

The Spatial Context of Social Integration: Gentrification in Amsterdam-Noord

Master Thesis - Population Studies

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Abstract

Since the beginning of the 21st century, Amsterdam-Noord was involved in several urban (re)development policies that aimed to improve the socio-economic position of the neighbourhood. The gentrifying developments led to the arrival of a new international executive class, which is commonly seen in such neighbourhoods. Using Amsterdam-Noord as a case study, this research investigated how, and to what extent the social integration of these new residents is affected by the urban redevelopments. This study made use of qualitative data collection in the form of in-depth interviews, investigating the experiences and perspective of new international residents in Amsterdam-Noord. Additionally, a documents and media analysis were conducted in order to construct a background on the neighbourhood, consider the socio-economic position of Amsterdam-Noord, and understand the aim of previously implemented policies. The findings show how the neighbourhood was always subject to socio-economic problems, and could be characterised as one with strong local relationships and a high degree of sense of belonging and identity. In contrast, the new residents generally tend to create spatially independent ties, and weak ties through work-related networks. The (re)development policies seem to exacerbate the contrasts between the different tendencies of social networks in the neighbourhood, and focus more on the economic, and physical state of the neighbourhood. Considering the limitations in regard to the interviews, further research is desired to further understand the dynamics of (and improve) social integration of new higher-income residents in gentrifying neighbourhoods.

Keywords: *Gentrification, Integration, Social Integration, International Migration, Amsterdam-Noord*

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background and gap in literature

Over the course of the 21st century, Amsterdam-Noord has been involved in a number of pro-gentrification urban redevelopment programs (2000-2004, 2005-2009: *Nota Stedelijke Vernieuwing*, 2008-2012: *Actieplan Krachtwijken*, 2012-2015: *Amsterdamse Focusaanpak*, 2017-2022: *Ontwikkeldbuurten*), aimed at attracting more middle-class residents in lower working-class neighbourhoods, and increasing liveability. Through privatisation of social housing, capital investment, as well as subsidising cultural and commercial activities, the redevelopments led to the rise of hotspots for the creative sector and the arrival of so-called young urban professionals ('yuppies') (Van de Kamp and Welschen, 2019). The creative sector (or creative economy) can be described as knowledge-based economic activities that involve the use of creative talent for commercial purposes (Bakhshi et al., 2013; UNCTAD, 2018). Atkinson and Bridge (2005) argue that gentrification is part of globalisation at local scale, as it involves the attraction and inflow of a new international professional managerial class. This is also seen in various media. *Thehomelike* (2020), a company that helps expats and working professionals find a home abroad, ranks Amsterdam-Noord as number one neighbourhood for expats, and *Timeout* (2022) ranks it as the 32nd 'coolest neighbourhood in the world'. However, there are also drawbacks to pro-gentrification developments, as it causes displacement of original residents due to the increasing cost of living in the area (Cocola-Gant and Lopez-Gay, 2020).

Using Amsterdam-Noord as a case study, this research examines the immigration of this new international executive class into gentrifying neighbourhoods, focussing on the process of social integration and means to improve this process. People who migrate to a new country will have to integrate into this society – meaning that they go through a process of settlement, communication, and cooperation with the host society, as well as social change (Garcés-Mascareñas and Penninx, 2016). Literature on integration and gentrification rarely links the two concepts together, and if so, it is researched in an American context and/or in relation to racial segregation. Naturally, American, and Western-European urban contexts are completely different (in scale, socially, institutions, historically, etc.) and thus calls for a different perspective. Therefore, this research seeks to fill in this gap in the literature, and further explore the dichotomy that arises at neighbourhood scale between gentrification on the one hand, for which Cocola-Gant and Lopez-Gay (2020) argue that the newcomers hold a higher status; and integration on the other hand, for which Heckmann (2006) argues that the receiving population holds a higher status over the newcomers.

1.2 Problem statement and research aim

Integration is an interactive process between the newcomers and the receiving population (Heckmann, 2006). However, it is necessary to examine to what extent this integration process could still be successful in gentrifying neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods are places in which the differences in socio-economic status, interests, and language barriers between newcomers and original residents are rather big (and increasing). This may cause friction between different groups of residents, and loss of social cohesion within the neighbourhood, as shown by Van de Kamp and Welschen (2019). They found that different groups rarely interact with each other, and that 'unifying activities' in Amsterdam-Noord have even led to misunderstandings and distrust. These developing feelings may then result into a divided neighbourhood with forms of mutual exclusion, alienation, and reduced social cohesion. Reduced social cohesion can have significant policy implications, as policymakers may need to allocate additional resources to further promote social integration, bridge these social divides, as well as foster a sense of belonging among residents to improve or restore social cohesion in the neighbourhood.

By offering new perspectives within a European context, this research further seeks to enhance the current body of literature linking social integration and gentrification. With the use of theory and a

qualitative research approach in the form of in-depth interviews, and a document- and media analysis, this study aims to answer the following research question:

How does gentrification affect the social integration of international migrants in Amsterdam-Noord?

In order to gain answers to the central research question as stated above, multiple sub-questions logically arise. First, the main concepts are deconstructed through theory and literature research:

- *What is gentrification (in a European context)?*
- *Who lives in gentrifying neighbourhoods?*
- *Who are the people moving into gentrifying neighbourhoods?*
- *What are the consequences of gentrification?*
- *What is social integration?*

Second, through qualitative research, this research aims to answer the following sub-questions:

- *What were the socio-economic pre-conditions of the 21st century urban redevelopments in Amsterdam-Noord?*
- *How did the urban redevelopments and policies lead to the arrival of international migrants in Amsterdam-Noord?*
- *How do international migrants experience social integration in Amsterdam-Noord?*
- *How do the urban redevelopments and policies affect social integration of international migrants?*
- *What measures could be instituted to facilitate the social integration of international migrants into local communities?*

1.3 Structure

The structure of this research paper is as follows. First, a theoretical framework is composed, discussing existing literature on gentrification and social integration. Together with the conceptual model, which considers the linkages between the key concepts and expectations, the theoretical framework forms the basis for this research. The research design is discussed in chapter 3, including the primary and secondary data collection, ethical considerations, the positionality of the researcher, and the data analysis. The historical context, as well as the socio-economic position and character of Amsterdam-Noord are described in chapter 4. The findings of this research are presented in chapter 5, followed by the discussion and conclusion, which aim to answer the research questions stated above.

2. Theoretical Framework

The following chapter involves further deconstruction of the key concepts that are essential in understanding the dynamics of gentrification and integration. These insights clarify the conceptual model presented in the subsequent section. The concepts shape and provide the theoretical background of this research.

2.1 Gentrification

As mentioned, a lot of the literature on gentrification and its consequences is based on American cities and segregation processes in their neighbourhoods. Therefore, it should be noted that for the purpose of this research, the focus for establishing the theoretical background of gentrification is more concentrated on gentrification research in European cities. Gentrification generally refers to a phenomenon in a specific area or neighbourhood, in which capital investment in the housing market generally leads to displacement and negligence of the – often more vulnerable – original residents, and the inflow of newcomers with greater economic and cultural capital (Cocola-Gant and Lopez-Gay, 2020; Rodríguez-Barcón et al., 2020; Citron, 2021). Furthermore, Rodríguez-Barcón et al. (2020) argue that gentrification involves a process of socio-economic value, materialistic, and symbolic transformation.

Liu and O’Sullivan (2020) note that there are generally two overarching theories on drivers of gentrification processes. On the one hand, the production side explanations emphasize the role of urban developers and the state reinforcing gentrification with funding provided by financial institutions. The rent gap theory is one example of this, and suggests that neighbourhood investment occurs once the rent gap (the gap between the real capitalized ground rents and the potential ground rents) has reached a certain threshold (Smith, 1996). On the other hand, consumer side explanations on housing market dynamics emphasize that changes in the neighbourhood are driven by choices and preferences of individual households (Liu and O’Sullivan, 2020). Marcuse (1989) mentions that gentrification is influenced by developments in the labour market. In his research on the relationship between work and housing in city centres, he found that reduced demand for low-qualified workers results into reduced demand for low-cost housing in the city centre. Meanwhile, Marcuse (1989) also argues that increased demand for accommodation near the city centre arises from highly educated, high-income people.

While the process of gentrification might look like a process taking place only at local scale, once it involves the immigration of middle- and high-income migrants, one could argue this transnational gentrification is more than just a process at local scale. As Hayes and Zaban (2020) explain, this phenomenon is a new ‘trend’ that reshapes the urban social order, and it creates new types of global social relations.

2.1.1 Residents and newcomers in gentrifying neighbourhoods

The neighbourhoods in which gentrification typically occurs, are mostly disadvantaged neighbourhoods with low-income households and they (originally) consist of working-class persons and minorities for the most part (Lees, 2008). Van Zoest and Verheul (2020) explain that original residents feel a particularly strong sense of place or belonging in these neighbourhoods. This sense of place means that they feel especially strongly connected to the neighbourhood, based on the area’s ‘identity’ (Verheul, 2015). This is important to note, as people attach great value to being able to identify themselves with their living environment (May and Muir, 2015) – which adds to the liveability of a neighbourhood, aside from the functional and economic aspects.

In addition to the original residents, there are the newcomers living in gentrifying neighbourhoods. Cocola-Gant and Lopez-Gay (2020) mention that these newcomers (or gentrifiers) are considered to be

higher educated persons with professional occupation, moving into these neighbourhoods for the career- and lifestyle opportunities close to the city centre. Various papers add to this, identifying gentrifiers as persons who have left the suburbs, in order to move into ‘the emancipatory space’ of inner cities (e.g., Caulfield, 1994; Lees, 2000; Butler, 2007). Gentrifiers are regularly described as ‘trendy’ and ‘hipster’ (Le Grand, 2020). Additionally, they tend to vote for more socialist- and green-oriented parties (Clerval, 2018).

2.1.2 Effects of gentrification

As previously mentioned, gentrification involves transformations within the neighbourhood concerning socio-economic value, materialism, and symbolism. In regard to these transformations, Rodríguez-Barcón et al. (2020) distinguish four essential factors that come into play: 1) redistribution of the different social groups’ locations in the city; 2) regrouping communities based on similar consumption modes, cultural characteristics, lifestyles; 3) (physical) urban redevelopment through requalification of architecture and services; and 4) a significant increase in homeownership over rented homes.

The redistribution of social groups’ locations is largely concerned with the displacement processes that are involved in – and caused by – gentrification. Atkinson et al. (2011) illustrate this in their study on the effects of gentrification on low-income households. First of all, low-income households are put under cost pressure due to rising rents and prices at local shops, forcing them either to pay the increasing costs or to relocate to a neighbourhood where prices are lower. However, relocation to non-gentrified neighbourhoods result into loss of social networks. Helbrecht (2018) also mentions that the original, low-income households may accept poorer housing conditions in order to stay in the gentrifying neighbourhoods for as long as possible. Gentrifying neighbourhoods and their service infrastructure are often no longer targeted toward low-income households either (Atkinson et al., 2011).

Cocola-Gant and Lopez-Gay (2020) found the phenomenon of regrouping of communities as distinguished by Rodríguez-Barcón et al. (2020) in Barcelona. Here, ‘foreign only’ enclaves are formed, as leisure and meeting spaces in gentrified neighbourhoods have been appropriated by transnational gentrifiers. According to Cocola-Gant and Lopez-Gay (2020), this is caused by the similar characteristics such as language and lifestyles, as well as purchasing power. However, the formation of these ‘foreign only’ enclaves makes for little to no interaction between the original residents and the migrants, leading to increased segregation.

The third and fourth factors as distinguished by Rodríguez-Barcón et al. (2020), (physical) urban redevelopment and privatisation of housing, may be the clearest signs of gentrification in and around city centres. In their case study of the city of Utrecht (the Netherlands) for example, Van Kempen and Van Weesep (1994) found low-rent dwellings in the older inner-city neighbourhoods being refurbished or replaced by expensive new apartments, as well as private-sector conversion and redevelopment of old industrial sites, harbour areas, former hospitals, and redundant military facilities. Another example of urban redevelopment and requalification in the form of gentrification is found in Woolwich, London. The redevelopment of a military industrial site, the Royal Arsenal, involved the construction of new residential buildings, repurpose of old warehouses for residential use, new cultural facilities, shops, and a transport link connecting the Royal Arsenal with Canary Wharf and the City, the two main financial districts in London (Citron, 2021). According to Citron (2021), this redevelopment project led to the inflow of middle-class young workers, and it ignored the existing communities.

2.2 Integration

As people migrate to a new country, they go through various processes involving settlement, communication, and cooperation with their new host society (Garcés-Masareñas and Penninx, 2016).

These processes combined are referred to as integration; individuals must secure a place for themselves in regard to both the ‘parts’ of society, as well as its people. This particular distinction was initially introduced by Lockwood (1964) in his sociological theory of social society through the concepts of system integration and social integration. Here, system integration refers to the mostly anonymous integration into social systems, through the main institutions of a host society such as the government, the legal system, and the economy. Social integration on the other hand involves the conscious and motivated inclusion of new persons into a social system by means of interactions, relationships, and cooperation with other actors and groups.

Heckmann and Schnapper (2003) differentiate four dimensions of integration: structural, cultural, social, and identificational integration. Structural integration refers to the acquisition of civil rights, and access into the core institutions of a person’s new host society. Integration at cognitive, behavioural, and attitudinal level is referred to as cultural integration. This dimension is a precondition for one’s participation in the host society. Social integration (or interactive integration) is indicated through private relationships and memberships, such as friendships, marriage, and other voluntary connections. Lastly, identificational integration refers to membership in a new host society at the subjective level. This concerns the feeling of belonging in the form of social identification, for example, ethnic or national identification. For the purpose of this research, the focus is on social integration as distinguished by Heckmann and Schnapper (2003).

2.2.1 Social integration and policies

As earlier noted, social integration is reflected through one’s private relations. The concept can also be seen as an immigrant’s membership in the new society. While the role of private actors is the most dominant in this regard, there are certain political decisions, institutional-, and organisational structures in society that influence social integration. Heckmann and Schnapper (2003) argue that private social relations of first-generation immigrants are centred within the ethnic group, and that policies for common schooling and occupational training influence the social relations mostly of younger adults as well as children. However, ethnic segregation might counteract this effect. This is shown by Stubbergaard (2010), as she found immigrants living in one of the most segregated areas in Sweden pointing out their strong social (and cultural) relations with other immigrants in their neighbourhood. Yet, these immigrants also mentioned the issue of their children spending insufficient time with native Swedish children (Stubbergaard, 2010). Another highly important (private) organisational structure concerning social integration are sports clubs, as they bring people together and open up possibilities for the creation of social networks (Østerlund and Seippel, 2013; Nobis, 2018). The gathering of people at sports clubs further creates the opportunity for immigrants to familiarise with (local) social rules and values (Ibsen et al., 2020).

In order to foster the development of positive social networks between immigrants and natives, as well as increase migrant membership of private connections, the state and other NGO’s might implement special policies and measures (Heckmann and Schnapper, 2003). An example of this is the current Finnish Integration Policy which involves budget allocation for (local) project activities to support municipalities and NGO’s in their aim to enhance social integration (Ministry of Employment and the Economy, 2010). Moreover, campaigns (supported) by NGO’s and the government against discrimination, prejudice, and xenophobia are also part of social integration measures.

2.2.2 Spatial context of social integration

Considering the spatial context of social integration, Koramaz (2014) argues that social integration is not only associated with individual factors, but with urban dynamics and locational factors as well. The findings of her research highlight the importance of different desires for either strong or weak social

ties between different social groups. Strong ties refer to relations within a social group such as friendship and intimate relations, as well as location-based relations with neighbours, while weak ties refer to relations based on less dense networks (Granovetter, 1973). Vulnerable populations, more often than not living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, tend to create more strong ties rather than weak ties, as these relations might function as coping mechanisms and provide support (Koramaz, 2014). On the other hand, Koramaz (2014) argues social groups with stronger positions in society, and living in neighbourhoods that facilitate stronger structural integration, tend to create more weak ties through relations of work, education and other (socio-)economic structures. In other words, weaker social groups tend to have more spatially dependent ties, while stronger social groups tend to have more spatially independent ties.

2.3 Conceptual Model

In order to have an overview of how the dynamics of gentrification and social integration are related to one another, a conceptual model is designed (*Figure 1*). The model was used as a guide in gathering data, and in the analysis of the findings from the interviews. The conceptual model also served to better understand and triangulate the findings from the documents and media analysis. More precisely, the model depicts how disadvantaged (European) neighbourhoods close to the city centre may find an increased probability of experiencing urban redevelopment in the form of gentrification. This development is indicated by the **orange** arrow. Additionally, the model is used to explore how gentrification in Amsterdam-Noord has led to the immigration of internationals of a higher (professional) working class on the one hand, and how gentrification exacerbates the negligence and displacement of original residents. These developments are indicated by the **green** and **red** arrow, respectively. Lastly, in regard to social integration, it is expected that the new residents of Amsterdam-Noord tend to create more weak (and/or spatially independent) ties, and that they tend to have less (benefits) from the strong ties they might be able to develop – contrary to the original residents. The links between social groups and weak/strong ties are indicated by the **blue** arrows.

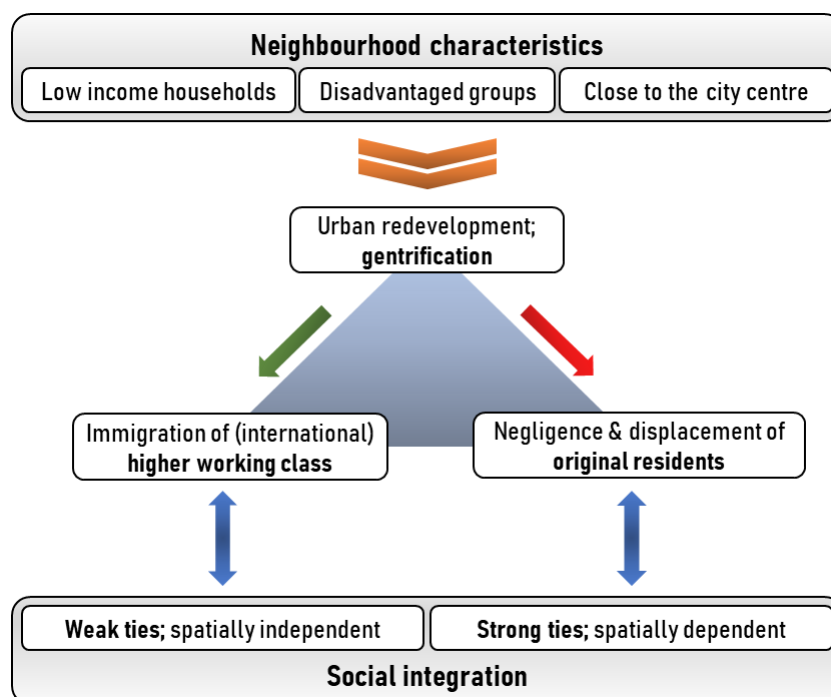


Figure 1 Conceptual model of the dynamics between gentrification and social integration – by author (2022)

3. Research Design

Aiming to seek answers to the question “*How does gentrification affect the social integration of international migrants in Amsterdam-Noord?*”, this research made use of both primary- and secondary data collection. In the following sections, the methodological approach and the data collection is discussed, as well as ethical considerations and data analysis.

3.1 Underlying Paradigm

The underlying paradigm for this research is the interpretivist paradigm. The interpretivist paradigm allowed the research to derive constructs from the field through subjective meanings that people attach to their own experiences (Hennink et al., 2020). This paradigm thus enabled the researcher to investigate the meaning of social actions, taking into account the context in which people live – in this case the social integration of international migrants in gentrifying neighbourhoods. Accordingly, this methodological approach helped to understand the experiences of the international migrants in regard to their integration in a gentrifying neighbourhood from the emic perspective.

3.2 Primary data collection

The primary data collection was in the form of in-depth interviews, in order to investigate the experiences and perspectives of international migrants (or gentrifiers) in Amsterdam-Noord. Regarding the time-period of these experiences, the interviews referred to the period the interviewee has lived in Amsterdam-Noord. One condition was that the interviewee must have moved into Amsterdam-Noord no earlier than 2010. This was important, because the gentrification processes had been going on for a couple of years already, with the sale of social housing to private investors (Engbersen et al., 2005; Kleinhans, et al., 2000). Moreover, questions were asked about ongoing, and present-day experiences in regard to the characteristics of the neighbourhood, as well as their daily life and social contacts. The in-depth interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, through a number of main questions, and probing questions. This allowed the interviews to be more free flowing, and it made for more freedom in respect to follow-up questions to emerge as the interview goes. The complete interview guide is found in Appendix 9.1.

3.3 Participants and recruitment

The participants were recruited through various Facebook groups for internationals living in Amsterdam-Noord, and through recruitment on the streets of the neighbourhood. The number of interviews is limited, due to difficulties finding people, and some never responded back again. The participants are between the ages 26 and 44, and all have different nationalities. Aside from participant 3, who initially moved to Amsterdam for their master’s degree and currently works at the university, the participants all moved to Amsterdam for a job. Participant 5 is the only one working within the neighbourhood, the others have a job elsewhere in Amsterdam. An overview of the participants and their attributes is presented in *Table 1*.

Participant	Nationality	Age	Occupation	Homeowner / Renter
1	Australian	32	Works at a fintech company	Homeowner
2	Japanese	37	Works at an accounting company	Homeowner
3	American	44	Works at the university	Renter
4	Egyptian	26	Works at software company	Renter
5	French	35	Works at a restaurant	Homeowner

Table 1 Overview of participants and relevant attributes

3.4 Ethical considerations

Naturally when it comes to in-depth interviews in research, several ethical issues emerge before, during, and after data collection. The Belmont Report (1978) identifies three core principles in regard to the ethical conduct of research: respect of persons, beneficence, and justice. With respect to the conduct of research, the application of these principles leads to a couple of important ethical guidelines, namely: informed consent, self-determination, minimization of harm, anonymity, and confidentiality (Hennink et al., 2020). The following section describes how these ethical guidelines have been taken into consideration throughout the course of this research.

First, it was required for both the researcher and the participants to make sure that the participants knew and understood the purpose of the study. Therefore, the participants were informed about 1) who the researcher was; 2) what the research was about, its scope, and its purpose; and 3) what will be done with their data. In regard to these issues, the participants were handed an information sheet before the interview, as well as a consent form, which involved that the interviewee was:

- Informed about the research that was being conducted;
- Able to ask questions before, during and after the interview;
- Given sufficient time to decide whether or not to participate;
- Able to withdraw from the interview at any given time.

Moreover, the consent form stated that the interviewee agreed with the following:

- The use of their anonymized personal data;
- The use of the interview data for educational purposes;
- That the data may be used in articles, book chapters, published and unpublished work, as well as presentations;
- The confidential storage of the interview data for the duration of the obligatory five years;
- That the interview is audio-recorded;
- The participation in the interview.

Lastly, the consent form involved that the interviewer confirmed that they agree to abide by the conditions set out in the information sheet and that they ensured no harm will be done to any participant during this research.

During the interview, more ethical issues were taken into consideration. The questions asked, had to be accessible for everyone, which was kept in mind during the preparation of the interview questions. While the interviews were being conducted, other matters could have caused discomfort or uneasiness to the interviewee, such as the setting or location. It was therefore crucial to take as much of these issues into account for the participants to be as comfortable as possible. As such, it was up to them where the interview would take place.

Moreover, ethical implications arose related to the transcriptions, and the analysis of the data. All personal data was anonymised prior to the analysis and remained safe and confidentially stored on a RUG Google Drive file with two-factor authentication, so the interviewees cannot be traced. Only the researcher and the supervisor had access to this file. Finally, any personal contact information of the participants has been stored on a RUG Google Drive file with two-factor authentication, to which only the researcher has access.

3.5 Researcher positionality

It is important to assess positionality as researcher and author, and therefore my scope on the data. Positionality in research refers to an individual's worldview, as well as the position a researcher might adopt during research and its social and political context (Gary and Holmes, 2020). Moreover, it is important to understand how the researcher's characteristics and experiences might contribute to the

interpretations of people's lived experiences as collected through the in-depth interviews. As mentioned by Hennink et al. (2020), positionality also involves that attributes such as appearance and attitude, contribute to determining how the interviewer is perceived by the interviewee. The researcher therefore acknowledges his standpoint as a young, educated, white male from the Netherlands, as well as an outsider in relation to international migrants living in gentrifying neighbourhoods. In qualitative research, this positionality concerns various intrinsic assumptions on ontological and epistemological grounds, and it concerns intrinsic assumptions about the means people interact and relate with their environment (Bahari, 2010; Carey, 2012). Accordingly, this positionality is likely to have impacted the research process to a certain extent (e.g., interpreting English while it is my second language, or understanding social integration without personal experience, ...), including interpretation and understanding of others' research findings. It was thus crucial to adopt a critical reflexive approach throughout the research process in order to reduce this bias and partisanship. This reflexivity can only be achieved by self-conscious assessment by the researcher, and how their experiences and subjectivity might influence the research process (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). However, we should be aware that it is impossible to objectively describe reality. As suggested by Ormston et al. (2014), the researcher therefore aimed to achieve empathetic neutrality. Empathetic neutrality refers to the pursuit of neutrality in the collection, interpretation, and presentation of the findings, while recognising that this ambition will never fully be accomplished (Ormston et al., 2014).

3.6 Secondary data collection

Aside from the data collection through in-depth interviews, maps of Amsterdam-Noord were collected using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) in order to have a visual of how the neighbourhood has developed over the course of the 21st century. Additionally, documents and media analysis were conducted to: 1) describe the origins of Amsterdam-Noord and how it became the neighbourhood it is today, 2) gain understanding of the gentrification processes going on in the neighbourhood, 3) have an overview of the timeline from the start of the urban redevelopments until now, and 4) gain knowledge on the community as well as activities that might be or have been organised within the community.

3.7 Data analysis

Firstly, the data analysis involved a reflection on the data collection, taking into consideration the reliability, validity, and trustworthiness of the process – meaning that the data had to be checked on its quality (accuracy, coherence, consistency), the extent to which the way data was measured actually corresponded to what it claimed to, as well as the sampling strategy and ethics (Punch, 2014). For the analysis of the interviews, a deductive code tree was used that is based upon previous theory. Also, in vivo coding was used in order to include matters that had not been taken in consideration with the deductive codes. The coding of the transcriptions helped to analyse the data, filter patterns and exceptions. The code book can be found in Appendix 9.2. Lastly, the documents and media analysis in combination with the GIS maps contributed to further triangulate and understanding the socio-economic, and spatial context of the developments in Amsterdam-Noord.

4. Contextual background of Amsterdam-Noord

In the following sections, a timeline and characterisation of Amsterdam-Noord is shaped through the use of literature, as well as government documents and media articles. GIS maps are used in order to illustrate the development of Noord, and provide a visual of the neighbourhood.

4.1 Amsterdam-Noord prior to the urban redevelopments

Amsterdam-Noord consists of several smaller areas, many of which were realised in the first half of the 20th century. Simultaneously, heavy industry was booming, and Amsterdam-Noord became the most important industrial area of Amsterdam during this period. The ‘garden villages’ were originally built to house the people employed in the industrial sector who were still living in the dark and deprived, narrow streets around the old Amsterdam centre. The new neighbourhoods on the other hand, were revolutionary when it came to social housing. They were bright, spacious, and the new homes even came with their own gardens. Other characteristics of the garden villages include the use of red bricks, steep tile roofs, decorations in the facades, and little squares were scattered around the neighbourhoods (Borman, 2019). The garden villages were furthermore characterised by socio-cultural facilities such as clubhouses, community centres, and libraries (Van de Kamp and Welschen, 2019). Behind the construction of the garden villages, however, was more than just the idea of improving the physical living conditions of the working-class families. The aim was also to prevent moral decay, and ‘develop’ these people into decent citizens through a strong emphasis on family life (Peeters, 2021). In fact, the neighbourhood of Asterdorp was a walled village built in 1927, in which problematic individuals and families would live under supervision and guidance, to ultimately have them placed back in normal rental housing. This area quickly became a social debacle and as of 1940, Asterdorp was cleared and became an asylum for people from Rotterdam after the bombardments in May 1940. Two years later, the German occupier took over Asterdorp, and made it into a Jewish ghetto. Asterdorp was demolished in 1955 (Steinmetz, 2016). The garden villages can be identified in *Figure 2*, by the colours referring to the periods 1900-1924 and 1925-1949.

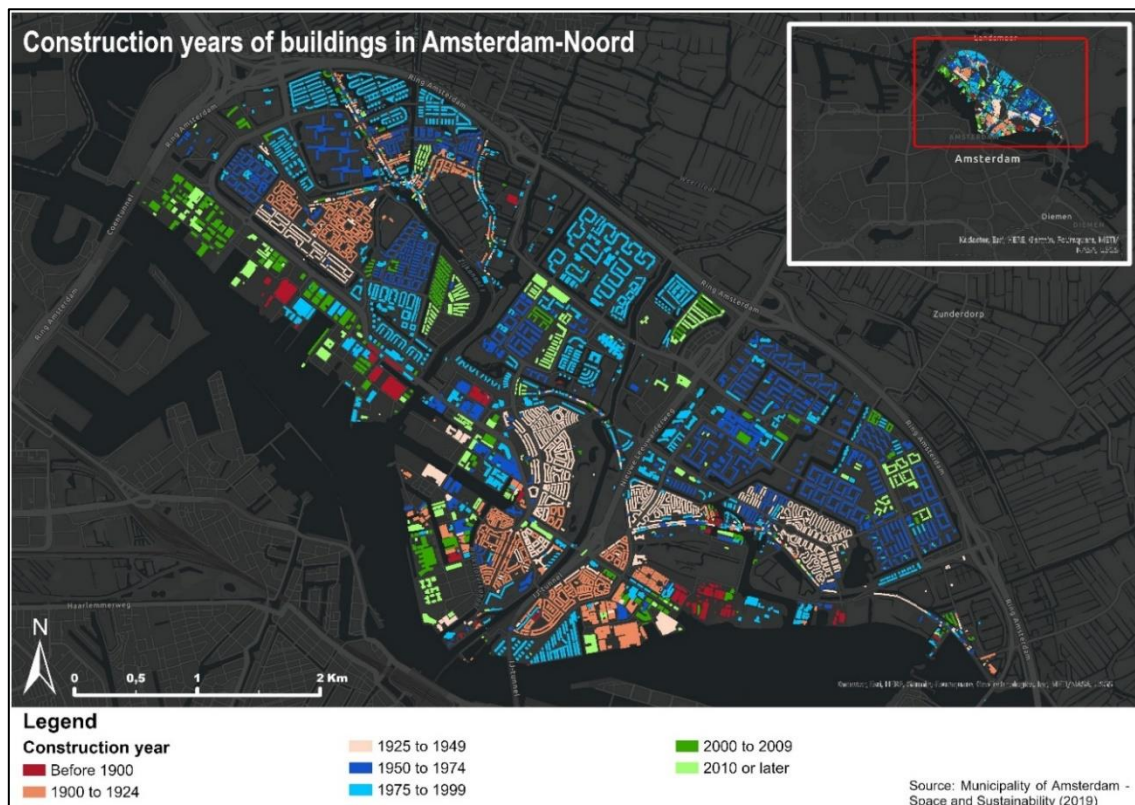


Figure 2 Construction years of buildings in Amsterdam Noord – by author (2023)

The oldest neighbourhoods of Amsterdam-Noord were home to a relatively homogenous population – Dutch, low-educated, lower working-class – that gradually changed after the economic crises of the 70's and 80's, which will be further discussed in the next section. In the 1960's there was a desperate need for urban expansion, which led to the construction of new types of row houses, small flats with staircase entrance, and large apartment blocks with parking garages and surrounded by green spaces, such as the neighbourhood of Molenwijk (Balk, 1968). These types of neighbourhoods can mostly be identified in *Figure 2* by their dark- and light-blue colours.

4.2 Economic decline and demographic change

The economic crises in the 1970's and at the start of the 80's had great impact on Amsterdam-Noord in the following years. A large part of the industry disappeared, causing numerous residents of Amsterdam-Noord to lose their jobs. Due to the low level of education, many were cut from the labour market and became dependent on social benefits. According to Ypeij et al. (2002), the changes in employment opportunities during the 1980's and 90's in Amsterdam-Noord contrast those of the rest of Amsterdam. They point out that Amsterdam was characterised by movements from the industrial sector to low-educated jobs in the service sector, which resulted in a strong growth of this sector, whereas Amsterdam-Noord saw a decline both in absolute and relative terms in the service sector employment. Meanwhile, Noord saw a decline in absolute terms in the industrial sector, but in relative terms the industrial employment increased from 1981 to 1996. The potential labour force remained fairly constant during this period. However, other facets of the population structure did change. Due to the economic decline, but also due to the shrinking sizes of households and the increasing number of one-person households, Amsterdam-Noord (especially the oldest parts) saw a decline in the population (Ypeij et al., 2002). Ypeij et al. (2002) further note that there was a partial case of population substitution between the 70's and 90's, as the wealthier households – or those who could afford to – left Noord, new types of households moved into the neighbourhood. Whereas the leaving residents were mostly native Dutch couples with children, many new residents were one-person households or single parent families. Another development seen in the period from 1981 to 1996 is the increase of ethnic minorities and young, native Dutch singles. These groups moved to Noord with the same reason; rents here were much cheaper compared to the rest of Amsterdam (Ypeij et al., 2002).

4.3 Socio-economic position and character

With Amsterdam-Noord being the location to accommodate the lower social classes throughout the 20th century, the neighbourhood can be seen as the result of long term planned segregation (Kok, 2020). Due to this, the neighbourhood developed to be a rather disadvantaged neighbourhood, dealing with numerous socio-economic problems. Many residents struggle with debts, drugs- and alcohol abuse, and are dependent on social benefits (Ypeij et al., 2002; O&S Amsterdam, 2021a). Moreover, Amsterdam-Noord is home to a relatively high percentage of low literate people. Estimates show that 10 to 11 percent of its residents are low literate, which is the upper boundary of the average in Amsterdam (O&S Amsterdam, 2021b). The problems in Noord seem to be continuously passed over to the younger generations, as numerous articles report feelings of unsafety due to youth nuisance in the streets and increasing juvenile delinquency (Welschen, 2014; Mirck, 2022). According to O&S Amsterdam (2021a), these issues are often related to problematic home-situations, and the absence of places for the youth to get together and meet others.

Aside from being characterised as a lower working-class neighbourhood with various socio-economic problems, Amsterdam-Noord has long been known for its close-knit, village-like community (Van de Poll, 2020). Due to the concentration of poverty and its isolated location relative to the rest of Amsterdam, residents of Noord formed their own 'identity', sense of place, and feelings of 'not belonging to the city' (Van de Kamp and Welschen, 2019). The close-knit community started changing

with the arrival of ethnic minorities in the nineties, who brought their own socio-economic issues. This exacerbated the socio-economic position of Noord, and the neighbourhood got labelled a problem neighbourhood with a lack of social cohesion (Van de Kamp and Welschen, 2019). However, the arrival of new – higher-class – residents following the urban redevelopments of the last decade made an even greater impact. Kok (2020) mentions that this inflow affects the identity of Amsterdam-Noord, as it reveals the lack of wealth in the area and brings expensive bars and restaurants. Van de Kamp and Welschen (2019) add that the recent developments lead to increased anonymity, contrasting the strong collective identity.

5. Findings

The following paragraphs describe the urban (re)development policies that have been in effect over the course of the 21st century. Furthermore, the arrival and integration of new residents in Amsterdam-Noord is discussed, and how the redevelopment programs relate to the arrival and integration of new residents.

5.1 Urban redevelopment policies

Since the start of the 21st century, Amsterdam-Noord has been part of several urban redevelopment programs initiated at both national and urban levels of governance. Between 2000 to 2004 and from 2005 to 2009, parts of the neighbourhood were involved in the *Nota Stedelijke Vernieuwing* (Memo on Urban Renewal), which was in effect within the framework of the *Grotestedenbeleid* (Big City Policy). The *Nota Stedelijke Vernieuwing* could be regarded as the physical dimension of the *Grotestedenbeleid*, as it mainly involved physical measures to tackle urban problems. The leading principle of this policy was restructuring of neighbourhoods (largely by transforming social housing into owner-occupied houses), which aimed to increase differentiation of living- and working environments in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Kamerstukken II, 25427, nr. 2, 1997).

From 2008 to 2012, the Dutch government chose a more specific approach within the *Grotestedenbeleid*. They continued tackling disadvantaged neighbourhoods with *Actieplan Krachtwijken* (Empowered Neighbourhoods Policy). This was an additional policy with respect to the *Nota Stedelijke Vernieuwing* and aimed to improve the liveability, safety, facilities, as well as the local economy, using a more specific selection of ‘empowered neighbourhoods’ (Ministry VROM, 2008). Important interventions of the empowered neighbourhoods policy involved matters such as the replacement of rentals with owner-occupied houses, sale of social housing, improving public spaces, and the creation of community schools (Permentier et al., 2013). Moreover, the program made space for community initiatives that would improve liveability and social contacts (Vogelaar, 2007). Four major parts of Noord were selected by the municipality of Amsterdam: Volewijk/Van der Pekbuurt, Ijplein/Vogelbuurt, Nieuwendam-Noord and Banne Buiksloot (Van Ankeren et al., 2010). The Empowered Neighbourhoods policy was unsuccessful, as an evaluation by Permentier et al. (2013) showed no measurable effect on social advancement and income profile, nor on safety and liveability. Worse still, Permentier et al. (2013) found a negative effect on neighbourhood participation, even though this was one of the core aims and was supposed to distinguish the policy from other redevelopment programs.

When the Big City Policy was discontinued in 2012, the municipality of Amsterdam proceeded urban redevelopments through the *Focusaanpak* (Focus Approach), and later through a policy called *Ontwikkelbuurten* (Development Areas) from 2017 to 2022. With the Focus Approach policy, the municipality of Amsterdam had two main aims; 1) improve the quality of life, and 2) improve the socio-economic position of residents. Amsterdam selected eight focus areas, of which three in Amsterdam-Noord: Ijplein/Vogelbuurt, Volewijk, and Waterlandpleinbuurt. According to O&S Amsterdam (2016), the overall quality of life slightly improved in Ijplein/Vogelbuurt and Volewijk, whereas the quality of life remained stable in the Waterlandpleinbuurt (due to great improvements in the previous years). Especially in regard to the residents’ perception on the area, Volewijk scored much better compared to the previous Empowered Neighbourhoods policy. The socio-economic position of Volewijk also slightly improved, but only remained stable in Ijplein/Vogelbuurt and Waterlandpleinbuurt (O&S Amsterdam, 2016).

The development areas policy came with five goals: 1) improve quality of dwellings, living environment and existing facilities, 2) improve liveability, 3) improve social and socio-economic

position of residents, 4) link urban development areas with strategic area development through connections with surrounding areas, and 5) improve energetic quality (sustainability) of dwellings. 32 areas in Amsterdam were selected, of which seven in Noord. These seven areas are identified in Figure 3. One of the starting points of the new policy was to retain and renovate existing social housing, but also to make room for new private sector housing (Van der Molen, 2017). This is also mentioned by one of the interviewees, who perceives this as a positive development for the community:

“On my street especially, because my house also used to be a social house and a lot of housings used to be a social house, and a lot of people are just buying it. So more like, stable property. I think that is good, because if the neighbours keep on changing, I think that is not really—. I do not find it easy. (...) Because if the people buy the property, I think they have the intention to live for long term. So, I think that is good, yeah” (Participant 2, 2022).

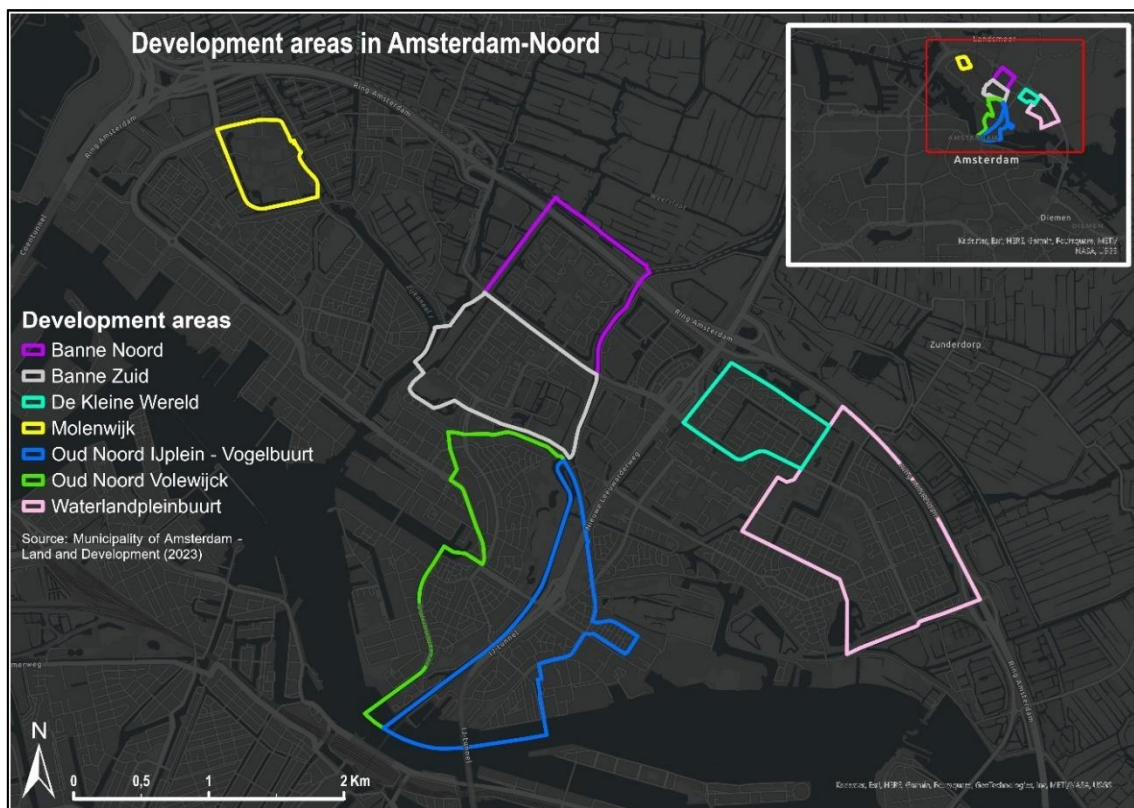


Figure 3 Development areas and construction plans (by % of social housing) in Amsterdam-Noord as of 01/01/2023 - by author (2023)

These interventions would then result in a lower percentage of social housing, and – according to the municipality – in a better, and more sustainable housing supply (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2020). As previously mentioned however, these developments also increases the price of services in the area. This is emphasized by one of the interviewees:

“I feel like the area where I am now, in a way it (gentrification) would be good, because it would probably bring more business to the area, more activities, and that could be nice for the whole neighbourhood. But it will also then probably make the prices higher, which is like the downside. And the people with low income or something, we saw that happening before, that they would be kind of forced to move” (Participant 5, 2023).

5.2 New areas Overhoeks and Buiksloterham

Along with the previously mentioned policies that aim to upgrade the disadvantaged areas of Amsterdam-Noord, there are a number of big projects just outside or at the edge of the development areas to which most of these policies applied; such as in the areas Overhoeks and Buiksloterham. Overhoeks is a new area being developed on the old Shell terrain, adjacent to the IJ-river, and opposite of Amsterdam Central station. The area is mainly being developed for high-income (dual) earners (private sector rent and buy), but also includes several blocks with social housing in the form of studios and apartments for one- or two-person households or small families (Kooistra, 2022). Aside from these apartment blocks, a new 80-meter-tall tower is built containing luxurious ‘sky villas’, towering over all of Amsterdam-Noord. Buiksloterham is also developed on the grounds of past industrial terrains. The area has a similar division in housing supply as Overhoeks, but is commercialised as a circular neighbourhood for creative entrepreneurs, and people who desire to build their own houses (Janssen, 2021). Buiksloterham also makes place for creative hotspots for bottom-up initiatives on the subject of sustainability (Gladek et al., 2014).

5.3 Arrival of international migrants and expats

With its 32nd place in the ‘51 coolest neighbourhoods in the world’ by *Timeout* (2022), Amsterdam-Noord receives a lot of attention in international media outlets. *Timeout* (2022) gives the neighbourhood praise for retaining its ‘gritty, post-industrial charm’ while becoming ‘the epicentre of all things cool’. Other media aimed at expats expand on this, appreciating the sense of community and quiet, family-friendly nature of Noord (e.g., *Iamexpat*, 2022; *Expatica*, 2023). When asked about their view on the neighbourhood, the interviewees also described it using words such as ‘trendy’, ‘hip’, and ‘unique’:

“So, there are pockets that I feel like that have been gentrified, or like, revamped, and they have become kind of hip and artistic and cool, and they have a nice vibe” (Participant 3, 2022).

“The people, I think they are really friendly. Because, for example, if I take a walk in the neighbourhood, this area, everybody says, ‘Hi.’ or, ‘Good morning’, ‘Good evening’. (...) More like family feeling in the neighbourhood” (Participant 2, 2022).

Aside from its atmosphere, Noord is also an attractive location for foreigners due to the housing prices, especially with its proximity to the centre of Amsterdam. As illustrated in *Figure 4*, the neighbourhood is – although increasing in price – still more affordable than the centre. The houses in Noord are also more spacious, and many have a garden. Participant 1 emphasizes how much better they are off, after moving from the centre to Noord:

“I am pretty happy with the space. We have a garden which is nice. For the price we pay for the mortgage, it is cheaper than what we were renting in the centre of Amsterdam, so it is much better for us in terms of what we get for the space and the price” (Participant 1, 2022).

In July 2018, metro 52 opened up connecting Amsterdam-Noord with Amsterdam Central Station and Amsterdam-Zuid. This made Noord even more attractive for internationals and especially expats, as it provided the neighbourhood with a quick link to the Zuidas; the main business district of Amsterdam. Although they are generally content with the public transport, the participants note they would like the metro to be more extensive.

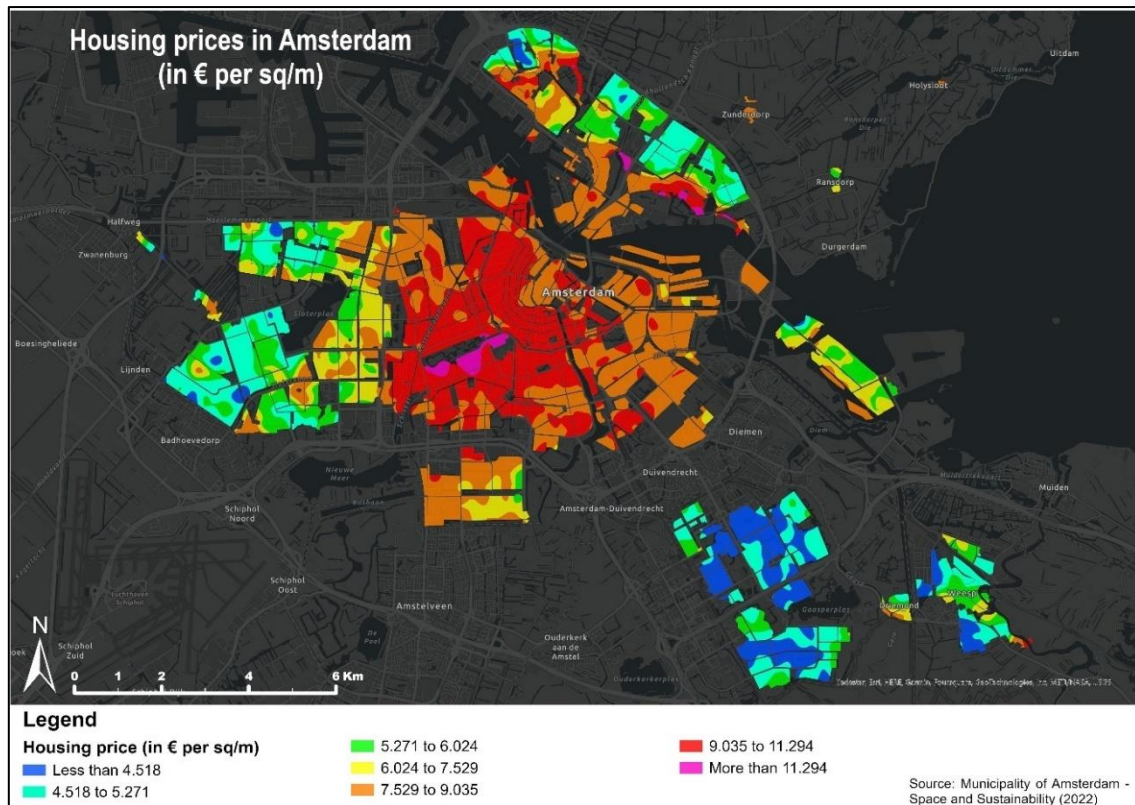


Figure 4 Housing prices in Amsterdam in € per sq/m - by author (2023)

5.4 Social integration

In regard to social integration, the participants were asked about the community, their free time activities, memberships, and other social contacts; both within, as well as outside of the neighbourhood. The participants were further asked about their job, time spent in the Netherlands, and whether they own or rent a home, to understand their degree of structural integration and socio-economic position.

Neighbours and community

The participants generally did not express being very close to the community, due to several barriers which are discussed below. However, some of the participants do have particularly close connections with their next-door neighbours. Participant 5 described how he was welcomed by his neighbour when asked about how he experienced social integration in the neighbourhood:

“Well, it has been nice. Because the neighbour really helped even though we do not speak Dutch. Like, they made an effort to be understood. (...) when we moved in, the neighbour next-door passed by a few times to see if we need anything. Like, borrow a ladder, borrow a thing, or carry couch, or something like that whilst moving. But I think it means a lot in the end, like, hey it is cool, the neighbour is here to help. Then you straight away open discussion” (Participant 5, 2023).

Participant 2 also keeps close ties with her Dutch neighbours. In order to also stay connected to the community, she receives help with translating the minutes of VVE (Association of Owners) meeting:

“Because I cannot speak Dutch, I sometimes find it difficult. For example, at those annual meetings, they always do it in Dutch. But I do receive the minutes after the meeting, and I can translate it if I have the time. And then I do have some neighbours that help me in English. So yeah, I think our VVE is going really active and good” (Participant 2, 2022).

Other participants, however, do not have any contact with their neighbours. Participant 3 explained that they would prefer to have some connections around, but do not mind the situation as it is, due to their

anonymity and quietness at home. On the other hand, participant 4 mentioned how their apartment building and/or surrounding area is not really made to meet neighbours or other people from the neighbourhood. He further explains how this could make big difference in getting to know others in the direct environment:

“Well, when you get to know your community, you can ask for, well how to do that, and how to do this. I do not experience that in my building in Noord, because it is super hard to meet your neighbours. There is just no reason to. But, in places where it is, the buildings or the neighbourhood is made to meet neighbours, that is much easier. It is, like, how to do that, and you know, your Dutch friends would help you” (Participant 4, 2023).

Friendships and other social ties

New relationships of the participants are often embedded in their work, and the participants mention that most of their connections are outside of Amsterdam-Noord. This is also where the metro comes in, as the metro made it much easier to go to the centre of Amsterdam, and link up with people that do not live in the neighbourhood. Participant 2 for instance, mentioned that almost all of her friends live elsewhere in Amsterdam, and discussed how the metro increased the attractiveness of Noord:

“Yeah, outside of Amsterdam-Noord. But I think especially because the metro changes everything a lot. Because the metro was completed after I moved to the Netherlands, and I think that changed a lot. And it is very easy from Amsterdam-Noord to go to Amsterdam-Zuid, or De Pijp area by metro. So, I think that the metro is doing a very big role for Amsterdam-Noord; to get more popular or to become more an upcoming area” (Participant 2, 2022).

With connections embedded in their work, one could also consider going to work on itself – instead of working from home – a social activity:

“... but you coming to the office in the end is kind of a social thing. Because you can work from home too, so I come in to see people” (Participant 3, 2022).

The office then becomes an ‘isolated’ place to meet new people and keep up with your connections, and thus dependent on whether you are authorised to be there, as opposed to a public space.

Free time activities

The interviewees engage in a range of (social) activities in their free time. For some of these activities, there is a membership involved. For example, several of the participants go to group sessions at the gym where they meet and get to know new people who also go there regularly:

“I just joined a gym, so I was trying to get more integrated into the community. And then, going to the gym now I see some people regularly and at least you feel like you belong in the neighbourhood a little bit” (Participant 3, 2023).

NoordOogst (Noord Harvests) is a community farm in Amsterdam-Noord, where people from the neighbourhood can go and harvest vegetables every week through a membership. Participant 1 expands more on this:

“There is something really close to where we live, and it is called NoordOogst, and it is like a community farm where you pay subscription and then you can harvest vegetables every week. And we are part of that actually, but we do not really see the people that often, because we would come at different times to get the vegetables. But they had a little party for autumn two weeks ago, and then we met everybody. It was actually mainly Dutch people. We were the only ones not Dutch” (Participant 1, 2022).

Naturally, there are also other social activities the participants engage in, that do not require any form of paid memberships. The participants would undertake activities with people they already know, and also meet new people through undertaking these activities. These connections are often embedded in

work relations as well. As such, participant 4 explains how he got to know the people he goes for motorcycle rides with:

“I had a colleague who did ride, and he already had a group. So, he introduced me to the group and that is how it became” (Participant 4, 2023).

Language barriers

The main barrier that holds the participants back from networking with people they come across on their day-to-day activities and integrating into the community, is that they do not speak Dutch. They explain that the ability to speak the language would certainly help communication, make them feel more part of the community, and less like a stranger:

“Yeah, I think that is the only thing that makes me feel still like a little bit of an outsider, and I think also for Dutch people. I do not know, they probably see us, like, as outsiders, because we do not speak Dutch” (Participant 1, 2022).

“(P) I feel like I am learning Dutch slowly, and I feel like that would still help. I could be more integrated. I could be more part of it. (R) And why do you think that would help? (P) To help communication, and to feel more part of it. Because, yeah, we are in the Netherlands, and I do not speak that language. I do not think that is very great” (Participant 5, 2023).

On the other hand, the topic of language also leads to a paradox the participants are confronted with. They mention that there is no real need for them to learn the language, due to the fact that there are many internationals living in the neighbourhood, and Dutch people are generally fine with speaking English anyhow. Whenever they try to speak Dutch to Dutch people, the Dutch people would notice they are not from the Netherlands, and quickly switch to English:

“Yeah, you might see or call this a drawback, or it is a benefit, but indeed if you want to learn Dutch, and you try to speak it, people notice automatically that you are not native. So they just switch to English, and that might make it harder to learn. But I think it is way better than if I speak to you and you do not reply unless I speak in Dutch” (Participant 4, 2023).

5.5 Improving social integration

Due to the different dimensions that come into play in regard to social integration, improving social integration proved to be a complex issue. During the interviews, a number of initiatives were discussed at various levels of responsibilities. First, the participants expressed that their process of social integration is ultimately down to themselves. They feel that it is their own responsibility to be more involved in the community, and keep up the existing ties with neighbours:

“Ultimately it is down to me right. (...). It is my responsibility to integrate more, I think. So yeah, that is why I have been more actively seeking out more local contacts, and more integration now that the world is open, but it is a really long process” (Participant 3, 2022).

“It is a bit of an everyday thing. I will take the neighbour example again. You talk to them, you say: “Hey, we are here.”, to really try to communicate as much as we can to feel like part of the community” (Participant 5, 2023).

Second, locally organised community meetups and activities would help the migrant residents get closer ties with neighbours and other people in the area. Although the participants were hesitant on how, or who would organise these activities, they indicated it could help create the opportunity for social interaction between new residents and original residents:

“Maybe some kind of local community. Like a language meetup or something like that. Some kind of group where Dutch people could meet new people that join, or come to the area; to show them around or something, show them the area” (Participant 1, 2022).

“On some streets they organise a barbeque or something. But on my street, they do not. So, maybe those, like, social opportunities to get to know each other would be good. Especially because I quite like to mingle with people” (Participant 2, 2022).

A third initiative was to create more public sports places, such as small football pitches or basketball (half) courts. Such places invite both original, as well as new residents through common interests in specific sports, opening conversation:

“I think through activities, or through meeting points. I mean, you and I could play football. Then it is like, you already have something in common, because we all go play football. I think it would help. Then, at least we can talk about football, or whichever activities where people meet to do something. Then they already have one activity in common to start conversation” (Participant 5, 2023).

Finally, the participants expressed the need for the local government or municipality to be more involved in the (social) integration of international migrants through various ways. They mention for example, that foreigners roughly go through the same process when moving to Amsterdam, in which the government could provide advice on improving people’s social integration:

“It is not like they reach out to you and say: “here is how you can integrate more.” when you get your residency, (...) or when you pick up your residency card, that is an opportunity right, to welcome people into the culture a little bit more” (Participant 3, 2022).

Participant 1 also explains how local governments could organise local activities and meetups to enhance social interaction and relationships within the neighbourhood:

“I think the government could be involved, like the local government. That always makes it easier if they are organising it. Yeah, I think something like that could help, or maybe even something for children. Because then it will, I guess, bring everybody from the area together, including Dutch and international people” (Participant 1, 2022).

6. Discussion

The characteristics, as well as the socio-economic position of Amsterdam-Noord largely relate to the attributes of gentrifying neighbourhoods discussed in the theory. As is the case in most neighbourhoods that experience gentrification, the findings showed that the socio-economic position of Amsterdam-Noord has always been rather weak since its development in the early 20th century. Residents were mostly low-educated people, working in the industrial sector that used to be located in the neighbourhood. With the industry disappearing in the second half of the 1900's, people lost their jobs and became dependent on social welfare benefits. In examining the relationship between work and housing in city centres, Marcuse (1989) found that reduced demand for low-cost housing in the centre was the result of a reduced demand for low-qualified workers. The developments in the local labour market of Amsterdam-Noord, however, did not directly lead to a reduced demand for low-cost housing as argued by Marcuse (1989).

In fact, the low housing prices remained in Noord, and led to the inflow of ethnic minorities in the 80's and 90's. Hence, by the start of the 21st century, the neighbourhood could be described as disadvantaged and underdeveloped, with low-income households, consisting of lower working-class people, people dependent on social welfare benefits, and ethnic minorities. This corresponds with the characterisation of neighbourhoods in which gentrification occurs as discussed by Lees (2008). Lees (2008) explains that these neighbourhoods are typically disadvantaged, with lower-working class residents and minority groups. Moreover, due to its isolated location and long-term concentration of poverty, it was found that residents of Noord formed their own identity and feel a strong sense of belonging to the neighbourhood. This coincides with Van Zoest and Verheul (2020), suggesting that original residents of gentrifying neighbourhoods feel particularly strongly connected to the neighbourhood they live in, based on its 'identity'.

Rodríguez-Barcón et al. (2020) distinguished four effects of gentrification: 1) redistribution of the different social groups' locations; 2) regrouping communities based on similar consumption modes, cultural characteristics, and lifestyles; 3) (physical) urban redevelopment through requalification of architecture and services; and 4) a significant increase in homeownership over rented homes. Taking these effects into consideration, the developments in Noord are no exceptions. First, privatisation and the redistribution of different social groups' locations in the city are apparent through the policies implemented in the neighbourhood over the course of the past decades. Especially the earlier policies predominantly aimed to increase the socio-economic position of Noord through differentiation. In other words, they aimed to attract higher-income households by privatising social housing.

Second, the regrouping of communities based on similar lifestyles and cultural characteristics have, although to a lesser extent, also been found in Amsterdam-Noord. The new area of Buiksloterham for example, clusters (wealthy) creatives who desire to live in a circular neighbourhood, and other entrepreneurs with bottom-up initiatives. The new areas Overhoeks and Buiksloterham in particular are furthermore popular amongst expats due to the proximity to the city centre, which leads to enclaves of people with similar consumption modes. The physical urban redevelopment through requalification of architecture and services is the most obvious effect of gentrification found in Noord. Large parts of the neighbourhood are developed at former industrial sites, older housing has been refurbished or replaced throughout the past decades, and the new metro line makes for an easy connection with the bustling city centre of Amsterdam. All these developments have drastically increased the attractiveness of Amsterdam-Noord and contributed to bringing a 'hip and nice vibe' as described by the participants. On the other hand, the participants also recognise some negative effects of the developments; they notice how new businesses and other investments in Noord are driving up the prices, and disregard the original residents.

In the qualitative part of this study, the social integration of new international residents in Noord has been investigated. Findings show that they generally lack social connections within the neighbourhood, and that their relationships are therefore not spatially bound, but rather spatially independent. The participants exhibit a rather strong socio-economic position, as they moved to Amsterdam for either work or higher education, and some of them were able to buy a house in the city. Their friends are more often than not located in other parts of Amsterdam, and relationships are frequently embedded in work. Considering their relatively strong socio-economic position and type of relationships, these findings compare with those of Koromaz (2014), who found that social groups with stronger positions in society, and living in areas that facilitate stronger structural integration tend to create more weak ties.

The findings also correspond to the expectations stated in the conceptual model (*Figure 1*), as it was expected that the new residents would tend to create more weak ties. Additionally, they were expected to have fewer strong ties, and the strong ties they might have, would also be less imperative to them compared to those of original residents. Whereas the original residents have a strong connection with their community regarding their identity and relationships, the new residents do not experience this as such. This seems to result in contrasting networks that struggle to intertwine, while living besides one another. While some of the participants do keep contact with their next-door neighbour, others do not interact with the local community as such. The most prominent reasons for this were the language barriers, and the lack of opportunity for social interaction in either their apartment building, or in the neighbourhood in general. The first one may foster social integration if the barriers were smaller, but can also be related to identificational integration, as distinguished by Heckmann and Schnapper (2003). The findings show how the inability to speak or communicate in Dutch may create the feeling of being an outsider, at least from the perspective of the new resident. Therefore, a greater degree of identificational integration might ease the social interaction between old and new residents.

It is also found that the policy schemes that have been implemented over the course of the 21st century have slightly impacted parts of the neighbourhood positively on the socio-economic aspect, while other areas' position remained stable. Findings further showed that the policies seem to lack attention on the community and relationships present in the neighbourhood. As some of the participants mentioned, the (new) buildings and the environment lack the opportunity for social interaction, and there is no real reason for people to interact with each other.

The participants were finally asked whether they could think of any measures that would help their social integration in the neighbourhood. They explained that developing these social connections in the community is ultimately down to themselves. Though as the findings show, there are certain barriers to overcome, and the different social groups present tend to create different social ties (Koromaz, 2014). With the language barriers in mind, casual – but organised – social meetups or activities could work to bring people together, without the need for proficient Dutch (or English) skills. This could go from street barbecues to sports activities, or local project activities as seen in the Finnish Integration Policy. Moreover, integration policy from the municipality or the national government could include providing advice on social integration to foreigners at their arrival in the neighbourhood, in order to ultimately try creating a healthy social environment in the neighbourhood of Amsterdam-Noord.

7. Conclusion

This research investigated how, and to what extent, the urban redevelopments of the 21st century affect the social integration of new international residents in the neighbourhood of Amsterdam-Noord. Various media, government documents, and other literature were used in the analysis to understand the socio-economic position of Noord, and how policies and other factors led to the arrival of new, higher-income residents. Qualitative data collection in the form of in-depth interviews was used to study the social integration of new, international residents in the neighbourhood. The limited number of interviewees was caused by difficulties in recruiting participants, and a lack of response after recruitment. Despite this limitation however, the interviews provided valuable insight into the way these new residents build and manage their social networks. The findings have shown that due to the poor socio-economic position Noord has exhibited ever since its development, the neighbourhood quickly shifted to one with stark contrasts in the social networks its residents tend to desire. On the one hand, the original residents tend to keep their ties close and spatially dependent. On the other hand, the new residents tend to have more weak ties, and are rather spatially independent in regard to their friendships. The urban developments further strengthen these desired ties, and the neighbourhood seems to slowly make less space for local social interaction between residents. It is therefore recommended for future urban redevelopments to consider the existing 'landscape' of social networks, and to support the combination of different networks in order to stimulate the social integration of new, international residents. This could for instance be done through locally organised casual gatherings or projects supported by the municipality and local NGO's. To achieve further understanding on how to improve the social integration of foreigners in areas with conflicting social networks, more research is desired. This should include exploration of where and how social interaction between original and new residents might occur, possibly through the use of GIS. Additionally, identificational integration should be considered when measuring the social integration of higher-income international migrants and expats.

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9. Appendices

9.1 Interview guide

Main question	Subquestion	Probes
Introductory questions		
	What is your age?	
<i>Education</i> →	What education do you follow / have you followed?	<i>Highest obtained degree?</i>
	How far do you travel for your education and what mode of transport do you use?	<i>Bike, walking, bus, train, study at home</i>
	How did you find out about this study?	
<i>Work</i> →	What do you do for work?	
	How far do you travel for your job?	
	How did you find out about this job?	<i>Friends / family, other networks, (social) media, organisations</i>
For how long have you been living in Amsterdam-Noord?		
	Did you buy your house or are you renting?	<i>Why?</i>
	How did you find the place you live in?	<i>Real estate agency, (social) media, old / new building, condition, renovated?</i>
	What is it like to live in Amsterdam-Noord?	<i>Neighbours, culture, safety, facilities, friends / family nearby, costs, benefits</i>
	Would you say you feel at home in Amsterdam-Noord?	<i>Why?, Familiarity, sense of place, comfort</i>
Could you tell me about your free time activities?		
	Do you do any sports or do you have hobbies?	<i>Clubs / associations, with others?, (IA) how about the children?</i>
	Do you participate in any other organised social activities?	<i>Community (centre)</i>
	How do you think your daily activities are related to your social connections?	<i>E.g. easier to find a job, study together, social life, wellbeing</i>
Could you tell me about your social contacts in daily life?		
	How do you perceive your social contacts within Amsterdam-Noord?	<i>Neighbours, friends / family, closest people, trust</i>
	When you moved to Amsterdam-Noord, did you already know people living here?	<i>Yes → their role in forming new contacts? Dutch, internationals</i>
	How did you meet new people when you first moved here?	<i>Social media, social activities</i>
	In what language do you communicate most of the time?	<i>English, Dutch (lessons?), native language</i>
What do you think about the neighbourhood Amsterdam-Noord?		
	What do you think about the infrastructure in place?	<i>Improvements, public transport, accessibility</i>

	What do you think about the attractiveness of Amsterdam-Noord?	<i>Buildings, (lack of) green spaces, decorations</i>
	What does gentrification mean to you / How do you perceive gentrification?	<i>Good, bad, neutral, effects</i>
	Could you tell me something about the developments regarding constructions or renovation activities taking place?	<i>Pro's & cons, improvements, problems, attractiveness</i>
	What do you think of the community in Amsterdam-Noord?	<i>Welcome, open, closed off, distant</i>
How do you experience / have you experienced integration in to the Netherlands?		
	How do you perceive Dutch norms and values?	<i>Rude, polite, friendly, distant, intro-/extraverted, or e.g. shaking hands, interrupting</i>
	Would you say you feel integrated in Dutch society?	
	→ <i>If well integrated, why?</i>	<i>Sense of belonging, more / less important aspects, role of yourself; the government; NGO's; the neighbourhood</i>
	→ <i>If not well integrated, why not?</i>	<i>Difficulties, language, culture, unexpected setbacks</i>
	How could integration – in general – be improved when it comes to social relations?	<i>Policies, community, activities</i>

9.2 Deductive & inductive codebook

Deductive codes		Inductive Codes	
Daily life	Housing & living environment	Facilities Familiarity Green spaces Homeownership Renter Housing characteristics Neighbourhood characteristics Urban (re)developments Gentrification	Neighbourhood culture Public transport Improvements Renovations Bike network Accessibility
	Health	Good health Health constraints	
	Employment / profession	Full time job Internship Paid job Part time job Voluntary work	International company Research assistant
	Activities	Children Community activities Food & drinks Hobbies Household tasks Religion Routines Sports (club/membership) Sports (individually)	Leisure
	Education	Undergraduate Bachelor Master	PhD candidate Associate degree
Accessibility	Language & culture	Cultural differences Cultural problems Language barriers Native language No cultural problems	
	Safety & feeling of belonging	Discrimination No discrimination Safe neighbourhood Unsafe neighbourhood	Sense of belonging
Social integration	Strong ties	Children Family (native country) Family (in NL) Friends (International) Friends (Dutch) Neighbours Spatially dependent	Friends (/)
	Weak ties	Acquaintances Colleagues Fellow students Other networks Spatially independent	
	Social links	Government Municipality Work	Own effort Local community Association of Owners
Structural integration	Rights and citizenship	Access to job market Feeling of belonging Financial freedom Financial rights Homeownership Integration process Nationality	> 5 years in NL Financial constraints Financial security External setbacks Incentives