | | | | | 0.968 | 0.039 | ** | 2.634 |
| Contacts between people are better in the new neighbourhood | | | | | -0.095 | 0.840 | | 0.910 |
| Constant | | | | 0.483 | | | | 0.040 |
| Nagelkerke $R^2$ | 0.124 | | | | 0.492 | | | |

Source: own fieldwork (2009)

Those who moved within their own neighbourhood have been excluded from this table

* = $p < 0.10$; ** = $p < 0.05$; *** = $p < 0.01$

## 2.6 Conclusion

The main aim of the research was to establish the effects of demolition on the dwelling and neighbourhood conditions and satisfaction of youths. The conclusion is that, in general, they were able to improve their position, especially in terms of dwelling conditions.

When they compared the old situation to the new situation, many youths stated that they liked the new dwelling better than the old dwelling. In general, displaced youths are more often satisfied with their new dwellings compared to their old dwellings than other movers. It can also be concluded that being forced to move offers an opportunity for especially non-western minorities to improve their dwelling situation. Households from a non-western background are more likely to move to single-family dwellings and to dwellings with more rooms than native Dutch people.

These results are of course good news. Until now, most Dutch studies have emphasised the negative effects of urban restructuring, at least for adults, such as lower levels of satisfaction and social cohesion in the neighbourhood of origin, limited social interaction between old and new inhabitants, and the disruption of social ties (see Bolt et al., 2009; Slob et al., 2008; Van Beckhoven and Van Kempen, 2003; Van Bergeijk et al., 2008). Our research shows that there are also positive sides to this policy, as it might indeed lead to improvement of the dwelling conditions of the displaced and to improved satisfaction among youths with their dwelling and neighbourhood conditions, at least in the context of Utrecht. A crucial factor in this matter is the institutional context in which the displacement takes place: the choice-based letting system and the compensation mechanisms in the relocation process make it possible for a large proportion of displaced households to find better dwellings (see also Kleinhans and Van der Laan Bouma-Doff, 2008).

However, it is also necessary to make some reservations with respect to the results of this study. First and foremost, it should be repeated that as regards neighbourhoods, the objective improvements that are made are rather limited. There are a large number of moves from one deprived area to another deprived area (the so-called horizontal moves). It is clearly not the case that youths are able

to move to neighbourhoods that are much better than the previous ones. They are mostly almost equal in terms of average income, population composition and amenities. The areas they move to are often among the most disadvantaged areas of the city. Non-western minorities and youths with a low SES (as measured by their level of education and their parents' level of education) are especially likely to again end up in deprived neighbourhoods.

This finding gives reason for concern, as the Dutch housing allocation system is intended to provide equal housing opportunities for those in need of social housing. For policy considerations, it is therefore important to find out whether the relocation to other deprived areas is a matter of preference or a matter of constraints, such as the availability of housing or a lack of information about housing opportunities after demolition. All in all, policymakers should realise that the idea that demolishing substandard dwellings leads to a massive movement of people to better neighbourhoods is an erroneous one. This policy is unlikely to result in many new opportunities for youths to acquire bridging capital and meet positive role models. Therefore, a large positive effect of urban restructuring on the educational, occupational and other social outcomes of youths should not be expected.

Second, although the opinion of the new dwelling was in general quite positive, the evaluation of the new neighbourhood compared to the old neighbourhood was less often positive (though it was still the case that around twice as many movers rated their new neighbourhood as better, than rated it as worse). This might be because it is difficult for youths to get used to a new neighbourhood, especially if they had lived for a long time in their old neighbourhood. They might miss their friends in the old neighbourhood and it is difficult to build new friendships. Safety and the population composition of the neighbourhood seem to be crucial variables in generating satisfaction with the new place. This is not so very different from the results of research among adults (Van Bergeijk et al., 2008). It has to be noted, however, that for younger children who are still going to primary school, the impacts of residential mobility on their satisfaction with the new dwelling and neighbourhood conditions might be more pronounced, because their action space has not yet extended far beyond the neighbourhood context. For future research, it will therefore be interesting to focus on the effect of displacement on

this group of younger children.

Finally, it should be noted that at the city level the increasing displacement of households as a result of the restructuring of neighbourhoods is leading to a growing tension in the housing market: an increasing number of movers with certificates of urgency are competing for social rented dwellings. This development is reinforced by the reduction in the availability of affordable social housing, as a result of the restructuring policy that makes forced relocation necessary (Van Kempen and Priemus, 2002, p. 247). It can, therefore, be expected that the likelihood of being able to improve the dwelling and neighbourhood conditions of households, and hence the satisfaction of youths with these conditions, will only decrease.

If policymakers want to improve youths' dwelling and neighbourhood conditions by demolishing the social rented stock and moving the inhabitants to other dwellings, this might be a successful strategy in terms of dwelling satisfaction. However, not much more should be expected. If policymakers expect a better mix of household types in neighbourhoods as a consequence of demolition, they should be aware that the displaced movers do not spread evenly over the city but tend to re-concentrate in deprived areas.

## Notes

[1] Definitions of the specific age range that constitutes 'youths' vary across studies. Moreover, we are aware of the fact that youth is a socially constructed concept, of which the age markers might differ between cultures (Cope, 2008; Wyn and White, 1997). In line with the existing sociological studies of young people in 'Western countries', we chose to use the term youths to mean people aged 12-21.

[2] Of the three housing associations in Utrecht, Mitros has been the most active in demolition activities.

[3] We chose this period as in these years there was extensive demolition in Utrecht. We are aware that there might be some recall bias, as it might have been difficult for respondents to remember how they had experienced the move several years previously. However, when we compared the respondents who moved before 2002 with those who moved in 2002 or later, we found no significant differences in their satisfaction with dwelling and neighbourhood conditions.

[4] In the Dutch context, single-family dwelling is a term used for a dwelling which does not share a roof with another dwelling (i.e. there are no dwellings above or under a single-family dwelling).

Dwellings that do not meet this criterion, such as apartment buildings, are multi-family dwellings. A single-family dwelling may share a wall with one (semi-detached house) or two (terraced house) other dwellings. Most single-family dwellings in Dutch cities are terraced houses.

[5] Unfortunately, we do not have data on household size, which means we cannot control for this variable.

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# 3 OUT OF PLACE? THE EFFECTS OF DEMOLITION ON YOUTHS' SOCIAL CONTACTS AND LEISURE ACTIVITIES

*A case study in Utrecht*

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## Abstract

Most Dutch cities have adopted urban restructuring policies aimed at creating a socially mixed population in deprived neighbourhoods. This entails the demolition of low-cost, social rented housing units, which leads to the displacement of their residents. While researchers have investigated the social effects of displacement on adults, this study is the first to provide insight into the effects on youths. The findings indicate that, although the first months after displacement youths lose some social contacts and stop participating in certain leisure activities, they show high levels of flexibility and soon make new friends and take up leisure activities in their new neighbourhood. No differences were found in friendships and leisure activities between displaced youths and those in a control group of non-displaced youths as reported at the time of the study. This confirms that in the long term the effects of displacement are limited.

## 3.1 Introduction

As a reaction to growing concerns about the undesired consequences of concentrations of poverty, many Dutch cities have adopted policies aimed at changing the physical and social composition of deprived neighbourhoods. These urban restructuring policies generally entail the demolition of inexpensive social housing units and the construction of more expensive alternatives in order to achieve a 'better' social mix, particularly in terms of income (Bolt et al., 2008; Galster et al., 2010; Uitermark, 2003). One of the consequences of urban restructuring is that it leads to the displacement of large groups of often low-income households. Studies following displaced households have generally concluded that most movers were satisfied with their new homes and their new neighbourhoods (Brooks et al., 2005; Doff and Kleinhans, 2011; Joseph and Chaskin, 2010; Posthumus et al., 2014; Varady et al., 2001). However, displacement is accompanied by the disruption of social networks in the old neighbourhood and difficulties integrating into the social structure in the new neighbourhood (Clampet-Lundquist, 2004; Popkin et al., 2004). While there is a growing understanding of the effects of displacement on adults, we know very little about the consequences of being forced to move for youths' social networks. This is an important shortcoming, as youths' friendships are considered to be of central importance for their development. These ties can function as a source of companionship, stimulation, physical support, ego support, social comparison, intimacy and affection (Gottman and Parker, 1986). The orientation towards peers peaks in mid adolescence, when the influence of friends on young person's behaviour surpasses that of his or her parents (Crosnoe, 2000; Thornberry et al., 1994).

The importance of friendships has also been confirmed by the large number of studies that have related youths' friendships to variations in their wellbeing (see Brown, 2004; Hartup and Abecassis, 2002). Young people derive their wellbeing from identifying with a group and experiencing group solidarity. For most groups, this is achieved by regular meetings around foci of activity (Feld, 1981; Feld and Carter, 1998), such as the micro neighbourhood of adjacent dwellings, a community centre, the street or the basketball or football court (Van Eijk, 2010). Organised leisure activities may also function as important foci of activity around which friendship networks are formed and maintained. Moreover, leisure

activities in themselves may be an opportunity for the development of capacities and a sense of self-efficacy (Chaskin and Baker, 2006; Du Bois Reymond et al., 1998).

While there is abundant psychological and sociological literature on youths' friendships, little attention has been paid to how these friendships are related to the neighbourhood context and how displacement affects them. This paper partly fills these gaps. Our research question was:

> *To what extent and how does displacement affect youths' friendships and leisure activities?*

## 3.2 The formation and maintenance of friendships: the role of the neighbourhood

It is generally assumed that the formation of social networks is influenced by two structural factors – namely, propinquity and similarity. Propinquity – or closeness in physical space – influences the formation of social networks because people are more likely to become friends with those whom they meet regularly, for example in neighbourhood-based settings (Crosnoe, 2000; Feld, 1981; Feld and Carter, 1998; Huckfeldt, 1983). The importance of propinquity, and hence of neighbourhood settings, for the formation and maintenance of social contacts might, however, differ between different groups of people, and specifically between adults and youths. In this context, we therefore need to pay more attention to the ways in which young people differ from adults in their use and interpretation of urban space.

First, youths and adults differ in their freedom of movement. Youths' possibilities to use urban space are, first of all, often constrained by the modes of transport available. In the Dutch context, most youths travel by bike, as driving a car is only allowed for people older than 18 years. Moreover, car ownership by young people is quite low due to the associated costs (Statistics Netherlands, 2012). The alternative would be to use public transport, but its use is limited by a lack of money and the fact that it takes a lot of time to get from one place to another

(compared with adults who generally have access to a car). Moreover, the spatial behaviour of youths might also be restricted by regulations imposed by adults, most notably their parents. This means that they might be more restricted to their neighbourhood for the formation of friendships than adults (Karsten, 1998; MacDonald and Schildrick, 2007; Valentine, 1997; Van Kempen, 2010).[1]

Secondly, some places, such as parks or squares, might form important foci of activity for young people, whereas for adults they may merely be spaces to pass through (Matthews and Limb, 1999). Being forced to leave a specific neighbourhood might therefore be experienced differently by youths and adults. In addition, youths' relationships with their environment, and their use of this environment, might differ between groups of youths, depending on their gender, age, ethnicity, social class or neighbourhood of residence (Karsten, 2003; Valentine, 1997; Wyn and White, 1997).

An increasing number of scholars have argued that, with the emergence of new forms of ICT and transport, the importance of the neighbourhood for the formation and maintenance of social networks is decreasing (Ansell, 2009; Guest and Wierzbicki, 1999). Nevertheless, empirical studies have shown that young people still make significant use of their neighbourhood. Social contacts often take place within the neighbourhood and local foci of activity are considered important for young people (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1997; Preciado et al., 2012; Rankin and Quane, 2002). Moreover, MacDonald and Schildrick (2007) showed in their research on youths' leisure careers in deprived neighbourhoods that the large majority of the young people in their sample spent much of their time in the company of peers in the public spaces of their neighbourhoods.

The second structural factor that influences the probability of youths' friendships is similarity: young people are homophilous – that is, they are attracted to those who share the same characteristics, behaviours, norms and values, even more so than adults (Baron and Byrne, 1994; Crosnoe, 2000; Van Mastrigt and Carrington, 2013). Youths' friendships are generally structured by gender, family background, income and ethnicity. The processes of propinquity and similarity intersect at the neighbourhood level because residence is often related to socioeconomic status and ethnicity (Crosnoe, 2000; Zhou, 1997). Because of the limited activity spaces

of youths, and thus a more limited 'pool' of potential friends, the networks of youths are likely to show high levels of homogeneity.

## 3.3 Displacement: the loss of foci of activity

Since the neighbourhood context might play a role in the formation and maintenance of youths' friendships, a change in residential context is assumed to have a disruptive effect on these friendships, as it results in the loss of important neighbourhood-based foci of activity. It can be argued that all relocations of young people are by definition 'forced', as it is their parents who make the decision to move and young people generally have little say in this. Research by Bushin (2009) in the UK has shown that in most families youths were simply notified about the decision to move. In some cases, youths were asked their opinion, but this usually had little influence on the ultimate decision to move. In the case of displacement as a result of the demolition of the dwelling, however, the situation is somewhat different. First, displacement is accompanied by a sometimes long period of insecurity about whether the family will actually have to move. Secondly, under the policy of urban restructuring usually whole blocks of multifamily units are demolished, which means that families in these blocks are dispersed over several neighbourhoods. Displacement might therefore be more disruptive than a move for another reason.

The few studies that have specifically focused on the effects of displacement on the friendships of children and youths were conducted in the context of the American HOPE VI programme (a programme similar to the Dutch policy of urban restructuring) and the 'Moving to Opportunity' experiment. Research by Clampet-Lundquist (2007) on the effects of the HOPE VI programme on 12- to 18-year-olds showed that after moving it was difficult for the youths to build a new life in their new neighbourhood. They had to get used to new norms and values, new friends were difficult to make and organised activities were still unknown, which resulted in a lower feeling of being at home in the new neighbourhood. Moreover, Gallagher and Bajaj (2007) found that, after displacement, children and youths showed greater levels of social isolation than in the previous neighbourhood. The study by Pettit (2004) on the effect of the 'Moving to Opportunity' experiment on

6- to 17-year- olds revealed a more positive picture: displacement led to a short-term disruption of the young people's social networks, but the children and youths were generally able to reconstruct social connections in the new neighbourhood. Thus, time is an important variable. In addition, de Souza Briggs (1998) showed in his research among youths aged between 12 and 17 years old that displaced youths were no more cut off from social support than a control group of youths who had stayed put. On the other hand, the movers were no more likely to report access to good sources of job information or educational advice.

## 3.4 Dealing with displacement

While the formation of youths' social networks is affected by structural neighbourhood factors, youths can react and respond to these structural influences in different ways: they can make their own decisions with regard to which activities to undertake and which people to engage with (Evans, 2010; Miles, 2000; Rudd and Evans, 1998). In the context of our research, it was therefore important not to see youths as passive 'victims' of displacement: they can actively choose to participate in different settings and form social networks, and thus create their own biographies. This can be in the old neighbourhood, the new neighbourhood or in other non-neighbourhood settings. These choices are often mediated by knowledge and understanding of what is possible, which in turn is mediated by the neighbourhood context, gender, socioeconomic status and ethnicity.

## 3.5 Research design

### 3.5.1 Research site

The research was carried out among a group of youths who had been forced to move out of seven neighbourhoods to make way for demolition activities in Utrecht, the fourth largest city in the Netherlands. Utrecht has a number of characteristics typical of large Dutch cities: compared with other Dutch municipalities, Utrecht has a relatively large number of children living in families on welfare (12 per cent) and living in deprived neighbourhoods (35 per cent), and a significant group of non-western immigrants (21 per cent) who are concentrated to a considerable

degree in deprived neighbourhoods (ethnic segregation index: 37.4) (Municipality of Utrecht, 2010a; Verwey-Jonker Instituut, 2008).

In 2000, the municipality of Utrecht and a number of the city's housing associations decided to restructure early post-Second World War neighbourhoods by demolishing 9500 socially rented units and building 9000 new units, including 6000 in the owner occupied sector (Municipality of Utrecht, 2010b). These demolition activities took place in a limited number of neighbourhoods, most of which are characterised by relatively low rents and, consequently, by a large percentage of low-income households.

### 3.5.2 Research group

Our research focused on how displacement affects youths between the ages of 12 and 21. We chose the lower limit of 12 years because at this age youths make the change from primary to secondary education, which is generally accompanied by a change in their action space as well as by changes in the restrictive regulations imposed by their parents. This transition can have an important effect on youths' social contacts and leisure activities. We set the upper limit at 21 years because until this age most young people are still in education. At the age of 21, a large share of youths finishes their secondary vocational education and is likely to enter both the housing and the labour market. Again, such an important change may influence their action space, social networks and leisure activities.

The research sample of displaced youths allowed us to investigate the immediate effects of displacement: we asked these youths how they had experienced their move and whether they had lost friends or stopped participating in leisure activities after the move. However, as we were also interested in the extent to which the effect of displacement prevailed in the long term, we included a control group of youths from the same neighbourhoods who had not been forced to move. This group consisted of two sub-groups: 'other' movers – namely youths who had moved, but not because their homes were to be demolished – and non-movers. Including this control group allowed us to compare the new situation in terms of the friendships and leisure activities of youths who had been displaced and those who had not.

### 3.5.3 Data, measurements and methods

We used the database of the municipality of Utrecht and data from the housing association Mitros to find households that had been forced to move because of demolition activities in the period 1998-2009[2] and that included youths who had been between 12 and 21 years old at the time of the move. We also used the municipal database to find youths from the same neighbourhoods who had not been forced to move to serve as our control group. The group of displaced youths comprised 433 potential respondents, while the control group (other movers and non-movers) comprised 859 potential respondents.

We carried out the actual survey between June and December 2009. The total response rate of 26 per cent left us with 336 completed questionnaires. For the purpose of this paper, we focused on youths who lived and had moved with their parents, because we expected displacement to have the largest effect on this group, as they were generally younger and therefore more likely to be neighbourhood-based for their activities and social networks. Youths who already lived on their own prior to the move were often students, for whom we expected the move to be less disruptive. We also excluded youths who moved from the parental home to a dwelling of their own, because among youths in this group there might already have been plans to leave the parental home – for example, because of a change from secondary education to higher education or from education to employment. The forced move might thus have been an opportunity rather than a disruptive factor. This selection left us with a research group that shows less internal differentiation than our initial research group. This reduced our sample to 236 respondents.

Table 3.1 shows the descriptives of the displaced and the non-displaced youths. It can be seen that most respondents were still attending school at the time of their move and a large share of them were still in education at the time of the interview. The share of youths who were still in education at the time of the interview was slightly higher in the group of displaced youths than in the control group, this difference can be explained by the fact that the respondents in the control group were slightly older. Moreover, quite a large share of the respondents had a non-western background. The share of respondents from non-western backgrounds was slightly larger in the group of displaced youths than in the control group. We

controlled in the logistic regression analyses for these variables (and for a number of other variables).

When we look at the moves, two interesting issues emerge. First, as most of the respondents had moved only a short distance, not many of them had had to change schools: only 11 respondents had changed schools in the same year as the residential move. However, for all these respondents, the change of schools was related to the transition from primary to secondary education.

Secondly, a large share of the respondents had moved to similarly deprived neighbourhoods (see Chapter 2 for more background information and maps). This means that, in terms of institutional resources, the differences between the old and the new neighbourhood were limited. However, it has to be noticed that, in the context of Utrecht, living in a deprived neighbourhood does not necessarily result in limited access to leisure facilities. On the contrary, in the field of leisure provision the municipality pays specific attention to disadvantaged neighbourhoods, including those our respondents came from and moved to (Municipality of Utrecht, 2009).

We also asked the displaced youths whether they would participate in a follow-up interview; 66.4 per cent indicated that they would. From July until December 2009, we conducted 29 in-depth interviews. We aimed at achieving an equal distribution of respondents over different categories of displaced youths (moved within/out of the neighbourhood, moved to another deprived neighbourhood or to a better neighbourhood) and over different ages, genders and ethnicities. Each respondent was assigned a pseudonym, which is used throughout this paper. An important strength of combining quantitative with qualitative data (i.e. adopting a mixed methods approach) is that it allowed us to examine how the changes in friendships and leisure activities as a result of displacement operate within the realities and constraints of the individual lives of youths as well as in the neighbourhood context (see DeLuca et al., 2012).

In the quantitative part of our research, we used a number of regression analyses to gain insight into the effects of displacement on friendships and leisure activities. Since the dependent variables were measured on a binary scale, we used logistic

regression analyses to predict whether (1) or not (0) changes had taken place in friendships and activities and to find out which individual, household and neighbourhood characteristics played a role in predicting these outcomes.

**Table 3.1**: Descriptives of the research group

| | Displaced youths | Non-displaced youths |
|---|---|---|
| Gender (%) | | |
| Male | 42.5 | 43.0 |
| Female | 57.5 | 57.0 |
| Ethnicity (%) | | |
| Native, western ethnic group | 31.4 | 48.2 |
| Non-western minority ethnic group | 68.6 | 51.8 |
| Level of education (obtained or following, 2009) (%) | | |
| Low | 41.2 | 35.3 |
| High | 58.8 | 64.7 |
| Level of education of parents (2009) (%) | | |
| Low | 52.9 | 46.7 |
| High (at least one parent) | 36.3 | 34.3 |
| Unknown | 10.8 | 19.0 |
| Main activity (2009) (%) | | |
| Education | 63.8 | 51.9 |
| Work | 27.7 | 35.6 |
| Inactive | 8.5 | 12.6 |
| Mean age at time of research (2009) | 20.4 | 21.5 |
| Mean age at the time of relocation | 15.5 | 17.3[1] |
| Attending school at the time of relocation (%) | 84.0 | 71.6[1] |
| Average length of residency in old dwelling | 11.3 | 10.1[1] |
| Type of old neighbourhood (%)[2] | | |
| Deprived neighbourhood | 89.2 | 79.6 |
| Non-deprived neighbourhood | 10.8 | 20.4 |
| Type of new neighbourhood (%) | | |
| Deprived neighbourhood | 59.4 | 41.9[1] |
| Non-deprived neighbourhood | 40.6 | 58.1[1] |
| Distance old from new neighbourhood (km) | 2.1 | 3.5[1] |
| Move within the same neighbourhood (%)[3] | 33.0 | 27.5[1] |
| N | 101 | 135 |

Source: own fieldwork (2009).

[1] Applies only to respondents who moved, n=43.

[2] For the non-movers the old neighbourhood is the same as the neighbourhood at the time of the study.

[3] It has to be noted that even a move within the same neighbourhood was regarded by many of the respondents as a large change in their residential environment. A move to a dwelling even just a couple of blocks from the previous one might disrupt the casual meeting opportunities on the street and lead to the loss of friendships. Moreover, as generally whole blocks of multifamily units were demolished, only few of the old friends remained in the old neighbourhood.

## 3.6 Results

### 3.6.1 The localness of networks before the move

Social networks differ in the extent to which they include neighbourhood-based ties. One can question whether youths' friendships are indeed locally based, as youths increasingly make use of mobile phones and social networking sites to maintain their friendships. Knowledge about this network localness is crucial when researching the effect of displacement on friendships, as moving may have a larger effect on youths who have relatively many local friends. Our survey confirmed our hypothesis that youths are to a considerable degree locally oriented for their friendships: 74 per cent of the displaced youths indicated that most of their friends had lived in the same neighbourhood. Thus, for most of our respondents the neighbourhood can be regarded as an important place for friendship formation.

We conducted a logistic regression analysis to establish which factors influenced network localness (Table 3.2). This analysis showed, first of all, that having more friends in the neighbourhood is positively related to length of residence. Youths who had lived in the neighbourhood longer were more likely to have lived in the same neighbourhood as most of their friends, than those who had lived in the

**Table 3.2**: Logistic regression analysis on the likelihood of having at least half of all friends in the neighbourhood before the move

| | B | Sig. | | Exp (B) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Neighbourhood is deprived | 0.059 | 0.943 | | 1.061 |
| Length of residence | 0.140 | 0.004 | *** | 1.150 |
| Gender (ref = male) | -0.180 | 0.751 | | 0.835 |
| Age | -0.067 | 0.519 | | 0.935 |
| Non-western minority | 1.306 | 0.017 | ** | 3.692 |
| Has or follows high education | -1.291 | 0.032 | ** | 0.275 |
| Education level of parents (ref = low) | | | | |
| High | -0.183 | 0.755 | | 0.833 |
| Unknown | -0.446 | 0.657 | | 0.640 |
| At least one parent employed | 0.206 | 0.771 | | 1.228 |
| Constant | | | | 2.102 |

Source: own fieldwork (2009)

* = $p < 0.10$; ** = $p < 0.05$; *** = $p < 0.01$; N=95; Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.279$

neighbourhood for only a relatively short period. We also found that youths with lower levels of education or a non-western background were considerably more neighbourhood-oriented. This might mean that the negative effect of displacement on friendships is greater for these youths.

### 3.6.2 The effect of displacement on friendships and leisure activities

Before discussing the loss of friends and the giving up or participating less in leisure activities, it is important to take a closer look at the participation in activities before the move and how this differed between groups of youths (see Wyn and White, 1997). We found that leisure activities were influenced by ethnicity: youths from a non-western background spent significantly more time than native Dutch youths at the community centre or in meeting friends on the street (see Table 3.3). Thus, displacement might have a larger influence on youths who belong to a non-western minority group than on native Dutch youths. Interestingly, we found no significant differences in leisure activities between age-groups, main activities or level of education of parents (which can be seen as a proxy for socioeconomic status). The only additional difference we found was between males and females in being a member of a sports club: boys were more often a member.

Overall, we found that displacement had caused a large share of the youths to stop participating or to participate less in leisure activities. Youths particularly stopped visiting the community centre (68.3 per cent) and participating in other organised leisure activities (44.2 per cent), most probably because these activities were to a large extent neighbourhood-based. Being a member of a sports club decreased by only 10.9 per cent, most likely because most sports facilities are usually not located in the neighbourhood of residence. Logistic regression analyses (not shown) indicated no significant effect of being from a non-western background on the likelihood of ceasing leisure activities. However, as this group participated to a much larger extent in neighbourhood-based activities, in absolute terms the negative effect for non-western minorities was more profound.

Our survey also showed that 30.2 per cent of the displaced youths had lost one or more friends as a result of moving. Of the factors that influence the likelihood of losing friends (Table 3.4), the distance between the old and the new home is

**Table 3.3**: Leisure activities of displaced youths before the move (%)

| | Member of sports club | | Participation in other organised activities | Visiting community centre | | Meeting friends on the street | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | | | | | | | |
| Male | 75.5 | *** | 44.9 | 46.9 | | 79.6 | |
| Female | 27.7 | | 45.7 | 37.0 | | 76.1 | |
| Ethnicity | | | | | | | |
| Native, western ethnic group | 45.2 | | 38.7 | 22.6 | *** | 58.1 | *** |
| Non-western minority ethnic group | 54.5 | | 47.7 | 52.3 | | 86.2 | |
| Age | | | | | | | |
| <17 | 46.9 | | 50.8 | 46.0 | | 76.2 | |
| 17 or older | 60.6 | | 33.3 | 36.4 | | 78.8 | |
| Main activity | | | | | | | |
| Education | 55.2 | | 47.4 | 40.4 | | 82.5 | |
| Work | 45.8 | | 37.5 | 41.7 | | 75.0 | |
| Inactive | - | | - | - | | - | |
| Level of education of parents | | | | | | | |
| Low | 51.0 | | 37.3 | 41.2 | | 80.4 | |
| High (at least one parent) | 55.6 | | 58.3 | 47.2 | | 72.7 | |
| Unknown | - | | - | - | | - | |
| Total | 51.5 | | 46.2 | 42.7 | | 77.1 | |

Source: own fieldwork (2009)

* = p < 0.10; ** = p < 0.05; *** = p < 0.01; N=96

Some categories were left blank because of too small cell counts

**Table 3.4**: Logistic regression analyses on the likelihood of losing one or more friends after moving

| | B | Sig. | | Exp(B) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| At least half of all friends in old neighbourhood | 2.068 | 0.022 | ** | 7.908 |
| Old neighbourhood is deprived | 1.600 | 0.155 | | 4.953 |
| Distance between old and new home | 0.401 | 0.007 | *** | 1.494 |
| Length of residence in old neighbourhood | 0.041 | 0.496 | | 1.042 |
| Gender (ref = male) | -0.444 | 0.430 | | 0.641 |
| Age at time of moving | -0.236 | 0.055 | * | 0.790 |
| Non-western minority | -0.955 | 0.115 | | 0.385 |
| Received or still in high education | 0.167 | 0.769 | | 1.182 |
| Level of education of parents (ref = low) | | | | |
| High | -0.412 | 0.474 | | 0.662 |
| Unknown | -20.830 | 0.999 | | 0.000 |
| Constant | | | | 0.815 |

Source: own fieldwork (2009)

* = p < 0.10; ** = p < 0.05; *** = p < 0.01; N = 92; Nagelkerke $R^2$ = 0.383

the most important. This is not very surprising: when youths move further away, it becomes more difficult to meet friends in a casual way and thus maintain friendships. The localness of the social network before the move also emerged as an important predictor: youths who had lived in the same neighbourhood as most of their friends, were more likely to have lost these friends after the move. Being younger also led to a slightly higher likelihood of losing friends. This is probably because it is more difficult for younger youths to maintain friendships after the move because their action space is more restricted. Again, the logistic regression analysis did not show a significant effect of ethnicity on the likelihood of losing friends. However, as youths from a non-western background more often had networks that were neighbourhood-based, in absolute terms the negative effect for these youths was more profound.

The interviews revealed that losing friends was primarily related to the loss of common foci of activity: youths no longer met on a casual basis, but had to make appointments to meet each other. Zoran (22 years old, male, Bosnian, moved in 2007) illustrated this as follows:

> *We practically grew up together and spent almost every day together. We played football and things like that. After the move, it all fell apart. One person moved to [neighbourhood A], the other moved to [neighbourhood B]. They of course also have to work and have to go to school. This makes it very difficult to get everyone together, like before. Now you need to have some sort of diary to make an appointment.*

One focus of activity that emerged as being particularly relevant to displaced youths was the street: 77.1 per cent indicated that, before the move, they used to meet their friends in the street. Six months after the move, 60.8 per cent of the displaced youths had stopped meeting friends, or met them less often, in the street in the old neighbourhood. Our interviews revealed that the willingness to travel to other neighbourhoods for visiting friends decreased over time: shortly after the move, most youths had tried to continue meeting their friends in the old neighbourhood, but after some months this had become harder. Most youths indicated that it took too much effort to go there – also because they were dependent on the bike. Older youths in particular seemed often too busy with

school and work to visit their friends in the old neighbourhood. Issues like lack of money and parental regulations seemed to be less important. Nando (18 years old, male, Angolan, moved in 2007) illustrated the change in meeting his friends in the old neighbourhood as follows:

> *In the first months after the move, I spent most of my time hanging around with friends from the old neighbourhood. After the first year, I started to visit the old neighbourhood less and less. I had much less time to always cycle there. The longer I lived in the new neighbourhood, the less often I went to the old neighbourhood.*

The loss of friendships turned out to be one of the main reasons why displaced youths were negative about being displaced. Displacement was perceived as negative by 43.2 per cent of the respondents. Our interviews revealed that particularly those who had many friends in the old neighbourhood were more negative about the move, whereas those who lacked emotional and social bonds with the old neighbourhood were often more positive and emphasised the opportunity to move to a better home and neighbourhood. On the positive side, although some of the respondents had lost friends after moving, 50.5 per cent had made new friends. A logistic regression analysis (not shown) indicated that younger youths had a higher chance than older ones of making new friends in the new neighbourhood. This might be because it is easier for younger youths to make new friends by just playing in the street.

### 3.6.3 The flexibility of youths

The effect of displacement cannot be explained by structural characteristics at the individual and the neighbourhood levels alone: it is also dependent on differences in the ways youths deal with the opportunities to maintain their old friendships, make new friends and take up new activities and with the barriers to doing so. Although we found differences in how youths dealt with displacement and their new neighbourhood, the overall picture shows that they felt in control of the situation, took up new activities and formed new friendships. When asked if it was hard to make friends, Cahil (15 years old, male, Turkish, moved in 2006) indicated: '*No. When I came to live here, I started to study the neighbourhood. I often went*

*outside to play in the street and in this way I made a lot of new friends'*. Like Cahil, most youths were able to form new friendships easily. They met their new friends on their block, the local basketball court or the street corner. Younger youths in particular tended to be more outgoing and more open to new experiences, whereas older youths generally had other obligations in terms of homework, jobs or chores, which reduced the time they had to engage in neighbourhood settings.

Most youths thus felt in control of the situation after displacement, but there were a number of barriers that restricted the options they could exercise. Because many leisure facilities were available in the neighbourhoods the respondents moved to, the youths had a large variety of activities they could participate in after their displacement. However, this opportunity was constrained by a lack of knowledge about these activities. It took time to learn about the neighbourhood's facilities and activities. Some of the youths simply did not know about the facilities available in the new neighbourhood. Elif (15 years old, female, Turkish, moved in 2009):

> *I had heard about it at school and we could go there every week [in the old neighbourhood]. You could practise sports and participate in other activities, and you could even organise activities yourself. Now I don't even know where the community centre is. I haven't heard about or seen anything that's organised in the neighbourhood.*

The youths' opportunities were also restricted by a lack of feeling of social belonging. For most youths, existing networks and familiarity with the neighbourhood and the people living there played a role. Not only did neighbourhood settings influence the formation of social networks, but having networks generally led to easier participation in other settings because the youths felt more comfort and familiarity. Youths sometimes felt ill at ease entering unknown situations where they did not know anybody (see Goffman, 1959). This can be illustrated by the following story from Tisba (23 years, female, Moroccan, moved in 1999) about visiting the community centre.

> *Here I know nobody, and there [in the old neighbourhood] you went to a familiar environment. You knew the group leader, the children, which isn't the case in the new neighbourhood. So then I have the feeling: no, I don't have to [participate in these activities].*

Moreover, when the new neighbourhood was primarily populated by people who were very dissimilar in their behaviour and norms and values, the youths were less likely to form new friendships. This is illustrated by the following quote from Nando (18 years old, male, Angolan, moved in 2007):

> *I don't have any friends in my new neighbourhood. There are few boys my age here. The boys my age who are here have different interests than I have. I don't like to hang around with them. When I see those boys, I don't want to belong to that group. They smoke, drink and just damage things, so I don't want to be associated with them.*

From our interviews, it appeared that for many youths the presence of similar people in terms of gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status turned out to be an important structural factor influencing feelings of social belonging and hence the leisure pursuits of youths after displacement. This is illustrated by the following quote of Nassima (25 years old, female, Moroccan, moved in 2006):

> *It [the old neighbourhood] was a very lonely place. My god, I was actually never happy to live there, but I thought I had to stay there; I couldn't go anywhere. In the neighbourhood after the move I had Turkish neighbours; I had very good contact with them, and with Dutch neighbours. We talked a lot with the neighbours. Moroccan women came to visit me every now and then and I visited them.*

Thus, the effects of displacement are not homogeneous across youths, but are dependent on the interaction between individual characteristics (most notably personality traits, such as openness and outgoingness); the ethnic group a young person belongs to; and the conditions in the new neighbourhood (for example, the availability of facilities and the population composition).

### 3.6.4 Long-term effects

Our findings indicate that, although the youths faced some barriers to integrating into their new neighbourhood, after a while they had been able to 'catch up' and adopt new activities and form new friendships, which means that in the long

run the effects of displacement were limited. The absence of long-term effects is confirmed by the extent to which youths met friends in the street and participated in leisure activities at the time of the survey (2009): there was no significant difference between the displaced youths and the non-displaced youths (see Table 3.5). This was confirmed by a number of logistic regression analyses (not shown) that indicated that, after controlling for a number of individual, household and neighbourhood characteristics, there was no effect of displacement on the likelihood of meeting friends in the street, visiting the community centre or participating in organised leisure activities (member of a sports club; music, dance, theatre, etc.) at the time of the survey. Thus, although moving had led to the loss of foci of activity for a large share of the youths, in the long run moving had not had a significant impact on their activities and social networks.

**Table 3.5**: Leisure activities (2009)(%)

| | Displaced youths | Non-displaced youths | p-value |
|---|---|---|---|
| Meeting friends on the street | 46.9 | 39.7 | 0.304 |
| Visiting community centre | 11.1 | 10.3 | 0.857 |
| Member of a sports club | 39.0 | 42.1 | 0.663 |
| Other organised activities | 25.6 | 26.2 | 0.926 |

Source: own fieldwork (2009)
Only those living with parents; N=207.

## 3.7 Conclusion

Urban restructuring is seen by many policymakers as beneficial for the housing career of the households involved. The present study looked at whether the benefits of moving to a new home and neighbourhood come at a cost for youths – namely, the loss of friendships and having to give up leisure activities. Our results showed that for some of the respondents, moving had indeed led to the loss of friendships and the giving up of leisure activities. This was primarily because the youths no longer met each other on a casual basis – for example, at the street corner or the basketball or football court. In the first months after moving, most youths had tried to maintain their social contacts and activities in their old neighbourhood, but after a while this had become increasingly difficult.

On the positive side, we found that youths were to a large extent able to take up

new leisure activities and to make new friends in the new neighbourhood, which is confirmed by the fact that displacement did not have a significant effect on the leisure activities and the extent to which the youths meet friends in the street a couple of years after the displacement. Thus, although moving had quite a few short-term negative effects, in the longer run these effects turned out to be limited, as most youths show high levels of flexibility. Most studies on displacement assume that a move has homogeneous effects across the population. However, we found that the effect of a displacement on the friendships and leisure activities of youths depends on conditions both at the individual level and in the new neighbourhood (see also Small and Feldman, 2012). The greatest loss of friends was among the youths who had had a very local network in the old neighbourhood, who had been younger and who had moved a greater distance. Further analyses showed that primarily youths from a non-western background had a local social network and participated significantly more in neighbourhood-based activities than native Dutch youths. The effect of displacement was therefore more profound for this group. Moreover, conditions in the new neighbourhood – such as the population composition and the availability of leisure facilities and places to hang out – influenced the extent to which displacement had a negative effect.

We should rethink the assumption that displacement has a negative effect on the wellbeing of youths because of the disruption of social networks and the loss of activities. Most of the displaced youths felt in control of their situation and had been able to 'catch up' again. In this context, however, it is still necessary to recognise that the extent to which youths can take up new activities and make new friends is bounded by neighbourhood structures, such as the accessibility of activities and facilities, and the social climate in the neighbourhood. It is therefore important to assist young people and their parents when they move. Institutional actors need to be more proactive in helping families connect to their new neighbourhoods by, for example, supplying information about community centres and other places that provide leisure activities, and ensuring that the activities on offer meet the demands of diverse groups of youths.

Finally, although changes in friendship networks and activities are important in their own right, it is also important to research further the extent to and ways in which they mediate the effects of displacement on social outcomes. Although the

effect of displacement on social contacts and leisure activities is only short-lived, it might still have a positive or negative effect on the future wellbeing of youths. Future research in this area might also profit from including other factors that moderate or mediate the effect of displacement on the social outcomes of youths, most notably the role that parents and schools play in this context.

## Notes

[1] It has to be noted that there might be some groups of adults that are even more restricted in their spatial movements and localness of the social network than youths. One can think of elderly people (Allan, 1989); women with young children (Ibid.) or women with a non-western background (Heringa et al., 2012). However, our further analyses (Table 3.2) show that youths – at least the ones living in deprived urban areas – are also one of these groups with a high network localness.

[2] Like in Chapter 2, we chose this period as in these years extensive demolition was carried out in Utrecht. We are aware that there might be some recall bias, as it might have been difficult for respondents to remember how they had experienced the move several years previously. However, when we compared the respondents who moved before 2002 with those who moved in 2002 or later, we found no significant differences in their opinion about the move or the extent to which they had experienced a loss of friends.

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# 4 'COME AND LIVE HERE AND YOU'LL EXPERIENCE IT': YOUTHS TALK ABOUT *THEIR* DEPRIVED NEIGHBOURHOOD

## *A case study in Rotterdam*

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### Abstract

This study examined youths' lived experiences of a deprived neighbourhood in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Previous studies assume that deprived neighbourhoods pose serious risks for youths. What is largely missing from these studies, however, are the experiences of young people themselves. Do they indeed experience their neighbourhood as hostile and unsafe? Do they really experience a lack of resources? We conducted a qualitative study among youths aged 13-18 living in Feijenoord, a district of Rotterdam. The research demonstrates how important it is to discover youths' views on and experiences of their environments, as their experiences are very diverse and often differ from the hegemonic discourse. While the respondents were aware of problems, such as crime and violence, they also pointed to several positive aspects of their neighbourhood. In the eyes of the youths, their neighbourhood has both instrumental and affective meaning. Neighbourhood effect research might benefit from paying more attention to the idea that place can have multiple meanings, and from looking at the perceived neighbourhood strengths instead of only focusing on the deficits in deprived neighbourhoods.

## 4.1 Introduction

The assumption that the neighbourhood of residence has effects on the social outcomes of children and youths has influenced much social research as well as many urban policies. Growing up in a deprived neighbourhood has been shown to have a negative influence on several social outcomes such as education, behavioural problems, aspirations and job opportunities (Andersson, 2004; Kauppinen, 2007; Kintrea et al., 2011; Nieuwenhuis et al., 2013; Sykes and Musterd, 2011; White and Green, 2011). Several explanations for these neighbourhood effects have been put forward: young people in deprived neighbourhoods do worse than their peers in 'better' neighbourhoods because of factors like high levels of crime, negative role models, peer influences, the presence of negative social norms and values, and the lack of institutional resources (Leventhal and Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Sampson, 2008).

Previous studies on neighbourhood effects, however, have been met with criticism (Bauder, 2002; Gotham, 2003; Lupton, 2003). First, by using census data as a proxy for neighbourhood environments many studies provide insight only into the impact of the structural characteristics of neighbourhoods, and hardly take into consideration the complex social processes underlying neighbourhood effects (Martin, 2003). Another criticism is that most of these studies focus too much on presumed deficits and pathologies, and overlook the strengths that might also be present in these neighbourhoods (Bauder, 2002; Lupton and Tunstall, 2008; Sykes, 2011). Moreover, although neighbourhood effect studies focus on the importance of spatial location, the meanings of space have been underemphasised (Gotham, 2003; Martin, 2003). Little attention has been paid to how neighbourhoods are 'multiply constructed', that is, how they are experienced differently by different groups and individuals (Martin, 2003; Sykes, 2011). Understanding how people give meaning to neighbourhood settings and how this influences their socio-spatial behaviour is, however, fundamental to understanding the neighbourhood as an influential context (Nicotera, 2007, 2008).

Youths' neighbourhood perceptions and experiences are particularly understudied. For a long time, the experiences of children and youths were not taken into account in either academia or urban policies (Churchman, 2003; Francis and

Lorenzo, 2002; Frank, 2006; Knowles-Yanez, 2005; Loebach and Gilliland, 2010). Young people have been, and sometimes still are seen as 'less' than adults, lacking the ability to express their experiences and needs (Chawla and Malone, 2003; Holloway and Valentine, 2000; Matthews, 2003; Sutton and Kemp, 2002). As a result, many researchers have used adult proxies, such as the interpretations of parents, teachers or other professionals, to measure the experiences of youths (Darbyshire et al., 2005; Loebach and Gilliland, 2010; Matthews and Limb, 1999; Rasmussen et al., 2004). Until now, many studies have failed to acknowledge that because the socio-spatial behaviour and perceptions of children and youths are different, they might experience their neighbourhood differently from adults (Burke, 2005; Loebach and Gilliland, 2010; Rasmussen et al., 2004). This might be one of the reasons why studies on neighbourhood effects on youths are inconclusive (Burton and Price-Spratlen, 1999). The present study fills this gap by answering the following questions:

> *How do youths living in a deprived area perceive their neighbourhood? What do they perceive as problems and what as resources?*
>
> *How are perceived neighbourhood problems and resources related to the youths' wellbeing?*

To shed light on these issues, we discuss youths' reports of neighbourhood problems, their perceptions and experience of resources and their sense of place attachment in Feijenoord, a low-income, multi-ethnic district of Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

## 4.2 Interpreting the neighbourhood

Several authors discuss the ways in which different spaces can be made meaningful by individuals and how people can become attached to certain spaces in a variety of ways. Two concepts are important here, namely, that places are constructed through social practices, and that places have several layers of meaning and relationships to other places. Agnew (2005) distinguishes three components of a meaningful location (see also Cresswell, 2004; Sykes, 2011). The first is place as location or a fixed spot on the earth's surface; for example, Feijenoord is located in

Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Second is the view of place as a series of locales for social interaction. Examples are everyday social settings, such as homes, schools, squares, shopping malls, football fields and street corners, which structure social interaction and thus influence the formation of norms, values and behaviour. Some locales – for example, social media like Facebook – are not physical locations. The third component is sense of place, which is conceptualised as the subjective and emotional attachment people have to a place (Cresswell, 2004).

Understanding how people give meaning to neighbourhood settings and how this influences their socio-spatial behaviour is an important aspect to take into account when researching neighbourhood effects. People (and in the case of this study, youths) can experience their neighbourhood in a myriad of ways. These different interpretations of places, however, are discussed in only a limited number of studies. Spencer (2001), for example, explains how individual and contextual characteristics influence subjective experiences of the neighbourhood. For instance, the presence of police in the neighbourhood may be perceived by girls as a resource, as it increases their feelings of safety, whereas boys might experience it as a problem, as it reduces their feeling of freedom to express themselves (Anthony and Nicotera, 2008). Lynch (1979), moreover, shows that there is no one-to-one relationship between physical characteristics and the perceptions that youths have of their neighbourhood. He shows that youths in a deprived Argentinian neighbourhood that has poor quality housing and is near to a prison and municipal rubbish dump, perceive their neighbourhood as nice, safe and friendly. Their sense of belonging to their neighbourhood was quite high and they felt they could freely and safely use their environment.

These studies show that individual perceptions of neighbourhood are very diverse and can play an important role in directing socio-spatial behaviour. They also illustrate that there is a need to include in neighbourhood effect studies the subjective experiences of youths living in the neighbourhood, instead of focusing only on objective neighbourhood characteristics. In this study, we therefore adopted a perspective of heterogeneous space; in other words, we acknowledged that there might be different interpretations of space, and that this leads to different uses of the same environments. It also allowed us to leave the hegemonic discourse of adult perceptions of space behind and pay attention to youths' interpretations of place.

## 4.3 Place attachment

The notion that places are meaningful to people is related to a sense of place attachment. Place attachment is a '*set of feelings about a geographic location that emotionally binds a person to that place as a function of its role as a setting for experience*' (Rubinstein and Parmelee, 1992, p. 139). This emotional place attachment can relate both to the place itself and to the communities that are present in that place, and thus also help to define that place. It is argued by several authors (Breakwell, 1992; Livingston et al., 2008; Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996) that attachment to a place influences identity formation. According to these authors, four principles of identity may be met through place attachment: distinctiveness, continuity, self-esteem and self-efficacy.

- The first principle of identity is the desire to maintain personal distinctiveness. People use certain places to distinguish themselves from others, such as people in another city ('I'm a Rotterdammer') or another neighbourhood ('I'm from Rotterdam-South').
- The second is the wish to maintain continuity. Places can refer to experiences in the past and can thus offer a sense of continuity to the identity of people.
- The third principle is self-esteem: people become attached to a certain place if that place enables them to make a positive evaluation of themselves or the group with which they identify.
- The final principle is self-efficacy, which refers to the extent to which a person feels that he or she can deal with situational demands, and is often linked to personal agency (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996). The environment plays a role in this in that it can hinder or facilitate the extent to which people can exercise their agency. Livingston, Bailey and Kearns (2008) state that this relationship could work both ways: on the one hand, it could be the case that when place supports a person's sense of self-efficacy, people will form a stronger attachment to it, and on the other hand self-efficacy could also be a potential outcome of attachment.

### 4.3.1 Place attachment in deprived areas

The relationship between place attachment and levels of area deprivation has been discussed by many authors. Woolever (1992), for example, found that low levels of place attachment were related to high densities and high percentages of low quality housing. Interestingly, average income levels had no significant impact, whereas average educational level did have an impact: place attachment was higher in neighbourhoods with higher educated residents. Based on Woolever's findings, Livingston and colleagues (2008, p. 15) conclude that: *'the key factor may be one of cultural resources, not poverty, so that higher levels of education in an area may help generate more social involvements and hence higher place attachment'.*

Sampson's (1988) study of attachment in the UK shows that place attachment at the neighbourhood level is lowest in communities characterised by residential mobility, urbanisation, a high density of youths, a high victimisation rate and, most importantly, high levels of fear about neighbourhood safety. On the individual level, a person's length of residence and his or her local friendships significantly increased attachment to the community. In a recent paper, Bailey and colleagues (2012) argue that in the UK place attachment is significantly lower in more deprived neighbourhoods primarily because these areas have lower levels of social cohesion, but these scholars also show that the factors that shape place attachment in more deprived neighbourhoods are the same as in other places. Many authors argue that place attachment is related to the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood. Putnam (2007), for example, states that people who live in more mixed communities tend to withdraw from collective life and to distrust their neighbours. On the other hand, Sturgis and colleagues (2011) show in their study in the UK that economic deprivation has a larger effect than ethnic diversity on place attachment.

Although these studies give an indication of the relationship between place attachment and levels of deprivation for adults, there are few studies that address the question for youths. In their recent study on youths' perceptions of their neighbourhood, Anthony and Nicotera (2008) plea for future studies that examine the relationship between neighbourhood resources and youths' sense of belonging in their neighbourhood. One study that focuses on youths – albeit

slightly older youths than the ones in our study – is that by MacDonald and Marsh (2001). Their qualitative study among respondents in their mid and late twenties revealed that the majority preferred to remain in neighbourhoods that suffered from socio-economic problems and social exclusion. The reasons they found for this were the strong family and social networks and the normalcy of social exclusion. The young adults did not feel that the problems they experienced were unusual, particularly because they had little experience of other neighbourhoods with which they could compare their situation.

## 4.4 Research design

We carried out our research in Feijenoord, a district of Rotterdam. Feijenoord is located south of the river Meuse (Rotterdam-South), an area that has traditionally been the poorer part of the city. Five neighbourhoods in the Feijenoord district were part of the research: Afrikaanderwijk, Bloemhof, Hillesluis, Feijenoord and Vreewijk. These neighbourhoods are characterised by a low socio-economic status, low levels of education and high levels of unemployment (compared to the city average), and most of the inhabitants are from a non-western background (see Table 4.1). Moreover, the area is blighted with such problems as low levels of perceived safety, nuisance from youths and drugs use (see Table 4.2).

We recruited respondents through community organisations and secondary and MBO (secondary vocational education and training) schools. We used a non-random, convenience sampling strategy. In total, we conducted 26 interviews with youths. The group of respondents consisted of 14 boys and 12 girls from diverse ethnic backgrounds (Dutch, Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, eastern European, Dutch Antillean, Afghan and Pakistani). The age range was 13-18 years.

The study consisted of three components. First, the youths were asked to use their camera phones to take photographs of the places that were important to them, and the places that they liked or did not like. We chose to use photography as one of the methods since it has a number of advantages: by giving young people control of the camera they can show the places that they, rather than the researcher, think are important; the pictures can be used as a starting point in interviews and help

to focus on the topic; and lead to less self-consciousness among respondents compared to drawing or writing (Lewis and Lindsay, 2000; Nic Gabhainn and Sixsmith, 2006; Tunstall et al., 2004).

The second part of the research consisted of a mental mapping exercise: the respondents were asked to draw a mental map representing the places and people that were important to them. The advantage of mental mapping is that it gives respondents the freedom to express themselves with limited intervention by the researcher. Moreover, it is a good method to provide insight into the relative importance of places in their daily lives (Young and Barrett, 2001).

The third part of the study consisted of in-depth interviews. We asked the respondents a series of questions about their neighbourhood, namely, the places that were important to them, why they liked to go there and what they did there, with whom and how often. The pictures served as input for this interview. We also asked general questions about their individual and family background. We transcribed the interviews in their entirety and used a standardised QDA program (NVivo) to code and analyse them.

**Table 4.1**: Socioeconomic and ethnic composition of the selected neighbourhoods

| | Standardised household income[1] | Households living in poverty | Employment | Persons with medium or high level of education[2] | Total non-western |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | x 1 000 euro | % | % | % | % |
| Afrikaanderwijk | 16.4 | 28 | 48 | 25 | 78 |
| Bloemhof | 16.7 | 25 | 57 | 24 | 60 |
| Feijenoord | 17.0 | 25 | 47 | 31 | 73 |
| Hillesluis | 17.0 | 23 | 61 | 31 | 74 |
| Vreewijk | 18.9 | 16 | 48 | 39 | 21 |
| Rotterdam | 21.7 | 14 | 61 | 56 | 36 |

Source: De Jong and Van Rhee (2007); Statistics Netherlands (2010)

[1] Corrected for differences in household size and composition

[2] Persons who have finished at least an MBO education. MBO is the abbreviation for *middelbaar beroepsonderwijs* (secondary education and training). Approximately 40 per cent of the Dutch working population has completed a vocational course to at least a secondary vocational training level

**Table 4.2**: Safety indicators of the selected neighbourhoods

| | Safety index[1] | Drug-related nuisance | Youth-related nuisance | Social cohesion |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | [1-10] | % | % | [1-10] |
| Afrikaanderwijk | 5.6 | 25 | 23 | 6.0 |
| Bloemhof | 5.5 | 18 | 23 | 6.0 |
| Feijenoord | 7.0 | 5 | 14 | 6.0 |
| Hillesluis | 5.6 | 18 | 17 | 5.9 |
| Vreewijk | 6.5 | 9 | 13 | 6.4 |
| Rotterdam | 7.2 | 8 | 14 | 6.2 |

Source: De Jong and Van Rhee (2007)

[1] The safety index is composed of two main types of indicators: (1) direct indicators, such as theft, violence, drug-related crime, burglary, vandalism, cleanness and wholeness, and traffic incidents; and (2) indirect indicators, such as the number of social security claimants, ethnic backgrounds, mobility and satisfaction with neighbourhood

## 4.5 Results

Our respondents' narratives showed that youths had a critical understanding of their neighbourhood. They were well aware of both the positive and the negative aspects. The problems and positive points they perceived are elaborated upon as follows.

### 4.5.1 'What I dislike about my neighbourhood'

Feijenoord is often seen by outsiders as a district with high poverty rates, poor quality housing and relatively high levels of crime and other social problems. The youths pointed to similar problems. First, the interviews showed that the youths were aware of signs of decay and vandalism. Many respondents specifically talked about dwellings that were in a poor state or about graffiti tags on buildings. Poor environmental quality affected the youths' sense of well-being, as illustrated by the words of Christian (19 years old, male, Dutch):

> *I don't know what it is, but it's becoming worse. A while ago a house burnt down, and it's still standing there, burnt down, boarded up ... I think they are planning to demolish it, that's why they are doing it, but it's not a nice place to live anymore.*

Second, the youths expressed concern about the people present in public space. When asked why they disliked certain places, most of them indicated that this is because of the people present within these places. Quite a few pictures and mental maps showed places where annoying or 'scary' people often hung around, ranging from a group of boys to drug dealers (see Figure 4.1). The perception of these places sometimes also influenced youths' spatial behaviour. For example, Vivian (16 years old, female, Surinamese) indicated that she dislikes one spot in the park where youths hang around: '*I don't feel comfortable walking past there, most of the time I take another route*'. On the other hand, some places were also disliked because of the absence of people: because of the perceived lack of 'eyes on the street'.

Particularly places where groups of boys or men hung around were perceived as unpleasant. Specific places mentioned were train or subway stations, cafes or coffee shops, street corners, parks and places that are dark and have little supervision. Alyssia (16 years old, female, Dutch Antillean) said that she dislikes the area around the grocery store she works at, especially in the early mornings and evenings, because it is quiet and dark, there is little supervision and she had heard someone had been shot there (see Figure 4.2). Among the other youths the reasons for disliking places were often also related to events that they had heard about or experienced themselves. This is illustrated by the following quote of Mitchell (18 years old, male, Dutch/Surinamese): '*I have seen some things that a normal person isn't supposed to see, or at least doesn't want to be associated with … like drug deals, violence, robberies. Actually, all the things you hear on the news ….*'

Most of the youths in Feijenoord, however, had high levels of environmental competence; in other words, they had the ability to use their neighbourhood in a skilful way based on their understanding of the different places in the neighbourhood. The narratives of youths showed how they developed ways to use their neighbourhood strategically and to avoid unpleasant settings. For example, Emine (18 years old, female, Turkish) said the following:

> *When we've been to the city centre in the evening, I prefer to take the subway home instead of the tram … when I take the subway I don't have to cross 'het dijkje' [an area she feels unsafe in]. When I take the tram I have to cross 'het dijkje', so I prefer the subway.*

Youths' opinions about the above mentioned places were mostly more a matter of dislike than fear. Similar results emerged from studies in the UK. Ormston and Anderson (2010, p. 11), for example, show that for young adults, *'exposure to some kinds of antisocial behaviour may partially desensitise people to its effects'*. Along the same line, Percy-Smith (2001) argues that certain environmental fears might be greater in less deprived neighbourhoods that have low levels of danger. The idea is that in deprived areas – such as the Feijenoord district – youths are constantly aware of dangers, and thus their experiences and behaviours are based on real experiences rather than imaginary fears.

**Figures 4.1 and 4.2**: 'Places I don't like'

**Younous** (18 years old, male, Moroccan): *'This is what we call 'the shed', it's kind of a problem, a lot of pot so to say. This is where the guys that smoke pot hang around, people dealing drugs and things like that. I'm not very proud of this.'*

**Alyssia** (16 years old, female, Dutch Antillean): *'Someone was shot over here. That's why I don't like it. When I have to start work here in the early morning, it's still very dark and quiet. I don't like it at all.'*

### 4.5.2 'What I like about my neighbourhood' – the neighbourhood as a source of instrumental and affective meaning

Although the youths were well aware of the problems in their neighbourhood, most were generally positive about their local environment. For example, Boris (17 years old, male, eastern European) stated:

> *When you live here yourself it's a nice neighbourhood. Nice people. But there are also 'bad boys'; they want to be tough, making problems. But besides that it's a nice neighbourhood. They say it's dangerous, but either I've learned to live with it, or it's just an ordinary neighbourhood. Before I moved here I lived in [a similar neighbourhood in Rotterdam] and people also said 'That's a dangerous neighbourhood, a lot of criminality and things like that', but I didn't notice anything.*

How do we explain these perceptions? In the interviews, most youths pointed to several sources of support in their neighbourhood that make them value their local environment. Sources of support are conceptualised as persons, places or activities that provide opportunities for either instrumental or affective meaning (Bryant, 1985); that is, a place or a person is considered a resource not only when it has material value, but also when it is of social-emotional value to the respondent.

*Instrumental meaning*

Most neighbourhood effect theories, of which the social disorganisation theory is the most prominent, assume that the structural characteristics of deprived neighbourhoods reduce the likelihood of residents developing social networks that can be sources of support (Osgood and Chambers, 2000; Sampson and Groves, 1989; Witherspoon and Ennet, 2011). From our interviews, however, a different picture emerges.

The youths in our study characterise the Feijenoord district as a place where many people know each other, at least within their own micro-neighbourhood. This allows them to go to each other for instrumental help, such as finding a job, helping with homework or taking care of each other when there are problems. Mitchell (18 years old, male, Dutch/ Surinamese), for example, reported that he

found an odd job as a security guard through his neighbourhood network:

> *A cousin of a friend of mine, his mother has a bar, here in Afrikaanderwijk. It's a Latino bar. I'm studying to be a security guard, and he knew that … and then she [the mother] said, why don't you come to work here?*

The neighbourhood-based networks also provide a source of support when things are not going well. Neighbours take care of each other when one of them is having problems. Yvette (16 years old, female, Surinamese), for example, explained how her neighbours take care of her when she has to go home because she is ill, and that they also teach her to cook and do household chores:

> *I'm quite often ill and my parents can't always come home from work for me. When I'm ill and I can't go to school, I go to them [the neighbours]. I go to their homes and they teach me a lot of things: cooking, household chores, beauty tips, etc.*

The youths also indicated several settings that fostered the availability of sources of support in their neighbourhood. Neighbourhood effect studies often assume that deprived neighbourhoods lack such settings; however, the narratives of our respondents illustrate that they perceive that there are several of these settings in their neighbourhood, such as youth centres or sport clubs, and that these settings offer various opportunities. The youths mentioned, for example, playing sports, working on their self-defence skills, getting help with homework and doing cookery courses. This is illustrated by the following quote of Hamid (14 years old, male, Moroccan): '*This is a football school: there's a football academy and a freestyler who comes from outside the neighbourhood … he also helps you with problems, you can talk with him. About school and internships and things like that.*'

Places of worship were also considered sources of support. Many respondents are from an Islamic background, and the mosque often came up in the interviews (as well as in the pictures and mental maps) as an important place for them. These places of worship offer resources in the form of organised activities, which keep youths of the street, as well as spiritual support. For instance, Selami (16 years old, male, Turkish) said the following:

*Every Wednesday we go to the mosque and they teach us about Islam. On Saturdays, we have indoor football and in the evening we watch a film. On Sundays, we go to the morning prayer and after that we have breakfast together. And that's how our week passes by.*

It has to be noted, however, that although most of the youths valued the recreational facilities, some indicated that these facilities do not appeal to them. They also talked about having a limited variety of things to do. This is an interesting outcome, as there are relatively many youth organisations in the area. A possible reason for this outcome is that the supply does not match the demand and the interests of the youths.

So far, the youths' narratives indicate that living in a deprived neighbourhood does not necessarily mean that they perceive a lower level of social-instrumental support. Similar results were found by Nicotera (2008), who shows that regardless of the level of neighbourhood disadvantage, youths describe important relationships with neighbours. In both deprived and non-deprived neighbourhoods, neighbours provide support such as watching each other's children, fixing bicycles and helping with homework. The findings of our research confirm her conclusion that youths have both positive and negative experiences of their neighbourhoods that are not necessarily dependent on structural neighbourhood characteristics. Our study illustrates that youth perceive that there are several opportunities available to them in their neighbourhoods that can be used to combat neighbourhood risks.

*Affective meaning*

A second theme that came up in the interviews is the youths' pride in and place attachment to their neighbourhood; in other words, how the neighbourhood is a source of affective meaning. This type of neighbourhood resource is often not taken into account when researching neighbourhood effects, but is important when considering youths' well-being.

The interviews revealed that the youths were well aware of the potentially 'dangerous' settings, but that this generally did not lead to a negative overall impression of the neighbourhood. In fact, the youths' narratives generally showed pride in their neighbourhood as well as high levels of identification with the

place and the community. It emerged from our interviews that the four principles of identity – distinctiveness, continuity, self-esteem and self-efficacy – are met through this neighbourhood attachment.

Most of the youths indicated that their neighbourhood was one of their favourite places in Rotterdam: they felt at home there, knew the people and generally felt safe. Most of them spoke with pride about the places they took pictures of and talked about 'my neighbourhood', 'my street' and 'my football field'. This neighbourhood pride can be illustrated by the response from Mitchell (18 years old, male, Dutch/Surinamese) when asked whether he would rather live in another neighbourhood:

> *I try to stay in Rotterdam-South because it's my neighbourhood, I know all neighbourhoods by heart … I have everything I want here, so why should I leave? It's as simple as that.*
>
> *Interviewer: Are there also places where you feel unsafe?*
>
> *I think there are some places that are perceived as unsafe by most other people, but there are no places where I feel unsafe. Absolutely none.*

This pride is also materialised in the form of identifying with the code of the subway area (5314) or the postcode of one of the various sub-neighbourhoods. These codes can often be seen in graffiti tags, on the walls of school toilets, on youths' bags or in Facebook statuses. This is related to the *distinctiveness* dimension of place attachment: youths use these codes to distinguish themselves from other neighbourhoods. Mitchell explained this as follows:

> *I'm from Rotterdam-South and another person is from Rotterdam-West and then you just having a fight. 5314 is to show where you're from; it's like showing your identity. Like 'I want to put Rotterdam-South on the map, so I'm going to yell 5314 the entire day', something like that.*

Some youths also referred to the perceptions the media or outsiders have of their neighbourhood. They were well aware that people from outside the neighbourhood were generally not that positive about it. Nevertheless, most of the

youths were proud of their neighbourhood. The following quotation illustrates how Selami (16 years old, male, Turkish) feels about outsiders' perceptions of his neighbourhood. It also shows the relationship between place attachment and *self-esteem*: since youths' identity is related to their neighbourhood of residence, they tend to overemphasise the good things about their neighbourhood. There was no indication that outsiders' perceptions of the neighbourhood reduced the youths' identification with and pride in the neighbourhood. On the contrary, it might even have made it stronger.

> *You always hear about the bad things before your hear about the good things. If you do ten good things and one bad thing, they will remember that bad thing. We did so many good things here in the neighbourhood, but they don't see them. Only bad things, riots, shootings, stabbings, but that all happened in 2009, 2008. We've shown that the neighbourhood isn't like that anymore, but still people think about it as a bad neighbourhood. But it isn't.*

That most of the youths felt comfortable in their neighbourhood is a result of familiarity. Most of the youths have lived there all their lives; they know the place and the people there, and they do not know any other living environments. We can link this to the dimension of *continuity*, as discussed in the theoretical section. The neighbourhood can be seen as a referent to past experiences and actions, and it thus provides a sense of continuity to the youths' identity. Most of the youths perceived other areas where they are less familiar as more unsafe. For example, Xandra (17 years old, female, Surinamese) stated:

> *Because I have lived here for a very long time – I've lived here for 11 or 12 years – I am used to it. A lot of people say it's a very vibrant neighbourhood, and a very dangerous neighbourhood, but because I live here I don't notice that.*

Since most of our respondents had lived in their neighbourhood all their lives, they – and their families – knew most of their neighbours. Levels of social control were perceived to be high in the neighbourhood, particularly within ethnic communities. This was sometimes perceived as annoying by the youths, as it

limited their freedom. On the other hand, it also made them feel safe, as shown by the words of Jenna (17 years old, female, Moroccan):

> *To be honest, I'm never scared when I walk on the street … I have five brothers and they are well known in the neighbourhood. People can't hurt me. When I walk on the street, people are like: 'Hey, Alaoui!' They don't know my first name, but they are like: 'Hey, sister of Alaoui!'*

The above quotations also illustrate that the *self-efficacy* dimension of place attachment is met among most youths in the Feijenoord district. Twigger-Ross and Uzzell (1996, p. 208) indicate that *'with respect to the environment … feelings of self-efficacy are maintained if the environment facilitates or at least does not hinder a person's everyday lifestyle'*. Their familiarity with the neighbourhood induces most youths in the Feijenoord district to feel that they have high levels of personal agency. This is further strengthened by the high levels of environmental competence, as mentioned in the previous section.

On the other hand, this familiarity with the neighbourhood can also have negative consequences. First, it has to be noted that while social networks create opportunities for certain groups, they exclude other groups. When asked if she sometimes feels uncomfortable in the neighbourhood, Janey (16 years old, female, Dutch) replied:

> *Yes, in the Feijenoord neighbourhood. There are so many immigrants living there. Not that I'm racist or something, but when you walk on the street over there … people look at you like you are from another planet or something.*

Second, the familiarity with the neighbourhood is related to what MacDonald and Marsh (2001) call the 'normalcy of social exclusion'. Most of the respondents had lived in their neighbourhood for large parts of their lives; they had gone to school there and their social networks were largely neighbourhood based. They had limited lived experiences beyond the Feijenoord district, which meant they did not have any neighbourhoods to compare the area against. They knew little about how youths in more advantaged neighbourhoods live. Youths' residential

history might thus have an important influence on their perception of the neighbourhood, as illustrated by the words of Emine, Meryem and Irmak (three Turkish female friends, 18, 16 and 18 years old). They disagreed over how they felt about Rotterdam, and particularly the Feijenoord district. Whereas Meryem and Irmak had lived in the area all their lives, Emine had just moved there some years previously from a rural area in the south of the Netherlands. Their words also reveal the heterogeneity in neighbourhood perceptions:

> *Emine: I don't know, but actually I don't like Rotterdam that much. That has to do with graffiti, but also with people. But I also think that's because I grew up in a village.*
>
> *Irmak: I don't agree with that. I like Rotterdam, it's a nice city.*
>
> *Emine: It might be a nice city, but it's also about how you live. People that grew up here, most of them became junkies. They weren't raised the right way, because their parents are 'bad' as well. In a village you rarely have these problems.*
>
> *Meryem: She's right about that, but I still like Rotterdam.*

Finally, the affective meaning of the neighbourhood was reflected in the plans for the future of some of the youths. Quite a few expressed the desire to remain in their neighbourhood, even after they moved out of their parental home. For example, Malih (16 years old, male, Moroccan) said:

> *I was born here and I'm gonna die here.*
>
> *Interviewer: Why?*
>
> *Because I know a lot of people that had success in their lives, and then they leave the neighbourhood. Then I'm like, you're abandoning the neighbourhood you grew up in. Where I grew up, I also want my children to grow up.*

On the other hand, some of the youths said that although they were familiar with the neighbourhood and liked living there, it was not a place they would like their children to grow up in. Jenna (17 years old, female, Moroccan), who was generally positive about her neighbourhood, said: *'When I get married, I'll leave this place, then I want a quiet neighbourhood. Over here I don't have 100 per cent certainty that my child will get on the good path.*' This shows that despite doing well herself, she is aware of the problems in the neighbourhood and how these can potentially influence younger children. Particularly the suburbs were perceived to be better, quieter places for children to grow up in.

## 4.6 Conclusion and discussion

The present study explored youths' perception of neighbourhood problems, neighbourhood support and their sense of place attachment in a Dutch deprived neighbourhood. While the youths were well aware of the problems in their neighbourhood, such as crime and violence, most of them were generally positive about their neighbourhood. How do we explain this? In the interviews, most of the youths pointed to several sources of support in their neighbourhood, which made them value their local environment. Whereas it is common in neighbourhood effect studies to explain problems in terms of a lack of social cohesion and social capital (Putnam, 2007; Sampson and Groves, 1989; Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999), the majority of our respondents did not feel that they lacked relationships that could be a source of instrumental and emotional support. Moreover, they indicated high levels of social belonging to the neighbourhood. It was clear that for many of the youths, their neighbourhood formed an important part of their identity. They felt attached to their neighbourhood because it met their needs for distinctiveness, continuity, self-esteem and self-efficacy. Together with the fact that most of the youths had few lived experiences outside the neighbourhood, and thus had little knowledge about other, more advantaged neighbourhoods, these factors made the majority of the respondents relatively positive about their neighbourhood.

Our findings lead us to question deficit models, such as the social disorganisation theory, which have been common in neighbourhood effect literature. These

models assume that neighbourhood disadvantage necessarily means a lack of social capital, positive norms and values, and social cohesion. We found that, at least in the perception of our respondents, this is not necessarily the case. Instead, the youths were generally positive about the social networks and support in their neighbourhood. Our findings support the pluralistic neighbourhood theory of Aber and Nieto (2000), who state that even structurally disadvantaged neighbourhoods have strengths that can lead to positive outcomes for youths. Despite socio-economic disadvantage and related social problems in the neighbourhood, there still may be positive social processes. One remark has to be made here, however. As Perri 6 notes, *'We must not celebrate … any kind of network or any kind of social capital … some networks may be very damaging for everyone else and perhaps, in the longer term, for themselves'* (1997, p. 21). Whereas in the eyes of the youths the social processes in the neighbourhood may be positive, some of these networks might also lead them to participate in deviant behaviour, such as criminality or drugs use. Moreover, while these social networks lead to a feeling of social inclusion, they might also lead to a lack of bridging capital and thus limit youths' opportunities to achieve social mobility (MacDonald et al., 2005). Although the youths in our study displayed conventional norms concerning school and work, longitudinal research is needed to see whether neighbourhood-based social networks impede their chances of getting a good education and good jobs.

Our study also suggests that it is crucial to include individuals' subjective perceptions of their neighbourhood in neighbourhood effect studies. These perceptions vary among individuals, suggesting different neighbourhood effects for different (groups of) youths. Youths are, however, often still portrayed in a one-sided way in neighbourhood effect studies as well as in the media: they are generally seen as a unitary group with the focus on the negative characteristics. The diversity in youths' perceptions we found across our small sample shows that we need to guard against adopting a too simplistic description of youths in deprived neighbourhoods (see also MacDonald and Marsh, 2001). Neighbourhood effect research could benefit from paying more attention to what a neighbourhood really means in the lives of young people and how this influences their behaviour and choices, and from acknowledging the multiple meanings of place (Sykes, 2011).

Finally, we found indications that youths' perceptions vary considerably from

the hegemonic discourse. Understanding how youths experience and perceive their neighbourhoods is essential to understanding their socio-spatial behaviour and how neighbourhoods may influence their social outcomes. It is therefore important to include youths in neighbourhood research as well as in policymaking, and to acknowledge youths as capable participants in this context (Burke, 2005; Darbyshire et al., 2005; Francis and Lorenzo, 2002; Sutton and Kemp, 2002). The challenge is to develop innovative tools – such as the use of visual methods – to adequately capture youths' views and to communicate these views to policymakers and youth workers (see also Loebach and Gilliland, 2010). These methodologies should not only shed light on neighbourhood deficits but also provide insight into the potential resources, so that policymakers and youth workers can draw upon these resources to stimulate positive youth outcomes despite their growing up in a 'risky' environment.

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# 5 'WE'RE COOL AND WE'RE JUST HANGING OUT, BUT THEY CAN LOOK AT IT DIFFERENTLY': THE CONSTRUCTION OF YOUTHS' SOCIO-SPATIAL BOUNDARIES IN A LOW-INCOME, MULTI-ETHNIC NEIGHBOURHOOD

## *A case study in Rotterdam*

This chapter is currently under review at an international journal


### Abstract

In recent decades, numerous scholars have studied the use of public spaces by youths. Central to this research is the marginalisation of youths and how they negotiate adult restrictions. This existing research, however, fails to acknowledge how the construction of socio-spatial boundaries is a relational process; how encounters other than those between youths and powerful adults matter for youths' socio-spatial behaviour; and how identities can be fluid depending on the context. To fill these gaps, we conducted a qualitative study among youths (13-18) living in Feijenoord, a low-income, multi-ethnic district of Rotterdam. Three types of relations emerged as important for the construction and reconstruction of socio-spatial boundaries, namely those between youths and the authorities, between groups of youth, and between girls and boys. Comparing these three types highlights the complexity of youths' relations with their everyday environment and illustrates that socio-spatial boundaries and identities are fluid and situational.

## 5.1 Introduction

In recent decades, an increasing number of scholars have studied the perception and use of public spaces by youths. These studies generally focus on two important aspects. Firstly, the emphasis is on how youths are marginalised in public space by the authorities or other adults, or in other words, on the socio-spatial boundaries that are created between youths and the 'legitimate' users of public space (Gaetz, 2004; Macdonald and Shildrick, 2007; Malone, 2002). These studies mainly focus on how the use of places by young people to 'hang out' in is understood as a threat by other people in the public realm (White, 1994). The second strand of studies focuses on youths' roles in negotiating the adult restrictions placed on their use of public space (Matthews et al., 2000; Robinson, 2000; Skelton, 2000). These studies generally show how youths are able to resist the adult dominance over public space and to carve out their own free places away from the adult gaze.

This existing research can be criticised on at least three points. Firstly, whereas the relational approach to space has been increasingly acknowledged in recent social research projects (see e.g. Blokland, 2012; Jones, 2009; Manderscheid, 2009), this has hardly been applied to youths' everyday encounters in public neighbourhood space. It is, however, important to acknowledge that what matters for the production of socio-spatial boundaries and as such the production of space, is not just powerful adults setting boundaries or youths pushing against those boundaries, but the reciprocal relation between the two. This means that youths can play an active role in constructing socio-spatial boundaries and are not solely the ones negotiating existing boundaries. Secondly, existing studies (see e.g. Atkinson, 2003; Fine et al., 2003) mainly focus on the interactions between youths and the authorities in public space, whereas their socio-spatial behaviour could also be influenced by other encounters, for example between groups of youths or between girls and boys. Thirdly, space and identity are often seen as overly fixed and static; little attention is paid to individual, cultural and contextual variations – in other words, how the same spaces can mean something different to people from different backgrounds, or how people can adopt different identities in different settings. The aim of this study was to fill these gaps by answering the following research question:

*How do youths construct, deconstruct and reconstruct socio-spatial boundaries through their encounters in public space?*

The research focused on how boundaries were constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed through everyday encounters between youths and 'others' in public space, and how this construction, deconstruction and reconstruction influenced youths' socio-spatial practices. As argued by Tilly (2007), it is important to focus on relations, as it is through them that phenomena such as social exclusion or inequality are constructed. This study responds to the plea by Horton and Kraftl (2006; see Evans and Holt, 2011, p. 280) for researchers in the field of children's and youth studies to explore *'mundane, everyday events, 'happenings' and ongoing practices in children's lives'*.

The focus of this study was on youths aged between 13 and 18 years. This age period can be considered an important life stage to study, as it constitutes an important juncture in socio-spatial behaviour. In contrast to children, youths have a wider range of socio-spatial opportunities both in and outside the neighbourhood. Central in this study was 'hanging out', which encompasses a wide range of activities, often done together with friends, such as walking around, sitting on benches or standing on street corners, shopping, and playing soccer or basketball. In her study on teenage girls, Thomas (2005, p. 591) describes hanging out as:

> *The navigation and creation of space by girls, their temporary inhabitation of different spaces for social activity, the simultaneous surveillance of their social practices by others, and the various practices of identities that shape the spaces of hanging out to include age, gender, sexuality, race and class'*.

In this study, the above definition was used for youths in general.

## 5.2 Relational production of space, boundary making and resistance

Since the emergence of the 'new' social studies of childhood, children and youths are increasingly being seen as active negotiators of places and social relations, and are thus perceived to be capable of challenging the hegemony of adults

(Valentine, 2000; Vanderbeck and Johnson, 2000; Winchester and Costello, 1995). The behaviour of people in public space, however, cannot be seen in isolation from meanings and interpretations of space (Gotham, 2003) and relations of power (Massey, 2005). A relational approach was therefore adopted in this study. Relational approaches to space are increasingly being used in studies in human geography (Massey, 1993, 2005; Thrift, 1996), sociology (Callon and Law, 2005; Latour, 2005) and anthropology (Collier and Ong, 2005; Rankin, 2003). The underlying assumption of such an approach is that people together, through interaction, create society as we observe it (Dépelteau, 2008; Emirbayer, 1997). Or, as Tilly (1998, pp. 497-498) puts it:

> *… humans turn out to be interacting repeatedly with others, renegotiating who they are, adjusting the boundaries they occupy, modifying their actions in rapid response to other people's reactions, selecting among and altering available scripts, improvising new forms of joint action, speaking sentences no one has ever uttered before, yet responding predictably to their locations within webs of social relations they themselves cannot map in detail.*

Such a focus on relations overcomes the problem of the artificial distinction between structure and agency that is still common in much social science literature (Dépelteau, 2008; Emirbayer, 1997).

Social interactions between people are filled with power. As Nightingale (2011, p. 123) explains: 'a *person does not exist outside a set of relationships that are always infused with power, even if that does not imply "power over".*' In these relationships of power, socio-spatial boundaries are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed. Space is both visibly and invisibly divided, and power struggles often occur between groups for control over public space, including various neighbourhood settings (Sandercock, 2008). In particular, there are frequent struggles between youths – who often feel marginalised in public space and seek to overturn the socio-spatial order – and adults, who want to defend their structural position as the one 'in power' (Valentine 2008; Vanderbeck, 2007). These struggles do not necessarily take the form of overt power and resistance, but can also be tacit negotiations to increase or restrict spatial boundaries. As McGrellis (2005, p. 517)

puts it: *'Central to these negotiations is the creation, transgression and sometimes evasion of boundaries. Such boundaries not only mark where it is possible to go, but also who it is possible to be.'*

Furthermore, power struggles can also take place between groups of youths themselves. Such struggles are often related to territoriality. Kintrea and colleagues (2010) show that power struggles between youth groups can take different forms, ranging from youths socialising on the street and as such claiming a piece of public space, to a strong territorial affiliation and the use of violence. Furthermore, Tucker and Matthews (2001) in their study on girls in a rural town show that power struggles between youth groups are related to age and gender. They illustrate how rivalries emerge between the mainly all-girl friendship groups (the respondents in their study) and mixed-sex groups of older teenagers.

How youths are influenced by and negotiate socio-spatial boundaries is dependent on their sense of self. Youths' everyday practices can take the form of resistance or conformity to existing boundaries depending how that context does or does not support their social identity. Epstein and Johnson (1998, p. 116) indicate that for young people,

> *… struggling to acquire the means to represent themselves to self and others is part of growing up. However, this active work always occurs under socially given conditions which include structures of power and social relations, institutional constraints and possibilities but also available cultural repertoires.*

The concept of resistance to existing socio-spatial boundaries and the link with youths' identities has been applied to young people quite frequently. Bottrell (2007), for example, shows how youths in a public housing estate in inner-city Sydney play truant from school and participate in illegal activities, and she frames this as necessary identity work, given the context of their marginalisation. A study by Dikec (2007) in the French *banlieues* shows the conflict between the state and marginalised youths. He concludes that the *banlieues* are both controlled areas, where the state is trying to subordinate young people, and sites of resistance. In a similar study, Dillabough and Kennelly (2010) investigate how youths construct

their identities in deprived areas of Toronto and Vancouver. The authors show how these youths have incorporated *'individualized and anxiety-ridden models of selfhood into their own self-perception, but also how this self-perception actually rests on traditional forms of gender and class practices'* (Johansson and Lalander 2012, p. 1084).

Finally, it is important to realise that youths' identities can be fluid and situational. Chen and colleagues (2012), for example, indicate that most youths have the opportunity to practice different roles in different contexts. Through experimentation they acquire a sense of self. In the same line, White (2008), in his article on youth gangs, uses the concept of 'fluid identities' to indicate that young people can have multiple identifications, and can be simultaneously gang members and non-gang members. Furthermore, in a study on native and Turkish youths in Germany and England, Faas (2009) shows that rather than having a singular identity, youths had fluid identities based on governmental policies and their schooling, community, social class and ethnicity. In this paper, socio-spatial boundaries and identities are therefore conceptualised as something 'hybrid', since youths are able to hide or emphasise certain aspects of their identity to suit the context.

## 5.3 Research design

The participants in this study were selected from Feijenoord, which is a district of the city of Rotterdam. The area has a population with a low socioeconomic status: the average income is 10,500 euros (the city average is 12,500 euros), and 29 per cent of the residents receive benefits and 63 per cent have a low level of education. Most of the inhabitants (65 per cent) are from a non-Dutch background. The largest non-Dutch groups are Turks (20 per cent), Surinamese (11 per cent), Moroccans (10 per cent) and Dutch Antilleans (4 per cent). Moreover, the area's residents have to deal with higher than average levels of unsafety and nuisance caused by youths and drugs use (all data: Feijenoord district, 2010). Respondents were recruited through community organisations and secondary and senior secondary education schools. Snowball sampling was used to find additional participants.

The youths were first asked to use their camera phones to take photos of places that were important to them, and of places they liked or did not like. Photography gave the youths the opportunity to express their experiences of spaces, their activities and their social networks through a more tangible means than just an interview. The photos were used as a starting point for the semi-structured interviews (see below). Using photography made the youths 'partners' in research and more aware of the social processes in their neighbourhood, which is in line with the conceptualisations of youth as 'agents of change' in their environments (Cahill, 2007; Ginwright and James, 2002; Holloway and Valentine, 2000; Skelton, 2007).

After the photography exercise, the respondents participated in a semi-structured in-depth interview on their socio-spatial practices, who they met in different settings and how participation in these settings influenced their lives. The interview also included a mental mapping exercise in which the youths were asked to draw the most important places for them as well as the places they did not like. The advantage of mental mapping is that it gives participants the freedom to express themselves with limited intervention by the researcher. It is also a good method to obtain insight into the relative importance of places in their daily lives (Young and Barrett, 2001).

In total, 26 interviews with youths were conducted in the period January-August 2013; 23 of the interviewees had participated in the photography exercise. The interviews took place in the youths' homes or at their schools or youth centres. Most of the interviews were conducted individually, but at the youths' request, three interviews were conducted in groups of two or three friends. The group of participants consisted of 14 boys and 12 girls from diverse ethnic backgrounds (Dutch, Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, eastern European, Dutch Antillean, Afghan and Pakistani) who were attending different school levels (mainly low and middle levels). A large share of the participants had a Muslim background.

The interviews were transcribed in their entirety and were coded and analysed by NVivo. General patterns in the data that were identified in the first round of coding were further refined during the subsequent rounds. Text query and negative case analysis were used to determine the relative strength of the themes that emerged from the data. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym, and

these pseudonyms are used throughout this chapter.

The fieldwork also included observations in the area, the attendance of meetings in youth centres, and informal conversations with residents, community workers and teachers.

## 5.4 Results

As noted in the theoretical section, we adopted a relational approach to explain how socio-spatial boundaries were being produced and reproduced through youths' everyday encounters in public space. The term 'encounter' was used in the broadest sense, ranging from everyday interactions – such as routine conversations or observations of others in public space – to personal relationships (Van Eijk, 2010). Specific attention was paid to encounters between people in unequal power positions and how boundaries were being made and remade through these encounters (Blokland, 2012). Three themes emerged from the interviews: (1) the encounters between the youths and the authorities or other adults; (2) the encounters between the respondents and other youth groups present in the neighbourhood, and (3) the encounters between girls and boys.

### 5.4.1 Me and the authorities

The first way in which socio-spatial boundaries – and hence the use of space by youths – were influenced by encounters in neighbourhood public space was through the power relations between youths and the authorities or other adults (for the role of parents, see Chapter 7). Adults in the neighbourhood often perceived hanging out on the street as an aimless pursuit engaged in by youths who had nothing better to do. This sometimes led to exclusionary actions, such as increased surveillance, policing and curfews. Youths, on the other hand, saw hanging out as a meaningful activity. Percy-Smith (2001) argues that the actions of youths hanging out is little different from the activities of adults in a social setting, like a pub. However, because there are limited places for youths to meet others they are forced to hang out on the street and are able to carve out some places for their use.

First of all, social-spatial boundaries were influenced by social distances of class and ethnicity. Particularly boys from non-western (Muslim) backgrounds were often seen by other residents as a potential threat and a source of anxiety. This might be because boys generally hung out in larger groups and were more visible and sometimes more aggressive than girls – at least in the opinion of many residents (see also Ralphs et al., 2009; Deuchar, 2010). Moreover, non-western boys were often branded as criminals, gangsters or hypersexed males. Neighbourhood residents applied the principle of 'emulation' to make sense of their experiences (Tilly, 1998), that is, they made sense of inequalities and reproduced them through *'the copying of established organizational models and/or the transplanting of existing social relations from one setting to the other'* (Tilly, 1998, p. 10). Blokland (2003) argues that when people have little personal information they are more likely to draw on available categories and ascribe stereotypical identities to others. In the case of Feijenoord, many adults in the neighbourhood applied their stereotypical image of youths hanging out in public space in general to the situation in their neighbourhood.

How this affected youths can be illustrated by the story of Ali, Musa and Selami (Turkish male friends, 17, 16 and 16 years old, respectively). They talked about the places they could or could not hang out in the neighbourhood. They mentioned a whole range of places from which they felt excluded. Ali said that people in the neighbourhood sometimes felt uncomfortable when the boys hung out in a group: *'People just tell us that they feel unsafe when we're standing there. Not that we're doing anything, but some people just don't like it when there are five people standing in front of their door.'*

Selami added that there are often many police officers walking or riding around in the neighbourhood, and that they reprimanded the group even when the youths were not doing anything wrong, at least not in their eyes. The stigmatisation of Muslim boys played a role here, as shown by Selami's words below. These power relations and the stigmatisation also influenced how these boys portrayed themselves in public spaces. They thought that it might be better to stay inside or otherwise be as little a nuisance as possible:

*Particularly if you're Muslim – for example, Moroccan or Turk – then they*

> *say: 'It's the Muslims again.' When we are outside, people are like: 'Look, another Muslim.' The more we stay inside, the better it is for the Muslims and the Dutch.*

Secondly, our interviews showed that even though power struggles often resulted in unequal opportunities to make use of space, youths could also position themselves as 'in power'. In the words of Tilly (2002, p. 115), they were '*renegotiating who they are, adjusting the boundaries they occupy*'. The narratives of the youths (mainly the boys) showed that they could create a sense of ownership of public space through their physical presence and behaviour (Sibley, 1995). They could reinterpret adult places – such as alleys and street corners away from adult supervision – and use them as free, personal spaces to be with their friends. In their search for a space to hang out in, the group of three boys had found a spot in their neighbourhood that was not intended for socialising, but that met the needs of the boys, namely somewhere to hang out with friends without being disturbed by adults (see Figure 5.1). As Ali put it:

> *This is where we hang out most of the time because it's the quietest place in the neighbourhood and because there is nobody walking by who disturbs us. We usually hang out in a group of five or six. We also don't have a ban on assembly here.*

Some critical notes have to be made here, however. Even though the youths felt that they could negotiate socio-spatial boundaries by carving out spaces for socialising, it was still the adults who allowed them to hang out in this specific space, as there was no ban on assembly. The community created a space for youths where they could conduct their activities without interfering with the 'legitimate' users of public space, but this tolerance still hid an implicit set of power relations (Valentine, 2008). As Waltzer (1997, p. 52) puts it: *'toleration is always a relationship of inequality where the tolerated groups or individuals are cast in an inferior position. To tolerate someone else is an act of power; to be tolerated is an acceptance of weakness.'* This point of view reinforces the position of youths as a problematic group, and positions them as the 'other' who must validate a claim for public space (Malone, 2002).

Another way to renegotiate the existing socio-spatial boundaries between youths and powerful adults was through the performance as a powerful person. In their pursuit of excitement, youths moved around the neighbourhood, creating their own spontaneous fun (Percy-Smith, 2001). For some youths, excitement went hand in hand with interaction with the police or the threat thereof. Kevin (17 years old, male, Dutch), for example, reported some of the things he and his friends had got into trouble for:

> *One time we smashed a window; we didn't do it on purpose … and another time I just managed to escape from the police. There was an empty house in my street and we'd collected wooden pallets to make a fire on New Year's Eve. And then we tried to get into that house [to store the pallets there], and we were all standing in the garden when we suddenly heard the police, so we started running …*

Some boys needed a controlled space and interactions with the authorities as part of their performance as powerful persons (see also Landolt, 2013). They created a fearless and 'tough' identity by hanging out in places where they were not allowed to, or by seeking conflicts with the authorities in order to achieve a feeling of superiority over them. Mitchell (18 years, male, Dutch/Surinamese), for example, talked about the dangers in the neighbourhood, but said that they did not affect him because of his 'fearless' identity. He had developed a mentality *'typical of Rotterdam-South, which I learned on the street actually. I think it's something like "Don't tell me what to do"'*. It has to be noted, however, that this tough behaviour was often a situational response. Boys acted tough when on the street and when confronted by the authorities, but could be well-behaved in other contexts. Mitchell, for example, recounted the numerous times he had been in trouble with the police, but also said that he was serious about completing his training as a security guard.

Finally, the interviews showed not only that the boys changed their behaviour in reaction to the authorities, but also that the authorities changed their reaction towards the boys again, which is likely to lead to the reproduction of the idea of groups of youths, usually non-western boys, as problematic and a threat to public order. This, in turn, was likely to lead to more exclusionary actions, which brings

us back to the first point mentioned in this paragraph. This illustrates how youths and adults together, through continuous interaction, create the neighbourhood as we observe it. Selami, for example, said:

> *When you put 30 police vans in a neighbourhood, and the police are very frustrated, they look at you with this tense look on their faces, that's what you get [boys causing even more trouble]. In [another neighbourhood]: two police vans, police are smiling at you. But here, you'll get arrested right away, get a preventive pat down, things like that. 'We saw you hanging out here today and there was a robbery, so we're going to take you to the police station.'*

**Figure 5.1**: One of the few street corners Ali and his friends were allowed to hang out

### 5.4.2 Me and the others

The second relational aspect that influenced the use of space is the youths' encounters with 'other' youths in the neighbourhood. Chapter 4 showed that youths in Feijenoord tended to have strong emotional attachments to local places, which served as a major source of collective identity and group cohesion, and that they drew boundaries between themselves and other groups. As Mitchell (18 years old, male, Dutch/Surinamese) put it: '*I'm from Rotterdam-South and another person is from Rotterdam-West and then you're just having a fight.*' Youths tended to describe other youths who did not live in their neighbourhood as suspicious or unwelcome outsiders, and as such these outsiders were often intimidated by groups of youths. Such boundary making can be best understood as a '*spatial strategy to effect, influence, or control resources and people by controlling area*' (Sack, 1986, p. 19).

Moreover, youths were sometimes excluded from certain spaces by other groups of youths from the same neighbourhood, often without explicit bullying or intimidation. Boris (17 years old, male, eastern European), for example, illustrated the power hierarchy that is present in the use of the limited amount of public space to hang out, in this case the benches in front of a snack bar. The word 'obviously' shows that for him this boundary is a normal part of his everyday life and that he does not feel the need to challenge it:

> *Over there, there are a couple of benches, where you can go and eat your food quietly, when the weather is nice. But most of the time it's occupied by other boys, bigger boys, and then you are not going to disturb them. Obviously…*

Younes (18 years old, male, Moroccan), on the other hand, explained that socio-spatial boundaries were something that could be made and remade through time. He explained that when he was younger, he did not use certain neighbourhood spaces (see Figure 5.2) since these were considered the territory of older boys: '*Just like, when one of the older boys gave us the look, like "You're not welcome here", then we just had to move.*' However, nowadays: *'in every group of boys there are about three, four, five younger boys, and they won't be sent away, and then they hear*

*all the stories about what the bigger boys did.'* This story shows that boundaries could change, and that these changing boundaries also influenced the nature of the social space. From a place from which younger boys were excluded, it had changed into a place where younger boys learned the 'good' – and also the 'bad' – things from the older ones.

Secondly, besides being excluded from some socio-spatial settings, many of the youths also created socio-spatial boundaries in order to set themselves apart from groups that hung out in certain spaces (Robinson, 2000). One reason youths excluded themselves from these spaces is that they feared being associated with groups that engaged in anti-social behaviour. Most of the youths had encountered such groups and most of them indicated that to a certain extent they had been influenced by these peers. For boys, 'bad' was related to issues like criminality, using drugs and vandalism, whereas for girls it was related not to real delinquency but to 'moral' issues like being loud, going to clubs and hanging out with boys, and sometimes having many sexual contacts. The boundaries youths constructed thus varied depending on the intersection of such matters as age, gender, ethnicity and 'anti-social' behaviour.

By contrasting themselves with people and places they associated with deviant behaviour, the youths feel they were emphasising important characteristics of themselves, such as behaving well, not engaging in violence, and often being anti-drugs and anti-alcohol. In other words, a certain identity was constructed by creating and maintaining boundaries. The distinctions youths made between places in which they felt comfortable and those they perceived as negative influenced their socio-spatial behaviour: through their behaviour, youths drew together the 'right' spaces and people and as such constructed or reinforced socio-spatial boundaries. Yasir (17 years old, male, Afghan), for example, indicated how he chose his socio-spatial environments:

> *Well, actually I know … I never hang out with people who are a bad example or something like that. Always with people I think are good persons. Never with somebody who smokes or drinks, I never hang out with those types …*

**Figure 5.2**: One of the neighbourhood spaces that used to be the territory of older boys

Some youths contrasted the people, places and activities with whom/which they were formerly involved, with their current situations and viewpoints. In other words, they constructed a new boundary between themselves and those who were still involved in antisocial behaviour such as smoking marijuana, bothering other people in the street or seeking confrontation with the police. This also illustrates the fluidity of youths' identities. Selami (16 years old, male, Turkish), for example, explained how he and his friends had improved their lives by deciding to participate in activities organised by their mosque instead of hanging out on the street: *'If we*

*weren't here [in the mosque], we'd be outside, and outside there are 'bad things', and if we do 'bad things' we'll get into trouble.'* This quotation also illustrates that the divisions youths made between social-spatial environments, correlated with divisions they made between different identities. They linked going to school, the community centre and the mosque with a process of emphasising their identity as responsible and being engaged in 'good' behaviour, as opposed to the street, which was linked to undesirable behaviour. It has to be noted, however, that these boundaries were not fixed but permeable depending on the spatial-temporal circumstances. The boys indicated that despite their 'new' focus in socio-spatial networks and the construction of a 'new' identity, they kept in touch with their old friends. Selami explained:

> *The bad boys … whatever they do, they are still my friends … at one point in time I chose my own way [because those boys engaged in bad behaviour] but they are still my friends. Whatever they do, I'll do anything for them.*

### 5.4.3 Girls and boys

Finally, the interviews showed that the construction of socio-spatial boundaries was also related to gender. First of all, encounters between girls and boys/men in the neighbourhood influenced how girls could navigate public space. Groups of boys and groups of girls hung out in public space, but ironically, the boys' reliance on peer networks contributed to the girls' feelings of unsafety. This was inflated by the fact that for boys the hanging out often went together with exaggerated performances of masculinity, such as showing off, making sexual remarks or acting 'tough'. It is argued that this is especially the case in deprived neighbourhoods, because other opportunities to feel acknowledged and valued – for example, through school or work – are less available (Anderson, 1999; Spencer, 2001).

How boys' hanging out in public space influenced girls' socio-spatial behaviour is illustrated by the story told by Vivian (16 years old, female, Surinamese). She said that she rarely spent time in public spaces in the neighbourhood, preferring to stay at home or with her aunt, who is one of her neighbours. These were the places where she felt safe and could be herself, as opposed to the neighbourhood, which she did not like and where she often felt unsafe because of the neighbourhood

boys hanging out there: '*In my neighbourhood there are a lot of places where boys hang out. That's why I'm not [outside] in my neighbourhood very often; most of the time I'm at my aunt's place or just at home.*'

In the same line, Gladys (14 years old, female, Surinamese) discussed the presence of boys in her neighbourhood and how this influenced her spatial behaviour:

> *I think this is a scary place. When you walk there in the evening, there are always boys hanging there and they 'check you out'. That's why I never walk here in the evening, I don't think it's really safe: boys, cigarettes…*

These quotations show that girls' encounters with boys influenced their experience and consequently their use of public space. They did not feel comfortable visiting certain places, as they felt that their bodies were sexualised by the male gaze, and were consequently excluded from these places because of their gender (Hyams, 2003). As such, socio-spatial boundaries between boys' places and girls' places were being produced and reproduced.

Besides the issue of gendered unsafety, gender also influenced the beliefs about how girls should behave in public spaces (Thomas, 2005). Girls, like boys, had to deal with spatial constraints imposed by adults and older youths, but unlike boys they also had to deal with gendered ideals of femininity that further restricted their socio-spatial behaviour (Gagen, 2000; Hyams, 2000). Parents and other members of the community often maintained a distinction between boys and girls ('boundary work') that resulted in social pressure to behave like a typical boy or a typical girl. In the case of Feijenoord, femininity intersected with the ethnic and religious background of the girls, as the majority of participants were from a Muslim background, which required them to behave as 'good Muslim girls'. This was illustrated by Meryem (16 years old, female, Turkish), who explained how she reacted when a friend asked her to go to the swimming pool with some boys:

> *… she even asked, come with me and a couple of boys, and we'll go to the swimming pool together. It's not something that is abnormal, but in my culture it's not normal to go to the pool with strange boys or get something with them.*

This quotation shows that encounters (or the possibility of encounters) with 'inappropriate people' (in this case, non-related boys) influenced girls' socio-spatial behaviour. As such, boundaries were created between places that were considered appropriate to visit and those that were not. This creation of boundaries is also reflected in the words of Emine (18 years old, female, Turkish), who said that she often went to a certain restaurant to hang out with her friends: '*This is Marmaris restaurant, it's the meeting place for the Turkish community, they have a lounge over there, where you can go for some food and drinks. It's a very nice place, most people are known over there…'.* Emine is only allowed to go there because it is a Turkish restaurant, which is considered an appropriate place for Turkish (Muslim) girls because they are watched over by other members of the community. Emine said that she was not allowed to go to other restaurants or lounges, because her parents would not know who else was there and because it was not considered appropriate behaviour.

Finally, the interviews showed that despite gendered constraints, girls were able to negotiate existing boundaries, which allowed them to have geographies that were *'active, significant and clearly positive'* (Skelton, 2000, p. 90). This is illustrated by Jenna (17 years old, female, Moroccan), who described the place she often met her female friends. This place was considered a nice place to hang out because it is close to the supermarket and the girls' homes, and it is slightly away from the main roads, so they could sit there without being disturbed.

> *This is the place I go every summer … we first go to the supermarket, get some crisps and drinks and other stuff, and then sit down on the stairs: laughing, talking … sometimes there are five of us, sometimes just two …*

Girls could negotiate the socio-spatial boundaries related to the ideas of girls in public space through their friendships with other girls (see also Skelton, 2000). Using the neighbourhood in small groups gave them a feeling of security and protected them from negative encounters with boys. Moreover, they were able to create private zones in public spaces (Ganetz, 1995). Alyssia (16 years old, female, Dutch Antillean), for example, talked about a small square surrounded by walls. She and her friends sit at a specific spot in this square because it allows them to see who is walking by, which increases their feelings of safety and privacy vis-à-vis

boys and adults:

> *This is the square where I usually sit. I like it over here. I usually sit at the front, because if you sit at the back you don't know who is walking there because it's a quiet alley … I prefer to be able to see everything.*

Finally, most of the girls knew how power worked and were able to decide precisely when and where they could 'be themselves'. Girls belonged to various groups – such as their family, the ethnic community, their school community and their peer group – and they activated different parts of their identity repertoires according to what was appropriate in that particular group and related space. For example, they emphasised their Muslim identity when they were with family or community members, and their Dutch identity when they were with friends.

## 5.5 Conclusion and discussion

The aim of this paper was to provide an insight into youths' hanging-out activities in the public space of a low-income, multi-ethnic district in Rotterdam. Within neighbourhoods, public space is divided both socially and spatially between those who have power and those who do not. The author adopted a relational approach and focused on how these divisions (or boundaries) are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed through encounters in public space. This was illustrated by focusing on three types of relations that emerged from youths' narratives, namely relations between youths and the authorities, between groups of youths, and between girls and boys.

The first section showed how socio-spatial boundaries were being made and remade through the encounters between powerful adults and youths in public space. On the one hand, powerful adults set certain boundaries through exclusionary actions, which were largely influenced by social distances of class and ethnicity. Further, youths were often positioned as the 'other' who must validate a claim for inclusion in public space. On the other hand, youths were able to shift some of these socio-spatial boundaries by carving out certain spaces to hang out in, or by challenging the existing power relations by acting 'tough', for example through seeking confrontation with the police or other authorities. This illustrates

how youths and adults together, through their reciprocal interactions, create the neighbourhood as we observe it.

The second section showed that boundaries were created not only between youths and adults, but also between groups of youths. This is related to the desire to have control over a certain territory, such as a street corner or a part of a park or square. The narratives in this section further showed that boundaries could change, and that these changing boundaries influenced the nature of the space. Moreover, youths also drew boundaries between themselves and those who were engaged in deviant behaviour. Through their socio-spatial behaviour, youths drew together the 'right' spaces and people and as such constructed socio-spatial boundaries. These boundaries, however, were not fixed but permeable, depending on the spatial-temporal circumstances.

The last section focused on the socio-spatial boundaries between girls and other people (mainly boys) in public space. The behaviour of boys in public space as well as gendered ideals of femininity restricted the socio-spatial behaviour of some of the girls. This was specifically the case for some Muslim girls, as they had to live up the ideal of a 'good Muslim girl'. However, despite these gendered and ethnic constraints, girls did not feel they were very restricted in their socio-spatial behaviour. They could negotiate the socio-spatial boundaries in neighbourhood public space through their friendships with other girls or by creating private zones in public space.

Comparing these three examples of boundary construction, deconstruction and reconstruction in the same urban neighbourhood, highlights the complexity of youths' relations with their everyday environment. Youths, while using public space, shared physical space with adults and other youths, and socio-spatial boundaries were consciously and unconsciously created though encounters between these groups. By adopting a relational approach, we were able to step away from the artificial distinction between structure and agency, and instead focus on the actual everyday practices and encounters, in other words, on how people in the neighbourhood together produce spaces as we perceive them. Moreover, by looking at the reciprocal interaction between different actors in the neighbourhood we can move away from blaming one group for problems in

neighbourhood public space (Blokland, 2012). What matters is not the youths who display anti-social behaviour, or the authorities that construct socio-spatial boundaries through exclusionary actions, but the relation between the two through which socio-spatial boundaries – and as such social-spatial inequalities – are being reproduced.

Finally, the study showed that the ways in which youths used and negotiated socio-spatial boundaries was dependent on their sense of self. Resistance or conformity to existing boundaries was dependent on how a specific context supported their identity. The youths' narratives, however, showed that these identities could be fluid and situational. Youths had multiple identities: the same person could be, for example, a Dutch citizen, of Moroccan origin, a Muslim, a male, a father and a drugs dealer (Althoff, 2013). Youths could partly decide on the relative importance of the different identities in any particular context. The interviews, for example, showed that boys emphasised their identity as a 'tough guy' in some encounters with powerful adults or other groups of youths, but that this was primarily a situational response to the power relations present in that specific context, as the same boy could, for example, be a caring son or a motivated student in a different context. Similarly, the youths' narratives showed that Muslim girls addressed their identity as a good Muslim girl when with their family or ethnic community, and also addressed Dutch aspects of their identity when with their friends at school. This showed the complexity and hybridity of the socio-spatial boundaries and identities negotiated by youths. Their gender, ethnic and class identities could shift depending on the context – and the related power relations – they found themselves in at a particular moment.

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# 6 HOT TIMES, HOT PLACES. YOUTHS' RISK PERCEPTIONS AND RISK MANAGEMENT IN TWO LOW-INCOME MULTI-ETHNIC NEIGHBOURHOODS

## *A comparative study of Chicago and Rotterdam*

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### Abstract

Many youths in low-income neighbourhoods are considered to be at risk of poor social outcomes and of becoming victims of violence and criminality. Although in recent decades studies have increasingly paid attention to youths' own perceptions of risk and how they deal with this risk, there has been little exploration of risk management as the outcome of the interaction between the individual and the individual's environment and how this differs between national contexts. In our study, we performed a cross-national comparison in order to obtain an additional perspective on the relative importance of structural influences on youths' risk management. We explored the perspectives of young people aged 14 to 19 years selected from two low-income, multi-ethnic neighbourhoods, one in Chicago, the other in Rotterdam. We conducted in-depth interviews and mental mapping exercises and found that the territoriality of youth groups – which was higher in the Chicago neighbourhood than in the Rotterdam neighbourhood – was one of the main factors influencing youths' risk management strategies. The nature of territoriality makes it harder to navigate the neighbourhood and to avoid unsafe places and people that are considered a bad influence.

## 6.1 Introduction

Many youths in low-income neighbourhoods are considered to be at risk of poor social outcomes and of becoming victims of violence and criminality. Several studies in both the United States and Europe have examined how the neighbourhood context in which a young person grows up is related to issues like victimisation, behavioural problems, low levels of education and low aspirations (Brännström, 2008; Kauppinen, 2007; Kintrea et al., 2011; Nieuwenhuis et al., 2013; Sykes and Musterd, 2010; White and Green, 2011). Several underlying theories have been put forward to explain these neighbourhood effects. Youths in deprived neighbourhoods are more at risk than youths in 'better' neighbourhoods because of some combination of, for example, neighbourhood social disorganisation, negative socialisation, lower levels of social control, lack of social capital, stigmatisation and lower quality of institutional resources (Ainsworth, 2002; Bauder, 2002; Galster, 2012; Sampson and Groves, 1989; Sampson et al., 2002).

One limitation of many of these neighbourhood effects studies is that they tell us little about how youth perceive, negotiate and contest several aspects of their neighbourhood. In the last few years, however, a number of studies have paid attention to youths' own perceptions of neighbourhood risk and how they deal with this risk (Bottrell, 2007; Evans, 2002; Robinson, 2009). Understanding how youths perceive neighbourhood settings and how this influences their socio-spatial behaviour is fundamental to understanding the neighbourhood as an influential context (McCray and Mora, 2011; Nicotera 2007, 2008). The expression of this agency, however, must be understood within the context in which it occurs and in the light of the resources that are available to young people. In this paper, we therefore examine how youths' risk management strategies are the outcome of the interaction between the individual and his or her environment.

Only a few neighbourhood effects studies have investigated how growing up in a deprived neighbourhood differs between national contexts. Some studies focused on the differences in the magnitude of neighbourhood effects – it is stronger in the United States than in Europe (Atkinson and Kintrea, 2001; Friedrichs et al, 2003; Musterd, 2002) – but little attention has been paid to the possible differences in the mechanisms behind these effects. American theories are often applied

to the European context without taking sufficient account of the differences between the two contexts. From a theoretical standpoint, there are many reasons to expect differences in risk and risk management between the United States and the Netherlands. Differences in welfare system, for example, might result in greater inequality not only between but also within neighbourhoods in the United States compared to the Netherlands, resulting in different opportunities to access resources and avoid risks. Differences in the nature and enduring impact of racism in the two countries might shape youths' opportunities and constraints in different ways. Differences in policies and legal frameworks – such as those concerning gun control, drugs and incarceration – may have differential effects on the nature of risk in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in each context and the relationship between young people and state systems. And differences in the nature of gangs – such as their historical embeddedness, the prevalence of violence, and the connection to drug trafficking and other criminal activity – might influence the perceived risk and risk management strategies of youths in the disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the two countries. A cross-national comparison therefore offers an additional perspective on the relative importance of structural influences on youths' perceptions of risks and risk management and the social conditions underpinning each. Our study focused on two principal questions:

> *How do youths perceive and manage risks in their low-income neighbourhood?*
>
> *How do the perceptions and risk management strategies differ across neighbourhood contexts cross-nationally?*

The paper is organised as follows. We first discuss existing theories of neighbourhood effects, neighbourhood risk, and risk management strategies. We then outline the methods and data upon which our analysis is based and describe the two areas – Feijenoord in Rotterdam and Rogers Park in Chicago – that provide the empirical contexts for the study. We then examine youths' perceptions of neighbourhood spaces as places of risk and safety in each context, and provide an analysis of the risk management strategies they apply in those contexts.

## 6.2 Neighbourhood effects, neighbourhood risk and risk management strategies

A large body of research into neighbourhood effects has shown that living in high-poverty neighbourhoods can lead to a range of social problems such as high-risk behaviours (Ingoldsby and Shaw, 2002; Kling et al, 2005; Oberwittler, 2004), social exclusion (Brännström, 2004; Rankin and Quane, 2000) and exposure to crime and violence (Sampson and Lauritsen, 1990; Van Wilsem et al., 2006). Five mechanisms behind negative neighbourhood effects have been distinguished (Galster, 2012; Musterd and Andersson, 2006; Sampson et al., 2002). These are the absence of resourceful networks that could serve as protection and facilitate access to opportunities; the reproduction of deviant norms and values through socialisation; lack of mutual trust and shared expectations among residents (collective efficacy); lack of institutional resources; and negative stereotyping of deprived neighbourhoods and the people living in them. These negative neighbourhood effects are often linked to a number of neighbourhood characteristics such as poverty, ethnic heterogeneity and population turnover. When these factors increase, the strength of cohesion and effectiveness of informal control often decreases (Markowitz et al., 2006; Sampson and Groves, 1989). The built environment also plays a role in influencing social disorganisation. The quality and configuration of housing, the availability or absence of common 'civic' space, and the extent of physical disorder can all either encourage or hinder informal social control, thus promoting or constraining the use of public space and fostering or limiting 'eyes on the street' (Jacobs, 1961), the degree of public familiarity, and levels of social cohesion and control (Blokland, 2003).

Although neighbourhood effects studies have identified the influence of neighbourhood factors on risk they have not, for the most part, paid attention to the ways in which youths use their neighbourhood and how they interpret risk (Green and Singleton, 2006). Youths' perceptions of risk influence how they live their everyday lives, their relationships with others and where they choose to engage in leisure. Small and Feldman (2012) point out that neighbourhoods are likely to have differential effects on different people, depending on the characteristics of the context and the individual responses. Anderson (1999), for example, describes how some of his respondents consider violence to be the only

possible response to threats, whereas others in similar environments use multiple strategies to resolve their problems while avoiding violent confrontation. Mitchell and colleagues (2010) and Green and Singleton (2006), for example, focus on gendered differences in the ways young people respond to risk, but in complicated ways. For example, the stereotype of young men as active risk takers and young women as more passively 'at risk' are shown to be too simplistic (Mitchell et al., 2010), and while young women carefully manage their socio-spatial behaviour to avoid everyday aspects of risk, there are significant contextual differences within and between groups of women (Green and Singleton, 2006).

Successful risk management is the outcome of the interaction between the individual and his or her environment. Consequently, the ways in which risk can be managed are particularly subject to contextual variation, such as socio-spatial limitations and access to the resources that can support positive development (Bottrell, 2009; Evans and Heinz, 1993). Catell (2001), for example, compares two neighbourhoods in East London and concludes that neighbourhood characteristics such as housing design, anti-social behaviour and high population turnover influenced social network formation and the social capital that could be created. It is thus important to take into account the ways in which youths draw upon certain aspects of the environments available to them and avoid others, and in this way manage risk (Bandura, 1997; Maddux, 1995).

## 6.3 Context and methods

Whereas many existing cross-national studies (e.g. Wacquant, 2008) compared the worst neighbourhoods in each country, we matched two areas that have similar socioeconomic and ethnic compositions and a similar built environment, but are embedded in different national and municipal contexts, namely Rogers Park in Chicago and Feijenoord in Rotterdam.

Rotterdam is a harbour city, and this is reflected in its population. It has high levels of residents with a low socioeconomic status and many non-western and immigrant families (Van Eijk, 2010). As a result, Rotterdam has to deal with several social problems, particularly in the southern part of the city. These dynamics make

Rotterdam an interesting city for the study of risk and risk management. Like Rotterdam, Chicago has high levels of ethnic and socioeconomic segregation, a large immigrant population, and neighbourhoods that are plagued by crime and unsafety.

### 6.3.1 Neighbourhood selection

We first selected Feijenoord, as it was already included in a larger study on youths in low-income neighbourhoods in the Netherlands (see Chapters 4 and 5). Feijenoord is one of the most deprived areas of Rotterdam, and of the Netherlands as a whole, and as such is an interesting location to investigate risk management strategies. We then selected Rogers Park, as the two neighbourhoods are comparable on a number of factors (see Table 6.1):

1. Socioeconomic composition. Both neighbourhoods have comparable average incomes and a comparable percentage of people living below the poverty line. The employment rate, however, is higher in Feijenoord. As low socioeconomic composition is often linked to social disorganisation, we expected that youths in both neighbourhoods encounter similar risks and have access to similar resources.
2. Ethnic diversity and residential turnover. Both neighbourhoods have a high level of ethnic diversity. Ethnic composition is often linked to risk and risk management in two ways. On the one hand, encountering people from other ethnic groups may lead to distrust, anonymity and conflict (Putnam, 2007). For example, many scholars have viewed the immigration patterns in Europe and the United States as contributing to the creation of an environment conducive to gang formation (Decker et al., 2009). Rogers Park also has to deal with relatively high levels of population turnover, which may negatively impact community social control and social cohesion. On the other hand, ethnic networks may also provide a resource in the form of instrumental help, belonging and social control (Putnam, 2000). For example, children from some immigrant groups are successful at school because they come from families and ethnic communities that have close networks (Bankston, 2004).

3. Built environment. In both areas, multi-unit apartment buildings predominate and the percentage of owner occupation is similarly low. As noted by Jane Jacobs (1961), the built environment can contribute to safety or unsafety in the neighbourhood through the presence or absence of 'eyes on the street'. The open staircases of many of the apartment blocks in both Feijenoord and Rogers Park make it easy for local youths or other people to 'hang around' or use drugs without being seen. Moreover, both neighbourhoods suffer from vandalism, litter and graffiti. These are often associated with an increase in the perception and fear of crime (Sampson and Raudenbush, 2004; Wilson and Kelling, 1982).

4. Crime rates. The objective crime rates of the two neighbourhoods are similar. Crime rates are often believed to be related to higher levels of fear and might influence youths' risk perceptions and risk management strategies. There are, however, some limitations to the comparison of crime rates cross-nationally, and the crime rates presented below should thus be interpreted with some caution. Specific definitions of crime categories might vary between the two countries. Moreover, the same offense can differ in the amount of violence used. In the United States, for example, over one third of robberies involve the use of firearms, which is a much higher proportion than in the Netherlands (Lynch and Pridemore, 2011). Although the two neighbourhoods are similar, it should also be noted that Rogers Park scores slightly below the average on the Chicago rankings on crime and violence, whereas Feijenoord is one of the worst neighbourhoods in Rotterdam.

### 6.3.2 Selection of respondents and methods

With these factors in mind, we conducted a qualitative comparative case study. Qualitative methods were chosen because their application is the best way to investigate the motives behind the socio-spatial behaviour of youths (Ungar and Nichol, 2002). The focus of the research was on youths aged 14 to 19 years. The lower age limit coincides with the change from primary to secondary school and usually marks a change in action spaces as well as in the restrictive regulations

**Table 6.1**: Core characteristics of the case studies

| | Feijenoord | Rotterdam | | Rogers Park | Chicago |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Population | 72,297 | 618,279 | | 54,991 | 2,695,598 |
| Per capita income (US$) | 14,150 | 16,800 | | 24,248 | 27,940 |
| Households below the poverty level (%)[1] | 22 | 15 | | 23 | 19 |
| Unemployment (%) | 23 | 15 | | 7.9 | 12 |
| Ethnic diversity (%) | | | | | |
| Dutch | 17 | 54 | White | 38 | 32 |
| Turkish | 19 | 8 | Black | 26 | 32 |
| Surinamese | 11 | 9 | Hispanic | 24 | 29 |
| Moroccan | 10 | 6 | Asian | 6 | 5 |
| Antillean/Aruban | 4 | 3 | | | |
| Owner occupation (%) | 14 | 34 | | 19 | 50 |
| Land area (sq. Miles) | 2.5 | | | 1.8 | |
| Population density (per sq. mile) | 28,034 | 7,309 | | 30,550 | 11,844 |
| Tenure <10 years (%) | 73 | 64 | | 61 | |
| Crime rates (per 1000 inhabitants) | | | | | |
| Criminal damage | 9.57 | | | 7.82 | |
| Battery/assault | 5.91 | | | 2.64 | |
| Homicide | 0.06 | | | 0.07 | |
| Narcotics | 2.49 | | | 5.50 | |
| Robbery | 2.16 | | | 2.47 | |
| Sexual assault | | 0.22[2] | | 0.35 | |

Sources: Feijenoord district (2010); GGD Rotterdam Rijnmond (2010); Municipality of Rotterdam (2012, 2013a); Statistics Netherlands (2013); Chicago Police Department (2010); US Census Bureau (2010a, 2010b); Chicago Tribune (2014)

[1] The poverty line in the Netherlands is a gross income of US$ 1,325 per month for single people and US$ 2,475 for a couple with two children (Statistics Netherlands, 2009). In the United States, the poverty threshold for a single person under 65 is a gross annual income of US$ 11,490 (US$ 957.50 per month); the threshold for a family group of four, including two children, is US$ 23,550 ($ 1962.50 per month) (US Census Bureau, 2010c)

[2] Only data available on city average (municipality of Rotterdam, 2013b). Total number of sex crimes (which includes but is not limited to sexual assault) is not significantly higher in Feijenoord than it is in the rest of Rotterdam

imposed by parents. This transition can have an important effect on youths' social contacts and leisure activities. In the Netherlands, secondary school starts at 12; in the United States most students enrol in secondary school at age 14. We chose 14 as the lower age limit in order to ensure the comparability of the two contexts.

We set the upper limit at 19, as in the Netherlands the majority of youths are still at school until this age. Around the age of 19, many youths finish secondary school or secondary vocational education and are likely to enter both the housing and the labour market. Again, such an important change may influence youths' socio-spatial behaviour. We used the same upper limit in Chicago to ensure the comparability of the two contexts.

In Feijenoord, we recruited respondents through community organisations, secondary and senior secondary education schools, and snowball sampling. In Rogers Park, we selected respondents through community organisations, the park district and snowball sampling. We began by identifying key stakeholders such as teachers and youth centre leaders, then recruited through these key stakeholders by means of flyers and multiple site visits. This selection strategy may have led to some selection bias; that is, we might have identified youths who were already involved in community activities. In Feijenoord, we conducted 25 interviews in the period January-August 2013; in Rogers Park, we conducted 30 interviews in the period September-December 2013 (for sample characteristics see Table 6.2).

During the in-depth interviews, we asked the youths about their experiences in their neighbourhood, their spatial practices, who they met in different settings, their perceptions of risk and resources, and how participation in these settings influenced their lives. We also asked them to visualise their socio-spatial practices by means of a mental mapping exercise. Respondents were asked to draw a map of important neighbourhood settings and network members, and the interviewer used this process to probe into their experience of these settings.

Most of the interviews were conducted individually, but on four occasions they were conducted, at the request of the youths, in groups of two or three friends. The interviews lasted 45-90 minutes and were conducted by a white, Dutch, female researcher. The characteristics of the researcher had consequences for the research process, which differed between Feijenoord and Rogers Park. Feijenoord is a neighbourhood that has been studied extensively in the last couple of years and has been represented in a negative way in the media. The respondents were therefore rather distrustful of the researcher (who was not from the neighbourhood) and it took some effort to elicit answers to risk-related questions. In Rogers Park, the

fact that the researcher was even more of an outsider had a positive effect, as it allowed for more distance from the youths and made them the experts on their own neighbourhood.

The interviews were transcribed in their entirety and then coded and analysed using NVivo. In the first round of analysis, general patterns in the data were identified and these were further refined during the subsequent rounds of coding. The respondents were assigned pseudonyms, which are used throughout this chapter. Finally, the fieldwork included observations of both neighbourhoods, attendance at meetings in youth centres, and informal conversations with residents, community workers and teachers.

**Table 6.2**: Sample characteristics

| | Feijenoord | | Rogers Park |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | | | |
| Male | 13 | | 18 |
| Female | 12 | | 12 |
| Ethnicity | | | |
| Native Dutch | 5 | African American | 17 |
| Turkish | 7 | Latino | 6 |
| Moroccan | 4 | African | 5 |
| Surinamese | 4 | Other | 2 |
| Other | 5 | | |
| Age | | | |
| 14-15 years | 4 | | 10 |
| 16-17 years | 15 | | 13 |
| 18-19 years | 6 | | 7 |

### 6.3.3 The neighbourhoods

*Feijenoord*

The easiest way to get to the Feijenoord area is to catch a tram or take the tube to the southern part of the city. En route, one passes the Erasmus bridge, which connects the north and the south side of the river Meuse. While on the tram, the population of the neighbourhoods through which one travels slowly changes from white Dutch people to a mix of people from non-western backgrounds. What stand out in the Feijenoord area are the many ethnic shops interspersed with the international chains like KFC and McDonald's on the main shopping

street; the large square (Afrikaanderplein) where the weekly multi-ethnic market is held (Afrikaandermarket); and the Essalam mosque, which is the largest in Europe, reflecting the size of the area's Muslim population. A number of these places were also highlighted in the mental maps of the neighbourhoods created by our respondents. The area has a large number of community and youth centres, which organise all kinds of activities for youths.

At first sight, the area looks nice, particularly compared to deprived urban neighbourhoods in the United States. It is well connected to other parts of the city and it accommodates a lot of shops and services. Nevertheless, Feijenoord does not have a favourable reputation. The area has considerable crime problems, such as drug dealing, robberies and nuisance from groups of boys. Feijenoord has one group of youths that could be described as a 'criminal gang' that is involved in burglary and drug-related crimes (RTV Rijnmond, 2014). This group is thought to have 18 members. Moreover, there are a number of other groups that are regarded as troublesome youth groups (engaged in petty crimes, vandalism and harassment) that can be a source of perceived risks. The abovementioned problems also emerged in the elaboration of the mental maps created by the youths, but are not linked to any specific sub-neighbourhood.

Social life in Feijenoord is fragmented. Although it is characterised by tight networks among people from similar ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, these tight networks lead to anonymity and distrust among residents from different backgrounds (see also Pinkster and Droogleever Fortuijn, 2009). The area is densely populated by Dutch standards and the built environment is characterised by many buildings and not much green space. The housing stock is largely social housing. It is of low quality and the apartments are small and overcrowded. The open staircases of multi-family housing blocks make it easy for people to 'hang around' without being seen, which intensifies the safety problems in the area.

*Rogers Park*

Rogers Park is located in the far northeast corner of Chicago. It, too, is easily reached by public transport. If one takes a Red Line train north to Loyola, Morse, Jarvis or Howard Street, one passes Loyola University, which is one of the neighbourhood's most important institutions. Further into the neighbourhood, to

the west, is Clark Street, one of the main shopping corridors with mainly Mexican food shops and retail. To the east is the beach and Lake Michigan, where the park district also offers a wide range of activities during the summer. A number of these locations also emerged on the mental maps of the youths.

The population of Rogers Park is mixed. Groups of African American boys hang out near the Howard 'El' station, groups of Latina girls walk back from Sullivan High School or the CMSA charter school, and diverse groups of parents wait to pick up their children from the primary school in Morse Street. The diverse ethnic composition also contributes to a rather fragmented social life, as people tend to form networks within their own ethnic group. Rogers Park is often referred to by both outsiders and residents as a very diverse community that is experiencing high levels of poverty and crime. This is often seen to be linked to the presence of gangs. An audit in 2012 (Main, 2012) identified 17 gang factions and 249 active gang members in the district.[1]

Rogers Park has a relatively comprehensive range of community and youth centres offering all kinds of activities for youths. In contrast to those in Feijenoord, these centres feature prominently in youths' mental maps, but are often segregated by ethnicity. The area is characterised by more green space, such as parks and the beach, compared to Feijenoord. The role of green space in perceptions of safety is ambiguous, however. Although it is considered beneficial for the health and wellbeing of people, it may facilitate crime by providing a hiding place for perpetrators and may conceal criminal activity.

**Figure 6.1**: Public space in Feijenoord and Rogers Park
*Top: Places where boys hang out: square in Feijenoord (left) and park in Rogers Park (right).*
*Bottom: Dordtselaan in Feijenoord (left) and Howard Street in Rogers Park (right).*
*Both streets are considered 'hot' places by the municipalities.*

## 6.4 Youths' perceptions: similarities and differences between the two areas

When we compared youths' perceptions of the two neighbourhoods, we saw a number of similarities and differences. In both areas, youths point to problems like vandalism, drugs, violence and groups of boys hanging out. Places like train stations and some street corners were considered 'hot' (dangerous) places because groups of older boys often congregate there, whereas some other places, such as parks, are considered unsafe because of the absence of people. In both study areas, the nature of risk is different for girls and for boys (see also McCray and Mora, 2011). For girls, perceptions of risk are mainly related to the presence of groups of older boys and the perceived risk of stranger-danger and sexual violence. The fear of harassment among girls is further heightened when they see men using

drugs. Vivian (16 years old, female, Surinamese, Feijenoord), for example, said the following about one place she did not like:

> *There is small park over there, and there are usually youths hanging out there. I really don't like walking past it. I usually take another route. They smoke and if you pass them they start shouting at you.*

Kaylee (15 years old, female, African-American, Rogers Park) said something similar about Rogers Park, particularly the Howard Area:[2]

> *Like, when I'm walking on Howard and Paulina, I am so scared because I see like a whole bunch of people on the street, like, smoking crack and shouting comments at you, like 'Hey girl, come here!' and I feel really scared. When I walk past there, I have to put 9-1-1 [phone number for the emergency services] on my speed dial.*

Although the perceived risks are similar among girls in both neighbourhoods, the spatial range of these risks differs. This can be illustrated by girls' mental maps. Figures 2 and 3 show the mental maps of two girls of the same age: Meryem (16 years old, female, Turkish, Feijenoord) and Tina (16 years old, female, Nigerian, Rogers Park). Both girls indicated similar places that they perceive as unsafe. What stands out from Tina's mental map, however, is that the entire area between Howard and Farwell is considered a no-go area. This is also an area where conflicts between two gangs take place. The majority of girls in Feijenoord, such as Meryem, mentioned specific places such as a street corner or a park that were considered unsafe, but did not refer to entire sub-neighbourhoods that would be considered no-go areas by those who did not live there.

Indeed, the nature of territoriality is at the heart of differences between the two neighbourhoods, and for boys in Rogers Park it is this territoriality itself – and the nature of the groups that define it – that drives perception of risk to the greatest extent. Territoriality can be defined as a social system through which control is claimed over a defined space and defended against others (Kintrea et al., 2010). Territoriality is important in both neighbourhoods, but it manifests itself in different forms. In Feijenoord it mainly takes the form of boys socialising in the

street and as such claiming a small piece of public space, for example a street corner, whereas in Rogers Park it manifests itself through groups with a stronger territorial affiliation, usually claiming larger areas.

In addition, the groups that claim space in this way differ. Kintrea and colleagues (2008) distinguish between a 'group' and a 'gang', with the key differences being the nature of territoriality they claim and the level of violence in which they engage. A gang marks its territory and engages in anti-social behaviours, which include serious violence and criminality and often involve guns or other weapons. Groups, on the other hand, are involved in minor anti-social behaviour, vandalism and perhaps fighting with each other. Using this distinction, in Feijenoord groups are more common whereas in Rogers Park gangs are perceived to be part of everyday public life. Territoriality associated with gang activity leads boys to perceive risks in Rogers Park as more serious and of a more violent nature than in Feijenoord, and as such has a larger impact on boys' everyday socio-spatial behaviour. The mental map drawn by Otis (18 years old, male, African American, Rogers Park) illustrates the different gang dynamics in a small part of the Howard area and shows the criminal behaviour some of them are involved in. He explained it as follows, describing the different orientation of different gangs active in the space:

> *The MOEs, they're helpful. They put you on the right path. … If they're there, they'll protect you no matter what, but the BDs, they love to start trouble. The GDs, they just like to lay low. I don't want to get in with none of it.*

Territoriality plays a role here as each gang tries to protect its turf, which results in a high level of perceived risk among boys, even if they are not a member of a gang. The mental maps drawn by the boys in Feijenoord, however, show few perceived risks related to territoriality. Boys' opinions about places they did not like were mostly more a matter of dislike than of fear. The majority of boys said that they feel they can freely roam the neighbourhood.

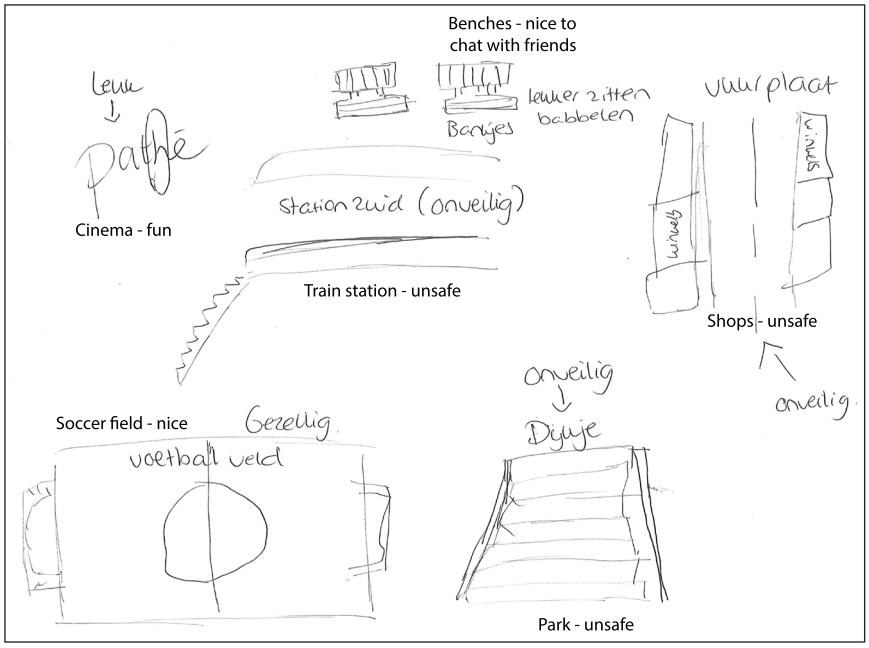


**Figure 6.2**: Mental map drawn by Meryem (Feijenoord)

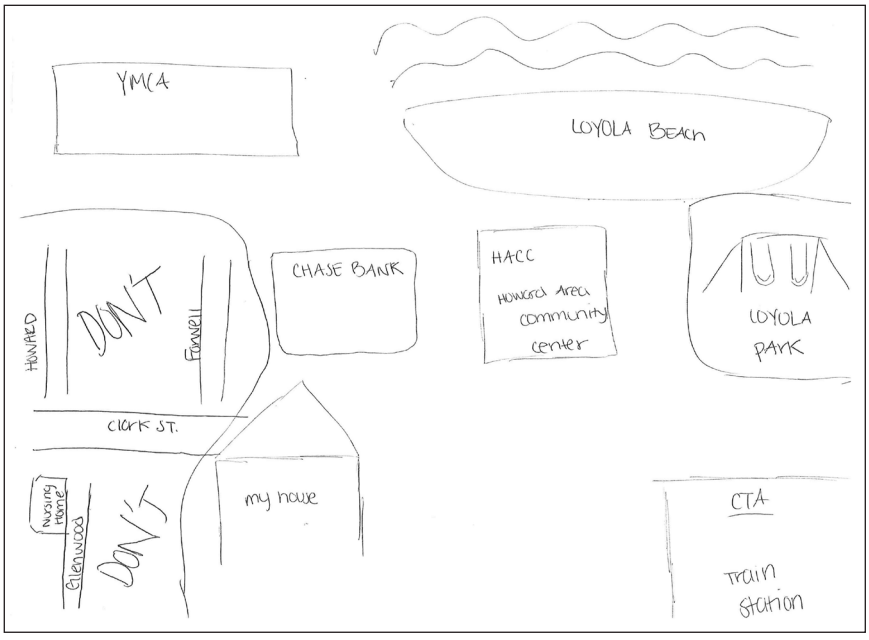


**Figure 6.3**: Mental map drawn by Tina (Rogers Park)

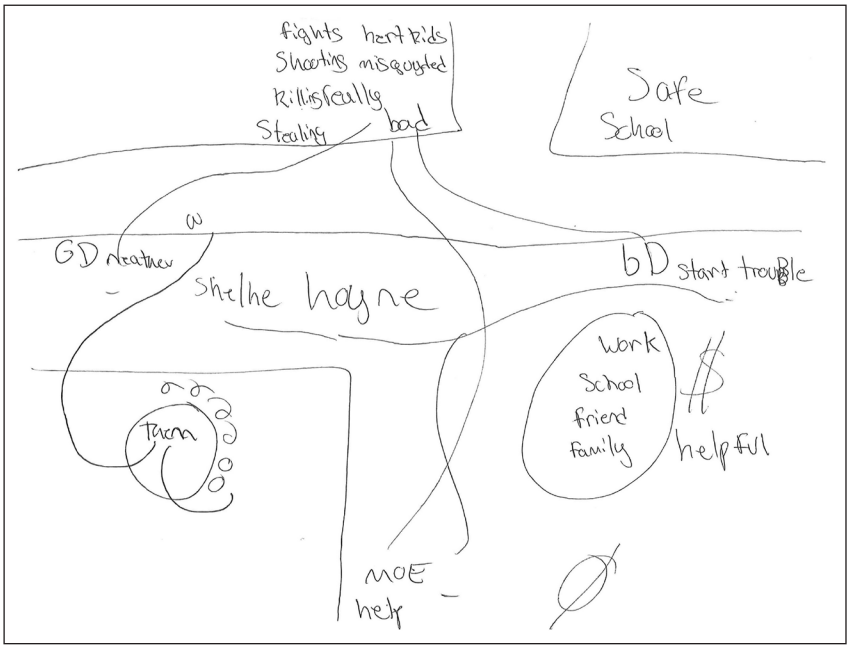


**Figure 6.4**: Mental map drawn by Otis (Rogers Park)

## 6.5 Territoriality, spatial restrictions and risk management

Youths use their perceptions of risk to construct cognitive maps of their neighbourhood environment, and they act upon these perceived risks in specific and intentional ways. Although they restrict their socio-spatial behaviour based on their perceptions of risk, they find ways to negotiate these risks. This takes two forms: strategically navigating public space and drawing socio-spatial boundaries.

### 6.5.1 Strategically navigating public space

Spatial restrictions and how these restrictions were navigated differed between boys and girls. A large share of the girls in both neighbourhoods said that they choose to spend their time in their home or in the homes of family members rather than on the street. Sade (16 years old, female, Nigerian, Rogers Park), for example, explained why she sometimes stays home, and noted the role parents play in this context (see also Chapter 7).

> *Mainly because I'm a girl, because females tend to attract males who are older and, you know, bad things mostly happen to females ... So my parents definitely, like even sometimes when I want to go to the movies, they're like 'No, you can't', because it's for my own safety. They're like, 'No. Please stay home'.*

Whether a girl had to stay indoors was often dependent on the time of day and the type of activity and company concerned. At the same time, the majority of the girls in our study discussed how they navigate the neighbourhood by demonstrating temporal and spatial avoidance patterns such as using main paths and other forms of transport and avoiding being out at night. The words of Alyssia (16 years old, female, Dutch Antillean, Feijenoord) illustrate such a temporal-spatial avoidance strategy:

> *Sometimes, when I have to go home and it's dark, instead [of taking the bus and walking the shortest route] I take the tram and I quickly enter my street … I'd rather not take that other street. In the afternoon or morning I do, but not in the early morning when it's still dark. I'd rather not walk alone over there.*

In addition, most girls in both neighbourhoods travel around in groups and as such create a sense of safety, primarily from stranger-danger. Anuli (17 years old, female, Nigerian, Rogers Park), for example, said:

> *My mum always told me to walk in a group with friends, just in case something might happen or somebody tries to grab me or anything like that. She said: 'Either two or three in a group or something, don't ever walk by yourself.'*

The types of avoidances pattern were similar for girls in Feijenoord and Rogers Park, but the extent to which these avoidance patterns were adopted differed in the two neighbourhoods. For girls in Feijenoord avoidance was limited to certain 'hot' places (such as street corners) and 'hot' times (for example, night time), whereas for girls in Rogers Park entire sub-neighbourhoods or streets had to be avoided at all times.

Even more significant differences emerge between Feijenoord and Rogers Park when we look at the boys. In Rogers Park, the majority of the boys (whether or not gang-affiliated) said that they avoid at least one location in the neighbourhood and that they *'don't come outside for no reason'* and *'only go places where they are meant to be going'*. Tyrell (18 years old, male, African American, Rogers Park), for example, said: *'I know it's bad out, if you're at the wrong place at the wrong time. I try to stay in the crib. I try not to be outside.'* In Feijenoord, none of the boys said that they feel restricted to their home or their own street. Mitchell (18 years old, male, Dutch/Surinamese, Feijenoord), for example, said:

> *I think there are some places that are perceived as unsafe by outsiders, but there is no place where I feel unsafe. Absolutely not… People get scared and don't want to go to some places, but I don't have any problem with that. I can walk anywhere.*

This difference can be mainly related to the violence associated with the spatial-use patterns of gangs in Rogers Park. For example, Jamal (14 years old, male, African American, Rogers Park) – who used to be affiliated with a gang – told us: *'I can't go up on Howard. It's too dangerous over there. If I even step on Howard, somebody will go "What you is? What you from?"'*. Such impacts are felt most heavily by boys who belong to a gang, but even boys who are not affiliated to gangs experience being at risk in public space that is considered gang territory (cf. Kintrea et al., 2008). A boy's mere presence is often read by others as an indication of criminal involvement or membership of a rival gang. Many boys in Rogers Park noted that they *'always had to watch their back'*.

Like the girls, the boys also rely on safety in numbers to protect themselves from risk. However, whereas for the girls this is mainly related to stranger-danger, the boys regard it as a way to protect themselves from being attacked by boys from other groups or gangs. This is particularly the case for boys in Rogers Park, again due to the higher levels of violence and the nature of territoriality. Ironically, in both neighbourhoods boys' reliance on peer networks for protection or belonging also contributes to higher perceived risks by other youths – especially girls – because it leads to the gathering of males in public spaces and exhibitions of male bravado. Thus, boys' strategies for managing risk simultaneously trigger heightened fear among other youths in the neighbourhood.

### 6.5.2 Drawing socio-spatial boundaries

In addition to strategically navigating places, many youths also draw socio-spatial boundaries between themselves and 'others'. Below we explain two parts of this process: excluding the 'wrong crowd' and building resourceful networks.

*Excluding the 'wrong crowd'*

We found that youths draw boundaries between themselves and others in the neighbourhood and try to stay away from those who are *'on the other side of the line'* (Reay and Lucy, 2000, p. 420). This is the case for both boys and girls. For example, Hicham (16 years old, male, Moroccan, Feijenoord) said that he is very selective when it comes to choosing his friends:

> *Your friends can influence you in certain ways. That's why you have to choose your friends carefully. You can think this is my friend, but one day he could make jokes with you and the other day he could play the 'tough guy' and then you'll get into trouble.*

Whereas choosing the right friends is considered important in both neighbourhoods, in Rogers Park both boys and girls mentioned that they *'do not trust many people'* and *'try to keep their circle small'*. This might again have to do with the territoriality and violence related to gangs. Hanging out with the 'wrong crowd' can lead to being associated with a certain gang and can result in becoming a victim of violence. Jamal (14 years old, male, African American, Rogers Park), for example, said:

> *Farwell and Howard [gangs named after the streets they hang out on] are rivals, so there's a lot of gang-related issues with that… You don't wanna get in that mix. So if you have friends from Howard and you have friends from Farwell, don't mention it… You know you might end up getting shot.*

In both neighbourhoods, the majority of the youths who were not engaged in deviant behaviour made marked distinctions between their attitudes and behaviour and that of 'others'. When doing so, they emphasised important characteristics of themselves such as being sociable, anti-violence, and often anti-

drugs and anti-alcohol. Helina (16 years old, female, Ethiopian, Rogers Park), for example, recounted the following:

> *I don't know, but like also at my school there are a lot of people who are interested in drugs and alcohol and smoking and going to clubs and getting fake IDs and having sex, and I'm just, like, no. That's not for me. I'm just trying to have regular good old fun, clean fun. I'm not interested in any of that stuff.*

When we compared the two neighbourhoods and the boys and girls within them, we concluded that, particularly for boys in Rogers Park, it is considered necessary to draw a clear line between themselves and others. As argued, for this group the chances are high that they will be associated with gangs even if they simply hang out with them, which could result in conflict with other gangs. At the same time it is precisely the nature of territoriality that makes it harder to draw these boundaries. Interviews with gang-affiliated boys in Rogers Park show that it is difficult to distance oneself from these groups. Jamal (14 years old, male, African American, Rogers Park), for example, said that he had left a gang and was going to better his life; participating in a youth programme was the first step in that process. Some weeks later, however, he had left the youth programme and been persuaded to re-join the gang.

*Building resourceful networks*

In addition to avoiding certain people and environments, another strategy youths use is to form neighbourhood-based social networks that they can draw upon when dealing with the risks and adverse circumstances in the neighbourhood. These resourceful networks can help youths in everyday matters such as protection and access to educational opportunities and employment (Pinkster, 2009). Bryant (1985) suggests that children as young as seven have local networks that they can draw upon for emotional and instrumental support. Moreover, Watt and colleagues (1998) argue that personal knowledge of others can enhance feelings of safety when using public space (Reay and Lucey, 2000).

A majority of youths in both neighbourhoods rely on close, locally oriented social networks for emotional and instrumental support. As Forrest and Kearns

(2001, p. 2141) write: *'Close family ties, mutual aid and voluntarism are often strong features of poor areas and help people cope with poverty, unemployment and wider processes of social exclusion.'* Both boys and girls mentioned the importance of these local networks. Jenna (17 years, female, Moroccan, Feijenoord), for example, said that her older brothers are well known in the neighbourhood and as a result she generally feels safe there. Along the same lines, Younous (18 years old, male, Moroccan, Feijenoord) said that: *'Sometimes neighbours can be even more important than family. When you need help, your neighbour is the closest helping hand.'*

The importance of these local support networks was addressed even more by youths in Rogers Park than by youths in Feijenoord. These local networks can protect youths from gang-related violence and provide them with access to school and work when institutional channels fail to do so. Otis (18 years old, male, African American, Rogers Park), for example, said that his social network is a source of support for him: '*It's crazy, but you have a lot of things that you have to fall back on. You can go to work. You can go to school. You can go to friends, family.*'

It is important, however, to recognise that this reliance on local social networks is an ambivalent one, especially among boys. For some of the boys, these local networks take the form of knowing and being respected by networks of troublesome or gang-related boys. Particularly in Rogers Park, associating with a gang can provide a sense of safety in that specific location and can thus be seen as a resource for youths. Deshane (17 years old, male, African American, Rogers Park) explained:

> *One day I just decided, forget it. I'm gonna join with y'all and get money with y'all … and like here's my protection at the same time. So they started showing me love. I started showing them love back and I just united with them.*

At the same time, this network can lead to an increased risk of victimisation in other spaces such as the territory of rival gangs. Our findings are in line with what MacDonald and colleagues (2005) call the paradox of social networks. Although these networks can lead to a sense of safety and support, they can result

in immersion in youth gangs and in some youths becoming entrapped in deviant behaviour (Webster et al., 2004).

Finally, in both neighbourhoods resourceful networks can be accessed through institutions like schools, youth centres or places of worship. Tina (16 years old, female, Nigerian, Rogers Park), for example, said:

> *You have places like this for kids that we're hoping don't fall under the influence of gangs and will come in here and do something productive, and that's what I really like about it. And another thing about, like, the safety issue, I feel safe here.*

However, we found two differences between Feijenoord and Rogers Park. Firstly, although the supply of institutions is similar in both neighbourhoods, these places emerge significantly more often on the mental maps of girls and, somewhat less frequently, boys in Rogers Park but rarely on the maps drawn by Feijenoord youths. This might be explained by the fact that, unlike youths in Rogers Park, youths in Feijenoord prefer to spend their time on the street rather than at the youth centre and also feel safe being on the street. Secondly, participation in institutions is more segregated along ethnic lines in Rogers Park than in Feijenoord. These institutions might offer opportunities for the development of youths, but youths remain within their own ethnic network, potentially limiting opportunities for bridging capital.

## 6.6 Conclusion and discussion

The aim of this study was to examine how youths in low-income neighbourhoods perceive and manage risks, and how perceptions of risk and risk management strategies differ across neighbourhood contexts cross-nationally. We found that youths encounter and manage risks on a daily basis, and that certain aspects of their perceptions of risk and risk management strategies are specific to their context. Risk had some common factors across the two areas – such as the fear among girls of stranger-danger, sexual harassment and groups of boys hanging out in neighbourhood public space – but there is variation in the extent to which these risks have an impact on the daily lives of youths, which is mainly related

to the differences in the nature of territoriality and higher levels of violence in Rogers Park compared to Feijenoord. Territoriality is important in the lives of youths in both areas, but it manifests itself in different ways. In Feijenoord, it mainly takes the form of youths socialising on the street and as such claiming a small piece of public space, whereas in Rogers Park it manifests itself through groups with a stronger territorial affiliation often backed up by – or perceived to be backed up by – violence.

This, in turn, has a significant influence on youths' use of time and space. Both boys and girls strategically navigate their neighbourhoods, avoiding certain 'hot' places at 'hot' times or moving around in groups. Whereas these strategies are rather similar for girls in both neighbourhoods, we found significant differences between boys in Feijenoord and Rogers Park. The differences in territoriality and higher levels of violence led boys in Rogers Park to avoid certain places to a larger extent than those in Feijenoord, who feel they can freely roam the neighbourhood. The spatial behaviour in Rogers Park is further restricted by the fact that entire sub-neighbourhoods are sometimes considered no-go areas, whereas in Feijenoord the places that are considered unsafe are generally only a specific street corner or a park. Secondly, we found that youths in both neighbourhoods strategically draw boundaries between themselves and 'others'. This means including people who could be a source of instrumental and emotional support and excluding those who are perceived as a risk. This boundary drawing is considered more of a necessity in Rogers Park than in Feijenoord, because in the former neighbourhood youths have to distance themselves from gangs. At the same time, this is increasingly difficult for boys in Rogers Park since the nature of territoriality means that they have few opportunities to find resourceful networks outside their immediate environment.

We also found that it is difficult to define 'successful' risk management. One reason for this is that a strategy adopted by youths as a reaction to their neighbourhood context can also lead to heightened fears among other youths in the neighbourhood. Boys trying to find safety in numbers, for example, leads to more perceived risk among girls or among boys who are not members of such a group. Risk management strategies can, moreover, be double-edged in that they are both protective and a source of new risk (see also Kolar et al.,

2012). For example, the drawing of socio-spatial boundaries can protect youths from negative influences, but can also constrain access to resources. Similarly, while gang membership and the use of violence may lead in the short term to a feeling of safety, in the long run it has the potential to result in victimisation. Both policymakers and researchers should be aware that for youths growing up in deprived neighbourhoods, short-term protection from risks is often the most rational response, even though outsiders would consider it a maladaptive strategy.

Our findings show that the risk-management strategies that youths employ are dependent on the context, and are influenced by the circumstances they have to negotiate and their access to resources that can help them negotiate risks. We looked at what caused the differences in risks and risk management between the two areas in our study. Firstly, the nature and history of gangs might play a role. Klein (1995) notes that a territorial gang structure is more common in cities with well-established gangs and among gangs in which membership is intergenerational – two conditions that are met in Chicago but not in Rotterdam. Moreover, American gangs differ from those in Europe regarding the availability of guns and the importance of the drug trade (Curry and Decker, 2003). Differences in drug and gun laws between the two countries could explain the differences in perceptions of violence.

Secondly, there are institutional differences between the two contexts, the most important of which is the welfare system. In Feijenoord there is less inequality between different classes and ethnic groups within neighbourhoods than in Rogers Park (Berrey, 2008). This inequality between classes and different ethnicities might condition the relationship between poverty and gang membership (Pyrooz et al, 2010) and increase the chances of territorial conflict. Also the school system might play a role: almost all secondary schools in the Netherlands are of a relatively good quality – including those in areas like Feijenoord – and education is obligatory until the age of 16, whereas in Rogers Park the quality of schools is lower and dropout rates are high. This might decrease the educational prospects for youths in Rogers Park and increase their search for other avenues. The governments' stance toward problem youth is important here. European responses are more concerned with social opportunity approaches, whereas American responses are more concerned with gang suppression (Curry and Dekker, 2003). Finally, structural racism in the

United States might hamper the opportunities of youths in their neighbourhood. As Feagin (2014) notes, racism is still systemic in American society, particularly against African Americans. This can take the form of discrimination by employers or the police. Again, this might lead to youths in Rogers Park turning to gangs for belonging and instrumental support. It has to be noted, however, that institutional racism is believed to be on the rise in the Netherlands.

Our findings show that for scholars studying neighbourhood effects it is important to be careful when applying theories from one national or municipal context to another, as in neighbourhoods with similar demographic and socioeconomic characteristics there might be totally different processes at play. Future research would benefit from investigating in detail how certain neighbourhood processes are embedded in national, historical and social processes. Our study confirms that territoriality is an important limiting factor in youth's lives, but as Kintrea and colleagues (2010) note, its full incidence and scale are still unknown. Further comparative research between different cities and countries is necessary to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the differences in violence between contexts, the origins of territoriality, the backgrounds of those involved and those who are most at risk, and the cultural and structural characteristics that are associated with that variability.

## Notes

[1] The Rogers Park police district also includes part of the nearby West Ridge neighbourhood, and is thus larger than the Rogers Park neighbourhood as defined in this article.

[2] Generally nicknamed as 'The Jungle' – referring derogatorily to its ethnic composition (the area is primarily African American) and the fact that 'It's so wild.'

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# 7 BETWEEN TRUST AND FEAR. THE DIVERSITY OF PARENTING PRACTICES IN A LOW-INCOME, MULTI-ETHNIC NEIGHBOURHOOD

## *A case study in Rotterdam*

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This chapter is currently under review at an international journal.

### Abstract

A considerable number of studies have now recognised the importance of parental strategies in mediating or moderating neighbourhood effects on children. These studies tend to pay insufficient attention to two crucial points, however: they provide little insight into the diversity of the neighbourhood perceptions of both parents and children, and they barely acknowledge the negotiation of parental regulations within the family and the reciprocal relationships between parents and their children. To provide insight into these issues, we conducted in-depth interviews with 26 youths (13–18 years) and 21 parents living in a low-income, multi-ethnic district in Rotterdam. We found that the parents' perceptions of the neighbourhood were very diverse, and that this was reflected in their parenting practices. We distinguished four types of parents, namely protective parents, similarity seekers, coping parents and invisible parents. We also found that parenting practices are the outcome of a complex process of negotiation between parent and child, in which the perception of the neighbourhood, the tension between trust and fear, and the discrepancy between what the parents know and what the child tells them play a role.

## 7.1 Introduction

Several decades of research have shown that the neighbourhood a young person grows up in matters for his or her social outcomes. In this research, parenting has emerged as a critical mediating or moderating agent: the social outcomes of youths are a result of successful or less successful parenting styles and strategies. It is important to realise in this context that parents, like their children, are embedded in different neighbourhood settings. Parents who raise children in deprived, high-risk neighbourhoods can face numerous challenges and obstacles that parents who live in less deprived neighbourhoods do not have to deal with, such as crime, unsafety, negative peer pressure and a lack of good quality institutions. It is not surprising, therefore, that a large number of studies have shown that neighbourhood deprivation affects many aspects of family functioning, including parents' approaches to parenting (Roosa, et al., 2003; Simons et al., 1996).

This existing work, however, has two shortcomings. Firstly, many researchers have focused on objective neighbourhood indicators such as income, ethnic composition or crime rates to explain parenting strategies in deprived neighbourhoods (Brody et al., 2001; Chase-Lansdale et al., 1997; Dahl et al., 2010). However, as Roosa and colleagues (2003) note, *'by relying solely on objective indicators of neighbourhood quality, most research may have eliminated an important source of individual and family differences in responses to neighbourhood conditions'* (p. 60). Little attention has been paid to subjective neighbourhood perceptions – and the diversity in these perceptions – even though they are likely to play an important role in determining how neighbourhoods influence parents and children (Dahl et al., 2010; Silk et al., 2004). Most researchers assume that definitions of risk and safety are shared among parents in a certain deprived neighbourhood and that they are unanimously negative about their neighbourhood as a place for their children to grow up in (Backett-Milburn and Harden, 2004). Possible divergent subjective perceptions of the same neighbourhood and how these can result in a diverse range of parenting practices are generally not taken into account.

Secondly, many studies assume that definitions of risk and safety are also shared between parents and their children. What these studies fail to recognise is that parents and children tend to perceive neighbourhoods differently, and that

therefore parents' perceptions may not capture their children's neighbourhood experiences (Burton et al., 1997). Parental strategies might be in conflict with youths' ideas about their ability to navigate the neighbourhood. The result is that youths can negotiate control and find ways to influence decision making (Sibley, 1995). We should see youths as active agents, not only in the public domain, but also in the home. As Solberg (1990, p. 119) argues, *'although in many ways children's position is a weak one, they do not passively adapt themselves to what their parents say and do'.* Youths often challenge and find gaps in adult restrictions.

To fill the abovementioned gaps in research, the following questions are answered in this paper, on the basis of qualitative interviews with both youths and parents:

> *How do parents' perceptions of risks in their neighbourhood influence their parenting practices?*
>
> *How are perceptions of risk and safety constructed and negotiated between parents and children?*

## 7.2 Parenting in a deprived neighbourhood

Parents can play an important role in moderating the impact of the neighbourhood on their children's social outcomes, as they can adopt certain parenting strategies as a reaction to perceived neighbourhood threats and opportunities (Furstenberg et al., 1999; Jarrett and Jefferson, 2003). A study by Galster and Santiago (2006), for example, shows that a majority of parents in deprived neighbourhoods feel that the neighbourhood has a negative influence on the social outcomes of their children, and that a large share of this group tries to protect their children from these negative influences.

A first strategy is to move to another neighbourhood. Parents, however, are not always in a position to live where they desire, and they may adopt other strategies to shield their children from perceived threats in the neighbourhood and connect them to sources of human and social capital. A second way for parents to deal with a 'risky' neighbourhood is to adopt protective strategies. These strategies include monitoring, cautionary warnings, danger management, chaperonage,

and keeping children at home to protect them from physical dangers, negative role models and peers (Jarrett and Jefferson, 2003). Existing research generally concludes that living in a more deprived neighbourhood results in parents adopting more protective parenting strategies as they try to shield their children from negative neighbourhood influences (Furstenberg et al., 1999; O'Neil et al., 2001; Mitchell et al., 2007). Thirdly, parents can adopt promotive strategies to deal with neighbourhood dangers. These strategies are aimed at promoting the educational, cultural and social skills of youths (Furstenberg et al., 1999; Jarrett and Jefferson, 2003). This can be done through in-home learning activities, actively searching for resources or placing children in settings where they come into contact with positive role models. Many parental management strategies include both promotive and protective components.

Studies on the changes in children's use of space in recent decades show that parents have increasingly restricted children's opportunities to play in the street, because the streets are seen as unsafe (Karsten, 2005; Valentine and McKendrick, 1997). At the same time, the acquisition of cultural capital through formal leisure activities is a promotive strategy that is being adopted by more and more parents (Karsten, 2005; Pinkster and Droogleever Fortuijn, 2009). Furthermore, research by Emmelkamp (2004) shows how parents use protective strategies to create a 'safe adventure' in public space for their children. To a certain extent they allow their children to discover public space independently, but at the same time try to protect their children from perceived threats in public space by setting spatial boundaries for their children and by regulating with whom they interact, even in relatively problem-free neighbourhoods.

One aspect that is often missing from existing studies is the fact that parents can hold diverse views about the quality of the same neighbourhood. Many studies assume that parents hold more or less the same opinion. It is, however, crucial to take into account the possible differential perceptions of parents about risks and resources in the neighbourhood, since it is these perceptions that influence parental behaviour (Roosa et al., 2003). The underlying idea of our study is that both youths and their parents have unique experiences in neighbourhood space, which results in different reactions to the neighbourhood and in different processes within the family (see also Chaskin et al., 2013).

Finally, while parental styles and strategies have an important impact on the activities, social contacts and hence wellbeing of youths, these styles and strategies are under constant negotiation (Emmelkamp, 2004; Holloway and Hubbard, 2001; Sibley, 1995; Valentine, 1997). Risk and safety are not fixed but are negotiated through everyday interaction in families. As such, youths and their parents jointly construct and reconstruct the rules and regulations in the family, for instance about which places to visit, when and with whom. Backet-Millburn and Harden (2004), for example, illustrate how families face and renegotiate risk on a daily basis. In this process, parents and children draw both on personal experiences and on knowledge of local stories. Moreover, Valentine (1997) shows how youths resist, oppose and find gaps in adult restrictions. She explains, for example, how youths try to extend their spatial boundaries by demonstrating their competence to their parents before asking for permission to extend their boundaries. These studies show that to fully understand the relationship between parenting and the neighbourhood, it is crucial to take into account the iterative processes between parents and their children.

## 7.3 Methods

The research was carried out in the Feijenoord district of Rotterdam. Feijenoord is located south of the river Meuse, an area that has traditionally been the poorer part of the city. The district is characterised by low incomes, low levels of education and high levels of unemployment (compared to both the city and the national average), and most of its inhabitants are from non-western backgrounds. Moreover, the area is faced with such problems as low levels of perceived safety, nuisance caused by youths and drugs use.

The sample comprised both youths and parents. The youths were recruited through community organisations and secondary and MBO (secondary vocational education) schools by means of a non-random, convenience sampling strategy. In total, 26 interviews with youths were conducted. The group consisted of 14 boys and 12 girls from diverse ethnic backgrounds (Dutch, Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, eastern European, Dutch Antillean, Afghan and Pakistani). The age range was 13 to 18 years.

The parents were recruited through the youths, secondary schools, community centres and snowball sampling, and by handing out flyers in the street. The group consisted of 18 mothers, two fathers and one grandmother[1] with at least one child or grandchild aged between 13 and 18 years (the target child/children), from diverse ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. In eight cases, the child and parents came from the same household; the other children and parents were recruited independently of each other.

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used to better understand how youths and parents felt about their neighbourhood and parenting practices. Such a qualitative approach is particularly useful for understanding the complexities of people's perceptions, because they do not limit respondents to pre-established categories (Dahl et al., 2010). The interviews with the youths were conducted first and were part of a larger study on youths' use and perception of their neighbourhood (see Chapters 4 and 5). Most of the interviews were conducted individually, but at the youths' request, three interviews were conducted in groups of two or three friends. The topics that were explored were: youths' everyday socio-spatial behaviour, their social networks, their fears and concerns, their attitudes to the boundaries set by parents, and their strategies for managing risks and negotiating parental boundaries. The data from these interviews helped to shape the interviews with the parents. The latter interviews explored their residential histories, their perception of neighbourhood threats and resources, their experiences of parenting in relation to the neighbourhood context, how they perceived their children's personality, and how they made everyday decisions about safety and danger. The focus was on their relationship with the target child/children; questions about other children in the household were asked only in relation to siblinghood and negotiations within the family.

The interviews were transcribed in their entirety and then coded and analysed by NVivo. In the first round, general patterns in the data were identified and these were further refined during the subsequent rounds. Furthermore, text query and negative case analysis were used to strengthen or nuance the themes that emerged from the data. Participants were assigned pseudonyms, which are used throughout this chapter to protect the participants' confidentiality.

The fieldwork also included observations in the area, the attendance of meetings at youth centres, and informal conversations with residents, community workers and teachers.

## 7.4 Parents' perception of the neighbourhood and parenting strategies

Parents' perceptions about their neighbourhood as a source of risks and opportunities for their children were diverse and complex. They pointed to both negative and positive aspects of their neighbourhood, and parents in the same neighbourhood did not necessarily perceive their neighbourhoods in similar ways. On the basis of their different perceptions of the neighbourhood and the resultant parenting strategies, we distinguished four types of parents (table 7.1). In the remainder of this section, we draw upon the interviews with both parents and youths and elaborate upon how neighbourhood perceptions are formed and the ways in which several parenting strategies are employed by the different types of parents.

**Table 7.1**: Four types of parenting

| Type | Parental monitoring | Neighbourhood perception | Reasons for perception | Social-spatial parenting strategies |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Protective parents | Yes | Mainly negative | Unsafety | High level of social-spatial restrictions |
| Similarity seekers | Yes | Mainly positive | Presence of 'similar' people, social cohesion | Focus on own social/ ethnic group (social control) |
| Coping parents | Yes | Mixed | Unsafety, ethnic composition | Concerted cultivation |
| Invisible parents | No | | | Very low level |

### 7.4.1 Protective parents

The protective parent is generally negative about the neighbourhood, which results in high levels of socio-spatial restrictions. Their negative neighbourhood perception is primarily related to the feeling that the neighbourhood is an unsafe place because of the presence of crime, drugs, alcohol and negative peers. For example, Mina (single mother of three girls of 14, 12 and 7 years old, Surinamese)

said the following:

> *This neighbourhood? Unsafe. Very dangerous, very unsafe. People are killed over here in broad daylight. Around the corner here, somebody was stabbed in broad daylight, in front of so many people. So yes, it's not a nice neighbourhood over here. People smoke weed on the street, and there are a lot of bars, men hanging around everywhere. Sometimes I'm even scared to buy some bread at the grocery store.*

As a result of the negative neighbourhood perception, protective parents like Mina are strict with regard to which places their children are allowed to visit. We identified two parenting strategies that buffered children from neighbourhood dangers: isolation and monitoring. Isolation is used to segregate children from negative adult and peer influences and activities. In the most extreme form, protective parents attempt to confine their children to the house. For example, Adiba (single mother of two girls of 14 and 12 and two boys of 10 and 2 years old, Moroccan) said that she does not let her children walk on the street on their own, unless it is absolutely necessary:

> *My children can go outside, but not without their mother. My children are allowed to walk to school, but they are not allowed to just walk on the street with other children. They can bring home a friend from school. But not walk back and forth outside.*

Furstenberg (1999) writes that at some point being too protective as a parent might be counterproductive, as it can reduce young people's chances of getting involved in activities that might have a positive influence on them. It emerged from our interviews that this 'locking up' primarily happened when the children were younger. In the present situation, most of the youths can go out into the street and visit places in the neighbourhood and other parts of the city. The switch from primary to secondary school at the age of 12 marks an important change, as many of the youths have to travel further to school, which allows less control by parents over their socio-spatial activities and behaviour.

Parents, however, still monitor their children. Almost all the parents said that

they monitor their children when they are not at school, but monitoring is more intensive among protective parents. We found two types of monitoring (Kerr et al., 2010): asking for information about the youths' friends and the friends' parents ('solicitation') and about where and with whom the youths are when they are away from home ('control'). Florence (mother of one boy of 20 and one girl of 18 years old, Surinamese) explained how and why she monitors her children:

> *I always want to see what the children are doing … who they hang around with, and who they don't hang around with. Which child is appropriate for my child and which one isn't. In the case of my son … I saw his friends from school slowly changing. Changing their behaviour, hanging around outside, doing things they weren't allowed to … so I told my child … what are you doing?*

The fact that most youths in our study owned a mobile phone made it easier for their parents to monitor them. Mobile phones increase parental knowledge about the youths' whereabouts and their peers. They also lead to a greater feeling of safety among parents, as the youths can also reach out to parents when needed. For example, Xandra (17 years old, female, Surinamese) said: '*My mother doesn't want me to go far away, and when I do so, I have to tell her. And then she calls me pretty often to see if everything is going alright.*'

The risks perceived by protective parents differ between boys and girls. For boys, parental regulations are directed at risk behaviours such as staying away from negative peers, not getting into fights or other trouble, and not using alcohol or drugs. For girls, it is more related to not going out after dark and avoiding dangerous places and people. In other words, boys are generally seen as 'youth *as* trouble' whereas girls are more passively stereotyped as 'youth *in* trouble' or at risk of becoming victimised (Green et al., 2000; Griffin, 1997; Mitchell et al., 2001). For example, Anny (grandmother of two boys of 24 and 22 and two girls of 17 and 14 years old, Dutch) told us:

> *As a mother you're always more worried about girls, because things happen to girls. The boys will do it. I'm not happy with that either, but the girls will become the victims whereas the boys are the offenders. That's the difference.*

Protective parents are therefore generally more protective towards their daughters than their sons. Another important factor that plays a role here is the Muslim background of many respondents. Some of the Muslim girls, for example, said that they are not allowed to hang around with non-related boys or to go to clubs, issues that are not really considered problematic by non-Muslim parents. Yvette (16 years old, female, Surinamese), for example, said that in their (Muslim) culture it is the case that *'when you hang around with somebody who is "wrong", you're also wrong in their [the community's] eyes'*.

Besides restricting their children's socio-spatial behaviour, protective parents also talk with their children about the perceived threats in the neighbourhood, in order to increase their awareness of neighbourhood dangers. This happens in everyday conversations as well as in response to specific incidents (Jarrett and Jefferson, 2003). During the interviews, many parents and youths related local stories or personal experiences of incidents that served as reason for cautionary warnings (see also Backet-Milburn and Harden, 2004). The media play an important role in this. In the family of Xandra (17 years old, female, Surinamese) and her mother Esmee (mother of three girls of 20, 17 and 10 years old, Surinamese), for example, incidents that are seen on the news are a reason for Esmee to talk with her daughter about these issues. Xandra, on the other hand, sometimes perceives this as annoying:

> *Some time ago, there was a stabbing close by. And my mother was, like, you have to be careful, because it could also [happen to you] … Then she lectures me, watch out, have you heard on the news what happened? And then she explains the whole story to me, and she's, like, that could happen to you. I hear it rather often actually. Sometimes it drives me crazy.*

### 7.4.2 'Similarity seekers'

Similarity seekers are parents who are mainly positive about their neighbourhood because of the extensive, often ethnic, social networks, which results in less restrictive parenting practices and a focus on these networks for social control.

Similarity seekers generally feel comfortable in their neighbourhood because

they know the place and the people who live there. Most of them have lived there for many years. The parents in this group characterise the Feijenoord district as a place where many people know each other, at least within their own micro-neighbourhood, and where they help each other when necessary. Parents note that their children are able to make a lot of good friends and can hang around with neighbourhood children. For example, Berna (mother of three boys of 20, 17 and 15 years old, Turkish) said that her children have a lot of friends and participate in activities in the neighbourhood, and that therefore in her eyes the neighbourhood is a positive place:

> *They go swimming as a group, they go to the cinema as a group, they go for a picnic, and it's like you bring this, you bring that … Or they collect money mutually, and they go and have a barbecue, and they sit over here or somewhere over there. So they do a lot of things together. I know, as a group, that's safe.*

Although it is common in neighbourhood effect studies to explain problems in terms of a lack of social cohesion and social capital (Putnam, 2007; Sampson and Groves, 1989; Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999), similarity seekers do not feel that they lack relationships that can be a source of instrumental and emotional support.

Furthermore, within the group of similarity seekers, levels of social control are perceived to be high. This leads to the informal monitoring of the children in the neighbourhood. Berna told us about how the community watches over the neighbourhood children, in this case her son:

> *One time I got a phone call from a friend. He [the son] was hanging around with some kids who were doing some 'things', and then she told him 'I don't like to see you here, particularly such a nice boy like you, you don't belong to that group, so next time I don't want to see you here.' Well, that was the first and the last time [that he hung around with the 'wrong' kids]. She also called me, but my son also came to me and told me: 'That detective of yours.'*

The positive perception of similarity seekers can be related to what Coleman (1988, p. 1990) calls 'intergenerational closure'. This concept refers to the interconnection of the social networks of parents and their children: parents whose children are friends are also strongly connected. This intergenerational closure is believed to lead to shared behavioural norms, higher levels of social control and shared consequences for misbehaviour, which in turn lead to youths behaving better. As Emine (18 years old, female, Turkish) said when asked what would happen if a young person in the community did something 'bad': '*Then immediately the whole Turkish community would know, and they'd immediately tell your parents*.' This intergenerational closure and high levels of social control could make parents more positive about the neighbourhood and less strict in their parental monitoring. Like the protective parents, similarity seekers also address the importance of Muslim norms and values, but they deal with it differently: protective parents try to keep their children away from 'inappropriate' people and places by mostly keeping them indoors, whereas similarity seekers aim to find the 'appropriate' people and places for their children through their social network and social control.

### 7.4.3 Coping parents

Coping parents are parents who note both positive and negative neighbourhood characteristics. They generally feel they have to cope with negative aspects of the neighbourhood like unsafety and ethnic diversity, which results in them seeking opportunities outside the neighbourhood. However, these parents also refer to some positive aspects of growing up in a deprived neighbourhood.

When asked how they feel about their neighbourhood, the coping parents' first reaction was largely negative. They showed similar concerns as the protective parents about neighbourhood risk, such as violence and negative peer groups, but one other aspect stood out in the interviews with the coping parents, namely concerns about the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood. Not surprisingly, this group mainly consists of native Dutch parents. In their narratives, these parents are negative about the ethnic composition in the neighbourhood, as they feel excluded and subject to discrimination. Babs (mother of one boy of 16

years old, Dutch), for example, referred to many activities that are organised for non-western neighbours, such as activities around the end of the Ramadan (Eid al-Fitr), whereas there is little for Dutch people to do. The perception of social exclusion also emerges from the story told by Linda (mother of one girl of 16 years old, Dutch), who said that her daughter was bullied by other, non-Dutch children in the neighbourhood: '*She once told me: "When I come from school and meet a group of girls, I feel threatened. I get dirty looks, and they call me names like 'cheese head"'.*'

It was mainly native Dutch parents who perceived the presence of ethnic groups as a threat. This concern was sometimes shared by the youths as well. For example, Janey (16 years old, female, Dutch) said the following about a place she does not like: '*There are so many immigrants living there. Not that I'm racist or anything, but when you walk on the street over there ... people look at you like you're from another planet or something.*' However, the Dutch youths seemed to feel less socially excluded by their non-western neighbours compared to their parents. This might be because multiculturalism is a larger part of youths' everyday lives than is the case with their parents: they interact on a daily basis with non-western peers at school or at out-of-school activities.

Although many of the Dutch parents in this group were quite critical about the ethnic composition of their neighbourhood, most of them also see the strengths of a diverse ethnic composition, and thus cannot be classified as entirely 'dissatisfied'. Some of them believe it was an asset that their children learn to live together with different ethnic groups, as illustrated by the words of Janet (mother of two girls of 21 and 16 years old, Dutch):

> *Multiculturalism is of course very positive, because you also learn from that, and it's fun as well. We have very good contact with a lot of our neighbours – even though I just said some negative things. We have a neighbour from Chile; she [one of her daughters] sometime speaks Spanish with him.*

Moreover, growing up in a neighbourhood that is considered 'unsafe' is also believed to be positive by some parents as it teaches their children 'street smarts'.

For example, Jessica (mother of one boy of 14 years old, Dutch) said the following:

> *Yes, listen, when you are from this neighbourhood, you're not scared easily. I know people from [a suburb] and they're like 'I don't dare to do this; I don't dare to do that'. Then I'm like pfffffft… They're even scared to walk in the dark.*

Coping parents are thus aware of both the negative and some of the positive aspects of the neighbourhood for their children. Whereas for the protective parents, the reaction to the dissatisfaction with the neighbourhood is extensive monitoring and a focus on the home, the strategies of the coping parents are more directed to opportunities outside the neighbourhood. Peter (father of one girl of 16 years old, Dutch) for example explained why he sent his daughter to horse riding classes outside the neighbourhood which allowed her to come in to contact with other, presumably better, peers:

> *Here [in the neighbourhood] she had very few friends. And there at the horse riding classes she comes into contact with other people … so that's what we did.*

Moreover, some of the coping parents aim at getting their children into schools outside the neighbourhood. Linda (mother of one girl of 16 years old, Dutch), for example, said that the ethnic composition at one of the neighbourhood schools is one of the reasons not to send her daughter there:

> *Well, you hear a lot of bad stories about that school. I think when you're the only Dutch person in such a school with only immigrants; you'll have a hard time. I don't want to do that to my child.*

Margriet (16 years old, female, Dutch, daughter of Janet) also said that she is happy to go to a school outside the neighbourhood. Her argumentation, however, has a more positive intonation: '*Here [in the neighbourhood] you encounter a lot of cultures and there [at school] you meet yet other types of people. It's very useful to get to know two types of people.*' Both parents and children talked about a certain hierarchy of schools within the Feijenoord area. Some neighbourhood

schools were called 'ghetto schools' by the respondents. They are known for their bad reputation, fights and perceived low quality of education. For some of the coping parents, however, a school outside Feijenoord is not considered an option, especially because the long journeys to school are through unfamiliar territory and are considered unsafe, sometimes even more so than the own neighbourhood.

### 7.4.4 'Invisible' parents

The last group of parents are 'invisible' parents (see also Kleiwegt, 2005). These parents are not strict enough, allowing their children to hang around on the street till very late and not disciplining them when they engage in deviant behaviour. It has to be noted that our respondents primarily talked about *other* parents who are insufficiently involved in the lives of their children. Bojana (mother of a girl of 20 and a boy of 13 years old, eastern European), for example, said that she feels that giving young people too much freedom to hang around on the street – as she sees the Turkish and Moroccan parents in the neighbourhood doing – has a negative influence on youths' behaviour:

> *… they should pay more attention to their children. I very often see that they are just hanging around outside; most of the time they are outside, outside, outside. Sometimes I wonder if these children are ever inside. Or do they only sleep inside? Even when they come home from school I see them on the street right away. They go home and after 10 minutes they are on the street again.*

Moreover, invisible parents are rarely involved in school or other leisure activities. Nico (father of a girl of 16 years old, Dutch) compared his situation with that of some other families in the neighbourhood:

> *When I didn't want to go to school, they made me go … and I do the same with my oldest daughter. You just go to school … But what I see in other families, these kids just sit at home. Sometimes you see them go to school, and then they are home again for two weeks. What will become of them?*

Other studies also describe families in which the parents have little direct control

over their children, who consequently can do whatever they like, especially in the case of boys (Junger, 1990; Kleiwegt, 2005). This literature provides a number of explanations for parents being 'invisible'. Kleiwegt (2005), for example, explains how some parents in her study – often from non-western backgrounds – are isolated from society. They often have no idea what their children are doing on the street, some do not know which school their children go to and a considerable number of them do not speak Dutch, which results in little contact with school or other institutions that could help to monitor their children. Similar results emerged from some of our interviews with youths, who said that their parents have little knowledge about what is going on at school. For example, Jenna (17 years old, female, Moroccan) said the following:

> *My mother doesn't speak Dutch, and she always tells me to do my very best at school, but for me that's not enough to stay at school and do my best … She also doesn't really understand how the school system works. My mother is rather old and she didn't go to school when she was young.*

Also the informal conversations with teachers at neighbourhood schools show that it is difficult to involve parents in schools and talk with them about the child's academic and behavioural performance. Attendance at parent-teacher meetings is generally low. Moreover, teachers indicate that a considerable number of parents does not know where there child is when he or she is playing truant from school.

Moreover, the poor quality and small size of houses is another reason for youths to spend their time on the street, and thus away from the supervision of their parents. Anny (grandmother of two boys of 24 and 22 and two girls of 17 and 14 years old, Dutch) summed up the situation:

> *The houses are too small. Let's be honest, if you have four or five of these big kids, and they don't have their own room, where can they entertain themselves? When mother is home, she doesn't want six or seven youths hanging around in her home … So these boys have to go outside.*

To sum up, parents living under similar neighbourhood conditions had diverse views about their neighbourhoods as places for their children to grow up in,

ranging from negative to mostly positive. Whereas one would expect parents in a deprived neighbourhood to be overly negative due to high levels of unsafety and criminality, some parents also pointed to positive aspects like strong social networks and high levels of social cohesion. Interestingly, the ethnic composition is seen as both a positive and a negative aspect by some of the parents. Parents' perceptions of their neighbourhood influence their parenting practices. Negative perceptions lead to them being more restrictive towards their children (protective parents) or seeking opportunities elsewhere (coping parents), whereas positive perceptions lead to a stronger focus on the neighbourhood (similarity seekers).

## 7.5 Negotiation within the family

The nature of the parent-child relationship and the child's actions also influence the parenting strategies that are adopted. Parenting should be conceptualised as a bidirectional, transactional process (Crouter and Booth, 2003). It is therefore necessary to look at how parental regulations are negotiated between parents and children (Bámaca et al., 2005). There are often significant differences between children's perceptions and parents' perceptions of their neighbourhood, for example because of differences in socio-spatial behaviour (Gaylord et al., 2003).

Although parents use several monitoring strategies to find out where their children are when they are not at school, it is important to understand that parents have to rely on what their children tell them and that youths know how to manage what their parents know about their activities. Patrick (18 years old, male, Dutch), for example, said:

> *I wasn't allowed to go there, and I wasn't allowed to go there and there. But at some point I just ignored these rules. I went to school over there, so why shouldn't I be allowed to go there? And if I went there, it was just bad luck for them, because they simply didn't know.*

Moreover, youths challenge their parents' influence over the places they can visit and when they can do so. Particularly when children get older, they are able to negotiate rules and regulations with their parents and question their parents' authority (c.f. Nixon and Halpenny, 2010; Backett-Milburn and Harden, 2004).

This takes the form of, for example, withholding information, not coming home on time, or sleeping over at a friend's house and undertaking activities that their parents do not allow them to do, such as going out. Nick (18 years old, male, Dutch), for example, reported that he usually comes home much later than his parents allow. His parents sometimes get angry, but he simply does it again next time. In the same line, Mitchell (18 years old, male, Dutch/Surinamese) gives his father incorrect information when he is asked where he hangs around: '*It's more like, I'm at places where I'm not supposed to be: "arranging some things" so to say. Of course he wants to know where I am, and then I tell him I'm at a friend's house or something.*'

Consequently, many parents feel that forbidding their children to hang out with certain people or to go to certain places has little – or even an opposite – effect. Youths will go there anyway and simply will not tell their parents. This erodes the trust relationship between parent and child. Nesrin (mother of five girls, including one of 16 years old and one of 17 years old and one boy of 12 years old, Turkish), for example, said: '*I didn't forbid her to hang out with this guy, but I tried to let her see what the influence of this boy was on her. Because if I forbid it, it will work counterproductively.*'

This is confirmed by the youths' narratives. Many of them said that their parents had forbidden them to hang out with certain people, but if they do not agree with this decision, they simply continue seeing those people. They first have to see or experience the negative consequences themselves. For instance, Selami (16 years old, male, Turkish) said the following:

> *We grew up together, for 10 years or so. And suddenly you see them being arrested, things like that. And then they [his parents] said: 'You shouldn't hang around with these guys.' But I didn't listen, I continued hanging out with them; they are my friends. But at a certain moment I knew my parents were right and I chose my own way. But they're still my friends. Whatever they do, I'll do anything for them.*

Moreover, we found that certain rules within the family are sometimes not set in stone, and are thus negotiable. Some children, for example, can negotiate staying

out longer if they agree to cycle home with a group of friends. Furthermore, in some families, it appears that the children's understanding of their parents' roles determines which parent to ask. Linda (mother of one girl of 16 years old, Dutch), for example, said that her daughter knows that she has to go to her first if she wants to do something:

> *Well, when she wants to go somewhere, she comes to me. If she thinks that there's a chance that she won't get permission, then she's not going to ask her dad. She then first asks permission from me. Then she already has 50 per cent in her pocket.*

It is not always the case, however, that fathers are stricter than mothers. For example, Nick (18 years old, male, Dutch) reported the opposite: *'My mother was very strict: you're not allowed to do this, you're not allowed to do that, and my father was more like, go out, do whatever you like.'*

We found that the extent to which youths can negotiate their parents' regulations is related to the four parenting styles. For youths with protective parents or similarity seekers, it is harder to challenge parental regulations due to the high levels of control, either from the parents themselves or from the community. As Tarik (13 years old, male, eastern European) put it: '*When she [his mother] says I can't go somewhere, I don't do it, even if I wanted to. I know she always finds out. I don't know how, but she always finds out.*' Youths with coping or invisible parents find it easier to challenge parental regulations because they are subject to less monitoring. Since youths with coping parents are likely to spend their time at school or doing activities outside the neighbourhood, it is harder for their parents to monitor them.

The extent to which youths are able to negotiate parental regulations is also related to the characteristics of the child and the family. Firstly, siblinghood plays a role. Youths particularly referred to their parents exercising less control over their younger siblings compared to when they had been that age. One could say that the negotiation has already been done by the older siblings. Jenna (17 years old, female, Moroccan), for example, said:

> *I'm the youngest, and I'm the apple of my mother's eye. I'm allowed way more than the rest. The way my brothers and sisters were raised was very different from the way I'm being raised. I'm allowed to do so many things. When I tell my mother, we're going to the cinema at eight o'clock, I'm allowed to go, but they [her siblings] absolutely weren't allowed to go when they were my age.*

A second factor that plays a role is the personality of the child. An older sibling is sometimes perceived as vulnerable to risks whereas a younger sibling is seen as 'responsible' and therefore provokes less anxiety in the parents (Backett-Milburn and Harden, 2004). The levels of trust and fear among parents are important in this context. All types of parents are sometimes worried about the safety of their children in public space and set certain rules, but at the same time the majority of the parents indicated that their child is sensible enough to make their own decisions. For example, Nesrin (mother of five girls, including one of 16 years old and one of 17 years old, and one boy of 12 years old, Turkish) said the following:

> *Well, they can decide themselves who to hang around with. I don't really worry about that… I see they can make the distinction between the people to hang around with and the people not to hang around with. I monitor them from a distance, like the people they hang around with, who comes home with them, where they go. When they go to a party. I monitor them, but I do trust them.*

Not surprisingly, the levels of trust and fear differed between the four groups of parents. The protective parents showed high levels of fear, but interestingly they generally also showed high levels of trust in their children. They believe that their children will adhere to the parental regulations and not get into trouble. Risks are primarily perceived as coming from others and not dependent on the youths' sensibility. The similarity seekers and the coping parents showed relatively low levels of fear and high levels of trust in their children. However, there is an important difference in the nature of this trust between the two types: coping parents primarily address the individual responsibility and agency of the child. Trust is seen as being dependent on the individual characteristics and behaviour of the child. Several parents indicated that there child *'is able to make the right decisions'*

concerning hanging out with peers and engaging in anti-social behaviour, and *'does not get into trouble that easily'*. For the similarity seekers, on the other hand, the trust is largely related to the high levels of social control in the neighbourhood. It is a matter of trusting not so much the child as the local community to act when the child does not behave appropriately. Anny (grandmother of two boys of 24 and 22 and two girls of 17 and 14 years old, Dutch) explained: *You can't know with 100 per cent certainty where your child is hanging out … but this neighbourhood is like, when your child is seen somewhere [where he/she isn't supposed to be] you'll receive a phone call.* Finally, for the invisible parents it is rather hard to explain their behaviour in terms of trust and fear, as their parenting practices seem to be more related to issues like isolation and lack of knowledge and control.

## 7.6 Conclusion and discussion

The aim of this study was twofold: to examine how parents and children perceived the neighbourhood and how this influenced parenting practices, and how perceptions of risk and safety were negotiated within the family context.

We found that parents living under similar neighbourhood conditions have diverse views about their neighbourhoods as places for their children to grow up in. Parental perceptions range from very negative to mostly positive. Parents who are positive about their neighbourhood primarily referred to good neighbours, social cohesion and social control. Those who are less positive mentioned issues like unsafety and criminality. Interestingly, cultural diversity in the neighbourhood is perceived as both positive – as it allows children to learn about other cultures – and negative, as parents feel excluded because there are 'too many' people from non-western backgrounds. Parents' neighbourhood evaluations are related to parenting behaviour in anticipated ways. Parents who believe that their neighbourhood has a negative effect on their children are more likely to rely on extensive monitoring and keeping their children inside, or tend to seek opportunities for their children outside the neighbourhood. Those who are more positive about the neighbourhood draw more upon neighbourhood resources, including social networks, and allow their children more freedom to roam the neighbourhood.

We also showed that parenting practices cannot be considered in isolation from the nature of the parent-child relationship and the child's actions. We found that it is important to include the negotiation of parental rules by the youths. Particularly when children get older they are able to negotiate rules and regulations with their parents, and to question and even resist their parents' authority and power. This takes the form of, for example, coming home late or not telling their parents where and with whom they spend their time. The extent to which youths are able to negotiate parental regulations, however, is related to the type of parent. Whereas youths with coping parents and invisible parents can easily challenge their parents' restrictions, this is much harder for youths with protective parents and similarity seekers as parents, due to the higher levels of parental and community control.

There are several lessons to be learnt from this study. Firstly, our findings emphasise the importance of including people's subjective perceptions of their own neighbourhood in neighbourhood effect research and pedagogical studies. We found that residents of the same neighbourhood can hold very diverse views about the quality of their communities. This might be related to the fact that social life in Feijenoord is fragmented: although it is characterised by close-knit networks between people from similar ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, there is anonymity and distrust between residents from different backgrounds (see Pinkster and Droogleever Fortuijn (2009) for a description of a similar neighbourhood in The Hague). The perception of the neighbourhood thus partly depends on the group to which one belongs. We should therefore not be completely reliant on objective neighbourhood criteria to predict parental behaviour.

Secondly, our findings lead us to question deficit models, such as the social disorganisation theory, which have been common in neighbourhood effect literature. Outsiders – such as researchers and policymakers – often tend to focus on the negative characteristic of a neighbourhood, such as a low-quality built environment, high crime rates, nuisance caused by youths and drugs use. Our research shows that the formation of neighbourhood perceptions is more complex than that. Our findings support the pluralistic neighbourhood theory of Aber and Nieto (2000), which states that despite socioeconomic disadvantage and social problems in a neighbourhood, there may still be positive social processes, at least in the perception of its residents. We have to be aware, however that being

positive about the neighbourhood and its social networks – as is the case with the 'similarity seekers' – can also lead to parents not seeking opportunities for their children elsewhere, and hence to the reproduction of certain norms and values and less access to bridging capital (MacDonald et al., 2005).

Finally, studies that focus on the relation between young people and neighbourhood space should pay more attention to the complexity of the processes that take place within the family. Parents play an important role in moderating the impact of the neighbourhood on their children, but parenting is more than just a reaction to the neighbourhood context: it is the outcome of the interaction between the parent-child relationship, the child's actions and the neighbourhood context.

## Notes

[1] Her grandchildren of 24 and 17 years old spent most of their out-of-school time at her place, since both parents were working full-time.

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# 8 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study engaged with literature and debates on neighbourhood effects, urban restructuring, children's geographies and parenting. The aim was twofold, namely to provide 1) *a detailed description of how youths (12-21 years) perceive and deal with growing up in a deprived neighbourhood*, and 2) *insight into how youths perceive and deal with displacement resulting from urban restructuring.* This study has contributed to the literature on neighbourhood effects on youths by filling the three knowledge gaps introduced in Chapter 1. That is, it has provided insight into (1) youths' perceptions of forced residential mobility; (2) how youths can negotiate their neighbourhood environment, and (3) the role of parenting.

This thesis has also provided insight into the 'black box' behind neighbourhood effects on youths and into the complexities of the relations between people and place. Chapters 2 and 3 presented an empirical examination of how a change of neighbourhood as a result of forced relocation influenced the housing situation, social networks and leisure activities of youths and how they dealt with this. The examination was based on quantitative analyses combined with interviews.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 provided a more in-depth description of how youths perceived and acted towards their deprived neighbourhood, which factors influenced their perceptions and agency, and how this in turn influenced their wellbeing. Finally, Chapter 7 dealt with how parenting practices were influenced by parental perceptions of their neighbourhood and how these practices were negotiated within the family context.

This concluding chapter summarises the main findings of each chapter and discusses how the study filled the three knowledge gaps. The subsequent discussion reflects further upon these main findings. Finally, the implications of the study for future research and policy implications are elaborated upon.

## 8.1 The effects of forced residential mobility

In Chapters 2 and 3, attention was paid to how forced residential mobility was perceived by youths, and the extent to which and how this influenced their social outcomes in terms of housing, social networks and leisure. In the past two decades, policymakers in western countries have seen the creation of a social mix as an

important way to prevent the concentration of disadvantage in neighbourhoods and, as such, negative neighbourhood effects. One of the forms this policy has taken is urban restructuring through the demolition of often social-rented dwellings and the construction of more expensive dwellings in order to attract people with a relatively higher socioeconomic status. The consequence of this policy, however, is that those who lived in the dwellings that were to be demolished, were forced to move. How did this forced relocation influence youths' housing and leisure situation and their social networks? And how was the moved perceived by the youths?

Chapter 2 investigated how youths perceived their forced relocation and their new dwelling and neighbourhood, compared to the old situation. When looking at the housing situation the outcomes of displacement were quite positive: displaced youths had an even better chance of moving to better housing – such as from a multi-family dwelling to a single-family dwelling or to a dwelling with more rooms – than youths who moved voluntarily. Moreover, the majority of the youths indicated that they were more satisfied with their new dwelling than with their previous dwelling. At first sight, this points to a positive effect of forced relocation. However, it is also necessary to make some reservations. Firstly, with regards to the neighbourhood, the improvements that were made were rather limited. Youths' opinions of the new neighbourhood compared to the old neighbourhood were generally mixed. This could be explained by the fact that a large number of moves took place from one deprived area to another deprived area (so-called horizontal moves). Particularly non-western minorities and youths from households with a low socioeconomic status were likely to again end up in deprived neighbourhoods. These findings are reason for concern. Almost all households in the study moved within the social rented sector, and since they were given priority over other regular home seekers one would assume equal opportunities on the housing market for all households in our study. Particularly as the rent in the social sector was not related to the quality of the neighbourhood, the expectation was that families would move to the relatively better neighbourhoods in the city. This, however, was not always the case. Posthumus and colleagues (2013) found similar outcomes in their study on adults. They conclude that displaced residents move to deprived neighbourhoods partly as a result of restrictions, such as a

lack of knowledge about the housing allocation system and the fear of becoming homeless. The authors argue, however, that preferences also play a large role in the relocation decision of displaced residents.

Secondly, while the opinion of the new dwelling was in general quite positive, youths' perceptions about the move itself were less positive. Chapter 3 showed that one of the reasons for this negative perception was the difficulties they had getting used to a new neighbourhood, especially if they had lived for a long time in their previous neighbourhood. It was difficult to maintain friendships with people in the old neighbourhood since they were not able to meet each other on a casual basis. On the positive side, youths were to a large extent able to take up new leisure activities and to make new friends in the new neighbourhood. Thus, although moving had quite a few short-term negative effects, in the longer run these effects turned out to be limited. The interviews showed that most of the displaced youths felt in control of their situation. This illustrates how youths exercised agency in the context of a forced relocation. It is still necessary, however, to recognise that the extent to which youths could take up new activities and make new friends is bounded. It is, for example, dependent on such matters as the accessibility of activities and facilities, and the social climate in the neighbourhood.

## 8.2 Negotiating the neighbourhood

This thesis further showed that youths can actively negotiate their neighbourhood. In line with the new social studies of childhood, it was shown that youths were active agents who had their own activities, their own social networks, their own spaces and their own perceptions of these spaces (Corsaro, 2005; Qvortrup, 1994). Moreover, youths, in turn, also influenced the people around them and played a role in the construction of neighbourhood space (James and Prout, 1997). Our study showed that the negotiation of the neighbourhood is related to neighbourhood perceptions and power relations in public space.

### 8.2.1 Neighbourhood perceptions

Chapters 4 and 6 explored youths' perceptions of neighbourhood problems,

neighbourhood support and their sense of place attachment. They showed that the behaviour of youths in space cannot be seen independently of meanings and interpretations of space (Gotham, 2003). The meaning youths attached to certain spaces had an impact on their temporal-spatial activities and the social contacts they chose to form. The perception of certain places as 'good' or 'bad', 'safe' or 'unsafe', or 'adventurous' or 'boring' guided the actions of young people and formed a frame of reference for identification with places and the people in it (Van Eijk, 2010). Chapter 4 showed that although youths in the Feijenoord area of Rotterdam were well aware of the problems in their neighbourhood, such as crime and violence, most of them were generally positive about their neighbourhood. Youths pointed to several sources of support that made them value their neighbourhood environment. For many, their neighbourhood formed an important part of their identity and they indicated high levels of social belonging. They felt attached to their neighbourhood because it met their needs for distinctiveness, continuity, self-esteem and self-efficacy.

The situation in the Feijenoord area, however, stood in sharp contrast to how youths in the Rogers Park neighbourhood in Chicago perceived their environment, as discussed in Chapter 6. Also here place attachment was strong among the youths, but this manifested itself in a different way, namely in strong territorial affiliation backed up with violence. As a result, the situation in Rogers Park was characterised by a high level of risk, regular fights and significant violence, which had resulted in higher levels of fear amongst youths. Although there was widespread risk in Feijenoord, it was characterised by lower levels of violence, and had not led to a high level of fear among the youths.

Moreover, the differences in territoriality influenced the risk-management strategies youths could adopt. In Rogers Park, entire sub-neighbourhoods were considered no-go areas, whereas in Feijenoord the places that were considered unsafe were generally specific settings such as a certain street corner or park. In Rogers Park it was consequently harder to navigate the neighbourhood and avoid unsafe places and people who were considered a bad influence. This illustrates that the risk-management strategies that youths can employ are often bounded by the neighbourhood conditions. The ways in which youths can manage risk is dependent on the options and resources available as well as on the obstacles

they face. Our study has shown that these opportunity structures differ between the two neighbourhoods – Feijenoord seems to have more options for navigating the neighbourhood compared to Rogers Park – even though the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics are rather similar at first sight. This might be related to national and municipal differences in, for example, the welfare system, the school system, drug and gun laws, institutionalised racism and the history of gangs. Scholars who study neighbourhood effects should therefore be cautious when applying theories from one context to another, as processes might be in place that are not captured by objective neighbourhood characteristics.

### 8.2.2 Power relations in public space

The ways in which youths could negotiate their neighbourhood were influenced by power relations in public space. Neighbourhood space was both visibly and invisibly divided, and several power struggles occurred between groups for control over this space (Sandercock, 2008). Chapter 5 discussed three power relations in the neighbourhood, namely that between youths and adults, that between groups of youths, and that between girls and boys. While using public space, youths shared physical space with adults and other youths, and encounters between the different users of public space consciously and unconsciously created socio-spatial boundaries, which influenced the youths' socio-spatial behaviour.

We found that the power relations in the neighbourhood, and the ways in which they could be negotiated, were dependent on age, ethnicity and gender. Firstly, younger children and youths had to deal with spatial constraints imposed by adults and older youths. In the case of youths, 'being older' often meant 'being in power'. Particularly adults were able to influence youths socio-spatial behaviour, for example by means of bans on assembly, curfews or parental regulations. Secondly, ethnicity influenced how others saw youths in public space and how they reacted to that. For example, particularly boys from a non-western background were considered a threat to public space by residents and institutional actors, and were often the target of exclusionary actions. Thirdly, gender had a strong influence on power relations in public space and the ways in which they could be negotiated. The behaviour of boys in public space as well as gendered ideals of femininity

restricted the socio-spatial behaviour of some girls. They often did not feel comfortable visiting certain places, as they felt that their bodies were sexualised by the male gaze and were consequently excluded from these places because of their gender. Here, ethnicity again played a role, as the gendered restrictions on socio-spatial behaviour mainly applied to Muslim girls, since they had to live up to the ideal of a 'good Muslim girl' as constructed by the adult community. These examples show that the ways in which power relations in public space were constructed were dependent on the intersection of issues like age, gender, ethnicity and socio-spatial behaviour.

On the other hand, Chapters 5 and 6 showed that youths were able to shift some of these socio-spatial boundaries by, for example, carving out certain spaces for hanging out, by challenging the existing power relations between themselves and adults by acting 'tough', or by drawing together the 'right' spaces and people. The ways in which youths used public space and negotiated socio-spatial boundaries were dependent on their sense of self. Resistance or conformity to existing boundaries was dependent on how a specific context did or did not support their identity. The narratives of the youths, however, showed that these identities could be fluid and situational. The same young person could emphasise one identity (for example as a tough guy) in one context, and another identity (for example as the dedicated Muslim) in another context. The identities and social spatial boundaries of youths should thus be considered hybrid and more complex than is often assumed. Youths' gender, ethnic, religious and class identities could shift depending on the context and the related power relations.

## 8.3 The role of parents

This study showed that parenting plays an important role in moderating the impact of the neighbourhood on the social outcomes of youths. In the case of forced relocation, for example, parents played an important role in the choice of neighbourhood and the new dwelling, as shown in Chapter 2. Moreover, their social networks, or absence thereof, played a role in connecting youths to people or institutions in the new neighbourhood or in their sticking to those in the old neighbourhood, as discussed in Chapter 3. Furthermore, Chapter 7 showed that

parenting practices were influenced by the neighbourhood of residence. Parents who raise children in deprived neighbourhoods often face numerous challenges that parents who live in less deprived neighbourhoods do not have to deal with, such as crime, unsafety, and negative peer or adult influences. It is not surprising, therefore, that our study showed that neighbourhood characteristics influenced parents' approaches to parenting.

What is more interesting, however, is that the same neighbourhood can influence parenting in diverse ways. Our study revealed that parents living under similar neighbourhood conditions had divergent views about their neighbourhoods as places for their children to grow up in. Four types of parents were distinguished: protective parents, similarity seekers, coping parents and invisible parents. These parents differed in their perceptions of their neighbourhood, the reasons for these perceptions and the ways in which they monitored their children. Neighbourhood perceptions and parenting practices were related in expected ways. Parents who believed that their neighbourhoods had a negative effect on their children were more likely to rely on extensive monitoring and keeping their children inside – as could be seen among the protective parents – or tended to seek opportunities for their children outside the neighbourhood, as could be seen among the coping parents. Those who were more positive about the neighbourhood drew more upon neighbourhood social networks and allowed their children more freedom to roam the neighbourhood, as was the case for the similarity seekers.

Moreover, the study revealed that the negotiation of power by youths took place not only in public space (as shown in the previous section) but also within the family. Youths negotiated rules with their parents and questioned and resisted their parents' authority and power. Definitions of risks and how to deal with them were regularly contested between parents and children both verbally and through the youths' behaviour, and thus should be considered as fluid. The extent to which youths were able to negotiate their parental regulations, however, was related to the type of parent. Youths with 'coping' parents or 'invisible' parents could more easily challenge their parents' restrictions compared to youths whose parents were 'protective' or 'similarity seekers', due to the higher levels of parental and community control. Moreover, the characteristics of the child and the family and the personality of the child influenced the extent to which youths could negotiate

parental regulations. Parents generally tended to be more protective towards girls, particularly in the case of Muslim families. The sibling order also played a role: parents were often less protective towards children who had older brothers or older sisters. Finally, a considerable number of youths had been able to win the trust of their parents, which resulted in more freedom in their socio-spatial behaviour. Although many parents said that they feared their children would become 'victims' of neighbourhood problems, they trusted that their children would be responsible and sensible. In other words, many parents tried to find a balance between trust and fear.

Our study showed that if we want to understand neighbourhood effects on youths, it is important to take into account the role of parents and the complexity of the processes that take place within the family. Parents play an important role in mediating and moderating the impact of the neighbourhood of children, but parenting is more than just a reaction to the neighbourhood context. Parenting strategies are the outcome of the interaction of subjective neighbourhood perceptions, the nature of the parent-child relationship and the child's actions.

## 8.4 Discussion

Apart from filling the three abovementioned gaps in neighbourhood effect research, two additional themes emerged from our study.

### 8.4.1 Subjectivity and the social construction of risk and opportunity

Firstly, our study showed that it is crucial to include individuals' subjective perceptions of their neighbourhood in neighbourhood effect studies. Perceptions of the same neighbourhood differed among both youths and parents, and these perceptions were important in guiding their socio-spatial behaviour as well as parenting strategies. Neighbourhood effect research could benefit from paying more attention to what a neighbourhood really means in the lives of youths and their parents, and how this influences their socio-spatial behaviour and formation of social networks. Moreover, we should acknowledge that place can have multiple meanings, depending on the individual and the other individuals present in that

place (Sykes, 2011). This means that in neighbourhood effect studies we should not rely solely on objective neighbourhood characteristics to predict social outcomes of youths and parenting practices. It is important to acknowledge the idea that even deprived neighbourhoods have strengths that can lead to positive outcomes for youths (see also the pluralistic neighbourhood theory of Aber and Nieto, 2000). Despite socioeconomic disadvantage and related social problems in the neighbourhood, there still may be positive social processes, at least in the eyes of its residents.

Secondly, perceptions of risk and risk management were socially constructed. Chapter 6 showed that different neighbourhood contexts may require different strategies for risk management. Issues like variances in the territoriality of groups of boys and levels of violence influenced how youths in both studied neighbourhoods managed risks, and what was considered the 'right' response in such a situation. The findings show that what outsiders would consider as maladaptive behaviour could in fact be a rational response to the circumstances a young person is facing at that moment. What is considered successful risk management is thus dependent on the context. We should therefore be critical about the normative assumptions that influence definitions of successful risk management.

We do, of course, have to be careful not to rely too much on subjective neighbourhood perceptions, as what is perceived as positive by one person could be damaging for others and possibly, in the end, also for themselves (Perri 6, 1997). Although youths could, for example, be positive about social networks in their neighbourhood as they give them a sense of belonging and instrumental help, some of these networks might also lead them to participate in deviant behaviour or lead to a lack of bridging capital and thus limit their opportunities to achieve social mobility (MacDonald et al., 2005). Galster and Santiago (2006), moreover, caution that one should be critical when drawing out policy implications on the basis of subjective neighbourhood perceptions. They acknowledge that perceptions are crucial in predicting behaviours, but indicate that perceptions are not an infallible source of information.

### 8.4.2 Reciprocal relations between youths and their neighbourhood

The second additional theme that emerged from our study is that the relations between youths and parents and their neighbourhood should be seen as reciprocal. As illustrated in the conceptual model in Chapter 1, whereas neighbourhoods influence youths and their parents, the neighbourhood context is socially produced through the behaviour of youths and parents in space and through their interaction with others (Chaskin et al., 2013; Gotham, 2003; Sykes, 2011). Existing research has focused on the influence of the neighbourhood on youth outcomes and on how moving to less poor neighbourhoods influences their social outcomes, but few studies have paid attention to the contributions of youths to the dynamics in the neighbourhood (but see Chaskin et al., 2013). Our study, however, has illustrated the diverse ways in which youths define, contest and transform neighbourhood space. As such our study has taken a first step towards going beyond analysing youths' own lives and how others shape these lives, by also exploring how the behaviour of youths influences the lives of others in the neighbourhood and as such constructs social space.

We have shown that physical space and the behaviour of people and the power relations in this space influence youths' socio-spatial behaviour. At the same time, however, the socio-spatial behaviour of youths themselves influenced the neighbourhood perceptions and behaviour of others in the neighbourhood. For example, groups of unsupervised youths hanging around in neighbourhood public space were perceived as negative by many other residents of the neighbourhood. These perceptions influenced residents' behaviour, for example in the form of exclusionary actions, which in turn influenced youths' perception of and behaviour in public space again. In Chapter 6, we further showed that the strategies adopted by youths as a reaction to their neighbourhood context could again lead to heightened fear among other people in the neighbourhood. Boys trying to find 'safety in numbers' would, for example, lead to more risk among girls or boys who are not members of such a group because they fear sexual harassment or being set upon by these groups of boys.

Thus, we can conclude that youths and others in the neighbourhood together produce the spaces as we perceive them. Social practices are made possible or are

constrained by socio-spatial structures, but we should realise that these structures can be constantly reconstructed. Recognition of the reciprocal relations between different human and non-human actors is crucial for the understanding of the everyday life of youths in a deprived neighbourhood. As Horton and Kraftl (2006, p. 88) state:

> *It becomes obvious that children (and adults) are constantly creating, or co-creating their geographies. Spaces are never finished, never containers waiting to be filled, never discrete blocks, segments or 'fields'. There are all sorts of complex, contingent and on-going connections that always make spaces (an) under-construction.*

## 8.5 Avenues for future research

The outcomes of this study suggest a number of interesting avenues for further research in the field of youths' geographies and neighbourhood effects. First of all, neighbourhood effects studies could be enhanced by putting ethnographic research higher on the research agenda. The present study is a step in that direction, but more qualitative studies are necessary to help explain the results of prior quantitative studies and to help generate hypotheses for future ones (see also Small and Feldman, 2012). There is a need to combine quantitative and qualitative research, which should result in the increased use of mixed methods, rather than merely multi-methods. A mixed-methods approach goes beyond simply combining qualitative and quantitative methods in order to cancel out the weaknesses of each method. Instead, researchers using a mixed methods approach should select and then integrate the most appropriate techniques from qualitative and quantitative methods to more thoroughly investigate neighbourhood effects on youths (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2003).

Secondly, the many ways in which the neighbourhood is relevant to youths, and how they choose the places to participate in it, are often not sufficiently captured in neighbourhood effect studies. The neighbourhood effect framework could be enriched by paying more attention to the heterogeneity of socio-spatial practices and the meaning young people attach to different places. The question we should

ask is not 'To what extent does the neighbourhood matter?', but 'To whom does the neighbourhood matter, and how?' (see also Lupton, 2003). This question is particularly relevant in the current era of increased mobility (Van Kempen and Wissink, 2014). This means that it is crucial for studies to adopt an activity-based approach and focus on where exactly people spend their time, how long they spend their time there and the degree to which social interaction takes place in the neighbourhood (Sampson, 2001; South, 2001). Useful in this context is a recent paper written by Van Kempen and Wissink (2014), in which they connect neighbourhood effect research with the new mobilities paradigm. They argue that the neighbourhood should be reimagined as a collection of hybrid nodes that bind human and non-human actors, and recommend that researchers should shift their gaze to these nodes of interaction (including virtual spaces), which might be beyond the neighbourhood context.

Thirdly, and related to the previous point, future research could benefit from paying more attention to the role of the Internet and mobile technologies in neighbourhood effects. Youths' activities are located not only in physical space, but also in virtual spaces like Facebook and online chat rooms. The increasing use of technology is assumed to be leading to the 'end of geography', as local space will matter less in people's lives and social networks. One critical remark should be made here, however. Whereas some researchers believe that the Internet is pulling people away from meaningful networks in the household or neighbourhood, other studies (Valentine et al., 2000; Hampton and Wellman, 2003) show that technology plays an important role in the development and maintenance of local ties. Our study showed, for example, that mobile phones or Facebook were often used to make appointments to meet neighbourhood friends on the street. Moreover, the use of mobile phones could provide youths with other opportunities to explore their environment: it provides them with a 'lifeline' to security and could reduce parental monitoring. The effect of the increasing use of technology on social networks – and hence neighbourhood effects – is thus not as straightforward as assumed and particularly little is known about how this works for youths. Qualitative studies are necessary to reveal how the neighbourhood still plays a role in youths' lives in a time of increasingly virtual contacts and influences. It is important in this context to pay attention to the actual uses and experiences of

youths using mobile technologies and the Internet and how they combine on-line and off-line experiences.

Finally, future studies could be enhanced by adopting a more longitudinal approach. Two types of longitudinal studies should receive specific attention. First, future studies could pay more attention to the residential histories of families and children, and as such study the possibilities of different neighbourhood 'dosages' and lingering effects. Chapter 3 showed that youths can maintain contact with their old neighbourhood after residential relocation. This confirms that it is not solely the current neighbourhood that might have an impact on the outcomes of youths. Secondly, longitudinal studies could investigate how and to what extent neighbourhood effects are intergenerational. Do children end up in a disadvantaged situation that is similar to that of their parents, or are they able to do better? Some quantitative studies have made a good start at tackling this question (see Hedman et al., 2013). They show that there is intergenerational transmission of neighbourhood effects from parents to children, and that these effects are long lasting. However, more qualitative research is necessary to provide an understanding of how exactly disadvantage is transmitted through generations.

## 8.6 Policy recommendations

The results of the present study have a number of implications for policymakers who are engaged in deprived neighbourhoods, mixing policies, and youths and their families. Chapters 2 and 3 showed that urban restructuring had led to an improvement in youths' dwelling conditions, but apart from that nothing more should be expected in terms of positive influences of social mix. On the contrary, youths and their families felt very insecure about whether they had to move and whether they would still be able to see their friends. Policymakers should therefore provide more information about the forced relocation to youths and their families and shorten the period of insecurity.

On the positive side, most of the displaced youths had been able to 'catch up' again. In this context, however, it is necessary to recognise that the extent to which youths could take up new activities and make new friends is dependent on such

matters as the accessibility of activities and facilities, and the social climate in the neighbourhood. It is important to assist young people and their parents when they move. Institutional actors need to be more proactive in helping families connect to their new neighbourhoods by, for example, supplying information about community centres and other places that provide leisure activities, and ensuring that the activities on offer meet the demands of diverse groups of youths.

Moreover, the study showed that many youths were rather positive about their neighbourhood and felt attached to the place. These positive sentiments could be used to engage youths with policymaking in their neighbourhood. Getting youths to define their own problems rather than discussing the ones brought up by adults, and allowing them to design their own age-appropriate methods to combat those problems, can increase their awareness of neighbourhood problems and move them to action (Checkoway and Richards-Shuster, 2003). Although the notion of 'children as social actors' is fully recognised within academic childhood studies (Holt and Holloway, 2006; Vanderbeck, 2008), there is still a gap between theory and practice (McNeish and Gill, 2006). One possible reason is that youths are often still being portrayed as a 'problem'. In many Dutch municipalities, the nuisance caused by youths falls under the same policy category ('safety') as drugs use, crime rates and feelings of unsafety. Moreover, in the Netherlands many youth programmes are financed from the budget allocated to safety or crime prevention. Changing administrative labels would be a good first step towards taking youths seriously. Furthermore, there are other obstacles to be overcome. To some extent youths participate in policymaking and research in their neighbourhood, but their participation is uneven. Some youths are enthusiastic about participating, whereas others are willing to participate but do not know where to start, and yet others lack support from peers or adults or face obstacles in the community (Checkoway and Richards-Schuster, 2003; Van der Veen and Posthumus, 2008).

Finally, the politicisation of parenting (Faircloth et al., 2013) in recent years has stirred a new wave of interest in the impact of policy intervention in family life (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson, 2013, 2014; Jupp and Gallagher, 2013; Wainwright and Marandet, 2013). Our study showed that the ways in which parents perceive their neighbourhood and how they try to buffer their children against negative influences are very diverse. Interventions in family life should therefore pay

attention to the specific characteristics of the family and its resources. In particular, what we called 'invisible parents' should be the focus of policy attention: these parents often feel overwhelmed by the social problems in their neighbourhood and do not have the resources to deal with them (Pinkster and Droogleever Fortuijn, 2009). Institutional actors could help these parents access resources, such as professional help or informal networks. These parents, however, are often hard to reach. A first step would be to contact them through already existing institutions such as the children's school, the community centre, or the church or mosque. It is important in this context to take into account emotional barriers to involvement or seeking institutional help. Anderson and colleagues (2006) showed that low-income mothers often felt that institutions had excessive power over their lives and that this was identified as a barrier to receiving help. This resulted in an ambivalent relationship with social services: although the mothers wanted help, they were reluctant to admit they needed it and were wary of social services becoming intrusive (Freeman, 2011). It is therefore important that such services are low key and easily accessible. Moreover, the present study showed that a considerable number of parents could neither read nor write Dutch, which could also be perceived as a barrier to parental participation. Institutions, such as schools, could do more to help parents overcome their own insecurities regarding their lack of educational knowledge or levels of Dutch.

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*NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING*

# NAVIGEREN DOOR DE BUURT: HOE JONGEREN OMGAAN MET GEDWONGEN VERHUIZING EN HET LEVEN IN EEN ACHTERSTANDSBUURT

# 1. Inleiding

Door zowel beleidsmakers als wetenschappers wordt vaak aangenomen dat opgroeien in een achterstandsbuurt een negatieve invloed heeft op onder andere onderwijsuitkomsten, gedrag en ambities van jongeren. Jongeren in achterstandsbuurten zouden het slechter doen dan hun leeftijdsgenoten in 'betere' buurten vanwege zaken als sociale disorganisatie, negatieve rolmodellen, invloed van slechte vrienden, stigmatisering en een gebrek aan institutionele hulpbronnen. Ondanks dat in de Nederlandse context het bestaan van dit soort buurteffecten nog niet overtuigend is aangetoond, vormt deze gedachtegang de basis voor de buurtgerichte aanpak, zoals het beleid van stedelijk herstructurering. De sloop van verouderde flatgebouwen en de nieuwbouw van duurdere alternatieven zou leiden tot een 'betere' sociale mix en daarmee minder negatieve buurteffecten. Een van de gevolgen van dit beleid is de gedwongen verhuizing van een grote groep huishoudens.

Hoewel er al veel bekend is over buurteffecten en de invloed van stedelijke herstructurering op volwassenen, weten we nog weinig over hoe jongeren hun buurt ervaren en gebruiken en hoe ze omgaan met een gedwongen verhuizing. Dit terwijl jongeren belangrijke gebruikers zijn van de buurt: ze brengen veel tijd door binnen de buurt, hebben er een groot deel van hun vrienden en beïnvloeden in grote mate hoe andere bewoners hun buurt ervaren. Jongeren worden echter vaak gezien als 'minder-dan-volwassenen' die niet de kennis en ervaring hebben om hun wensen onder de aandacht te brengen. Als gevolg hiervan worden vaak volwassen proxies – zoals de mening van ouders of leraren – gebruikt om de ervaring van jongeren te meten. Het probleem is echter dat jongeren hun buurt of een gedwongen verhuizing heel anders kunnen beleven dan volwassenen omdat hun sociaalruimtelijk gedrag en belevingswereld anders zijn, bijvoorbeeld als gevolg van sociaalruimtelijk beperkingen opgelegd door de ouders. Begrijpen hoe jongeren betekenis geven aan hun buurt en hoe dit van invloed is op hun sociaalruimtelijk gedrag is echter cruciaal wanneer we de buurt als invloedrijke context willen onderzoeken.

Deze dissertatie richt zich op dit gebrek aan kennis. Door middel van een survey, diepte-interviews, 'mental mapping' en fotografie geeft deze studie

inzicht in de belevingswereld van jongeren (12-19 jaar) uit buurten met een lage sociaaleconomische status en een etnisch diverse bevolkingssamenstelling in Utrecht, Rotterdam en Chicago. Drie verschillende thema's worden onderzocht:

1. de invloed van een gedwongen verhuizing op jongeren
2. de buurtbeleving van jongeren en hoe ze strategisch navigeren door hun buurt
3. de invloed van ouders op de relatie tussen de buurt en jongeren

## 2. De invloed van een gedwongen verhuizing op jongeren

Hoofdstuk 2 en 3 in deze dissertatie richten zich op de vraag hoe jongeren een gedwongen verhuizing als gevolg van de sloop van hun woning ervaren en hoe deze verhuizing van invloed is op hun huisvesting, sociale netwerken en vrijetijdsbesteding. In de afgelopen decennia is het beleid van sociale mix in achterstandsbuurten regelmatig toegepast met als doel de concentratie van armoede – en daarmee negatieve buurteffecten – te verminderen. Een van de manieren waarop men sociale mix wilde bereiken is door middel van de sloop van huurwoningen in de sociale sector en de bouw van duurdere alternatieven bedoeld voor huishoudens met een hogere sociaaleconomische status. Dit leidde ertoe dat de bewoners van de woningen die op de slooplijst stonden gedwongen waren te verhuizen. Hoe is zo'n gedwongen verhuizing van invloed op de woonsituatie en vrijetijdsbesteding van jongeren? En hoe ervaren de jongeren de verhuizing zelf?

Hoofdstuk 2 geeft door middel van kwantitatieve analyses inzicht in hoe jongeren hun gedwongen verhuizing ervaren en wat ze vinden van hun nieuwe woning en buurt vergeleken met de oude situatie. Wanneer we kijken naar de woonsituatie lijkt het effect van de gedwongen verhuizing overwegend positief: van de jongeren die gedwongen moesten verhuizen, verhuisde een groter deel naar een betere woning – zoals van een flat naar een eengezinswoning, of naar een woning met meer kamers – dan van de jongeren die vrijwillig verhuisden. Daarbij geeft de meerderheid van de jongeren aan dat ze meer tevreden waren met hun nieuwe woning dan dat ze waren met hun oude woning.

Op het eerste gezicht wijst dit op een positief effect van de gedwongen verhuizing,

echter een aantal kanttekeningen is hierbij nodig. Ten eerste, wanneer we de oude en nieuwe buurt vergelijken dan is er weinig vooruitgang te zien. Veel verhuizingen vonden plaats van één achterstandsbuurt naar een andere achterstandsbuurt (zogenaamde horizontale verhuizingen). Wanneer de jongeren gevraagd wordt hun nieuwe buurt met de oude buurt vergelijken, zijn de antwoorden dan ook gemengd. Terwijl sommige jongeren tevreden waren met hun nieuwe buurt, geeft ook een aanzienlijk deel aan dat ze hun oude buurt beter vonden. Vooral jongeren met een niet-westerse achtergrond en uit een huishouden met een lage sociaaleconomische status hadden een grote kans weer in een achterstandsbuurt terecht te komen. Deze bevindingen zijn een reden voor zorg. Vrijwel alle huishoudens in de studie zijn verhuisd binnen de sociale huursector. Binnen het Nederlandse systeem krijgen huishoudens die gedwongen moeten verhuizen voorrang binnen de sociale huursector, wat zou betekenen dat alle huishoudens gelijke kansen zouden moeten hebben. Omdat de huurprijs in de sociale huursector niet gerelateerd is aan de kwaliteit van de buurt, zouden we verwachten dat huishoudens vaker naar de relatief betere buurten binnen de stad verhuizen. Voor velen bleek dit niet het geval. Hiervoor zijn twee verklaringen te geven. Enerzijds is het mogelijk dat huishoudens naar achterstandsbuurten verhuizen vanwege restricties zoals weinig kennis van het sociale huursysteem of een overhaaste beslissing omdat ze bang zijn zonder woning komen te zitten. Anderzijds spelen voorkeuren – zoals bekendheid met de buurt of sociale netwerken – een rol bij de keuze van de buurt bij een gedwongen verhuizing.

Terwijl de jongeren overwegend positief waren over hun nieuwe woning, waren ze minder te spreken over de verhuizing zelf. Het proces rondom de verhuizing ging vaak gepaard met met veel onzekerheid of er wel of niet gesloopt ging worden en op welke termijn er verhuisd moest worden. Dit had ook invloed op andere keuzes, zoals schoolkeuze of investeringen in de woning. Hoofdstuk 3 toont aan dat jongeren moeite hadden met het wennen aan de nieuwe buurt, vooral als ze een groot deel van hun leven in de vorige buurt hadden gewoond. Het was vaak moeilijk vriendschappen te onderhouden met vrienden in de oude buurt omdat de jongeren hun vrienden niet meer op regelmatige basis tegenkwamen. Aan de positieve kant waren jongeren wel in staat nieuwe vrijetijdsbestedingen op te pakken en vrienden te maken in de nieuwe buurt. Ondanks dat de gedwongen

verhuizing een aantal negatieve effecten had, bleken de gevolgen op de langere termijn beperkt. De interviews tonen aan dat veel van de jongeren het gevoel hadden dat ze controle hadden over de situatie en over hun leven.

## 3. De buurtbeleving van jongeren en hoe ze strategisch navigeren door hun buurt

Het idee achter buurteffecten is dat het leven in een achterstandsbuurt negatieve gevolgen heeft voor jongeren. In bestaand onderzoek is er echter weinig aandacht besteed aan hoe jongeren zelf hun buurt ervaren en hoe ze omgaan met de problemen die ze er tegenkomen. Uit dit onderzoek blijkt dat de invloed van de buurt niet hetzelfde is voor alle jongeren, maar afhankelijk van welke plekken ze gebruiken en wie ze daar ontmoeten. Bovendien is het niet alleen de buurt die jongeren beïnvloedt, maar kunnen jongeren ook de buurt beïnvloeden, bijvoorbeeld door hun gedrag in de openbare ruimte. In deze dissertatie wordt aangetoond dat twee aspecten belangrijk zijn in hoe jongeren strategisch door hun buurt navigeren, namelijk hun buurtbeleving en de machtsrelaties in de openbare ruimte.

### 3.1 Buurtbeleving

In Hoofdstuk 4 en 6 wordt ingegaan op de vraag hoe jongeren de problemen en hulpbronnen in hun buurt beleven en hoe ze zich verbonden voelen met de buurt. In deze hoofdstukken wordt aangetoond dat de buurtbeleving van cruciaal belang is voor het verklaren van sociaalruimtelijk gedrag en de sociale netwerken van jongeren, en daarmee hoe de buurt van invloed is op hun leven. De beleving van een plaats als 'goed' of 'slecht'; 'veilig' of 'onveilig'; 'avontuurlijk' of 'saai' beïnvloedt het gedrag van jongeren en hoe ze zich met een bepaalde plaats en de mensen aldaar identificeren. Zo wordt in Hoofdstuk 4 aangetoond dat jongeren in de deelgemeente Feijenoord in Rotterdam zich goed bewust zijn van de problemen in de buurt, zoals criminaliteit en geweld, maar tegelijkertijd overwegend positief zijn over hun buurt. De jongeren wijzen op verschillende hulpbronnen, wat leidt tot een positieve ervaring met de buurt. Te denken valt aan hulp van buurtgenoten bij het vinden van een baantje of bij het maken van

huiswerk of hulp vanuit (jongeren)organisaties op het gebied van vaardigheden, lichamelijk beweging, zelfverdediging en zelfvertrouwen. Hiernaast vormt de buurt een belangrijk deel van de identiteit van de jongeren. De meerderheid van de jongeren voelt zich verbonden met hun buurt omdat het hun behoefte aan onderscheidingsvermogen, continuïteit, eigenwaarde en zelfredzaamheid vervult – of in ieder geval niet hindert.

De situatie in Feijenoord staat echter in scherp contrast met hoe jongeren in de wijk Rogers Park in Chicago hun buurt ervaren. In Hoofdstuk 6 wordt beschreven dat ook in Rogers Park de verbondenheid met de buurt sterk is, maar dat dit zich op een andere manier uit, namelijk in sterke territorialiteit ondersteund met geweld. Als gevolg hiervan beschrijven de jongeren in Rogers Park hun buurt als een risicovolle plek, waar gevechten en geweld aan de orde van de dag zijn. Dit leidt vervolgens tot gevoelens van onveiligheid onder de jongeren in Rogers Park, in veel sterkere mate dan onder de jongeren in Rotterdam. Hiernaast blijkt dat het verschil in territorialiteit van invloed is op hoe jongeren met risico's in hun buurt omgaan. In Rogers Park worden grote delen van de wijk als een *no-go-area* beschouwd, terwijl in Feijenoord slechts enkele specifieke plekken, zoals een straathoek of een park, als onveilig worden ervaren. Dit leidt ertoe dat het voor jongeren in Rogers Park moeilijker is gevaarlijke plekken en personen die een slechte invloed kunnen hebben te vermijden. In andere woorden, de manier waarop jongeren door hun buurt kunnen 'navigeren' is afhankelijk van de aanwezige hulpbronnen en obstakels. Hoofdstuk 6 toont aan dat deze hulpbronnen en obstakels sterk verschillen tussen Feijenoord en Rogers Park, zelfs al lijken de buurten in eerste instantie sterk op elkaar wanneer we kijken naar de demografische en sociaaleconomische samenstelling. De verschillen in hulpbronnen en obstakels kunnen mogelijk verklaard worden door nationale en gemeentelijke verschillen in, bijvoorbeeld, de welvaartsstaat, het schoolsysteem, drugs- en wapenwetten, geïnstitutionaliseerd racisme en een geschiedenis van *gang*-gerelateerd geweld. Onderzoekers op het gebied van buurteffecten moeten daarom oppassen niet al te gemakkelijk Amerikaanse modellen toe te passen op de Nederlandse of Europese situatie, of vice versa. Er zijn verschillende processen gaande binnen de buurt die niet gemeten kunnen worden door middel van objectieve buurtgegevens.

## 3.2 Machtsrelaties in de openbare ruimte

De manier waarop jongeren door hun buurt navigeren wordt verder beïnvloed door de machtsrelaties in de openbare ruimte. De openbare ruimte binnen een buurt is zowel zichtbaar als onzichtbaar verdeeld en vaak vindt er een machtsstrijd plaats tussen verschillende groepen over de controle over deze ruimte. In Hoofdstuk 5 worden drie machtsrelaties – en hoe ze van invloed zijn op het sociaalruimtelijk gedrag van jongeren – besproken, namelijk tussen jongeren en volwassenen; tussen groepen jongeren; en tussen meisjes en jongens. Wanneer jongeren een openbare ruimte gebruiken, delen ze deze ruimte met anderen zoals volwassenen en andere groepen jongeren. Door ontmoetingen tussen deze verschillende gebruikers van de openbare ruimte worden, bewust en onbewust, sociaalruimtelijke grenzen gecreëerd.

In Hoofdstuk 5 wordt verder aangetoond dat deze machtsrelaties binnen de buurt afhankelijk zijn van leeftijd, etniciteit en sekse. Ten eerste hebben kinderen en jongeren te maken met ruimtelijke beperkingen opgelegd door volwassenen of oudere jongeren. Jongeren geven aan dat ze vaak opkijken tegen groepen oudere jongens, en dat deze oudere jongens vaak de regels binnen de buurt bepalen. Daarnaast zijn het vooral volwassenen die invloed kunnen uitoefenen op het sociaalruimtelijk gedrag van jongeren, bijvoorbeeld door middel van een hangverbod of regels opgelegd door de ouders. Ten tweede is de etniciteit van de jongeren van belang voor hun sociaalruimtelijk gedrag, en voor de manier waarop anderen de jongeren zien. Jongens met een niet-westerse achtergrond worden bijvoorbeeld vaak gezien als een bedreiging voor de openbare orde door andere buurtbewoners. Als gevolg hiervan hebben veel van deze jongens het gevoel dat ze niet welkom zijn in de openbare ruimte. Ten derde, heeft sekse een sterkte invloed op de machtsrelaties in de openbare ruimte. Het gedrag van jongens in de openbare ruimte en de ideeën over hoe een 'goed meisje' zich zou moeten gedragen, beperkt het sociaalruimtelijk gedrag van meisjes. Een aantal van de vrouwelijke respondenten geeft aan dat ze zich niet prettig voelen op bepaalde plekken omdat ze het gevoel hebben object te zijn van mannelijke geseksualiseerde blikken. Het effect van sekse valt soms samen met etniciteit: het zijn vooral 'moslimmeisjes' die het gevoel hebben beperkt te zijn in hun sociaalruimtelijk gedrag, omdat ze moeten leven naar de ideeën van een 'goede moslimvrouw'. Al met al tonen

deze voorbeelden aan dat de machtsrelaties in de openbare ruimte geconstrueerd worden afhankelijk van factoren als leeftijd, sekse, etniciteit en sociaalruimtelijk gedrag.

Aan de andere kant wordt in Hoofdstuk 5 en 6 aangetoond dat grenzen tussen bepaalde groepen en plaatsen flexibel zijn. Zo zijn jongeren in staat een plek voor zichzelf te creëren in de door volwassenen gedomineerde openbare ruimte; kunnen ze zichzelf in een 'machtige' positie plaatsen door 'stoer' gedrag; of kunnen ze juist hun sociaal netwerk zo vormgeven dat de jongeren met 'slecht gedrag' hier geen onderdeel van uit maken. Of jongeren zich neerleggen bij sociaal-ruimtelijke grenzen is vaak het gevolg van hoe ze zichzelf zien en of de omgeving waarin ze zich bevinden overeenkomt met deze identiteit. Dit betekent ook dat jongeren verschillende identiteiten kunnen ontwikkelen in verschillende contexten. Dezelfde persoon kan in de ene context de stoere jongen uithangen terwijl hij in de andere context een toegewijde werknemer of serieuze student is. Kortom, de identiteit van jongeren en de grenzen tussen bepaalde groepen moeten gezien worden als hybride en complex.

## 4. De invloed van ouders op de relatie tussen de buurt en jongeren

Dit onderzoek toont verder aan dat ouders de invloed van de buurt op de sociale uitkomsten van jongeren in belangrijke mate kunnen beïnvloeden. In het geval van een gedwongen verhuizing spelen de ouders bijvoorbeeld een belangrijke rol bij de keuze van de nieuwe woning en buurt, zoals gezien kan worden in Hoofdstuk 2. Bovendien zijn de sociale netwerken van ouders van invloed op de sociale netwerken van jongeren en de voorzieningen waartoe ze toegang hebben in de nieuwe buurt (Hoofdstuk 3). Verder toont Hoofdstuk 7 aan dat de manier waarop ouders hun kinderen opvoeden afhankelijk is van de buurt waarin ze wonen. Ouders in achterstandsbuurten kunnen te maken hebben met een flink aantal obstakels waar ouders in betere buurten niet mee te maken hebben, zoals criminaliteit, onveiligheid en de negatieve invloed van andere jongeren en volwassenen in de buurt. Het komt dan ook niet als een verrassing dat de manier waarop ouders hun buurt ervaren een belangrijke rol speelt in de manier waarop

ze hun kinderen opvoeden. Binnen deze context is het interessant dat ouders dezelfde buurt op veel verschillende manieren kunnen ervaren. In Hoofdstuk 7 wordt daarom onderscheid gemaakt tussen vier groepen ouders: beschermende ouders; ouders die vooral op zoek gaan naar gelijkgestemden (*similarity seekers*); ouders die vooral de kansen buiten de buurt zoeken (*coping parents*); en onzichtbare ouders. Deze ouders verschillen sterk in hun mening over de buurt.

De mening van ouders over hun buurt als een plek om hun kinderen te laten opgroeien is gerelateerd aan hun opvoedstrategieën. Ouders die vooral negatief zijn over hun buurt wenden zich tot strikte monitoring of houden hun kinderen binnenshuis; óf zoeken vooral activiteiten – zoals school of vrijetijdsbesteding – buiten de buurt. De ouders die positiever zijn over hun buurt, richten zich meer op de sociale netwerken binnen de buurt en geven hun kinderen meer vrijheid.

Hiernaast toont het onderzoek aan dat jongeren niet alleen te maken hebben met machtsrelaties in de *openbare ruimte* (zoals besproken in de vorige paragraaf), maar dat machtsrelaties ook een rol spelen binnen het gezin. Jongeren zijn in staat te onderhandelen over de regels die hun ouders hebben gesteld, en betwisten soms de autoriteit en macht van hun ouders. Ook de definitie van een 'gevaarlijke situatie' kwam naar voren als onderwerp van discussie tussen ouders en jongeren. Niet alleen door discussie, maar ook door gedrag, laten jongeren zien dat ze in staat zijn met bepaalde 'gevaarlijke' situaties om te gaan. De mate waarin de jongeren met hun ouders in discussie kunnen over regels is gerelateerd aan het type ouder. Jongeren met beschermende ouders of ouders met een uitgebreid sociaal netwerk in de buurt (*similarity seekers*) zijn minder in staat de regels van hun ouders te ontwijken of te betwisten dan de jongeren met ouders in de andere twee groepen, vanwege de hoge mate van controle door de ouders en de gemeenschap. Hiernaast spelen de kenmerken en het karakter van het kind een rol. Veel jongeren zijn in staat het vertrouwen van hun ouders te winnen en hun ouders ervan te overtuigen dat ze veilig en zelfstandig door de buurt kunnen bewegen. Ondanks dat veel ouders bang zijn dat hun kinderen 'slachtoffer' zullen worden van verscheidene buurtproblemen, vertrouwen de meeste van hen dat hun kind verstandig genoeg is hiermee om te gaan. In andere woorden, veel ouders proberen een bepaalde balans te vinden tussen angst en vertrouwen.

Al met al, toont deze studie aan dat wanneer we de rol van de buurt in het leven van jongeren willen begrijpen, we de rol van de ouders en de complexiteit van de onderhandelingen binnen het gezin niet kunnen negeren. In deze context moeten we opvoeding zien als een uitkomst van de interactie tussen buurtbeleving, de relatie tussen de ouders en het kind en de persoonlijke kenmerken van het kind.

## 5. Discussie

De bevindingen van deze studie vragen om een kritische blik op de veronderstelde effecten van de buurt op jongeren. Twee aspecten verdienen meer aandacht in onderzoek en beleid: (1) het belang van subjectiviteit en de sociale constructie van het begrip 'risico' en (2) de wederkerige relaties tussen jongeren en hun buurt.

### 5.1 Het belang van subjectiviteit en de sociale constructie van het begrip 'risico'

Ten eerste toont dit onderzoek aan dat het cruciaal is om de subjectieve beleving van een buurt mee te nemen in buurteffectstudies. De beleving van dezelfde buurt verschilt niet alleen sterk tussen jongeren en volwassen maar ook binnen deze groepen. Deze beleving heeft een sterke invloed op zowel het sociaalruimtelijk gedrag van jongeren als de opvoedstrategieën van ouders. In deze context is het van belang dat we bewust zijn van het feit dat dezelfde plek verschillende betekenissen kan hebben, afhankelijk van het individu, zijn of haar achtergrond, eerdere ervaringen en van de aanwezigheid van andere personen op die plek. Voor buurteffectonderzoek betekent dit dat onderzoekers zich niet alleen moeten richten op 'objectieve' buurtkenmerken en onvoorwaardelijke relaties tussen deze kenmerken en de uitkomsten voor de bewoners. Bovendien wordt er nog steeds te veel gedacht in de vorm van *deficit* modellen, die de nadruk leggen op de tekortkomingen van een buurt. Een goed alternatief zou zijn meer te richten op zogenaamde 'pluralistische' buurtvisies. Het idee hierachter is dat zelfs achterstandsbuurten bepaalde inherente krachten hebben. Ondanks sociaaleconomische achterstand kunnen er nog steeds positieve processen plaatsvinden.

Ook toont het onderzoek aan dat 'risico' sociaal geconstrueerd is. Hoofdstuk 6 laat zien dat in elke buurt de risico's voor jongeren anders zijn en dat er daardoor ook in elke context andere strategieën nodig zijn om met deze risico's om te gaan. Zo kan het lid worden van een *gang* in de context van de wijk Rogers Park in Chicago gezien worden als een rationele reactie op het geweld op straat, terwijl het vaak door de maatschappij als een maladaptieve reactie wordt gezien. Ook dient er onderscheid te worden gemaakt tussen risico's op korte termijn en op lange termijn, waarbij de eerste vaak sterker het sociaalruimtelijk gedrag van jongeren beïnvloedt. Het gedrag van jongeren wordt vaak ingegeven door de behoeften *op dat moment*, zoals veiligheid, respect of het gevoel ergens bij te horen. Over de langetermijneffecten van hun gedrag wordt op dat moment minder nagedacht.

Toch moeten we subjectieve ervaringen wel met enige voorzichtigheid interpreteren. Wat als positief wordt ervaren door de één, kan een negatief effect hebben op de ander, of wellicht – op de lange termijn – op de persoon zelf. Jongeren kunnen bijvoorbeeld positief zijn over de sociale netwerken in hun buurt, maar aan de andere kant kunnen hechte netwerken in de buurt ook leiden tot probleemgedrag of beperkt contact met andere personen die hen vooruit kunnen helpen in het leven.

## 5.2 Wederkerige relaties tussen jongeren en hun buurt

Niet alleen worden jongeren en ouders beïnvloed door de buurt, maar zijzelf beïnvloeden de buurtcontext ook weer door hun gedrag en interactie met anderen. Deze studie toont aan dat er verschillende manieren zijn waarop jongeren en ouders de buurtcontext definiëren, betwisten en transformeren.

Hoofdstuk 5 laat zien dat machtsrelaties in de openbare ruimte het sociaalruimtelijk gedrag van jongeren beïnvloeden. Echter, tegelijkertijd is dit sociaalruimtelijk gedrag weer van invloed op de percepties en het gedrag van anderen in de buurt. Groepen jongens die rondhangen in de buurt worden bijvoorbeeld door veel bewoners ervaren als een probleem. Deze beleving is van invloed op het gedrag van deze bewoners – zij verbieden bijvoorbeeld jongeren bepaalde plekken te gebruiken – wat vervolgens weer van invloed is op de beleving van jongeren in de openbare ruimte. In Hoofdstuk 6 komt naar voren dat de strategieën die jongeren

ontwikkelen om met de problemen in hun buurt om te gaan, kunnen leiden tot een sterker gevoel van onveiligheid onder andere bewoners. Veel jongeren hangen rond in groepen omdat dit ze een gevoel geeft van veiligheid en ergens bij te horen. Deze groepen kunnen echter weer als bedreigend ervaren worden door personen die niet tot die groep behoren.

Kortom, jongeren en andere aanwezigen in de buurt 'produceren' samen de buurt zoals ze die ervaren. Het gedrag van mensen in de openbare ruimte is afhankelijk van bepaalde sociale structuren en machtsrelaties, maar het is van belang te realiseren dat deze structuren ook constant veranderen door de interactie tussen verschillende groepen.

## 6. Toekomstig onderzoek

Op basis van deze studie kan een aantal aanbevelingen voor vervolgonderzoek worden gedaan. Ten eerste: buurteffectonderzoek kan worden verbeterd door etnografisch onderzoek hoger op de onderzoeksagenda te plaatsen. Meer kwalitatief onderzoek is noodzakelijk om de resultaten van bestaande kwantitatieve studies te verklaren en nieuwe hypotheses te formuleren voor toekomstig onderzoek. De combinatie van kwalitatieve en kwantitatieve technieken in één studie (*mixed methods*) zou ook gestimuleerd moeten worden.

Ten tweede: de verschillende manieren waarop de buurt van belang is voor jongeren wordt nog niet voldoende meegenomen in bestaand onderzoek. Meer aandacht zou besteed kunnen worden aan de heterogeniteit van sociaalruimtelijk gedrag en de beleving van plaats. De vraag die we moeten stellen is niet: 'In hoeverre is de buurt belangrijk?' maar 'Voor wie is de buurt belangrijk, en hoe?' Deze vraag is vooral relevant in de huidige tijd van toenemende mobiliteit. Belangrijk is dat we meer aandacht besteden aan de daadwerkelijke activiteitenpatronen van jongeren: waar brengen jongeren hun tijd door en met wie?

Ten derde: meer aandacht zou besteed moeten worden aan de invloed van internet en mobiele technologieën op buurteffecten. De activiteiten van jongeren vinden niet alleen plaats in de fysieke ruimte maar ook in virtuele ruimtes zoals Facebook, Twitter, Instagram of online chatruimtes. Veel wetenschappers

stellen dat deze ontwikkeling leidt tot 'het einde van de geografie' aangezien fysieke plaatsen steeds minder belangrijk worden in het leven van mensen. Aan de andere kant blijkt dat deze technologieën juist een faciliterende rol kunnen spelen wat betreft het vormen en onderhouden van lokale netwerken. Onze studie toont bijvoorbeeld aan dat Facebook gebruikt wordt om afspraken te maken met vrienden in de buurt. Mobiele telefoons kunnen daarnaast de actieradius van jongeren vergroten, omdat ouders het gevoel hebben dat hun kinderen veiliger zijn als ze altijd te bereiken zijn per telefoon. Kwalitatief onderzoek is nodig om inzicht te verschaffen in hoeverre de buurt nog steeds van belang is voor jongeren in deze tijd van toenemende virtuele contacten en invloeden. In deze context is belangrijk aandacht te besteden aan hoe jongeren de online en offline wereld combineren.

Tot slot kunnen toekomstige studies voordeel halen uit een longitudinale benadering. Te denken valt aan twee typen onderzoek. Ten eerste zou meer aandacht besteed moeten worden aan de woongeschiedenis van jongeren. Met behulp van deze benadering zou meer gezegd kunnen worden over de manier waarop 'doseringen' van verschillende buurtcontexten van invloed zijn op het leven van jongeren. Hiernaast kan er inzicht worden verschaft in zogeheten *lingering effects*, oftewel de effecten van het wonen in eerdere woonbuurten. Ten tweede kan longitudinaal onderzoek bijdragen aan kennis over de mate waarin buurteffecten intergenerationeel zijn. Eindigen kinderen in een vergelijkbare achterstandssituatie als hun ouders, of doen ze het beter? En wat zijn de mechanismen hierachter?

## 7. Beleidsimplicaties

De resultaten van deze studie hebben een aantal implicaties voor beleidsmakers die zich bezig houden met achterstandsbuurten, stedelijke herstructurering en jongeren en hun ouders. Hoofdstuk 2 en 3 tonen op basis van onderzoek in Utrecht aan dat stedelijke herstructurering heeft geleid tot een betere woning voor jongeren, maar dat verder weinig moet worden verwacht van dit beleid in termen van betere sociale mix en sociaal kapitaal. Bovendien voelden jongeren zich erg onzeker over of ze wel of niet moesten verhuizen en of ze hun vrienden nog wel

zouden zien. Beleidsmakers zouden daarom jongeren en hun ouders moeten voorzien van meer informatie over de mogelijke implicaties van een gedwongen verhuizing en moeten proberen de periode van onzekerheid zo kort mogelijk te houden.

Aan de positieve kant vonden veel jongeren op langere termijn wel hun weg in de nieuwe buurt. Het is echter belangrijk bewust te zijn van het feit dat de mate waarin jongeren nieuwe contacten kunnen opbouwen en nieuwe activiteiten kunnen ontwikkelen na een gedwongen verhuizing afhankelijk is van zaken als de toegankelijkheid van voorzieningen en activiteiten, de bekendheid met deze voorzieningen en het sociale klimaat in de buurt. Het is daarom belangrijk jongeren en hun ouders te begeleiden bij een gedwongen verhuizing. Een meer proactieve houding vanuit instituties (bijvoorbeeld woningcorporaties) om de huishoudens te verbinden aan hun nieuwe buurt is gewenst. Te denken valt aan betere informatieverschaffing over de voorzieningen en activiteiten in de buurt en aandacht voor de wensen van de nieuwe bewoners.

Hiernaast toont Hoofdstuk 4 aan dat de meeste jongeren die opgroeien in de 'achterstandsbuurten' in de Rotterdamse deelgemeente Feijenoord, overwegend positief zijn over hun buurt en zich ermee verbonden voelen. Het positieve beeld dat veel jongeren van hun 'probleembuurt' hebben zou een goede basis kunnen vormen voor het inzetten van deze groep bij het aanpakken van de problemen in de buurt. Dit gebeurt nu nog onvoldoende, vooral omdat jongeren te vaak als probleem in plaats van oplossing worden gezien. Het betrekken van jongeren begint bij het doorbreken van het negatieve stereotype beeld dat anderen van deze groep hebben. Deze taak is deels weggelegd voor de media – die ook meer de positieve initiatieven van jongeren zouden moeten belichten in plaats van slechts te rapporteren over jongerenoverlast – maar ook beleidsmakers zouden een omslag in hun denken moeten maken. 'De jongere' wordt steevast gecategoriseerd als probleem. Zo worden in de meeste buurtmonitoren cijfers voor 'ervaren jongerenoverlast' onder hetzelfde kopje ('veiligheid') geschaard als gevoelens van onveiligheid, aantal autokraken en aantal woninginbraken. Jongerenprojecten worden ook vaak betaald uit portefeuilles als veiligheid en criminaliteitspreventie. Het creëren van een evenwichtiger beeld van jongeren – bijvoorbeeld beginnend bij het wijzigen van administratieve labels – kan leiden tot een groter bewustzijn

voor de positieve rol die jongeren kunnen spelen bij een meer constructieve aanpak van problematiek in de buurt. Hiernaast is het belangrijk dat jongeren weten waar ze terecht kunnen voor de middelen en faciliteiten om hun ideeën om te kunnen zetten in daadwerkelijke actie.

Ten slotte heeft dit onderzoek implicaties voor professionals die zich bezighouden met opvoeden in een achterstandsbuurt. Ouders kunnen dezelfde buurt op verschillende manieren ervaren en als gevolg daarvan ontwikkelen ze verschillende opvoedstrategieën. In het geval van problemen binnen een gezin is het daarom van belang aandacht te besteden aan de specifieke kenmerken en hulpbronnen van dat gezin. Vooral de 'onzichtbare ouders' verdienen extra aandacht van professionals: hun onzichtbaarheid is vaak het gevolg van het gevoel dat ze weinig aan de problemen in hun gezin en in de buurt kunnen doen, versterkt door een gebrek aan hulpbronnen en een gevoel van onzekerheid over bijvoorbeeld de Nederlandse taal. Deze ouders zijn echter moeilijk te bereiken. Belangrijk is dat professionals zich bewust zijn van de emotionele barrières die deze ouders weerhouden van het zoeken van institutionele hulp. De angst dat instituties zich te veel met hun leven en opvoeding gaan bemoeien is vaak groot. Daarom is het van belang dat hulporganisaties toegankelijk zijn en dat ze ouders minder onzeker laten voelen over een eventuele lage opleiding of beperkte kennis van het Nederlands.

# CURRICULUM VITAE

Kirsten Visser (1986) was born in the Noordoostpolder, the Netherlands, and spent her childhood in the Frisian village of Lemmer. She obtained her BSc (Hons) in Social Sciences from University College Utrecht (2007) and her MSc in International Development Studies (2008) and MSc in Urban Geography (2010, cum laude) from Utrecht University. In September 2010, she started her PhD project on youths' experiences of displacement and life in a deprived neighbourhood. During her PhD she presented her research at several international conferences and published in various national and international journals. She also acted as PhD representative on the daily board of the Urban and Regional research centre Utrecht (URU). Moreover, since 2011 she has been a member of the editorial team of AGORA magazine. She is currently a postdoctoral researcher at the Department of Human Geography and Planning at Utrecht University, where she participates in a research project on hyper-diversity in urban neighbourhoods.