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Bosch, Eva M.; Ouwehand, André L.

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Article

At home in the oasis: Middle-class newcomers' affiliation to their deprived Rotterdam neighbourhood

Eva M Bosch
Rotterdam, the Netherlands

André L Ouwehand
Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands

Abstract
One of the arguments for 'social mix' urban renewal in low-income neighbourhoods is that the presence of middle-class residents would improve life chances for lower-income groups. However, according to various researchers, middle-class newcomers have little social interaction with the neighbourhood, do not feel at home there and make little use of the neighbourhood's public spaces and facilities. In short, they show disaffiliation with their mixed neighbourhoods, thus compromising the assumed positive effects of social mixing. Several studies, on the other hand, point to different factors that mediate this (dis)affiliation, such as newcomers' lifestyles, housing trajectories, the width of class and ethnic differences between newcomers and the existing population and the presence of neighbourhood shops and facilities that can cater to both groups. This relatively large set of factors suggests a need for detailed case-study research to understand neighbourhood affiliation of middle-class newcomers. We made a qualitative and quantitative study of a housing complex designed specifically for middle-class buyers with a 'diversity-liking lifestyle', in a poor neighbourhood in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. It has not been researched before how using the assumed preferences of diversity-liking middle-class households in dwelling design, for social mix, relates to the eventual residents' neighbourhood affiliation. The study yields hardly any disaffiliation in the sense of exclusionary spatial strategies: almost all residents use (semi-)public spaces in the neighbourhood on a day-to-day basis. Affiliation in terms of self-identification with the neighbourhood, however, is higher for residents with a diversity-liking lifestyle, and only the minority-ethnic residents use neighbourhood primary schools.

Keywords
diversity/cohesion/segregation, neighbourhood housing, Rotterdam, social mix

Corresponding author:
André L Ouwehand OTB-Research for the built environment, Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment, Delft University of Technology, Julianalaan 134, 2628 BL Delft, the Netherlands.
Email: a.l.ouwehand@tudelft.nl

摘要

低收入社区"社会混合"型城市更新的一个理由是，中产阶级居民的存在将改善低收入群体的生计。

然而，不同的研究者表示，中产阶级新来者与社区的社交互动很少，不会感到与社区的归属，并且使用很少社区的公共场所和设施。简而言之，他们表现出对混合社区的疏离，从而损害了社会混合理论所假定的积极效果。另一方面，一些研究指出了能调解这种疏离的不同因素，例如新来者的生活方式，住房经历，新来者与现有人口之间的阶级和种族差异的宽度，以及可以同时迎合两个群体需求的社区商店和设施。这些相对较宽泛的因素表明，需要进行详细的案例研究，以了解中产阶级新来者对社区的归属感。在荷兰鹿特丹的一个贫民区，有对一个专为中产阶级买家设计的"热爱多元化生活方式"住宅区，我们对其进行了定性和定量研究。此前没有被研究过的是，如果我们在为社会混合目的而进行住宅设计的过程中利用我们所推定的、"热爱多元化"的中产阶级家庭的偏好，这与中产阶级居民最终对社区的归属感有怎样的关系。本项研究未发现任何排斥性空间策略意义上的影响：几乎所有居民每天都使用社区的（半）公共空间。然而，在自我认同的意义上而言，拥有"热爱多元化"生活方式的居民对社区的归属感更强，只有少数民族居民的孩子会上社区的小学。

关键词

多元化/凝聚力/隔离、社区住房、鹿特丹、社会混合

Introduction

Since Wilson's book *The Truly Disadvantaged* (1987), socially mixed neighbourhoods are often regarded as a better situation for poor residents than homogenously poor neighbourhoods. An array of arguments has been presented for changing lower-income neighbourhoods into socio-economically mixed neighbourhoods by partly renewing the housing stock (for an overview, see e.g. Galster, 2012). Most of these arguments for social mixing require that the middle-class newcomers not only live in their dwellings but also use the neighbourhood's public spaces, shops and other facilities. If middle-class residents encounter lower-class residents in the neighbourhood they can form social networks and thus share social capital with them, act as role models, or they can use their political capital to improve neighbourhood facilities and public spaces and they can contribute to the neighbourhood economy. Nevertheless, considerable empirical evidence suggests that middle-class newcomers have relatively low levels of 'neighbourhood affiliation' defined as their use of neighbourhood spaces and facilities, identification with the neighbourhood and contacts with lower-class residents (Chaskin and Joseph, 2011). Other studies that do report forms of affiliation, point to a relation with the specific lifestyles and housing trajectories of newcomers, as well as to the importance of shared ethnic backgrounds between newcomers and the existing population and the influence of neighbourhood facilities (e.g. schools, shops). This relatively large set of factors suggests a need for more insight and detailed, case-based empirical research, as suggested by Atkinson (2008) more generally for research into effects of social mix.

In this article we present a detailed, mixed-method case study of the neighbourhood affiliation of the residents of a

new-built middle-class housing complex in a deprived neighbourhood in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. This block of 93 owner-occupied dwellings was part of a social-mixing neighbourhood restructuring plan. We are convinced that the site can be treated as a critical case (Flyvbjerg, 2006), given that, from the start, the development was explicitly designed for buyers with a 'diversity-liking' lifestyle that would enable them to feel at home in an ethnically and socio-economically diverse neighbourhood. If these newcomers' neighbourhood affiliation turns out to be only limited, middle-class newcomers in other social-mix developments could be expected to have even less neighbourhood affiliation. Such a case study has not been made before. The case furthermore offers the possibility to look at neighbourhood affiliation for both native-Dutch middle-class newcomers and middle-class newcomers with a minority-ethnic background.

This article is structured as follows. The next section provides a brief overview of the literature on affiliation (and disaffiliation) among middle-class households in socio-economically mixed neighbourhoods. The third section describes the development process of the complex *Le Medi*. In the subsequent two sections we present the results of our inquiry, which we then discuss in the final section.

The literature on middle-class affiliation (and disaffiliation) in mixed neighbourhoods

As introduced above, various empirical studies have reported low levels of affiliation among middle-class residents in socio-economically mixed neighbourhoods. According to several studies, interclass social contacts are scarce or absent in these neighbourhoods (Allen et al., 2005; Brophy and Smith, 1997; Van Beckhoven and Van Kempen, 2003; Veldboer, 2010). More

strongly, one strand of literature suggests that mixed neighbourhoods are primarily spaces in which middle-class and lower-class populations live in *parallel worlds* (Atkinson, 2006; Davidson, 2010; Pinkster, 2013; Savage et al., 2005; Watt, 2009). There is little interclass social interaction as the higher-income groups frequent different spaces of consumption and leisure and interact mainly with other middle-class households. In addition, in their narratives about their sense of local belonging, middle-class residents often refer to lower-class residents in negative terms. They draw symbolic boundaries by speaking about the areas where lower-class residents live as not belonging to their neighbourhood and by referring to these residents as 'them' versus 'us' middle-class residents (Davidson, 2010; Tersteeg and Pinkster, 2016; Watt, 2009). Furthermore, they often motivate their housing choice by pointing out its value-for-money regarding dwelling space and proximity to work or the city centre, rather than by referring to neighbourhood qualities (Pinkster, 2013; Watt, 2009). In some studies, newcomers are found to offer positive, neighbourhood-related motivations for their choices for mixed neighbourhoods, but lower-income residents are largely absent from their social networks and from their narratives about their sense of belonging in the neighbourhood (Butler, 2003; Butler and Robson, 2001; Pinkster, 2013; Savage et al., 2005). Butler and Robson introduce the term *social tectonics* to describe this type of social life in the gentrifying Brixton neighbourhood of London where 'low and middle-class groups move past each other like tectonic plates below the Earth's crust, with little contact' (Jackson and Butler, 2014), with middle-class parents being especially likely to avoid the primary schools in the neighbourhood. The diversity of the neighbourhood thus functions merely as a backdrop or 'social wallpaper' for middle-class residents (Butler, 2003) (see also

Blokland and Van Eijk (2010) and Van Gent et al. (2016) on 'social tectonics' in a mixed neighbourhood in the Netherlands).

Atkinson (2006) uses the word *disaffiliation* to describe all such forms of socio-spatial and psychological distancing of middle-class residents from the poorer parts and residents of their neighbourhoods. Like Lees (2008), Atkinson positions middle-class newcomers and 'existing populations' as two groups against each other: 'cosmopolitans versus locals', 'affluent versus poor'. In Atkinson's account of extreme disaffiliation, middle-class newcomers live in gated communities within deprived neighbourhoods in the city, and avoid meeting the poorer residents (e.g. by using cars and secure car-parking for even the shortest of journeys). Also Pinkster (2013: 4) and Watt (2009: 2285–2286) define disaffiliation as both *dis-identification* with poorer parts of the mixed neighbourhood and *avoidance of interactions* with lower-class residents achieved by spending little time in the neighbourhood outside the home or outside the better parts of the neighbourhood. According to Atkinson (2006), middle-class disaffiliation is due to fear of crime, as well as to anxiety relating to supporting one's social status by sticking to one's own social group, partly in order to safeguard social reproduction. Like Atkinson, most other authors who have found evidence of disaffiliation (Davidson, 2010; Savage et al., 2005; Watt, 2009) refer to Bourdieu's field-habitus theory, arguing that, as a rule, people do not feel comfortable outside the space-bound practices (or fields) in which their own, partly class-shaped habitus is dominant.

In contrast to this literature, various studies have identified groups amongst middle-class newcomers in socially mixed areas that express more *identification with the poorer residents*. In the first place, Moore (2009) and Pattillo (2007) show how black middle-class households moving into poor black neighbourhoods in Philadelphia and Chicago, respectively, identify with the incumbent population because of the black identity they share with them. According to Moore, such 'Black gentrification is distinctive in that the middle-class gentrifiers are also motivated to move into a neighbourhood guided by a social justice agenda, with the express desire to live *with* low-income residents' (2009: 136–137, italics in original). Through their own housing decisions, as well as in their organised activism for mixed housing development and better education in the neighbourhood, they want to offer role models to low-income blacks and contribute to better facilities and less crime in the area. Other studies have identified groups of majority-ethnic middle-class newcomers who identify with the incumbent minority-ethnic poor residents. Veldboer (2010) reports that even though higher-educated, mostly native-Dutch newcomers in social mix areas in Amsterdam make little use of their neighbourhood, they often feel more solidarity with the neighbourhood's poor migrant residents than the (middle and lower-educated) long-time residents do. Veldboer connects this to the observation that post-materialistic value-orientations, including support for income redistribution at national level and diversity at neighbourhood level, are found relatively more often among the higher educated than among the lower educated. This would be because solidarity with low-income groups is easier when one's own income position is secure. Research in the socially and ethnically mixed Peckham neighbourhood of London, made Jackson and Butler (2014) revisit the idea of social tectonics (which Butler had coined a decade earlier to describe Brixton) for this area. In Peckham, several middle-class interviewees reported having quite some *social interaction* and contacts with poorer residents and frequenting its low-end, multi-ethnic shopping street. These residents

found the neighbourhood offered intercultural learning experiences, which they regarded as contributing to their own cultural capital and identity. In a study of three socially mixed urban renewal areas in France, Lelevrier (2013) interviewed middle-class households living in the new housing developments who avoided contact with low-income households, but also found a group who

> … show empathy toward the neighbourhood, despite their social distance in terms of income and origins. This attitude involves, at the very least, frequenting local stores and amenities, and may even extend to the exchange of services (childcare) with people from the cité [high rise estates]. These households have acquired a spirit of tolerance of and openness to ethnic and social differences through travel, mixed marriages, the foreign origins of parents, etc. (Lelevrier, 2013: 413)

Lelevrier discerns a third group amongst the middle-class newcomer interviewees: residents who had lived in the same or another deprived neighbourhood before, who claimed familiarity with the (type of) neighbourhood and its problems, and who felt comfortable using its public spaces and facilities. Lelevrier's study thus shows that the *lifestyles and housing trajectories* of newcomers can play an important role in their identification with and use of the mixed neighbourhood. From these studies it can be concluded that middle-class newcomers' *household-level* characteristics and attitudes matter for their affiliation with their mixed neighbourhoods.

But also, *neighbourhood-level* characteristics have been found to influence contacts and middle-class affiliation. If mixed neighbourhoods have a large assortment of shops, several of them are usually used by both low-income and middle-income residents (Jackson and Butler, 2014; Lelevrier, 2013; Van Beckhoven and Van Kempen, 2003). Furthermore, as demonstrated by Kleit

(2001) and by Monk and colleagues (2011), more interclass contacts tend to be formed in neighbourhoods with relatively smaller socio-economic differences between renters and homeowners. Third, especially neighbourhood primary schools have been identified as incubators for interclass social contacts between child-raising families in socially mixed neighbourhoods (Kearns et al., 2013: 413), although in neighbourhoods with stark socioeconomic differences and high ethnic diversity most middle-class newcomers avoid local schools (see Boterman, 2012; Butler, 2003; Lees, 2008).

In conclusion, the neighbourhood affiliation of middle-class newcomers is regularly depicted along three dimensions: (1) their use of neighbourhood spaces and amenities, (2) their level of identification with the neighbourhood, and (3) the amount of interclass social contact. Various characteristics of newcomers' households but also of the neighbourhood have been identified as influencing these outcomes. In this case study we explore whether the influence of these characteristics can be corroborated in our case and whether a housing-complex design that is aimed to attract diversity-likers, will result in higher neighbourhood affiliation for the residents.

Le Medi's development process

To study affiliation in context, we focus on *Le Medi*, a housing complex for 93 diversity-liking middle-class households, which was constructed in 2008. It is located in the deprived neighbourhood Bospolder-Tussendijken, which has 14,000 inhabitants. Situated in the west of Rotterdam, the neighbourhood Bospolder-Tussendijken was built in the early 20th century for workers of the nearby harbours and their families. Since the 1970s, the area has been deteriorating. In the 1980s, the local government and housing associations brought about the renovation of

much of the housing stock for the incumbent residents (housing associations provide affordable 'social housing' in the Netherlands, which resembles public housing abroad, but is much less residualised, as it forms approximately one-third of the Dutch housing stock). The first few dozen new owner-occupied dwellings were added in the 1990s, and since 2004 approximately 350 middle-class owner-occupied dwellings have been built, including *Le Medi*. Given that this new owner-occupied housing still makes up only about 5% of the area's total dwelling stock, Bospolder-Tussendijken has remained an area where 84% of housing is rental (CBS, 2014) and has also remained the city's poorest neighbourhood north of the Nieuwe Maas river (between 2004 and 2011, average standardised household income steadily remained 21% below the city average; CBS, 2012). The neighbourhood is also highly ethnically diverse: native-Dutch people[1] form the largest group (22%), followed by inhabitants of Turkish (19%), Moroccan (17%)

and Surinamese (12%) background; 90% of the children living with their parents in the neighbourhood have a migrant background (CBS, 2013). The neighbourhood is centred on a busy shopping street and a market (which operates twice a week), with most of the vendors in both sites having a non-Western foreign background. The development process of the complex *Le Medi* started in 2000, when a Rotterdam-based businessman of Moroccan descent proposed to build an Arabian style neighbourhood 'to show the wealth and riches of Arabian culture (…) in a time when people spoke about migrants in a rather negative tone' (Van Dael, 2008). His initiative was welcomed, as the city was encouraging 'multicultural planning' in that period (Van der Horst and Ouwehand, 2012). Two housing associations, later joined by a private developer, adopted the project and found a site in Bospolder-Tussendijken. The initiators of *Le Medi* first gained familiarity with Arab architecture by visiting Morocco. They then organised a 'branding

Figure 1. Scale model of *Le Medi*.
Source: Van Dael (2008). Other pictures of the project can be found in the online appendix to this article, or by searching the web for 'Le Medi Rotterdam'.

session', to which also a consultancy firm was invited to deliver a 'lifestyle profile' for the plan. 'Lifestyle profiling' is a strategy for customising housing products to the assumed functional and aesthetic preferences of a consumer group defined by a set of mostly psychological traits. In housing development, it is particularly popular for projects that aim to attract middle-class buyers to neighbourhoods with a poor reputation (Meier and Reijndorp, 2012). The lifestyle consultant selected for *Le Medi* used a two-dimensional grid, with one axis representing the continuum extrovert/introvert consumers and the other representing the continuum individualist/collectivist consumers (see also Ouwehand and Bosch, 2016). The resulting branding report (Koenigs and De Jong, 2004) notes that *Le Medi* should not only 'offer possibilities for 2nd and 3rd generation foreign families [from the neighbourhood] who can live here close to family and acquaintances', but should also 'strengthen the city and Bospolder-Tussendijken by creating a highly distinct residential environment that attracts new groups of residents'. This latter target group is described as 'a new type of urbanite': people 'of many nationalities' with 'high education', 'often work[ing] in public service and government' and having 'a new way of dealing with diversity: hospitality, being different is cool, they enjoy diversity'.

Inspired by the branding session and the instruction to express the virtues of Arabian building culture, the architect eventually designed a complex of 93 dwellings in six rows around a central courtyard (see Ouwehand and Bosch, 2016, for the effects of the branding of *Le Medi* on its attractiveness to prospective residents). Two-thirds of the dwellings have front doors opening onto the inner streets of *Le Medi*. These streets have gates that connect to the surrounding streets (see Figure 1). This enclosed layout corresponds to that of the Arabian *medina*,

allowing the inner streets and court to be relatively free of nuisance. These spaces are owned by the collective of owner-occupants and are accessible to non-residents only on workdays and Saturdays between 06:00 and 19:00. The outer façades of *Le Medi* have grey and brown stones, with small windows, whereas those facing the streets on the inside and courtyard are painted in Mediterranean colours, resembling the colourful courts of Arabian *medinas*. Some of the architectural details (e.g. lamps, gates, mosaics, the central square fountain) are based on geometric Arabian ornamentation, while other architectural aspects are reminiscent of Dutch modernism. When they were sold in the period 2006–2011, the dwellings cost between €200,000 and €300,000, and the price per square metre was approximately €1800. The 2006 sale brochure alluded to the assumed preferences of the diversity-liking targeted buyer group. Several computer-rendered previews of the semi-private spaces of *Le Medi* show residents with different ethnic features, some of whom are socialising. The brochure also describes Bospolder-Tussendijken by highlighting the existing 'colourful retail range' in the neighbourhood with a picture of two apparently Surinamese shop owners in front of their grocery store.

Our case study in *Le Medi* was conducted in 2011 and consisted of a resident survey (36 respondents), 16 semi-structured follow-up home interviews with residents and eight interviews with professionals involved in the development of *Le Medi*. The survey data indicate how *Le Medi* contributed to social mix in Bospolder-Tussendijken. Most of the dwellings were purchased by young middle-class households, as the developers had intended. The average net household income of the respondents (€40,000 per year) was nearly three times that of Bospolder-Tussendijken as a whole (€14,800; data from 2007, CBS). Most of the respondents had higher levels of education (72% had

completed degrees comparable to a Bachelor's degree or higher) and were relatively young (80% were between the ages of 25 and 44 years, with only one older than 65). The household types were diverse (61% consisted of one or two parents with children, 27% were couples without children and 11% were single-person households). The fact that *Le Medi* is middle-class does not mean that it is exclusively 'white'. Of our respondents, 40% were of non-Western foreign background. They were probably underrepresented in our sample, however, given that the sales registry reports that 56% of the first buyers were non-Western. The households of the respondents consisted of native-Dutch people (21 respondents), followed by first- or second-generation Surinamese (4), Turkish (3) and Moroccan (2) people, or other ethnicities or ethnically mixed households (6). In line with the developers' expectations, some buyers had already been living in the neighbourhood before moving to *Le Medi*. All these residents were of non-Western foreign background (14 households according to the sales registry, that is 16% of the total number of buyers; 2 respondents in our survey, that is 5%).

Living in *Le Medi* and in the neighbourhood

As both the survey and interviews showed, the eventual owner-occupiers positively appreciate living in *Le Medi*. All but one of them indicated in the survey that they (very much) liked living in the complex and felt at home there. A large majority likes the architecture and spaciousness of the dwellings and colourful court and inner streets. Interviewees described the complex's semi-private inner court and streets as safe play zones for children, as well as facilitating community amongst adults. (The residents have joint responsibility for these spaces,

and organise voluntary cleaning events, have barbecues and spontaneous drinks with each other in summer and monthly owners' meetings, attended by many *Le Medi* residents, of native-Dutch and migrant background. For further information on residents' appreciation of *Le Medi*'s characteristics and of each other, see Ouwehand and Bosch, 2016). All interviewees make distinctions between their complex and the neighbourhood, referring to architecture, norms about keeping up public space, and social composition. Generally, residents refer to the fact that since all *Le Medi* residents have bought their house, incomes and education levels are higher than in the rest of the neighbourhood. Most of them see this as positive also for the neighbourhood, stating that the complex brings a better name to the area, improves its visual attractiveness and/or that its dwellers are unlikely to cause nuisance, litter or crime in the neighbourhood. Also, sociability in the complex is described as different from that in the neighbourhood. Usually, residents stress that in *Le Medi*, people have friendly chats in the streets, but 'don't visit each other's homes too often' (*'we lopen de deur niet bij elkaar plat'*), thereby distancing *Le Medi* social life from that in more 'working class' areas. Social life in Bospolder-Tussendijken, on the other hand, is described as more intimate between some groups of long-time residents. Bospolder-Tussendijken residents are described as having more time for chatting, since relatively many of them have much time on their hands, or because they are regarded as coming from countries where street interaction is important in social life. Several interviewees mentioned that the neighbourhood children were 'rougher' and 'cheekier' than they were used to. Yet, other interviewees find that social life in the neighbourhood is segmented along ethnic lines, thereby making social interaction between neighbours scarce, as for instance interviewee Magda states:

Magda (Dutch household): I once tried to introduce myself to [renters living across the street from *Le Medi*] more than just say 'hi', and then the person was emotionally moved, and said: 'I have been living here for 23 year and no one has ever done that'.

To answer the question of whether *Le Medi* attracted the targeted diversity-liking life-style group, and whether this resulted in a higher neighbourhood affiliation among the eventual residents, respondents' buying arguments offer much insight. The survey suggested 15 reasons for buying a house in *Le Medi*, and asked if these had played a role for the respondent at the time of buying. The reasons most agreed to by the respondents concern the price of the housing (28 respondents agreed) and the proximity of the city centre (21 respondents). All interviewees who have children in primary school also mentioned that they bought because *Le Medi*'s inner streets and courtyard would be safe playing areas for their children.

The (diverse) neighbourhood Bospolder-Tussendijken was thus not foremost on most buyers' minds when they bought the house. For two groups, however, the neighbourhood did play a role. The respondents who already lived in the neighbourhood when moving to *Le Medi* agreed that: 'existing social contacts and/or facilities in Bospolder-Tussendijken'

had been a reason for buying. Next to these 'local' newcomers (whose presence is under-represented in the respondent group), a group of people showed interest in Bospolder-Tussendijken for its ethnically diverse character. These nine respondents affirmed that 'the multicultural character of Bospolder-Tussendijken was one of my/our reasons for buying'. In the remainder of this article, we refer to these last nine respondents as 'diversity-likers'. Four of these nine respondents lived in native-Dutch households, the other five in households with a non-Western or mixed background. All of them had moved into Bospolder-Tussendijken from other neighbourhoods. Figure 2 shows that while all groups feel at home in *Le Medi*, there is a difference in how local newcomers, diversity-likers and the other residents feel at home in Bospolder-Tussendijken (B-T).

In line with feeling more at home there, the local newcomers and diversity-likers also expect to stay living in the neighbourhood longer than the other respondents. None of the local newcomers intend to leave within ten years, and this is also true for all diversity-likers except two (who want to stay five to ten years). Most 'other respondents', on the other hand, plan to remain in *Le Medi* for five to ten years, while a third of them expect to leave within four years.
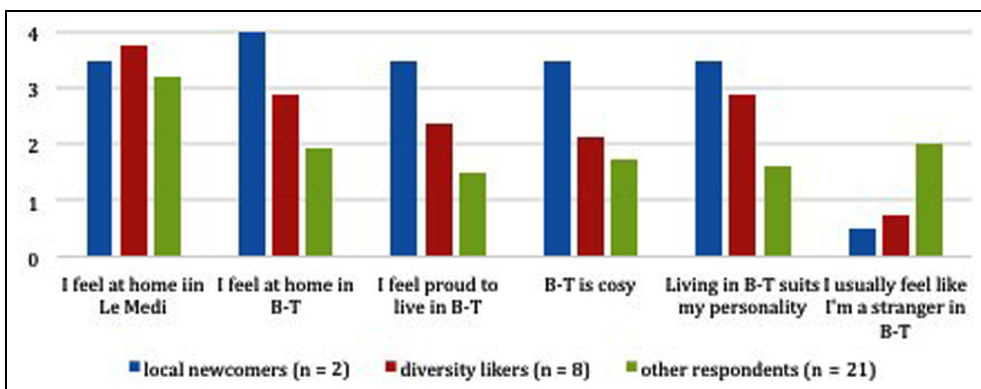
Figure 2. Average agreement with statements about the neighbourhood for local newcomers, diversity likers and other respondents, where 4 = totally agree and 0 = totally disagree.

Practices and narratives of neighbourhood affiliation of *Le Medi* residents

This section will give further insight into the practices and feelings of neighbourhood affiliation for the three groups discerned in Figure 2, beginning with the least neighbourhood-affiliated group.

The 'other respondents'

As stated above, the 'other respondents' chose to buy in *Le Medi* because they liked the complex and its location in the city, but did not express any neighbourhood-related buying reasons. As Figure 2 shows, they do not positively feel at home in Bospolder-Tussendijken. However, this does not translate into avoiding the neighbourhood's public spaces and facilities. All shop for groceries in the neighbourhood at least once per week, and most of them indicate they regularly take leisurely walks in Bospolder-Tussendijken (57% doing this at least once a week). This may partly be shopping strolls, as the shopping street, accommodating a large supermarket, is only 50 m away. The public spaces of the main shopping street and its stores thus form a permanent stage for everyday observations between residents of *Le Medi* and those of the rest of Bospolder-Tussendijken (see also Jackson and Butler, 2014). While walking, residents have many opportunities to observe other neighbourhood residents and 'encounter diversity in the routines of their lives in a way that [people in] segregated neighbourhoods do not' (Blokland and Nast, 2014: 1157). Such observations inspire different images of the neighbourhood. Some of the 'other' respondents recount how they are quite satisfied with the neighbourhood as they walk through it. Interviewees for instance praised the liveliness of the neighbourhood, while also noting that there is

relatively much dirt and many derelict buildings. Other interviewees from this group, who did not feel at home in the neighbourhood, however, talked about feelings of not belonging during shopping. Interviewee Amy is an example:

> Amy (Dutch-Turkish household): It's with all people here, whether Turkish, Moroccan or Dutch, they're just a whole different type of people. I sometimes find it hard to look at. Hard to see that there are people walking around in clothes that have … it's plain sad … that have holes in them (…) I sometimes feel the odd one out when I walk around the neighbourhood. Sometimes I see people watching me like 'what is she doing here?' And when I buy bread at the Moroccan bakery then eh … they think: hey, that's not right, she is different. And then I feel different.

Like Amy, several interviewees in this group noted that they felt sad or uninspired when seeing the poverty in the neighbourhood. Many 'other respondents' also felt insecure about the neighbourhood's safety at night. As noted above, this did not cause them to avoid walking through the neighbourhood during the day. Only one respondent recounted that she used neighbourhood facilities as little as possible, reflecting the desire for spatial partition and withdrawal, as outlined by Atkinson (2006):

> Ellen (Dutch household): Out here it's like a communist country, empty shop shelves and everything (…) I don't care, I just turn my back to it. I don't like public transport anyway, but if I had to go to the nearest metro stop here, I just wouldn't feel like it.

Although none of the interviewees was personally affected, knowing about drug trafficking and thefts from cars made them aware the neighbourhood crime rates are higher than those in other areas of the city. For some of the (aspiring) parents in this group, perceived unsafety of children's

playing areas and perceived quality of neighbourhood schools were important reasons for making plans to move.

'Local newcomers'

According to the sales registry, as mentioned above, a group of buyers was already living in the neighbourhood when moving to *Le Medi*. The respondent group contained two of these buyers. During the interviews, both recounted that their many neighbourhood contacts and high sense of home in the neighbourhood were their main reasons for buying a house in *Le Medi*.

> Yunus (Turkish household): I'm 42 now. And I've been growing up with all these people from age 12 onwards (…) so from the beginning I meant to stay here, I don't want to move.
>
> Interviewer: Was that because of your acquaintances or for other reasons as well?
>
> Yunus: Well, also my family, my father and mother live here and my brother and sister. At a certain point, it has become a bit of a close community of people now.

For both of these local newcomer interviewees, their sense of home resulted, in the first place, from their high familiarity with the neighbourhood and local social networks of friends and family, rather than from strong feelings of pride about the neighbourhood. Both regarded the neighbourhood renewal as important for its diversity, a homogeneously poor area was seen as problematic. This view was shared by the diversity-likers (see below). Local newcomers' familiarity, however, made them more socially connected to the neighbourhood than the last group. The local newcomer interviewees were the only ones to report volunteering or pursuing hobbies in neighbourhood-based organisations and having neighbourhood friends outside *Le Medi*.

Diversity-liking newcomers

As mentioned, the third group discerned on the basis of their positive choice for the neighbourhood are the diversity-likers. Not only the 'local newcomers', but also the diversity-likers on average feel more at home in the neighbourhood, feel proud to live there and feel living in the neighbourhood suits their personality, than the other *Le Medi* residents. The survey also shows that diversity-likers have mostly the same perceptions as the other respondents of Bospolder-Tussendijken's cleanliness, cosiness and safety, which they see as limited. Yet, diversity-likers still like living in the neighbourhood, and feel it suits them and provides a sense of home. In the interviews, diversity-likers mentioned appreciating not only the liveliness of the shopping street but also the wide variety of shops (cf. Jackson and Butler, 2014), whereas the other respondents had more complaints about the quality of shops. According to Florida (2003), mixed neighbourhoods' possibilities for symbolic consumption of other cultures and lifestyles is part of what attracts the creative middle class to these places. Blokland and Van Eijk (2010) have illustrated how Dutch middle-class residents, also those working in traditional occupations, indeed perceive local multicultural shopping and eating opportunities as a neighbourhood asset. The account of the diversity-liker Rik provides an example.

> Rik (Dutch household): I used to live in a greener part of the city, which was nice, only it was much less lively. Here, you walk up to Schiedamsekade [Bospolder-Tussedijken's shopping street], and there you find lots of things. There's a Chinese restaurant, a Surinamese restaurant, a supermarket, a shoe mender, everything really … it really is a self-supporting neighbourhood. Where I lived before, I couldn't find those things.

Diversity-liking interviewee Mathilde expresses that shopping in the neighbourhood invokes feelings of home.

Mathilde (Surinamese household): All those different shops that are there [in the neighbourhood shopping street] with all these foreign products. For me, that's lovely. That's like coming home!

The diversity-likers in our sample give further reasons for preferring neighbourhood diversity. First, some mention that living in a partly poor neighbourhood is instructive for their children. Dana, for instance, posits this:

Dana (Dutch household): I don't like living in a place where only one type of people live, you know, to say it in a blunt way. A bit like poor, rich, nothing, I like that better and I think it's also better for our children, for everyone.

In line with the findings by Hollingworth and Williams (2010, as mentioned in Veldboer, 2010), these diversity-liking *Le Medi* parents find that daily encounters (especially in mixed schools) prepare children for life in the mixed city, and teach them to interact and understand children from lower socio-economic strata. Mathilde for this reason sent her son to a neighbourhood school 'to show him that not everyone is as privileged as he is'.

Another reason diversity-likers give for feeling at home in the neighbourhood is that it offers liveliness and opportunities for educational or inspiring observations of other residents' different ways of living (cf Jackson and Butler, 2014). This can be related to Florida's (2003) tenet that the creative middle classes like to be inspired by a heterogeneous, stimulating residential environment. Dana and Mehmet for instance both state they do not like to live in homogeneous neighbourhoods, whether they are homogeneously poor or homogeneously affluent. Dana feels that in her residential environment she 'like[s] to see things and learn things from other people, the way they go about … I like a bit of mix, rather than

[seeing] only dual-earner families working all the time'. Mehmet sees the diverse neighbourhood as a mirror of life:

Mehmet (Turkish household): Rotterdam-West is a tremendously dynamic and multicultural area. I like that. It is a reflection of life, meaning, it is old and young, beautiful and ugly, the people as much as the buildings. In a suburb, where we were living before, everything is monotonous and I mean, that's not what life is like. When you look at yourself, there are probably also things you like better about yourself and other things that you like less. So monotony doesn't appeal to me that much.

Furthermore, Mehmet and other interviewed diversity-likers chose to live in Bospolder-Tussendijken because the diverse environment ties up with their personal history and housing trajectories (cf. Lelevrier, 2013). Mehmet chose the area 'because I was born and raised here [in a nearby neighbourhood] and also my memories and networks are here, friends and family'. Although raised in other parts of the world, Mathilde and Dana also relate how Bospolder-Tussendijken in some ways reflects their own (early) life experiences. Mathilde explains she looked for a neighbourhood where she can recognise the easy-going street sociability she knew during her youth in Surinam, and expected to find this in multicultural Bospolder-Tussendijken. Dana thinks maybe the fact that she lived in various countries with her parents while growing up, formed part of her preference for a diverse residential environment. She recounts she has 'been the newcomer in a new country many times (…) and [back in the Netherlands] somehow I always used to hang out with migrant kids'. Different aspects of Bospolder-Tussendijken thus matched part of these residents' habitus formed over their lifetime.

In sum, diversity-likers' higher sense of home springs from various sources. It does

not, however, necessarily translate into having social contacts in the neighbourhood. Rik and Mathilde both indicate that they enjoy seeing Bospolder-Tussendijken residents chat in the streets, but Rik only chats with *Le Medi* residents, and Mathilde finds it hard to get into contact with people, even though she would like this. Like other parents with a child in a neighbourhood primary school, she reports that her chats with neighbourhood residents are mostly with parents of the child's playmates. Although these parents have not become her friends, she and other interviewees who bring their children to neighbourhood schools (including the two local newcomers) are the only interviewees to report knowing other Bospolder-Tussendijken residents as acquaintances (over time and on first name basis).

Choosing neighbourhood schools

Regarding one issue of neighbourhood use, however, ethnic background of the household rather than diversity-liking turns out to be a strong predictor. This is the use of neighbourhood schools. According to the survey, all 11 of the child-rearing families in which at least one of the parents was of non-Western migrant background had chosen to enrol their children in neighbourhood schools, whereas none of the native-Dutch households had (including one diversity-liking household). Also, all but one of the Dutch parents with babies and toddlers chose day-care locations outside the neighbourhood. This strong difference was also noted by interviewees. We interviewed three child-rearing families with a migrant background, and all noted that they were quite happy with the neighbourhood schools. Yunus, for instance, sent his two children to a neighbourhood primary school.

> Yunus: My experience at this moment is that it is a pleasant school. It is also a rather black school, I have to admit that.

Two of these interviewees had had some initial doubts, but had overcome these doubts by thinking about their own positive childhood experience of visiting a local school in a deprived neighbourhood. One of these interviewees is Mehmet:

> Mehmet: We got mainly positive reactions when we told people that we were moving to *Le Medi*. It was mainly our own fears when it comes to schools and things like that, how will you do that. Because you get to live in a neighbourhood where many residents are deprived. And we were like, well, our children were in a super … eh … white school. And here there are – I went to a black school myself when I was young – mostly black schools. And they [respondent's children] are in a black school now, because I have the opinion that, well you try to do many things in the neighbourhood and if the quality is good, why go outside the neighbourhood? (…) We were born and raised in Spangen [formerly deprived neighbourhood bordering on Bospolder-Tussendijken] and we did not fare any worse for it either.

Personal experience with black schools thus plays a role in these residents' school choice, and is linked to their habitus. Conversely, lack of experience with such schools is part of what keeps native-Dutch residents from choosing nearby black schools. The other reasons native-Dutch interviewees give, are that local schools are too busy trying to solve backlogs in education existing among the neighbourhood's children. One native-Dutch couple tried a neighbourhood school, but felt it could not deal with their child's specific health needs, and noted that the kid was picking up coarse language from classmates.

Such difference in schooling choice in the Dutch context is in line with research by Karsten and colleagues (2003). They found that on average native-Dutch parents give more importance to the match between their own social and cultural background and the pupil composition of the school, than parents with a migrant background do.

Migrant-background parents choose schools with a good reputation that give ample attention to instruction in the Dutch language, and are less averse to enrolling their child in a 'black' school, although they also prefer a mix. Veldboer (2010) also finds that sending children to black neighbourhood schools is less common for the white middle-class newcomers than for 'local newcomers' with a migrant background.

Conclusions

In the current debate on socio-economically mixed areas, authors have identified different degrees and forms of disaffiliation among middle-class households living in poor and often also ethnically diverse neighbourhoods. This article has presented a detailed case study of neighbourhood (dis)-affiliation of the middle-class residents of *Le Medi*, a semi-gated complex in a poor and highly ethnically diverse Rotterdam neighbourhood, that was designed with the assumed preferences of diversity-liking middle-class households in mind. The first finding is that, contrary to the outcomes of various studies in this debate, middle-class socio-spatial withdrawal from the neighbourhood is not the general pattern here. Instead, all *Le Medi*'s middle-class residents regularly visit the neighbourhood's 'mixed' spaces – notably the market and shops – on foot (mostly once or twice per week). As such, their affiliation includes socio-spatial neighbourhood practices related to encountering diversity in the public realm (Blokland and Nast, 2014). Psychological affiliation (feeling at home in the neighbourhood and being proud to live there), however, is low on average, but two respondent groups are exceptions here. The first group consists of 'local newcomers': these residents had already been living in the neighbourhood directly prior to moving to *Le Medi* and most have a migrant background. The

second group that is at home is the residents we have termed 'diversity-likers'. Encountering ethnic and socio-economic 'others' in the neighbourhood positively motivated their housing choice. Several of these interviewees express that they enjoy neighbourhood diversity because it brings liveliness and learning experiences, some also find it reflects aspects of their personal biography. For them the diverse neighbourhood is not merely 'social wallpaper' (cf Butler, 2003). Instead, these residents are interested in observing and interacting with the residents living in the rest of the low-income neighbourhood. The two groups also feel they will stay in *Le Medi* for many years, whereas other residents expect to leave earlier.

Together, the findings corroborate other studies' findings (Jackson and Butler, 2014; Lelevrier, 2013; Veldboer, 2010) that middle-class newcomers' social and housing trajectories, lifestyle and ethnic backgrounds influence neighbourhood affiliation and paint a less grim picture for this social mixing case than would have been expected after reading a wide variety of studies on disaffiliation and tectonic interclass behaviour in mixed neighbourhoods. The findings also underline that affiliation has psychological, social and socio-spatial dimensions. Whereas literature on social tectonics and middle-class disaffiliation systematically finds middle-class withdrawal or indifference along all three dimensions, our study and those of others (Lelevrier, 2013; Pattillo, 2007; Veldboer, 2010) yields that it can be limited on one dimension, yet strong on another dimension. Furthermore, the presence of the 'local newcomers' with a high sense of home places the image of disaffiliated middle-class social-mix gentrifiers as residents in another perspective. In their contributions to the social-mix debate, Lees (2008) and Atkinson (2006) position two groups against each other: 'cosmopolitans

versus locals', 'affluent versus poor', thereby losing sight of trajectories of social mobility and of already existing population diversity within social-mix neighbourhoods.

The presence of migrant middle-class 'local newcomers' and diversity-likers matters for affiliation in yet another way: in our study, only parents with a migrant background chose to enrol their children in a neighbourhood school. These households showed the most substantial social neighbourhood affiliation, since local schooling turned out to generate interclass social contacts for both these children and their parents, whereas other – 'non-local' – residents knew very few neighbourhood residents outside *Le Medi* on a personal basis. The affiliation of middle-class ethnic-minority families can therefore be regarded as most encompassing in social terms, and most important for the local educational system. Many western-European cities are home to substantial populations with a migrant background and a growing share of middle-class households within them. We therefore argue that more attention should be paid to these households' neighbourhood affiliation.

Last, the 'diverse by design' case of *Le Medi* indicates that residents' diversity-liking lifestyle indeed relates to a sense of home in the neighbourhood, but that also the presence of nearby 'mixed' shops and schools is an important factor. We conclude that the role of housing trajectories, ethnic backgrounds and lifestyle orientations of middle-class households as well as neighbourhood mixed facilities, shops and schools deserves much more attention in the study of middle-class (dis)affiliation's dimensions.

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Note

1. In this article, we follow the definitions of the Statistics Netherlands (CBS) to distinguish residents based on ethnicity. Dutch citizens who were born abroad or who have at least one parent who was born abroad are referred to as 'persons with a migrant background'.

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