

Gentrification in Amsterdam

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Introduction

Since the rise of urbanisation much theory has been developed in order to understand and explain mechanisms, causes and consequences of urbanisation and related phenomena. Gentrification is a term that has been coined by Ruth Glass during the second half of the last century (Wikipedia, NL, Gentrificatie, 07 Jan 2020). The phenomenon of less affluent neighbourhoods being transformed and uplifted in (property) value has since become so pervasive and had such an immense impact on urban communities anywhere in the world that the academic term 'gentrification' describing this phenomenon has long become common vocabulary among the masses.

Gentrification can be found in various forms and when looking at it, different causes, mechanisms or gentrifiers can be identified depending on the area and time that is being considered.

In Amsterdam both, the causes and consequences of gentrification, have been subject to considerable debate in recent years. While gentrification is often framed as something positive, uplifting cities and neighbourhoods to a higher and better standard, this often only holds true when looking at the property values in the area in question.

Meanwhile, depending on the dynamics at play in that particular case of gentrification, higher property prices, increased costs of living and the change of amenities, available commodities and their prices often drives out people who originally lived in the area and now can no longer afford to live there.

Irrespective of whether gentrification is good or bad news for you, it can be very beneficial to gain early insights into the early stages of gentrification, even before the price hike in property prices manifests itself. It is crucial for property developers to make their investments during the early stages in order to reap the highest profit towards the final stages of gentrification. Equally, political parties, activists and other social society groups representing those negatively affected by gentrification need to voice their concerns and organize themselves as early as possible, if they want to still be able to intervene and slow down the process or at least partially address the adverse outcomes of the gentrification process. So they, too, will benefit greatly from data identifying early stages of gentrification.

The city of Amsterdam is said to be gentrified and gentrifying in various areas at the moment. While the neighbourhoods and districts in the city centre have long become the most expensive areas to live, there are other areas of the city that are expected to experience major transformations in the coming years. During the past years the borough of Amsterdam Noord was often mentioned as being expected to gentrify rapidly. Since 2019 the borough, which is situated north of the water way 'Het IJ' has been connected to the rest of the city by an underground metro line that can significantly shorten the commute to literally anywhere in Amsterdam city centre and other commercial districts of Amsterdam. Other boroughs at the outskirts of the city such as Amsterdam Nieuw-West and Amsterdam Zuidoost are still considered to be cheaper to live than the boroughs in the city centre but have not undergone dramatic structural changes such as the introduction of new transport links in recent years.

This paper seeks to establish which boroughs of Amsterdam are currently likely to be in the early stages of gentrification. The analysis provided in this paper is meant to provide a preliminary analysis that can provide guidance as to which borough(s) to focus on for an more in-depth analysis, based on which investors, politicians and social society groups then can make further decisions.

Data and Data Sources

The data used for this analysis will come from several sources.

Amsterdam is currently divided into 8 boroughs. These boroughs can be found on a map made available by the data service of the city of Amsterdam (Amsterdam boroughs, accessed 07 Jan 2020). The coordinates of those boroughs are available on the Dutch Wikipedia pages of those boroughs (Wikipedia, NL, Amsterdam boroughs, 07 Jan 2020). With the data collected from the various websites, I manually created a csv file that can be used for further analysis in a Jupyter Notebook. The coordinates provided in the csv file can be used to extract data of venues available in any given borough from FourSquare.

FourSquare has proven to be a well-documented up-to-date source for venue data in most major cities of the world. While the data is usually collected by untrained FourSquare users, the website has been set up in such a way that it is very clear and easy to use and data entry errors are unlikely and hence expected to be rare. This way of collecting data also has the great advantage that the data provided is continuously updated. In order to get a meaningful answer to our research question, it is crucial to have access to the most recent data on venues in any given area of Amsterdam. Therefore, FourSquare is an excellent choice.

FourSquare is mainly used to get the venue category (such as café, gym, hotel) of each venue found in a borough. The kinds of venues available in a borough are expected to be a good indicator of the progress of gentrification in that borough. The data will be extracted from FourSquare using the FourSquare API. It will then be further processed in a Jupyter Notebook in order to be used for the analysis.

Finally, a csv file with data on property values in each borough of Amsterdam is available via the website of the data service of the city of Amsterdam (Amsterdam property value, 7.6b, 11 Oct 2019). The data is available in average price per square metre and in average total property value. It is important to have both values as the size of property within the different boroughs can vary greatly. Rising property prices in a particular borough are usually a good indicator of gentrification. This analysis will be looking to identify cases where the first signs of gentrification arise, for example, the (increased) availability of certain venues, but property prices are not yet picking up to a point where they would have risen to a level that equals prices in the city centre.

Sources/References

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