The ambiguity of diversity: Management of ethnic and class transitions in a gentrifying local shopping street

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Abstract

As a malleable concept with a relatively positive resonance, 'diversity' proves to be a useful tool to legitimise a range of policy strategies, goals and outcomes. In the Netherlands, the concept has gained a central role in the implementation of social mixing policies targeting so-called problematic neighbourhoods by introducing a better 'mixed' or 'balanced' population. The discursive celebration of such a mixed neighbourhood, however, often carefully evades the question: 'A mix of what?' Closer inspection of policy interventions reveals that the different meanings of diversity are employed to claim urban space for some groups, while excluding others. This is illustrated by a range of micro-management strategies in a shopping street in Amsterdam, Javastraat. Framed as promoting diversity, they form a symbolically loaded strategy to covertly manage ethnic and class transition by targeting the retail landscape. This article explores the (discursive) remaking of the shopping street and the consequences thereof for shopkeepers and local residents.

Keywords

diversity, ethnic businesses, gentrification, retail

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摘要

"多样性"作为一个能引起相对积极共鸣的可延展概念，被证明是为一系列政策策略、目标和结果赋予正当性的有用工具。在荷兰，"多样性"概念在针对所谓"问题街区"引入更"混合"或"平衡"居住人口的社会混合政策的实施中发挥了核心作用。然而，对这种混合街区的话语颂扬，经常小心翼翼地回避这样一个问题："什么的混合？" 我们更细致地考察政策干预后发现，有人利用多样性的不同含义来为一些群体主张城市空间，同时排斥其他群体。阿姆斯特丹购物街"爪哇街"的一系列微管理策略说明了这一点。在促进多样性的名义下，它们汇聚成了一套象征性的策略，通过瞄准零售空间来悄悄地管理族群结构和阶层结构的转变。本文探讨了该购物街的（话语性）改造及其对店主和当地居民的影响。

关键词

多样性、民族风情商业、绅士化、零售

Introduction

On a cold January afternoon in Amsterdam, a group of international scholars gathered in Javastraat, a long shopping street in the Indische Buurt in the eastern part of the city, for a tour of a street in transition guided by the governmental shopping street manager. 'Diversity' turned out to be the key term to describe the shopping street and its history, as well as to legitimise the actions undertaken by the municipality, housing associations and private developers to revitalise it. Counting over a hundred different nationalities amongst its residents, the Indische Buurt is undeniably an ethnically diverse area. But now that the area is gradually becoming the turf of (mainstream Dutch) young urban professionals, diversity is increasingly employed to describe differentiations in terms of class, educational backgrounds and length of residence. A growing number of visitors and backpackers staying in the local hostel add to the mixture of people that can be found browsing and shopping on Javastraat. This pattern of radical heterogeneity, which Steven Vertovec (2007) has called 'super-diversity', manifests itself in Javastraat's retail landscape as well, consisting of a mixture of Dutch entrepreneurs, ethnic businesses and upscale 'boutiques'

bringing different economic functions and cultural styles to the shopping street (Zukin et al., 2009). The neighbourhood diversity is considered its main distinctive feature, and strategies to reinforce this diversity surely sound inclusive and benign at first sight. After all, the Moroccan greengrocer can be a testimony to the neighbourhood's diversity as much as the owner of the upscale restaurant and design furniture store. In the same vein, diversity is expressed by Muslim immigrants purchasing halal meat as much as by the hipsters buying a new pair of jeans.

As the tour continues, however, it becomes apparent that although the ethnic and lower-scale businesses are repeatedly pointed out as a central aspect of the street's authenticity and atmosphere, none of them are actually part of the excursion. While the upscale restaurants and boutiques are elaborately introduced and visited, the plethora of ethnic shops for daily needs are approached with a mixture of praise for their *couleur locale* and concern for the economic malaise, criminal activity and shabby appearances associated with these shops. At the end of the day, although different types of diversity are used interchangeably as positive attributes, the most prominent reading of diversity is marked by the high-end stores opening up in the otherwise somewhat impoverished shopping street. This reading is so

widely accepted that one of the newer upscale restaurants refers to itself as being 'the first' to locate there, when there was still 'nothing'; the perception of the neighbourhood and its amenities is as an exciting terra nullius free to be 'explored' by higher-class residents.

This article has emerged out of several research projects carried out in Indische Buurt and its main shopping street, Javastraat, since 2010. Investigating the perspectives of different stakeholders – policy makers, shopkeepers and both longer established and newer residents – our attention was drawn to the use of 'diversity' as a critical theme. Despite the clear contradictions in the different meanings of the term diversity, as illustrated in the above vignette, our research found that the term manages to raise a surprising amount of consensus amongst the different stakeholders in a context where residential and commercial gentrification are causing considerable transformations in the composition of residents and businesses. The following sections will illustrate the pacifying role of the term diversity in this process. Its positive and inclusive resonance diverts attention away from the question of *what* type of diversity is promoted, effectively de-politicising a process of state-led commercial gentrification, as well as the exclusionary effects that come with it.

This contributes to a growing body of literature that focuses on the effects of gentrification beyond housing market dynamics and reforms (Bridge and Dowling, 2001; Gonzalez and Waley, 2013; Mermet, 2017; Zukin, 2010). Arts, culture, consumption landscapes and representations of neighbourhoods not only change as a consequence of gentrification, but are also actively pursued by local governments and other institutional actors to instigate gentrification (Cameron and Coaffee, 2005; Hoekstra et al., 2018). Such strategies are referred to as symbolic politics. Symbolic politics can be understood as a *field* of symbolic struggle (Bourdieu, 1985) over the power to represent and impose a legitimate world view on the social reality, and a spatially defined territory in this case in particular (De Koning, 2015; Hoekstra et al., 2018; Sakizlioglu and Uitermark, 2014). However, the critical strand of research on symbolic politics seems at odds with the situation encountered in Javastraat and Indische Buurt in two ways. First, the symbolic remaking of neighbourhoods is often seen as a conscious and deliberate strategy, with either more revanchist motives or economic purposes on the side of the local government (Cameron and Coaffee, 2005; Smith, 2002). Secondly, these symbolic politics are described as inherently contested and a breeding ground for conflict and struggle (De Koning, 2015; Hoekstra et al., 2018). In our case study, both assumptions did not seem to apply. We argue that ambiguity around the different understandings of diversity is an important explanatory factor, both of the complex ideologies of policymakers that legitimise state-led commercial gentrification and of the lack of resistance from entrepreneurs and residents to this process.

Symbolic politics in state-led gentrification

As Savini and Dembski (2016) have pointed out, the mobilisation of symbols, rationales and discourses has played a pivotal role in enabling change in the long social-democratic tradition of urban planning in Amsterdam. Directly and indirectly, state officials impose their vision upon policy and, as such, upon representations of the city and specific neighbourhoods by making use of their 'monopoly of legitimate symbolic violence', that is: 'an act of symbolic imposition that has behind it all the strength of the collective, the consensus [and] the common sense […]' (Bourdieu, 1985: 205).

This seems especially true for the rationale behind urban restructuring programmes of relatively low-income neighbourhoods. The promise of economic prosperity and 'the rising tide that lifts all boats' (Duany, 2001: 36), enabled urban governments to blatantly search for the best strategies to attract better educated and higher income residents and recreate the city as a middle-class playground. Stigmatised representations of concentrations of lower income groups provide further rationale to urban restructuring strategies based on social mixing – which can be understood as state-led gentrification by stealth (Bridge et al., 2011; Lees, 2008; Uitermark et al., 2007). Although the presumed benefits of social mixing are highly contested in the academic world, it nevertheless finds much resonance with policymakers, journalists, planners and marketing agencies (Rose, 2004). Furthermore, since the influx of higher social class residents has gradually changed the city's electorate, elected parties and government representatives, the positive effects of these strategies are increasingly perceived from a middle-class perspective (Van Gent and Boterman, 2019). This literature has laid the foundation for the discrepancy between the (inclusive) concept and (excluding) practice of 'mixing'.

De Koning (2015) has shown how this ideology plays out on a neighbourhood scale, in a case study of a relatively deprived Amsterdam neighbourhood where responsible, higher income residents are introduced to accommodate positive neighbourhood effects. While policy reports capitalise on the concepts of a 'balanced' and 'diverse' housing stock, she shows how social mixing policies in fact reverberate – and normalise – class and racially coded ideas about 'good' neighbourhoods and associated desired residents. Consider, for example, the following quote in the policy report 'Urban Renewal' by the Municipality of Amsterdam (1999) which marked the starting point of the social mixing approach to the

so-called (nationally identified) 'development' areas (*ontwikkelingsgebieden*), of which the Indische Buurt was part:

> Amsterdam has a high share of cheap social housing and a lower share of owner-occupied housing. The development areas with a high share of social housing suffer from drugs nuisance and dilapidation […]. They show a strong concentration of ethnic minorities and have a gravitational pull of immigrants. This is why [decent] manners between neighbourhood residents disappear; shopping streets and local markets have changed and the formerly familiar world does not exist anymore. Some people have been displaced. (Municipality of Amsterdam, 1999: 17, author's translation)

Here, the governmental discourse equates the concentration of problems (e.g. drugs nuisance, aberrant normative behaviour and decay in general) with the concentration of social housing and certain population groups, especially ethnic minorities. This interpretation allows the city government to present its focus on (native Dutch) middle-class residents as an inclusive measure, as these residents are considered the 'essential actors for social cohesion' or the 'cement' that keeps all the different values, attitudes and behaviours together (Municipality of Amsterdam, 1999: 25; Municipality of Amsterdam, 2008).

In contrast, *particular* cultural identities are tied to notions of socio-economic deprivation and failed successive integration, a practice that Bonjour and Duyvendak (2018: 896) call the 'culturalization of economic deprivation'. Uitermark (2003) shows how these discourses that position neighbourhoods dominated by *immigrants* as pathological spaces serve as a proxy to legitimate urban revitalisation and displacement. In the same vein, Rath (2010) argues that ethnic diversity, and in particular the spatial concentration and prolonged institutionalised existence of ethnic and religious

particularism, has increasingly been perceived as a 'sign of deprivation and failing integration and, what is worse, a sign of immigrants' unwillingness to become part of the mainstream' (Rath et al., 2018: 84). As a consequence, the discursive celebration of mixed and inclusive neighbourhoods promotes a mix measured purely by differences in income and social class. This is therefore a completely different view on diversity than the idea of ethnic diversity. However, these categories seem to be obfuscated in popular debate.

At the same time as being negatively stereotyped, however, lower socio-economic class and ethnic non-Dutch residents are also romanticised. In fact, the presence of ethnic and social others is often one of the motivations for gentrifiers to move into relatively deprived neighbourhoods (Blokland and van Eijk, 2010). Loving diversity functions as a distinctive sign and, when the difference is recognised, as a sign of social distinction (Bourdieu, 1984), as long as its threatening dimensions can be controlled and aestheticised to meet the needs of the bourgeois urbanists (Goonewardena and Kipfer, 2005; Tissot, 2014). The concept of cosmo-multiculturalism ties the more positive and negative connotations of otherness together, referring to an appreciation of ethnic differences as viewed from a middle-class (cosmopolitan consumption) perspective, without any real consequences for the existing power balance. In this symbolic representation of the city, the term 'diversity' receives a particular meaning that is tied to the a priori presumption that diversity in terms of immigrant ethnic particularism is inferior to an urban culture which is referred to as 'cosmo-multiculturalism' (Hage, 1997).

This illustrates the schism in debates on ethnic diversity: when it concerns *couleur locale* as an urban amenity, a larger presence of minorities with *mixed* ethnic backgrounds is considered an attractive mix. When it concerns social-economic diversity, the very same mix of ethnic backgrounds is seen as constituting a *homogenous* group with non-Dutch backgrounds and a lower social-economic status as its main features. Therefore, interventions to promote social-economic diversity can end up decreasing ethnic diversity, even though at the same time this mix of ethnic backgrounds is highly appreciated. Considered as a policy moment, cosmo-multiculturalism embraces ethnic difference, yet it puts this embrace in service of the newly emerged urban middle class.

In addition to the symbolic power of the state to *construct* a specific discourse on diversity that covertly satisfies the needs of some residents while excluding others, governmental actors can also put this same discourse into practice by *intervening* in neighbourhoods through the subsidisation and facilitation of specific urban amenities, organisations and initiatives. By doing so, governmental actors are able to represent neighbourhoods in such a way that they cater to the needs of middle-class residents even before they have actually arrived. Hoekstra et al. (2018) use the Dutch term *kwartiermaken* to denote this practice: 'by financing initiatives that represent specific cultural-creative aesthetics and symbolisms, [governmental actors] try to attract middle-class residents and, in this way, pave the way for partial, if not complete, gentrification' (Hoekstra et al., 2018: 258, author's translation). As such, through the support of new landscape complexes that supply the material and less-tangible social-cultural needs of higher-class residents (Bridge and Dowling, 2001), the 'constructed multicultural urbanity' (Hackworth and Rekers, 2005: 232) of upscale cosmopolitan amenities 'may complement neo-liberal strategies of growth expressed by city governments' support for new, market-rate housing […]' (Zukin et al., 2009: 49).

In what follows, we illustrate how the ambiguity around the term diversity is perceived by policymakers, business owners and residents in Javastraat in Amsterdam.

Table 1. Demographics of Indische Buurt and Amsterdam.

	Indische Buurt West	Indische Buurt East	Amsterdam
Residents (n)	12,668	10,264	844,952
Social housing (%)	89.0	89.0	71.0
Households with a low income (%)	30.0	30.0	21.4
Working population on unemployment benefits (%)	13.3	17.2	11.2
Residents with a migration background* (%), of which:	62.2	64.5	52.5
Moroccan	18.2	20.2	9.0
Turkish	7.7	10.6	5.1
Surinamese	7.6	8.8	7.7
Antillean	1.2	1.1	1.5
Other non-western country	11.7	11.5	11.9
Western country	15.8	12.3	17.3

Source: Research, Information and Statistics (2019); own adaptation.
* Based on the Dutch principle *jus sanguinis a patre et matre* (citizenship by nationality of mother or father). Research, Information and Statistics identifies every person with at least one parent born in a foreign country, despite the place of birth, as having a 'migration background'.

We observed that the different meanings of diversity are used interchangeably and, as such, obfuscate power relations and political choices, creating a widely shared sense of agreement in a process that is more harmful than the inclusive term of diversity suggests. Although we are not particularly interested in the representativeness[1] of our case, Javastraat can be considered as a typical case of a state-led gentrifying neighbourhood. The analyses of this article are based on 45 interviews with shopkeepers (14), local residents (26) and urban planners and policy makers (five) conducted between 2010 and 2018. The latter comprise street managers, urban planners and representatives of housing associations who have been engaged in the urban renewal process of Javastraat. These analyses are complemented with analyses of relevant policy documents.

Case study area and research design

The Indische Buurt is situated in the eastern part of Amsterdam and has almost 22,300 residents. The demographic profile of the area as presented in Table 1 reveals a predominantly lower income area, and one where more than two-thirds of residents have a non-western immigration background. The neighbourhood was built at the beginning of the 20th century, shortly after the opening of new harbours and canals and the concomitant dramatic expansion of manufacturing and transportation industries in the eastern part of the city. Tenements offered affordable housing to the rapidly growing working class, including skilled workers, tradespeople, office clerks and lower government employees. When these industries started to degrade in the 1960s and 1970s, a large part of the (native Dutch) working class found jobs in other sectors. In the decades of large-scale suburbanisation, numerous inhabitants moved to outskirts and satellite towns. At the same time, large numbers of lower skilled immigrants from developing countries – Turkey and Morocco in particular – were attracted to work in the sunset industries and moved into the relatively large and cheap vacant tenements of the Indische Buurt.

Table 2. Share of social housing (left) and real estate values of total stock (right) relative to Amsterdam (= 100).

	Social housing				Real estate values			
	2005		2017		2005		2017	
	In %	Relative	In %	Relative	× €1000	Relative	× €1000	Relative
Indische Buurt West	89	125	59	111	136*	69	254	87
Indische Buurt East	89	125	61	115	159*	81	251	86
Amsterdam	71	100	53	100	197*	100	292	100

Note: * We used Hochstenbach's (2015: 828) data, since Research, Information and Statistics (2019) only has data available on real estate values from 2014.
Source: Hochstenbach (2015: 828); own adaptation; Research, Information and Statistics (2019).

By the 1970s, however, many of the tenements in the Indische Buurt were in a severe state of disrepair due to flaws introduced during the hasty construction period (Heijdra, 2000). The Indische Buurt was for a long time represented as one of Amsterdam's least liveable neighbourhoods (Hochstenbach, 2015), and has consequently been targeted by national policies aiming to improve the neighbourhood through social mixing and infrastructural investments. In 2002, and later on again in 2007, the municipality and three social housing corporations settled an agreement and organised into a consortium called 'Convenant Vernieuwing Indische Buurt' (CVIB; Indische Buurt Revitalization Agreement), with the goal of 'increas[ing] the share of larger owner-occupied houses [in order to] improve the social infrastructure and economic climate of the neighbourhood' (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2010: 33). Under the sway of this strategy, a large share of the social-rental stock was converted into private rental housing and owner-occupancy. The changes in the housing stock as shown in Table 2 provide evidence for state-led gentrification. Especially in the western part of the neighbourhood, the share of social housing has declined more drastically in comparison with the average decreasing trend of social housing in

Amsterdam. Moreover, the average relative real estate values have increased significantly, coming closer and closer to those of Amsterdam as a whole.

Before the 1990s, the strong position of housing associations would have prevented, or at least slowed, the decrease in social-rental housing. However, with the establishment of the CVIB, the drive to transform the Indische Buurt into a mixed-income neighbourhood gained momentum. The changes in the symbolic language of the Indische Buurt became especially visible in the streetscape of Javastraat. With the local government and housing associations as allies, transitions in the shopping street are managed by direct regulation through zoning plans and indirect regulation through aesthetic refurbishment and interventions in property ownership. The city planning department designed a new outlook by reducing parking space for cars while increasing it for bicycles, and by cutting down trees and installing new planters. Zoning plans have been modified to allow for more flexibility, particularly for hospitality businesses, and certain 'undesirable' businesses have been banned. A shopping street manager has been appointed and employed by the local government to supervise and promote the upgrading of Javastraat. Their task is to look for ways to make use of

policies to promote commercial gentrification. Ernst and Doucet (2014: 149) show how the 'traditional' supply of takeaways, snack bars and pubs has decreased in the Indische Buurt. In contrast, the biggest increase has come from new upscale coffee bars and restaurants, particularly since 2002. Many of these new amenities can be described as boutiques and are concentrated on the neighbourhood's main square, Javaplein. Javaplein has been completely renovated into a green space with fountains, taken over by boutiques with trendy industrial or vintage aesthetics where shoppers and local residents congregate to sip cappuccinos or mint tea. Nearby, a former fashion school has been converted into a condominium consisting of 26 'smart lofts', equipped with its own car park, gym and roof terrace for residents (see Smart Lofts, n.d.).

Policy perspectives on ethnic diversity: Aestheticisation and deconcentration

Analysis of the institutional stakeholder interviews and the policy reports reveals that an integral part of the urban restructuring process in the Indische Buurt is the management of entrepreneurial activities in the neighbourhood. Shopping street managers explicitly embed the retail strategies in the context of social mixing policies and objectives, as illustrated in this quote:

> The local government tries to achieve a kind of dispersion, because they noticed that too many population groups with a low income are concentrated in the Indische Buurt. What they are doing – hence the social mixing policy – is differentiating these groups. And how do you entice people to move to the Indische Buurt? Exactly, by establishing trendier hospitality!

The perspective on 'diversity' that is articulated here closely follows the social mixing paradigm: in an area with a concentration of lower income population groups, higher income groups introduce more diversity.

At the same time, maintaining the street's ethnic diversity is also seen as a key objective. The CVIB proposes a themed revitalisation into, in the words of the shopping street manager, a 'Mediterranean shopping boulevard' (Samen Indische Buurt, 2009: 26). The shopping street manager describes her assignment as being 'to turn the street into a multicultural shopping street with multicultural offerings'. However, although the diverse ethnic backgrounds of entrepreneurs are seen as an amenity to the street, entrepreneurs with non-Dutch backgrounds are seen as lacking quality. In this way, the state-led commercial gentrification is framed almost as accidental: 'We shouldn't turn the street into a yuppie street; the street is for the entire neighbourhood. [But] of course we aim for quality and appeal.' The foundations for this perspective are laid in the zoning plan for Javastraat as determined in 2009. The plan confirms the former street manager's notion that the local government tries to attract higher-class residents by increasing the number of hospitality functions they believe will appeal to these residents and problematising particular ethnic businesses:

> The goal is to allot hospitality in a more flexible way, to provide more space for hospitality and to upgrade the current supply (…) The desired objective is the establishment of upscale, cultural hospitality in the Indische Buurt (…) At the same time, the goal is to reduce the number of takeaway restaurants, coffee houses and cafés which cause nuisance (…) Phone [call] stores are explicitly forbidden in the zoning plan. (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2010: 34, 5)

The zoning plan makes a clear distinction between *desired* and *less desired* businesses. Phone stores, where customers make low-

cost, long-distance phone calls and use the Internet, have drawn particular scrutiny. Phone stores mostly cater to relatively poor, first-generation immigrants. As Hagemans et al. (2015: 108) explain, the reluctant attitude of the local government to include these shops in the official zoning plans is the result of the bad connotation they entail: '[r]ightly or not, they are associated with informal economic practices and criminal activities'. In sharp contrast are the type of businesses that are deemed as 'qualitative': that is, upscale, cultural cafés and restaurants that have the potential to attract shoppers and residents with more purchasing power. In other words, the local government desires amenities that can boost the neighbourhood economy in order to market the economic quality of living in the Indische Buurt.

Secondly, and highly related to the tendency to exclude 'low quality' types of entrepreneurial activities, is the attempt to clear undesirable *elements* from existing businesses. Since zoning plans are reviewed only once every 10 years in a time-consuming, public process, they are too rigid to quickly respond to changes. The transition of the retail landscape is therefore partly accomplished by indirect regulation. One of these measures is to demand or subsidise renovations to the structure, building quality, facades and aesthetic appearance of shops. The following quote illustrates how this is again tightly linked to a perception of ethnic entrepreneurs lacking in quality: 'By addressing physical space, we take the ethnic entrepreneurs along with us in the quality improvements … These are ongoing projects towards the entrepreneurs, to *educate* them' (street manager, Javastraat, emphasis added). Another measure of indirect regulation is related to interventions in property ownership. In contrast to the housing property, commercial property on Javastraat is almost exclusively owned by private

landlords. The shopping street manager aims to convince these landlords to help in the regeneration of the street by attracting entrepreneurs who fit the vision of the development plan. Again, the shopping street manager perceives reluctance to comply from ethnic entrepreneurs:

> With regard to ethnic entrepreneurs, this is often quite a problem, because entrepreneurs who leave often have relatives or friends who take over their lease and continue. It's possible that you miss the chance to bring in a new entrepreneur. (Street manager, Javastraat)

In this process, the street manager stresses the importance of new entrepreneurs to increase the aesthetic appeal of the area, which 'could also benefit immigrant entrepreneurs'. This highlights how commercial gentrification is presented as a proxy to improve the opportunity structure for incumbent local businesses; a paradigm that clearly resounds with the ideology of social mixing as articulated in the research literature of state-led residential gentrification.

The ambiguity between diversity as reducing 'homogenous' low-income or non-native Dutch population groups and diversity as celebrated multiculturalism causes a policy with contradictory goals. Discursively, the two interpretations of diversity are used interchangeably, without much critical reflection. In practice, however, most of the interventions support an agenda of commercial gentrification. This is acknowledged by the shopping street manager, but downplayed as an unintended consequence of lacking quality amongst ethnic entrepreneurs: ethnic diversity is promoted, but it has to be of sufficient allure. The type of diversity that is desired, then, should not be understood in terms of ethnic diversity, nor in terms of an overarching identity that benefits different ethnic entrepreneurs. Rather, the diversity prescribed in the policy discourse can be considered, in accordance with

De Oliver's (2016) research findings, as a lifestyle amenity that caters to the more expensive cosmopolitan and cultural consumption interests of higher-class residents through which, in Bourdieusian terms, they subjectively define and demarcate their social position (see Shaker Ardekani and Rath, 2017).

The diversity experience of local shopkeepers and residents

It has become clear that the symbolic and discursive remaking strategies deployed by government agencies of Javastraat mobilise diversity as a malleable concept. The perception of the current one-sidedness of the retail landscape and resident composition, however, is not restricted to the policy documents and their underlying rationales, but is also widely echoed by both gentrifying and non-gentrifying shopkeepers and residents. The perception of the former group is exemplified by the negative attitude of a middle-aged Dutch shopkeeper towards the retail composition of Javastraat, who argues:

> Well, you had, you actually had – it sounds very discriminating, I shouldn't do that – but you actually didn't have any immigrants yet, let's put it like that. It was still a very white neighbourhood. And I wouldn't say that our immigrant friends have caused everything to decline, of course that's not true, but it has changed the neighbourhood. We've got completely different shops as well. A lot of them are very similar; that doesn't always please me. Forty years ago, that was different. You had a lot more diversity. Now it's much more of the same.

Whereas the shopkeeper first expresses the change in the residential composition of Javastraat with reference to the arrival of immigrants in comparison with its 'white' composition in the past, he conceives the current spatial manifestation of their shops surprisingly as *less* diverse. Similarly, a Dutch

owner of a 'vintage' furniture shop perceives the composition of ethnic shops as uniform:

> The start here, the start of Javastraat is still quite mixed, but in the second part (...) there are a lot of immigrant shopkeepers with very similar products. I like that part a lot as well, but it's less – I think there's an optician and a Blokker [household shop] – but it's still more uniform. And that should definitely remain, those people, but it would be good if it became a bit more mixed, I think.

While most of the ethnically Dutch shopkeepers dismiss the perceived uniformity of the ethnic businesses in terms of their physical appeal and offer of products, they repeatedly claim to be open-minded and point to the intrinsic added value of the presence of ethnic minority groups and their businesses. However, this commitment to ethnic diversity is not considered as an added value for their own businesses, but is rather more of a liberal attitude that epitomises and strengthens symbolic and social boundaries. The Dutch manager of an upscale coffee bar, for example, elaborates on the way in which he appreciates the oversupply of ethnic vegetable stores and butchers as good for them, but that if the street had 'a bit more audience and appeal' that would be even better. This type of discursive social boundary-drawing predicated on a clear distinction between a desired controlled, or sanitised, version of diversity (see Tissot, 2014) and the current manifestation of ethnic diversity that does not meet this criterion but is nevertheless good for *them* also finds its straitened expression in everyday encounters along socio-economic lines. After being asked about the customers that visit the vintage furniture shop, the owner explains:

> There are some, some people do enter, Moroccan people or Turkish people, to have a look. They might think it's a second-hand

store, but they think – I do regret that – they think it's too expensive. Sometimes I think about lowering the prices, because I would like them to have it too, but then I think that's not what business is like. Sometimes, very carefully, I refer them to a second-hand store, whenever I feel like that wouldn't be an insult. So, they do enter, but don't really buy anything.

The above-quoted Dutch entrepreneurs of more upscale amenities approach the concept of ethnic diversity through an isolated feature that the people in question seem to share: a lower socio-economic position. Consequently, the spatial concentration of ethnic entrepreneurs is, on the basis of this determinant, considered as a uniform group that lacks the ability to uphold economic enterprises consistent with upmarket cultural amenities. A Dutch resident who has been recently living in the neighbourhood exemplified this perfectly by arguing that 'it's about time that the Turks did their best to establish *good* Turkish restaurants'.

However, the devaluation and defamation of ethnic entrepreneurs because of the economic activities with which they are associated are, surprisingly, not restricted to gentrifying shopkeepers and residents only. The ideological discourse of diversity and the perception of the current uniformity is not simply 'top-down' rhetoric of more powerful actors but is also shared and enacted by almost all the interviewed ethnic entrepreneurs and residents themselves, displaced onto others. The owner of a long-established Turkish jewellery store concludes, for example, that:

These greengrocers, they also make an awful mess outside. Sometimes you really see the plastic bags tumbling through the air. That should also be managed more strictly, I think. But really, what I mainly recommend is that permits should no longer be granted to bakeries or groceries. If you start counting, there

are numerous greengrocers. If you continue like this, you'll only see vegetables here, you'll only see vegetables rotting away here.

Resembling Wacquant's (2007, 2009) research findings of territorial stigmatisation, the ethnic entrepreneurs and residents seem to demarcate themselves from their fellow ethnic entrepreneurs and 'reassign onto them the degraded image that public discourse gives them' (Slater, 2017: 120). Whereas a Pakistani hairdresser laments how the ethnic grocery stores only cater to the needs of 'foreigners', two middle-aged residents of Moroccan and Surinam origin complain almost identically about the departure of the last ethnic Dutch bakery. This results in a streetscape that evokes, according to two incumbent residents of Turkish and Moroccan descent respectively, the feeling of a 'bazaar' with which they are familiar through experiences in their countries of origin. This should not, however, be interpreted as a positive sign for the neighbourhood:

If you go to the western part of the city, you can see *real* shopping streets. But if you go here, it's not a shopping street, but a kind of a bazaar. It's like you enter another country, do you understand? You see only Turkish and Moroccan vegetable stores and, you know, it's a completely different shopping street than the usual ones. The grocery stores are the same as in other Moroccan neighbourhoods, even as in Tetouan, where I'm from.
I: And how do you experience this?
As negative. There are a lot of foreigners, Turkish, Moroccan, I do not understand why. (Emphasis added)

While thrusting the stigma of the unwillingness to integrate onto a 'faceless, demonized other' (Wacquant, 2007: 68) – greengrocers who make a mess outside, the grocery stores and butchers that only attract 'foreigners', other 'Moroccans' who only talk (in)directly with people in their own ethno-social

network – it appears that non-gentrifying residents with a migration background praise the arrival of new urbanites and the shops they start or patronise as a decorative asset to the neighbourhood. Echoing the social mixing rationale of the policy documents and urban professionals, the founder of an organization for elderly Moroccan residents explains how the (re)introduction of ethnically Dutch residents into the neighbourhood has contributed to an increased sense of 'liveability', 'cosiness', 'vivacity' and 'safety':

> Look, when a lot of people of the same origin congregate in one neighbourhood, that is not a good sign. We have the example of the Bijlmer [neighbourhood in the South-East borough of Amsterdam] where a lot of Surinamers were sent to, and it was bad, really bad. Here, it was a little bit the same. There was criminality, a lot of drug addicts, it was dangerous to walk alone on the street in the evening (…) But then, the municipality started to renovate the neighbourhood. Suddenly, you could observe first-time buyers. I can recall the memory of that time – 'Look, there are Dutch people in Javastraat!' It is a real change in the neighbourhood. There is more vivacity, liveability – it has become cosier, flamboyant and safe (…) I think this a very positive development. The politics have contributed to a great extent to the urban renewal. And that is very good, I am happy to live here.

In short, the interviews demonstrate that not only the new urbanites but also the incumbent entrepreneurs and residents with a migration background are consciously aware of the negative stereotyping of the spatial concentration of ethnically diverse enterprises. The analysis shows how the representation of space projects a dominant discourse through which the 'users' of space not only experience, understand and attach meaning to that space, but also reproduce as such the very dominant discourse of that same space (Lefebvre, 1991). Similarly, Wacquant (2007: 67) has shown how

discourses of vilification and stigma that pertain to severely deprived neighbourhoods 'proliferate and agglomerate about them, "from below", in the ordinary interactions of daily life, as well as "from above", in the journalistic, political and bureaucratic fields (…)'. This is not to claim, however, that residents are completely subject to the state's monopoly on legitimate symbolic violence (Bourdieu, 1985). It might very well be that the residents and shopkeepers in the Indische Buurt are more receptive because gentrification has brought the neighbourhood into the mainstream of Amsterdam's commercial life with concomitant amenities and services 'that others might take for granted' (Freeman, 2005: 3). Yet, it is to claim that the state plays a significant – active – role in constructing a depoliticised notion of diversity that seems to have become normalised. This *normalisation* allows for the legitimisation of retail interventions, such as aesthetic refurbishment and interventions in property ownership (i.e. *kwartiermaken*, Hoekstra et al., 2018), which, in turn, further commodify ethnic diversity and culturalise socio-economic deprivation, while paying scant attention to the issues of inequality and exclusion inherent in this process.

Conclusion

This article explored how the widely circulated and often used notion of 'diversity' is mobilised by government agencies to legitimise micro-management strategies of previously 'deprived' shopping streets by way of an in-depth case study of Javastraat, Amsterdam. In the effort to theorise the explicit link between diversity and state-led commercial gentrification, we found how micro-management strategies in Javastraat reflect and have accommodated a certain 'therapeutic', aestheticised notion of diversity that fits the political goal to secure

socio-economic development and security in a super-diverse context. Although the social and cultural heterogeneity of the retail landscape is acknowledged and there seems to be genuine commitment to inclusivity, in practice the municipality seems to adhere to a specific, ideal typical version of diversity that is consistent with high quality and upmarket cultural features.

With the local government and housing associations as active actors in the urban micro-management of Javastraat, transitions in the shopping street are managed by direct and indirect regulation. Through zoning plans, aesthetic refurbishment and interventions in property ownership, the government agencies retain the prerogative to make a distinction between elements of ethno-cultural diversity that are deemed 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable'. Stressing the importance of 'quality improvements', the city government implicitly conveys the message that the – although steadily declining – socio-spatial manifestation of ethnic enterprises meets neither the physical criteria of cleanliness, orderliness and aesthetic appeal, nor the potentiality to competitively engage in a striving neighbourhood economy (see Rath et al., 2018). Instead, the focus has shifted exclusively onto upscale, cultural 'boutiques' (Zukin et al., 2009) that are assumed to attract a *different type* of resident, that is, one with a higher socio-economic status who is approached not only as a more effective market actor, but also as an active agent who can re-constitute the tainted image that ethnic entrepreneurship entails. This *management* strategy, predicated on the process of state-led commercial gentrification under the discursive umbrella of social mixing (Bridge et al., 2011; Lees, 2008; cf. Uitermark et al., 2007), has implications for how diversity is understood and mobilised in *both* the dominant discourse of urban government *and* the everyday perception of shopkeepers and residents in the urban public sphere.

First of all, socio-economic determinants of the diverse cultural identities in question are essentially displaced onto ethnic signifiers (Bonjour and Duyvendak, 2018; Goonewardena and Kipfer, 2005). As a consequence, the spatial congregation and prolonged existence of *ethnic* differences are tied to notions of socio-economic deprivation. The effects of these associations are felt at the level of urban public policies as well. Once the neighbourhood is labelled economically detrimental, it is easier for the actors in the urban renewal process to justify special measures 'which can have the effect – if not the intention – of destabilizing and further marginalizing their occupants […] and rendering them invisible or driving them out of a coveted space' (Wacquant, 2007: 69). Similarly, the ethnically Dutch owners of more upscale cultural amenities in Javastraat approached ethnic diversity mainly in an abstract sense: they repeatedly highlighted a one-sided, isolated feature that ethnic entrepreneurs seem to share: a lower socio-economic position. Consequently, the spatial concentration of ethnic entrepreneurs is, on the basis of this determinant, considered as a uniform group lacking the ability to uphold the production and consumption of more expensive cosmopolitan products.

Secondly, and as a consequence of the abstract comprehension of diversity, we follow De Oliver's (2016) reconceptualisation of diversity in the gentrification process: although the retail landscape of Javastraat remains a 'site of difference' (Lees, 1996: 458), it should be approached 'as a lifestyle amenity that incrementally obscures its origins in race/ethnicity …'. As such, the notion of diversity is '… supplanted by a new "vanguard" articulation of "Otherness" that currently corresponds to the agenda and power of new actors in the inner city' (De Oliver, 2016: 1302).

However, in addition to De Oliver's eloquent remarks on the discursive shift of

diversity, our study suggests that it is not only more powerful actors such as government agencies and gentrifiers that adhere to a more sanitised articulation of diversity, but that ethnic entrepreneurs and residents *themselves* reverberate the negative associations of ethnic particularism as well. Having embedded our research in the literature of the symbolic politics of gentrification (De Koning, 2015; Hoekstra et al., 2018; Sakizlioglu and Uitermark, 2014) by looking specifically at the discourse on diversity, we add that the normalisation of the sanitised notion of this concept further legitimises state-led gentrification strategies, while moving attention away from the unequal power relations and exclusion that are inherent in the process.

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Note

1. The problem with this approach in case study research is that, no matter how a single neighbourhood is selected, it will never be representative of gentrifying neighbourhoods. As Small (2009: 16) reminds us, no 'sample' of a single neighbourhood can meet the criterion that the empirical findings derived from the case are similar to those that would be obtained from the whole population. Case study research is therefore concerned about analytical generalisation, rather than statistical generalisation (see Yin, 2009).

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