

Gentrification Narratives
The Evolution of Community in Blaak, Rotterdam

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ABSTRACT

This research delves into the urban metamorphosis triggered by gentrification within Blaak of Rotterdam, extending from the aftermath of World War II in the 1940s up to the early decades of the 21st century. It meticulously dissects the diverse and complex mechanisms through which gentrification—a multifaceted urban phenomenon—has fundamentally altered community interactions and reconfigured the spatial layout of this unique district. The primary aim of this research is not simply to map the evolution of socio-spatial relations in Blaak, Rotterdam, across a prolonged timeline but also to illuminate the wider ramifications this transformative process has on the fabric and dynamic interactions of the community.

Acting as a potent transformative force, gentrification has the profound capability to reshape urban landscapes, reallocate resources, and reformulate social networks. This research adopted a holistic mixed-methods approach, weaving together a rich fabric of qualitative insights with stringent quantitative analysis to forge a comprehensive understanding of the multifarious impacts gentrification exerts. This balanced approach enables a detailed examination of the phenomenon, capturing empirical trends alongside the lived experiences of community members, thus offering a nuanced narrative of gentrification's footprint.

Examining the intricate socio-spatial relationships at play, this research scrutinizes the shifting dynamics among Blaak residents and the subsequent changes to the district's physical milieu. From its post-war reconstruction to the dawn of the contemporary era, Blaak has been the stage for marked socio-economic shifts—chiefly propelled by urban renewal endeavors and gentrification processes. These shifts have precipitated profound modifications in the district's social weave, encapsulating demographic transformations, shifts in housing dynamics, and the evolution of local economic structures.

The incorporation of quantitative data sheds light on the demographic evolution, spotlighting trends of escalating property values, variations in resident income levels, and the metamorphosis of the neighborhood's social composition. Parallely, qualitative insights, harvested from interviews and archival research, unravel the personal narratives entwined with displacement, the genesis of novel community networks, and the redefinition of local identity.

Furthermore, this investigation ventures beyond the immediate effects on housing and social networks to scrutinize the broader socio-economic and cultural implications gentrification harbors. It evaluates how surging property values impact local enterprises, the creative reimagining and repurposing of public spaces, and the dual capacity of gentrification to either undermine or foster community identities.

In shedding light on the dualistic nature of gentrification—as both a catalyst for development and a precursor to displacement—this study underscores the critical need for meticulously balanced urban planning strategies. Such strategies are imperative to safeguard the inherent value of socio-spatial relationships within communities, whilst championing sustainable development practices.

In summation, this comprehensive exploration contributes a deeply nuanced perspective to the ongoing discourse surrounding gentrification. By offering an elaborate analysis that seamlessly bridges empirical evidence with the visceral human dimensions of urban transformation, this work holds the aspiration that insights garnered from the study of Blaak, Rotterdam, will significantly inform future urban policy and planning initiatives. The objective is to steer urban evolution

towards pathways that are equitable, inclusive, and attune to the diverse needs of their inhabitants, thus ensuring a harmonious socio-spatial fabric.

KEYWORDS: *Gentrification, Blaak, Rotterdam, Socio-Spatial Relationships*

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1. Introduction

Gentrification is a global phenomenon that has had a profound impact on the functional layout of cities, the quality of life of their residents, and social equity. The process occurs in major cities across the globe, from Brooklyn in New York to SOHO in London to the Hutongs of Beijing, the impact of gentrification is ubiquitous¹. The process of gentrification is accelerating in some urban communities as more middle- and upper-income groups move in and new commercial and residential projects are developed. Such changes may result in the displacement of original residents, whose quality of life and sense of belonging to the community may be severely affected².

The impact of gentrification varies in different national contexts. In the United States, gentrification is a phenomenon that often leads to large-scale displacement of original residents from middle-class gentrifying areas. In Europe, such as London and the Netherlands, gentrification-induced displacement of residents is not as pronounced or prevalent and is not necessarily accompanied by resentment and resistance from residents. For example, scholar Hamnett³ analyzed London and found that the decline in the number of working-class households was not entirely due to middle-classification, but more due to the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial economy, where people moved away from manual labour to managerial and professional jobs. In the Netherlands, a study by researcher Kleinhans⁴ in the central city of the Netherlands found that not all working-class residents who moved out of the city center were forced to do so. In fact, many

¹ Neil Smith, "New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy," *Antipode* 34, no. 3 (July 2002): 427–50, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8330.00249>.

² "Shifting Neighborhoods: Gentrification and Cultural Displacement in American Cities » NCRC," March 18, 2019, <https://nrcr.org/gentrification/>.

³ Chris Hamnett, "Gentrification and the Middle-Class Remaking of Inner London, 1961-2001," *Urban Studies* 40, no. 12 (November 2003): 2401–26, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098032000136138>.

⁴ Reinout Kleinhans, "Displaced but Still Moving Upwards in the Housing Career? Implications of Forced Residential Relocation in the Netherlands," *Housing Studies* 18, no. 4 (July 2003): 473–99, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673030304248>.

former city center residents were satisfied with their new homes and had no desire to return to their former community a year or two after the move. In addition, the impacts of gentrification are not limited to the negative, for example, some scholars believe that it may lead to low-income residents being forced out of their communities⁵; meanwhile, some researchers in the United States have taken a more positive view of gentrification, arguing that there are positive impacts of gentrification in terms of improving the environment of the communities and increasing safety⁶. It is crucial to consider regional differences in understanding the impacts of gentrification in order to better illuminate and address social issues that arise as a result of the city's own history of development.

From the 1940s to the beginning of the 21st century, Blaak experienced a series of significant social and physical changes that provide a unique historical context for studying gentrification. In the 1940s, the Blaak area suffered severe damage during the Second World War but recovered rapidly in the post-war reconstruction process. New buildings and infrastructure were constructed, making Blaak an important transport hub for Rotterdam. Over time, Blaak began to show signs of gentrification. The development of new commercial and residential projects, as well as the influx of more middle- and high-income groups, has led to significant changes in Blaak's community structure and cultural atmosphere.

David Harvey's theory of the right to the city provides an important theoretical tool in this process, as Harvey argues that everyone should have the right to participate in urban life and have a say in the use and development of urban space⁷. However, in the process of gentrification, the original low-income residents may be deprived of this right. Therefore, by applying and testing the right to the city theory in the

⁵ Tom Slater, "Missing Marcuse: On Gentrification and Displacement," *City* 13, no. 2–3 (June 2009): 292–311, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604810902982250>.

⁶ J. Peter Byrne, "Two Cheers for Gentrification," *Howard Law Journal* 46 (2003 2002): 405, <https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/howlj46&id=413&div=&collection=>.

⁷ David Harvey, "The Right to the City," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27, no. 4 (December 2003): 939–41, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0309-1317.2003.00492.x>.

gentrification process in Blaak, not only a deeper understanding of the specific impacts of gentrification will be gained, but also the way to protect and enhance the right to the city of all urban residents through improved urban planning and policies will be addressed.

This research will focus on Blaak of Rotterdam, the Netherlands, a vibrant commercial and residential area located in the center of Rotterdam. However, from the 1940s to the beginning of the 21st century, Blaak underwent a series of significant changes at the social and physical level, which provides a unique historical context for the study of gentrification. Over time, Blaak began to see the development of new commercial and residential projects, as well as an influx of more middle- and upper-income groups, resulting in changes to Blaak's community structure and cultural climate. Studying gentrification in Blaak therefore has profound implications for our understanding of the dynamics of urban development in Rotterdam, for improving the quality of life of the city's residents, and for promoting social equity.

The main research question of this research is: "How has the process of gentrification in Blaak of Rotterdam affected the right to the city and daily lives of its residents?". This question is posed in order to explore in depth the specific impacts of the global phenomenon of gentrification in a specific community and how these impacts interact with the right to the city of the city's inhabitants. The research of this question will not only provide insights into the impact of gentrification in Rotterdam, but also may provide a theoretical support for understanding and responding to the social issues facing the development of Rotterdam's city.

Specifically, it focuses on the following sub-questions:

- How has gentrification affected the physical spaces of Blaak?
- How has gentrification impacted social relations of Blaak?
- How has the right to the city of the residents in Blaak been affected during the process of gentrification?

Through the exploration of these questions, this research expects to explore the

development phase of gentrification in Blaak and to reveal the ripple effects of gentrification from the physical level to the social and human rights level.

The research will first introduce the concepts of gentrification and the right to the city, and why Blaak, Rotterdam was chosen as the subject of the study. Then, the historical background of Blaak, Rotterdam from 1940 to 2000 will be presented in detail. Next, how gentrification has affected the right to the city of Blaak, Rotterdam will be analyzed in detail, and the specific effects and consequences of gentrification will be examined in depth through specific case studies. Finally, the findings of the research will be summarized and their implications for understanding the impact of gentrification and the right to the city will be discussed, as well as concluding the research.

2. Concepts and Definitions

In this chapter, it will provide an examination of the key concepts that form the theoretical backbone of this research: the Right to the City, gentrification, and socio-spatial relationships. These concepts provide an analytical framework for understanding ongoing urban transformations and serve as a lens through which to scrutinize the multifaceted impacts of such changes on community life.

2.1 The Right to The City

In the wake of the World War Two, the world gradually entered a new era of urban revolution, with wave after wave of urban renewal, new construction, reconstruction and development of cities across the globe. The global urbanization movement has also emerged one after another, becoming a great impetus to help people heal the wounds of war, rebuild a delighted life after the war, and promote the economic, political, cultural and social development of all countries. However, at the same time, urbanization has also shown large-scale negative effects. In the 1960s, a widespread urban crisis emerged in many capitalist countries⁸. With the prosperous development of capitalist society, suburbanization became a common trend, which led to the decline of the urban centers of large cities; with the development of economic globalization, a large amount of capital was transferred from the old industrial cities to the newly industrialized areas, which brought a lot of problems to the old industrial cities, such as a sharp decrease in employment opportunities, a rise in the unemployment rate, a depreciation of the inherent assets, a decrease in the tax revenues available to the city, and financial difficulties for the city. At the same time, in the capitalist countries, the cities are full of all kinds of contradictions, conflicts and struggles, riots, various political struggles and social resistance

⁸ Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*; with a New Preface by the Author, Revised edition, Princeton Studies in American Politics (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2014).

movements in full swing⁹. As Edward Soja puts it, the urban crisis that erupted worldwide in the 1960s was one of several signals that the long post-war economic boom in the advanced industrial countries was coming to an end. The global order and especially the urban order of the large capitalist cities, which were the centers of national and regional control of the global economy, centers of national and regional control of the global economy was challenged. These metropolitan orders began to unravel in uprisings by those who had profited least from the post-war economic expansion, and the urban crises of the 1960s exposed deep-seated weaknesses and serious deficiencies in urban theory and practice of the previous century¹⁰. As a result, the city has gradually given rise to a number of new disciplines that have become a strong stream of urban studies thinking as a result of their intermingling with disciplines from different fields (e.g., political science, economics, sociology, etc.). The right to the city has gradually become one of the central issues in urban studies and has never ceased to be one of the central issues in urban studies, amidst the interplay of different dimensions of urban research ideas. It is not only the core issue of urban theory research, but also plays a fundamental role in the development and management of cities.

The right to the city belongs to a historical category. Throughout the ages, the development of the city has lasted for millions of years, and its contents and paradigms have also changed, while the idea of the right to the city has been closely related to the whole history of thought and the history of urban development since the very beginning. As early as in the ancient Greek period, the Greek city-state firstly gave equal rights to its citizens, and thinkers also explored the issues of city-state justice and city-state righteousness, which is the prototype of the right to the

⁹ Vladislavas Petraškevičius, “Capitalism’s Contradictions and Reasons of Its Collapse,” in *The Paradox of Marxist Economics*, by Vladislavas Petraškevičius, Springer Studies in Alternative Economics (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2023), 29–42, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36290-3_3.

¹⁰ Edward W. Soja, *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2000).

city¹¹. In the late Middle Ages, under the strict control of the feudal lordship system, the development of cities stagnated, while the subsequent rise of the commercial revolution and the subsequent emergence of those new commercial cities brought the breath of freedom to the people¹². Thus, the main element of the right to the city at this time was freedom, such as the free movement of people between cities and the free exchange of goods in the marketplace. By the time of the Industrial Revolution, most of the population had acquired the so-called right to freedom, but the widespread poverty in which they lived made the many proletarians dream of being able to survive and work in the city, a right that they constantly sought. In post-industrial societies, urban societies have rapidly developed and entered into consumer societies, and living fully and happily is increasingly becoming a criterion for the right to the city in people's minds^{13,14}. In this context, the right to the city is not only a central issue in the study of urban theory, but also plays a fundamental role in the development and management of cities¹⁵.

With the rapid development of urbanization, especially after World War II, the rate of urbanization has increased significantly, the pattern and form of urban development have changed, and many contradictions and problems related to the right to the city have emerged and intensified, thus attracting scholars from many

¹¹ Mogens Herman Hansen and Kongelige Danske videnskabernes selskab, eds., *The Ancient Greek City-State: Symposium on the Occasion of the 250th Anniversary of the Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters*, July, 1-4 1992, *Historisk-Filosofiske Meddelelser* 67 (Copenhagen: Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters : Commissioner, Munksgaard, 1993).

¹² Peter Johaneck, "Merchants, Markets and Towns," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History: Volume 3: C.900-c.1024*, ed. Timothy Reuter, vol. 3, *The New Cambridge Medieval History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 64–94, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521364478.004>.

¹³ Volker M. Rundshagen, "Post Industrial Society," in *Encyclopedia of Corporate Social Responsibility*, ed. Samuel O. Idowu et al. (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2013), 1859–67, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-28036-8_175.

¹⁴ Julia Kovalchuk, "Post-Industrial Modernization: Problems and Prospects," in *Post-Industrial Society*, ed. Julia Kovalchuk (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2020), 1–14, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-59739-9_1.

¹⁵ Anna Domaradzka, "Urban Social Movements and the Right to the City: An Introduction to the Special Issue on Urban Mobilization," *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 29, no. 4 (August 2018): 607–20, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-018-0030-y>.

different fields to explore the issues related to the right to the city. For example, Marx and Engels thought about the historical status of capitalist industrial cities, the problem of urban-rural dichotomy, and paid attention to the fate of the working class in industrial cities¹⁶; Max Weber explored the history of urban development and the value basis of the city¹⁷; the Chicago School focused on the study of the urban problem¹⁸; the neo-Marxist school of urbanism studied the city of justice, fairness, and socio-spatial dialectics and other issues¹⁹. All of them with different perspectives, issues, reveal the right to the city from different perspectives. With the deepening of the research, different paradigms of the right to the city based on different value theories and methodologies have gradually been formed.

With the deepening of urbanization, the phenomenon of alienation of urban culture and urban subjects is becoming more and more prominent, and it is necessary to construct a humanistic view of urban rights that takes human beings as urban subjects.

According to Lewis Mumford, culture is the basic quality of the city, the lifeblood of the city and the fundamental content of the right to the city. The city is both a material means by which mankind solves the problems of common life; at the same time, the city is a symbol that recounts this common way of life of mankind and the coherence that arises from the conditions of this favorable environment²⁰. Cities

¹⁶ Ronaldo Munck, *Rethinking Development: Marxist Perspectives, Marx, Engels, and Marxisms* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-73811-2>.

¹⁷ Diana Gianola, "City and Democracy in Max Weber," *Topoi* 40, no. 2 (April 2021): 435–49, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11245-019-09687-w>.

¹⁸ A. Javier Treviño, ed., *The Cambridge Handbook of Social Problems*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108550710>.

¹⁹ Chao Ye and Liang Zhuang, "Urbanization and the Production of Space," in *Urbanization and Production of Space*, by Chao Ye and Liang Zhuang, *Urban Sustainability* (Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore, 2023), 1–8, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-99-1806-5_1.

²⁰ Philip Kasinitz, ed., *Metropolis: Center and Symbol of Our Times*, Reprint, *Main Trends of the Modern World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

have the fundamental mission of storing culture, disseminating it and creating it²¹. Cities are no longer just containers for economic development; they accumulate and contain the human heritage of their region, tell the story of the real life and historical record of their region, and become the symbols and emblems of human civilization²². By highlighting the cultural significance of the right to the city, Mumford pioneered a new view of the right to the city.

Culture is still a way of life. For Jane Jacobs, the right of people to have a rich and colorful life is the fundamental essence of the right to the city. In reality, because those who transform cities often do not understand the real life of the city, and the resulting urban planning and redevelopment are often full of shortcomings, the people in the magical spots of the planners are pushed around at will, deprived of their rights, and even forced to move away from their homes, as if they were subjects under the conqueror²³. To get rid of the urban dilemma, to give life to the city, and to realize the prosperity of the city, it is necessary to respect everyone in the city, especially those urban ordinary people, who have the right to live and move according to their own preferences.

As a complex organism, cities are not only economic, but also social and political. The neo-Marxist urbanism that emerged in the 1960s and 1970s combined Marxism with the study of urban space to focus on the socio-political dimension of the right to the city.

In 1976, Henri Lefebvre²⁴ wrote a pioneering article on the right to the city, in which he proposed the concept of the right to the city for the first time and carried out a

²¹ Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects*, A Harvest Book (San Diego New York London: Harcourt, Inc, 1989).

²² Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities*, A Harvest Book 187 (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1970).

²³ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Vintage books ed (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

²⁴ *The Right to the City*, accessed July 3, 2024, <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/henri-lefebvre-right-to-the-city>.

pioneering exploration of the related issues and research methods, trying to depict the right to the city in the post-capitalist period. In this article, he attempts to depict some of the possible forms of urban philosophy in the post-capitalist period. In his view, the right to the city itself represents a series of extremely important rights, such as the right to enjoy freedom, the right to display one's own personality, the right to live in the city, the right to enter the city, the right to participate in public life and the right to dispose of one's own wealth, and so on. His concept of the right to the city reflected the situation in France and Paris in the 1960s, when working-class Parisians and immigrants found themselves gradually relegated to the urban periphery of Paris, and no longer even able to approach the city. This right, he argues, is both a cry and a demand. The cry is a painful reaction to the gradual erosion of everyday life in Paris, the demand is a command to open one's eyes to the crisis and build an alternative urban life.

In the book *The Rebel City: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*, David Harvey takes a new, urban perspective on the concept of the right to the city in capitalist societies and puts forward the thesis that the right to the city is a right to transform the city according to our desires and at the same time to transform the city²⁵. The right to the city is the right to transform the city as we wish it to be transformed, and to transform ourselves as well. It is a collective right that goes far beyond what we call the individual right of access to the resources of the city. It is a collective right that goes far beyond what we call individual rights of access to the city's resources, because, in building the city, urbanites are always indirectly re-creating themselves. Changing the city inevitably depends on the use of collective rights in the process of urbanization, so the right to the city is a collective right, not an individual right. The right to the city means a certain right to control the process of urbanization, a certain right to control the way in which the city is built and transformed, fundamentally and in radical ways.

²⁵ David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2012).

Edward Soja goes beyond the binary framework of traditional social theory and proposes a triadic structure of society-history-space with space at its core, a triadic dialectic. In this structure, the struggle over the right to the city and its realization and maintenance always revolves around space. Thus, spatial rights have become a core issue in contemporary political and rights struggles, and only rights realized in the form of space have authenticity²⁶. In his book *Seeking Spatial Justice*, he links the search for spatial justice with the struggle for the right to the city, the struggle for the right to the city. In other words, wherever we are, we need to be in control of the social production process of the space we are in, or, as citizens, we should have more rights to control the social production of the space. Nowadays, obtaining the right to the city is in a sense seeking spatial justice²⁷. Thus, the right to the city occupies a unique place in the practice of seeking spatial justice.

2.2 Gentrification

The concept of gentrification was first proposed by the British scholar Glass²⁸, which was derived from the word "gentry", and mainly refers to the process by which middle-class families enter poor lower-class neighborhoods, in which the quality of once-dilapidated homes is upgraded, and the middle class gradually replaces the former working class and low-income class, thus changing the social structure of the community. The middle class gradually replaces the original working class and low-income class, thus changing the social structure of the neighborhood. From the 1970s to the present, large-scale gentrification movements have taken place in many countries and have had a tremendous impact on urban development around the

²⁶ Jessie Speer, "Henri Lefebvre: Spatial Politics, Everyday Life and the Right to the City," *The AAG Review of Books* 3, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 4–5, <https://doi.org/10.1080/2325548X.2015.985526>.

²⁷ Edward W. Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice*, Globalization and Community Series (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

²⁸ Ruth Lazarus Glass, *London: Aspects of Change* (MacGibbon & Kee, 1960).

world.

2.2.1 The Concept of Gentrification and the Stages of Gentrification Development

The gentrification movement has lasted for several decades, and with the emergence of more and more urban phenomena, as well as the research of many scholars on the phenomenon of gentrification, the study of gentrification has become increasingly mature, and the diversity of the concept of gentrification and the phenomenon of gentrification in its many forms has become the focus of the attention of scholars. Glass's earliest definition of gentrification can be regarded as classic gentrification²⁹. Although Smith agreed with Glass's concept of gentrification in 1964³⁰, he showed in his later research that the concept of gentrification has been improved on Glass's earliest conceptualization by addressing a wider and broader range of urban phenomena³¹. In the context of post-Fordism and globalization, high-end service industries represented by finance, insurance, and real estate have clustered in urban centers, and a large number of high-income earners have been attracted to live in neighboring urban centers, leading to the reopening of land as well as gentrification. In addition, international companies, international developers and international buyers have created an international market, which can be said to be an urban phenomenon associated with gentrification. Therefore, gentrification has become a symbol of the emergence of the global city³².

Gentrification development and research has gone through three stages (see Table 1). From a macroscopic point of view, gentrification research has been spreading in

²⁹ Ruth Lazarus Glass, London: Aspects of Change (MacGibbon & Kee, 1960).

³⁰ Neil Smith, "Gentrification and Uneven Development," *Economic Geography* 58, no. 2 (April 1982): 139, <https://doi.org/10.2307/143793>.

³¹ Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London New York: Routledge, 1996).

³² Frank J. Macchiarola, "The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo, by Saskia Sassen," *Political Science Quarterly* 107, no. 2 (June 1, 1992): 370–71, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2152688>.

the world³³, in addition to the developed countries in the west, Eastern Europe, South America, the Caribbean, southern Africa, Asia, and some tourist resorts islands such as Tenerife, have gentrification research footprints³⁴³⁵³⁶. At the micro level, the study of gentrification is beginning to move out of central urban areas, and the term gentrification has been cited in a number of studies describing changes in suburban³⁷³⁸³⁹⁴⁰ and rural⁴¹⁴²⁴³ areas. The phenomenon of gentrification has thus flourished globally. Nowadays, gentrification has become a global urban strategy in

³³ Rowland Atkinson and Gary Bridge, eds., *Gentrification in a Global Context*, 0 ed. (Routledge, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203392089>.

³⁴ Anna Badyina and Oleg Golubchikov, "Gentrification in Central Moscow - a Market Process or a Deliberate Policy? Money, Power and People in Housing Regeneration in Ostozhenka," *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 87, no. 2 (June 2005): 113–29, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0435-3684.2005.00186.x>.

³⁵ Neil Smith, "New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy," *Antipode* 34, no. 3 (July 2002): 427–50, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8330.00249>.

³⁶ C. Nil Uzun, "The Impact of Urban Renewal and Gentrification on Urban Fabric: Three Cases in Turkey," *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 94, no. 3 (August 2003): 363–75, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9663.00263>.

³⁷ Jason Hackworth, "Inner-City Real Estate Investment, Gentrification, and Economic Recession in New York City," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 33, no. 5 (May 2001): 863–80, <https://doi.org/10.1068/a33160>.

³⁸ Blair Badcock, "Thirty Years On: Gentrification and Class Changeover in Adelaide's Inner Suburbs, 1966-96," *Urban Studies* 38, no. 9 (August 2001): 1559–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00420980120080441>.

³⁹ Garry Robson and Tim Butler, "Coming to Terms with London: Middle-class Communities in a Global City," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 25, no. 1 (March 2001): 70–86, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.00298>.

⁴⁰ Neil Smith and James DeFilippis, "The Reassertion of Economics: 1990s Gentrification in the Lower East Side," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 23, no. 4 (December 1999): 638–53, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.00220>.

⁴¹ Martin Phillips, "Rural Gentrification and the Processes of Class Colonisation," *Journal of Rural Studies* 9, no. 2 (April 1993): 123–40, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0743-0167\(93\)90026-G](https://doi.org/10.1016/0743-0167(93)90026-G).

⁴² Martin Phillips, "The Production, Symbolization and Socialization of Gentrification: Impressions from Two Berkshire Villages," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 27, no. 3 (September 2002): 282–308, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-5661.00056>.

⁴³ D. P. Smith and D. A. Phillips, "Socio-Cultural Representations of Greentrified Pennine Rurality," *Journal of Rural Studies* 17, no. 4 (October 1, 2001): 457–69, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0743-0167\(01\)00014-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0743-0167(01)00014-6).

the context of new urban liberalism, and as a blueprint model, gentrification has become an important part of the global urban strategy. Gentrification has become a global urban strategy⁴⁴, and as a gentrification blueprint, it has been mass produced, operated, and consumed globally⁴⁵, calling for more and more players to be involved in the third phase of gentrification, with governments taking a more active role in promoting gentrification, accelerating the process of gentrification through local government-driven, policy- and regulation-based approaches^{46,47,48,49,50,51,52}. The third stage of gentrification is no longer limited to the simple replacement of residential

⁴⁴ Neil Smith, "New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy," *Antipode* 34, no. 3 (July 2002): 427–50, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8330.00249>.

⁴⁵ Mark Davidson and Loretta Lees, "New-Build 'Gentrification' and London's Riverside Renaissance," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 37, no. 7 (July 2005): 1165–90, <https://doi.org/10.1068/a3739>.

⁴⁶ Jason Hackworth and Neil Smith, "The Changing State of Gentrification," *Tijdschrift Voor Economische En Sociale Geografie* 92, no. 4 (November 2001): 464–77, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9663.00172>.

⁴⁷ Elvin K. Wyly and Daniel J. Hammel, "Islands of Decay in Seas of Renewal: Housing Policy and the Resurgence of Gentrification," *Housing Policy Debate* 10, no. 4 (January 1999): 711–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.1999.9521348>.

⁴⁸ Loretta Lees, "Super-Gentrification: The Case of Brooklyn Heights, New York City," *Urban Studies* 40, no. 12 (November 2003): 2487–2509, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0042098032000136174>.

⁴⁹ Shenjing He, "State-Sponsored Gentrification Under Market Transition The Case of Shanghai," *Urban Affairs Review* 43, no. 2 (November 2007): 171–98, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1078087407305175>.

⁵⁰ Tom Slater, "Municipally Managed Gentrification in South Parkdale, Toronto," *Canadian Geographies / Géographies Canadiennes* 48, no. 3 (September 2004): 303–25, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0008-3658.2004.00062.x>.

⁵¹ Loretta Lees, "A Reappraisal of Gentrification: Towards a 'Geography of Gentrification,'" *Progress in Human Geography* 24, no. 3 (September 2000): 389–408, <https://doi.org/10.1191/030913200701540483>.

⁵² Rowland Atkinson, "Does Gentrification Help or Harm Urban Neighbourhoods?: An Assessment of the Evidence-Base in the Context of the New Urban Agenda (CNR Paper 5)," *Urban Studies*, 2002.

areas; it is not uncommon for residential areas to be replaced with commercial⁵³ areas and mixed-use⁵⁶ areas. Moreover, gentrification is not only limited to the replacement of poor communities, when a high-grade community has been gentrified by the more affluent class gentrification, which gives rise to super gentrification, but this phenomenon will only be in the high-density investment and high consumption of metropolitan areas such as New York, London⁵⁷. In addition, new-build gentrification also occurs during this phase⁵⁸. Overall, global gentrification today has become increasingly complex, with an ever-increasing number of players, a variety of different regions, and a diverse range of phenomena intertwined. As Smith and Phillips argue, today's gentrification is evolving so rapidly that the study of gentrification is under-represented, and a broader and more perspectival perspective is needed to study contemporary gentrification⁵⁹.

⁵³ Winifred Curran, "Gentrification and the Nature of Work: Exploring the Links in Williamsburg, Brooklyn," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 36, no. 7 (July 2004): 1243–58, <https://doi.org/10.1068/a36240>.

⁵⁴ Jessica Carroll and John Connell, "'You Gotta Love This City': The Whitlams and Inner Sydney," *Australian Geographer* 31, no. 2 (July 2000): 141–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/713612243>.

⁵⁵ Robert C. Kloosterman and Joanne P. Van Der Leun, "Just for Starters: Commercial Gentrification by Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Amsterdam and Rotterdam Neighbourhoods," *Housing Studies* 14, no. 5 (September 1999): 659–77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673039982669>.

⁵⁶ Loretta Lees, "Visions of 'Urban Renaissance': The Urban Task Force Report and the Urban White Paper," in *Urban Renaissance?*, ed. Rob Imrie and Mike Raco (Policy Press, 2003), 61–80, <https://doi.org/10.1332/policypress/9781861343802.003.0003>.

⁵⁷ Loretta Lees, "A Reappraisal of Gentrification: Towards a 'Geography of Gentrification,'" *Progress in Human Geography* 24, no. 3 (September 2000): 389–408, .

⁵⁸ Stuart Cameron, "Gentrification, Housing Redifferentiation and Urban Regeneration: 'Going for Growth' in Newcastle upon Tyne," *Urban Studies* 40, no. 12 (2003): 2367–82, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43100504>.

⁵⁹ Neil Smith, "New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy," *Antipode* 34, no. 3 (July 2002): 427–50, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8330.00249>.

⁶⁰ Martin Phillips, "Other Geographies of Gentrification," *Progress in Human Geography* 28, no. 1 (February 2004): 5–30, <https://doi.org/10.1191/0309132504ph458oa>.

Stage	Time	Groups	Location	Main Features
1	1960s- 1970s Great Recession	New city aristocrats, poor people, workers	Inner city residential area	After experiencing suburbanization, the new urban gentry reoccupies neighborhoods that were originally inhabited mainly by workers and the poor.
2	1970s- 1980s	Companies, high- income people, low-income people, etc.	Inner-city residential areas, cultural facilities and historical sites, etc.	The "cultural strategy" has led to increased investment in some cultural facilities (such as art galleries, schools, etc.) and historical heritage areas. The phenomenon of gentrification has been integrated into financial factors such as banking and real estate. The role of the market has increased the development of gentrification.
3	1990s to present Post- Recession	Government, companies, various groups of people and other roles	Most areas in inner cities (residential, commercial, industrial areas, etc.), urban suburbs and rural areas	The government has become more active in using various methods to promote the development of gentrification. Companies have become major developers. The phenomenon of gentrification has become diversified. The influence of the gentrification movement has spread around the world.

Table 1. The features and Stages of Gentrification Development

Sources: Based on footnotes 26-60 of the literature

2.2.2 Classification Studies of Various Types of Gentrification Phenomena

After about half a century of development and research, diversity is the most significant feature of Western gentrification today. Gentrification is no longer simply an urban geographic phenomenon; it is also accompanied by many different aspects that permeate all aspects of urban development. The gentrification movement has

also seen many changes in terms of landscape alteration, capital investment, location of the cause of the dynamics, changes in the cycle, and the extent of the occurrence of a wide variety of gentrification phenomena in the city, which has contributed to the development of cities and the advancement of geographic theories.

2.2.2.1 Traditional and Slash-and-Build Gentrification

Glass defines gentrification as the process of neighborhood change in cities in which neighborhoods that were previously low-income neighborhoods are replaced by the middle- and the high-income neighborhoods. This definition is the earliest and narrowest definition of gentrification. As the classic gentrification, in this definition, the transformation of class is relatively homogeneous, and is the displacement of the high-income class to the low-income class. In the beginning, the high-income class was attracted to the low-income class neighborhoods because of factors such as geographic location, low rent, and cultural values. Subsequently, the earliest group of high-income people moved into the neighborhood and upgraded and renovated their homes to make them more functional for their own needs. As a result, the price of housing rises so that the original low-income group can't afford the high prices and move out of the neighborhood. As this trend became more pronounced, more and more upper-income people moved into the neighborhood until all of the lower-income people had moved out, completing a round of gentrification and creating the earliest form of gentrification. Classic gentrification occurred mainly after suburbanization, and it was accomplished due to the personal will of the city's emerging aristocracy as well as the market's impetus⁶¹. In this round of gentrification, the higher-income classes renovated and updated the homes they moved into, working on them according to their wishes and preferences. However, they did not tear down and rebuild the original residential building, nor did they change the use of the original building, that is to say, the original building was mainly

⁶¹ Ruth Lazarus Glass, London: Aspects of Change (MacGibbon & Kee, 1960).

for living, and after gentrification, this building is still mainly for living.

After decades of development, the concept of gentrification has become more complex and broader than what Glass proposed back then⁶². In general, however, the concept of gentrification has evolved from its earliest formulations. Nowadays, gentrification is intertwined with more and more social factors and geographical phenomena, and the concept of the classic gentrification is no longer suitable to summarize the complex and varied phenomenon of today's gentrification. In particular, more and more actors are involved in the gentrification movement, including governments, corporations, and people from all walks of life, all of which have a direct and indirect impact on the advancement of gentrification. This new gentrification phenomenon can be called traditional gentrification. Traditional gentrification is based on the classic gentrification, and its main feature is still the replacement of the high-income class with the low-income class. However, in this type of gentrification movement, the participants are no longer simply the high-income class and the low-income class, but directly or indirectly join other roles such as the government and corporations. The renovation and upgrading of housing (which may be residential, commercial, or other functions) previously owned by the low-income class after the high-income class has moved in is not dissimilar to the content of the classic gentrification. However, the renovated and upgraded buildings are not used solely as housing but may be converted to commercial or mixed-use commercial and residential uses, which is a key feature of contemporary

⁶² Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London New York: Routledge, 1996).

gentrification⁶³⁶⁴⁶⁵.

Slash-and-build gentrification refers to the process of constructing upscale developments on barren land, or on land that has been demolished from previously dilapidated housing, thus enabling the direct or indirect displacement of lower-income classes by higher-income classes⁶⁶. Some scholars have questioned whether this slash-and-build gentrification can be called as gentrification⁶⁷⁶⁸, because the high-income class did not renew and renovate the decaying community, but demolished it, and then built new buildings; on the other hand, the construction of high-grade buildings on deserted land, the high-income class did not carry out direct replacement of the low-income class, but indirect replacement through the price shadowing. When a new high-grade community is built, the sense of identity, culture and values brought by the community to the high-income class attracts more high-income class to move into the community, which makes the price of the land rise, thus driving the price of the land in the neighboring areas to rise as well, resulting in a new round of replacement⁶⁹.

⁶³ Winifred Curran, "Gentrification and the Nature of Work: Exploring the Links in Williamsburg, Brooklyn," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 36, no. 7 (July 2004): 1243–58, <https://doi.org/10.1068/a36240>.

⁶⁴ Jessica Carroll and John Connell, "'You Gotta Love This City': The Whitlams and Inner Sydney," *Australian Geographer* 31, no. 2 (July 2000): 141–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/713612243>.

⁶⁵ Robert C. Kloosterman and Joanne P. Van Der Leun, "Just for Starters: Commercial Gentrification by Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Amsterdam and Rotterdam Neighbourhoods," *Housing Studies* 14, no. 5 (September 1999): 659–77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02673039982669>.

⁶⁶ Stuart Cameron, "Gentrification, Housing Redifferentiation and Urban Regeneration: 'Going for Growth' in Newcastle upon Tyne," *Urban Studies* 40, no. 12 (2003): 2367–82, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43100504>.

⁶⁷ Tim Butler and Garry Robson, *London Calling: The Middle-Classes and the Re-Making of Inner London* (Oxford: Berg, 2003).

⁶⁸ H. Stanley Loten, "Caulfield, Jon. City Form and Everyday Life: Toronto's Gentrification and Critical Social Practice," *Urban History Review* 24, no. 1 (October 1995): 56–56, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019225ar>.

⁶⁹ Christine Lambert and Martin Boddy, *Transforming the City: Post-Recession Gentrification and Re-Urbanisation* (ESRC Centre for Neighbourhood Research Bristol, 2002).

To sum up, both slash-and-build gentrification and traditional gentrification belong to the category of contemporary gentrification, but they have their own characteristics in terms of replacement methods and capital investment (see Table 2).

	Traditional Gentrification	Slash-and-Build Gentrification
Landscape	Renovation and upgrading of the original house, or addition of new facilities to improve its functionality; moderate degree of alterations	Demolition of the original house and reconstruction of a new one; or construction of a new house on a deserted vacant lot; extensive alterations
Invest	Costs of renovating existing buildings, adding new facilities, etc.	Demolition, resettlement and all costs of building a house
Replacement	Direct Replacement	Direct replacement; or indirect replacement through price shadowing.
Location	Mainly in the inner city area	Inner city areas and suburbs

Table 2. Traditional Gentrification vs. Slash-and-Build Gentrification

Sources: Based on footnotes 61-69 of the literature

2.2.2.2 Tourism Gentrification

Tourism gentrification was first proposed by Gotham, meaning the process of replacing low-income classes in the surrounding community with high-income classes through the development of the tourism and leisure industry⁷⁰. Previously, most of the gentrification research has focused on spatial differences, the transformation of urban neighborhood classes, and the replacement of low-income classes by high-income classes. The majority of previous studies have focused on

⁷⁰ Japonica Brown-Saracino, *The Gentrification Debates, Metropolis and Modern Life* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

spatial differences, urban neighborhood class transformation, and the replacement of low-income classes by high-income classes. Tourism gentrification, on the other hand, reflects a new mechanism arising from the intersection of local institutions, the real estate market, and the global economy, and it emphasizes the development of tourism and recreation as the cause of the gentrification movement. In terms of the causes of the phenomenon of tourism gentrification, the first signs of tourism gentrification should be seen in the second phase of the development of gentrification. At that time, the cultural strategy led to an increase in investment in cultural facilities (such as art galleries, schools, etc.) and historical sites, and the surrounding environment was sufficiently improved, which made the high-income class prefer the surrounding environment, and thus the germ of gentrification began. However, in the second stage of the development of gentrification, tourism gentrification was still only in its infancy and not on a large scale due to the relatively single mechanism for its generation. After the gentrification movement entered the third stage, the global expansion of multinational corporations under the background of globalization and the large amount of capital flow brought about provided the preconditions for the formation of tourism gentrification movement. Moreover, the booming development of tourism and other accompanying industries has been a catalyst for the acceleration of the tourism gentrification movement. The interaction between localization and globalization, the use of foreign capital to build the brand of the city, and the change of regional functions in the process of replacement have also made tourism gentrification a special gentrification phenomenon in the third stage of the development of the gentrification movement. From the perspective of the replacement method, tourism gentrification is not only direct replacement, but also indirect replacement through the price shadow, such as relying on the natural landscape or the transformation of large-scale abandoned sites. It does not displace the site being transformed, but rather the economic impact of tourism drives up land prices around the transformed site, and tourist spending raises the level of consumption in the surrounding area, so that the low-income class that used to live around the tourist attraction is unable to afford the high cost of housing and living, and is forced to move out, and thus is displaced by the higher-income class.

2.2.2.3 Gentrification of Ethnic Enclave

Under economic globalization, the reorganization of social space has made many Western countries appear, thus making the transnational social space⁷¹ into ethnic enclave become the focus of Western scholars' attention. The phenomenon of gentrification in ethnic enclaves is also an emerging phenomenon in the development of gentrification. Smith and Schaffer conducted a gentrification study on the Harlem black enclave in New York⁷², which confirmed the phenomenon of gentrification in the area through a large amount of empirical data and verified the degree of gentrification. From the perspective of the gentrification process in ethnic agglomerations, there are two possible scenarios for the gentrification movement that occurs in this type of area: the aboriginal inhabitants of the area are residents of foreign ethnicity, who are displaced by the high-income class of their own country or region's ethnicity; and the aboriginal inhabitants of the area are residents of their own country or region's ethnicity, who are displaced by the high-income class of foreign ethnicity. The first of these occurs mostly in developed countries, such as Harlem of New York. The second type mostly occurs in developing countries, such as some developing countries in Europe and the United States high-income people live in the community, these upscale neighborhoods before gentrification often by the country's low-income class.

2.2.2.4 Studentification

As gentrification enters its third phase, the emerging phenomenon of studentification emerges. Studentification is a phenomenon of gentrification that occurs in college towns and their surrounding neighborhoods, where the residents of the neighborhoods are replaced by students from the nearby colleges, particularly

⁷¹ Alejandro Portes, *Globalization from below: The Rise of Transnational Communities*, vol. 98 (Princeton University Princeton, 1997).

⁷² Richard Schaffer and Neil Smith, "The Gentrification of Harlem?," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 76, no. 3 (1986): 347–65, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8306.1986.tb00124.x>.

undergraduates⁷³. Limitations in the availability of school dormitories and the pursuit of a more free life are the underlying motivations for college students to move out of school in search of personal space. However, due to the limited financial ability of students, in most areas of student gentrification, the form of replacement is mostly in the form of leasing. In terms of the results of studentification, this phenomenon is not like other gentrification, which has a benign effect on the external environment; on the contrary, student gentrification has a negative effect on the local environment. Much of the coverage of student gentrification revolves around the problems of overflowing garbage, dirty streets, and traffic congestion in neighborhoods occupied by large numbers of students⁷⁴. However, many geographers have focused on the impact of student gentrification on local economic development⁷⁵⁷⁶ and its critical role in the segregation and reconfiguration of urban socio-spatial space⁷⁷⁷⁸⁷⁹. As a result, some scholars have argued that student gentrification can be viewed as part of the gentrification, a specific phenomenon of third-stage gentrification.

⁷³ Phil Hubbard, "Regulating the Social Impacts of Studentification: A Loughborough Case Study," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 40, no. 2 (February 2008): 323–41, <https://doi.org/10.1068/a396>.

⁷⁴ Peter Hall, "The University and the City," *GeoJournal* 41, no. 4 (1997): 301–9, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1006806727397>.

⁷⁵ Michael Harloe and Beth Perry, "Universities, Localities and Regional Development: The Emergence of the 'Mode 2' University?," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 28, no. 1 (March 2004): 212–23, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0309-1317.2004.00512.x>.

⁷⁶ Ron A. Boschma and Jan G. Lambooy, "Evolutionary Economics and Economic Geography," *Journal of Evolutionary Economics* 9, no. 4 (December 7, 1999): 411–29, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s001910050089>.

⁷⁷ Paul Chatterton, "The Cultural Role of Universities in the Community: Revisiting the University—Community Debate," *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 32, no. 1 (January 2000): 165–81, <https://doi.org/10.1068/a3243>.

⁷⁸ Richard L. Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: Revisited*, Paperback of the rev. ed (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2014).

⁷⁹ Rowland Atkinson and Gary Bridge, eds., *Gentrification in a Global Context*, 0 ed. (Routledge, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203392089>.

2.2.3 Gentrification research and its progress

The transformation triggered by gentrification is not limited to the physical sphere but extends to the social sphere as well. This change is mainly reflected in the social composition and class structure of the community. Gentrification leads to a social upgrading of communities with the replacement of working-class residents by upper-middle-class residents. This change in social space not only changes the social structure of the community, but also changes the cultural atmosphere and lifestyle of the community. The original community culture and lifestyle were replaced by new lifestyles, and the cultural and social atmosphere of the community also changed. This observation is consistent with Helen's research, in which she noted that many communities historically affected by unequal urban development are now at risk of gentrification. Her study found that gentrification may benefit the health of privileged residents, while it may be harmful or unhelpful to less privileged residents⁸⁰.

On the other hand, Jörg Blasius and Jürgen Friedrichs used Bourdieu's socio-spatial approach to show how a community's lifestyle changes over time in the course of gentrification. Their study highlights the impact of gentrification on a community's way of life and how this impact changes the social space of the community⁸¹.

However, gentrification is not without controversy. While it can lead to community revitalization and increased property values, it can also lead to the forced departure of long-term residents, often low-income residents, due to rising costs; Grier⁸² defines 'displacement' as 'the forced movement of low-income households from

⁸⁰ Helen V. S. Cole et al., "Breaking Down and Building Up: Gentrification, Its Drivers, and Urban Health Inequality," *Current Environmental Health Reports* 8, no. 2 (June 1, 2021): 157–66, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40572-021-00309-5>.

⁸¹ Jörg Blasius, Jürgen Friedrichs, and Heiko Rühl, "Gentrifikation in zwei Wohngebieten von Köln," *KZfSS Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 68, no. 3 (September 1, 2016): 541–59, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11577-016-0372-7>.

⁸² George Grier and Eunice Grier, "16 - Urban Displacement: A Reconnaissance," in *Back to the City*, ed. Shirley Bradway Laska and Daphne Spain (Pergamon, 1980), 252–68, <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-08-024641-3.50022-2>.

gentrifying areas because forces beyond their control make it impossible, dangerous, or unaffordable to live there⁸³. This process is particularly detrimental to the indigenous people of gentrifying areas, who often find themselves at the mercy of rising rents and property values. For example, consider a community that has been home to an Aboriginal community for generations. As the area begins to gentrify and property values rise, landlords may raise rents or sell the property to higher-income buyers. Aboriginal people are unable to keep up with these rising costs and are forced to move out. This displacement can lead to a loss of community, culture and a sense of belonging.

Recent studies have explored the impacts of gentrification on various aspects of urban life. For instance, Curci & Yousaf⁸⁴ analyzed the causes and consequences of gentrification, focusing on changes in amenities, labor markets, commuting, and housing markets. Cole⁸⁵ discussed the implications of specific types of gentrification for health equity. In short, gentrification leads not only to changes in spatial development, but also to corresponding changes in social class.

The process of gentrification, while frequently praised for revitalizing urban neighborhoods and enhancing property values, presents a paradox from the perspective of the right to the city. This concept was initially introduced by Henri Lefebvre and later elaborated upon by scholars such as David Harvey, advocating for a city that is accessible and livable for all residents, regardless of their socio-economic status. It underscores that urban development should not be measured

⁸³ Neil Smith and Peter Williams, eds., *Gentrification of the City*, 0 ed. (Routledge, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315889092>.

⁸⁴ Federico Curci and Hasin Yousaf, "Gentrification," in *Handbook of Labor, Human Resources and Population Economics*, ed. Klaus F. Zimmermann (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023), 1–36, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-57365-6_422-1.

⁸⁵ Helen V. S. Cole et al., "Breaking Down and Building Up: Gentrification, Its Drivers, and Urban Health Inequality," *Current Environmental Health Reports* 8, no. 2 (June 1, 2021): 157–66, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40572-021-00309-5>.

solely by economic gains or architectural improvements but also by its ability to maintain and enhance the social and spatial rights of the entire urban population.

As cities continue to evolve, achieving a balance between development and the preservation of the right to the city becomes increasingly crucial. This necessitates a form of urban development that does not displace long-standing communities but instead implements measures and policies to ensure the inclusivity of these communities. By fostering urban environments where new development projects coexist harmoniously with existing community structures, cities can achieve genuine revitalization, respecting and promoting the rights and lifestyles of all residents. Therefore, the phenomenon of gentrification and its potential to transform urban landscapes must be subjected to critical scrutiny and guidance to align with broader objectives of sustaining cities as spaces for inclusive growth and community well-being.

In essence, gentrification is a transformative process that alters urban communities and their social structures. It is a phenomenon that brings about significant changes to the spatial and social dynamics of urban areas. While it can lead to the revitalization of communities and an increase in property values, it frequently results in the displacement of long-term residents, typically those of lower income. This displacement, particularly for original inhabitants of gentrified areas, can lead to a loss of community, culture, and a sense of belonging. Therefore, gentrification is not merely a material transformation of urban spaces, but also a profound shift in the social class and social spatial relations within these spaces. It is a complex process with both positive and negative implications. As urban areas continue to develop, it is critical to consider the impact of gentrification on all residents.

2.3 Socio-Spatial Relations

The concept of the right to the city, first articulated by Henri Lefebvre in his seminal work *Le Droit à la ville*, provides a critical lens for examining the power dynamics inherent in urban spaces. Lefebvre challenges the dominant view of cities as mere sites of economic activity, instead arguing for a radical reimagination that prioritizes

the needs and desires of residents over capitalist or technocratic interests⁸⁶. He introduced the right to the city as a call for a radical restructuring of cities, emphasizing the needs and desires of residents over capitalist or technocratic interests. This right is not merely a visiting or access right but encompasses a deeper, participatory command over the urban environment. Lefebvre's concept goes beyond the physical use of urban space to include participation in the decision-making processes that shape the city's future.

David Harvey, building upon Lefebvre's foundational work, further develops the concept of the right to the city as an instrument of change and a collective rather than individual right⁸⁷. He posits that the freedom to make and remake our cities is one of the most fundamental yet neglected human rights. Harvey argues that the freedom to make and remake our cities is one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights. He recognizes cities as the site of accumulated wealth and political power, which should be democratically controlled by urban dwellers. Harvey's interpretation provides a tangible framework around which to mobilize social action, transforming the concept from a theoretical discussion to a catalyst for practical movements.

The right to the city, as a dynamic concept, continues to evolve and inform contemporary urban struggles. It advocates for inclusive cities where all residents, particularly marginalized communities often excluded from decision-making processes, have a stake in shaping their urban environment. This discourse intersects significantly with critical urban theory, which analyzes power structures within cities and emphasizes the transformative potential of collective action to reshape both

⁸⁶ Marina Melendres-Subirats, "Henri Lefebvre, Le droit à la ville, 1968," *Sociologie du travail* 10, no. 4 (1968): 456–57, https://www.persee.fr/doc/sotra_0038-0296_1968_num_10_4_1408_t1_0456_0000_3.

⁸⁷ David Harvey, "The Right to the City," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27, no. 4 (December 2003): 939–41, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0309-1317.2003.00492.x>.

individual lives and the urban landscape⁸⁸. The right to the city thus underpins crucial debates on social justice, spatial practices, and the democratization of urban governance.

While Lefebvre's vision offers a compelling template for urban reformation, its practical application remains complex and contingent upon the unique socio-political dynamics and spatial characteristics of each city. As movements and resistances worldwide contextualize and mobilize around the right to the city, it emerges not only as an analytical framework but also as a powerful rallying cry for those seeking to reclaim their rightful place in the urban development narrative.

To fully grasp the multifaceted impacts of gentrification, it is crucial to examine the concept of socio-spatial relations. This concept recognizes the intricate interplay between social interactions and spatial configurations, highlighting how social processes shape and are shaped by the physical environment⁸⁹. In other words, socio-spatial relations provide a lens through which we can understand how power dynamics, social inequalities, and cultural practices both are reflected in and reproduced through the organization and use of urban spaces. The right to the city has continued to evolve, informing contemporary urban struggles and advocating for inclusive cities where everyone, especially the marginalized, has a stake. It complements critical urban theory by analyzing cities' power structures and highlighting the right to change oneself by changing the city. The discourse has been pivotal in underpinning debates on social justice, spatial practices, and the democratization of urban governance.

Gentrification is a socio-economic process whereby wealthier residents and businesses move into an urban community, displacing lower-income residents and

⁸⁸ Peter Marcuse, "From Critical Urban Theory to the Right to the City," *City* 13, no. 2–3 (June 2009): 185–97, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604810902982177>.

⁸⁹ Marina Melendres-Subirats, "Henri Lefebvre, Le droit à la ville, 1968," *Sociologie du travail* 10, no. 4 (1968): 456–57, https://www.persee.fr/doc/sotra_0038-0296_1968_num_10_4_1408_t1_0456_0000_3.

altering the socio-spatial relations within these areas. Socio-spatial relations encapsulate the intricate interplay between social interactions and spatial configurations, providing a lens through which we can examine how social processes shape spatial arrangements and vice versa. This process reshapes the social fabric of a community, altering the dynamics between space and society⁹⁰.

David Harvey's emphasis on the collective power to reshape urbanization processes aligns closely with the concept of socio-spatial relations. By recognizing the freedom to remake cities as a fundamental human right, Harvey underscores the agency of residents in shaping their own environments and challenging the forces that seek to control and commodify urban space⁹¹. This perspective encourages us to view cities not as static entities but as dynamic spaces constantly being negotiated and contested by various actors.

Similarly, Lefebvre's work on the production of space provides valuable insights into how socio-spatial relations are shaped by power dynamics. He argues that space is not merely a neutral container for social life but is actively produced through social processes and imbued with meanings and values that reflect existing power relations⁹². In the context of gentrification, Lefebvre's framework helps us understand how the influx of new residents and businesses can lead to the reconfiguration of space in ways that privilege the interests of the affluent while marginalizing the needs and voices of existing residents.

By bringing together the concepts of the right to the city, gentrification, and socio-spatial relations, this research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the urban transformation of Blaak. By analyzing how gentrification has reshaped the physical

⁹⁰ Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London New York: Routledge, 1996).

⁹¹ David Harvey, "The Right to the City," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 27, no. 4 (December 2003): 939–41, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0309-1317.2003.00492.x>.

⁹² Marina Melendres-Subirats, "Henri Lefebvre, Le droit à la ville, 1968," *Sociologie du travail* 10, no. 4 (1968): 456–57, https://www.persee.fr/doc/sotra_0038-0296_1968_num_10_4_1408_t1_0456_0000_3.

and social landscape of the community, this research will explore the complex ways in which gentrification impacts residents' lives, experiences, and the right to the city.

3. Historiography of Blaak

Blaak, nestled in the vibrant heart of Rotterdam, stands as a powerful testament to the intricate interplay between state-led urban planning and community agency. Once a bustling commercial center teeming with activity, Blaak faced a period of decline in the latter half of the 20th century due to economic changes, urban sprawl, and evolving consumer habits. However, through a series of strategic planning initiatives and community collaborations, Blaak has undergone a remarkable transformation, emerging as a thriving cultural hub that embodies the dynamic spirit of Rotterdam. This chapter explores the complex processes of urban renewal and gentrification in Blaak, arguing that its journey from industrial heartland to cultural haven serves as a model for successful urban revitalization that balances economic development with social inclusivity.

Blaak's story unfolds through a rich tapestry of historical events, urban planning strategies, and social changes. In the early 20th century, Blaak was a vibrant commercial hub, home to a bustling marketplace, bustling shops, and a vibrant community of merchants and artisans. However, the post-World War II period witnessed a shift in economic activity, with the growth of suburban shopping centers and the decline of traditional retail in city centers. Blaak, like many other urban areas, experienced a decline in commercial activity, leading to vacant storefronts, increased poverty, and a sense of disinvestment.

Recognizing the need for revitalization, Rotterdam's city planners embarked on a series of ambitious urban renewal initiatives, beginning in the 1980s. These initiatives focused on transforming Blaak into a more attractive and vibrant urban space. The city undertook major infrastructure projects, including the construction of new public transport lines, the creation of pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, and the development of modern, mixed-use buildings that incorporated housing, retail, and cultural spaces.

Beyond infrastructure improvements, the city also implemented a number of innovative strategies to promote cultural development and community engagement. The creation of the Kunsthal Rotterdam, a renowned contemporary art museum, and

the establishment of various performance spaces and art studios transformed Blaak into a cultural destination. The city also fostered a sense of community by encouraging the establishment of local businesses, promoting cultural events, and supporting community organizations that work to improve quality of life in the neighborhood.

By meticulously tracing the trajectory of urban planning strategies, their tangible impacts on the district's spatial and socio-economic fabric, and the voices of those who lived, worked, and shaped this transformation, this chapter delves into the heart of Blaak's urban renaissance. It explores the challenges and triumphs of the urban renewal process, highlighting how Blaak's journey is emblematic of not just physical redevelopment but of cultivating a vibrant, sustainable urban community reflective of Rotterdam's dynamic urban spirit.

3.1 Post-War Resurgence: Setting the Stage for Urban Transformation

The catastrophic impact of World War II on the city of Rotterdam, particularly Blaak, necessitated an urgent and expansive reconstruction effort to restore the city's former vitality and functionality. Among the numerous reconstruction strategies considered in the immediate post-war period, the Witteveen Plan, formulated in December 1941 by city planner Willem Gerrit Witteveen, stood out for its visionary approach towards rebuilding and revitalizing the city. This plan aimed not only to restore Blaak to its pre-war status as a thriving commercial hub but also to address broader challenges accentuated by the war, such as the severe housing shortage and the need for modernized urban infrastructure conducive to a major port city.

Witteveen's conceptualization was holistic and forward-looking, emphasizing a city landscape that was not just reconstructed but reimagined to meet the growing and evolving demands of the mid-20th century. The plan proposed a meticulous balance between commercial activities and residential needs, reinforcing Blaak's role in Rotterdam's economic framework while ensuring the provision of adequate living quarters for its populace. His blueprint envisaged wide, organized boulevards that would facilitate smooth traffic flow, spacious public squares, and ample green spaces, aiming to foster a harmonious blend of urban functionality and aesthetic

appeal. This attention to both utility and quality of urban life underscored a new paradigm in city planning post the devastation experienced during the war.

Central to the Witteveen Plan was the revitalization of Blaak as a commercial bastion. The proposal included the development of modern commercial facilities, marketplaces, and business centers designed to reinvigorate trade and commerce, which were the lifeblood of the city. Additionally, significant emphasis was placed on the maritime industry, recognizing Rotterdam's strategic importance as a port city. The plan proposed the expansion of port facilities and the enhancement of maritime transport infrastructure to bolster economic activities and secure the city's position as a crucial node in international trade routes.

However, Witteveen's vision went beyond economic considerations, addressing the acute housing crisis that Rotterdam faced in the aftermath of the war. The plan laid out strategies for the construction of residential areas that would not only meet the immediate demand for housing but also provide a conducive living environment for the city's residents. This included the conceptualization of housing complexes that were integrated with the urban landscape, featuring sufficient amenities, green spaces, and community centers. By doing so, the Witteveen Plan aimed to foster a sense of community and belonging among the inhabitants, laying the foundation for a resilient urban society.

The Witteveen Plan, often heralded as "the First Reconstruction Plan," serves as a pivotal chapter in Rotterdam's history, embodying the city's resolve to rebuild from the ashes of war. The comprehensive nature of the plan, with its dual focus on economic revival and social welfare, provided a blueprint for Rotterdam's path towards becoming a modern, dynamic urban center. While not all elements of the plan were ultimately realized, its principles and ambitions significantly shaped the city's development trajectory in the years following the war. The legacy of the Witteveen Plan is evident in the urban fabric of contemporary Rotterdam, particularly in the Blaak area, where the blend of commercial vigor and residential vibrancy reflects the plan's enduring influence. The plan's emphasis on balanced urban development, integration of green spaces, and the creation of a functional yet

appealing city landscape continue to resonate in Rotterdam's ongoing urban planning endeavors.

Gentrification has significantly transformed the physical spaces of Blaak. The process has led to the renovation and repurposing of old buildings, the construction of new high-end residential and commercial properties, and the enhancement of public spaces. According to Smith (2002), gentrification often results in the "aestheticization" of urban areas, where the physical environment is upgraded to attract more affluent residents and businesses. In Blaak, this has manifested in the development of modern architectural landmarks and the improvement of infrastructure, making the area more attractive to investors and tourists alike.

However, these changes have also led to the displacement of long-standing businesses and residents who can no longer afford the rising costs associated with the upgraded physical environment. As noted by Zukin (2010), the physical transformation of gentrified areas often comes at the expense of the original community's character and accessibility.

The social fabric of Blaak has been altered by gentrification, leading to shifts in community dynamics and social relations. The influx of more affluent residents has introduced new social norms and practices, often clashing with those of the existing community. This phenomenon is well-documented in the literature, with Freeman (2006) highlighting how gentrification can lead to social polarization and a sense of alienation among long-term residents.

In Blaak, the arrival of new businesses catering to wealthier clientele has changed the social landscape, creating spaces that are less inclusive for lower-income residents. This shift has led to a decrease in social cohesion and an increase in social tensions, as noted by Lees, Slater, and Wyly (2008). The original residents often feel marginalized and excluded from the new social order, leading to a breakdown in community ties and a loss of social capital.

The rights of residents in Blaak have been significantly impacted during the process of gentrification. The rising property values and rental costs have led to the

displacement of many long-term residents, undermining their right to affordable housing. According to Marcuse (1985), gentrification often results in the erosion of housing rights, as market forces prioritize profit over the needs of existing communities.

In Blaak, this has been evident in the increasing number of evictions and the conversion of affordable housing units into luxury apartments. The lack of adequate legal protections for tenants has exacerbated this issue, leaving many residents vulnerable to displacement. As noted by Atkinson (2000), the displacement caused by gentrification not only disrupts the lives of individuals but also undermines the social fabric of communities, leading to long-term negative consequences.

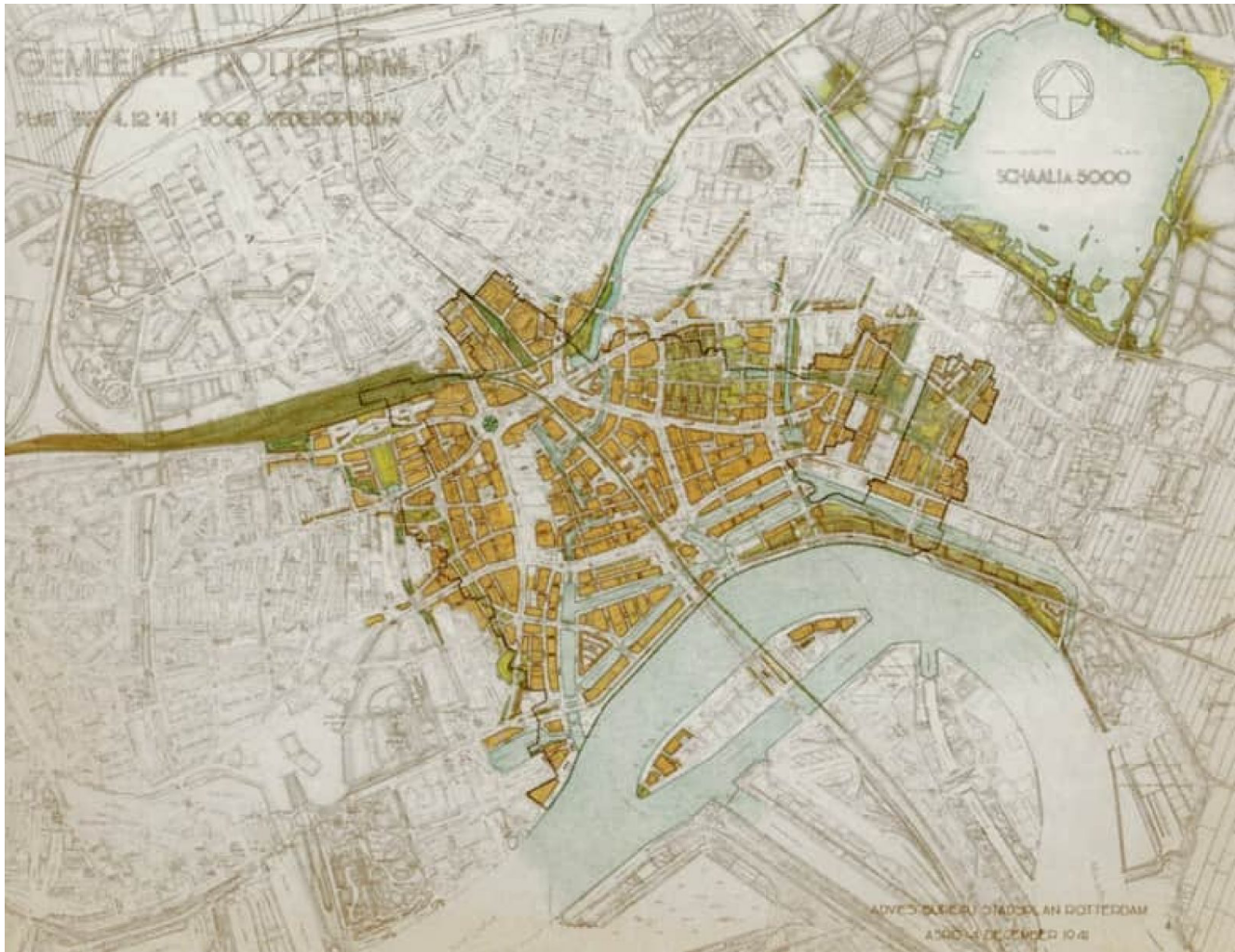


Figure 1. Witteveen reconstruction plan, December 1941⁹³

3.2 Mid-Century Transformations and the Emergence of Modernist Planning

Post-war reconstruction efforts in Rotterdam witnessed a significant paradigm shift with the introduction of Cornelis van Traa's Plan of 1946. This revolutionary urban planning initiative emerged as a direct continuation and evolution of the principles set forth by the earlier Witteveen Plan. However, Van Traa's vision diverged towards a more compartmentalized and functional urban matrix, embracing the burgeoning

⁹³ Melvin Baker and Peter Neary, "The Commission of Government's 1944 Reconstruction Plan," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 36, no. 1 (October 6, 2021): 116–29, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1082215ar>.

ideals of modernist urban planning. His approach was radical, aiming not just to rebuild but to reimagine the city's urban landscape in a way that would facilitate a more organized, efficient, and future-forward urban environment.

Under the guidance of "Plan Witteveen, the First Reconstruction Plan," the city's fabric began to transform, setting the stage for Van Traa's ambitious overhaul. Blaak, at the heart of Rotterdam, was specifically targeted for a robust enhancement of its commercial identity. Van Traa envisioned a district that was not only a center for business and trade but also a model of modern urbanism. The plan detailed the designation of different city blocks for specific purposes: some were earmarked for commercial activities, others for residential spaces, while still others were designated as industrial zones. This compartmentalization was a strategic move to segregate functions, thereby optimizing the area for efficiency and adaptability to the needs of a modern Rotterdam.

The intrinsic beauty of this bold restructuring lay in its ability to marry functionality with the aesthetics of modernist design. The architectural language that began to emerge in Blaak was characterized by clean lines, simplicity, and a focus on utility. Buildings and public spaces were constructed with an emphasis on serving the specific needs of the area, whether it be commerce, living, or industrial activities. This modernist approach to urban planning was instrumental in breaking away from the traditional, often chaotic urban sprawl, paving the way for a more orderly and functional city layout.

The impact of Cornelis van Traa's plan extended beyond just the physical restructuring of city blocks. It initiated a profound shift towards modernist gentrification, heralding a new era where modernity was not just architectural but also a reflection of societal progress and innovation. Blaak's transformation under Van Traa's guidance was emblematic of this new era, showcasing urban renewal not as mere physical reconstruction but as a holistic upgrade of the urban fabric to meet contemporary needs.

Additionally, the plan laid significant emphasis on the modernization and renovation of socio-spatial layouts. Public spaces, roads, and amenities were designed or

redesigned to enhance connectivity, accessibility, and usability. The introduction of organized land transport flows, in particular, marked a substantial improvement in the city's infrastructure. Roads, bridges, and public transport were integrated into the urban design, facilitating smoother movement within and around Blaak. This not only improved day-to-day life for residents and businesses but also reinforced Blaak's position as a vital hub in Rotterdam's urban ecosystem.

Van Traa's plan was more than just an exercise in urban design; it was a reflection of the societal values and aspirations of the mid-century. By compartmentalizing urban functions, it aimed to create a balanced urban environment where commercial vitality could coexist with residential tranquility and industrial productivity. This functional division was also reflective of a broader ambition to enhance the quality of life for all city dwellers, by creating spaces that were both functional and conducive to the new ways of urban living.

Moreover, the transformation of Blaak under this plan was a testament to the resilience and forward-thinking of Rotterdam in the post-war years. The city's ability to not only recover from the wartime devastation but to use the opportunity to leap forward into modernity is a narrative of revival and innovation. This period of reconstruction, marked by Van Traa's visionary planning, left an indelible mark on Rotterdam, laying the groundwork for the city's future development and its identity as a modern urban space.

As Rotterdam continues to evolve, the principles of compartmentalization and functional design instituted by Cornelis van Traa remain a foundational element of its urban planning ethos. Blaak, with its modern infrastructure, diversified urban zones, and harmonious blend of form and function, stands as a living legacy of this transformative era in Rotterdam's history, symbolizing the city's continued commitment to thoughtful, progressive urbanism.

Gentrification in Blaak has led to substantial changes in its physical spaces. The modernist planning principles introduced by Van Traa have evolved over time, leading to the development of high-end commercial and residential properties. The architectural landscape has been significantly upgraded, with older buildings being

replaced or renovated to meet contemporary standards. This transformation has resulted in a more aesthetically appealing urban environment, but it has also contributed to the displacement of long-standing community landmarks and affordable housing units.

The process of gentrification has profoundly impacted social relations within Blaak. The influx of more affluent residents and businesses has altered the socio-economic fabric of the area. Long-term residents, often from lower-income backgrounds, have faced increasing social and economic pressures, leading to a sense of displacement and loss of community. The new demographic has brought with it different cultural and social norms, which sometimes clash with the existing local traditions, leading to tensions and a fragmented community identity.

The rights of residents in Blaak have been affected in various ways during the process of gentrification. The shift towards high-value commercial and residential developments has often prioritized the interests of investors and new residents over those of the existing population. This has led to issues such as rising rents, reduced access to affordable housing, and the erosion of community networks. There have also been instances where long-term residents have faced legal and bureaucratic challenges in retaining their homes and businesses, highlighting a need for more inclusive urban policies that protect the rights and interests of all stakeholders in the community.

The mid-century transformations initiated by Cornelis van Traa's Plan of 1946 laid the foundation for Blaak's evolution into a modern urban space. However, the ongoing process of gentrification has introduced new challenges and complexities. While the physical spaces of Blaak have been enhanced, and the area has become a symbol of Rotterdam's resilience and modernity, the social fabric and rights of its long-term residents have been significantly impacted. As Rotterdam continues to grow and develop, it is essential to balance the drive for modernization with the need to preserve the rights and social cohesion of its diverse communities.



Figure 2. 1946 Cornelis van Traa Plan⁹⁴

3.3 Proposals for Transport and Residential Infill

In the transformative journey of Blaak, as it maneuvered through its phases of re-industrialization, a significant emphasis was placed on upgrading and expanding its infrastructure to align with the emerging urban demands. The urban planners and policymakers were tasked with striking a balance between nurturing the growth of commercial and industrial activities while ensuring the city remained livable, accessible, and aesthetically pleasing. Central to achieving this objective were the

⁹⁴ Melvin Baker and Peter Neary, "The Commission of Government's 1944 Reconstruction Plan," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 36, no. 1 (October 6, 2021): 116–29, <https://doi.org/10.7202/1082215ar>.

innovative transport and residential infill proposals that promised to redefine Blaak's urban landscape.

Among the most ambitious of these proposals was the design and construction of a triple suspension bridge. This engineering marvel was not merely a functional infrastructure meant to facilitate smooth traffic flow but also a symbol of Blaak's modernization and architectural innovation. It was envisioned to span across significant water bodies, providing critical links between different parts of the city, thus significantly reducing travel times and boosting economic activities by ensuring easier access to Blaak's re-emerging industrial zones. The bridge, with its elegant design and structural integrity, was also set to become a landmark, contributing to the city's skyline and serving as a testament to Rotterdam's resilience and technological prowess.

Similarly, the introduction of a behemoth traffic intersection beside Oudehaven was poised to revolutionize the traffic management system in Blaak. Designed to handle a high volume of vehicles, the intersection aimed to reduce congestion, a common concern in rapidly industrializing urban centers. By facilitating smoother vehicle movement, the intersection would not only enhance transport efficiency but also contribute to reducing pollution levels, thereby improving the quality of urban life. Moreover, the strategic placement of this intersection next to Oudehaven, an area of historical significance and bustling activity, underscored the planners' vision of blending the old with the new, ensuring that urban development paid homage to Blaak's rich heritage while steering it towards a future of growth and sustainability.

These transport networks and their seminal designs were a critical component of Blaak's comprehensive urban development strategy. Their role extended beyond mere facilitation of mobility; they were instrumental in shaping the urban landscape. By integrating innovative transportation solutions with urban design, planners aimed to create a cityscape that was not only functional but also harmonious and integrated. The aesthetics of the infrastructure, its alignment with the city's architectural ethos, and its impact on the urban vista were carefully considered, ensuring that the development projects augmented Blaak's urban appeal.

Furthermore, the proposals were indicative of a wider commitment to enhancing the overall functionality of the city. Recognizing the challenges posed by re-industrialization, such as increased pollution, traffic congestion, and strain on existing infrastructures, these initiatives were aimed at fostering an environment conducive to economic activities while prioritizing sustainability and livability. The emphasis on sustainable urban development was evident in the meticulous planning of residential infill projects. These projects were designed to address the acute need for housing due to the demographic changes accompanying Blaak's economic transformation. By strategically locating new housing developments within the city's fabric, planners sought to optimize land use, promote mixed-use developments, and encourage the creation of vibrant, cohesive communities.

The residential infill proposals were not mere constructions; they were envisioned as integral parts of the urban ecosystem. They aimed to foster a sense of community, facilitate easy access to amenities and services, and promote a balanced urban lifestyle. The design and layout of these new residential areas were conceived with an eye towards enhancing connectivity with public transport systems, green spaces, and commercial zones, thereby creating a holistic urban living experience.

In sum, the transport and residential infill proposals for Blaak were emblematic of a broader vision for Rotterdam's future — a vision that championed innovation, resilience, and sustainability. These infrastructural developments were more than just physical transformations; they were catalysts for socio-economic growth, urban revitalization, and community wellbeing. As Blaak continues to navigate its re-industrialization journey, the foundational changes introduced through these ambitious proposals are set to play a pivotal role in shaping its destiny, ensuring that the city remains at the forefront of modern urban living, whilst remaining true to its heritage and identity.

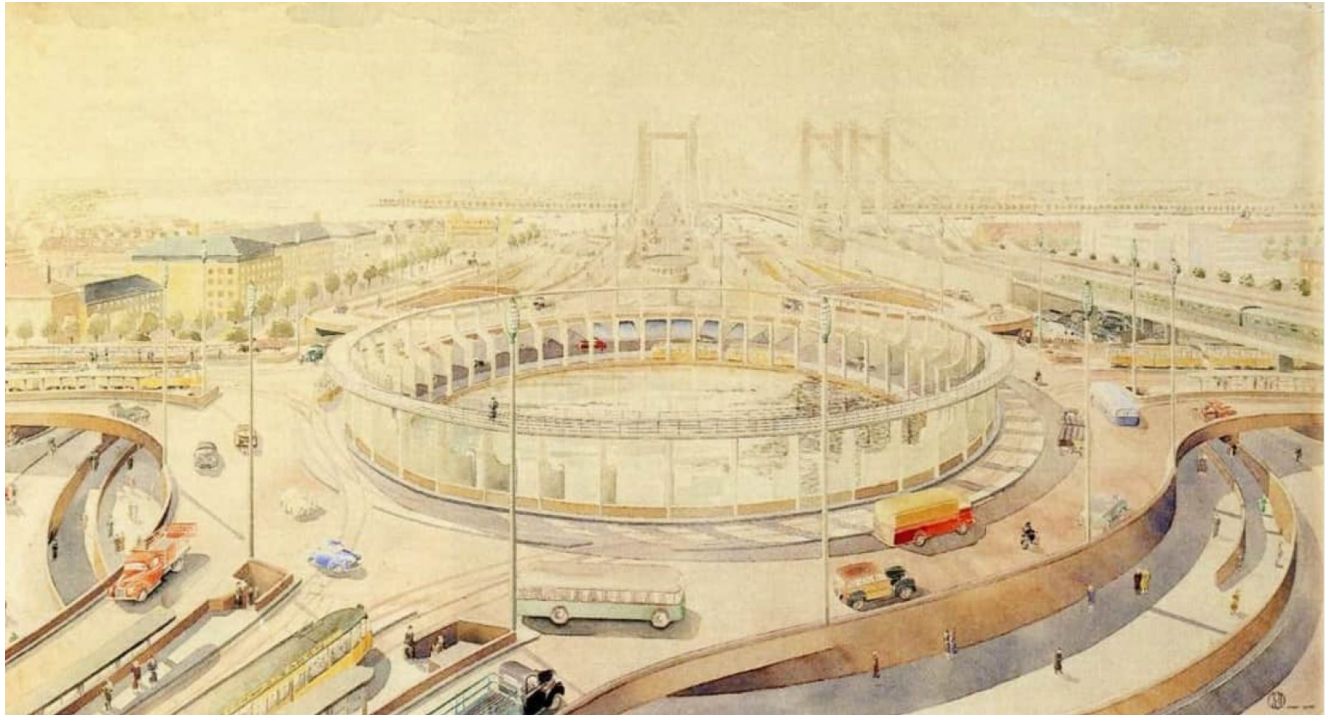


Figure 3. A triple suspension bridge and an immense traffic intersection were proposed beside Oudehaven⁹⁵

3.4 Communal Reconfigurations: Public Dissent in Urban Developments

The latter half of the twentieth century, a period marked by ambitious urban development agendas, was a transformative era for Blaak. Amidst these developments, the Rotte-Trace motorway plan became a focal point of civic engagement, highlighting the inherent tensions between governmental infrastructure projects and the community's vision for their neighborhood. This period illuminates the intricate dynamics of urban development, characterized by a complex interplay between state-driven ambitions and the grassroots desire for community preservation and sustainable development.

The ambitious Rotte-Trace motorway plan was conceived with the intention of

⁹⁵ "Traffic Intersection | Post-War Reconstruction Community Rotterdam," accessed July 3, 2024, <https://wederopbouwrotterdam.nl/en/articles/traffic-intersection>.

enhancing connectivity and fostering economic growth in Rotterdam, particularly in Blaak. Positioned as a vital infrastructural upgrade, the motorway was envisioned to streamline traffic, reduce congestion, and facilitate smoother transport of goods and services across the city. From the perspective of urban planners and policymakers, the project was a necessary leap towards modernizing the city's infrastructure and accommodating the growing demands of an expanding urban population.

However, the proposal quickly became a lightning rod for public scrutiny and opposition. The documentation preserved by Stadsarchief Rotterdam (Rotterdam City Archives) reveals a rich tapestry of public sentiment, articulating a collective apprehension about the potential repercussions of the motorway construction on the fabric of the community. Residents, community groups, and local activists voiced their concerns, arguing that the project would lead to the dismantling of established residential areas, the displacement of communities, and the irreparable alteration of Blaak's urban landscape and heritage.

The heart of the opposition lay in the perceived trade-off between infrastructural development and the quality of urban life. Critics of the Rotte-Trace motorway plan underscored the potential environmental degradation, increased pollution, and noise that would accompany the motorway. There was a profound concern that the construction, characterized by its invasive nature and the significant urban footprint it commanded, would inflict damage on the community's environment, undermining green spaces, recreational areas, and the overall livability of the neighborhood. Furthermore, the fear of disrupting the social fabric of Blaak, eroding community ties, and displacing residents added a deeply personal dimension to the public's resistance.

This episode of civic engagement and opposition in the history of Blaak underscores the nuanced negotiation process intrinsic to urban development. The public's vocal resistance to the Rotte-Trace motorway plan reflects a broader dialogue about the priorities and values that should guide the transformation of urban environments. It illustrates the tug of war between the state's infrastructural ambitions, aimed at fostering economic vitality and urban efficiency, and the community's aspirations for

a living environment that preserves the integrity of residential areas and prioritizes the health and well-being of its inhabitants.

The unfolding of events around the Rotte-Trace motorway plan also highlights the importance of participatory urban planning and the potent role of public engagement in shaping cityscapes. The episode served as a catalyst for broader discussions about sustainable urban development, community involvement in planning processes, and the pursuit of development strategies that harmonize infrastructural needs with environmental stewardship and social cohesion.

In the wake of the opposition, the narrative of the Rotte-Trace motorway plan became a compelling case study in the complexities of balancing modernization with preservation, economic growth with environmental sustainability, and infrastructural efficiency with community well-being. It posed critical questions about how cities like Blaak can navigate the challenges of urban development in a manner that is inclusive, sustainable, and reflective of the diverse priorities of all stakeholders involved.

As Blaak moved forward from this pivotal moment in its urban development journey, the legacy of the Rotte-Trace motorway debacle lingered, serving as a poignant reminder of the values and considerations that must guide the future transformation of urban spaces. This chapter in Blaak's history underscores the imperative for cities to foster an open, inclusive, and dialogic approach to urban planning - one that encompasses not only the technical and economic dimensions of development projects but also the social, environmental, and cultural implications that deeply impact the lives of urban residents.



Figure 4. Protested against a municipal plan to build a motorway at the Rotte (Rotte-Trace)⁹⁶

3.5 Contemporary Urban Fabric: The Markthal and its Significance

As the twenty-first century dawned upon the city of Rotterdam, Blaak began to witness a transformative phase in its urban landscape, marked by new architectural ventures that sought to redefine the fabric of the city. Among these, the construction plans of the Markthal stood out as a beacon of modern architectural achievement, epitomizing the innovative spirit that was beginning to permeate the district. The Markthal, conceptualized to fulfill a dual role as both a vibrant marketplace and a residential haven, emerged as an iconic structure that

⁹⁶ “Stadsarchief Rotterdam | Nieuw Op de Website Zomer 2022,” accessed July 3, 2024, <https://stadsarchief.rotterdam.nl/over-ons/nieuwsoverzicht/nieuw-op-de-website-zomer/>.

encapsulated the very essence of contemporary urban design thinking. This marvel was not only an architectural feat but also a cultural symbol, blending the rich historical tapestry of Blaak with the functional demands of modern living.

The Markthal was conceived as a response to the evolving urban dynamics of Blaak, aiming to create a space that embodied the dual needs for economic vibrancy and comfortable living. The structure's design, featuring a stunning arch that houses an array of residential apartments overlooking the bustling market floor, broke new ground in architectural design. Its curved facade, adorned with a vast artwork that depicts fruits, vegetables, and flowers, adds a visual narrative to the building, inviting onlookers into a world where art and architecture converge.

At the heart of the Markthal's architectural philosophy was the intention to pay homage to Rotterdam's maritime heritage while steering the city toward a future hallmarked by innovation and sustainability. The market's interior, a cavernous space teeming with stalls selling an array of goods from fresh produce to gourmet delicacies, rekindles the historical essence of trade and commerce that has always been central to Blaak's identity. Meanwhile, the residential units nestled within the arch embody the modern quest for urban living spaces that offer comfort, convenience, and a sense of community.

The Markthal's significance extends beyond its physical structure; it represents a pivotal moment in Rotterdam's urban design thinking. It symbolizes the city's ambition to create multifunctional spaces that accommodate the diverse needs of its citizens. By integrating a marketplace with residential living, the Markthal marries the concept of prosperity with the quality of life, proposing a holistic approach to urban development. It respects the historical heritage of Blaak, with its long tradition of being a commercial hub, while pioneering a new direction in the development of the city that is inclusive, sustainable, and forward-looking.

Furthermore, the Markthal has emerged as a catalyst for urban renewal, inspiring a wave of revitalization efforts within Blaak. It has become a bustling center of activity, attracting locals and tourists alike, and fostering a sense of community among the residents. The surrounding area has seen a rejuvenation of public spaces, improved

pedestrian pathways, and the introduction of green spaces, establishing a new paradigm for urban living that emphasizes walkability, accessibility, and environmental consciousness.

The blend of historical sentiment with contemporary function as embodied by the Markthal also underscores the complex narrative of urban transformation that Blaak has undergone. It reflects the growing recognition of the importance of architectural innovation in addressing the changing needs of urban societies. In crafting a space that simultaneously serves as a marketplace and a home, the Markthal challenges conventional notions of urban design and land use, proposing a model for the future where multifunctional structures become integral to the urban landscape.

Moreover, the Markthal's success in creating a thriving community around it highlights the potential of architectural projects to galvanize social and economic development. It has become a nucleus for entrepreneurship, culinary exploration, and cultural exchange, contributing significantly to the economic vitality of Blaak. The diversity of goods available, coupled with the array of eateries and cafés, enriches the urban experience, making the Markthal a destination for gastronomy and leisure.

In conclusion, the Markthal stands as a testament to Blaak's transition into the twenty-first century, embodying the aspirations of a city that values its heritage while embracing the challenges and opportunities of modern urban living. It represents a synthesis of historical reverence and contemporary innovation, setting a benchmark for urban design that seeks to enhance the quality of life of its inhabitants while fostering economic prosperity. As such, the Markthal not only reflects the new phase in urban design thinking but also propels Rotterdam towards a future where architecture and urban development are inextricably linked to the fabric of the community.

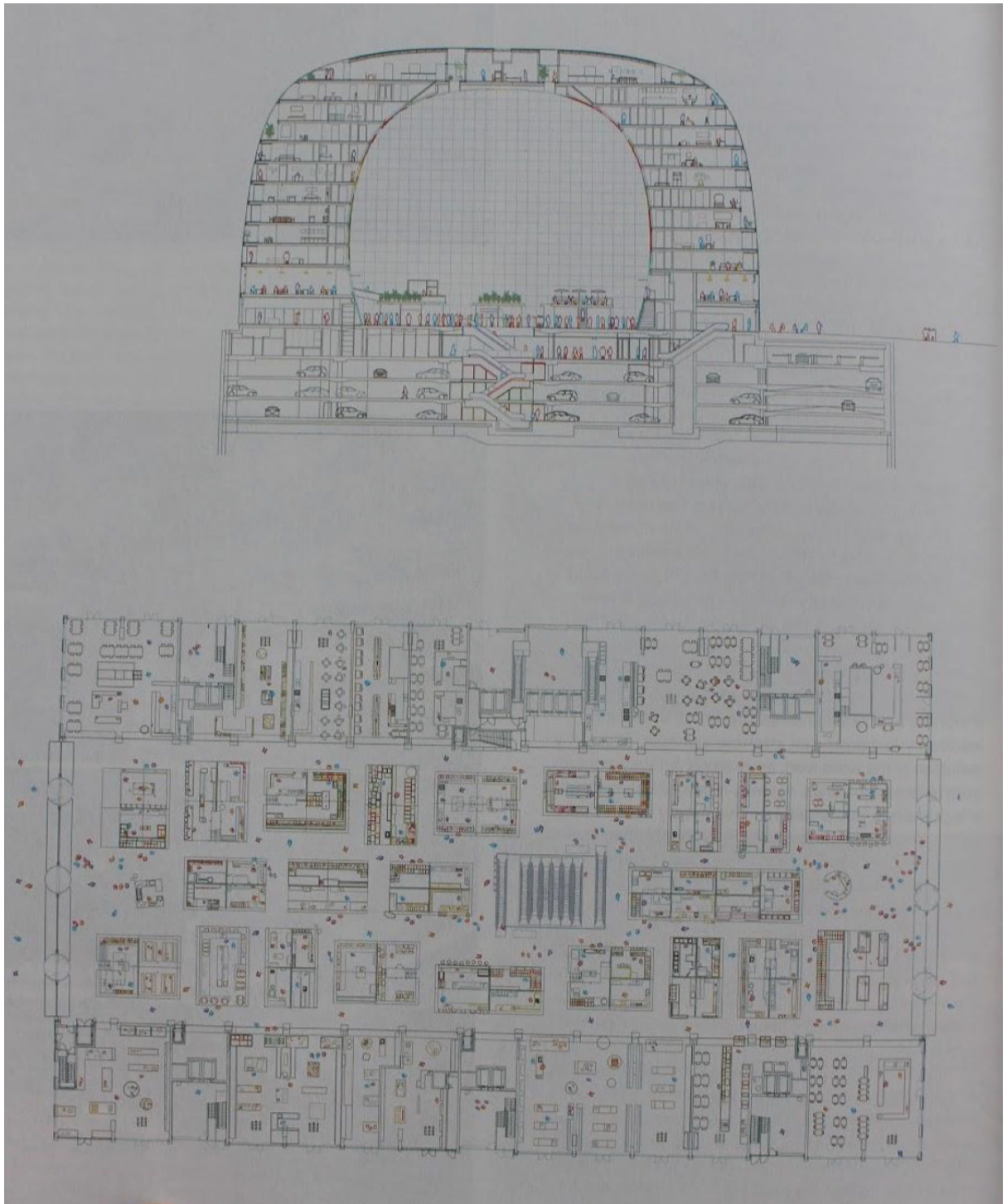


Figure 5. Markthal's plans⁹⁷

Embarking on a scholarly journey through the complex urban annals requires a deep

⁹⁷ Ilka Ruby and Andreas Ruby, eds., MVRDV Buildings, Updated edition (Rotterdam: nai010 publishers, 2015).

engagement with Clarke's open-ended definition of urban transformation, facilitating a nuanced exploration of the multifaceted impacts of gentrification through the prism of Blaak's enriched socio-spatial history. This exploration, firmly rooted in the socio-spatial narrative of Blaak, seeks to dissect the layers of urban metamorphosis, revealing insights into the dynamics that have shaped the district's contemporary fabric.

The investigation gains depth from the foundational works of prominent thinkers in urban studies, notably David Harvey and the collaborative insights of Meerow & Newell. Harvey's analysis of the right to the city, combined with his critical take on processes of capital accumulation, provides a theoretical scaffold that foregrounds the socio-economic forces driving urban transformations. Meerow & Newell's discussions on resilience in urban development sharpen the focus on sustainable futures, thereby enriching the inquiry. These perspectives collectively guide the exploration, emphasizing the pursuit of equitable and sustainable urban futures amidst the whirlwind of change.

Thus, the historiography of Blaak emerges as more than just a chronological recounting of urban change; it is a profound dialogue with time itself, serving as a testament to Rotterdam's enduring urban spirit. This narrative seeks to unravel how gentrification, often perceived through a singular lens of socioeconomic shifts, encapsulates a wider spectrum of change encompassing cultural, environmental, and spatial dimensions.

Deepening the exploration, the critical urban theory challenges conventional notions of urban development. The contributions of Harvey, with his emphasis on social justice in urban contexts, alongside Meerow & Newell, with their advocacy for resilient urban systems, frame the analysis. They compel a reevaluation of the broader implications of gentrification beyond economic phenomena and as catalysts for broader urban transformations. This encompasses shifts in cultural practices, environmental stewardship, and the renegotiation of public and private spaces.

This expanded perspective allows for the interrogation of underlying assumptions about gentrification and its repercussions on urban communities, prompting a

reevaluation of the roles of policy, planning, and community engagement in shaping urban landscapes. By situating Blaak within this broader theoretical and historical context, the exploration uncovers the layers of urban evolution, from its historical roots as a bustling port to its contemporary status as a vibrant urban enclave.

Furthermore, this inquiry into Blaak's historiography highlights the intricate balance between preservation and renewal, underscoring the necessity of maintaining the historical urban fabric while embracing contemporary urban living imperatives. It stresses the importance of fostering urban environments that are economically vibrant, socially inclusive, and environmentally sustainable.

In closing, the historiography of Blaak stands as a microcosm of broader urban transformations and offers invaluable insights for urban policymakers, planners, and communities worldwide. It underscores the imperative of crafting future urban environments that prioritize equity, resilience, and reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of urban residents, guiding the path towards more inclusive and sustainable cities.

4. Literature Review

The phenomenon of gentrification has sparked extensive scholarly inquiry, delving into its multifaceted consequences and intricate socio-spatial implications. This literature review explores key themes that have emerged in the discourse on gentrification, emphasizing the need to examine both the positive and negative outcomes, the experiences of diverse communities, and the micro-level dynamics of socio-spatial change.

4.1 Consequences of Gentrification

Gentrification, a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, has been the subject of extensive research across various disciplines. In Rotterdam, particularly in areas like Blaak, gentrification has led to significant changes in the physical landscape. Urban regeneration projects have transformed former industrial areas into residential spaces and urban facilities⁹⁸. However, these transformations often come at the expense of the original residents, who may be displaced due to rising housing costs⁹⁹.

While the displacement of long-term residents due to rising housing costs is a well-documented consequence of gentrification, scholars have increasingly recognized the need to move beyond this singular focus (Atkinson 2002) Freeman (2006) highlights that the impact of gentrification varies depending on the specific context, the demographics of the displaced, and the nature outvenoming population. While some studies emphasize the negative impacts of displacement, such as the loss of social networks and cultural identity (Marcuse 1986), others suggest that gentrification can also lead to positive outcomes like increased economic activity and

⁹⁸ Paul Stouten, 'Gentrification and Urban Design in the Urban Fabric of Rotterdam', *Journal of Urban Regeneration and Renewal* 11, no. 1 (2017): 92–103, <http://www.scopus.com/inward/record.url?scp=85032010034&partnerID=8YFLogxK>.

⁹⁹ 'Gentrification in Rotterdam: Ingenuity or Danger? | Erasmus University Rotterdam', accessed 5 February 2024, <https://www.eur.nl/en/education/alumni/content-alumni/erasmus-alumni-magazine/gentrification-rotterdam>.

improved public services (Ley 1996)

The rights of residents are a critical aspect of the gentrification debate. Gentrification can lead to the displacement of long-term residents, who are often forced out due to rising property prices. This displacement can be seen as a violation of the residents' rights to housing and to the city¹⁰⁰. Moreover, the process of gentrification can lead to increased policing and surveillance in gentrifying neighborhoods, which can further infringe on the rights of the residents¹⁰¹. Atkinson¹⁰² emphasizes the displacement of low-income residents as a significant consequence of gentrification. Rising rents and property values associated with gentrification pose challenges for these residents to maintain their presence in their neighborhoods. This displacement can lead to the dissolution of community bonds and a diminished sense of belonging, thereby exacerbating social and economic disparities. Ley¹⁰³ argues that gentrification begins with changing societal needs and demands rather than structural changes in the housing market. This perspective suggests that gentrification is driven more by demographic shifts than economic factors. Research indicates that the movement of educated Millennials to central city areas is a primary element of urban renewal¹⁰⁴. Their desire to live close to work and city amenities is driving the gentrification trend. Decreasing violent crime rates have made certain low-income neighborhoods more enticing, contributing to

¹⁰⁰ 'Gentrification and the End of Black Communities', Hampton Institute, 31 August 2021, <https://www.hamptonthink.org/read/gentrification-and-the-end-of-black-communities>.

¹⁰¹ Tanya Golash-Boza, Hyunsu Oh, and Robert Kane, 'Gentrification, White Encroachment, and the Policing of Black Residents in Washington, DC', *Critical Criminology* 31, no. 1 (1 March 2023): 181–202, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10612-022-09670-9>.

¹⁰² Rowland Atkinson, "The Hidden Costs of Gentrification: Displacement in Central London," *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 15, no. 4 (2000): 307–26, <https://doi.org/10.1023/a:1010128901782>.

¹⁰³ David Ley, 'Gentrification and the Politics of the New Middle Class', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 12, no. 1 (February 1994): 53–74, <https://doi.org/10.1068/d120053>.

¹⁰⁴ Derek Hyra, 'Commentary: Causes and Consequences of Gentrification', n.d.

gentrification¹⁰⁵.

The social implications of gentrification are equally significant. The process can disrupt established communities and alter social relations. In the context of Blaak, the influx of more affluent residents and the displacement of original inhabitants can lead to a loss of community cohesion¹⁰⁶. Furthermore, gentrification can exacerbate social inequalities, as it often benefits the more privileged residents while harming or not benefiting the underprivileged residents¹⁰⁷.

Gentrification's consequences are complex and multilayered. The effects vary depending on the social and geographic contexts of the neighborhoods undergoing gentrification.

4.2 Socio-Spatial Implications of Gentrification

Marcuse posits that gentrification is inherently linked with the displacement of lower-income households¹⁰⁸. This displacement, he argues, is not just a physical relocation, but also a disruption of social networks and community structures.

Slater¹⁰⁹, on the other hand, underscores the power dynamics inherent in

¹⁰⁵ Tim Lukas and Jan Üblacker, 'Gentrification and Crime. Theoretical Explanations and Methodological Problems', *SIAC-Journal – Journal for Police Science and Practice* 11 (2021): 64–74, https://doi.org/10.7396/IE_2021_G.

¹⁰⁶ Benjamin J. Newman, Yamil Velez, and Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz, 'Diversity of a Different Kind: Gentrification and Its Impact on Social Capital and Political Participation in Black Communities', *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* 1, no. 2 (September 2016): 316–47, <https://doi.org/10.1017/rep.2016.8>.

¹⁰⁷ Helen V. S. Cole et al., 'Breaking Down and Building Up: Gentrification, Its Drivers, and Urban Health Inequality', *Current Environmental Health Reports* 8, no. 2 (1 June 2021): 157–66, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40572-021-00309-5>.

¹⁰⁸ Peter Marcuse, 'Gentrification, Abandonment, and Displacement: Connections, Causes, and Policy Responses in New York City', *Wash. U. J. Urb. & Contemp. L.* 28 (1985): 195.

¹⁰⁹ Tom Slater, 'Missing Marcuse: On Gentrification and Displacement', *City* 13, no. 2–3 (June 2009): 292–311, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13604810902982250>.

gentrification, highlighting how it can reinforce social inequalities.

In essence, both Marcuse and Slater illuminate how gentrification goes beyond the physical transformation of urban spaces. It also reconfigures socio-spatial relations, altering who has access to space, resources, and opportunities within the city. This underscores the importance of adopting a critical lens in studying gentrification, one that takes into account its varied and far-reaching socio-spatial implications.

Within the expansive realm of gentrification research, Blaak's narrative benefits markedly from comparative analysis, juxtaposed against global exemplars and Rotterdam's diverse quarters. Case studies of gentrification in metropolises such as New York and London demonstrate a pattern of socio-economic upheaval and cultural displacement akin to that of Blaak, albeit modulated by distinct regulatory frameworks and market forces. Meanwhile, intra-city comparisons within Rotterdam reveal how different community characteristics, planning policies, and community responses shape the multifaceted outcomes of gentrification. Such juxtapositions unravel the intricacies of Blaak's transformation, highlighting both universal attributes of the gentrification phenomenon and particularities borne of its local context. This comparative discourse enriches our understanding of Blaak's restructuring, guiding the inquiry towards informed hypotheses about the socio-spatial dynamics at play.

4.3 Filling the Research Gap: Blaak and the Micro-Level Dynamics of Gentrification

This research seeks to bridge the research gap on gentrification and socio-spatial relations within the specific urban enclave of Rotterdam, with a particular focus on the Blaak community. Gentrification's consequences have been widely examined; however, these investigations have typically centered on larger, global cities. Blaak presents a unique case less scrutinized by academic inquiry, especially concerning the nuanced and localized socio-spatial dynamics at play.

The prevailing discourse on gentrification tends to emphasize its detrimental effects, like displacement and community disruption. Less explored are the potential benefits, including enhanced amenities and revitalization efforts that may foster a more vibrant community. Consequently, the positive dimensions of gentrification

warrant a more balanced examination to understand its full spectrum of impacts.

Scholarship from academics such as Marcuse and Slater have shed light on the broader socio-spatial implications of gentrification, yet there remains a paucity of research zooming in on the micro-level effects—how individual communities reconfigure their space and adapt to the gentrification process. This study aims to fill this gap by delivering a granular analysis of the socio-spatial transformations within Blaak, thereby offering a more comprehensive understanding of how gentrification unfolds on the ground.

The proposed research will delve into several key areas: the physical and social landscape alteration due to gentrification, the experiences and responses of Blaak residents. Through this lens, the thesis will explore the complex interplay between urban development and community dynamics.

By employing a case study methodology, the thesis will not only map the trajectory of gentrification in Blaak but also provide an in-depth account of the residents' lived experiences. It will scrutinize the tensions between displacement and community cohesion, examining whether gentrification can coexist with the preservation of social ties and the enhancement of local identity.

Ultimately, the thesis will contribute a novel theoretical and empirical perspective to the discourse on urban transformation. By concentrating on the specific example of Blaak, it will offer insights that may be applicable to other communities experiencing similar socio-spatial shifts. The research aspires to inform strategies that balance development and revitalization with the preservation of community character and inclusivity.

In sum, this thesis will address an understudied aspect of gentrification, enriching the understanding of its multifaceted impacts at the local level. It will provide a detailed portrait of how a community like Blaak navigates the choppy waters of urban change, adding depth to the global conversation on gentrification and socio-spatial relations.

5. Methodology

The exploration into the socio-spatial dynamics of gentrification within the Blaak area aims to dissect the intertwined narratives of displacement, changing accessibility to public services, and the metamorphosis of community life from the 1940s through the 2000s. This investigation endeavors to illuminate the layered complexities underpinning demographic shifts, the variance in public engagement, and resultant transformations in Blaak's community, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on urban gentrification phenomena. By employing a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach, this study seeks to provide a holistic understanding of the gentrification process and its far-reaching implications for the residents of Blaak.

5.1 Research Design

The study's methodology is founded on a mixed-methods framework, deliberately chosen for its capacity to synthesize both the quantifiable aspects of gentrification and the intricate, lived experiences of Blaak's inhabitants. This dual approach facilitates a nuanced comprehension of gentrification's multifarious impact, marrying the empirical rigor of quantitative analysis with the depths of qualitative insights. The quantitative component of the research will focus on collecting and analyzing data related to demographic changes, housing market dynamics. Concurrently, the qualitative aspect will delve into the subjective experiences and perceptions of various stakeholders, including residents, business owners, and community leaders. By integrating these two distinct yet complementary methodological approaches, the study aims to paint a comprehensive picture of the gentrification phenomenon in Blaak, capturing both its measurable outcomes and the profound human stories that lie at its core.

5.2 Data Collection

5.2.1 Quantitative Data:

To chart the demographic evolution, housing market fluctuations, and crime rate shifts within Blaak, this research will draw upon the demographic and economic databases maintained by Statistics Netherlands (CBS). The selection of participants for semi-structured interviews will be informed by a stratified sampling strategy,

aiming for a diverse cross-section reflective of Blaak's heterogeneous demographic profile. The quantitative data collection process will involve accessing and extracting relevant datasets from the CBS repository, ensuring that the information is up-to-date, reliable, and representative of the Blaak area. Key variables of interest will include population demographics (age, ethnicity, income levels), housing market indicators (property values, rental prices, ownership patterns). This data will be meticulously cleaned, organized, and prepared for subsequent analysis using Microsoft Excel to visualise.

5.2.2 Qualitative Data:

In contrast, the qualitative dimension will harness semi-structured interviews with a spectrum of stakeholders, including residents, business proprietors, property developers, and community figureheads. These dialogues are designed to unearth the subjective realities and perceptions of gentrification, augmented by the examination of archival repositories like local periodicals and urban planning documents, offering a historical lens through which contemporary changes can be contextualized. The semi-structured interviews will be conducted using a carefully designed interview guide, which will cover key themes such as personal experiences of neighborhood change, perceptions of gentrification, and the impact of urban development on community life. Participants will be recruited through volunteer, ensuring a diverse and representative sample. In addition to the interviews, the study will also draw upon archival sources, including local newspapers, municipal records, and urban planning documents, to gain a historical perspective on the gentrification process in Blaak. These sources will be systematically reviewed and analyzed to identify key events, policies, and discourses that have shaped the community's urban transformation over time.

5.3 Data Analysis

5.3.1 Quantitative Analysis:

At this stage, Excel software will be used for data analysis and visualization, focusing mainly on the display and observation of time series data. By creating a variety of charts, such as line charts, bar charts, and scatter charts, you will visually present the changing trends of Blaak over time. The charts will show changes in key indicators

such as property prices, rent levels, demographics and business activity.

Start by sorting and organizing the collected data to ensure it is suitable for time series analysis in Excel. Then create a separate chart for each key metric, showing its change over time. These charts will help to identify long-term trends, seasonal patterns and potential turning points.

Although this Excel-based analysis method does not involve complex statistical techniques, it can provide clear and intuitive data display and help understand the overall trends and patterns of the gentrification process in Blaak. By carefully observing these charts and summarizing the data, preliminary conclusions can be drawn, laying the foundation for further incorporation of qualitative analysis.

5.3.2 Qualitative Analysis:

Rooted in a methodical coding procedure implemented via R Studio, the thematic analysis will scrutinize the dataset, extracting prevalent narratives and overlooked nuances within the qualitative responses. Simultaneously, narrative analysis will furnish in-depth portrayals of individual and collective experiences of gentrification, enriching the statistical findings with interviewees' context. The qualitative analysis will commence with a thorough transcription of the recorded interviews, ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the data. The transcripts will then undergo a rigorous coding process, which will involve both inductive and deductive approaches. The thematic analysis will be conducted using R Studio, leveraging packages such as "LDA" to facilitate the coding, organization, and interpretation of the qualitative data. The word cloud analysis will be utilized to construct comprehensive narratives of individual and collective experiences of gentrification in Blaak. The focus will be meticulous on how participants make sense of and navigate the evolving social and spatial landscape. This analysis will entail an examination of the interview transcripts, with attention paid to the structure, content, and performative dimensions of the narratives.

5.4 Data Presentation

For a coherent and accessible presentation of results, this research will leverage an array of data visualization software such as Microsoft Excel, including but not

limited to urban development maps, trend lines. These visual aids will underscore geospatial variances, chronological trends, and key correlations, thus facilitating an intuitive understanding of Blaak's transforming landscape across different dimensions.

5.5 Research Limitations

In navigating potential biases and validity concerns, the research incorporates methodological pluralism and embraces diverse analytical avenues to authenticate its findings. A sensitivity analysis on the quantitative data will gauge the stability of results against shifts in analytical or data-collection methodologies. For qualitative data, a process of member checking will ensure the fidelity and authenticity of the interpreted narratives, aligning them with the participants' intended meanings. The study recognizes several potential limitations that may impact the validity and generalizability of its findings. Firstly, the reliance on secondary data sources, such as the CBS database, may introduce issues of data quality, completeness, and comparability across different time periods and geographic scales. To mitigate these concerns, the study will employ rigorous data cleaning and validation procedures, and will triangulate findings across multiple data sources wherever possible. Secondly, the qualitative component of the study may be subject to selection bias, as participants who agree to be interviewed may not be representative of the broader population of Blaak. To address this issue, the study will strive for a diverse and balanced sample and will employ more sampling to reach a wide range of stakeholders.

5.6 Ethical Considerations

Rooted in ethical rigor, this research is committed to upholding the principles of informed consent, participant anonymity, and stringent compliance with GDPR protocols. A comprehensive risk assessment tailored to preemptively identify and mitigate potential harm will be enacted, with specialized attention dedicated to protecting vulnerable cohorts involved in the research.

Through these methodological pathways, the research aspires not only to chart the physical and social contours of gentrification in Blaak but also to contribute

constructively to the crafting of policies and practices that address the ensuing challenges with empathy, equity, and foresight.

6: Findings

As the modern urban landscape continues to evolve, the process of gentrification in the Blaak area has reshaped the social structure and spatial layout of Rotterdam according to its different stages of development. From the post-World War II reconstruction to the ongoing regeneration of the new millennium, the area has undergone unprecedented economic and cultural transformations, reflecting the multidimensional trends of global urbanization.

Health Atlas - Albrandswaard																
	Households total [number]	Single-person households [%]	Multi-person households [%]	Households without children [%]	Households with children [%]	Single-parent families [%]	Total number of inhabitants [persons]	18 to 64 years [persons]	65 years and older [persons]	Population density [number]	Residents with Dutch background [%] ⁽¹⁾	Residents with migration background total [%] ⁽²⁾	Completed HBO or WO education, 15 to 75 years [%] ⁽²⁾	Median household income (standardized) [%]	Disposable household income [x 1,000 euros]	Registered Job Seekers UWV [%]
1940							25,814									
1950							25,814									
1960							25,814									
1970							25,590									
1980							25,590									
1988							13,799	9,039	1,903							
1989							13,785	8,990	1,952							
1990							13,913	9,091	1,983							
1991							14,121	9,210	2,035							
1992							14,181	9,225	2,080							
1993							14,350	9,311	2,095							
1994							14,920	9,613	2,159							
1995	5,774	21	79	35	40		15,141	9,777	2,160	679						
1996	5,844	21	79	35	40		15,325	9,807	2,236	687	91	9				
1997	5,817	22	78	35	40		15,249	9,699	2,260	684	91	9				
1998	5,850	21	79	35	40		15,395	9,747	2,293	690	90	10				
1999	6,057	22	78	35	38		15,805	9,986	2,339	709	90	10				
2000	6,311	22	78	36	38	4	16,420	10,432	2,354	736	89	11				
2001	6,841	22	78	36	38	4	17,721	11,341	2,387	794	88	12				
2002	6,992	22	78	35	38	4	18,092	11,562	2,410	811	88	12				
2003	7,240	21	79	36	38	5	18,737	11,913	2,451	845	87	13				
2004	7,620	22	78	34	38	5	19,607	12,420	2,564	884	87	13				
2005	8,036	22	78	35	38	5	20,606	13,131	2,658	929	86	14				
2006	8,246	22	78	34	38	5	21,059	13,448	2,693	952	86	14				
2007	8,415	22	78	34	38	6	21,523	13,745	2,780	973	85	15				
2008	8,808	23	77	34	37	6	22,453	14,331	2,939	1,016	85	15				
2009	8,958	23	77	33	37	7	22,974	14,612	3,046	1,054	84	16				
2010	9,465	23	77	33	37	7	24,191	15,458	3,198	1,110	83	17				
2011	9,718	24	76	32	37	7	24,674	15,721	3,293	1,128	83	17				47.2
2012	9,874	24	76	32	37	7	25,003	15,776	3,527	1,143	82	18				46.4
2013	9,948	24	76	32	36	7	25,101	15,663	3,683	1,151	82	18	28			48.1
2014	9,953	25	75	31	36	8	25,069	15,449	3,877	1,149	82	18	30	43		50.1
2015	10,016	25	75	31	36	8	25,148	15,398	4,022	1,153	81	19	30	44		48.5
2016	10,022	26	74	31	36	8	24,985	15,262	4,067	1,150	81	19	30	43		50.1
2017	10,087	26	74	31	35	8	25,105	15,346	4,122	1,155	80	20	30	42		52.2
2018	10,123	26	74	31	36	8	25,218	15,341	4,213	1,163	80	20	31	40		54.7
2019	10,180	26	74	30	35	8	25,271	15,341	4,336	1,165	79	21	31	41		57.4
2020	10,508	28	72	30	35	8	25,590	15,552	4,462	1,180	78	22	32	39		58.1
2021	10,357	26	74	30	35	8	25,814	15,658	4,565	1,190	78	22				60.3
2022	10,459	27	73	30	35	8	25,934	15,701	4,669	1,197	77	23				
2023	10,571	27	73	30	35	8	26,357	15,890	4,855	1,217						
Source :	CBS															
	CBS - Population statistics															
	CBS Social Statistical File															
	CBS - OBI															
	CBS, The Regional Income Survey															
	UWV															
Footnote																
	-1. For people with a Dutch background, both parents were born in the Netherlands. For people with a migration background, at least one parent was born abroad.															
	-2. 2017 are provisional figures (October 2018)															

Table 3. Health Atlas – Albrandswaard

Source: “Jive - Gezondheidsatlas - Albrandswaard.” Accessed June 24, 2024.

<https://gezondheidinkart.nl/jive/>.

Topic	Units	Periods										
		1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020			
Population by age | Population by age, rates | Younger than 20 years	%	37.3	37.9	35.9	31.5	25.7	24.4	23.7	21.7			
Population by age | Population by age, rates | 20 to 40 years	%	29.4	27.1	28.2	31.5	33.0	30.0	25.3	25.2			
Population by age | Population by age, rates | 40 to 65 years	%	25.6	26.0	25.8	25.6	28.6	32.0	35.7	33.7			
Population by age | Population by age, rates | 65 to 80 years	%	6.7	7.6	8.4	9.3	9.9	10.4	11.4	14.8			
Population by age | Population by age, rates | 80 years or older	%	1.0	1.4	1.7	2.2	2.9	3.2	3.9	4.7			
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | Total with migration background | With migration background	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	2775,302	3359,603	4220,705		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | Total with migration background | With migration background	%	.	.	.	.	.	.	17.5	20.3	24.2		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | Total with migration background | Western migration background | Total western migration background	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	1386,535	1501,309	1828,645		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | Total with migration background | Western migration background | Middle and Eastern European EU countries	number	.	.	.	.	.	.		127,768	34,994		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | Total with migration background | Western migration background | GIPS countries (European Union)	number	.	.	.	.	.	.		89,092	107,674	16,603	
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | Total with migration background | Western migration background | Other western background	number	.	.	.	.	.	.		1277,443	1265,867	1318,63	
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | Total with migration background | Non-western migration background | Total non-western	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	1408,767	1858,294	2392,06		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | Total with migration background | Non-western migration background | Morocco	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	262,221	349,005	40,864		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | Total with migration background | Non-western migration background | (former) Neth. Antilles and Aruba	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	107,197	138,420	166,265		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | Total with migration background | Non-western migration background | Suriname	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	302,514	342,279	356,402		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | Total with migration background | Non-western migration background | Turkey	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	308,890	383,957	416,864		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | Total with migration background | Non-western migration background | Other non-western background	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	427,945	644,633	1043,665		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | First generation migration background | Total first generation	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	1431,122	1699,751	2262,256		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | First generation migration background | Western first generation | Total western first generation	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	544,890	644,486	925,952		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | First generation migration background | Western first generation | Middle and Eastern European EU countries	number	.	.	.	.	.	.		94,527	26,958		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | First generation migration background | Western first generation | GIPS countries (European Union)	number	.	.	.	.	.	.		49,327	60,251	10,845	
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | First generation migration background | Western first generation | Other western background	number	.	.	.	.	.	.		495,563	489,708	548,436	
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | First generation migration background | Non-western first generation | Total non-western	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	886,232	1,055,265	1,336,304		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | First generation migration background | Non-western first generation | Morocco	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	152,940	167,305	17,204		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | First generation migration background | Non-western first generation | (former) Neth. Antilles and Aruba	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	69,266	81,175	89,118		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | First generation migration background | Non-western first generation | Suriname	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	183,249	185,089	176,963		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | First generation migration background | Non-western first generation | Turkey	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	177,754	196,385	197,446		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | First generation migration background | Non-western first generation | Other non-western background	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	303,423	425,311	700,737		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | Second generation migration background | Total second generation	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	1344,18	1,659,852	1,958,449		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | Second generation migration background | Western second generation | Total western second generation	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	821,645	856,823	902,693		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | Second generation migration background | Western second generation | Middle and Eastern European EU countries	number	.	.	.	.	.	.		33,241	7,492		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | Second generation migration background | Western second generation | GIPS countries (European Union)	number	.	.	.	.	.	.		39,765	47,423	5,753	
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | Second generation migration background | Western second generation | Other western background	number	.	.	.	.	.	.		781,880	776,159	770,194	
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | Second generation migration background | Non-western second generation | Total non-western	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	522,535	803,029	1,055,756		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | Second generation migration background | Non-western second generation | Morocco	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	109,681	181,700	23,882		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | Second generation migration background | Non-western second generation | (former) Neth. Antilles and Aruba	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	57,245	57,445	77,147		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | Second generation migration background | Non-western second generation | Suriname	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	119,265	157,190	179,439		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | Second generation migration background | Non-western second generation | Turkey	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	131,136	187,572	219,418		
Population by migration background | Persons with a migration background | Second generation migration background | Non-western second generation | Other non-western background	number	.	.	.	.	.	.	124,522	219,322	342,928		
Private households | Total private households	x 1,000	2535	3171	3986	5006	6061	6801	7386	7998			
Private households | One-person households	x 1,000	245	387	679	1085	1813	2272	2670	3080			
Private households | Multi-person households	x 1,000	2290	2784	3307	3921	4248	4529	4717	4918			
Private households | Average household size	number	3.93	3.56	3.21	2.78	2.42	2.30	2.22	2.14			
Population in institutional households	x 1,000	.	.	.	.	.	.	272	224	209	259	
Population growth | Total population growth, rate	o/o	17.3	12.2	12.5	8.3	7.9	7.8	4.9	3.9			

Source: CBS

Table 4. Population; key figures, 1950-2022

Source: "CBS Statline," opendata.cbs.nl, n.d.,

<https://opendata.cbs.nl/#/CBS/en/dataset/37296eng/table>.

6.1 Initial Phase (1940s to 1960s)

After 14 May 1940, ruins became the new face of the Blaak area. Much of the city centre was destroyed, but thankfully the port infrastructure survived. However, the sabotage of 1944, which resulted in the destruction of close to half of the harbour facilities, served as a catalyst for the economic reconstruction and spatial development of Rotterdam after the war. The post-war reconstruction programme, under the planning leadership of Witteveen and De Jong, not only looked at the restoration of the port and transport infrastructure, but also provided a framework for the regeneration of the urbanised port area.

Analysing the census data (see Table 3 & Table 4), the research observed subtle changes in the age structure of Blaak; the slight increase in the proportion of people under 20 years of age reveals an infusion of youth, while the decrease in the previously dominant 20-40 age group and the increase in the proportion of people over 65 years of age reflect the long-term structural changes in the population of the urban community in the post-war period.

The observation of family structure should not be overlooked. The increase in the number of single-person and multi-person households' points to changes in social lifestyles, such as the spread of single life or small families.

At the same time, the decline in the overall population growth rate may reflect the macro-trend of slowing population growth in the post-war period or changes in the pattern of out-migration of former residents and in-migration of new residents.

6.1.1 Population

Changes in population density in Rotterdam's Blaak reflect the entire trajectory of the city from post-war reconstruction to contemporary development, showing clear trends in continuous growth and changes in the social structure of the district. Since 1950, the population density of Blaak has increased from 309 persons per square kilometre to 352 persons per square kilometre in 2022, revealing a continuous trend of population growth. Although the lack of data for a specific period between 1940

and 1960 poses a challenge for the assessment, the analysis of national trends allows the inference that Rotterdam and its surrounding region have experienced a pattern similar to urban consolidation, a typical sign of post-war recovery and expansion.

The youth population has increased slightly, from 37.33 percent to 37.93 percent, indicating that the region remains attractive to the younger generation. However, the proportion of the population in the 60 and over age group increased from 7.69% to 8.92%, indicating that an aging trend in the population is beginning to emerge, echoing the labour market changes that have occurred in many European countries during the economic transition in the mid-21st century. The overall demographic change is further confirmed by the decrease in the proportion of the working age population from 54.99% to 53.14%.

6.1.2 Economy

In terms of economy, the bombing of 18 May 1940 not only destroyed many of Rotterdam's important buildings, but also created unprecedented challenges and opportunities for the city's long-term development strategy. The city architect Willem Gerrit Witteveen quickly planned a comprehensive reconstruction strategy aimed at using the aftermath of the disaster as an opportunity to realise the renewal of the city plan. Priority was given to the preservation of architectural sites that were deemed to be restorable, whilst at the same time addressing the problems of the old urban layout by improving the accessibility of the Goudsesingel neighbourhood. The monumental street layouts and architectural styles of this period demonstrate a fusion of traditional and modernist architectural ideas and provide infrastructure support to cope with the needs of a city that is expected to grow to a population of one million.

6.1.3 Re-construction plan

In terms of the urban renewal programme, from the widening of the Coolingsingel to the introduction of the revolutionary Lijnbaan shopping promenade, the redevelopment of Rotterdam aims to make the transition from sparse settlement to infrastructure densification. One of the key interventions was the segregation of living, working and recreational areas. This innovative approach to planning has been

effective, not only in pushing industrial areas to the edge of the city, as in the case of the Spence polder, but also in locating residential areas further away from the city centre. As sophisticated urban planning gradually gave way to rising high-rise complexes, the nature of the community began to gradually shift, evolving from a traditional neighbourhood to a modern urban layout characterised by functional segregation.

The changing demographic and urban structure of Rotterdam's Brac district illustrates one aspect of the general characteristics of the urbanisation process in the context of globalisation. Rotterdam's experience, from post-war reconstruction to modern urban planning, exemplifies the city's ability to adapt to change and the challenges of social equity and quality of life maintenance while sustaining growth and development.

6.2 Middle Phase (1960s to 1990s)

Economic transformation and changes in social values drove further changes in community structure, where new business developments and middle-class interest in old residential areas led to initial signs of gentrification . In Blaak, urban planners and developers began to seek a balance between commercial prosperity and housing security.

The findings of the study reveal significant shifts in the population makeup of Blaak post-war. Firstly, there's been a noticeable decrease in younger residents, with those under 20 dropping from 35.9% to 25.7% of the population. Meanwhile, there's a rise in the 20 to 40-year-old bracket, growing from 28.2% to 33%. This suggests that the area is attracting more adults but fewer young families. Additionally, the elderly community has expanded, echoing a broader aging trend.

When looking at how people live together, it's clear that more people are choosing to live alone. Single-person homes have more than doubled, rising from 679,000 to a striking 1,813,000. Multi-person households have also increased, but not by nearly as much, moving from 3,307,000 to 4,249,000. As a result, the average number of

people in each home has shrunk from 3.21 to 2.42, implying that households are getting smaller.

Overall, the pace of population growth has tapered off, with the growth rate decelerating from 12.5 per thousand to just 7.9 per thousand. This points to a general slowdown in how quickly the population is increasing. These changes in demographics, household composition, and growth patterns are crucial for understanding the early stages of Blaak's gentrification and economic recovery in the decades following the war.

According to research on the Rotterdam City Archives and the site "Ookditsderotte," Blaak's urban development story in the 1970s stands testament to the power of citizen activism. The proposed plan to construct a motorway at the Rotte (Rotte-Trace), touted as the gateway to the city's transformation, sparked widespread public outcry. Residents banded together in protest, defending the rotary's natural environment, and opposing the potential disruption to their community fabric.

These collective voices spearheaded an influential green revolution that altered the course of planning, rejecting the motorway project. This grassroots movement spotlighted the significance of preserving green spaces and promoting sustainable urban development, marking a potent shift in municipal planning strategies focused on citizen participation and conservation.

6.2.1 Population

A survey of Rotterdam for the period 1960-1990 reveals key demographic changes indicating that upgrading is underway. The city's population declined from 729,852 to 579,194, with a sustained negative annual growth rate. This phenomenon, often attributed to suburban sprawl and inner-city decay, confirmed a pattern of residents venturing beyond the city limits. At the same time, the constant influx of outsiders quadrupled from 2,958 to 10,133, hinting at a diversification of the urban fabric.

There has been a marked decline in younger residents, with the under-20 population falling from 35.9% to 25.7% of the total population, and the elderly population rising from 7.69% to 8.92%, highlighting the socio-economic impact of an ageing population. The labour force of 20-40 year olds has ballooned from 28.2% to 33%,

hinting at a city that has become more appealing to working adults than to young families. Resonating with this is the surge in the number of single-person households, which doubled from 679,000 to a staggering 1.813 million. Multi-family inflation increased from 3.307 million to 4.249 million. As a result, the average household size decreased from 3.21 to 2.42, signalling the arrival of smaller families.

6.2.2 Urban planning

In the late 1960s, the frenetic momentum of redevelopment provoked scepticism and criticism, as the remnants of the new city centre were seen as desolate, cold and monotonous. It needed to be transformed into an attractive, vibrant and eco-friendly centre dotted with a wealth of residential and recreational facilities. The 1970s witnessed architect Piet Blom's inspiration for the cityscape, marking the contemporary departure from the reconstruction phase. The current reassessment of post-war architecture highlights Rotterdam's unique contribution to urban form and residential typology. Nonetheless, key interventions tilted towards functional zoning emphasise the prescience of living, working and relaxing - shaping an urban centre based on commerce with residential suburbs.

6.2.3 Economy and real estate industry

The period 1960-1990 was an era of socio-economic waves, with a strong harbour economy and good settlement patterns in Rotterdam. The urgent need for housing in the post-war period stimulated housing developments in Pendrecht and Zuidwijk in the south of the city. The city experienced deflation in port-related jobs, coupled with an exodus of residents during the oil crisis. National housing policies and development funds have attracted middle-class populations to the emerging peri-urban growth centres, reflecting a process of middle-classisation whereby affluence promotes displacement.

6.2.4 Transportation

Rotterdam's first metro line was inaugurated on 9 February 1968, creating new arterial veins for inter-regional traffic, and the metro station near Bleeker is proof of the key role of urban infrastructure in reshaping the city's navigation and connectivity. A symbol of the progress of the times, the maturation of the metro

network represents the city's attempts at modern transport solutions, sometimes replacing visibility at ground level due to spatial constraints.

6.2.5 Public engagement

The pulse of Rotterdam's urbanisation in the 1970s is clearly captured through the prism of civic engagement and protest - a period marked by the interplay between urban policy-making and community response.

In the heart of post-World War II reconstruction, Rotterdam became fertile ground for avant-garde urban planning and architectural innovation; however, the initial enthusiasm of the 1960s exploded into a contentious debate in the following decade. The urban renaissance, while progressive, seemed to undermine the social and cultural fabric of the city and fundamentally alienate its original inhabitants. This wave of dissent coalesced into the powerful *inspraak* (participation) and *actiegroepen* (action groups), which sought to recalibrate the trajectory of the city's development to make it more inclusive and community-centred.

Archival records from this period, housed in Rotterdam's City Hall, show that citizens were increasingly sceptical of top-down development strategies, and the C'70 demonstrations were a manifestation of this sentiment, both as a celebration and a critique of modern Rotterdam. Paradoxically, while the city flaunted its pioneering architects and novel spatial designs, discontent reverberated through the streets, yearning for more than just concrete silhouettes. The archive offers a multicoloured picture of the era - pamphlets, protest artefacts, council minutes and photographs - each thread contributing to the tapestry of public opinion.

Criticism is not confined to empty development endeavours, but extends to the quest for vibrancy, environmental awareness and a balance between residential and recreational space. The decline of young residents goes hand in hand with the growth of an aging population, leading to questions about the livability of the city. The efforts of architects such as Piet Blom to infuse cities with glamour, while aesthetically exciting, are juxtaposed in the contemporary record against a backdrop of demolition and construction.

6.3 Recent Phase (1990s to present)

With the rise of the tech industry and urban regeneration plans, gentrification in Blaak has intensified. During this period, economic diversification and cultural revival brought regional development, but also led to rising housing costs and social inequality.

There's been a slight decline in young people under 20, from 24.4% to 21.7%, and a small decrease in the 20 to 40 age group. Conversely, there's been a noticeable rise in those aged 40 to 65, signaling a growing middle-aged demographic. The elderly population has also significantly increased, hinting at an age shift towards older residents.

Examining how people live, single-person households have risen, suggesting that living alone has become more common. Multi-person households also saw a growth, but it's not quite as sharp. The average size of households has decreased from 2.30 to 2.14 individuals, reflecting a trend towards smaller living arrangements.

Moreover, the general population growth has slowed down, with rates falling from 7.8 per thousand to just 3.9 per thousand. This slowdown indicates a change in the expansion rate of the area's population.

Lastly, the diversity of Blaak's residents is evolving with an upsurge in the number and percentage of people with immigrant backgrounds from Western and non-Western countries alike. This shift is changing the demographic makeup and contributing to the cultural fabric of the region.

Interviews were conducted with residents currently living in Blaak and transcribed, and RStudio was used to create a word cloud for the transcription, visually highlighting the terms most frequently mentioned by the interviewees, with the high-frequency words "cleanliness", "security", and "safety". "security". This was supplemented by LDA thematic modelling to explore the core themes of community member responses. Analysis of current resident feedback revealed three main themes, namely living expenses, living experience and community change. The most

commonly used words included 'well', 'new' and 'area'. The first theme focuses on the impact of gentrification on the cost of living, which is evident in the high frequency word 'rent'. Here, some residents are concerned about the rising cost of living. The second theme focuses on the right to the city in terms of the experience of living in the city, as can be seen from the high frequency words "resident" and "well". Here, some residents expressed good experiences of living in the city and did not experience their right to the city as being exploited. The third theme is community change, which emphasises changes in the local landscape, social structure and other dimensions. Words such as "change" and "new" reflect residents' perceptions and attitudes towards changes in the development of Blaak.

Between 1992 and 2023, the population aged 18 to 64 increases from 19,866 to 32,401 and the population aged 65+ increases from 3,828 to 4,796. This indicates that the area has experienced significant population growth over this time period, with particularly strong growth in the working age group (18 to 64 years old).

Whilst the population aged 65 and over is growing, its proportion relative to the working age population has not grown significantly, reflecting a relatively youthful population composition. This may be related to the attraction of the city to a younger workforce and the fact that the older population may choose to leave urban centres to live in more suitable areas.

From 1992 to 2023, the proportion of total residents with a migrant background is never recorded at 58 per cent. This significant increase suggests that the area has experienced a sizable influx of foreigners during this period, which may be linked to its economic opportunities, educational resources and inclusive social environment.

There has been an increase in the proportion of single person households and a decrease in the proportion of multi-person households. This reflects a trend towards smaller household sizes, which may be related to social trends such as the high cost of urban living, people's higher need for personal space and later marriages.

The percentage of HBO or WO (Higher Education or University in the Netherlands) completed education was recorded at 45% in 2012, indicating that residents in the

area have a higher level of education, which may be contributing to the development of gentrification, as more educated and economically advantaged residents may push up housing demand and prices.

The percentage of UUV of registered job seekers shows fluctuations over the years of available data, reflecting the impact of economic cycles on the job market. Periods of economic stability and growth may attract more people to move in to seek employment, further exacerbating gentrification.

The consistently high percentage of adults and older people who are fairly or very happy, as seen in the data, suggests that whilst this area has experienced significant demographic and social structural changes, the life satisfaction and wellbeing of residents has remained at a high level.

In executing a comprehensive analysis of the interview conducted with a resident of Blaak, named Hollis, utilizing RStudio for word cloud generation and Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) topic modeling, intriguing insights were garnered that shed light on the nuanced impacts of gentrification within the Blaak community. The analyses divulged distinct areas of concern and interest among the inhabitants, as detailed below:

Word Cloud Analysis:

The word cloud analysis (see Figure 6), a graphical representation of word frequency, highlighted the prominence of terms such as “city hall,” “cleanliness,” and “security.” These terms underscore pivotal aspects of communal life that residents are most engaged with, shedding light on their experiences and concerns.

Foremost among these concerns is the "area" itself. The changing physical and social landscape of the neighborhood is a central issue, as residents navigate the evolving environment. The prominence of the word "living" underscores how these changes directly influence their daily lives. For many, gentrification has brought about a shift in the quality of life, affecting everything from housing conditions to the availability of local services.

Security emerges as a significant theme, with "security" and "safety" frequently mentioned. This suggests a heightened sense of vulnerability among residents. The influx of new, often wealthier residents can lead to a perception of increased crime or a disruption of the community cohesion that previously contributed to a sense of safety. Consequently, long-term residents may feel the need to be more vigilant, reflecting broader anxieties about their personal and property security.

"Cleanliness" is another critical issue. Gentrification can lead to improvements in neighborhood maintenance and cleanliness, as new investments flow into the area. However, the word cloud does not clarify whether residents view these changes positively or negatively. It is possible that while some areas have seen improvements, others might suffer from neglect, particularly those inhabited by less affluent residents.

The word "time" is telling of the temporal aspect of gentrification. Residents often reflect on the transformations over the years, comparing the present with the past. This temporal perspective can evoke a sense of loss or nostalgia for the former character of the neighborhood and concern about the rapid pace of change.

Economic factors are also at play, as indicated by words like "expenses," "restaurants," and "products." The rising cost of living is a common consequence of gentrification, as property values and rental prices soar. While new amenities such as trendy restaurants and boutique shops can enhance the area's appeal, they may also cater more to the new, wealthier residents, potentially alienating long-time inhabitants.

The word cloud analysis reveals that gentrification deeply affects residents' lives, touching on aspects of security, cleanliness, economic conditions, and the overall character of the neighborhood. These insights highlight the complexity of gentrification, underscoring the need for thoughtful urban planning and policy-making that considers the diverse needs and experiences of all community members.



Figure 6. Word Cloud Result Generated by RStudio

Generated by R Studio

LDA Topic Modeling:

The LDA topic modeling (see Figure 7) unearthed three principal themes reflective of the residents' experiences and perceptions of gentrification: cost of living, residential

experience, and environmental changes. The predominant terms within these themes were “well” in relation to both cost of living and residential experience, and “new” concerning environmental changes. A deeper examination provides the following interpretations:

Cost of Living: Within this theme, the occurrence of “well” might echo residents’ nuanced reactions toward escalating living expenses. Despite student subsidizations tempering immediate financial repercussions, looming rent increases signal potential anxiety over future affordability and economic sustenance.

The interviewee mentioned that there has been no significant change in rent due to housing subsidies, but future rent increases are anticipated. She has received communication from the city hall regarding recycling and other community initiatives. However, they mention that communication with the city hall can be slow and language barriers exist. The community committee allows residents to participate in decision-making, but meetings are infrequent, which may limit timely responses to issues. The anticipation of rent increases could affect the affordability for residents, especially if subsidies do not keep pace. Communication barriers and slow response times from the city hall can hinder residents' ability to effectively address their concerns. The community committee provides a platform for resident involvement, but its infrequency may limit its effectiveness in addressing urgent issues.

Residential Experience: The repetition of “well” here likely denotes a general contentment toward current living conditions and satisfaction with municipal services (i.e., cleanliness and security initiatives). It reflects a positive appraisal of the efforts undertaken by the city hall to enhance living standards.

The interviewee mentioned that the community is predominantly composed of students, with some buildings housing professionals and corporate staff, she feels that the security is acceptable but mentions occasional petty thefts and the need for residents to remain vigilant. And there is a community committee that residents can approach for issues, and the property management is responsive to claims.

Environmental Changes: The term “new” highlights a consciousness and acknowledgment of shifts within the local environment, particularly noting strides toward ecological conservation and the introduction of public service measures.

Interviewee mentioned that there hasn't been a noticeable change in urban planning or new construction in the community. They haven't observed any significant renovations or new buildings being built. There have been efforts from the Rotterdam City Hall to promote recycling and environmental cleanliness. Flyers and instructional messages about recycling have been distributed, indicating a push towards environmental sustainability. The cleanliness of the streets has improved over time. Initially, she found the area not very clean, but it has become more acceptable.

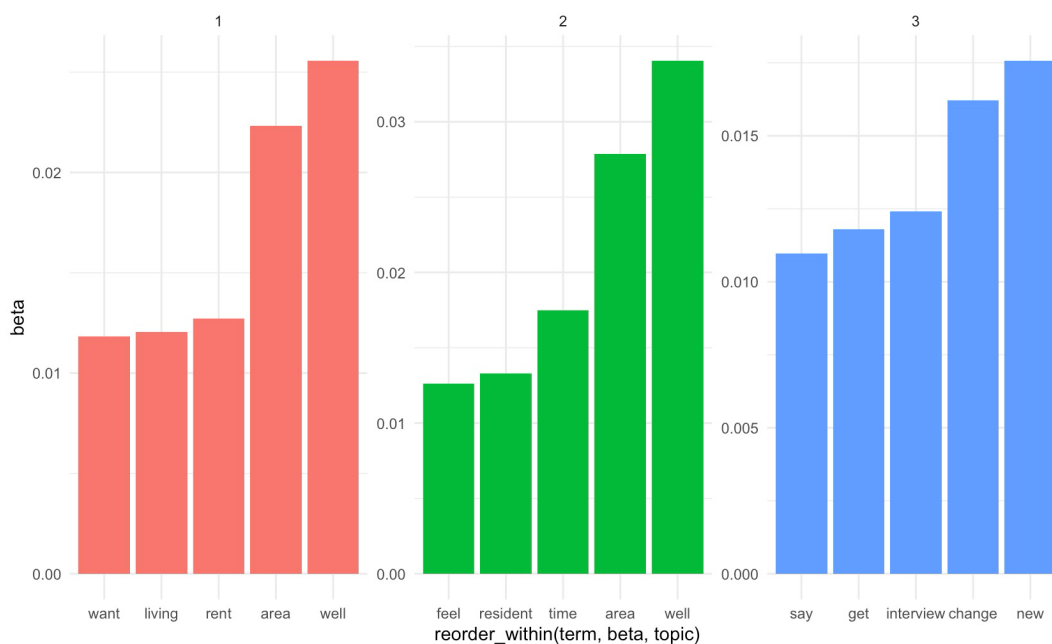


Figure 7. LDA Result Generated by RStudio

Generated by R Studio

Integrated Analysis:

From the findings delineated above, it is discernible that while gentrification has ushered in positive modifications within the Blaak community, such as augmented

environmental protection efforts and improved security, apprehensions regarding the upward trajectory of living costs and the uncertainties surrounding future affordability persist. Moreover, the city hall emerges as a pivotal entity in ameliorating residents' living experiences; however, challenges in communication, especially for non-native speakers, warrant attention. These insights furnish a granular perspective on how inhabitants of the Blaak community perceive and encounter the multifaceted processes of gentrification, pinpointing both the advancements and areas necessitating further consideration to foster sustainable and inclusive urban development.

7: Discussion

The findings from this comprehensive examination of gentrification's effect on Blaak, Rotterdam reflect a profound transformation both in the physical spaces and in the socio-spatial relationships within the community. Additionally, the rights and experiences of residents have been markedly impacted by these transformations. This discussion will delineate how gentrification has recalibrated the urban landscape, influenced social interactions, and impacted residents' rights in Blaak.

7.1 Physical Spaces

Following the devastation of World War II, Blaak underwent an extensive reconstruction process. The initial focus was on rebuilding the essential infrastructure, including the port and transportation networks. Architects Witteveen and De Jong spearheaded a comprehensive urban renewal program, emphasizing the restoration of the port and transport infrastructure while also addressing the broader urban environment. During this time, the physical landscape of Blaak transitioned from war ruins to a structured urban layout, characterized by the segregation of living, working, and recreational areas. This period laid the groundwork for future urban development, moving from sparse settlements to a more densely populated infrastructure.

The period from the 1960s to the 1990s saw further transformation in Blaak's physical spaces. The rise of new business developments and an evolving urban landscape marked the beginning of gentrification. Notable projects included the introduction of Rotterdam's first metro line in 1968, which enhanced connectivity and reshaped transportation within the city. Architect Piet Blom's innovative designs in the 1970s reflected a departure from post-war reconstruction towards a more contemporary urban aesthetic. Despite these developments, there was also significant public backlash against certain projects, such as the proposed motorway at the Rotte, which was ultimately rejected due to strong citizen activism. This era highlighted the tension between modernization and the preservation of green spaces and community fabric.

From the 1990s onwards, Blaak's physical spaces experienced further gentrification

driven by economic diversification and cultural revival. Urban regeneration plans introduced new residential and commercial developments, leading to rising housing costs and increased social inequality. The demographic shifts included a growing middle-aged and elderly population, signaling changes in the community's age structure. The introduction of high-rise complexes and modern infrastructure continued to redefine Blaak's urban landscape. However, these changes also raised concerns about sustainability and inclusivity, as evidenced by the rising cost of living and the pressure on affordable housing.

According to the interview transcript, the interviewee mentioned that she has not observed significant urban planning and architectural changes since she moved to Blaak last year. This may indicate that Blaak has reached a state of equilibrium in terms of urban regeneration and physical structure, and that the existing architectural and planning structures are adequate to meet current social and economic needs. This observation contrasts with the drastic architectural changes that are common in gentrification processes and may reflect a more mature or strategic approach to urban regeneration.

7.2 Socio-Demographic Changes and Community Dynamics

In the post-war period, Blaak's social structure underwent significant changes. The population saw an infusion of youth, with a slight increase in the proportion of people under 20 years old. Concurrently, there was a decrease in the previously dominant 20-40 age group and an increase in the elderly population. This shift reflected broader societal changes, including the spread of single-person and small family households. The initial reconstruction efforts brought a sense of community and collective effort, as residents worked together to rebuild their lives and surroundings.

The middle phase witnessed further demographic changes, with a noticeable decrease in younger residents and an increase in the working-age and elderly populations. The rise in single-person households and the decline in average household size indicated changing social lifestyles and increased urbanization. During this period, citizen activism played a crucial role in shaping social relations. Protests

against urban developments that threatened community spaces highlighted the importance of preserving social cohesion and community identity. The influx of middle-class populations due to national housing policies also contributed to the diversification of Blaak's social fabric.

Gentrification in the recent phase has intensified social stratification in Blaak. The area has attracted a more diverse population, including a significant number of residents with immigrant backgrounds. This demographic shift has enriched the cultural fabric of the community but also introduced new challenges in terms of social integration and equality. Rising living costs have displaced some long-term residents, leading to tensions between new and old inhabitants. Despite these challenges, efforts to improve urban management, cleanliness, and security have generally been well-received by the community, as indicated by positive feedback from residents.

According to the interview transcripts, the interviewee mentioned that his area is predominantly a student neighbourhood. This suggests that the Blaak neighbourhood maintains a degree of social diversity, but may also imply that affordability for young people and students is being affected by gentrification. This stability in the composition of the neighbourhood may hide exclusion of pre-existing households and lower income groups.

7.3 Living Conditions and The Right to The City

During the initial reconstruction phase, residents' rights were primarily focused on basic necessities and rebuilding the community. The government's efforts to restore infrastructure and provide housing were crucial in ensuring the residents' right to live in a functional and safe environment. The focus was on collective recovery and establishing a stable urban framework.

The rights of residents became more prominent as urban development progressed. Citizen activism in the 1970s, particularly against projects like the transportation project, underscored the importance of residents' participation in urban planning. The formation of action groups and increased public engagement reflected a growing awareness of the need to protect community interests and ensure that development

projects did not undermine residents' rights to a livable environment.

In the recent phase, gentrification has raised significant concerns about residents' rights, particularly regarding housing affordability and social equity. Interviews with residents, such as the one conducted with Hollis, revealed anxieties about rising rent costs and the potential displacement of long-term residents. While efforts to improve urban living conditions, such as cleanliness and security, have been appreciated, challenges in communication with municipal authorities and the need for more inclusive urban policies remain. The presence of a community committee offers a platform for resident involvement, but infrequent meetings limit its effectiveness in addressing urgent issues.

Whilst the interviewee mentioned that rents had remained stable due to student subsidy, he was also told of future rent rises. This is one of the typical economic consequences of gentrification, reflecting the pressure that rising costs can put on individuals who do not have financial aid or students whose aid is insufficient to keep up with rent increases. Overall, however, respondents felt that the rising cost of living was within an acceptable range.

The diversification of Blaak's population has infused the area with new cultural vibrancy but has also posed challenges in preserving the community's identity. Exploring events, festivals, and public spaces that celebrate Blaak's historic culture alongside new influences can serve as a lens to discuss the complex interplay between maintaining tradition and welcoming change.

Instances of civic engagement, notably the opposition to the Rotte-Trace motorway project, underscore the community's desire for development that respects their rights and needs. Analyzing minutes from community meetings, petitions, and local government responses to such initiatives could provide concrete examples of how public opinion and activism have shaped, or failed to shape, development decisions.

Respondents did not speak directly about cultural changes but gave positive feedback about environmental protection measures and improved street cleanliness. This may indicate that some public services and the quality of the environment have

been enhanced with the gentrification of the community. However, such changes also need to ensure that they are open to all residents, including those on low incomes who may not be able to afford enough to participate in these new measures.

7.4 Strategies for Sustainable Gentrification

Balancing Development with Equity

Strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of gentrification could involve mandatory affordability quotas in new developments, tax incentives for businesses that contribute to the local economy without displacing existing residents, and enhanced support for homeownership among marginal communities. Discussing these strategies requires not just ideation but also a critique of their potential efficacy and implementation challenges based on case studies from similar urban contexts.

Community-Centered Urban Planning

Advocating for a participatory approach in urban planning involves not just consultation but active engagement and co-creation with local communities. Examining successful participatory planning models from other cities can offer both inspiration and a practical framework for integrating residents' voices into Blaak's development process, ensuring that it grows not just in physical infrastructure but as a resilient and inclusive community.

The available data and findings from the study on Blaak adequately substantiate the narrative of gentrification's multi-faceted impacts, particularly concerning affordability, social and cultural diversification, and the collective aspiration towards balanced urban living. Through this lens, Blaak's transformation from post-war devastation to a vibrant urban district captures the essence of gentrification's complexity, where economic and cultural advancements are intertwined with the challenges of ensuring equitable urban living for all community members.

Integrating the theoretical framework of "the right to the city" into the discussion on gentrification in Blaak reveals significant transformations in residents' ability to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from urban life across different historical

periods.

In the aftermath of WWII, visionaries like Willem Gerrit Witteveen had the autonomy and support to reconstruct and reimagine Rotterdam, with Blaak being no exception. During this period, "the right to the city" could be seen in the collective effort to rebuild and restore, granting residents a significant role in shaping their urban environment. Initiatives like the building of innovative structures and spaces such as Rotterdam's Cube Houses and the Lijnbaan promenade illustrated a shared commitment to creating an urban space that was both functional and inclusive, fostering a sense of ownership and belonging among residents.

As Blaak experienced gentrification, the dynamics of "the right to the city" began to shift. Economic uplift and architectural modernization, while contributing to the area's vibrancy and appeal, also introduced challenges to maintaining equitable access to the city for all residents. Rising living costs and the potential displacement of long-standing communities reflect a constrained right to the city for lower-income groups, who find themselves increasingly marginalized from decision-making processes and the benefits of urban development.

Presently, as gentrification continues to evolve in Blaak, "the right to the city" is increasingly mediated by economic factors and market-driven developments, potentially compromising the ability of diverse groups to engage fully in urban life. While initiatives aimed at improving cleanliness and security, as noted by the interviewee, indicate an ongoing investment in the quality of urban living, these benefits must be accessible to all residents to truly uphold the principle of the right to the city. This inclusivity challenge is further complicated by the noted communication barriers and the need for more participatory governance structures that can accommodate the voices of all residents, including students, professionals, and non-native speakers.

The historical comparison reveals a transformation from a participatory reconstruction effort post-WWII, where residents had a substantial influence on their urban environment, to a contemporary context where economic pressures and structural changes challenge the inclusivity and accessibility of urban spaces.

8. Conclusion

The comprehensive exploration of Blaak's urban regeneration and gentrification reveals a saga of transformation that unites changes in the architectural landscape, economic frameworks, and community dynamics under the shadow of broader urban development trends. Initially, the post-WWII period set Blaak on a path of profound physical and social fabric remodelling—highlighted by visionary planning and architectural innovation, leading to a modern yet historically cognizant urban space. This era was marked by demographic shifts towards younger populations and evolving family structures, heralding a departure from traditional social norms and signalling the impending socioeconomic evolutions.

As Blaak transitioned into the 1960s through to the 1990s, the seeds of gentrification began to sprout, nurtured by economic transformations and changing social values. The allure of commercial development and middle-class interest in aging residential areas were precursors to shifting community structures. Civic protests and engagement during this era underlined a strong communal desire for green spaces and sustainable development, casting a spotlight on the residents' active role in sculpting urban planning decisions and asserting their right to shape the city's future.

Entering the modern era post-1990s, the acceleration of gentrification has been pronounced, powered by the rise of the technology sector and ambitious urban renewal projects. This phase has broadened Blaak's economic base and cultural landscape but has simultaneously surfaced challenges—rising housing costs and deepening inequalities forefront among them. The shifting demographics towards smaller, often single-person households, and a slowing in regional population growth reflect a nuanced adaptation to these new urban realities, while increased in-migration has woven a richer cultural tapestry, albeit one that complicates traditional community landscapes.

This intricate narrative of Blaak's journey through regeneration and gentrification encapsulates the dual-edged nature of such urban phenomena. While signifying economic growth and cultural enrichment, they necessitate an acute focus on the implications for social equity and community integrity. The future trajectory of

Blaak's development lies in striking a harmonious balance—a balance that leverages economic and cultural advancements as engines for inclusive growth, concurrently addressing the challenges of affordability, preserving cultural heritage, and ensuring that all community members have a voice in shaping their urban milieu. Through such concerted efforts, Blaak can aspire to not just evolve as an urban entity but to do so in a manner that reflects the aspirations and respects the rights of its diverse inhabitants, embodying an urban regeneration that is truly inclusive and equitable.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Guide

For residents living in Blaak:

1. When did you (your family) move to the Blaak and can you share some observations of how the area has changed since you first moved in compared to now?
2. How have you personally experienced socio-cultural changes in the Blaak area over time? Can you provide examples of these changes?
3. Have you noticed the impact of gentrification on your cost of living, such as changes in rent, house prices or daily spending? Can you describe the specific life impacts of these changes?
4. Has gentrification changed the demographics within the community? For example, have you observed that the backgrounds (e.g., income levels, occupations, or cultural backgrounds) of the new residents who have moved in are different than in the past?
5. From your experience, how did the government or developer communicate and interact with community residents during the gentrification process? Do you think these communications were effective enough?
6. Have you been involved in any gentrification-related community organisations, discussions or public meetings? How have these activities helped you understand and respond to gentrification?
7. Has gentrification brought about changes in the services and amenities provided in the community? Examples include education, health care, public safety, and parkland.
8. What are your thoughts on the new commercial facilities (e.g., shops, restaurants, and cafes) and cultural facilities (e.g., art galleries, theatres) being built in the community? Do these new facilities meet the needs and expectations of residents in the original community?
9. In your opinion, is the "right to the city" in Blaak fully respected and protected? Do you feel that all residents are equally involved in decisions about urban development?

For employees working in Blaak:

1. Does the company or organization where you work keep records of changes in office location, staff composition, or business areas between 1940 and 2000?
2. Has gentrification changed Blaak's business model and industry distribution during your working life?
3. Have you noticed an increase in property values near your workplace? Has this had an impact on the way you or your colleagues commute?
4. How do you feel about the positive or negative impact of gentrification on the work environment?

For NS (Dutch Railways) staff with knowledge of the Blaak public transport station:

1. Over the past few decades, can you describe the trends in traffic and frequency of operations at the Blaak site? Especially on weekdays versus weekends.

2. From your work experience, what specific changes in demand for transit service have occurred at Blaak sites during the gentrification process?
3. Have you witnessed any impacts of gentrification on infrastructure investment or quality of service at Blaak sites? Can you provide examples?
4. Have changes in resident demographics as a result of gentrification affected decision making or improvements related to public transport?
5. How would you assess the impact of gentrification on the maintenance and renewal needs of public transport stops at the Blaak site?
6. In your opinion, what types of future improvements in public transit services are needed at the Blaak site to better accommodate community changes?
7. Have you been involved in any public transport planning or reform projects resulting from gentrification trends? If so, can you share some project details and an assessment of their effectiveness?
8. What do you see as possible optimisations to the public transport system in terms of accessibility, fare structure and service hours in order to mitigate community exclusion that may result from gentrification?
9. During the Blaak gentrification process, has NS introduced any special policies or measures to accommodate the change? What are the specific elements included?

To shopkeepers who set up shop in Blaak:

1. Can you describe what you know or have experienced about the changes in commercial shops and product categories in the Blaak area?
2. How has gentrification changed your customer demographics and consumer behavior?
3. Have you ever been asked or advised to change your business model or product to accommodate gentrification trends?
4. Can you share some strategies to improve the capabilities of the Blaak business district and small businesses?

At the end of the interview, ask respondents for specific suggestions for preventing or reducing the effects of gentrification.

Appendix B: Consent Form

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Title and version	Voices From Blaak on Gentrification and the Right to the City
Name of Investigators	Sixuan Zheng
Name of Interviewee	
Purpose of the Study	This research is being conducted by Sixuan Zheng. It will invite you to participate in this research project about how would people in Blaak react to gentrification and the right to the city. The purpose of this research project is to gain a deeper understanding of the urban transformation.
Procedures	You will participate in an interview lasting approximately +/- 40 min. You will be asked questions about the gentrification and the right to the city.
Potential and anticipated Risks and Discomforts	There are no obvious physical, legal, or economic risks associated with participating in this study. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to discontinue it at any time.
Potential Benefits	Participation in this study does not guarantee any beneficial results to you. The broader goal of this research is to understand the impact of gentrification in Blaak.
Sharing the results	The results of this research will be shared with Erasmus University Rotterdam. After sharing the results, the organisation may share internally to expand or continue this research.
Confidentiality	<p>Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent of our ability. We will remove all personal information and replace participants with representative stakeholders. By doing so, we anonymize personal details from the results and report. However, the organisation could trace the representative stakeholder to the representative participant.</p> <p>As indicated above, this research project involves audio recordings of your interview. Transcribed segments from the audio recordings may be used in published forms (e.g., journal articles and book chapters). In the case of publication, pseudonyms will be used. The audio recordings, forms, and other documents created or collected as part of this study will be stored in a secure location in the researchers' offices or on the researchers password-protected computers and destroyed within ten years of the initiation of the study.</p>

Compensation	Participants will receive no compensation for their participation. However, they will receive much gratitude from the researchers for their time and knowledge.	
Right to Withdraw and Questions	Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or stop participating at any time, you will not be penalised or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact any of the investigators.	
Statement of Consent	Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree that you will participate in this research study. You will receive a copy of this signed consent form. If you have expanding questions regarding the research purpose, please contact the supervisor of the research, Youn Sun Won. If you agree to participate, please sign your name below.	
Audio recording (if applicable)	I consent to have my interview audio-recorded <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	
Secondary use (if applicable)	I consent to have the anonymised data used for secondary analysis <input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	
Signature and Date	NAME PARTICIPANT	NAME INVESTIGATOR
	SIGNATURE	SIGNATURE
	DATE	DATE

Appendix C: Transcription of Interviews

{ 0:11 }

Today is May 13th, 2024, and we are now doing an interview via a zoom link. uh, the interview location is, uh, the Netherlands, uh, my name is Zheng Sixuan, and I'm interviewing a resident who lives in the blaak area, uh, it's a pleasure to welcome, uh, you're being interviewed by me today, so we, uh, one thing to make clear is that this recording is only for academic purposes and will not be uh, if.

{ 2:37 }

He's not going to be revealed to anyone if you don't want to, uh, and, uh, if you're going to feel uncomfortable in the middle of the interview, you can always stop the interview. The whole interview will last about 15 minutes. I'm going to invite you to fill out an interview consent form after the interview, uh, you already know that, right?

Speaker 2: { 3:04 }

Ah, yes.

Speaker 1: { 3:05 }

Okay, so let's get to today's interview. Well, first of all, I'd like to ask you to introduce yourself, and I want to know, uh, when exactly did you move to this area of the blaak? Can you share some of the changes you've observed in the area compared to the first time you moved here?

Speaker 2: { 3:31 }

Um, okay, um, it's nice to have me here today. This this this visit, and then my name was Hollis, and then the time I moved to block was around July last year, um, July summer 2023, and then when I moved in, I actually moved into a student apartment, so what I could observe in my neighborhood was actually the student group, and then, um.

{ 4:00 }

I don't know if there are any specific changes that you are talking about.

Speaker 1: { 4:06 }

This change can be at the physical level of some of the entities you observe. Let's say you observe some of the landscape of the area, some of the commercial area planning has undergone some changes, or its environment, it's it that it has some changes, or it's its social culture, you observe.

Speaker 2: { 4:26 }

to the one.

Speaker 1: { 4:27 }

Well, it can be a cultural and social level, or it can be a physical and physical level.

Speaker 2: { 4:35 }

Well, okay, thank you for the explanation, I don't think there's been a noticeable change in the urban planning for the time being, because, um, because of the urban planning changes that I understand, for example, it could be this, um, some buildings are going to be torn down and rebuilt.

{ 4:54 }

Refurbished and refurbished, but I also haven't seen anything like this in the neighborhood where I live or such equipment working. But one of the things that I've observed is, uh, Rotterdam City Hall, he's going to send us some flyers a lot, and some of the instructions that we're going to recycle, use some of the products that we have around us, and, um, food recycling, these things, so I feel like he's there. There are changes in environmental protection, that is, there is improvement. Compared to last year, when I first moved in, I feel that they have changed a little in this area. Well, and then I think the cleanliness of the streets, uh, I may not think it was so clean when I first arrived, but it may be compared to other cities, but after staying for a while, I think it's actually okay around the area where I stayed.

{ 5:53 }

In terms of its neatness, it is within the acceptable range of this resident. But I think it's also possible that it's in this town hall or um, they have a feeling that they're elevating the residents, and then, um, other parts I think, um, like block, it's that, um, just the mark piece. Well, as far as the area near the train station is concerned, I don't think the cleanliness of this piece may not have changed very much, because from the beginning, for example, when he has this um to sell marketing, maybe every Tuesday and Saturday, you will find that no matter what kind of weather conditions, this garbage is flying all over the sky, and then there will be this relevant personnel to clean it afterwards, maybe also government personnel.

{ 6:47 }

Well, they're all such a relationship of first circle, and then then cleaning, a hmm, this I think is, in fact, as a resident, I still feel that there are points of improvement, for example, it may be necessary to maintain cleanliness at the same time, so this may be a change that I have observed.

Speaker 1: { 7:07 }

Good. Well, you mentioned that the town hall is going to distribute recycled products on a regular basis, or rather, uh, at a certain frequency, can you share this kind of brochure and you probably get a frequency of what this kind of flyer looks like.

Speaker 2: { 7:26 }

Well, I've been around nine since I moved in. months in less than a year.

{ 7:35 }

Just nine. Month ten. Month like this, in this ten. In the past month, I have received one of his two or three times, an envelope from A4 paper, preaching is actually a kind of education, telling me how I should go about sorting food, and my equipment

and things, and then the last time I received a flyer, which is actually a message delivered to your mailbox, and then you open it to see that it will let you pick up one. Well, a recycling bin that can be recycled, and then ah, this is only once, so it's about two or three times to get his letters, and then one of his at a time for me to pick up food.

Speaker 1: { 8:21 }

Okay, uh, and you also talked about, uh, you think the cleanliness of the environment has improved over the last 10 months, uh, the cleanliness of the surrounding environment. So if you are not satisfied with the cleanliness of it when you first move in, will you try to contact the government or the administration to protect your personal rights?

Speaker 2: { 8:48 }

Uh, I think it's probably still based on the uh, personal habits of individual residents, because as a new resident who has just moved into the blaak area, although I realize that the cleanliness here is not what I expected, but, uh, because I am personally still familiar with this environment and used to this environment, I actually don't know how clean it should be, um, as a city of Rotterdam, what should it look like? So, um, I didn't get in touch, um, but I personally think, because I've only been moving in for ten months, but if I'm a long-term resident, let's say I'm staying for another year, then I see that the level of cleanliness isn't what I expected, um, or, um, yes, it's not as good as I can feel, or I compare it to other cities in the Netherlands, then I might call the town hall to make such a suggestion.

Speaker 1: { 9:47 }

Okay, um, so our next question is have you noticed the impact of this thing on your cost of living? For example, you mentioned that you are currently living in a student apartment, so you would like to know if your rent has changed in the past 10 months?

Speaker 2: { 10:08 }

Well, just from the rent part, well, in fact, students may enjoy some housing subsidies discounts. Belch. The subsidy is that the city government will issue these subsidies, so in fact, there will be no significant change in the rent, but I did receive a notice that in the next few months, in fact, from next year, its rent will rise, but I am not sure that this rent and this housing subsidy will go up with the rent increase, because if they do it at the same time. Well, I don't really have a big impact on my living expenses, of course, because I'm maintaining my status as a student, um, but if they just go up the rent, but the house doesn't go up, then his uh change will have an impact on my cost of living.

Speaker 1: { 11:00 }

Okay, so are there any other living expenses besides rent, uh, the cost of living going up?

Speaker 2: { 11:09 }

Well, I think maybe the energy rise is a general problem, I'm not sure if it's due to this gentrification, but I think it should be part of the reason, because ah, the energy rise is a global one, or it's a whole thing that is going up in Europe, well, it has a lot of other reasons. But I think if a neighborhood or an area that you live in, it gets better, or uh, the living environment improves.

{ 11:39 }

Then some of the costs on its side will definitely go up, for example, except for the issue of uh energy, for example, the common area, um, because this student area will share some areas with the public area where the students live, and it will also add a fee to these areas, but these fees are still relatively invisible, and it will be included in the rent, but you can see the details of this, it is actually an increase in the cost there.

Speaker 1: { 12:05 }

Okay, so it's, uh, gentrification might bring about a certain amount of an increase in the cost of living.

Speaker 2: { 12:15 }

Well, that's right.

Speaker 1: { 12:16 }

Okay, uh, so I'd like to know a little bit about your neighbors, uh, are they're basically students?

Speaker 2: { 12:27 }

Ah, yes, there are actually three floors in this area that I live in, um, and then this building that I live in, it's actually mostly students. And then there is one of the two buildings next door to me that is mainly for this um, for professionals, and then there is a building for mixed people, where there are students, and there are employees of this company, or people who have jobs.

Speaker 1: { 12:53 }

Hmm, so do you feel that the security of this block area is also acceptable to you?

Speaker 2: { 13:03 }

Uh, yes, from the time I stayed in the past, I think that this area, its level of security is still okay. Well, of course, it also depends on where you compare it, because maybe in the Netherlands or Rotterdam there are still a lot of times you will think, there are some such as street robbery or burglary, or being followed, or drug dealing, etc.

{ 13:33 }

These things will affect one of your concerns about your daily life, um, but living in blaak Tree, I don't think it's that obvious, so far I don't feel like this, um, but only once, maybe when I was downstairs, I saw strange people over there to say hello to you, but I think because I was quite vigilant, so I didn't respond to them. But this is also sideways. The surface reflects its safety, which can only be said to be above the

middle or medium position, but it cannot be said that its safety factor is very high. Therefore, if you want to settle here as a resident or a new resident, you still need to have this security awareness, and you can't say that it is completely dependent on the security of the community.

Speaker 1: { 14:21 }

Okay, so do you hear from your neighbors about the security situation or anything like that?

Speaker 2: { 14:32 }

Well, I think it's what I just said, for example, there are no vicious incidents, but I think for example, petty theft or uh express car theft are common, but in fact, this part is also related to one of their logistics, and it can't be said to be just a security issue, because there is no security guard or front desk in our student area.

{ 14:59 }

So if there is you, he bought something online and sent it to your home, he has two ways, one is to contact you personally, and then send it to you, and the other way is to pile it up at your door, or pile it up under the apartment building, at this time, in fact, there is a high probability that your express will be taken away by mistake, or well, it just disappears directly, then it is very likely that someone took your things, but you are not sure about this. The person who took the thing or you could call it theft, was the inhabitant of the outside or something else. For example, passers-by still say that there are other residents in this building, so this is difficult to determine.

Speaker 1: { 15:39 }

Okay, so overall, uh, as a student apartment, living in the blaak area may be more acceptable than the rest of Rotterdam, but it may still be a place to live in the future. This is what it means to raise awareness of precautions in your daily life.

Speaker 2: { 15:58 }

Yes? Yes.

Speaker 1: { 15:59 }

Okay, uh, so in the course of your residency, do you think, uh, from the government or from the, uh, community administrators, how often do they interact with you, do you think that this communication is effective enough? Or do you think this, uh, your appeal has been resolved?

Speaker 2: { 16:22 }

Well. I don't think I've been in contact with the city hall because of it, but in terms of communication, actually, of course, if you call them or write to them, you can get a response, but this time will be a long wait. So, um, I don't think it's very effective in terms of the level of communication, but from.

{ 16:48 }

In terms of problem solving, that is, when I have a complaint to ask them to solve a thing, there is a way to help me solve it, so this timeline will be very long, and then this is the city hall, uh, and then our apartment building, it actually has property management, and then one of the parts of the case, um, the time to solve the appeal will be much faster, and I think it's also efficient, whether you're about. Well, there's something missing, or you want to report it, or you think, uh, the neighborhood is more noisy, or, uh, whatever you want to communicate with them, you, you're able to get a quick response, on their weekdays, of course, and then I think we have a committee in this area, and this committee is actually here to solve some of them, the surrounding residents, his feedback. Ah, I don't think I've been to this committee, but I think it's nice to have an organization like this, because you can, um, give them feedback on something, and then maybe you can get some quick and better solutions to solve it.

Speaker 1: { 17:53 }

Okay, let's ask about the existence of the community committee, how did you learn about it? Yes.

Speaker 2: { 18:00 }

This committee is actually their thing. The management will send us an email. He would tell us that now that we had such a committee in place, and then he would invite the residents to become one of them. In addition, you can actually go directly to the office of their property to participate in the discussion day, for example, if I have a very strong demand, um, then I can go directly to their office to vote, or propose my proposal.

Speaker 1: { 18:32 }

Okay, um, and I'd like to know, uh, how do you think some of the services and amenities that the blaak community has provided during your time of living in the area? For example, some public areas, uh, education, health care, public safety, public green spaces, etc.

Speaker 2: { 18:54 }

Well, I think it's convenient.

{ 18:59 }

Well, it's hard to say about the change, because I haven't actually been enjoying some of their public benefits, but I think, um, as far as I'm concerned, but not my own experience. Well, for example, if you're disabled, if you need some help, I've seen it, for example, on the bus or on the tram, there will be staff to push you for you, if you have limited mobility. I think this is a good one, um, a public service, but I can't say what has changed, but it's there, uh, there's a presence here, and if you have to say there's a change, it's probably from the fact that I see it and I know it now, so that's a change, and it's still there, then it's a good thing, because it's a contribution to the community.

{ 19:52 }

Well, and then the other part of this I've heard, but I haven't really checked it myself, which means let's say you're a new resident, but ah, you have a language barrier, or ah, you want to learn Dutch, then you're going to call them at the town hall and they'll arrange some um, free lessons for you, and then these free courses are actually matching some of this one in Rotterdam. Maybe it's the elderly residents, they might need some time to get out of the way, and then they're locals, so if you have this service, if you have this appointment, you can talk to them and improve your speaking skills. So I think this is also a good public service, and I haven't seen much of the others.

Speaker 1: { 20:46 }

Okay, well, in addition.

{ 20:48 }

In addition, if you want to know if you have noticed some new commercial facilities in the block area during the period of your residence, such as some restaurants, cafes or shops, some cultural facilities, or you will often visit them, art galleries, museums, theaters, etc. What do you think of these commercial and cultural facilities?

Speaker 2: { 21:13 }

Well, I think from. If you move in so far, there seems to be no big change in the commercial area, that is, you will rarely see those, what do you call him is the thing that hangs and hangs, that is, the crane will do some, well, the new one, the building and the like, it is rare to see the renovation or see the new building to be built.

{ 21:46 }

I feel like the city of Rotterdam is still, well, from it, all I know is that it hasn't changed very, very much since it was first built. The very new buildings that you see, in fact, have been around for a long time, um, so I think it's probably a more mature city, and it won't have some new land to be developed, and you can build new things, and then I often go to cafes, or eat and catering, and so on. I feel like they're still like all the merchants here in Marketo, speaking of which, then I think, uh, when it comes to the catering industry, then in Marketo, I have seen that he has a new opening, uh, the supermarket is the Super League, and then there is a new opening of this, Chinese restaurants, yes, um, other small stores may be that I didn't notice, but that means he this.

{ 22:45 }

In these malls, it's going to have some new stores moving into this change, and then for that change, I think from a residents' point of view, it's definitely going to provide a lot of convenience because it offers more food options. And ah, it's not far from where I stayed, so it's actually quite convenient. And then I feel like I'm welcoming these new changes, because I think the city might be more vibrant. And then, change also means that he is growing in all aspects.

Speaker 1: { 23:20 }

Okay, uh, last question, do you think that living in the blaak area, all residents can participate equally in the decision-making of the city's development? Actually, it's also the feedback channel of the committee that you just mentioned, if there are some, uh. If you are dissatisfied or have some suggestions, you can submit them through a channel and get reviewed and processed, uh, solve the problem, uh, do you think this right is respected and protected?

Speaker 2: { 23:53 }

Ah, I think, well, in my personal experience, it's the part of the area where I live, and I've been notified by this committee. So I must feel that I am respected, but I don't know if everyone receives it equally, so my assumption should be the same, because this is sent from the property, and everyone should receive this one in their mailbox. So actually, from the part where I live, I am more grateful to him for giving every resident such a right to mention, and to put forward his own channel whether it is a complaint or a suggestion. But I think one of the things that might need to be improved is that the committee is still not that convenient, because their meetings may be once a month or once a quarter. I think that as a resident, if you want to complain about something, you have some complaints that you want to talk to people and the city hall.

{ 24:50 }

Or if you want to talk to the area where you live, it's better to have a more convenient channel. And then, uh, because I'm not actually part of the local population, the language is also an issue, because from my experience of calling the town hall, it's usually in Dutch, um, and then some phone calls, like um, tax office calls, because in fact, if you contact the tax office, it's definitely a very anxious thing, at this time, actually. It's hard for you to get through to them, because in fact, they are all in Dutch at the beginning and then you have to go to the blind to listen to the button and say that this may be a manual service, and then it is a channel to speak English, so I think from this two-way communication of being able to send feedback to receiving feedback, the language barrier should be lowered, so that it can be given to the residents. Offered to feel more respected as equals. Otherwise, you will feel that you still enjoy more privileges as a resident of the Netherlands.

Speaker 1: { 25:52 }

Okay, uh, so that's the end of our visit to you today, uh, the questions, do you still have questions for me?

Speaker 2: { 26:04 }

Ah me. I don't have any questions, thank you for your interview today.

Speaker 1: { 26:07 }

Ah, okay, so that's the end of our recording here for now.

Appendix D: R Script for Analyzing Transcription of Interviews

```
install.packages(c("striprtf", "tm", "SnowballC", "wordcloud", "RColorBrewer",  
"tidytext", "dplyr", "topicmodels"))
```

```
library(striprtf)
```

```
library(tm)
```

```
library(tm)
```

```
library(wordcloud)
```

```
library(tm) library(wordcloud)
```

```
library(tidytext)
```

```
library(dplyr)
```

```
library(topicmodels)
```

```
# Read RTF files
```

```
text_rtf <- read_rtf("Transcription0513.rtf")
```

```
# Read an rtf file and convert to plain text.
```

```
text_content <- read_rtf("Transcription0513.rtf")
```

```
# Customize a removal list
```

```
removeWordsList <- c("will", "think", "one", "okay", "dont", "also", "like", "still",  
"example", "can", "actually", "well", "interview", "feel", " well")
```



```

# Create corpus and preprocess text

corpus <- Corpus(VectorSource(text_content))

corpus_clean <- tm_map(corpus, content_transformer(tolower))

corpus_clean <- tm_map(corpus_clean, removePunctuation)

corpus_clean <- tm_map(corpus_clean, removeNumbers)

corpus_clean <- tm_map(corpus_clean, removeWords, stopwords("english"))

corpus_clean <- tm_map(corpus_clean, stripWhitespace)

corpus_clean <- tm_map(corpus_clean, removeWords, c(stopwords("english"),
removeWordsList))

# Create term-document matrix and perform word cloud analysis

tdm <- TermDocumentMatrix(corpus_clean)

m <- as.matrix(tdm)

word_freqs <- sort(rowSums(m), decreasing = TRUE)

df <- data.frame(words = names(word_freqs), freq = word_freqs)

wordcloud(words = df$word, freq = df$freq, min.freq = 1, colors = brewer.pal(8,
"Dark2"))

# Construct document-term matrix and perform lda topic modeling

dtm <- DocumentTermMatrix(corpus_clean)

lda_model <- LDA(dtm, k = 3) # k is the number of topics you wish to analyze

lda_topics <- lda_model %>% tidy(matrix = "beta")

```

```

# Assume lda_model is the LDA model you've already fitted

library(ggplot2)

library(dplyr)

# View the top words of the topics

topics <- lda_model %>%

  tidy(matrix = "beta") %>%

  group_by(topic) %>%

  top_n(5, beta) %>%

  ungroup() %>%

  arrange(topic, -beta)

# Use ggplot2 to display the top terms for each topic.

ggplot(topics, aes(reorder_within(term, beta, topic), beta, fill = factor(topic))) +

  geom_col(show.legend = FALSE) +

  facet_wrap(~ topic, scales = "free") +

  scale_x_reordered() +

  theme_minimal()

# Calculate the topic distribution of the document

document_topics <- lda_model %>%

```

```
tidy(matrix = "gamma") %>%  
  
arrange(desc(gamma))  
  
# Select topics based on the highest gamma value for each document  
  
document_topics <- document_topics %>% Group_by(document) %>%  
Lda_model %>% tidy(matrix = "gamma")  
  
group_by(document) %>% Lda_model %>% tidy(matrix = "gamma")  
  
top_n(1, gamma) %>% Lda_model %>% tidy(matrix = "gamma")  
  
ungroup()  
  
# Main topics that correspond to each document  
  
head(document_topics)
```