



# The Revanchist Renewal of Yesterday's City of Tomorrow

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**Abstract:** Although planned as the “City of Tomorrow”, the Bijlmer district in Amsterdam quickly became the quintessential symbol of urban decline. Today, even with half of the planned renewal of the Bijlmer completed, the alleged success of this urban revitalisation programme is questionable. Parts of the black middle class did not move out and some are even returning to the Bijlmer; the combination is producing a type of “black gentrification”, which forces the “undesirables” like drug users, homeless people and undocumented immigrants to leave. This revanchist renewal not only benefits the middle and lower-class population of the district, but it also serves the interests of private developers. European revanchism makes the city safe for corporate investment and aims to restore social order as well as stimulating the development of a strong middle class. This paper demonstrates how hard revanchist policies are demanded not only by private developers but also by the middle and lower classes, and they exist alongside soft “caring” policies, even for the “undesirables”.

**Keywords:** revanchism, urban revitalisation, gentrification, Amsterdam, black middle class, homeless people, modernist urban planning, undesirables, drug use, public space, high-rise flats

## The Revanchist City

Neil Smith (1996, 1998) originally developed the concept of the revanchist city as a reflection of a new phase of urban policies related to gentrification. It was not too long before he also assigned a wider meaning of neoliberal urban restructuring to revanchism (Smith 2002). The city is “made safe” for corporate investment by cleaning it from the “other”, in some way undesirable, groups. In this scenario the state is increasingly less a regulating and intervening power and increasingly more a slave to the market. Instead of a means to an end, privatisation becomes a central goal in itself. This is coupled to increasing social control over groups which (according to neoliberal ideology) contribute too little to the economy. Those who are unable to cope with the demands of the market should no longer stand in the way of others gaining their due share of wealth and prosperity. According to Smith, the state transforms its actions towards these groups from care into repression. Those excluded from society are no longer viewed as victims and do not receive help; instead they are punished or removed for not being

able to “properly” adjust to market conditions. The ears and wallets of social workers have been replaced by the strong hand and sticks of the police. I will refer to those who are struggling to make ends meet as the excluded, the “undesirables”. Contrary to Smith I do not want to stress that revanchism targets ethnic minority groups. As I will argue in this paper, it affects poor groups that are considered problematic and the source of problems and inconvenience for other residents. In the Bijlmer, these “undesirables” are mostly made up of ethnic minorities; however, the middle and lower class residents also hail from these ethnic minorities.

The revanchist city has become a useful concept in researching neoliberal urbanism (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Hubbard 2004), not only in northern America (eg Addie 2008; DeVerteuil 2006; Niedt 2006; Papayanis 2000; Slater 2004; Smith 1996; Wyly and Hammel 2005; Zimmerman 2008), but also in the UK (eg Atkinson 2003a; Cameron and Coaffee 2005; Johnsen, Cloke and May 2005; Johnstone and MacLeod 2006; MacLeod 2002), continental Europe (eg Colomb 2007; Larsen and Lund Hansen 2008; Uitermark, Duyvendak and Kleinhans 2007; Uitermark and Duyvendak 2008; Van Criekingen, Dessouroux and Decroly 2006), Latin America (eg Swanson 2007) and Asia (eg Haraguchi 2006; Shin 2006; Whitehead and Moore 2007). It could be argued that one should distinguish between “heavy-handed” revanchism in the USA and (continental) European revanchism, as Uitermark and Duyvendak (2008) have persuasively argued. In European revanchism, the involved actors (in particular the state) play a different role than in US revanchism. Rather than revanchist in principle, European urban policies and practices contain some revanchist elements. While US style gentrification and neoliberal urbanism are often accompanied by lip-service statements exalting the “good for the people”, European revanchist urbanism, partly due to the long tradition of “welfare for the people”, often goes hand in hand with emancipatory goals and results.

It is easy to argue that revanchist urban renewal has some “positive” and some “negative” effects, but this superficial approach does not provide a key insight into the impact of the implemented policies. With this paper I aim to surpass such simplified approaches, not only demonstrating why revitalisation policies are considered necessary, but also showing who profits from revitalisation and who suffers due to revanchism. I want to highlight that European revanchism is “softer” than US style “heavy-handed” revanchism and to emphasise that it is more selective in whom it impacts—ethnic minorities are not a natural scapegoat and may actually be one of the supporters pressing for revanchist policies. The “undesirables”, many of whom also belong to ethnic minority groups, will be hardest hit by such revanchist pressures. However, European revanchism includes yet another “but”: as “soft” policies exist alongside “hard” revanchist policies. In the end, some

“undesirables” may actually be better off as a result of such revitalisation policies.

Rather than testing Smith’s thesis in the Dutch context, I use the idea of the revanchist city as a heuristic device to analyse the urban revitalisation programme in the Bijlmer, a large housing estate in Amsterdam at the fringes of the city proper—neither part of the inner city nor of the suburbs. The Bijlmer is arguably the most well known collection of housing estates in the Netherlands. It had a reputation of urban despair, neighbourhood decline and drug abuse, and was often cited in newspapers as *the* Dutch ghetto (eg Algemeen Dagblad 1998; Bekkers 1995; Verlaan and Van Zalinge 1992). Although it is certainly true that the Bijlmer has had, and still has, lots of problems, its reputation is worse than the reality and it can also be considered a place of social mobility. In 1992 a large revitalisation programme was introduced to improve the Bijlmer. Unlike the urban renewal programmes of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, these newer urban revitalisation programmes do not aim to replace poorly maintained private rented housing with affordable social rented housing; rather, these programmes aim to replace stigmatised, yet affordable, social rented housing with less affordable social rented housing and owner-occupied housing. In addition, urban revitalisation programmes aim to tackle socio-economic problems. Atkinson (2003b) raises the question of whether area-based initiatives, like the revitalisation of the Bijlmer, represent an explicit strategy of gentrification. The Bijlmer is surely not a textbook case of gentrification: it is not an inner-city neighbourhood and there is no indication that the upper classes are taking over the district. The urban revitalisation of the Bijlmer does not constitute “classic” or “first wave” gentrification; if deemed as gentrification at all it would be a case of so-called “third wave gentrification” (Hackworth and Smith 2001; Lees, Slater and Wylie 2008; see also Cameron and Coaffee 2005) in which the state plays an increasingly dominant role in facilitating private investment and where gentrification has moved beyond the older, pre-twentieth century neighbourhoods. In Amsterdam we can clearly see that gentrification happened first in areas which did not benefit from urban renewal programmes. Since old urban renewal programmes focused on increasing the social housing stock, such programs often worked against gentrification tendencies. On the other hand, new urban revitalisation programmes focus on decreasing the social housing stock and thereby facilitate the privatisation agenda that is part and parcel of the neoliberal project.

In some way, the renewal of the Bijlmer is also a special case of “black gentrification” (Freeman 2006; Hyra 2006, 2008; Jackson 2003; Moore 2005, 2009; Pattillo 2007; Taylor 2002). It is different from other examples in the literature, not just because it is, as far as I am aware, the first case study of black gentrification in continental Europe, but also

because the socio-historical experience of Surinamese-Dutch people is different from that of African-American people. Therefore the meaning attributed to this experience of black gentrification is also different. Yet, there are also enough similarities to refer to both the African-American and the Surinamese-Dutch experience as two distinct but related types of black gentrification, whether is it because of some “neosoul aesthetic” (Freeman 2006) or because “black gentrification is not driven by the same factors and does not produce the same outcomes as the processes of gentrification observed among White gentrifiers” (Moore 2009:119).

This paper contributes to the existing literature on revanchist urbanism in a number of ways. First, it helps to fill the analytical gap regarding the connection between urban policy and gentrification (see Van Weesep 1994). There is an increased interest in this topic (see Lees and Ley 2008) but more empirical work is needed in order to evaluate policies from around the globe. Second, this paper contributes to creating a body of knowledge for the above-mentioned idea of *European revanchism* or a *European geography of revanchism* (Atkinson 2003a; Lees, Slater and Wyly 2008; MacLeod 2002; Uitermark and Duyvendak 2008). Third, it demonstrates how hard revanchist policies targeting homeless people may exist alongside soft caring policies (see also DeVerteuil 2006). (In a way, the second and third contributions are more elaborated elements of the first.) Fourth, the issue of black gentrification, although not completely neglected in the literature (see Freeman 2006; Hyra 2006, 2008; Jackson 2003; Moore 2005, 2009; Pattillo 2007; Taylor 2002), still remains under-researched from a revanchist perspectives (Lees 2000). The Bijlmer is an excellent case which can help to close this gap by highlighting that ethnicity is not necessarily a defining factor in shaping inclusion/exclusion in the revanchist city. Fifth, it shows how revanchism is not something exclusively demanded by outsiders; the middle and lower classes also push for it. In this respect, larger, emancipating groups may demand revanchist policies against smaller “undesirable” groups (cf Wyly and Hammel 2005). Indeed, the state does work towards safeguarding private investment and regaining social control; however, it also seeks to heed the call for more desirable living environments.

## Urban Policies in the Netherlands

After World War II, the Dutch national government took the lead in designing and implementing interventionist public policies, which resulted in the development of a strong, nationally coordinated welfare state. Social housing was an important ingredient in the development of the Dutch welfare state. Although the most important housing agencies, the housing associations or housing corporations, were privately regulated institutions, they became increasingly subject to public

regulation (Salet 1999). Thus, social landlords came to dominate—and continue to dominate—rented housing. The Netherlands has about 500 housing associations which together manage 2.1 million out of a total of almost 7 million dwellings. In the post-war years, the housing associations became branch offices of government in the sense that, first, central government determined rents and set very detailed building requirements through subsidies and loans; and second, local government determined the choice of architect, the manner in which contracts were tendered, and also handled the supervision of construction. The role of government changed in the 1980s. Growing central government deficits led to consecutive cutbacks and social housing received a lower priority. Several changes, introduced in the 1990s, cut loose the housing associations from central government; today only a few financial ties between the government and the housing associations remain.

In the Netherlands, the housing associations play an important role in urban renewal and revitalisation policies. Since the 1960s, Dutch national policies on urban renewal have been subject to three different approaches (Vermeijden 2001). Up until the early 1970s, the expansion of the function of larger cities as economic centres was emphasised. In the late 1970s and 1980s, the main goal was just the opposite; attention turned to the quantitative and qualitative reinforcement of the urban residential function of the city centre and its surrounding urban residential neighbourhoods. Urban renewal focused almost completely on housing for the urban working classes. In poor neighbourhoods with bad housing conditions, urban renewal concentrated on building new dwellings, almost of all of them in the social sector, and improving the existing stock for the (poor) residents already living there.

At the end of the 1980s, it was realised that the urban economy had lost much of its strength due to suburbanisation and the previous focus on providing housing for the city's poor residents. The new policy of *stedelijke vernieuwing* (urban revitalisation) concentrated on areas with multiple problems (so-called “problem accumulation areas”) such as the Bijlmer. This policy put emphasis on addressing not just housing needs but also the urban economy. A few years after the introduction of this urban revitalisation policy, the existing social renewal policy was replaced by the *Grotestedenbeleid* (Big Cities Policy, BCP). BCP was supposed to integrate the urban revitalisation policy and the social renewal policies (and a number of other policies); however, this has not yet taken place as the different policies continue to operate independently (Aalbers and Van Beckhoven 2010).

The underlying objective of the BCP is to create the so-called “complete city”. Complete cities are cities where everyone feels at home, cities with thriving economies, jobs for jobseekers, satisfactory living conditions, safe streets and an inclusive community. Initially, the BCP concentrated on “income-neighbourhoods”, a euphemism for areas

which are predominantly low income. The BCP aimed at combating these concentrations of low-income households. To achieve this goal, the BCP focused on restructuring the urban housing market through a tenure change at the neighbourhood level by demolishing low-cost social housing and replacing it with more expensive homes (both social rented and owner occupied). By creating this mixture of dwellings, it sought to attract more affluent households to the neighbourhood.

The original BCP was renamed BCP I (1995–1999) and was succeeded by BCP II (1999–2004) and BCP III (2005–2009). In the second and third stage, the aim of the BCP changed from attracting more affluent households to offering better chances for the existing residents to find affordable accommodation within the same area, that is, reducing the need to move to other neighbourhoods in search of better accommodation (Musterd et al 2003; Van Kempen 2000). In addition, the BCP aimed to improve security (objective as well as subjective), the quality of the living environment, the social quality of society, and to increase the economic power of cities by 2009. (The current *Krachtwijken* [Powerful Neighbourhoods] policy which focuses on the 40 most troubled urban districts is a part of GSB III.) Although social policies receive most of their direct funding from the BCP, effectively urban revitalisation policies receive by far the largest amounts of investment. This is because the physical renewal programmes are heavily co-financed by other organisations, most importantly housing associations. While social policies faced repeated budget cuts in the 1990s, most housing policies could be implemented by the increasingly more independent (and in many cases ever richer) housing associations.

In this paper I will focus on the urban revitalisation policies in one of the targeted areas, the Bijlmer in Amsterdam. The Bijlmer is considered an early case because the problems that policy makers encountered in the Bijlmer actually inspired the urban revitalisation policy in the first place. Since the local tax base in the Netherlands is rather small and the national tax base rather big, the city of Amsterdam, together with the other three “big” cities, actively lobbied for policies like the urban revitalisation policy and the BCP. In that sense, these policies did not guide the renewal of the Bijlmer; the expressed need for renewal had actually guided these policies!

In 2002, we started a research project focusing on the Bijlmer and another urban revitalisation area in Amsterdam, along with two other areas in the city of Utrecht. In the Bijlmer case, we conducted 17 in-depth interviews with key actors in 2003 and 2004 (see Aalbers et al 2003, 2004) and we interviewed several of them again in 2008. Some of these key actors are local policy makers, but more than half of the interviewees were individuals working on the ground implementing different aspects of the policy. In addition, a resident survey with a total of 100 respondents was conducted (see Aalbers, Musterd and

Ostendorf 2005). This survey used a weighed method of sampling to ensure the inclusion of different ethnic groups and to assure adequate diversity in dwelling type (some respondents lived in new buildings, some in renovated buildings and some in not-yet-renovated buildings). This paper builds on the data gathered and presented in the research reports from this project.

The next section discusses the construction of the Bijlmer and the problems that this district encountered in its history. It is important to understand the problems of the Bijlmer in order to be able to understand the renewal policies discussed in the subsequent section. Next, I discuss the impact of these policies on the “undesirables”, such as drug users and rough sleeping homeless. The final section provides a discussion of these policies in light of the revanchist city thesis. There is a great deal of literature on urban revitalisation policies, but only a small portion employs this perspective for analysis. Since the concept of the revanchist city not only refers to gentrification, but to neoliberal urban restructuring more generally, such a heuristic approach can also be used in cases like the renewal of the Bijlmer.

### **The Rise and Fall of the “City of Tomorrow”**

The *Amsterdam Uitbreidingsplan* (AUP, Amsterdam Extension Plan) of 1934 contained all of the planned future expansions for the city through the year 2000. An extension southeast of the city was not envisioned. However, in the 1960s there was a pressing need for additional space for housing, parks and workspace. The first potential location for addressing this need was the North Bank of the IJ waters, followed by the Bijlmer to the southeast of the city. In 1965, the urban design for the Bijlmer—the bulk of the Southeast extension—was presented by the City Department of Urban Development and Public Works. The Bijlmer was designed according to the principles of the *Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM); not only is workspace separated from the residential areas, public transportation and car traffic are also separated from pedestrians and bikes by the construction of elevated “autostrada’s” and elevated metro lines. Roads were built on raised embankments, leaving the ground level free for pedestrians and cyclists.

The construction of the Bijlmer can be characterised best as an urban planning experiment. The goal was to develop the Bijlmer into a “modern”, “functional” or even “radiant city” where living, working, traffic and recreation were separated. The Bijlmer was planned to be an extension for the middle class where they could live in a “modern palace in the park”. The spacious and comfortable high-rise apartments, mostly developed as social housing (Figure 1), were originally intended for middle-class families from the inner city areas of Amsterdam. In the late 1960s and 1970s, the “city of the future” (or the “city of tomorrow”



**Figure 1:** Housing estates in Amsterdam (more than 500 units, more than 98.5% social housing, 1996)

as it was called those days) was built for the citizens of Amsterdam who wanted to flee the overpopulated inner city or were forced to do so by urban renewal. The idea was that families living in overcrowded conditions in the inner city would move to the improved housing in the Bijlmer. The Bijlmer offered 23,000 mostly large (100–125 m<sup>2</sup>) and almost identical apartments in identical high-rise buildings in a honeycomb-like spatial pattern.

In many ways, the radical and ambitious development was a failure. Social change in the second half of the twentieth century was so rapid that this “blueprint for the future” was simply not adequate. Society proved much less susceptible to “human intervention” than people had believed for decades. The expected influx of residents did not materialise. Families in the older parts of the city preferred to move to new towns and suburbs outside Amsterdam, rather than to high-rise flats in the Bijlmer. The competitive position of the Bijlmer was heavily undermined by suburbanisation. When many Surinamese left their country (prior to, and following, the independence of their country in 1975), the Bijlmer was their final destination as it was one of the least popular neighbourhoods and therefore the easiest to access. For the last two or three decades, about 80% of the population of the Bijlmer has had a non-Dutch ethnicity, among the highest percentages in the city (Table 1). Yet, one should take into account that only 55% of



**Table 1:** Population by ethnicity (%), 2000

	Dutch	Surinamese	Antillean	Turkish	Moroccan	Ghanaians	Other non-industrial countries	Other industrial countries
Amsterdam	55	10	2	5	8	1	9	12
Southeast	33	31	6	1	2	7	13	7
Bijlmer-Centre	16	40	9	2	2	10	16	5
Bijlmer-East	24	33	8	1	2	10	16	6

Source: Bruins Slot (2001)

the city is indigenous Dutch, and Amsterdam will soon become a minority-majority city (Aalbers and Deurloo 2003). The Bijlmer has some areas with very high percentages (90%) of ethnic minority occupancy, for example Grubbehoeve and Koningshof. While in the Southeast district the indigenous Dutch are under-represented in high-rise buildings, the Ghanaians and immigrants from other non-industrial countries are over-represented in high-rise buildings. The Surinamese are over-represented in recently built housing, that is, housing which replaced older high-rise structures.

Starting from the mid 1980s onwards, the Bijlmer increasingly became a haven for marginal groups, such as refugees, poor immigrants and undocumented immigrants. The last group (also known as *sans-papiers*) are people who lack a legal residence status in the Netherlands and are therefore not recorded in most city statistics. Consequently, it is safe to conclude that the ethnically non-Dutch population of the Bijlmer is probably significantly higher than 80%. Most undocumented immigrants are concentrated in non-renovated high-rise buildings. Some move from one building to the other and can be considered "revitalisation nomads". Many of them find low-paid and insecure work through informal networks. In addition to these various immigrant groups, the Bijlmer had also attracted two other groups: drug users and young people, in particular those new arrivals in Amsterdam who lack good opportunities in the housing market.

The high population turnover and the high number of vacancies in the Bijlmer were directly linked to the inferior position of the area on the regional housing market. The Bijlmer had become an area where people with little opportunities in the housing market went, and left as soon as their possibilities increased. The Amsterdam housing market has been, and continues to be, very tight. As a result, even less popular areas like the Bijlmer remain in demand. With high rents (compared with other social housing flats), the spacious apartments and small income, many residents had to share apartments which resulted in overpopulation. The living conditions worsened because of drug use and high unemployment. The Bijlmer degenerated and became notorious as one of the most problematic areas—if not *the* most problematic area—in the country and a synonym for crime, unemployment and poverty.

Even though frequently referred to as a ghetto in the Dutch media, the Bijlmer cannot be compared to the blighted areas characteristic of many American cities. Peter Marcuse (1997:8), one of the leading academic authors on ghettos, defines a ghetto as "a spatially concentrated area used to separate and to limit a particular population group, externally defined as racial or ethnic, held to be, and treated as, inferior by the dominant society". In this sense, it could be debatable if the Bijlmer could have been considered a ghetto, but if we look at other key publications on US ghettos (eg Hannerz 1969; Jargowsky 1997; Massey

and Denton 1993; Wilson 1987), we can see many differences between the Bijlmer and its supposed US counterparts: in the Bijlmer there are no absentee landlords; there are no buildings which are completely falling apart; there is no sub-standard housing; there are empty lots only if old housing has been demolished to make way for new construction; there are no bars blocking access to the windows of flats or shops; there are more supermarkets than liquor stores; and cash checking facilities exist along bank branches. Also, because of the Dutch welfare state tradition, the poor are generally less poor and receive better and more regular health care. In other words, the Bijlmer and its residents look, and also are, less worse off than their American counterparts. The following anecdote illustrates this point. When William Julius Wilson and other experts on US ghettos toured the Bijlmer and a particularly troubled neighbourhood in Rotterdam, they made puzzling remarks: “When do we finally get to see the Dutch ghetto?” and “I thought that the disadvantaged communities would also be in today’s programme”.

The Bijlmer’s ghetto image was exacerbated when an aeroplane crashed squarely into a Bijlmer housing block in 1992—an incident which exposed to both national and international scrutiny the squalid living conditions of many immigrants (legal or otherwise). The bad image of the Bijlmer and the high population turnover were also related to the lack of social cohesion, drug-related crime and high level of public disturbance. All these factors turned the Bijlmer into the Dutch symbol of modernist, utopian urban planning gone wrong. Even though the Bijlmer is not the ghetto that the media often presents, it is an undeniable fact that most residents who had the opportunity to leave, did so. In that sense, the Bijlmer was not only a largely low-income and migrant area, but also a very dynamic place with high social mobility, more typical of an “ethnic enclave” than of a “ghetto” (Marcuse 1998; see also Aalbers and Deurloo 2003).

Turnover rates and vacancies in the Bijlmer high-rise area have always given cause for concern (eg Wassenberg 1988). In 1974 the *Stedelijke Woningdienst* (City Housing Department) outlined the causes for the exceptionally high turnover: the competitive position of single-family dwellings, the housing needs of a large number of foreigners and Commonwealth people (Surinamese and Antilleans), and dissatisfaction with social conditions and the facilities of the Bijlmer. In 1983 a special housing association was founded to take over all of the housing units in the Bijlmer and to halt degeneration. The first years of this “super housing association”, called *Nieuw Amsterdam* (New Amsterdam), turned out to be the hardest as turnover and vacancy rates climbed to unparalleled heights of about 25% in 1984 and 1985. This obviously implied a huge financial deficit. Voices calling for the demolition of some estates began to be heard, even though the buildings were in a perfectly sound condition (Verhagen 1987). The *Effectrapportage 1987*

(Effects Report 1987) of the City Housing Department concludes that the aim of 100% occupancy, with primarily long-term occupants, is simply unattainable in the Bijlmer (Mentzel 1989:268–269).

Notwithstanding these unfavourable circumstances, the new housing association successfully upgraded—both socially and physically—several flats in the 1980s. It paid extra care in selecting “dependable” new residents before they were allowed to settle in the flats. Elevators, flat galleries and staircases were improved, and special care was taken to make sure that the “good buildings” did not degenerate and to upgrade the already degenerated ones. In addition, a project office *Hoogbouw Bijlmermeer* (High-rise Bijlmermeer) was commissioned with the co-ordination of improvement plans. The measures concerned improvement of the flats and their immediate environmental and major technical aspects (decades sooner than usual), such as, lowering the rent, introducing free parking facilities and changing the layout of the open spaces. About 1000 units of four- and five-room apartments were split up to provide smaller homes. In some buildings the long inner streets disappeared, galleries were closed off and more entrances and lifts were provided.

In some aspects Nieuw Amsterdam succeeded in reaching their physical goals, but they failed in other aspects. The failure with some of the buildings is coupled with the movement of the drug scene from the red light district and the adjacent Zeedijk in the city centre to parts of the Bijlmer. During the late 1980s and 1990s the police were chasing away drug dealers and users from the city centre and many chose the Bijlmer as their new location, because it was a relatively anonymous space, with little social control and good places to hide. Nieuw Amsterdam had a hard time fighting drug-related problems, partly because it did not have the power to fight crime. To prevent crime, Nieuw Amsterdam introduced concierges or superintendents; however, this was not enough to fully counter the Bijlmer's negative image.

Finally, the Bijlmer also had problems with youth gangs and disruptive school environments. In contrast to other areas, the problems did not disappear when teenagers got older, but continued to persist at an older age. Moreover, some groups behaved like gangs with their own informal rules and frequent use of violence. It is striking to note that there were also a number of “girl gangs”. School absence and dropout were, and still are, high among gang members of both sexes. The intensive research done by Bowen Paulle (2002) also demonstrated that high-school pupils in the southeast were less motivated, and more threatening and violent with each other as well as with teachers. In addition to these factors, teachers stressed the superior organisational efficiency of other schools when compared with Southeast district schools. According to these teachers, less stigmatised schools had a lower degree of disruptive influence and apathy than Bijlmer schools. Paulle (2002:12) speaks of:

a large minority of status-rich, “hard”, non-motivated and frequently obstructive student groups . . . The members of these “ghetto fabulous” student groups frequently obstruct, and at other moments appear decidedly apathetic to, the official goals and sanctions of the school.

## **The Revitalisation of the Bijlmer**

Although many problems in the Bijlmer were socio-economic, it was argued that the physical structure of the area added to the occupants living in fear of vandalism and crime. In 1992, the city district office, the municipality and the housing corporation jointly planned a large-scale revitalisation project. With the implementation of the revitalisation plan, many high-rise units were torn down and replaced by mid- and low-rise units. In the earlier years, the renewal of the Bijlmer is characterised by a general consensus of what needs to be done: there are few opposing voices. The struggle of the Bijlmer revitalisation has been less of a struggle of “what to do?” and more of a struggle of “who should pay?”—the sense of urgency was shared amongst the actors involved and there was only a small minority of residents and politicians that were against demolishing part of the high-rise blocks. More recently, the high number of demolitions has been criticised, both at the city and the city district level, but a majority are still in favour of big structural change, including demolishing many of the Bijlmer’s high-rise structures. Originally, a quarter of the high-rise units were earmarked for demolition, but according to recent revisions two-thirds will be demolished by 2013. In addition, many units have been physically transformed (splitting apartments, high-end renovation etc). In most cases, the layout of the apartments remains unchanged, as the interiors of the apartments themselves are spacious and well designed. The major changes relate to the structure of the buildings. The “inner streets”, the public corridors on the first floor which functioned as the original entrances to the flats, were removed. Lifts and entrances were transferred to the ground floor, where new closed-off entrances were placed. On the ground floors, the blank walls of storage space were replaced by apartments and office space. About 6500 units will be demolished in total (4000 were already demolished by December 2008) and replaced by 7300 new units (almost 3500 were completed by December 2008), of which 40% will be single-family dwellings, predominantly in the owner-occupied sector. In 2001, the demand for newly built flats exceeded the supply, but since 2005 some multi-family projects have had problems filling vacancies.

Single-family homes (mostly new owner-occupied units in various price ranges) are more popular and they attract many middle-income residents who would have left the Bijlmer prior to the revitalisation. In fact, most of the people who buy a house in the Bijlmer are people

who lived in a high-rise flat or people who returned to the Bijlmer. The goal of the renewal was to attract people of all races, some from the high-rise blocks in the Bijlmer and others from elsewhere in the city. It turns out that the Bijlmer is still not successful in attracting indigenous Dutch people who live elsewhere in Amsterdam or its suburbs. However, the renewal of the Bijlmer has been extremely successful in making sure middle-class residents stay in the district and in luring former residents back to the Bijlmer. Both of these groups are primarily “black” minorities, in particular Surinamese-Dutch, but also Antilleans (“Caribbean-Dutch”), Ghanaians and other Africans.

The Bijlmer had become the symbol of black culture in the Netherlands. One festival played an important part in putting the Bijlmer on the map. The Kwakoe festival started in 1975 as a soccer tournament for poor Surinamese-Dutch people who didn't have any money to go on holidays. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the event grew into an ever bigger Surinamese-Dutch festival, and during the 1990s and early 2000s other groups joined the festivities, such as Antilleans and Africans. Kwakoe, which now takes place over several weekends in the summer months, has become the major focal point for celebrating “black culture” in the Netherlands. Black people from all over the country and neighbouring countries flock to the Bijlmer for Kwakoe. Visiting the festival has also become a popular activity among the indigenous Dutch. Kwakoe has promoted the Bijlmer as a place where black residents form the majority of the population and are not “the other”; instead they are the mainstream. This has been a major factor in the success of the Bijlmer in not only keeping its middle class population, but also in attracting former residents back to the Bijlmer. Black residents typically refer to the Bijlmer as “my home” or “our district”. They see it as a place where black culture is dominant and celebrated throughout the year, instead of it being relegated as marginal and strange. In the words of one Suriname-Dutch resident:

I came back to the Bijlmer because this is a place where we are normal, not different. A place where most of my friends live and where I can get the best Surinamese food.

Other residents concluded, “the Bijlmer unites the best of Suriname and the Netherlands” and “the Bijlmer is a little piece of Suriname in the Netherlands; the weather is worse here but all else is better”. Many mixed couples, predominately Dutch-Surinamese, also call the Bijlmer their home. There are no official statistics, but estimates suggest that at least half of the white people living in the Bijlmer are in a relationship with a black person.

The image change of the Bijlmer from the Dutch ghetto to the mainstay of black culture in the Netherlands was of course not only a result of the success of the Kwakoe festival, but also attributed

to the implementation of the physical, economic and social renewal programs. The physical revitalisation of the Bijlmer, which is not yet fully completed, has cost more than €2 billion (January 2006)—largely paid by the housing association, but also by the national government and to a lesser extent by the City of Amsterdam and the Southeast city district. Moreover, the physical revitalisation is not limited to the housing stock. The three original neighbourhood shopping centres, two of which were situated under viaducts or car parks, were replaced. The rigid separation of functions was abolished. Business accommodation, churches, cultural facilities, sport and recreation are being integrated. Finally, the open space is being redesigned and reduced. In short, during a period of about 20 years the Bijlmer will be completely transformed. However, churches and other social organisations indicate that it is becoming increasingly difficult to realise non-commercial buildings since most of these organisations are not used to lobbying for their *physical* claims in the renewal discussion.

A fundamental shift is taking place from public to private space. This can also be seen in the redesign and reduction of open, mostly green, spaces (Wassenberg 2002). The traffic structure will be radically altered by giving up the strict separation of the different modes of transportation. The elevated streets originally meant exclusively for cars and parking garages are being demolished. The open, mostly green space (originally 80% of the area) is being redesigned and reduced. In addition, the Bijlmer will get a new train station. The train station is supposed to become the node which will connect the currently disjointed residential area on the one side and the office and leisure area on the other side. The leisure facilities on the other side are centred around the ArenA football stadium (where Ajax plays). The area also boasts other large facilities: a shopping strip, a furniture mall, a *megaplex* cinema, a theatre and a concert hall.

The ArenA stadium and boulevard are located within the largest office park in the city, Holendrecht/Amstel III. The flurry of planning activity at the office park during the 1980s and early 1990s was primarily targeted at attracting white-collar employment and did little to help the largely unskilled labour pool in the Bijlmer. Over 55,000 people worked in this area in 2001, and this number is expected to grow to 75,000 by 2010 (Bruijne 2002). Jobs became an even more poignant issue on the political agenda once the plans to build the stadium and the ArenA Boulevard were publicly announced. At that time, the district authority began playing a larger role as a spokesperson for the residents to ensure that some of the new jobs would help the Bijlmer unemployed (Evers 2005). In spite of all the construction activity in the Bijlmer and the adjacent office and leisure area and in spite of falling crime rates and the creation of new jobs, the Bijlmer continues to suffer negative publicity in the media. In 2000, there was a controversy surrounding the relocation

of the IT company Getronics to the suburb of Hoofddorp, allegedly in response to the high crime rates. The company claimed that at least one employee or customer is mugged each month on their way to or from the parking garage. Other companies also threatened to vacate the area for similar reasons, such as Albert Heijn (the country's biggest supermarket chain) and Kwik Fit (car mechanics). The telecommunications companies UPC and KPN publicly stated that they refuse to send their employees into some parts of the Bijlmer. All this placed the question of security and crime on the agenda (Evers 2005).

As the problems of the Bijlmer, in particular security and crime, were connected to public space, many of the interventions focused on the management of public space (Aalbers et al 2003). In recent years management has been improved on several key points. From their bases in the district security offices, police, wardens and other surveillance personnel combine forces to increase the security in the neighbourhood. The additional surveillance has improved security in several blocks of flats; while waste management awareness campaigns provided for quicker and thorough rubbish collection in public areas. In the last few years, a new approach promoted more intensive management during the physical renewal period and continued efficient management when the renewal is completed. The keywords are: "do more", "organise better" and "involve residents more". Specifically, this involves the following activities:

1. more cleaners in public areas and additional cleaning operations in apartment blocks;
2. additional anti-pollution squads to fine offenders;
3. temporarily closing-off storage space, lobbies, cul-de-sacs etc in flats earmarked for renovation;
4. more service and repairs outside office hours;
5. wardens or superintendents present in apartment blocks and public areas;
6. neighbourhood security offices;
7. cameras in interior corridors of apartment blocks;
8. two new social centres for drug addicts (next to the one existing centre);
9. a night shelter for homeless drug addicts.

Today, the maintenance of public space in the Bijlmer is greatly improved; for example, in some areas garbage is collected even on Sundays. It is important to note that the semi-public spaces in the "renewed" areas experience less problems than the non-renovated areas (apparently because they delineate a stronger border between public and private space).



The physical renewal of post-war neighbourhoods in the Netherlands is often discussed as a case of “social mixing”, where physical measures are supposed to ameliorate social conditions. This policy has been widely discussed and criticised elsewhere (eg Aalbers et al 2004; Lees 2008; Musterd 2008; Uitermark 2003) and is not the focus of this paper. In addition to the physical urban revitalisation policies, many socio-economic policies have also been implemented. For instance, more than €13 million of additional funding has been invested in skills and employment programmes, and more than €6 million of additional funding in social support and cultural programmes. This includes funding for projects like “Bridge to the labour market”, “Empowering Women for Work and Enterprise”, a children’s farm and several (multi-)cultural centres (for more details, see Aalbers et al 2004; Aalbers and Rancati 2008). There are so many socio-economic and socio-cultural policies, programmes and projects implemented in the Bijlmer that one cannot see the woods for the trees. It is impossible to review all these initiatives here; however, it is important to note that these initiatives are substantial and are not mere window dressing designed to hide revanchist intensions of the revitalisation policies.

### **Rough Sleeping Homeless and Drug Users**

In the mid 1980s, many marginal groups found refuge in the Bijlmer, namely: refugees, migrants, undocumented immigrants and others. This was also true for socially deviant groups, such as drug users, drug dealers and associated criminals. There was no better location to conceal one’s activities and to remain unnoticed than in the Bijlmer, with its anonymity and badly organised public and semi-public spaces. Almost half of the rough sleeping homeless people in Amsterdam live in the Bijlmer (almost a 100 people on an average winter night). While drug use is a common feature of homeless people in Amsterdam, it is more common in the Bijlmer where 83% of them are addicted to drugs. The number of addicted drug users is much bigger than the 450 registered with the city health department in the Southeast district (Rensen and Deben 2002). In other words, most homeless people in the Bijlmer are drug users, but only a part of the Bijlmer drug users are homeless. The number of homeless drug users has been rising since they were chased away from several city centre locations: the once notorious Zeedijk, the red light district and Central Station. In addition, the Ganzenhoef area of the Bijlmer is known as a good market for drugs with a good price–quality ratio. Since many drug users do not have a job or social security benefits—and even if they do, this is not enough to financially sustain their drug addiction—there is a lot of drug-related crime in the Bijlmer, especially in the Ganzenhoef area (Rensen 2002).

In the mid 1990s, many homeless people were sleeping in storage spaces which officially belonged to individual tenants. Consequently

many tenants were afraid to enter their storage space, which resulted in their continual neglect. This situation has been improving slowly, as Rensen and Deben show: in 2002 only 11 of the 95 rough sleeping homeless in the Bijlmer spent the night in storage space. Of these 95 people, 80 declared they were addicted to drugs. The vast majority (84%) were born in countries other than the Netherlands, with a very high share of Surinamese-Dutch homeless in the Bijlmer. Many of the non-Dutch and non-Surinamese homeless do not have legal permission to reside in the Netherlands, especially the non-drug-using homeless. Two-thirds of the rough sleeping homeless do not have any source of regular income (including social security benefits); in contrast, “only” half of the rough sleeping homeless in the city centre of Amsterdam lack regular sources of income (Rensen and Deben 2002).

Many policies focus on relocating the homeless people and drug users from the streets because they cause a nuisance to other residents. This can be done “the hard way”, that is, by forcing them to move around or by criminalising them, or “the soft way”, by offering night shelters, health care and spaces to use drugs. Both policies are implemented at the city and city district levels; the trend is to favour “hard” policies, although “soft” policies are not completely phased out. For example, a newly launched project focused on “integrating drug users and health care support” is investing an additional €691,000 to coordinate and enhance the work done by various actors: the City’s Health Care Service (GG&GD), Streetcorner Work, Jellinek (an organisation combating addiction and providing preventive care) and the Consultation Bureau for Alcohol and Drugs.

As a direct response to crime and other disturbances caused by drug users in the Bijlmer, a new plan was launched in the summer of 2003 with a “hard strategy” to fight crime committed by drug users. Within this strategy a distinction is made between “Bijlmer junkies” and “non-Bijlmer junkies”. “Bijlmer junkies”, or local drug users, explicitly does *not* refer to Dutch drug users but to drug users who have been living in the Bijlmer for a long time and can be considered “residents”. This group will be offered help within the Bijlmer by opening a *gebruikersruimte* (literally *users’ space*, a place or room where they can use drugs, get help and sanitation). Not surprisingly, neighbourhood residents do not welcome the opening of this *users’ space*. While local users will be socialised by the *gebruikersruimte*, free heroin and health care, and “dry-out programmes” to end their addictions, “non-Bijlmer” or non-local junkies will be criminalised according to the “hard strategy”. It might be a practical problem to make a distinction between local and non-local drug users, even though the police have special officers, each of whom deals with a limited number of local drug users.

There is also another plan for dealing with criminal drug users in the Bijlmer, developed under the coordination of Hannah Belliot the first

Surinamese-Dutch alderwoman of the City of Amsterdam responsible for health issues. Interestingly, she was the mayor of the city district Southeast before becoming an alderwoman of the City of Amsterdam. Born in Suriname, she embodies the idea of the “black middle class”, and she still lives in the Bijlmer. Ms Belliot’s plan was to isolate one block of flats and make it available to drug users:

We will have to isolate the addicts—accommodate them on a drug island. If we don’t take this step, it will remain unliveable here. And then we can forget about the whole good investment climate that we are creating here (Ms Belliot, quoted in Van Westerloo 2002, my translation).

Although most people did not take the isolation plan seriously and assumed that the alderwoman proposed this plan in order to generate a discussion on problematic and criminal drug user, Ms Belliot did in fact assign some of her civil servants to develop a more detailed plan. The plan was abandoned after the 2006 elections, even though her political party, the PvdA (Social Democrats), remained the largest party in the ruling coalition. Nonetheless, the plan is a vivid illustration of the types of measures officials consider for resolving the problem of the “undesirables.”

A new strategy was implemented in the summer of 2003. Now there is more police presence on the streets, in order to reduce the number of drug users hanging around in the residential, commercial and green areas of the Bijlmer. Also, in the *Bijlmer Overlast Team* (Bijlmer Disturbance Team) the city district and the police cooperate with the housing association to combat public disturbances by “visiting” the perpetrators. As one civil servant explained to Rensen (2002, my translation): “We will demolish all places which the police indicate as contributing to gatherings of homeless, dealers and drug addicts.”

### **Coloured Revitalisation: Emancipation and Revenge**

The revitalisation of the Bijlmer was not a big success in the early years. The Bijlmer remained a place where people passed through but did not settle down permanently. In the late 1990s the revitalisation reached a critical mass: increasingly residents decided to stay rather than leave. Surinamese culture was blossoming and many Surinamese-Dutch improved their position substantially with the booming economy. Also other migrant groups, like the Ghanaians, settled in the Bijlmer. In a relatively short period of time the city district council changed colour as the black middle class took over. This black middle class became the figurehead of a successful revitalisation, and the Bijlmer’s image slowly changed from *the* Dutch ghetto into the oasis amidst the so-called

“multicultural drama”. At the same time that migration is problematised in all ranges of society and integration is considered a failure, the Bijlmer shows that socio-economic integration and preservation of “black culture” can go hand in hand.

The Bijlmer can be seen as a special case of “black gentrification”. Although there are significant differences between the African-American and the Surinamese-Dutch experience, in both cases some middle class residents returned to the urban places where “black culture” is not the “other” but rather the “mainstream”. Freeman’s (2006) “neosoul aesthetic” is not that different from what is happening in the Bijlmer, where old and new elements of what is considered “black” are merged with typical middle-class sentiments. African-Americans and Surinamese-Dutch share a history of exploitation and discrimination: however one should highlight that for the Surinamese-Dutch this exploitation took place in Suriname, not the Netherlands. In addition, places like Harlem in New York and Bronzeville in Chicago have had the image of a “black place” for much longer than the Bijlmer. There are several key differences between the Netherlands and the USA. The Netherlands, in contrast to the US, does not have a racially stratified housing market (eg Massey and Fischer 1999) and there is also less evidence of racial discrimination against Surinamese-Dutch than against African-Americans. Indeed, while exclusion from other neighbourhoods is not a reason for Surinamese-Dutch to move (back) to, or stay in, the Bijlmer, in the US context fleeing exclusion is often the underlying reason for black gentrifiers. In addition, the Surinamese-Dutch are now often considered a relatively successful immigrant group, while African-Americans are not considered an immigrant group in the USA and there are still many socio-economic problems, for example much higher unemployment and incarceration rates. Yet, in both countries black gentrifiers have cultural and community motives for moving to an already black neighbourhood, even though many of the so-called “black” residents of the Bijlmer, that is, the Surinamese and the Antilleans, often refer to themselves as black *and* Latin and sometimes also Native American or Asian. Moore’s observation for the neighbourhood of Brickton in Philadelphia also holds true for the Bijlmer:

Both the commitment to racial uplift and the process of constructing this distinctive Black middle-class identity require a Black community that is diverse economically. Accordingly, most of the middle-class residents of Brickton are committed to maintaining a class-integrated neighborhood (Moore 2009: 130).

The issue of black gentrification is one that this paper has highlighted, another is the question “who benefits from revitalisation policies?” and to what degree revanchist policies are demanded by the middle classes. The makeover of the Bijlmer appears to be a great success, transforming

it from a stigmatised high-rise area with social housing and a large share of public space into an “average” low- and mid-rise area, where owner-occupied housing is mixed with social housing and a large share of private space. Even though degeneration has been “planned out”, it is not an unqualified success. The black middle and lower classes complain about the “undesirables”, for whom life becomes increasingly harder in the “normalised” Bijlmer. Even though city-wide research shows that the Bijlmer is no longer the least popular area of the city and slowly climbing up to the lower end of the averagely appreciated areas (Van der Veer et al 2004), a resident survey (Aalbers, Musterd and Ostendorf 2005) shows that a large share of Bijlmer residents are dissatisfied, in particular with the level of drug use, garbage on the streets, crime and security. Drugs are seen as the biggest problem in the Bijlmer not only by the middle-class residents of the new single-family homes, but also by the mostly lower-class residents of the high-rise blocks. Most residents do acknowledge the improvements made by the revitalisation initiatives; however, they also find them to be insufficient. Not surprisingly, 22–62% of the Bijlmer residents (depending on the estate) want to move within 2 years. These percentages are higher for people who live in the old high-rise units than for people who live in the renovated or new buildings (Aalbers, Musterd and Ostendorf 2005; Van Heerwaarden et al 2004).

As Neil Smith indicates, the recapture of the city by the middle class implies more than housing, it entails the transformation of whole areas. Of utmost importance is that the real estate sector no longer defines an area as a risk, but rather as full of potential. This is why private developers get a free hand to create not only housing, but also leisure (cinemas, theatres, shopping, sports facilities and music halls) and are supported by government through subsidies and tax breaks. It also implies that the groups which hinder these developments or obscure the picture of an emerging real estate market need to be dealt with. In the Bijlmer this has not automatically produced a policy of zero tolerance; rather it spurred a combination of enticement, hounding and expulsions of those on the lower end of society. Low-income groups are enticed with a relocation stimulus to move to another area. Some of them are happy to leave the Bijlmer, while others prefer to stay. Due to the newly constructed social rented housing, many of those who want to stay are also able to stay, albeit at often higher rents or in smaller flats. The paradox of the successful revitalisation is that more people want to stay while at the same time the opportunities for low-income tenants rapidly diminish. Nevertheless, most are able to stay and these individuals now live in a safer, more attractive neighbourhood with more available jobs and work trainee programmes. Moreover, the (ruling) black middle class is not just taking decisions in their own interest, but also in the interests of the black lower class, and they do not want to see them displaced

[not unlike Slater's (2004) research in Brooklyn where middle class residents stick up for ethnic minority lower class residents]. Solidarity often seems to follow ethnic lines; the black middle class do not only push for single-family owner-occupied housing, but also for renovated high-rise and new mid- and low-rise social housing for the black lower class.

The middle classes, and in the case of the Bijlmer the black middle classes in particular, clearly benefit from "third wave gentrification" urban policies, but the impact on lower classes is more ambiguous. Although middle class solidarity extends to the lower classes and, to some extent, to the undocumented immigrants, it does not extend to the "undesirables". The old Bijlmer provided undocumented immigrants with a place that was anonymous and where it was also possible to tap into their ethnic social networks. With the revitalisation of the Bijlmer, the area is slowly but surely becoming a "normal" everyday district with single-family houses. In the new Bijlmer they stand out more and have a harder time finding accommodation. The Bijlmer is no longer a "safe haven" for undocumented migrants, due to the revitalisation efforts and the state initiatives which sought to track and remove undocumented immigrants. The "undesirables", the unwanted social groups which are despised by the dominant groups in society, are handled with less care and are hounded and chased away. For the most marginal groups of society the "Bijlmer paradise" has ceased to exist (see Rensen 2002). As Atkinson (2003a:1841) concludes: "A problem with many of these developments is that they appeal to many while feeling oppressive to others." Although soft, socialisation strategies work better in the *long* run, some degree of hard, revanchist strategies may be needed to supplement socialisation strategies in order to combat crime and provide a feeling of security in the *short* run (Aalbers et al 2005). Of course the best way to combat not only the symptoms of an interlinked set of problems but also the roots is to "again and always, to strengthen and expand social and economic rights" (Wacquant 2001:410).

In Don Mitchell's (2003) view, the "right to the city" depends on the accessibility of public space. The Bijlmer revitalisation transformed semi-public and public space into more private space. Private space is considered easier to control because it is clear who is in charge. Increasing private space makes it easier to control the remaining public space. As a result, the right to use the city by homeless people is actively contested; they have no private space and are therefore dependent on the remaining but increasingly controlled public space (see also Mitchell and Staeheli 2006). The new regulation of Bijlmer's public space has dramatically reduced the right to use the city of the homeless, drug users and also, to a certain degree, undocumented immigrants. These "undesirables" are held responsible for degeneration, crime and the lack of security. While the Bijlmer once functioned as a marginalised area

which attracted undesirables, more recent restrictive policies are forcing them to leave the Bijlmer. This is not only done to satisfy the middle classes by restoring social order, but also to guarantee safe investments for the real estate sector.

In the name of the revitalisation and assistance to families and companies which are considered economically useful and valuable, public space is recaptured at the expense of the undesirables as they represent no added value. In this sense, the revitalisation programme of the Bijlmer can be characterised as neoliberal and revanchist, in the words of Brenner and Theodore (2002)—neoliberalism is becoming increasingly urbanised. And even though the result is not income polarisation, it does result in spatial polarisation and spatial purging, with some groups having to make space for others. As a result, this puts the emancipatory city in a crunch—social diversity and tolerance have metaphorical and geographical bounds. We can see the spatialisation of danger and the “other” in which social spaces become constructed as dystopian places and social problems are reduced to spatial problems (Baeten 2002; Belina, 2007). For the most deprived residents of the Bijlmer a different policy applies than for the lower and middle classes. On the one hand, they are increasingly excluded by the dominant institutions of the welfare state; on the other hand, the welfare state creates parallel institutions which assist the “undesirables” of society who are subject to this increased social control measures. Peck (2001), in the context of the state’s shift from welfare to repression, speaks of “the micromanagement of the poor”. It is clear that drug users are no longer welcome in the Bijlmer, but it remains unclear where they can go. Some of them live in social housing and have been able to move to other parts of the city, notably to the mid- and high-rise buildings of the Nieuwendam neighbourhood in Amsterdam-North, which has consequently seen an increase in public disturbances, drug use and crime (see also Dignum 2002).

This negative impact on the “undesirables” may imply a textbook case of revanchist urbanism; however, one should not forget that these “hard strategies” exist next to “soft strategies”, as discussed in the previous section. As Johnsen, Cloke and May (2005) remind us, such soft policies may work very well for some homeless people, but since they are often forced onto people who already have little choice, this “urge for care” may also be conceived as an unpleasant intervention in one’s life. In addition, “homeless people and others may insist upon public representation and recognition in ways that are not possible in . . . highly controlled pseudo-public spaces” (Mitchell 1995:125). Moreover, the division between homeless people who are targeted with *soft* policies and those who are targeted with *hard* policies, undoubtedly increases hierarchies of stigma, and also makes problems less visible and thereby precludes a good development climate from materialising. Indeed,

“Many public uses of space are increasingly outlawed and policed in ways unimaginable a few years previously” (Smith and Low 2006:2). All in all “poor people suffer more from the loss of benefits of living in a poor neighbourhood, than they gain from living in a more affluent one” (Lees 2008:2463).

Both hard and soft policies are examples of “net widening” (Cohen 1985); the state expanding its social control mechanism. This does not imply that the Netherlands, like the USA, has moved from neglect towards punitive measures—Amsterdam may have incorporated some elements of the revanchist city but it is not a “post-justice city” (Mitchell 2001). This brings us to the idea of a “geography of revanchism”. Amsterdam’s policies on homeless people are not as single-mindedly punitive as the revanchist focus suggests: “Rather, within one city there can be multiple and even contradictory responses that ultimately produce an ambivalent homeless policy” (DeVerteuil 2006:118; see also Law 2001). The state does not neglect poverty, but rather manages homelessness and drug use to ensure social order at specific sites of control.

In their paper on urban revitalisation in Hoogvliet Rotterdam, Uitermark, Duyvendak and Kleinhans (2007) suggest that revanchist analyses need to move beyond the economic dimension and should pay attention to the governmental and institutional dimensions. They argue that in the Netherlands serving the middle class is not the ultimate goal: “Instead, gentrification is a *means* through which governmental organisations and their partners lure the middle classes into disadvantaged area with the purpose of civilising and controlling these neighbourhoods” (127, emphasis in original). Although I agree that civilising and controlling are also goals of the revitalisation programme of the Bijlmer—and of European revanchism in general—I argue that this is not only done to restore social order but also to stimulate middle class formation. Middle class households are not attracted simply “to create a neighbourhood with a stable social order” (Uitermark, Duyvendak and Kleinhans 2007:138); the social order is also “normalised” because middle *and lower* class households that already live in the Bijlmer demand less crime, less disturbances and less mess—indeed, they demand social order. The residents’ call for social order cannot be dismissed as exclusively revanchist or *petit bourgeoisie* sentiments. The Bijlmer was an unpleasant place to live; “loyalty” was hardly an option and “exit” was the most common strategy. When the area started to improve, “voice” became a more common strategy, to borrow Hirshman’s typology (Hirschman 1970). The urban revitalisation policies do not simply aim to create safe investment zones where the middle classes can live, but also aim to improve the social situation of the lower classes. The problem is not that the definition of who should be included excludes ethnic minority groups or



low-income groups; the problem is that it excludes marginal groups like undocumented migrants and undesirables like homeless drug users. However, in Europe and the Netherlands even for these “underclass” citizens a mix of soft and hard policies is employed.

The revitalisation of the Bijlmer is a coloured one—not because a black lower class is replaced by a white middle class. On the contrary, it was the black middle classes who recaptured the Bijlmer from years of degeneration. However, thanks to massive governmental financial support, the real estate sector also captured territory and a “new” market was created for investments against reduced risk. The revitalisation of the Bijlmer is also a coloured one for the “undesirables”. For years they have been “tolerated” as they disturbed other inhabitants from leading quiet lives, but now they face harsh consequences which threaten their lifestyle. The revitalisation of the Bijlmer had a double effect; it rejuvenated and created a pleasant residential environment for the black middle and lower classes while at the same time taking revenge on the “undesirables”.

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