

# Exclusionary Policies are Not Just about the 'Neoliberal City': A Critique of Theories of Urban Revanchism and the Case of Rotterdam

GWEN VAN EIJK

## Abstract

*Exclusionary urban policies have repeatedly been interpreted as 'urban revanchism' — strategies aimed at attracting gentrifiers and tourists at the expense of marginal and minority groups. This article scrutinizes the claim that exclusionary policies are driven by economic insecurities and motives to attract capital. Rotterdam serves as an extreme case through which I examine who supports exclusionary policies, and for what reasons. The case study shows that urban policies are intertwined with ideas about multiculturalism and integration. This suggests that concerns about national unity also play a role, and that de-concentration (and creating mixed neighbourhoods) is, like citizenship, a strategy for inclusion, which, in effect, logically excludes people. I argue that insecurities that stem from concerns about national unity and demands for social order should be acknowledged as additional drivers of exclusionary policies and the latter cannot be reduced to economic motives. I conclude that current theories of urban revanchism need to incorporate a more complex notion of 'safety' and of ways in which insecurities produce strategies of exclusion and inclusion.*

## Introduction

Urban policies in Western countries have become harsher towards marginalized groups and are increasingly founded on sharply defined boundaries between privileged groups on the one hand, and marginalized, deprived, often ethnic minority groups on the other. Garland (2001: 135), for example, describes how Anglo-Saxon state policies evolve around 'essentialized differences': 'whole communities are anathematized by talk of an undeserving "underclass", locked into a culture and mode of life that is both alien and threatening'. Similarly, Body-Gendrot (2000: xx) observes that in the Old World 'established insiders are advocating a better control of crime and violence frequently associated with "others"'. Baeten (2001: 58) illustrates 'exclusionary politics' in Brussels, 'in which the Other is treated as the scapegoat for all sorts of urban problems' — the 'Other' being deviant from the preferred mainstream of 'married, heterosexual, affluent, house-owning families' (*ibid.*: 61). Van Swaaningen (2005: 292; italics in original), finally, notes that in the Netherlands currently 'virtually *all* social problems are judged along ethnic lines'.

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Several scholars have interpreted this development as ‘urban revanchism’ following Smith’s (1996) analysis of exclusionary politics as ‘neoliberal’ strategies aiming to ‘retake’ the city for capital and consumption. City governments aim to attract gentrifiers and tourists while excluding and criminalizing marginal groups who would threaten the ‘quality of life’ in neighbourhoods and public places (Papayanis, 2000; MacLeod, 2002; Hubbard, 2004; Belina, 2007; Swanson, 2007). These and other scholars (*Agora*, 2005; Uitermark and Duyvendak, 2008) have argued that ‘actual existing’ revanchism (MacLeod, 2002: 617) takes on different forms in different contexts, but that nevertheless these different examples can be classified as ‘urban revanchism’ conducive to the ‘neoliberal city’.

This article examines the value of theories of ‘urban revanchism’ for interpreting recent policy developments. My argument is directed at Smith’s and others’ thesis that exclusionary policies are driven by economic insecurities and motives to accumulate capital through tourism and gentrification. I argue that this thesis is unsatisfactory because it does not acknowledge concerns of national unity as distinct and fundamentally different drivers for exclusionary policies. Strategies based on these concerns aim at inclusion (e.g. integration, citizenship, mixed neighbourhoods), while they, logically, in effect produce (new) lines along which groups are criminalized and excluded (*cf.* Isin, 2002). The call for ‘safety’, thus, has a broader meaning than ensuring ‘liveability’, as revanchism theorists have it; it carries with it a demand for ‘social order’ (Boutellier, 2005). Current theories of revanchism tend to dispose of non-economic concerns as ‘a euphemism for class-motivated warfare’ on poverty and deviance (Papayanis, 2000: 342). Motives based on capital and consumption do indeed play a role in shaping urban policies, but, following Harding (2007), there is nothing *inherently* ‘neoliberal’ about exclusionary politics; not all motives are ‘in reality’ about capital.

In what follows I first present Smith’s ‘urban revanchist’ perspective and its adapted versions. As I am interested in what drives exclusionary policies (rather than the ways in which they are implemented and their effects) this article examines who supports these policies, and for what reasons. Through a study of an ‘extreme case’ — the implementation of a new measure in Rotterdam, the second largest city of the Netherlands — I inquire into the motives for and supporters of exclusionary policies. In the subsequent section I theoretically elaborate the notion of ‘safety’ and how it is connected to strategies of inclusion and exclusion. Conclusions follow in the final section.

## Theories of urban revanchism

Smith (1996: 211) describes how, in the US, the economic recession between 1988 and 1992 and a wider ‘discourse of urban decline’ fuelled revanchist sentiments and practices. White middle class urbanites felt they were ‘suddenly stuck in a place by a ravaged property market, the threat and reality of unemployment, the decimation of social services, and the emergence of minority and immigrant groups, as well as women, as powerful urban actors’ (*ibid.*: 211). Urban revanchism, Smith writes, represents a reclaiming of the city and the defence of their privileges by the white middle class in reaction to the ‘theft’ of the city by deprived and deviant groups (*ibid.*: 212). ‘Fears’ are thus rooted in the economic insecurity of the middle class. The revengeful middle classes proclaim ‘civic morality, family values and neighbourhood security’ (*ibid.*: 213) and seek to improve the quality of life by repressing all forms of deviancy. This would explain why, even though crime rates have gone down, ‘crime has become a central marker of the revanchist city’ (*ibid.*: 213). Urban policies have become intertwined with international crime (terrorism, Palestine conflict) as well as criminalization of marginalization and deviancy (poverty, homelessness). This all is part of the ‘capitalist city’ and, according to Smith (1998: 10), manifests ‘the ugly cultural politics of neoliberal globalization’.

Through gentrification, a political strategy which involves the rehabilitation of the existing stock and redevelopment through new construction, the middle classes aim to ‘conquer’ the city (Smith, 1996: 26). In other words, revanchism is, although with racial and authoritarian connotations, in its essence a class struggle which results from a capitalist mode of production.

Several scholars have applied the revanchism framework to cases other than those that Smith describes and especially other than New York City, arguing, nevertheless, that revanchism takes on different forms and is sometimes even ‘driven by a different set of criteria’ (Swanson, 2007: 714). In Ecuadorian cities, as Swanson (*ibid.*) describes, revanchism is intertwined with the project of ‘whitening’: a displacement of the indigenous beggars and street vendors ‘to make way for the global tourist class’. MacLeod (2002: 616) notes that Glasgow politicians seek, alongside zero tolerance policies banning homeless people from Glasgow’s downtown streets, to improve relations between the homeless, the police and the public, and address the ‘structural causes’ of homelessness, thus demonstrating an ‘inclusive’ politics, too. Also in the case of Rotterdam, the theory of revanchism needed adjustment. According to Uitermark and Duyvendak (2008: 1487), the ‘local government dominated by Fortuyn’s party (2002–06) was clearly revanchist in its self-conscious attempt to provide an alternative to the agenda of the previous social democratic governments and to make repressive and disciplinary measures a corner stone of urban policy’. They observe ‘a convergence . . . between Europe and the US towards urban revanchism . . . [T]here is a (perceived) need to “control” marginalized groups in order to safeguard the economic functioning of cities (*ibid.*). Yet, they conclude that the trend is ‘as intensive as, but qualitatively different’ (*ibid.*: 1486) from Smith’s theory. Therefore they propose to ‘amend’ the American revanchist framework in order to account for the unique (financial) position of cities and immigration histories. In the ‘European’ variant, first, the target groups are different (not marginal groups, the homeless in particular, but ethnic minorities, especially Muslims), second, its supporters are different (not the middle classes, but the native Dutch working classes), third, the goal is different (not repression, but disciplining), and fourth, the strategy is different (not exclusion through gentrification, but inclusion through mixed neighbourhoods) (*ibid.*).

These amendments raise the question of whether it is valuable or even tenable to hold on to theories of revanchism in their current form. Focusing on the *implementation* and *consequences* of urban policies, these examples demonstrate, not surprisingly, that revanchism works out differently in different places. Following Brenner and Theodore (2002), MacLeod (2002: 617) explains the differential outcomes in Glasgow as ‘“actually existing” revanchist political economies’ that ‘assume different forms in different contexts’, arguing further that ‘particular studies of revanchism will require much theoretical flexibility’. Uitermark and Duyvendak (2008: 1499) similarly claim that ‘path dependency’ brought about differential policies, resulting in new revanchist policies alongside existing social policies. In an attempt to do justice to different manifestations, Atkinson (2003: 1832–3) proposes to understand revanchism as several (competing) strands: a mode of governance to control the public realm, a set of programmes to secure public space, a prophetic and dystopian image of urban decline, and the economic objectives securing capital investment. As policies more or less fit the four strands of revanchism, it is, according to Atkinson (*ibid.*: 1840), possible to speak of a certain ‘degree of revanchism’.

However, when we focus on what *drives* urban policies, the examples of revanchist projects suggest that fundamentally different factors — other than economic ones — additionally drive the trend toward exclusionary policies (as both Swanson [2007] and Uitermark and Duyvendak [2008] actually explicitly claim). Managing differences, either through repression or integration, is central to urban policies both in Europe and the US. But these policies are not just economically driven but evolve also around issues of national unity (Favell, 2005; Body-Gendrot, 2008). I will illustrate this point by analysing an ‘extreme case’ (see Atkinson, 2003): Rotterdam and later the national

government implemented a measure designed to exclude unemployed and underemployed people from 'distressed' neighbourhoods in order to improve 'liveability' and 'integration'. The case shows, on the one hand, similarities with other revanchism cases, especially with regard to political rhetoric towards minority groups. On the other hand, strategies of creating mixed neighbourhoods and citizenship suggest how these policies are intertwined with concerns for national unity and social order.

### Exclusion and criminalization in Rotterdam: a case study of an extreme policy

In 2005, the Dutch national government implemented a law that allows municipalities to exclude underemployed and unemployed people from the rental housing market in 'distressed' areas. This case study examines, first, the political debates that preceded the implementation of this policy, which gives insight into the aims and motives of politicians. For this purpose I analysed media (newspapers) and policy documents (council meetings, official reports). Secondly, I interviewed 26 residents of the neighbourhood of Carnisse, where the new policy was implemented first. Residents were asked what problems they experienced, if any; whether and how Carnisse had changed (recently, long-term); and how they felt about these changes.<sup>1</sup>

The debate preceding the policy implementation started in Rotterdam and followed from a population prognosis from 2003 which predicted that in 2017 almost half — in some districts 75% — of the population of Rotterdam would be of non-Western descent (Rotterdam, 2003). Several local politicians expressed their concern and called for measures to put a stop to this development, because, they argued, some of these neighbourhoods were already dealing with many social problems and could not handle the influx of even more underprivileged residents. 'Rotterdam shouldn't be the waste pipe of the country', a local politician said (*Rotterdams Dagblad*, 2003b). Marco Pastors of the new right-wing party Liveable Rotterdam, at the time alderman responsible for housing, proposed a 'total stop' on the influx of underprivileged ethnic minorities (*Rotterdams Dagblad*, 2003a). His proposal encountered great resistance because of its discriminatory nature, and Pastors was compelled to drop it. Shortly thereafter the City Council started an experiment in several streets and Carnisse: application for rental housing was regulated in such a way that low-income groups could apply only for low-rent dwellings (Rotterdam, 2004). This in effect excluded the lowest income groups, among whom there were disproportionately many from ethnic minorities, from these areas. In the meantime the national government explored the possibilities of allowing all cities to implement the income requirement policy in distressed areas. The Commission for Equal Treatment (CGB) — established by the national government — objected that the policy involved disproportionate restrictions on housing choice for ethnic minorities, single mothers and disabled people (CGB, 2005), but the government paid virtually no attention to their protests. The new law (entitled 'Special Measures for Urban Issues', nicknamed the 'Rotterdam Act') was implemented in January 2005 and allows municipal governments to exclude people who depend on social security (apart from social security for the elderly) and cannot financially support themselves (Rotterdam, 2006), and who have not lived in the municipal region in the preceding six years, from the rental housing market in so-called problem areas. Rotterdam was the first city to implement the new law. Three neighbourhoods were added to the initial experimental areas. Up to now, no other municipality has implemented the policy.

1 Interviews were unstructured and followed an item list. Interviewees were selected by randomly ringing doors and by determining whether the residents had been living in Carnisse for over five years, as I was concerned with change over time. Most are women [ $n = 18$ ] and native Dutch [ $n = 20$ ]. All names except that of the neighbourhood are fictitious.

### Politicians: increasing liveability and integration through exclusion

How did politicians justify this new policy? Policy documents show how problems of integration (especially the integration of ethnic minorities), deprivation, and liveability<sup>2</sup> were often bracketed together. In an official report preceding the experiment, the Rotterdam Council states that the continuing influx of underprivileged residents, together with nuisance, illegality and crime are the ‘core problem’ (Rotterdam, 2003: 7) and need to be handled through, first, the regulation of in- and out-migration (e.g. by regulation of rental housing). The Council explains that neighbourhoods could become ‘unliveable’ as a result of the concentration of ethnic minorities and poverty in these areas and the many problems that would occur or be exacerbated as a result, problems such as health assistance dependency, unemployment, school segregation and school drop-outs (*ibid.*). Neighbourhood problems would lead to further out-migration of higher-income groups, both native Dutch and ethnic-minority, and thus would intensify poverty and ethnic concentration, increase problems with crime, nuisance and deviant behaviour and further decrease liveability and safety — neighbourhoods would get caught in a ‘downward spiral’ (*ibid.*: 9–10). A second strategy for dealing with the ‘core problems’ is to stimulate integration and *inburgering*, and education, work and economy (*ibid.*: 8). *Inburgering* refers specifically and only to the integration of ethnic minorities, and includes particularly speaking the Dutch language and ‘knowledge of the Dutch society’, which includes Dutch history and the democratic system, but also citizenship, education and parenting.<sup>3</sup> Integration here means ‘identificational acculturation’ (Brubaker, 2001: 541). The Council stated, for instance, that high residential mobility in deprived areas inhibits ‘residents of Rotterdam from feeling connected with the city and with each other. That is not beneficial to *inburgering* and the integration of residential groups’ (Rotterdam, 2003: 16). Although the City Council cautions against reducing issues to ‘ethnic problems’ (*ibid.*: 19), all measures to regulate the city population are substantiated by concerns and statistics about the spatial concentration and social segregation of *ethnic minorities*; not once are figures on deprived native Dutch presented. Note also that *all* non-Western ethnic minorities are labelled ‘attention groups’ because they often depend on social services (Ergun and Bik, 2003: 13).

Although the tone of the national parliament was more nuanced, they, too, linked liveability and integration of (ethnic) deprived groups. Left-wing parties were less inclined to speak about ethnicity and stressed that the deprivation of all people needs attention. Green Left (GroenLinks) repudiated the exclusion of residents on the basis of their income and rejected the ‘income requirement’. Other left-wing parties, however, supported the policy instrument, as they agreed that concentration of underprivileged groups is problematic. In their view too, the spatial concentration of underprivileged social groups is equivalent to social segregation, which in turn reduces opportunities for (mainly socio-economic) integration into mainstream society. Although the Social-Liberals (D66) refused to distinguish between native Dutch and ethnic minority residents, they supported the policy, because ‘arguing from the point of view of [underprivileged] people, we must do everything to offer them opportunities and prospects for work. You can’t do that by keeping everybody in a neighbourhood where the social underclass is overrepresented’ (Explanatory memorandum, 2005). In the words of the Socialist Party (SP): ‘the concentration of the underprivileged, among whom there are many from ethnic minorities, results in great problems in Rotterdam and other big cities. [Concentration] also hampers the underprivileged themselves from struggling out of their deprivation’ (*ibid.*). The link between ‘quality of life’ and integration also appeared in official documents that introduced the new national law: ‘living in a concentration neighbourhood often hinders the integration particularly of low-educated

2 Generally in Dutch debates ‘liveability’ in neighbourhoods refers to the level of crime and nuisance, feelings of safety and residential satisfaction, as well as interaction and ‘social cohesion’ among residents.

3 See Q&A on <http://www.handreikinginburgeringgemeenten.nl/>.

ethnic minorities, who speak the Dutch language poorly. [The new law] aims to improve liveability in those neighbourhoods and thus to stimulate integration' (Memorandum in reply, 2005: 10). And: 'diversity in income and background can contribute to liveability in a neighbourhood [and] to integration of non-Western ethnic minorities' (*ibid.*: 11).

Visions of an (ethnic) underclass concentrated in 'unliveable' neighbourhoods thus played an important role in justifying extreme measures to improve safety and liveability. This was also the case when the appointed areas were selected. The neighbourhood Carnisse, where Rotterdam started the experiment with the new measure, was selected because of several *potential* problematic factors (Rotterdam, 2004): Carnisse has a large number of low-quality private rental dwellings (which makes the district susceptible to illegal renting), was deemed 'on the verge of problematic' (not further specified) and ranks in the top twelve for the highest influx of 'newcomers' (i.e. non-Western ethnic minorities who have been less than two years in the Netherlands; the share of non-Western residents doubled from 20% in 1994 to 40% in 2004) (see Body-Gendrot [2008] and Drever [2004] for similar ethnicity-based criteria for identifying problem areas).

In what ways is the new policy driven by motives to attract the middle classes, as Smith's thesis would suggest? On the one hand, this new measure can be seen as part of broader urban policies in Rotterdam and Dutch cities that are indeed driven by economic concerns.<sup>4</sup> While the Rotterdam rightist party Liveable Rotterdam (like other new rightist parties currently in the national parliament) focuses almost exclusively on ethnic minorities, other policies indicate that the 'target group' is actually broader and also includes marginal groups in public places. For example, the Rotterdam government has banned marginal groups from public places in the city by closing down shelters for drug addicts (*Perron Nul* in 1994, the Paulus church in 2007) and fining homeless people for 'visual nuisance' (van Swaaningen, 2007) — actions that Smith (1996: 225) calls 'criminalization of the everyday life of homeless people', something that is also described in other works on revanchism (MacLeod, 2002; Atkinson, 2003; Belina, 2007). According to these scholars, securing public space is a way of making the city attractive for tourism (see also Mitchell, 2003; Swanson, 2007). Further, the particular policy described here, the income restriction, was designed to 'de-concentrate' deprived (ethnic) groups, but more generally (European and American) housing policies are designed to create mixed neighbourhoods (Veldboer *et al.*, 2002), aiming to attract 'creative classes' who would enjoy cultural diversity and boost the urban economy (see e.g. Rotterdam, 2007). Because the state allocates financial support to municipalities proportional to their problems, local governments are not wholly dependent on tax payers for the well-being of their city. Yet, the middle class is seen as essential for local and cultural facilities (see, e.g., Explanatory memorandum, 2005; Rotterdam, 2007). One could argue that these are examples of neoliberal strategies conducive to the 'capitalist city'.

On the other hand, the debate on integration and citizenship, and the broad support for the new Rotterdam measure, should also be connected with the recent denunciation of 'multiculturalism', which points to a motive that cannot be reduced to economic concerns. A few years earlier, Paul Scheffer published a paper (Scheffer, 2000) in which he held the multiculturalist paradigm responsible for the 'falling behind of entire generations of ethnic minorities and the creation of an ethnic underclass'. Many saw Scheffer's paper as marking the end of multiculturalism in the Netherlands (Snel, 2003). Moreover, Scheffer openly linked issues of crime and safety to the lack of integration of ethnic minorities, thus also doing away with 'politically correct' thinking — something the rightwing parties the LPF and Liveable Rotterdam were intent on carrying through — that had marked political (and academic) debates for so long. The LPF, the national right-wing party established by Pim Fortuyn (who was assassinated by an

4 On space grounds, I leave aside here the discussion of whether this is actually gentrification; it suffices to recognize that governments aim to somehow 'upgrade' areas by attracting less deprived residents.

environmentalist just before the national elections in 2002; his party nevertheless received enough votes to make it part of the national government), became famous for their quite controversial views on immigration and the integration of ethnic minorities, asylum politics and crime (see Bélanger and Aarts, 2006: 5). They also became popular for their ‘politically incorrect’ way of naming and blaming — ‘Pim says what everyone thinks but doesn’t dare to say’, many said. In practice that came down to rejecting Islam, criticizing immigration policies, and advocating more exclusive policies than those that other parties usually argued for. Fortuyn particularly denounced the multiculturalism of previous social-democratic governments, which he accused of being unable to tackle the problems that immigration had brought. Pastor’s call for an ‘ethnic minority stop’ is thus in line with the straightforward image of his party Liveable Rotterdam, which is the local department of the LPF.

However, the shift in thinking about ethnic minorities and safety had set in earlier (*cf.* van Swaaningen, 2007). Already in the 1990s the ideal of the ‘multicultural society’ had made way for the belief that holding on to one’s culture hinders integration into society (Snel, 2003; Uitermark, 2003). In the new ‘cultural perspective’ (Snel, 2003) that became mainstream, lack of integration is interpreted not as a consequence of deprivation but as deviant behaviour based in deviant cultural norms, and because cultural diversity is perceived to negatively affect national unity, lack of integration is seen as a problem for society as a whole (*cf.* Melossi, 2000; Garland, 2001; Boutellier, 2005). Demands for socio-cultural integration and harsher policies are more explicit now probably because of fears for radicalization of Muslims — the assassination of Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh by an Islamic fundamentalist (November 2004) and the rounding up of an Islamic terrorist organization in The Hague shortly thereafter was for many a sign that ‘9/11’ could happen in the Netherlands too. Fortuyn’s role in changing (the tone of) political discourse cannot be underestimated, but there are indications that the trend toward harsher policies had set in earlier. It is much more plausible that Fortuyn’s electoral victory was possible *because* of a shift in thinking, rather than the other way around. This might also be proven by the fact that harsher policies were broadly supported: both the lower educated and the higher social classes supported the right-wing LPF (Bélanger and Aarts, 2006), but even ethnic minorities felt attracted to Fortuyn’s message (‘more “emancipated” members’ no longer wanted to be ‘pampered’; van Swaaningen, 2005: 301). Bélanger and Aarts (2006) also found that people who voted for Fortuyn in 2002 were the most cynical about politics and least tolerant of refugees already in 1998, years before Fortuyn entered the political stage. Moreover, left-wing politicians supported the income requirement policy as well, and even continued the policy after 2006: ‘once the [social-democrats] got back in power they did not undo these policy changes . . . because they, too, emphasize the necessity of managing and redressing incivilities’ (Uitermark and Duyvendak, 2008: 1499).

In this light, ‘revanchism’ perhaps is mainly a politics of symbols. Uitermark and Duyvendak (2008: 1498, 1500) conclude that, in Rotterdam, ‘the biggest change . . . was on the symbolic level . . . The main difference . . . is that populist parties are not afraid to stigmatize migrants’. Further, the connection between ‘revanchist’ politics and debates on integration and multiculturalism indicates that strategies to increase liveability are also prompted by the call for integration — the strategies that in effect *exclude* certain groups thus are also strategies to *include* them. I will elaborate this argument in the final section.

### Residents: crime, noise and antisocial behaviour

I have argued that harsher policies are broadly supported by politicians and that their motive is to increase liveability *and* integration. This suggests that the call for ‘safety’ entails more than protection against crime and nuisance — it is also about ensuring unity and social order. Residents’ stories about local problems may give more insight into feelings of insecurity among urban residents. Indeed, Carnisse residents — who

**Table 1** Socio-demographics Rotterdam neighbourhoods (percentages)

	Carnisse 1994	Carnisse 2004	Tarwewijk 2004	Oude Westen 2004	Rotterdam 2004
Native Dutch	72	53	29	27	55
Non-Western ethnic minorities	19	37	63	61	35
Household income < poverty level	27	14	26	25	16
Social security recipients	8 <sup>a</sup>	6	12	13	7
Often feels unsafe in neighbourhood	–	4	8	10	4
Crime reports	8 <sup>b</sup>	7	8	16	9
Nuisance reports	9 <sup>b</sup>	7	9	16	8

<sup>a</sup>1997<sup>b</sup>1999

Source: www.rotterdam.buurtmonitor.nl

generally are *not* middle class — talked about problems of crime and nuisance, and were concerned with Carnisse's reputation, and some related these problems to the presence of ethnic minorities. Residents, however, talked more about 'abnormal' and 'antisocial' behaviour than about crime, which suggests discomfort with the presence of unfamiliar others, and may reveal concerns about a changing society rather than economic insecurity. The interviews also support my argument that the Rotterdam case is an example of revanchism at the symbolic level. Local politicians depicted Carnisse as an area with severe problems of crime and liveability, while the interviews also show other, perhaps more mundane, discomforts. This may suggest that policies officially aimed at increasing safety (also) attempt to respond to more indefinite concerns about 'integration' and 'difference' rather than to solve problems of crime and deprivation directly (*cf.* Bauman, 1998: 5, 188).

Carnisse, located in the south of Rotterdam, is the first neighbourhood where the new restrictive policy was implemented. Characterized as 'average and steady' in 2000, by 2005 it was said that 'big city problems' had occurred there, too, as cultural diversity, crime and illegal housing increased (Rotterdam, 2005a: 127). However, several statistical indicators do not substantiate the image of Carnisse as a 'problem area', especially not when compared to, for example, the neighbourhoods of Tarwewijk (an adjacent neighbourhood known for its problems with violence and the introduction of preventative stop-and-search practices) and Oude Westen (in 2004 the most 'problematic' area in Rotterdam). The proportion of non-western minorities had indeed almost doubled in ten years, although in 2004 it was still relatively modest; the proportion of low-income households and social security recipients equalled the average for Rotterdam and was smaller than in the other areas; and reports of crime, nuisance and feelings of insecurity were not out of proportion (see Table 1). Moreover, the annually published 'safety index' of Rotterdam neighbourhoods reports that Carnisse had become safer in recent years (Rotterdam 2005b).<sup>5</sup>

What, then, are the problems that residents encounter? In the first instance most residents described Carnisse as a 'neat' and 'quiet' area where they enjoy living. When asked specifically about development during the time that they have lived there, most of them put forward several problems. For some, thefts and burglary had affected liveability. Yet, they explained that car burglary and thefts increased during specific periods of the year ('in times of money shortage': at Christmas, before holidays) and

5 The safety index is based on (registered and self-reported) crime and neighbourhood characteristics, which is debateable. Nevertheless, the safety index plays a significant role in policy decisions.

occurred in ‘waves’ as homeless drug addicts moved across the city. ‘That’s just part of living in the city’, some said, and they dealt with it by carefully watching their valuable possessions and always locking doors and windows. The fact that residents talked about these incidents in such an easy manner suggests that they were not experienced as major liveability problems. Others talked about (criminal) youths who had diminished liveability: Moroccan youths who carried knives and vandalized anything movable or immovable. Mr van de Quast<sup>6</sup> blamed the local government whose strict policies in the adjacent neighbourhood of Tarwewijk had pushed ‘problem youth’ into Carnisse resulting in thefts, muggings and vandalism. Others stated that specific ethnic minority groups that had recently settled in Carnisse were to blame for increasing criminal activities. Thea<sup>7</sup> argued that ‘the arrival of Moroccan boys’ was to blame for increasing crime levels. Mrs Swanenberg<sup>8</sup> blamed Antilleans for making the neighbourhood like ‘the Wild West’, where ‘it’s easier to get cocaine than a loaf of bread’.

But apart from some horror stories about drug crime and violence, residents generally drew a picture of a low-crime neighbourhood. Youths were often mentioned for their disrespectful attitude (being ‘cheeky’ when residents addressed them) and ‘hanging about’ outside, which made residents feel uncomfortable. But most residents complained about nuisance — noise and litter mostly — when asked what affected liveability in their neighbourhood. According to Mr de Bruin,<sup>9</sup> new ‘young’ residents ‘make a mess’ by not cleaning the stairs as people used to do. He is thinking about moving, because ‘there are just too many antisocial residents here’. Others explicitly related nuisance to the presence of ethnic minority residents, for example, loud music and talking (‘why do Antilleans always yell at each other when they talk?’), ‘foreign children’ playing outside late at night, and a Hindu ‘tree festival’, as Leanne<sup>10</sup> describes:

If you go to the other side of the avenue, a lot of foreigners live there. Basically it’s not a problem for me, but if they celebrate cultural holidays then they cause a nuisance . . . In the Netherlands you simply are not allowed to cause a nuisance after ten in the evening and everybody should keep to that. And if you have a party once in a while, then you inform each other, which is what we do.

There was much talk about how others, sometimes explicitly ‘ethnic minorities’ or ‘foreigners’, did not stick to what people felt was ‘normal’: ‘throwing litter on the street apparently is normal, well, *we* don’t think it’s normal’. People described feeling distanced from the behaviour of other (groups of) residents, which made them uncomfortable within their neighbourhood. The residents who complained most about nuisance from ethnic minorities were also long-time residents — they had lived in Carnisse for over nine years — and thus had seen the composition of the neighbourhood change, which also suggests friction between the ‘established’ and the ‘outsiders’ (*cf.* Elias and Scotson, 1965) rather than ethnic/racial or class frictions.

Another recurrent theme in the interviews was socializing — or rather, people *not* socializing. Mrs Peters<sup>11</sup> explains that it was not the same ‘working-class neighbourhood’ it was before, because ‘new’ people don’t greet and don’t return her greetings. For her it is a reason to ‘keep shut’ and ‘close the door’. Ursula<sup>12</sup> too feels things have changed for the worse:

We used to sit outside with the neighbours, no matter whether they were Dutch or foreigners. We just sat in front of the house, playing cards, having a drink . . . We’d put the garden table,

6 Male, age 46, married, 1 child at home, native Dutch, residence in Carnisse 11 years.

7 Female, age 51, single, 1 child at home, native Dutch, residence 12 years.

8 Female, age 60, widow, native Dutch, residence 10 years.

9 Male, age 40, co-habiting, 1 child, native Dutch, residence 13 years.

10 Female, age 29, married, 2 children, native Dutch, residence 5 years.

11 Female, age 65, widow, native Dutch, residence 16 years.

12 Female, age 33, co-habiting, native Dutch, residence 9 years.

the seats, everything in front of the house. Well, you don't have to try that anymore now, no. Yes, we sit outside, with our Turkish neighbours, or with the neighbours from [number] 56. But it is not like before.

To summarize, many residents told how their neighbourhood had changed and was still changing — and not even always for the worse: they just saw it change. The role of other residential groups is salient in how people talk about change and problems. People noticed that Dutch people moved out and ethnic minorities moved in, but not everybody experienced this necessarily as a bad thing or, in so far as they did see it negatively, related this to crime. Nesrin,<sup>13</sup> of Turkish origin herself, was more concerned that the presence of ethnic minorities would negatively affect the appearance of buildings, because in her experience they often did not put up curtains or clean the doorway — 'it seems like this is more something about ethnic minorities', she explained. Furthermore, residents' stories show a variety of categories and boundaries along which people position themselves in relation to others, boundaries that also shifted along with the stories that were told. There are thus no clear boundaries between ethnic minority and native Dutch residents (*cf.* Blokland, 2003a), or between middle- and lower-class residents. People experience neighbourhood life in very different ways, mention different concerns and blame different people. For some 'problems of liveability' means Antilleans dealing drugs, for others it means that people don't greet anymore or don't put up proper curtains. Some talk seemed 'revanchist': several residents, Nesrin for example, thought that the presence of more high-income groups and Dutch people would improve Carnisse's appearance or reputation. Others were more explicit and said they desired a more 'balanced' population or wished the housing corporation would 'put more Dutch people in this street'. To go back to Leanne again:

I do think the City Council should consider mixing foreigners and Dutch people . . . A good mix, so not all problem cases together, and integration. Just put foreigners who don't or can hardly speak Dutch among Dutch people, but not too many Dutch people, because then of course people start turning against each other, but I feel that's also wrong of Dutch people. But just, more integration, and then it will come, it will get better.

Yet the fact that people talked about abnormal and antisocial behaviour more than about crime displays discomfort with the presence of unfamiliar 'others', within their neighbourhood but also within society. 'Crime talk' and 'place talk' tell us much about how people perceive social life more generally: talk about crime 'draws boundaries and distinctions' (Sparks *et al.*, 2001: 887) which are interwoven with group boundaries as they are experienced in general, as Merry (1981) has shown. Thus, we may interpret 'neighbourhood talk' and people's experiences with other residents as stories of how people perceive their relations to others and, more generally, their place in society. Talking about 'Antilleans' or 'new people' thus may have less to do with antagonistic feelings towards these groups, and more with how people deal with the presence of unfamiliar others. People had difficulty assessing unfamiliar others and their behaviour — they lack 'public familiarity' (Blokland, 2003b: 14). In this way people's stories echoed politicians' concerns with integration: it is not just criminal behaviour that threatens 'cohesion' or 'community' in neighbourhoods and society but also, perhaps particularly, 'abnormal' and 'antisocial' behaviour.

## **Beyond analyses of the 'neoliberal city': urban policies as strategies of exclusion and inclusion**

I have shown how urban policies of de-concentration (and also creating mixed neighbourhoods) are intertwined with ideas about multiculturalism, integration and

13 Female, age 40, married, 3 children, Turkish origin, residence 6 years.

citizenship, and that strategies that in effect exclude minority groups from certain places, are, paradoxically, aimed at including these groups 'into mainstream society'. My argument against an interpretation of these policies as 'urban revanchism' is that this theory assumes that feelings of insecurity stem from *economic* insecurities, particularly among the urban middle class. Adherents of Smith's thesis claim that the middle classes' new economic insecurity made them intolerant towards (cultural) deviancy. This idea fits Garland's analysis of the 'culture of control', which similarly explains how the changing interests and sensibilities of the middle (and working) classes and their reaction to failed welfare and multicultural politics 'gave rise to new group relations . . . often experienced and expressed as highly charged emotions of fear, resentment and hostility' (Garland, 2001: 76). Revanchism could, then, be seen as part of, and a manifestation of, a contemporary 'culture of control', rooted in discourses of urban decline and 'acted out' (*ibid.*: 131ff) through gentrification.

Boutellier (2005: 2), however, rejects the idea that more control results just from increased demands for safety as he observes that 'the desire for safety is countered by . . . an uninhibited sense of freedom'. In the 'safety culture' (a term Boutellier prefers to 'culture of control') our actions and beliefs are guided by the desire to be both free and safe — conditions that cannot be achieved at the same time. It is *because* we have come to enjoy, and demand, individual freedom that we now demand safety, and thus boundaries (see also Bauman, 1998: 116). People demand the reassurance of social order: 'the lack of vision, of values that can serve as guidelines . . . is a widely voiced complaint about our times and our politics' (Boutellier, 2005: 12). The search for 'safety' thus is more than demanding absence of crime and decay: it goes together with a search for national unity and identity (see also de Koster *et al.*, 2008). Understanding 'safety' in this way allows us to recognize insecurities about social order and national unity as additional but independent (i.e. not merely a manifestation of economic motives) drivers of exclusionary policies.

Incorporating these concerns into an analysis of political developments may give insight into the seemingly puzzling phenomenon that the lower socio-economic classes are voting 'against their economic interests' (Achterberg and Houtman, 2006): restrictive policies aimed at ethnic minorities, such as the new Rotterdam measure, exclude them just as well. De Koster and colleagues (2008) explain how not neoliberalism but a 'new political culture' has driven rising incarceration rates, and perhaps their claim also offers insight for interpreting urban policies. In their view, the new political culture evolves around *cultural* insecurities and demands — the higher educated value individual freedom, the poorly educated demand social order — rather than (or in addition to) economic interests (see also Achterberg and Houtman, 2006). These form 'the breeding ground for an authoritarian outcry for social order' (de Koster *et al.*, 2008). Concerns about restoring social order have been taken up particularly by new rightist parties, such as LPF and Liveable Rotterdam, which seek to maintain order through 'crime fighting' (*ibid.*) and restricting immigration.

The 'safety culture' thus constitutes the current struggle for safety (the call for liveability) *and* social order (the call for integration). Following Mitchell (2003: 4) we may recognize these claims as part of a constant struggle for rights which goes back and forth over time. After a period of relativism (multiculturalism), in which policies predicated on tolerance towards 'difference' (not to be mistaken with indifference, see Blokland, 2003a; Scheffer, 2007), many Western societies are now in a period of intolerance towards differences (Melossi, 2000). As the problems of immigration became more visible, societies feel that 'fragmentation has reached "intolerable limits" . . . and [needs] re-establishment of unity, authority and hierarchy' (*ibid.*: 297). In these periods deviancy is viewed as a threat to 'society's moral order' and (crime) policies are expected to bring 'unity by eliminating fragmentation and anarchy' (*ibid.*: 300). With increasing cultural diversity, the continuous struggle for rights came to involve a new kind of rights, that is, the 'right to difference' (Isin, 2002: 264).

Representations of ‘the deviant’ thus change along with how societies change or how their composition changes, as Smith, Garland and others also hint, but the latter claim that criminalization is *essentially* an attempt by dominant classes to maintain power over capital and space. This perspective obscures the fact that strategies such as de-concentration, creating mixed neighbourhoods, integration and *inburgering*, also *produce* difference and, particularly, categorical differences along lines that may not have existed before (Isin, 2002: 3–4). Isin rejects the idea that categories pre-exist struggles over rights — rather, these categories are created as a result of new strategies of inclusion. And these struggles are not just about equal distribution of capital and goods, but also about ‘what it means to be a member of the modern state’ (*ibid.*: 265). Strategies of urban governments, thus, are prompted not solely by economic interests but also by ideas on how cities (and nations) should develop (Mitchell, 2003: 10) or, perhaps particularly, how they should *not* develop.

In other words, ideas and strategies of inclusion (e.g. ideas of integration, cohesion, community) produce exclusion (Young, 1990; Isin, 2002; Schinkel, 2002). Citizenship (e.g. *inburgering*), as a strategy for inclusion as well as continuation of societal unity (Boutellier, 2005; Favell, 2005), aims at ‘sameness’ (Isin, 2002: 264). But these strategies at the same time emphasize differences and thus affirm ‘otherness’ (Young, 1990: 98–9). Categorical differences that are salient in contemporary policies are thus not given but produced by (new) strategies aimed both at boosting the urban economy and ensuring the continuation of national unity and identity. That is not to say that categories and division are always newly invented: through ‘emulation’ (Tilly, 1998: 10) existing categories are copied from one setting to the other. Through this mechanism categorical divisions are often persistent, but this does not mean that they are self-evident. Analyses of struggles over the city, over public places, over places to live, thus should not presume categorical divisions (e.g. class) but rather allow for changing divisions as new groups emerge — leading to new struggles, new stakes and new strategies of inclusion and exclusion.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, theories of urban revanchism in their current form cannot do justice to the differential practices of city governments and are therefore forced to introduce conceptual ‘twists’, theoretical ‘flexibility’ and ‘amendments’ in order to stay close to Smith’s thesis of the ‘neoliberal city’. This follows from a rather narrow perspective on ‘safety’ as economic security, and consequently the assumption that the strategies of urban governments are about attracting capital, while obscuring the fact that concerns for national unity also play a role. This is relevant not only for analysing Dutch urban policies but for understanding the political strategies of other West European countries and the US as well, as they deal with the effects of (new) migration.

Strategies of inclusion may result in exclusion, but that observation in itself should not be mistaken for an understanding of the aim of these policies. Moreover, not all motives can be reduced to economic motives. Other, fundamentally different motives need not exclude economic motives, though: they exist next to each other and sometimes are combined, as creating mixed neighbourhoods aims to disperse problems of crime and nuisance, attract the middle classes for financial benefits and integrate deprived groups ‘into society’. Put differently, commodification of the city need not be the *single* (or principal) drive of harsher policies, but neither is ‘interethnic disidentification’, as Uitermark and Duyvendak (2008: 1487) claim in their description of ‘European revanchism’. Theories of urban politics need to allow for more complexity in analysing contemporary struggles over the city.

**Gwen van Eijk** (g.vaneijk@uva.nl), Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research, University of Amsterdam, Oudezijds Achterburgwal 237, 1012 DL, Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

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## Résumé

*On interprète souvent les politiques urbaines d'exclusion comme l'expression d'un 'revanchisme urbain', autrement dit des stratégies visant à séduire touristes et acteurs de la gentrification, aux dépens de groupes marginaux ou minoritaires. L'article examine l'affirmation selon laquelle les politiques d'exclusion sont motivées par les insécurités économiques et la volonté d'attirer le capital. En considérant le cas extrême de Rotterdam, il s'intéresse aux personnes qui soutiennent les politiques d'exclusion, et à leurs motivations. L'étude de cas montre que les politiques urbaines sont étroitement liées aux idées sur le multiculturalisme et l'intégration. On peut donc penser que les préoccupations d'unité nationale jouent également un rôle, et que la dé-concentration (avec la création de quartiers mixtes) constitue, comme la citoyenneté, une stratégie d'inclusion qui, dans les faits, exclut logiquement des individus. Les insécurités qui naissent de préoccupations d'unité nationale et de demandes d'ordre social devraient être reconnues comme des facteurs supplémentaires des politiques d'exclusion, les secondes pouvant être ramenées à des mobiles économiques. En conclusion, les théories actuelles du revanchisme urbain doivent incorporer une notion plus complexe de la 'sécurité' et de la façon dont les insécurités produisent des stratégies d'exclusion et d'inclusion.*