Dutch title

Gentrificatie gaat naar school: Sociale mix en de strijd tegen onderwijsongelijkheid

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Cedric,
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Abstract

This chapter offers a general introduction to the dissertation. The first section presents the problem statement and underlines the main research aim, namely gaining insight into the bigger picture of mixing initiatives from the prism of gentrification. Next, "gentrification" is introduced as the backdrop against which mixing initiatives at the school level increasingly take place. Following this, mixing initiatives in education are dwelled upon from a series of different lenses. It is against this background that the central research questions of the dissertation are presented. Subsequently, the methodological approach to tackle these questions is briefly discussed. Finally, an overview of the structure of the dissertation is provided and the different chapters are concisely outlined.

Problem statement

A politician of sense will rather confess to a murder than to question the ideal of social mix in education. But how effective is this mixing really? (Eeckhout, 2018)

A lthough driven by a variety of motives, most, if not all, will agree that educational opportunities ought to be distributed equally. To date, however, educational opportunities remain firmly unequal in many countries around the world (OECD, 2017). In Belgium, for instance, results from the PISA-studies reveal that students' educational outcomes are related to both their socio-economic status and migration background, with pupils who are socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or have a migration background significantly performing worse (OECD, 2010; 2016a; 2016b).

In an attempt to respond to these blatant inequalities, scholars have tried to uncover the mechanisms underlying the persistent disparities in academic performance between different groups of pupils. Within this context, the idea has been established that the socio-ethnic composition of the student population matters (Putnam, 2015). This notion is bolstered by half a century of research showing that disadvantaged and minoritised pupils tend to perform worse in schools with a majority of pupils "like them" (Coleman, 1968).[1] Throughout the Western world, schools where socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised pupils make up most of the student population are predominantly found in urban areas (Boterman, 2013; Cucchiara, 2013; Hamnett, Butler, & Ramsden, 2013). In a context in which white middle-class families are increasingly returning to the inner-city, initiatives are arising to integrate these families in such problematized schools. In fact, as the areas surrounding some of these schools have started to gentrify, mixing has become both an increasingly viable and popular strategy (Stillman, 2012). Currently, one can even find blueprints on how to attract gentry families, the idea being that this could lead to wholesale improvement (cf. Edelberg & Kurland, 2009).

These mixing initiatives are strongly welcomed as they are perceived as an important step toward equal educational opportunities. The debate on socio-ethnic mix and whether or not inner-city schools should pursue such makeup as a way to minimize unequal educational opportunities, however, is almost

exclusively centred around one question. As the epigraph illustrates, this question is whether mixed environments will boost the performance of socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised pupils (see also Agirdag, Van Houtte, & Van Avermaet, 2012a; Glatter, 2012; Kuscera, Siegel-Hawley, & Orfield, 2015; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005 for illustrative studies on this topic). Of course the question whether mixed environments are a lever toward equal educational opportunities is a legitimate and important one. Nevertheless, such fixation raises the question as to what is the meaning of mixing initiatives for other issues of (in)equality in education – certainly as "knowledge about the effectiveness of interventions is not, as such, a sufficient basis for decisions about educational action" (Biesta, 2007, p. 9).[2] That the debate on mixing could be enriched by transcending a fixation on questions of effectiveness, is evident when taking a peek over the fence of the school and having a look at the level of the neighbourhood. In point of fact, on the neighbourhood level a similar tendency exists. Also here, policy makers and practitioners are taking steps to mix populations in general, and deconcentrate socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised communities in particular, as a way to combat a variety of social ills (see for instance Arthurson, 2012; Christensen, 2015; Davidson, 2008; Dhalmann & Vilkama, 2009; Glynn, 2012; Münch, 2009; Musterd & Anderson, 2005; Popkin *et al.*, 2004; Rose *et al.*, 2013; Uitermark, Duyvendak, & Kleinhans, 2007; Van Criekingen, 2012; van Kempen & Bolt, 2009). However, in this case, scholars have not only focussed on the question whether the mix is a fix. Informed by a gentrification perspective, attention has also been drawn to questions regarding place-making, displacement, marginalization, class formation, and struggle in mixed environments and mixing initiatives (see for instance Atkinson, 2015; Cheshire, 2009; Davidson, 2008; Davidson & Lees, 2005; Smith, 1996; Wyly & Hammel, 2005). All of this has led to a deeper understanding of mixing on the neighbourhood level – an understanding which also had an impact on the way mixing is evaluated. Indeed, generally speaking, the view of scholars on mixing on the neighbourhood level has been a lot more critical.

In line with this strand of research, the aim here is to gain insight into the bigger picture of mixing initiatives in education in relation to issues of equality. In doing so, we hope to shed a new light on mixing initiatives in education and hence to contribute to the corresponding debate. In order to succeed in this

endeavour, we will stay close to the concept of, and literature on, gentrification. On the one hand, because processes of gentrification are increasingly the backdrop against which mixing initiatives in education take place. On the other hand, gentrification offers a unique prism to analyse such initiatives. Indeed, as is evident from the research examining mixing initiatives on the neighbourhood level, gentrification is not "neutered" as is the case with social mix (Lees, Butler, & Bridge, 2012, p. 1), a term dominantly used by educational scholars, and evokes questions that compel us to contemplate on mixing initiatives in a way that transcends a preoccupation with effectiveness.

Gentrification

In what follows, we will elaborate on the process of gentrification. To begin with, we discuss the emergence of the term, how the concept evolved and how it is currently being defined. Next, three theories explaining gentrification are dwelled upon. In this, special attention is paid to the supporting role of the state in processes of gentrification. Subsequently, the reasons for policy leaders to adopt mix policies, or as many scholars would argue 'gentrification policies', on the neighbourhood level are highlighted. Finally, four lines of critique against these polices developed by scholars are identified. The information provided in this section serves three goals. First, it introduces the context against which mixing initiatives on the school level increasingly take place. Second, it will enable us to draw parallels between mixing initiatives on the neighbourhood level and the school level later on. Third, and partly as a consequence of the former, the section also gives an impression of the different image that can be gained by examining mixing initiatives in education via the prism of gentrification. In other words, the goal here is not so much to incorporate the field of education into the literature on gentrification as to do the exact opposite. That is to bring gentrification into the research examining socio-ethnic mix and mixing initiatives in education.

Characteristics of gentrification

One by one, many of the working class quarters have been invaded by the middle class
– upper and lower. Shabby, modes mews and cottages – two rooms up and two down
– have been taken over, when their leases were expired, and have become elegant,

expensive residences. Larger Victorian houses, downgraded in an earlier or recent period – which were use as lodging houses or were otherwise in multiple occupation – have been upgraded once again. Nowadays, many of these houses are being subdivided into costly flats or 'houselets' (in terms of the new real estate snob jargon). The current social status and value of such dwellings are frequently in inverse relation to their size, and in any case enormously inflated by comparison with previous levels in their neighbourhoods. Once this process of 'gentrification' starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the working class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed. (Glass, 1964, p. xviii-xix)

In her introduction to the book *London: Aspects of Change* in 1964, the German-born British sociologist Ruth Glass coined the term "gentrification" so as to describe the drastic changes in the social structure and housing market she observed in many working-class neighbourhoods of Inner-London. With the term, Glass aimed to draw attention to the emergence of a new 'urban gentry', paralleling the 18th and 19th-century rural gentry as a class in between (Hamnett, 2003; Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008), that started to replace the existing population of cities. At the time of writing, the changes noted by Glass ran directly counter to ubiquitous processes of urban flight, suburbanization and urban decay that had characterized the Western world since two decades. Yet in London, Glass stumbled upon a process that included the rehabilitation of unmaintained housing, a tenure transition from renting to owning, the inflation of property prices, and the displacement of working-class residents (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008).[3]

Since the time of Glass's publication more than half a century ago, the process of gentrification has expanded dramatically. Today, processes of gentrification have become mainstream and have been observed in places all around the world (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2010). Gentrification, however, has not only gone global (Atkinson & Bridge, 2005), but has also evolved and mutated (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). As a result, some of the qualifiers of what is now referred to as classic gentrification have been blurred. In turn, this has called for a new look on the process. Indeed, more than three decades ago Smith and Williams (1986) argued that the process of gentrification was highly dynamic and developing rapidly, thereby making innovative definitions potentially obsolete. In fact, early definitions of the process, like that of Glass, tended to

focus on the rehabilitation of existing low-income dilapidated housing in the inner-city by middle-class households for residential use. Over the years, however, an increasing number of observers have linked gentrification to additional actors, developments, users, uses, and areas. For instance, some scholars have made mention of new-build gentrification in contrast to the rehabilitation of architecturally alluring old buildings. Moreover, often these developments have been introduced by developers rather than middle-class households. Writing on riverside development projects in London, Davidson and Lees (2005) show how new luxury apartment blocks have been built by developers on former brownfield sites. The authors demonstrate that although these developments are new, are built on vacant land and have been initiated by corporate developers – all off which are elements that contrast traditional conceptualisations of gentrification – the consequences have been the same (i.e., the reinvestment of capital, a change in the landscape, the social upgrading by an incoming new middle class, and processes of displacement). In the same way, other scholars have dwelled upon commercial and tourism gentrification as opposed to development of properties for permanent residential use. Interesting here is the work by Cocola-Gant (2015; 2016) in the context of Barcelona who examined the conversion of rental flats into holiday apartments and the commercial upgrading of businesses so as to cater to affluent visitors. Drawing on in-depth interviews and survey material, the author illustrates how these processes result in both direct and indirect displacement pressures for established residents and as such should be seen as a form of gentrification. Finally, some commentators have provided a case for the idea that processes of gentrification unfold in rural, green and remote areas as well as in inner-cities. For instance, Clark, Johnson, Lundholm and Malberg (2007) give an example of an island group around Gothenburg that has been subject to processes of gentrification for more than two decades (see for instance also Mahichi, 2018; Wohlberg, 2005; Young, 2018 on the gentrification of Gulf Islands such as Salt Spring).

In order to deal with the "diversity of gentrification" (Beauregard, 1986, p. 40), some scholars have come up with broader definitions of the process. Particularly influential in this movement has been the work of Clark (2005, p. 258) who has developed an elastic yet targeted definition of gentrification:

Gentrification is a process involving a change in the population of land-users such that the new users are of a higher socio-economic status than the previous users, together with an associated change in the built environment through a reinvestment in fixed capital.

By discarding a number of delusive qualifiers, Clark (2005) has managed to draw out the key characteristics of gentrification. These include (i) the reinvestment of capital, (ii) a change in the built environment, (iii) the social upgrading of land-users, and as a consequence (iv) the displacement of previous land-users. Now that the concept of gentrification has been outlined, it is time to focus attention to the causes of the phenomenon.

Explanatory theories

As was shown in the previous section, the phenomenon of gentrification has become mainstream in many cities throughout the world. Of course, this begs the question as to what has caused and still causes the back-to-the-city movement of which the first manifestations became apparent in the 1960s. Throughout the years, a number of scholars have dealt with this question resulting in different explanations being developed: (i) neoclassical economic explanations, (ii) consumption explanations, and (iii) production explanations. In the following, we discuss these different explanatory theories and highlight the role of the state in processes of gentrification.

Neoclassical economic explanations

Initially, explanations were dominantly based on neoclassical economic theory. As has been argued by Lees, Slater and Wyly (2008, pp. 45-46), these accounts took off from the presumption that:

[t]he form and function of the city (…) could be understood as the result of choices made by innumerable individual decision makers. Consumers rationally choose amongst available options in order to maximizes satisfaction or 'utility,' subject to the constraints of their available resources. Firms compete to serve the needs of these utility-maximizing consumers, and in the case of neighborhoods and housing, the resulting market will yield the spatial trade-offs between space and accessibility that structure different residential patterns.

As neoclassical explanation theories pivoted around the idea of consumer sovereignty, they explained the back-to-the-city movement as a result of a change in consumer preference. More precisely, these theories concurred that wealthier households attached a greater importance to accessibility leading to a new spatial equilibrium. Nevertheless, these accounts were criticized as being rather descriptive (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). In fact, it left many wondering why the middle-class had changed their preference.

At the closing of the 1970s two alternative explanation theories were developed, namely production explanations and consumption explanations. Both of these theories reacted to simplistic neoclassical economic model that saw gentrification as natural and inevitable (i.e., as a process that engendered a new spatial equilibrium in the housing market after a change in consumer preference). Moreover, these theories moved away from an interpretation of gentrification as an isolated phenomenon. Rather these theories tended to link gentrification to a broader set of changes in the economic, social, industrial and/or cultural infrastructure of society. Although both production explanations and consumption explanations have been important in grasping the process of gentrification, they have emphasized different aspects of the process. Initially these explanation theories were therefore placed in juxtaposition to each other. Since the 1990s, however, there is a growing consensus that these theories are complementary rather than contradictory and that one need both to fully understand the process. Making an appeal to Aesop's fable of the blind men and the elephant, Hamnett (1991, p 188) argued that neither of these explanation theories "may have recognized the elephant of gentrification at first, but they each identified a key part of its anatomy". It is this anatomy of gentrification we will turn to now.

Consumption explanations
Consumption explanations started from the premise that an understanding of gentrification required an apprehension of profound processes of change in society itself. Especially influential in the development of this line of explanation theories has been the work of David Ley, who took up a position at the University of British Columbia in the early 1970s. Ley (1986; 1996) argued that the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial society has had

consequences for cities. More precisely, Ley contended that this transition, characterized by a growing dominance of professional, administrative, managerial, and technical jobs, led to the emergence and expansion of a new middle class. This was significant as an increase of higher income groups could lead to pressure on local housing markets (see also Hamnett, 2003). Nevertheless, apart from the fact that post-industrial jobs are concentrated in cities, such observation not yet explains why the new middle class ultimately opted for an inner-city life (Beauregard, 1986). Coupled with other societal changes, however, an explanation does occur.

In fact, some scholars have pointed to other profound changes in society that explain the choice of the new middle class for inner-city neighbourhoods. More specifically, it has been argued that gentrification is in large part a result of the breakdown of the nuclear and patriarchal household since the late 1960s to the advantage of dual-earning families, singles and gay people (cf. Markusen, 1980). According to these scholars this is because, in contrast to suburban neighbourhoods, the inner-city could provide an "environmental solution" to a number of problems these households face (Rose, 1984). Indeed, it is concurred that the inner-city is more convenient for these households as it decreases commuting time and provides a number of nearby support services and social opportunities to meet like-minded people (cf. Karsten, 2010; Markusen, 1980; Rose, 1984).

In addition, it has been proclaimed that the transition to a post-industrial society happened at a time of social and cultural upheaval in which cities became arenas for counter-cultural practices (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). Writing on the reshaping of Canada's urban cores, Ley (1996, p. 5) states:

> The social, spatial, and political reshaping of Canada's major cities was part of a larger national, indeed international, set of events and changing values. (…) Environmentalism, civil rights, the Vietnam War, the student movement, and the counter-culture all offered a sharp critique of post-war society in Western nations, societies.

For Ley (1980; 1981), these processes were the key that made the back-to-the-city movement intelligible. In fact, "it produced an expanding group of

gentrifiers with a disposition towards central city-living" (Slater, 2011, p. 575). Indeed, Ley (1980, p. 243) argued that the members of this new middle class "exhibit a high degree of social if not political liberalism, and have plural life goals, placing a higher premium on self-fulfilment as a major career objective than any other occupational category". In turn, as counter-cultural arenas, inner-city neighbourhoods provided the new middle class with a chance to oppose, to reject and to escape from suburbia characterized by blandness, intolerance, modernist planning, cultural conformity, stifling norms, expectations, and structures (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). This is also noted by Caufield (1989, p. 622) who has argued that the choice for inner-city living was first and foremost an "emancipatory practice" for the middle classes. As has been contended by Butler (1995) in his study on gentrification in Hackney (i.e., a borough of inner-London), gentrifiers have mainly been drawn from the middle class but have a quite unique profile. Not only are most of its members highly educated – something which provides them with an entrance into professional occupations – but also are they likely to be politically positioned on the left (Butler, 1995).

It are these individuals which, through their choice for the inner-city and their participation in daily practices within these locales, have started to constitute a new class that is distinct from other (middle-class) factions (see for instance Karsten, 2010). Indeed, as has been argued by Jager (1986), who draws on the work of Bourdieu, it is through the cultivation of a certain way of life that these individuals have turned social differences into social distinctions. As such, the choice for the inner-city, a specific type of housing, and way of living should not only be interpreted as a matter of expressing individual preference but also as a way to provide oneself with a certain status (see for instance Bridge, 2006). Although having limited value to an explanation of gentrification, it is important to note here that the practices through which this group constitutes and reconstitutes their class position and tries to sustain their needs can come into conflict with the practices of other groups living in the inner-city (e.g., a specific practice of one group can complicate or preclude the practices of another group). As such, gentrifying neighbourhoods can become arenas or battlegrounds between groups who try to acquire status and power.

Production explanations

In the late 1970s, the conventional wisdom on gentrification was disturbed when production explanations started to emerge. Particularly important in this movement was an article published by Neil Smith in 1979 titled "Toward a theory of gentrification: A back to the city movement by capital, not people".[4] As the title suggests, Smith challenged theories that tried to explain gentrification processes by emphasizing (changes in) consumer preference. Although Smith (1979), did not deny consumer preference is significant, he did claim it is of secondary importance. For Smith, gentrification scholars ignored the role of capital in the emergence of the urban renaissance. In contrast, Smith (1979) placed capital flows at the centre of gentrification theory. He argued that capital moves as a see-saw from one place to another and back again and flows in the direction of where the profit is the highest. Moreover, according to Smith (1979; 1986) these flows of capital in general and the possibility of profitability in particular were essential in explaining the restructuring of urban space and thus processes of gentrification. While stressing the importance of capital flows in processes of gentrification, Smith (1979, pp. 540-541) argued that:

> The so-called urban renaissance has been stimulated more by economic than cultural forces. In the decision to rehabilitate an inner city structure, one consumer preference tends to stand out above the others-the preference for profit, or, more accurately, a sound financial investment. Whether or not gentrifiers articulate this preference, it is fundamental, for few would even consider rehabilitation if a financial loss were to be expected. A theory of gentrification must therefore explain why some neighborhoods are profitable to redevelop while others are not. What are the conditions of profitability? Consumer sovereignty explanations took for granted the availability of areas ripe for gentrification when this was precisely what had to be explained.

In his thought-provoking article, Smith (1979) proclaimed that it is crucial to explain why some neighbourhoods are ripe for gentrification. In other words, an answer needed to be found on the question as to why a variety of actors, from project developers to individual families, suddenly tended to invest en

masse in certain urban neighbourhoods. In order to answer this question, Smith (1979) formulated the rent-gap theory.

Smith's theory pivots around the concept of ground rent. By this is meant "the charge that landlords are able to demand (via private property rights) for the right to use land and its appurtenances (the buildings placed on it and the resources embedded within it), usually received as a stream of payments from tenants but also via any asset appreciation captured at resale" (Slater, 2017, p. 87). When a lot of land is being developed it is done in a way so as to reflect its highest and best use so as to maximize profit. As such, initially the capitalized ground rent is equal to the potential ground rent (i.e., the amount that could be capitalized under its highest and best use). Nevertheless, as time goes by, the capitalized ground rent will decrease. This is due to advances in labour productivity (which would allow a similar structure at a lower value than before) and the style obsolescence and physical wear and tear of the appurtenances (Smith, 1979). Moreover, as urban areas undergo a transformation, the highest and best potential use for a lot of land can alter. As a result, a gap will emerge between the capitalized ground rent and the potential ground rent. In this situation (i.e., the dilapidation of the structure combined with a decreasing capitalized ground rent), a landowner is faced with the choice whether or not to maintain his/her property. When the disparity between old and new is also spatially structured (Lees, Slater, Wyly, 2008), it becomes reasonable for a landowner to withhold costly investments, minimize maintenance and milk a property (Smith, 1979; see also Clark, 1988). In fact, choosing otherwise would "necessitate" a higher than average rent for the neighbourhood with little hope of attracting tenants willing to pay such rent.[5] These processes of disinvestment allow the rent gap to widen to a level that is financially interesting for a variety of actors to redevelop the property. In turn, this potentiality for a sound financial investment leads to a germinating gentrification process (Smith, 1979).

The role of politics: state-led gentrification
In order to fully get a grasp on "the elephant of gentrification" (Hamnett, 1991), it is necessary to consider an aspect that until now has not been covered, namely the role of the state. Both consumption and production theories recognized that the state can play an important role in facilitating or impeding

the influx of middle-class households and/or capital necessary to close the rent gap. Indeed, in his study on the gentrification of Society Hill, a Philadelphia neighbourhood, Smith (1996) defined the state as an "essential ingredient" in the gentrification process. Likewise, in his assessment of gentrification processes in Canadian cities, Ley (1996) marked out the state bureaucracies as "key actors" in processes of gentrification. That state bureaucracies can have an influence on gentrification has to do with the fact that they are able to provide (dis)incentives to developers, middle-class residents and businesses (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). A series of studies have buttressed this idea by pointing to state interventions that had an impact on processes of gentrification. Interventions that have proven propitious for gentrification include, inter alia, investments in public infrastructure, the implementation of urban renewal projects, the provision of subsidies and tax concessions for renovation and/or development, the promotion of school choice plans, the realization of environmental clean-up projects, the passing of restrictive and punitive ordinances in relation to homelessness, the movement toward a child-friendly city, the privatization or demolition of social housing complexes, the abandoning of rent control measures, and the rezoning of areas to make way for residential and commercial use (Anguelovski, 2016; Mösgen, Rosol, & Schipper, 2018; Van Den Berg, 2013; Vicario & Martinez Monje, 2005; Wyly & Hammel, 2005).

However, this does not mean that policy actors are intentionally spurring processes of gentrification. In fact, Ley (1996, p. 52) demonstrated how the gentrification of Canadian cities in the 1970s in most cases was an "unintended consequence" of policy initiatives. Nevertheless, it has been argued that in recent decades urban policy makers in many Western countries actively and deliberately pursue gentrification via a variety of initiatives aimed at creating mixed communities (Hackworth & Smith, 2001; Lees, Butler, & Bridge, 2012). Indeed, social mix policies, via gentrification, have been adopted in countries as Australia (Arthurson, 2012), Belgium (Van Criekingen, 2012), Canada (Rose *et al.*, 2013), Denmark (Christensen, 2015), England (Davidson, 2008), Finland (Dhalmann & Vilkama, 2009), France (Rose *et al.*, 2013), Germany (Münch, 2009), the Netherlands (Uitermark, Duyvendak, & Kleinhans, 2007; van Kempen & Bolt, 2009), Scotland (Glynn, 2012), Sweden (Musterd & Anderson, 2005), and the United States (Popkin *et al.*, 2004).

Moreover, it has been argued that state interventions such as these have been crucial in bringing about processes of gentrification (Wacquant, 2008). In what follows, the rationale behind such endeavour will be examined.

The gospel of mixing

That city leaders also tend to promote social mix is certainly related to the belief that social mix via "gentrification is good on balance for the poor and ethnic minorities" (Byrne, 2003, p. 406). Such vision draws heavily on what has come to be known as "the neighbourhood effect thesis," a vision that concurs that one's life chances are affected by the neighbourhood in which one lives. This thesis started taking off in the late 1980s after the publication of a book by William Julius Wilson named "The truly disadvantaged: The inner city, the underclass, and public policy".[6] In this book Wilson argues that the social and economic woes of lower-class residents living in ghetto's are a result of what he calls "concentration effects" (i.e., negative effects caused by social isolation from middle-class constituents). Which brings us to the question: Why would the middle classes have a positive effect on the individual outcomes of lower-class residents? The reasons behind such an inference are various but roughly fall down into three categories (cf. Byrne, 2003; Schoon, 2001, ch. 8).

First, there is the political argument. More precisely, there is the idea among gentrification proponents that members of the middle class are more effective in representing their interests both towards authorities such as the city council and the police and towards private businesses (cf. Byrne, 2003; Henig & Gale, 1987; Kennedy & Leonard, 2001). In turn, it is believed that this interest representation will also benefit lower-class residents. On the one hand, this advocacy of the middle-class relates to the introduction, maintenance, restoration and defence of services, amenities, and historic properties. Consider, for example, a bank that wants to move out the neighbourhood but encounters the resistance of middle-class residents who threaten to move their money out. Or imagine a neglected pavement that finally gets repaired by the city after some calls and letters from middle-class residents. On the other hand, the advocacy of members of the middle class refers to the prevention, suppression and removal of unwanted practices. Envisage, for instance, a decreased rate of crime, an increased responsiveness to illegal dumping, or the

removal of heavy traffic throughout residential areas as a result of middle-class action to influence local policy.

Second, there is the social argument. This argument relates to the conception that the middle classes could both serve as role models for disadvantaged communities as provide these with the necessary social capital. In turn, this would counter anti-social behaviour and enable the upward social mobility of disadvantaged communities. More precisely, it is assumed that middle-class residents hold onto a powerful social network that can be used to help lower-class residents find a job (cf. Byrne, 2003; Wilson, 1987). This is done not only by informing lower-class residents of job vacancies but also by bringing them into contact with possible employers, both of which are possible as middle-class residents have an array of social connections that can be tapped into. In addition, it is reasoned that the work ethic and full-time employment of members of the middle class will lead to specific norms and behaviour patterns in the neighbourhood that are conducive to positive individual outcomes (cf. Byrne, 2003; Vigdor, 2002; Wilson, 1987). These includes, inter alia, diligence, ambition, self-reliance, punctuality and perseverance.

Third, there is the economic argument. This argument is based on the notion that the middle classes are a financially stable group. Because of this it is also believed that members of the middle class strengthen the local economy. Whereas it is concurred that lower-class residents reliant on benefits do not have the financial means to maintain local business, middle-class residents are believed not only to be able to maintain these businesses but also facilitate the establishment of new ones, this either by their 'distinct' taste and spending power (cf. Kennedy & Leonard, 2001) or by their creative capital which allows innovative business to quickly attract the necessary talent to flourish (Florida, 2005). In turn, there is the idea that this will sustain create job opportunities for lower-class households in the neighbourhood (cf. Byrne, 2003; Vigdor, 2002). Closely linked to this notion, there is also the thought that because of their financial stability, middle classes will improve a city's tax base (cf. Kennedy & Leonard, 2001; Vigdor, 2002). In turn, this allows policy makers to mitigate the situation of disadvantaged communities.

That these arguments are drawn on by gentrification proponents, for instance, is apparent from an article titled "Tree cheers for gentrification" by Andres Duany (2001, p. 36):

> Gentrification rebalances a concentration of poverty by providing the tax base, rub-off work ethic, and political effectiveness of a middle class, and in the process improves the quality of life for all or a community's residents. It is the rising tide that lifts all boats.

Mixing policies critically examined

Although urban policy makers and planners draw heavily upon the above rationale to justify the necessity of mixed communities,[7] social mix strategies targeted at the neighbourhood level have become subject to fierce criticism in academic research. In fact, social mix initiatives via gentrification have come under scrutiny from at least four angles.

First of all, some scholars have started to question the motives behind social mix strategies, thereby insinuating that such strategies are often part of a hidden agenda. On the one hand, it has been concurred that the means to social mix, namely gentrification, is rather an end in itself and in fact should be conceived as the ultimate goal. For instance, in their book "Mixed Communities: Gentrification by stealth?", Lees, Butler, and Bridge (2012, p. 7) argue that rather than gentrification being the means for social mix, in reality things often run the other way around, namely social mix strategies being a mere tool "on the way to complete gentrification". To buttress this statement, the authors indicate that social mix strategies have seldom been implemented in neighbourhoods characterized by a concentration of wealth. [8] In this sense, the concept of social mix is perceived to be a cover or disguise used by policy makers to deflect any criticism and or resistance on the plans they want to sell (Lees, 2008; Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008; Slater, 2006). Other scholars, on the other hand, have observed additional motives for promoting mixed communities. In a Dutch context, for instance, Uitermark, Duyvendak, and Kleinhans (2007) and van Eijk (2010) assert that social mix strategies are also employed as a way to retain social order in what are otherwise deemed as lawless and riotous neighbourhoods.

Turning to a second angle of criticism, a number of scholars have questioned the assumption that undergirds the neighbourhood effect thesis, namely the idea that one's life chances are affected by the neighbourhood in which one lives. For Slater (2013, p. 367), such an assumption "misses the key structural question of why people live where they do in cities".[9] According to Slater (2013, p. 369), under a capitalist regime, it makes more sense to invert the neighbourhood effect thesis to "your life chances affect where you live". A decade before, Musterd (2002, p. 140) argued something similar when stating that:

> while social processes may become manifest *in* a certain residential stock *in* a neighbourhood, as rising levels of social segregation or as local spatial concentrations of poverty, that does not necessarily imply that they are also caused *by* or being problems *of* the housing stock or *of* the neighbourhood composition.

Also Cheshire (2009; 2012) takes issue with the causal direction behind neighbourhood effects research. After a review of the literature, the author concludes that mixing initiatives mainly treat the symptoms of inequality not the underlying cause as the evidence is overwhelming that poor people live in deprived neighbourhoods exactly because they are poor. Although Cheshire (2009) does not deny the existence of neighbourhood effects to a certain degree, the author indicates that the benefits of living in mixed communities must outweigh the possible costs so as to make mixing policies a success for lower-class residents. This brings us to the other points of criticism.

In fact, a third angle of criticism focusses on the effectiveness of social mix policies. More precisely, a group of scholars have claimed that the benefits of social mix, if existing, must be small. For instance, after reviewing studies on US poverty mixing initiatives, Manley, van Ham, and Doherty (2012) conclude that the evidence for such initiatives is at best inconclusive (see also Cheshire, 2009, 2012; Sautkina, Bond, & Kearns, 2012; Slater, 2013 for similar results in other contexts). Indeed, many studies focussing on one or more of the proclaimed benefits of mixed communities have come to disillusioning results. In relation to the economic argument, a number of scholars have questioned the assumption that gentrifiers will strengthen the local economy. For instance,

a study of Atkinson and Kintrea (2000) which zoomed in on the practices of owner-occupiers of estates in three Scottish cities, showed that, unlike tenants, owner-occupiers dominantly consume outside the home neighbourhood. Likewise, Davidson (2008) argues that gentrifiers often do not shop at local stores but instead take their business elsewhere, something that can ultimately lead to shop closures. With regard to the social argument, some scholars, have shown that mixed communities do not necessarily lead to mixed interactions. Examining social relations in three London neighbourhoods undergoing new-build gentrification, Davidson (2010) concludes that there was little evidence of substantial interaction between gentrifying and longtime residents (see also Butler and Robson, 2003 in the same context). Also Bokland and van Eijk (2010), who focussed on middle-class people who came to live in a mixed inner-city neighbourhood in Rotterdam because of the diversity of it, obtained similar results. The authors found how these newcomers, while being attracted by diversity, tended to in networks divided by class, ethnicity and education level. In relation to the political argument, some scholars have demonstrated that the interests of middle-class newcomers are not always in line with those of longtime residents. For instance, Shaw and Hagemans (2015) show how middle-class newcomers call for more police presence led to the targeting and harassment of the neighbourhood's most vulnerable residents (see also Smith, 1996 and Wyly & Hammel, 2005 on the "revanchist city"). In this context, van Kempen and Bolt (2009, p. 471) argue that there exists a "wide gap between the high policy expectations about social mix and the scientific evidence that does not support mixing policies at all".[10] Indeed, as argued by Schuermans, Meeus, and De Decker (2014, p. 491), the evidence shows that white middle classes living in urban areas "do not necessarily take up the roles they are expected to take up by advocates of social mix policies". Taken together, this brings Lees (2008) to define social-mix discourse as a "gospel" (p. 2450). Also Cheshire (2009) makes an appeal to a similar terminology when defining state-led social mix initiatives as "faith-based policy".

Turning to a last angle of criticism, some scholars have demonstrated that mixed communities also entail costs. More precisely, it has been argued that gentrification can give rise to processes of displacement. A bulk of studies have showed how an influx of middle-class residents can lead to an inflation of housing costs, thereby increasingly pricing out lower-class residents of inner-

city neighbourhoods (see for instance Davidson & Lees, 2005; Smith, 1996). In addition, several scholars have demonstrated that gentrification can also engender displacement pressures beyond physical dislocation. This is in fact what has been demonstrated by Shaw and Hagemans (2015) in their research on two gentrifying neighbourhoods in Melbourne. Drawing on interviews with 22 low-income residents, the authors, inter alia, show that the closure of frequented shops and the opening of shops catering to young and wealthy constituents caused low-income residents to feel less attached to, and out-of-place in, their neighbourhood. Also focusing on Melbourne and in addition on Sydney, Atkinson (2015), who makes use of a sample of 29 self-selected displaced citizens, states that many feelings of displacement were located at a time prior to the actual physical dislocation, something which as the author notes could be explained by the new faces, the changing social histories, and the physical remodelling of the streetscape and its facilities following from gentrification. Finally, some scholars have argued that concentration neighbourhoods hold specific benefits for its residents that are lost when these mix (see e.g., Davidson, 2008). For instance, Cheshire (2009, pp. 358-359) argues that concentration neighbourhoods not only can facilitate people in finding jobs as these allow for interactions between people similar to each other but also hold consumption, communication and cultural benefits:

> Living in a neighborhood with a local wholefood supermarket, Montessori school, gastropub, or microbrewery commands a premium: neighborhoods with pawn-brokers, a local Aldi or discount store, and a takeaway are cheaper. If you are a recent immigrant and want to be able to continue to speak your original language, engage in your native culture or religion, and buy food or other items you have developed a taste for, then there are great advantages in living in neighborhoods with concentrations of people of similar origin.

In sum, within the academic world, social mix policies on the neighbourhood level have been called into question both on moral and empirical grounds. Indeed, as became clear, scholars not only have interrogated the underlying motives of social mix policies, but have also challenged such policies for dominantly treating the symptoms of poverty, for overestimating the benefits of mixed communities, and for not taking into account the costs that come with mixing neighbourhoods. Notwithstanding these critical sounds, social mix

initiatives remain to play a central role in the agenda of many urban policy makers throughout the western world.

Gentrification as a prism

The foregoing discussion makes clear that the concept of gentrification evokes certain questions about the people who are subjected to processes of mixing. In fact, there are at least three issues that come into the light via the prism of gentrification.

First, in contrast to the concept of social mix, gentrification does not start from the assumption that individuals, when being mixed, acquire an equal position within a certain environment (e.g., the neighbourhood or the school). Rather the concept points to the fact that inequality also has a spatial dimension (and thus not only refers to let us say differences in educational attainment, financial assets and/or the number and sort of contacts). More specifically, it is suggested that differences in individuals' capital stock may, through their deployment, result in status and power inequalities between individuals within a certain space. In turn, it is shown that this may also affect who has a say within this particular space. As such, gentrification draws our attention to the position and voice of a variety of actors in mixed environments in general and how these could play out in an unequal way in particular.[11]

Second, as gentrification expresses key aspects of class and class formation, the concept suggests that the interests of different individuals do not necessarily mesh and can in fact come into conflict. As has been argued by Atkinson (2006, p. 826) "[g]entrification represents a tendency to appropriate neighbourhood spaces in order to build common identities to sustain the social needs of new residents". In turn, this can give rise to a situation in which the the needs of a certain group are either not taken into account or are overshadowed. As a consequence, gentrification compels us to examine the needs of the most vulnerable in general and how these may be put aside or rendered as illegitimate within mixing initiatives and mixed environments.

Third, the concept of gentrification is predicated on the notion that a socio-ethnic mix is not necessarily the end point of the process in which socioeconomically advantaged groups flock to the inner-city. More precisely,

the concept departs from the idea that socio-ethnic mix, rather than being something stable, could very well be a transitory stage in a process that leads to a complete demographic turnover. Indeed, gentrification suggests that socioeconomically disadvantaged groups may be physically displaced as the process of mixing goes forward. As a result, gentrification naturally directs our attention to issues of access in processes of mixing.

Apart from questions about the people who are subjected to processes of mixing, gentrification as a prism also draws attention to the idea of interactivity. More precisely, gentrification theory shows that what attracts actors to a certain environment – for instance a counter-culture (see consumption explanations) or a sound financial investment opportunity (see production explanations) – is created by the actions of other actors both inside as outside this. Consequently, gentrification as a prism emphasizes the relevance of taking into account a diverse range of actors, actions, and areas in order to fully understand and capture processes of mixing.

In sum, gentrification evokes a number of important questions that could help to contribute to and challenge the popular understanding of mixing on the school level as well as on the neighbourhood level.

Mixing and the struggle against unequal educational opportunities

In the previous section, we have taken a peek over the fence of the school and have dwelled upon processes of gentrification and mixing initiatives on the neighbourhood level. Now it is time to (re)turn attention to the main subject of this dissertation: mixing on the school level. Before all else, three examples will be provided to illustrate how in a context of gentrification, initiatives are springing up to bring white middle-class families into inner-city schools. Next, we elaborate on the reception of mixing initiatives by educational scholars and the rationale behind this reception. This is followed by a discussion of the "mixability" of inner-city schools. The section concludes with an overview of a strand of research that has recently started to develop and that analyses mixing initiatives via the prism of gentrification.

Mixing in times of urban renaissance

> Gentrification is changing the demographic makeup of neighborhoods across America. This reinvestment of capital in underprivileged, urban communities has the effect of putting the affluent and the poor on the same streets, and has the potential to do the same in schools. Racial segregation and concentrated poverty rarely breed an optimal environment for learning, and the arrival of the children of the gentry in urban schools offers the potential to improve them. (Stillman, 2012, p. 1)

Within urban areas throughout the Western world, one can find a great number of schools where socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised pupils make up most of the student population (Boterman, 2013; Cucchiara, 2013; Hamnett, Butler, & Ramsden, 2013). Indeed, as processes of residential segregation are often highly reflected on the school level (Karsten *et al.*, 2006; McPherson, 2001; Nouwen & Mahieu, 2012; Rivkin, 1994; Saporito & Sohoni, 2006), the socio-ethnic makeup of many schools located in urban areas has become relatively more disadvantaged and minoritised as a result of decades of urban flight and migration. Coupled with the observed phenomenon of the tipping point (i.e., an event where white middle-class families *en masse* avoid or flee from a school where the percentage of socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised families has crossed a certain threshold), this has led to inner-city schools with a concentration of socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised pupils (cf. Hamnett, Ramsden, & Butler, 2007). Yet, as is suggested by Stillman in a US context, no longer does this has to stay like this. Mixing these schools is becoming increasingly viable as middle-class families without a migration background are again taking up residence in inner-city neighbourhoods after decades of absence. Against the backdrop of gentrification, initiatives that try to mix schools characterized by a concentration of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised pupils are arising (see Cucchiara, 2013; Diem, Holme, Edwards, Haynes, & Epstein, 2019; Edelberg & Kurland, 2009 for initiatives in the US). This is the case in Western Europe as well as in Northern America. To illustrate this, three examples will be provided.

Since 2006, Flanders (Belgium) is characterized by a mixing initiative, named *school in zicht* (school in sight). This initiative, launched by a social entrepreneur and publicly subsidized, tries to mix urban primary schools characterized by a concentration of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised pupils by organising school visits for middle-class parents in group. By bringing participating parents into contact, not only with neighbourhood schools, but also with each other, the initiative aims to encourage parents to select a school where socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised pupils make up most of the student population. In turn, it is hoped to desegregate a segregated school system of which is believed that it deprives socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils of learning opportunities.

> School in zicht saw the light in 2006. Antwerpen-Noord and Oud-Borgerhout [i.e., two neighbourhoods of Antwerp, Belgium] comprised 27 schools, 25 of which were concentration schools with 90 to 100 per cent disadvantaged and/or immigrant pupils. Nevertheless, at that time, both neighbourhoods were already attracting socioeconomically advantaged families back for a number of years. They just did not find their way to the schools in the neighbourhood. (School in zicht, n.d.)

> Socioeconomically disadvantaged children are in classes with other socioeconomically disadvantaged children. Because of this homogenous composition, concentration schools pose a threat to the learning context and learning opportunities of their children. Concentration schools help to maintain disadvantage. This harmful long-term societal impact is underestimated. School in zicht intervenes in this. (Albertijn & Smeyers, 2009, p. 5)

School in zicht or similar initiatives currently run in eight Flemish cities. However, also individual schools are swinging into action. For instance, in 2018, the principal of one of the "concentration schools" located in Oud-Borgerhout launched a remarkable call on the national radio ("Nog altijd geen 'Vlaamse kinderen'", 2018). The principal asked the many white middle-class parents that have come to live in the neighbourhood to send their children to her school instead of cycling past it on their way to some renowned school miles away – a phenomenon which she observed on a daily basis. Also this year

the principal has publicly invited white middle-class parents to come and have a look at her school via a newspaper article. As a sort of teaser, the principal revealed that her school employs certain progressive practices and that parents will not just see student desks that are organized in rows and directed to the blackboard (Cools, 2019). An even more remarkable initiative in the same vein was taken a few years back in the Netherlands by two Amsterdam primary schools with a student population characterized by a concentration of pupils with a migrant background. The two schools sent out their pupils in the neighbourhood dressed in T-shirts bearing the inscription "Is this white enough for you?" (Van Gelder, 2015). To promote the respective schools, they also handed out flyers saying "To cut right to the chase: we are searching white pupils" (Van Gelder, 2015).[12] Although the initiative failed in its aims, the schools still aim to mix their student bodies. In fact, recently, one of the principals stated wanting to respond more to the needs of highly educated, working, white families ("Campagne voor meer witte kinderen", 2017).

Inequality of educational opportunity and student composition
In contrast to their counterparts who examine mixing policies on the neighbourhood level, many scholars focussed on the school level tend to celebrate mixing initiatives. This has to do with the fact that many educational scholars believe a mixed student population could have a favourable influence on equality of educational opportunity. The idea that mixing inner-city schools can enhance the performance of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised pupils is based on a strand of research that started to develop since the end of the 1950s and that focusses on compositional effects. Particularly important in this development has been the report *Equality of Educational Opportunity* led by James Samuel Coleman in 1966, which was designed to assess the sources of unequal educational opportunities in the US. Drawing, inter alia, on data of more than 600,000 pupils, Coleman and his colleagues made a compelling case for school integration. More specifically, the authors showed that the performance of single pupils was related not only to their own family background but also to the ones of their classmates. As explained by Coleman (1968, p. 24):

> [C]hildren's achievement is very much related to the social composition of their classroom. The survey showed that Negro students, for example,

performed at a higher level according to standardized tests, even though their school grades were lower, when they were with children who were from higher socio-economic levels, most often white students, than when they were in schools with children of lower socio-economic levels. (Coleman, 1968, p. 24)

The notion that student composition has a strong relationship with the achievement of individual pupils has since been supported by other research. More precisely, a number of studies have proved that socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised pupils tend to perform worse in schools characterized by a majority of socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils (Agirdag, Van Houtte, & Van Avermaet, 2012a; Ledoux, Driessen, Vergeer, van der Veen, & Doesborg, 2003; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005) and/or minoritised pupils (Kucsera, Siegel-Hawley, & Orfield, 2015; Ledoux *et al.*, 2003; Logan, Minca & Adar, 2012; Stiefel, Schwartz, & Chellman, 2007).[13] Moreover, this relationship has been observed both in the US (Kucsera, Siegel-Hawley, & Orfield, 2015; Logan, Minca, & Adar, 2012; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005; Stiefel, Schwartz, & Chellman, 2007) and in European countries (Agirdag, Van Houtte, & Van Avermaet, 2012a; Ledoux *et al.*, 2003).

Possible explanations for the relationship between inequality of educational opportunity and student composition
The fact that concentrations of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised pupils tend to impair individual educational performance, automatically raises the question as to why this is the case. Hitherto, scholars have not come up with a comprehensive model of how student composition affects educational outcomes (Reardon & Owens, 2014). According to Rumberger and Palardy (2005), there are at least three possible answers. First, it could be that the effects of student composition can be traced back to (alterable) characteristics of schools, such as to certain resources, structures, and/or practices. Such reasoning is credible when taking into account a number of facts. For instance, it is known that in the US, where most of the studies have taken place, schools are funded by local governments from the revenues generated by property taxes. As a result, schools in high-income areas are likely to receive more funding compared to schools in low-income areas. Coupled with the fact that school segregation is largely attributable to existing patterns

of residential segregation (Frankenberg, 2013; Rivkin, 1994), this means that children of lower socio-economic levels predominantly will end up in underfunded schools. Even in countries where such system of government funding does not exist, a similar outcome can be expected. In fact, it has been suggested that schools try to thrive in the education market by influencing their student intake (Ball, 2003; Gewirtz *et al.*, 1995). In particular, schools tend to strive for pupils who will enhance their reputations and who are believed to require little investment. When this process of "schools' choice" (Jennings, 2010) is coupled with a process of school choice, it can be expected that socioeconomically advantaged students from the majority are sorted to the schools with the best resources as in both arenas unequal power relations prevail (Nouwen & Vandenbroucke, 2012; Poesen-Vandeputte & Nicaise, 2015).

Second, the effects of student composition could again be traced back to specific characteristics of schools, but with these characteristics being triggered by the social makeup of the student population served. For instance, it has long been known that teacher expectations significantly influence student outcomes (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). It might be that teachers who are working in schools characterized by a majority of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised pupils not only hold lower expectations compared to teachers working elsewhere, but also that these expectations are triggered by the social makeup of the families they are serving (see Van Houtte, 2003 for an overview of studies examining this aspect). Moreover, a similar train of thought could be developed for teachers' perceptions of students' teachability, teachers' exposed level of trust in their students, and the prevailing teacher culture and school-level futility culture (cf. Agirdag, Van Houtte, & Van Avermaet, 2012b; Dewulf, 2019; Van Houtte, 2003; Van Houtte, 2010; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2010).

Third, and this is the most straightforward reasoning, it could be that the effects of school composition cannot be explained by the schools' characteristics. In this case, school composition itself would determine the academic performance of pupils. For instance, it has been argued that the things that pupils bring with them from their homes to the school, such as certain expectations, dispositions and competences, has an impact on the

academic performance of their fellow pupils. Indeed, it might be that pupils transmit the educational norms, values, and skills they bring from their homes onto each other (Putnam, 2015).

Taken together, it is not said that a concentration of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised pupils in and of itself is problematic for equality of educational opportunity. In fact, working toward mixed communities may not be needed or could even prove quite ineffective. Yet, it could also be that mixing policies prove a silver bullet against unequal educational opportunities. Whatever it may be, the call for mixed schooling is strong, with many scholars and commentators embracing the idea as an important step toward equal educational opportunities. In the next section, the case for school integration will be discussed.

Mixed schools as a solution

> *We can state that socio-economic school segregation is a very important source of educational inequality in cognitive school outcomes. Desegregation strategies in view of a better socio-economic school mix are therefore of crucial importance to combat educational inequality.* (Franck & Nicaise, 2018, p. 52)

Throughout the years, a number of scholars and commentators have argued for mixed schools as a way to close the achievement gap (Franck & Nicaise, 2018; Frankenberg, 2013; Glatter, 2012; Kucsera, Siegel-Hawley, & Orfield, 2015; Ledoux *et al.*, 2003; Orfield & Frankenberg, 2014; Ryan, 1999). While discussion exists over (i) which strategies contribute to integration (Logan, Oakley, & Stowell, 2008; Rossell & Amor, 1996; Saporito & Sohoni, 2006), (ii) whether integration should trump freedom of school choice (Karsten *et al.*, 2006; Scott & Quinn, 2014), and (iii) whether ethnicity also has an impact on inequality (Franck & Nicaise, 2018; Kahlenberg, 2003), the idea that urban schools with a concentration of either socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised pupils should be mixed is rarely questioned and receives broad support (Horsford, 2010; see Merry, 2013 for a notable exception).

Most known in such defence, have been the efforts of Richard Kahlenberg. In his manifesto *All together now*, Kahlenberg (2003) fervently builds the case for

school integration by bringing together an extensive amount of empirical data that point toward the importance of mixed environments. In his plea, the author makes his point on the basis of the three actors involved in schools, namely the students, the parents, and the teachers. In relation to the students, Kahlenberg (2003) argues that students are influenced by one another in two ways. First, drawing on studies on peer influence, the author reminds the reader that students are not only affected by their teachers but also by their fellow classmates. In relation to this matter, Kahlenberg indicates that the influence of middle-class students is more beneficiary as compared to the influence of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. This is because socioeconomically disadvantaged students, so the thinking goes, achieve worse and are less motivated to learn. In turn, this would deprive students both from valuable opportunities to learn and from the motivation to learn through the installation of an anti-achievement culture. Second, the author argues that teachers often struggle to educate properly when being in front of a class with a majority of socioeconomically disadvantaged students. It is reasoned that, on average, socioeconomically disadvantaged students present more disorderly conduct, require more attention as they often are slow learners or speak a language at home that is different from the official school language,[14] move more often, and miss class more often. In turn, this would divert the teacher's attention from educating other students and corrupt the learning environment for all students.

As regards the parents, Kahlenberg departs from the notion that parents can exert an influence over schools. Yet, according to the author, this influence is unequal across different groups of parents, with middle-class parents being better at promoting effective schools. Such thought is assumed to be true for two reasons. First, the author argues that middle-class parents volunteer more in schools and as such help to raise the average achievement level of all children. Second, the author also states that middle-class parents are more likely to safeguard the school quality. More precisely, it is argued that these parents are more likely to insist on high standards and high-quality teachers and to ensure that available resources are properly used. Moreover, and with regard to the latter, it is asserted that middle-class parents not only have a higher volume of economic, social, and cultural capital but are also more likely

to make use of this stock of capital to ensure that the school has sufficient resources to educate their children.

The third reason Kahlenberg is assuming that the presence of middle-class families in schools can minimize unequal educational opportunities has to do with the teachers. More precisely, the author identifies two elements with regard to teachers that are different between schools with a majority of middle-class families and schools with a majority of socio-economic disadvantaged families. First, the author shows that teachers in schools with a majority of middle-class families are, on average, more likely to be licensed, experienced, hold a master's degree, and score well on teacher exams. In addition, teachers in such schools are less likely to teach out of field and to quit. It is suggested that this is due to the fact that the best teachers are drawn to schools with a majority of middle-class families. Second, the author illustrates that teachers in schools with a majority of middle-class families hold higher expectations toward their students whom they offer a more challenging curriculum. In turn, this allows students to flourish.

The creation of mixable schools

As the three examples in the beginning of this section already made clear, the fact that many inner-city neighbourhoods are gentrifying does not mean that the schools located within these locales will mix. In fact, it has been argued that white middle-class families living in urban areas generally not consider their neighbourhood school (Boterman, 2013; DeSena, 2009; Stillman, 2012). Indeed, a bulk of studies demonstrate how white middle-class parents tend to avoid certain inner-city schools by deploying different strategies depending on the context.[15] These include, inter alia, moving to more suburban areas (Boterman, 2013; Butler & Robson, 2003), taking refuge in the private sector (Butler & Robson, 2003; Clotfelter, 2004), applying for magnet schools (Saporito, 2003), testing children for talented and gifted programmes (DeSena, 2009), or enrolling in schools outside the neighbourhood, this whether or not by renting property in an area close to a desired school for a short period of time (Boterman, 2013; Butler, Hamnett & Ramsden, 2013; DeSena, 2009; Reay, 2004). In sum, white middle-class parents who populate inner-cities may very well not be inclined to populate inner-city schools.

Consequently, a school's location in a gentrifying area only means that the school *can be(come)* mixable, not that it automatically *is* mixable. Some scholars have, therefore, identified measures or proposed a "blueprint for a neighbourhood school renaissance" (Edelberg & Kurland, 2009). In order to become mixable, the reasoning goes, it is first and foremost necessary for school boards to cater to the expectations, needs, norms, and wishes of white middle-class families, this whether or not proactively (Edelberg & Kurland, 2009; Stillman, 2012; Zanoni & Mampaey, 2013). For instance, in describing the successful gentrification of a Chicago-based school, Edelberg and Kurland (2009, p. 25) discuss how the principal's idea of asking potential gentrifying parents to draw up a "wish list" was an essential step in convincing them to enrol their children at the school. Stillman (2012), who examined processes of school integration in three New York neighbourhoods, comes to a similar conclusion. The schools that managed to successfully integrate had principals who were viewed as "willing to listen" by white middle-class parents (Stillman, 2012, p. 82). Moreover, as became clear, a great deal of "listening" consisted of tailoring the school to these parents (i.e., fulfil their wish list).

This of course begs the question as to what exactly are the wishes of urban white middle-class parents. Or to put it even more precise: what is it that is generally leading white middle-class families away from inner-city schools? According to Stillman (2012), there are two major areas where the preferences of white middle-class families do not mesh with the reality of most publicly-financed inner-city schools, being the student composition and the employed pedagogy.[16] With regard to the student population, a bulk of studies have shown that most white middle-class families tend to favour schools populated by a majority of families like them (Ball, 2003; Boterman, 2013; Butler & Robson, 2003; Gewirtz *et al*., 1995; Hamnett, Butler, & Ramsden, 2013; Karsten *et al*., 2003; Reay, 2004; Roberts & Lakes, 2016). However, many publicly-financed inner-city schools are characterized by a majority of low-income pupils with a migrant background (Butler & Robson, 2003; Cucchiara, 2013; Stillman, 2012). A similar observation can be made with regard to issues of pedagogy. More specifically, a number of scholars have argued that white middle-class families living in urban areas often tend to have a preference for schools that employ progressive pedagogies (DeSena, 2009; Stillman, 2012). Yet, most publicly-financed inner-city schools employ a traditional pedagogy

(DeSena, 2009; Stillman, 2012). These two themes also come vividly to the fore in the research of Bridget Byrne (2006, p. 124) who examined the school choice process of white middle-class mothers living in two areas south London, under which also Clapham:

> [T]he interviewees emphasised their desire to give their children the freedom to develop their imaginations and creativity. Steiner schools were mentioned favourably as an alternative route to state schooling, and there was an anxiety about too much emphasis on reading and writing at an early age. But the key concern that emerged from the interviews with the middle-class women in Clapham was that of the 'right mix'.

As such, it should come as no surprise, that the key for inner-city schools to become mixable lies in taking steps with regard to issues of student makeup and pedagogy. This is actually what is illustrated by Stillman in the context of school integration in New York. Stillman (2012) demonstrates that publicly-financed inner-city schools that managed to mix, all had adopted some sort of enclave program (i.e., a program that allowed the children of white middle-class parents to be sorted into the same classroom). Moreover, these schools had also somehow accommodated the wishes of white middle-class families for certain progressive practices.

School gentrification

As should have become clear by now, most educational scholars tend to stand positive toward the mixing of inner-city schools, this from the point of view that mixed schools could enhance the performance of socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised pupils. However, not all scholars tout these initiatives. In recent years, a new strand of research has started to emerge that tries to capture the bigger picture around the influx of white middle-class families in inner-city schools from the prism of gentrification. Similar to their colleagues who examine the influx of white middle-class families on the neighbourhood level from such a perspective, these scholars have brought some concerns to the fore which have led to a more critical perspective on mixing. In fact, these scholars not only have examined whether the influx of white middle-class families can help to close the achievement gap, but also have pondered the question of what this influx means for socioeconomically disadvantaged and

minoritised families in relation to issues of equality. Indeed, attention has been drawn to the meaning of mixing for socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised families with regard to access, position, voice, and needs. Consequently, this strand of research has the potential to contribute to and challenge the popular understanding of mixing within the sociology of education and educational sciences.

A first noteworthy endeavour in this area is a study by Cucchiara and Horvat (2009) who examined parental involvement of gentrifiers in two urban public elementary schools located in the downtown area of a north-eastern US city. Their results indicate that although gentry parents in both schools were heavily involved, the consequences of such involvement differed greatly. For instance, while in one school parental efforts were focussed on securing resources or advantages for the collective, in another the benefits of parental involvement often did not reach the school as a whole as gentry parents focussed their efforts on their own children and the class in which these were enrolled (cf. Crozier, Reay, & James, 2011). Moreover, whereas gentry parents in one school respected and valued diversity, many of the efforts of gentry parents in the other school were concentrated on the attraction of middle-class families like them (cf. Freidus, 2016). Consequently, Cucchiara and Horvat (2009, p. 998) question "the sometimes simplistic discourse around middle-class parental involvement by showing it may not create widespread improvement".

In the same vein, Siegel-Hawley, Thachik, and Bridges (2017) examined the reinvestment of gentry parents in an elementary school in a gentrifying neighbourhood of a midsized southern US city. Their analyses show that while gentry parents actively tried to academically improve the school in consultation with district and school leaders, members of this group also requested special treatment. For instance, the authors point to gentry parents asking school leaders to assign their children to teachers that are identified as acceptable, something leading to tensions between groups of parents, teachers, and school leadership.

A third criticism is put forward by Posey-Maddox (2014) who argues against an overly optimistic view of mixing inner-city schools by pointing out significant costs that are attached to such strategies. Drawing on data of the

integration of white middle-class families in an elementary school in a large urban district in California, the author, inter alia, shows how the influx of white middle-class families engenders the professionalization of the Parent-Teacher Organization and hence also the expansion of fund-raising efforts and revenue for the school, while at the very same time also giving rise to processes of exclusion and marginalization of disadvantaged families. More precisely, Posey-Maddox (2014) shows that parents who seek and provide funds also often wield greater decision-making power with exacerbated status positions and marginalization of those who cannot provide as a net result.

Finally, a recent study published by Diem *et al.* (2019) shows that initiatives that seek to establish a diverse student population can be detrimental to socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils. The authors, inter alia, draw attention to a mixing initiative in Dallas (Texas), which allowed schools to close, rebrand, and subsequently reopen as "transformation schools" so as to entice gentrifying families. Importantly, in these schools of transformation admission is by lottery, with half of the seats set aside for advantaged pupils. The authors demonstrate that this desire to attract gentrifying families caused some children from the local community to lose access to their former neighbourhood school. In sum, these studies, which examine mixing initiatives and middle-class reinvestment in inner-city schools from the prism of gentrification, tend to point to important issues of equity in education. Up till now, however, these issues have rarely been included into the debate on mixing.

Research questions

A social mix of disadvantaged and advantaged pupils at schools remains the best way to give each child equal opportunities. (Vermeersch, 2019)

In the previous sections, it was shown that many urban schools are characterized by a concentration of socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised pupils. Moreover, it was established that these schools are often looked upon as "pathological" (Kahlenberg, 2003, p. 37). We demonstrated that, in a context where many urban areas throughout the Western world have started to gentrify, initiatives are springing up to integrate white middle-class families in these problematized schools. Furthermore, it became clear that such

initiatives are celebrated within as well as outside the academic community. We pointed out that this appraisal is based on a bulk of research demonstrating a relationship between school composition and educational opportunities and that exactly this line of thinking dominates the debate on mixing initiatives in education.

Furthermore, it was revealed that such a stance stands in sharp contrast with the position of scholars who examine the (coordinated) influx of white middle-class households on the neighbourhood level via the prism of gentrification. In fact, generally speaking, their view of mixing (initiatives) has been a lot more critical. However, we illustrated that, in recent years, a strand of educational research started to develop focussing on the (coordinated) influx of white middle-class families in education via the prism of gentrification. It was indicated that these studies offer a different picture of this process. More specifically, this strand of research demonstrates that the mixing of inner-city schools can also entail costs, costs that are dominantly borne by the families who are subjected to processes of mixing. Consequently, such analyses could provide a welcome addition to the popular debate on socio-ethnic mix and mixing initiatives which is mainly informed by studies examining the relation between school composition and student outcomes.

As many questions remain about how socio-ethnic mix and mixing initiatives "may influence existing race- and class-based inequalities in neighborhoods and schools" (Posey-Maddox, Kimelberg, & Cucchiara, 2014, p. 454), this dissertation aims to make the picture of mixing and mixing initiatives more complete by engaging with this topic via the prism of gentrification. More specifically, this dissertation will tackle the question as to what is the meaning of mixing initiatives in education for the families who are object of these initiatives in relation to issues of equality? This main question is divided into three sub-questions:

Research question 1:   What effect do mixing initiatives in education have on the *access* of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families?

Research question 2:   What effect do mixing initiatives in education have on the *position* and *voice* of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families?

Research question 3:   What effect do mixing initiatives in education have on the *needs* of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families?

Methodological approach

In order to provide an answer to the research questions, the dissertation adopts a case study research design. The choice for a case study stems directly from the dissertation's aim, namely gaining insight into the bigger picture of mixing initiatives via the prism of gentrification. The advantage of such a design as compared to other methods in realizing the research aim is that it deliberately does not divorce the context from the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2009). Indeed, case studies purposely draw attention to the relation of phenomena to their environment (Flyvbjerg, 2011). With regard to this dissertation, the choice for a case study thus allows for examining how mixing initiatives play out in the real world, what dynamics are engendered by these initiatives, and what the effects of the foregoing are in relation to equity.

At a more practical level, the dissertation focusses on one case. This choice was made so as to make possible an in-depth analysis that takes all relevant facets around mixing into full consideration. More precisely, attention is turned to one school located in Brugse Poort, a gentrifying neighbourhood of Ghent (Belgium). This school was the first out of six primary schools in Brugse Poort to respond to processes of gentrification by actively pursuing a mixed student population. In a period of no more than a decade, the school succeeded in transforming the social and ethnic makeup of its population. More precisely, the school went from a student population characterized by a concentration of socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils with a migration background to a population comprising a majority of middle-class pupils without a migration background. In this process, this school – which we will refer to as *Cotton Bridge* before its transformation and *Park Lane* after its transformation – became a model for other schools with similar plans, located either within or outside of the neighbourhood. The school is thus a compelling case both

because of its efforts to mix its student population and its location in a gentrifying neighbourhood, the décor against which discussions on social mix in education increasingly take place. Furthermore, the case of *Cotton Bridge/Park Lane* is a welcome addition to the majority of studies that focus on schools in major US cities. Indeed, this case can help us to gain insight in the size and scope of white middle-class families' integration into inner-city schools (Posey-Maddox, Kimelberg, & Cucchiara, 2014). This is not only because the case is drawn from a European mid-sized city but also because the context significantly differs from the one in the US. More precisely, the public-private divide between schools is less clear-cut in Belgium as more than 99% of all private schools refrain from collecting tuition fees and are publicly funded. Moreover, the system of pupil allocation is characterized by a relatively high degree of freedom.

In order to examine the selected case, the dissertation mainly draws on interview data. Although at moments an appeal is made to documents and statistical material, interview data are the pillar on which the analyses rest. Interviews were deliberately chosen over other methods for collecting data such as observations, as the research questions compel us to also explore aspects that cannot be observed (Patton, 2002). In more concrete terms, the dissertation draws on just over a hundred interviews. These interviews were conducted with crucial actors in the Ghent education policy, staff member of *Cotton Bridge/Park Lane*, parents of whom the children are enrolled at the school, and neighbourhood residents. With regard to the parents and the neighbourhood residents, we purposefully selected socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised households as well as gentry households. In fact, we intend not only to talk *about* such households but also *with* them. As such, the dissertation also responds to an omission commonly found in research on mixing in education (Quarles & Butler, 2018).

Chapter outline

The dissertation is structured around nine chapters and is composed of six research manuscripts set out to provide an answer to the research questions.

Within the introductory chapter, it was shown that, parallel to the discourse on the neighbourhood level, social mix is being pushed forward as a silver bullet strategy against inequalities in education. Drawing on relevant literature, it became evident why such salutary effect of school composition on educational equality is assumed. Nevertheless, it was pointed out that the debate on mixing and mixing initiatives dominantly centres around questions of effectiveness. In this view, we argued that the debate could be enriched when facets are included that go beyond this viewpoint. It was illustrated, that the prism of gentrification – a perspective that has been used by scholars examining the influx of white middle-class families in inner-city neighbourhoods – could facilitate the construction of a bigger picture around mixing and mixing initiatives. Finally, the research questions were introduced and the methodological approach to this dissertation was briefly set out.

Chapter 2, "The neighbourhood under study" introduces Brugse Poort as the area in which the selected case-study school is located. Making an appeal to a variety of census data, the chapter draws up a statistical portrait of the neighbourhood. Later on, this portrait is tied to the historical development of Brugse Poort. More precisely, three developments throughout the neighbourhood's two-hundred-year-old history are identified and described. By demonstrating how each of these developments encompassed the formation of a socio-demographic layer, the chapter provides an insight into the texture of Brugse Poort's portrait and how this texture was formed.

In chapter 3, "From *Cotton Bridge* to *Park Lane*," *Park Lane* is introduced as the case-study school of this dissertation. More precisely, the chapter recounts the school's mixing process (i.e., its transformation from a school exclusively populated by lower-class families without a migration background into a school characterized also by the presence of a critical mass of middle-class families without a migration background). The chapter describes why the school board longed for a 'mixed' student population and how progressive education came to be seen as the vehicle par excellence in this endeavour. In so doing, attention is also focussed on additional measures taken by the school board so as to attract and retain a critical mass of middle-class families without a migration background, such as the setting of a maximum quota of minoritised pupils. The

chapter concludes with exploring the implications for equality of a preoccupation of school boards with mixing their student population.

The following two chapters shift the focus from mixing schools to the families sought-after by such schools. Attention is drawn to the school choice process of white gentry parents who selected *Park Lane* for their children. Making use of 35 in-depth interviews, the chapters aim at teasing out the complex interplay between interests, values, anxieties and unique context variables, that ultimately drove this sample of parents – like most other gentrifiers in the neighbourhood – to select *Park Lane* over other schools. In doing so, it is explored whether and in which way the measures identified in the literature (see chapter 1) and the ones taken by the school board (see chapter 3) had, in fact, an appeal for a specific group of white middle-class parents and, hence, help to explain the successful transformation process of our case-study school. As such, the findings also provide an insight in some necessary conditions for successful mixing in education. Each chapter deals with one of the two main measures taken by the school board (i.e., the limitation of minoritised pupils and the provision of progressive education).

Chapter 4, "Blowing hot and cold about diversity," zooms in on issues of ethnic diversity in the school choice process. It addresses the question as to why most neighbourhood gentrifiers have opted in to the ethnically mixed *Park Lane*, thereby avoiding both all-minority and all-majority schools. Taking into account the complex nature of the school choice process, the findings suggest that our sample of parents, although embracing some amount of ethnic diversity within the student population, actively searched for schools with a majority of others like them. The ramifications of such propensity toward clustering for the process of desegregation are discussed at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 5, "Progressive education in neoliberal times," gives prominence to issues of pedagogy in the school choice process. More precisely, the chapter teases out the pedagogical preferences of our sample of white gentry parents. In so doing, light is shed not only on the role of pedagogy in the school process but also on the rationality behind the pedagogical preferences of this group of white middle-class families. Making an appeal to the work of Pierre Bourdieu,

it is concurred that these parents tend to prefer child-centered and holistic forms of education, inter alia, as these forms are believed to be more in line with current field structures. By linking these preferences to the habitus as well as the capital structure of this group of parents, it is aimed to unravel differences in pedagogical preferences between diverse groups of parents.

The latter is particularly interesting as chapter 6, "Do as you/they think best?" draws attention to the pedagogical preferences of white gentry parents' counterpart, namely socioeconomically disadvantaged parents with a migration background. Drawing on in-depth interviews with 23 lower-class mothers with a migration background of whom the children are enrolled in *Park Lane*, it is demonstrated that most oppose educational progressivism. Moreover, the analyses show that both the opposition of these mothers to progressive education and the very fact that these mothers did select *Park Lane* for their children, can be attributed to their habitus as well as to their specific capital structure. Taking into account that the provision of progressive education was one of the measures taken by the school board so as to attract and retain a critical mass of middle-class families, the chapter furthermore discusses how the school staff deals with such opposition from the families they are aiming to help and what the consequences of all of this are for issues of equality.

Chapter 7, "The mix as an unproblematic fix?" changes the focal point of the discussion. Attention is moved away from the means to gentrify a school (i.e., the effectiveness, necessity, and consequences of particular measures) to the end itself (i.e., the actual operation of a gentrifying school). The chapter aims at grasping ways in which a mixed environment is able to disrupt existing forms of educational inequality and/or in fact contribute to new forms of inequality. In order to do so, this study draws on 64 in-depth interviews with actors involved in our case-study school: 6 with members of the school staff, 35 with middle-class parents without a migration background, and 23 with lower-class mothers with a migration background. While some benefits of school gentrification are discerned, the results also point toward five forms in which school mixing can contribute to new forms of inequality.

In chapter 8, "Improving the neighbourhood," *Park Lane* is left as an object of study to give prominence to the neighbourhood in which *Park Lane* is located,

namey Brugse Poort. More specifically, the chapter zooms in on a particular greening initiative that was initiated in Brugse Poort by a public-private partnership under which also neighbourhood gentrifiers. Drawing on 37 in-depth interviews with neighbourhood residents, it is examined how the (place-making) practices of gentrifying residents help in breaking down existing inequalities faced by longtime residents and/or contribute to new forms of inequality, marginalization, exclusion and disempowerment. By shifting attention from the school level to the neighbourhood level, the chapter helps to tease out the parallels between the two levels with regard to the discourse on, as well as to the played-out realities of, mixing. The chapter, however, is significant to the dissertation in at least two other ways. First, it demonstrates how the effects of school mixing can transcend the school level as the social networks that are formed in the school can be mobilized on the neighbourhood level. Second, the chapter also shows how certain practices and feelings of *Park Lane* parents cannot fully be understood in isolation from the neighbourhood in which the school is located.

The dissertation ends with a general discussion and conclusion (chapter 9). The chapter synthesizes and merges the main findings of the previous chapters so as to provide an answer to the research questions. From this discussion of the findings, multiple implications for policy and practice are extracted. Moreover, the limitations of the dissertation are discussed as well as directions for future research.

Notes

1   In comparison to early efforts, recent studies have become more refined and have started to put more stress on class composition (Agirdag, Van Houtte, & Van Avermaet, 2012a; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005). Yet, the idea that student composition has a powerful effect on the performance of individual pupils has remained intact, making it one of the most consistent findings in educational research according to some (Kahlenberg, 2003).

2   In order to illustrate this, Biesta (2007) states that we may have conclusive evidence that demonstrates that corporal punishment is highly effective in controlling disruptive behaviour. However, it is clear that such practices should be avoided for a variety of reasons.

3   However, as suggested by Clark (2005, p. 260), the fact that Glass coined the process in 1964 does not imply "we have here the origin of the phenomenon" (see also Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). This idea is being buttressed by Neil Smith who has identified significant precursors of the process. More precisely, Smith (1996), inter alia, points to the Hausmannization of Paris in the mid-19th century as an example of gentrification *avant la lettre*. This process which was led by Georges-Eugène baron Haussmann, who operated under the authority of Napoleon III, included the large-scale demolition of working-class slums to make way for a more modern and *grand* Paris, enjoyable for the urban *flâneur*. Yet, as has been argued by Lees, Slater, & Wyly (2008) gentrification proper began after the Second World War in advanced capitalist cities.

4   This paper builds on the work of Smith's supervisor, David Harvey, who in 1973 had published "Social Justice and the City," a work which later on would become seminal and in which Harvey, inter alia, examined the mechanisms behind exploitation in cities (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008).

5   Necessitate is placed between brackets as a higher than average rent for the neighbourhood is only necessary when the landowner does not want to lose any profit in comparison with milking the structure.

6   Yet, the idea that neighbourhoods have an impact on life chances and that neighbourhoods characterized by a social mix are essentially better for the lower-class goes back to the 19th century (see Sarkissian, 1976 for an interesting discussion on the history and rationales behind the idea of social mix in town planning).

7   See, for instance, van Kempen and Bolt (2009) who after analysing the development programs of 31 Dutch cities found out that cities drew on a variety of arguments to justify mixed communities, however, most of which were related to the rationale mentioned above. This rationale also came to the fore in a more recent study of Rose *et al.* (2013) who carried out interviews with local policy actors in France, the UK and Canada.

8   Nevertheless, in the past there have been some examples where lower-class residents were given the opportunity to move to more wealthy neighbourhoods (see for instance de Souza Briggs, Popkin, and Goering, 2010 on the Moving to Opportunity Program in the US which was launched in the early 1990s).

9   In a similar vein, Lees, Slater, and Wyly (2008, p. 84) have wondered "what produced the 'down-at-the heels neighborhood' that subsequently becomes a popular place to invest and speculate".

10 Quite interesting in this context is the fact that gentrification proponents hardly rest their arguments on scientific evidence. In fact, when reference is made to research, it is often to studies demonstrating mere correlations. Exemplary in this context is a statement by Byrne (2003, p. 424) who concurs that "[a]lthough these benefits to the poor are largely hypothetical, they seem likely enough that cities should not adopt laws to halt gentrification, lest these benefits be lost".

11 A similar reasoning could be made with regard to issues of ethnicity and race. Indeed, critical race scholars demonstrate how certain bodies are "minoritised" within particular environments.

12 While the initiative provoked a lot of controversy (see for instance Albertijn, 2015; Amkreutz, 2015), the criticism that ensued mainly centred around (i) the unethical way in which a mix was pursued and (ii) the idea that it was class rather than migration background which mattered. As such, rather than the idea of mixing itself, it was the way and the sort of mixing that was being questioned.

13 Most scholars agree that the ethnic composition of schools affect individual pupils' performance primarily through the class composition of these schools (see Kahlenberg, 2003 for a discussion).

14 By referring to students who do not speak the official school language, the author clearly points to migrant background as well as to class in the discussion on school integration.

15 More precisely, white middle-class parents living in different locales may face (i) a different system of pupil allocation (see Hamnett & Butler, 2013 for an overview of various systems of pupil allocation), (ii) different exclusive curriculum offerings (e.g., magnet schools and talented and gifted programs), and (iii) differences in the extent of the divide between public and private education (e.g., in some countries such as Belgium almost all private schools are publicly funded and refrain from collecting tuition fees). Consequently, depending on the context, some strategies are more or less viable.

16 The latter is also suggested on a policy level by the OECD. For instance, in its report *Helping immigrant students to succeed at school – and beyond*, the intergovernmental economic organisation advises schools to "make their curricula more appealing to students from across the socio-economic spectrum" so as to facilitate school integration and, hence, equal educational opportunities (OECD,

2015, p. 8) – an idea that is based on, and goes back to, the system of magnet schools.

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CHAPTER TWO
The neighbourhood under study

Abstract

In this chapter, we briefly introduce Brugse Poort as the neighbourhood on which attention is focussed throughout this dissertation. Making an appeal to a variety of census data, we draw up a statistical portrait of the neighbourhood. Later on, this portrait is tied to the historical development of Brugse Poort. More precisely, three developments throughout the neighbourhood's two-hundred-year-old history are identified and described. By demonstrating how each of these developments encompassed the formation of a socio-demographic layer, the chapter provides an insight into the texture of Brugse Poort's portrait and how this texture was formed.

Introduction

T his study will focus on one particular neighbourhood, named Brugse Poort. As one of the twenty-five city districts of Ghent (i.e., a mid-sized city of Belgium with a population of 261,483)[1], Brugse Poort is situated northwest of the city centre (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). While having a surface area of little more than 2.5 km^2, the neighbourhood is densely populated with 19,231 inhabitants according to a 2018 count. As such, the population density of Brugse Poort is more than 4 times the Ghent average, respectively 7,554 inhabitants/km^2 to 1,665 inhabitants/km^2. This number is even higher in the zone where most participants of this study worked or lived and where the population density rises to more than 12,000 inhabitants/km^2 (see Figure 2), which is more than the New York average even though the urban tissue consists mainly of low-rise buildings.[2] With regard to the latter, it should be noted that Brugse Poort's housing stock is relatively old. In fact, a 2014 count showed that 64.79% of all dwellings dated back to the period before 1931. This is 10.90 percentage points higher in comparison to the 53.89% Ghent average. Nevertheless, property prices in the neighbourhood have soared in recent times. For instance, between 2010 and 2014, prices have gone up by 36.45%, from 152,128 euros to 207,576 euros. In comparison, in the same period Ghent property prices rose by 17.15%, from 227,475 euros to 266,484 euros. While property prices are still higher in Ghent in general, Brugse Poort has started to 'catch up'. A similar pattern of inflation can be observed in relation to the migration balance of Brugse Poort. More specifically, since the beginning of the new millennium, the neighbourhood's population has risen by 28.27%, which is significantly more than the 16.71% population rise in Ghent in general.

On a socio-economic level, however, Brugse Poort is still somewhat disadvantaged. In 2017, the unemployment pressure was 3.3 percentage points higher than the Ghent average, respectively 12.1% against 8.8%. Moreover, with 17,531 euros, the net average income in 2015 was 4,502 euros below the Ghent average of 22,033 euros. Also the percentage of dwellings in owner occupation is lower in Brugse Poort. A 2015 count made clear that only 41.54% of all dwellings in the neighbourhood are owner occupied against 50.34% of all dwellings in Ghent in general. Finally, the neighbourhood is also

characterized by a high number of poorly educated people. More specifically, the 2011 census shows that 26.0% of adult inhabitants who no longer follow an education had an educational attainment of primary education or less. In contrast, for Ghent this figure was only 18.2%. Next to the socio-economic composition, Brugse Poort's ethnic composition also stands out. According to a 2017 count, 51.38% of Brugse Poort's residents had a foreign background, significantly more than the 33.17% Ghent average. As such, Brugse Poort is one of the five majority-minority districts of Ghent.

In sum, these figures draw a portrait of an ethnically diverse neighbourhood that, albeit socioeconomically being positioned somewhat on the fringes, has lately become increasingly popular. This sketch is the result of three socio-demographic layers that have crystalized in the neighbourhood at various points in time and that relate to each other in a certain tension. These layers refer to Brugse Poort as (i) a working-class neighbourhood, (ii) a migrant neighbourhood, and (iii) a gentrifying neighbourhood. In what follows, these layers and their formation will be discussed separately.
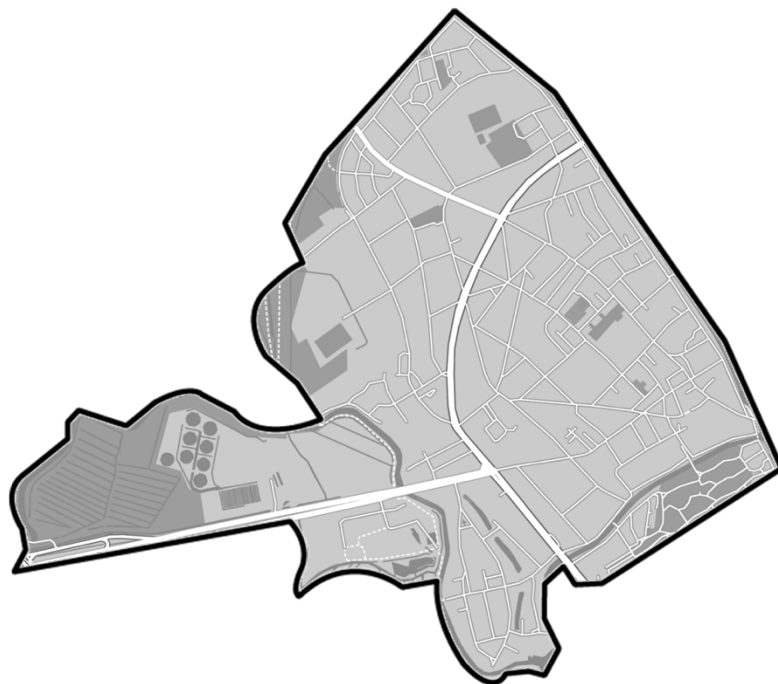

Figure 1. Map of Brugse Poort neighbourhood.

Figure 2. Map of the city of Ghent with the neighbourhood Brugse Poort outlined and the zone where most participants of the research worked or lived shaded.

A working-class neighbourhood

First, Brugse Poort can be described as a working-class neighbourhood. In fact, the area developed in the early nineteenth century as a result of an industrialisation process that Ghent was undergoing. As one of the first cities on the European mainland to industrialize, Ghent was referred to as the "Manchester of the continent" (De Herdt, 1980). As available space within the city walls of this boomtown became increasingly scarce,[3] more and more newly established factories opted for embedment in areas located just outside the city gates in view of expansion possibilities (Bockstael, 1995). Coupled with the repeal of the *octroi* (i.e., a form of consumption taxes charged at the city gates) in July 1860, this led to the development of a number of neighbourhoods around the city's mediaeval core, under which also Brugse Poort.

In fact, before the nineteenth century had come to a close, some large textile mills and a steel-producing company had already set up a shop in the neighbourhood.[4] As this attracted both pauperized immigrants from rural areas and a working class previously housed in the mediaeval core of the city (Balthazar, 1989; Heughebaert, 2006), Brugse Poort soon developed as a fully-fledged working-class neighbourhood. In fact, the neighbourhood was built-up with small and poor-quality houses to accommodate the industry's working class and developed a vibrant community life and a strong local identity, that centred around the factory floor, the local church, and the many pubs, clubs and associations that were located in the neighbourhood (Oosterlynck & Debruyne, 2013).[5]

In the period after the Second World War, however, Brugse Poort, just as many other neighbourhoods in Ghent, lost most of its middle-class residents due to a process of urban flight. In fact, whereas on the verge of the year 1950 the Ghent population still counted 166,577 inhabitants (Stad Gent, 1950), three decades later, the same area was populated by no more than 132,728 inhabitants (Stad Gent, 1981).[6] Moreover, around the same time, Brugse Poort witnessed a series of factory closures through deindustrialization. In this manner, the city in general and the Brugse Poort in particular fell more and more into the role of an innkeeper of problems (e.g., with respect to poverty, crime, and unemployment).
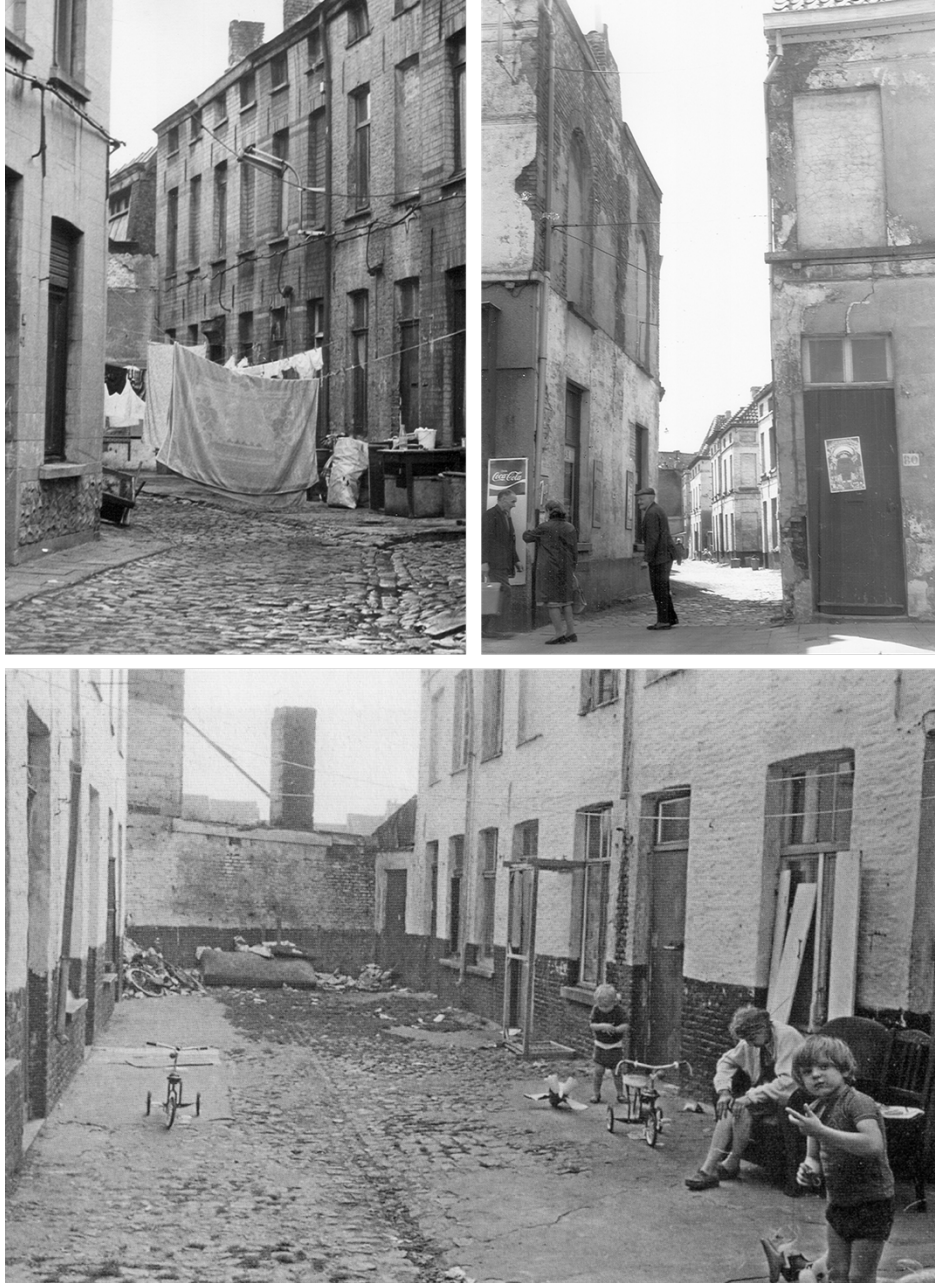
Figure 3. Brugse Poort characterized by a chaotic urban tissue, poor housing, and dead end streets. Top photographs taken in 1975 (Adriansens, 2008). Bottom photograph taken in 1968 (Adriansens, 2007).

A migrant neighbourhood

Next to a working-class neighbourhood, Brugse Poort can also be described as a migrant neighbourhood. In fact, since the 1960s, the (then struggling) Ghent industry started to recruit labour migrants, mainly from Turkey and Maghreb countries. This process was facilitated by the national government who pursued several bilateral agreements in which the employment of labour migrants was settled (Florence & Martinielo, 2005). As these migrants often ended up in the cheapest neighbourhoods, Brugse Poort, with a stock of slum dwellings dating back to the 19th century industrialization, became one of Ghent's main offices for migration. While in 1974 labour migration to Belgium was halted as a response to the oil crisis, migration to Brugse Poort firmly continued in the next decades, this mainly as a result of subsequent processes of family reunion and family formation (De Bock, 2012). Since the opening up of the European Union in 2004 and 2007, also migration from Central and Eastern Europe has drastically increased. In fact, in the 2018 count, already 1251 inhabitants of Brugse Poort had a nationality of one of these new member states, a figure coming down to 6.51% of the neighbourhood's population. It thus seems that processes of migration are not only part of the neighbourhood's history but tend to persist in recent times. For instance, between 2007 and 2017, the external migration rate of Brugse Poort has been largely positive, with only three years deviating from this path. In addition, from 2012 to 2017, the amount of inhabitants with a migration background in the neighbourhood continually rose.

Figure 4. The influx of minoritised children in Brugse Poort. Top photograph taken in 1973 (Adriansens, 2007). Bottom photograph taken in 1981 (Adriansens, 2010).

A gentrifying neighbourhood

Lastly, Brugse Poort can also be described as a gentrifying neighbourhood. Since the 1990s, the neighbourhood has been subject to processes of gentrification as many white middle-class households began buying and rehabilitating the terraced houses that were originally populated by the industrial proletariat. This gentrifying group mainly comprises young graduates who decide to stay and settle in the city after completing their education at Ghent University or one of the city's university colleges. For instance, a survey study by Van den Broeck (2016) showed that 69.9% of new Ghentians emigrating from another locality in Belgium, had previously studied in Ghent. For the age group 20-29, this figure even rose to 80.8%. Moreover, the two most important reasons for newcomers to settle in Ghent were a desire to live in the city (66.8%) and an attempt to reduce their commute time (49.8%).[7]

Whereas gentrification in Brugse Poort was spontaneous at first, from 1998 onward it also became government-induced. More precisely, as the Ghent city council felt that the neighbourhood did not sufficiently self-regenerate, it decided to plan and implement an urban renewal project, named "Oxygen for Brugse Poort" (*Zuurstof voor de Brugse Poort*).[8] Specifically, the project consisted of a broad environmental strategy through the demolition of various structures under which also 89 terraced houses. Alongside the development of a brownfield site of nearly 15 acres into a community park, Oxygen for Brugse Poort provided for the (re)development of six green spaces and the creation of a safe pathway for cyclists and pedestrians running through the district. Moreover, urban renewal strategies in Brugse Poort were also coupled to a social agenda (Oosterlynck & Debruyne, 2013). This agenda, which took shape through a dialogue with local civil society, included, among other things, investments in a Community Health Centre, a social-artistic organization, and a social economy firm. As such, the project aimed to attract middle-class households as well as improve the quality of life for existing residents.

More recently, also property developers have jumped on the bandwagon and hence fuelled the process of gentrification. Student complexes, gated communities and loft apartments increasingly characterise the view of the district. At present, one can even witness the establishment of a so-called

"smart city hub" that is designed as an "incubator-accelerator" for "promising start-ups" (Watt Factory, n.d.)[9] and the renovation of 40 connected terraced houses who were bought by one project developer (De Troyer, 2019). Whereas rents for these houses used to fluctuate between 450 and 600 euros per month, after renovations rents now go as high as 1050 euros per month. Houses that are not rented out are listed for 359,000 euros, a staggering number when taking into account that in 2015 the median annual net income of residents in Brugse Poort amounted to 15,256 euros. These large-scale projects go well with recently established businesses, such as an organic and fair-trade grocery store, "Belgian's very first indoor camping" (Degrande, 2016), and a "relaxation locality", which serves a mix of cocktails and renowned beers in a trendy setting that, according to the owners, is cleansed of "slot machines and fluorescent tubes" (Staes, 2016).

In sum, Brugse Poort comprises three socio-demographic layers that have crystalized at various points in time. As will become clear throughout the following chapters these layers relate in a certain tension to each other. In the next chapter, the case-study school of this dissertation will be introduced. More specifically, we will examine the board of this school longed for a mixed student population and how it capitalized on recent processes of gentrification to succeed in this endeavour.

Figure 5. The renovation of terraced houses in Brugse Poort. Top photograph taken by author in 2014. Bottom photograph taken by author in 2018. Slogan in bottom photograph says "Rather pesticide than gentrification!" and most likely refers to the fact that some residents of Sparrestraat (i.e., the street where the picture was taken) took an ecological initiative to convince other street residents to refrain from the use of pesticides in their garden while around the same time 40 terraced houses in the street were being sold to a project developer.

Notes

1   Unless indicated otherwise, all figures in this section are retrieved from, or calculated via, the publicly accessible database G3nt_1n_c1jf3r5 (see https://gent.buurtmonitor.be).

2   This zone is demarcated to the North, West and South by two important roads for intra-city movements (i.e., Rooigemlaan and Nieuwewandeling) and to the East by a channel (i.e., Coupure).

3   Exemplary is the fact that in the early nineteenth century even the mediaeval castle *Gravensteen* was transformed in a textile mill.

4   I refer, inter alia, to the steel-producing company *Huyttens-Kerreman* set up in 1821 and the textile mills *société anonyme Linière La Lys* set up in 1838, *société anonyme Filature du Nord* set up in 1870, and *société anonyme Filature de Roygem* set up in 1897.

5   As this urbanization process happened in unplanned and speculative way, this gave rise to a chaotic urban tissue, a lack of green space, poor housing, and a high population density, many of which remain to this day (Oosterlynck & Debryne, 2013).

6   Due to the large-scale fusion of communes (directed by the national government) in 1977, Ghent incorporated the former communes of Afsnee, Drongen, Gentbrugge, Ledeberg, Mariakerke, Oostakker, Sint-Amandsberg, Sint-Denijs-Westrem, Wondelgem en Zwijnaarde. To allow comparison, I have deducted the population of these communes from the population of Ghent.

7   As such, these results resonate with consumption explanations of gentrification which stress the desire of professional and non-traditional households to cultivate a certain lifestyle and to find solutions to a number of problems they face (e.g., the daily commute). Nevertheless, it cannot be ruled out that also reasons to make a sound financial investment play a role, or have played a role, in the reasons of this group to gentrify. In fact, it should be noted that the survey was conducted in 2012 (i.e., at a time when property prices already had risen significantly). In addition, it is likely that the motive of making a sound financial investment is not easily made explicit, and as such is hard to tease out via survey studies.

8   Inspiration was drawn from an urban renewal design of the architectural firms *NERO* and *Stramien* that was drafted at the city's request in the context of its efforts to draw up of a Regional Zoning Plan (1997-2003).

9   Interestingly, in an interview, one of the co-founders of this project argued that "some concentration neighbourhoods, in which the mix of residents is too limited, just need a little gentrification" (Delbeke, 2017).

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CHAPTER THREE

From Cotton Bridge to Park Lane

Abstract[1]

In recent years, marketisation has increasingly been propounded as a strategy for inner-city schools to attain a mixed student population in order to achieve greater social justice. This turn towards the market is remarkable, because scholars have historically viewed it as existing in opposition to social justice. In this study, we engage with this tension by drawing attention to a particular primary school located in a gentrifying district of Ghent (Belgium) that has sought to establish a mixed student population by marketing itself to the district's white middle-class newcomers. Through the use of interview data, this study demonstrates that marketisation as a lever for social justice can be problematic because it may engender a number of new inequalities.

Introduction

Although driven by a variety of motives, most (if not all) agree that educational opportunities should be equally distributed. Indeed, the concept of equal opportunity can be deemed a key goal of education within welfare states (West & Nikolai, 2013). Nevertheless, no general consensus exists as to a definition of equal educational opportunities (Howe, 1996; Winstanley, 2010). According to a minimal reading, equal educational opportunities are defined as no more than *equal access* for all children, regardless of social origin. In contrast, a radical reading views the concept as *equal achievement* for all children, again regardless of social origin.[2] Taking this radical reading as a point of departure, it is clear that equal educational opportunities remain a pipe dream in many welfare states around the world. Indeed, time and again Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) studies reveal that in many welfare regimes, students' educational outcomes are related to both their socioeconomic status and migration background, as pupils who are socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or have a migration background perform significantly more poorly (OECD, 2010, 2016a, 2016b, 2017).

In an effort to respond to these blatant inequalities, scholars have propounded "mixed schools" as a solution. The notion that mixed schools might enhance the outcomes of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised students is based on half a century of research demonstrating that school composition matters (Putnam, 2015; see Coleman *et al.*, 1966 for the first seminal study on this topic). More specifically, a number of scholars have demonstrated that socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised students tend to perform worse in schools characterised by a majority of socioeconomically disadvantaged students (Agirdag, Van Houtte, & Van Avermaet, 2012; Ledoux, Driessen, Vergeer, van der Veen, & Doesborg, 2003; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005) and/or minoritised students (Kucsera, Siegel-Hawely, & Orfield, 2015; Ledoux *et al.*, 2003; Logan, Minca, & Adar, 2012; Stiefel, Schwartz, & Chellman, 2007).

Throughout the Western world, schools where socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised students make up most of the student population are disproportionately situated in urban areas (Boterman, 2013;

Cucchiara, 2013; Hamnett, Butler, & Ramsden, 2013). Indeed, as processes of residential segregation are often highly reflected at the school level (Karsten *et al.*, 2006; McPherson, 2001; Nouwen & Mahieu, 2012; Rivkin, 1994; Saporito & Sohoni, 2006), the socio-ethnic makeup of many schools located in urban areas has become relatively more disadvantaged and minoritised as a result of decades of urban flight and migration. According to Kahlenberg (2003, p. 37), this concentration of socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised students has led to "pathological environments" that deprive children of equal opportunities. As processes of gentrification are becoming increasingly commonplace (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008), however, concentrations of socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised students in inner-city schools do not have to constitute an enduring phenomenon. As Stillman (2013, p. 37) argues:

> The gentrification of many of our big cities is providing a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a large number of racially and socioeconomically integrated schools. (…) But to capitalize on this opportunity, urban schools that currently serve a predominantly poor and minority population must find a way to attract and retain the gentrifiers—mostly white, upper-middle-class, highly educated parents.

As is evident from the above quotation, processes of gentrification provide a unique opportunity to mix those schools where socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised students make up most of the student population. Yet, in order for this to happen, inner-city schools must find a way to entice white middle-class families, something easier said than done. Certainly, a large body of research demonstrates that white middle-class parents living in urban areas generally do not consider neighbourhood schools. Instead, these parents often game the system, for instance by moving to more suburban areas (Boterman, 2013; Butler & Robson, 2003), taking refuge in the private sector (Butler & Robson, 2003; Clotfelter, 2004), applying for magnet schools (Saporito, 2003), testing children for gifted and talented programmes (DeSena, 2009), or enrolling in schools outside their neighbourhood, such as by renting property in an area close to a desirable school for a short period of time (Boterman, 2013; Butler, Hamnett, & Ramsden, 2013; DeSena, 2009; Reay, 2004).

What then should be done to guarantee social justice, here in the form of equal educational opportunities? Some scholars argue that inner-city schools should market themselves to white middle-class families by responding to their wishes. For instance, Edelberg and Kurland (2009) drafted a "blueprint" describing how urban schools can establish a mixed student body. Drawing on the success story of a public school in Chicago, the authors indicated how asking potential white middle-class parents to draw up a "wish list" proved an essential piece of the puzzle. Their findings are supported by Stillman (2012) who, after examining processes of school integration in three New York neighbourhoods, concluded that the schools that managed to establish a mixed student population were generally also those that tailored themselves to white middle-class families. Similar findings have been attained in Europe: for instance, Mampaey (2012) examined four secondary schools with a significant proportion of minoritised pupils in Flanders, Belgium, and discovered that in order to retain a good reputation with parents without a migration background (and thus to promote equal education opportunities), they should strategically present themselves as conforming to the dominant culture (see also Zanoni & Mampaey, 2013).

In sum, scholars are increasingly advancing a market logic to promote social justice (here in the form of equal educational opportunities). Such a move is remarkable, because in the past the market was largely portrayed as existing in opposition to social justice. For example, almost seven decades ago the British sociologist Thomas Humphrey Marshall (1992, p. 40) defined the welfare state (of which the educational system is an integral part) as "the subordination of market price to social justice". Moreover, Marshall (1992, p. 40) has argued that the market and social justice operate in a certain tension, or in his words "have been at war" (see also Katz, 2008 on the tension between capitalism and equality). The fact that social justice rests uneasily with a market logic has also been observed in the field of education. As argued by Gewirtz, Ball and Bowe (1995, p. 2):

> The education market (like all markets) is intended to be driven by self-interest: first, the self-interest of parents, as consumers, choosing schools that will provide maximum advantage to their children; second, the self

interest [sic] of schools or their senior managers, as producers, in making policy decisions that are based upon their institutions thrive, or at least survive, in the marketplace.

Even when schools are not primarily driven by self-interest, marketing strategies may prove problematic. This is, in fact, what is argued by Cucchiara (2013) after studying an inner-city elementary school in Philadelphia that marketed itself to white middle-class families so as to establish a mixed student population. The author has claimed that such an endeavour may lead to a process whereby parents are transformed from citizens into customers, and hence are "treated differently or valued differently depending on the goods they have to exchange" (Cucchiara, 2013, p. 211).

The use of a market logic to promote social justice in education thus begs the question as to whether and to what extent such strategies represent a lever for social justice or (also) give rise to new forms of inequality. In this article, we engage with this question through instrumental case research.[3] More specifically, attention is focused on a particular primary school located in Brugse Poort, a gentrifying district of Ghent (Belgium). Since 2000, this school, which we refer to as Cotton Bridge, has attempted to realise a mixed student body, inter alia in an attempt to enhance its standards. Through the use of both interview data and school archives, attention will be drawn to this process and its consequences in relation to social justice. The structure of this article is as follows. In the first section, a historical overview of Brugse Poort is provided. This is followed by a discussion on the Belgian education system with regard to student allocation. In the third section, the data and methods used are briefly described. Fourth, the main findings of this study are presented. More precisely, the story of our case study will outlined by drawing attention to (i) the context surrounding and rationale behind the school's endeavour to attain a mixed student population, (ii) the way in which the school has tried to succeed in this endeavour, and (iii) the consequences with regard to social justice. In the final section, the main conclusions and implications of the study are presented.

Historical overview of Brugse Poort

Brugse Poort is one of 25 districts in Ghent, a mid-sized city of approximately 260,000 inhabitants. Located northwest of the city centre, Brugse Poort developed in the early-nineteenth century as one of the new industrial centres of the city. Housing several thriving textile mills and a steel-producing company, the district soon attracted a large number of people willing to work and hence evolved into a fully fledged and vibrant white working-class district. Since the 1960s, however, Brugse Poort has witnessed a series of factory closures, leading to a process of neighbourhood decline. Moreover, many of the district's middle-class residents have started to leave for the suburbs.[4]

From the 1960s, Brugse Poort began to ethnically diversify as the (then struggling) industry started to recruit labour migrants from Mediterranean countries. This process was facilitated by a specific national policy intended to compensate the shortage of blue-collar workers in some harsh and underpaying industrial sectors. Indeed, "beginning with Italy in 1946, and continuing with Spain (1956), Greece (1957), Morocco (1964), Turkey (1964), Tunisia (1969), Algeria (1970) and Yugoslavia (1970), the government pursued several bilateral agreements" in which the employment of labour migrants – so called *gastarbeiders* – was settled (Florence & Martinielo, 2005, p. 49).[5] Since the expansions of the European Union (EU) in 2004 and 2007, migration from Central and Eastern Europe has also drastically increased. As such, in 2013, 49.50% of people living in Brugse Poort were of foreign origin (9,031 out of 18,246 residents). Considering the fact that the origin of 10.72% of the district's population is unknown (1,955 out of 18,246 residents), it is apparent that Brugse Poort has passed into a majority-minority district.

Since the 1990s, Brugse Poort has also been confronted with gentrification, as many white middle-class families have started to buy and rehabilitate the terraced houses originally populated by the industrial proletariat. Whereas gentrification was spontaneous at first, since 1998 it has been induced by government support through the planning of an urban renewal project that explicitly seeks to initiate social mix via the physical upgrading of the environment.

The Belgian education system

For most of Belgium's history, education has been a national affair. It was only from 1989, when the educational jurisdiction was almost entirely handed over to the communities, that Flanders became relatively autonomous with regard to educational matters.[6] Naturally, Flemish educational policy still adheres to the Belgian constitution, which is characterised by a high degree of freedom.[7] This freedom needs be understood in both an active and passive way (Van Orshoven, 1990).

Actively, every natural or legal person in Belgium has the right to establish a school autonomously. One can therefore discern public schools (i.e., schools organised by public administrations such as a community, a province or a municipality) from private counterparts (i.e., schools organised by another body such as a diocese, a monastic order, a non-profit organisation, etc.). Culminating in a so-called First (1879-1884) and Second (1954-1958) School Struggle, it was only in 1958 that a compromise was found. On the one hand, the compromise dictated the right to establish a school. On the other hand, it also stipulated that schools must meet legal and statutory regulations in order to (i) be publicly funded and (ii) receive the right to issue official diplomas. As a result of these benefits, almost all private schools have voluntarily opted to meet these regulations (e.g., during the school year 2013-2014, 99.04% of all Flemish private primary schools did so). This has two main consequences. First, owing to public funds, the private sector (mainly made up of Catholic schools) is strongly represented throughout Flanders (e.g., during the school year 2013-2014, 63.18% of all primary schools were organised privately). Second, as the imposed regulations inter alia relate to the refrainment from collecting registration or tuition fees, the public-private divide is less marked than is the case in contexts such as the United Kingdom (UK) and United States of America (USA).

Passively, the Belgian constitution safeguards parental freedom of choice. This implies that parents are free to select a school in accordance with their personal beliefs, values and attitudes. Until recently, however, schools were also allowed to select pupils based on a particular admission policy.[8] This changed in 2002 when the Flemish Parliament considerably minimised the grounds upon which

school boards can disobey (specific) enrolment requests by introducing a first-come, first-served principle through the Act on Equal Opportunities in Education. Nevertheless, the act was subsequently modified several times. In 2005, the legislator decided to provide schools with opportunities to implement a desegregation policy. Starting from the enrolment period for the school year 2006-2007, schools could choose to institute a priority enrolment period (with a specified number of places) for advantaged or disadvantaged pupils.[9] It stands to reason that schools were only allowed to give priority to advantaged students when these were considerably underrepresented compared to their relative presence in the area. Moreover, decisions on the exact number of reserved places also had to be based on the demographics of the area in which the school in question was located. In its first year of implementation, 16 Ghent primary schools chose to institute a priority enrolment period for disadvantaged pupils, whereas 20 of their counterparts (including our case study school) opted to do the opposite. In 2008, the act was modified once again. Some cities, including Ghent, were permitted to disobey the first-come, first-served principle and order enrolment request in both periods on the basis of another fair and non-discriminatory system. Ghent chose to experiment with this system, ranking children on the basis of distance between their residence and the school.[10] In this case, the shorter the distance, the higher the ranking a student obtains. As such, the installation in 2008 of what were de facto catchment areas has limited school choice to a certain extent. To date, the last major modification to the Act on Equal Opportunities in Education was carried out in 2012 and went into effect for enrolments for the school year 2013-2014. More precisely, the legislator decided to discard the priority enrolment period and to install a controlled-choice plan. In fact, it was decided that schools in some cities, including Ghent, had to reserve a specified number of places to both advantaged pupils and disadvantaged pupils. Furthermore, the exact ratio should be specified in accordance with the relative presence of both groups of pupils in the neighbourhood. In cases where the number of registrations in a specific list exceeds the number of reserved places, unfortunate parents can still be given the opportunity to enrol their child as long as places exist in the other registration list. Moreover, enrolment requests in both categories must continue to be based on a fair and non-discriminatory system. Therefore, Ghent still ranks on the basis of distance criteria.

Data and methods

Methodologically, we utilised oral history alongside school archival research. As we were interested in the marketing process of our case study school and the relationship of this process to the broader education field in Ghent, we identified key actors and contacted them for an interview. Thus, we present here interview data with the former Ghent Alderman of Education and two founding members of the Pedagogical Centre of Ghent (i.e., a public centre that tries to enhance the quality of the urban education system via the implementation of educational innovative practices and the provision of support to schools). Interviews were also undertaken with (former and current) staff members of our case study school. As well as the former principal, a former teacher and the former bridge figure (i.e., a support figure for socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised families)[11], we interviewed the current principal and four teachers. In order to facilitate data analysis, all of the interviews were audio-recorded. Interviews lasted between 50 and 137 minutes and took place in an interview room at Ghent University, the participants' working address or home, or at a coffeehouse in Brugse Poort. The interviews were subsequently transcribed orthographically, all interview data were read multiple times and memos were added. These complemented the already existing notes that were taken during and/or immediately after the interviews.

With regard to the research in the school archives, we particularly made use of data that enabled us to portray evolutions in the population of our case study school during its marketing process. Data on socio-cultural characteristics such as the number of students (i) following Islamic education as part of the Philosophies curriculum, (ii) whose language spoken at home is not Dutch and (iii) of whom the mother did not hold a degree of secondary education were therefore incorporated into the analyses. These data were abstracted from diverse school files and analysed descriptively.

The context and rationale

As indicated in the historical overview, since the 1960s Brugse Poort has been subject to an influx of immigrants. As might be expected, these changing demographics have also affected the student population of neighbourhood schools (see Braster & del Mar del Pozo Andrés, 2001 for similar reflections in a Dutch context). Indeed, in our case study school, which we refer to as *Cotton Bridge*, minoritised pupils began to enrol from the 1970s. Since the late 1980s, the student body of *Cotton Bridge* was no longer only characterised by a concentration of pupils economically at the fringe, but also by a concentration of minoritised pupils. As the former principal recounts, however, this was not only because minoritised families increasingly entered the school; it was also because families without a migration background increasingly started to flee the school (see Hamnett, Ramsden, & Butler, 2007 on the notion of the tipping point):

> At a certain moment you had a kind of snowball effect. On one side, we lost children without a migration background. On the other, loads of children with a migration background entered. I remember that in a period of one year, there was a fluctuation of 200 children, namely 200 children who left and 200 children who entered. (George, former principal)[12]

While reflecting on her initial experiences in the school, this concentration of socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised pupils was recalled by the current principal of the school:

> I still remember doing an interim here in the late 1980s. At that time the student body comprised almost 100 per cent immigrants. You got a class with Mohammed and Ali and Somaya and John… There was one boy called John in the class I got, and John was a real working-class boy. So a certain echelon of the population didn't come here. (Courtie, current principal)

Since the 1990s, however, a growing number of white middle-class families have started to move to Brugse Poort. Whether tempted by the atmosphere, the housing prices and/or the proximity to post-industrial jobs, the process of gentrification soon became visible. However, although the neighbourhood saw an influx of white middle-class families, this was not apparent in the local schools. For instance, in the late 1990s, 358 out of 360 pupils enrolled at *Cotton Bridge* were minoritised. That some white middle-class families were aggrieved by this situation is clearly illustrated by an incident at a community meeting in late 1998. The meeting, organised by *Opbouwwerk Steunpunt Gent vzw* (i.e., a publicly funded community development organisation) but commissioned by the city, was intended to actively involve Brugse Poort residents in the development of the neighbourhood by giving them a say on 12 themes (Opbouwwerk Gent vzw, 1999). According to the school staff present at the time, at the point when reference was made to the topic of education, tempers began to run high. A group of white middle-class families raised the question as to why their children could not go to schools located in the neighbourhood.[13] With this question, participants neither referred to possible enrolment problems nor to any practices of affirmative action. Rather, they pointed out that the majority of schools located in Brugse Poort were characterised by a concentration of socioeconomically disadvantaged minoritised pupils, which was perceived as unacceptable and in turn led them to reject neighbourhood schools as a whole.

A few months earlier, over 100 mainly white middle-class residents headed by *Opbouwwerk Steunpunt Gent vzw* had gathered in small groups to discuss and propose measures regarding these 12 themes (Opbouwwerk Gent vzw, 1999). Concerning education, eight measures were proposed, of which two are particularly interesting in this regard. First, it was advocated that schools located in the neighbourhood should only enrol a maximum percentage of pupils with a migration background. Second, it was suggested that schools located in Brugse Poort should be made more attractive to residents without a migration background.

However, the fact that socioeconomically disadvantaged minoritised pupils made up most of the schools' populations in Brugse Poort did not mean that these schools supported or deliberately perpetuated such concentrations. On

the contrary, the school board of *Cotton Bridge*, which had monitored these meetings, had long been disgruntled by the situation. Apart from being "very hard" on teachers, providing education to immigrant pupils was said to strengthen existing inequalities, especially in a context in which appropriate expertise, support and resources were difficult to obtain. This situation was intensely described by the school staff:

> We have never been able to call upon the Pedagogical Centre for any help with regard to the hopeless situation we found ourselves in. (…) Why? Because they didn't have the people who were competent in these matters. (…) We did try everything to provide educational quality. (…) We tried all methods. We received a lot of educational packages that were designed by universities with regard to newly arrived migrant students. You always could use some parts of it, but in daily practice this was not sufficient to increase learning outcomes. (…) So we noted that we achieved limited results. Once in a while we got one or two [pupils who succeeded]. That was our alibi, our Ali Bi, so to speak, to be able to say "look, at least we did something good". (George, former principal)

> I made a lot of mistakes when I started to teach because of ignorance. There is no one [to help you]. They drop you in a class full of immigrants (…) and say "Just keep them busy". But that's not the goal of education. (Jude, former teacher)

> I think that when you are working in a class with 100 per cent immigrants on a daily basis, you start to ask yourself questions like "How can I change this?" I mean, you feel that it isn't right (…) putting everyone with the same problem together. (Courtie, current principal)

Both the school board and the teachers therefore yearned for a mixed student population, this being seen as a potential lever for school quality and hence equal educational opportunities. Whereas at the end of the 1980s such an idea had been no more than wishful thinking, a decade later it had become increasingly likely due to processes of gentrification. The school board also observed this phenomenon. For instance, the former principal recalled participating in the meeting organised by *Opbouwwerk Steunpunt Gent vzw* in

"open-mouthed wonderment" due to the presence of so many "Belgian young families". This was also observed by a teacher:

> What also surprised me was the educational attainment of those people. There was a college professor from the Faculty of Economics. There were bio-engineers. We sat there with all those people which made you wonder "What are they seeking in this neighbourhood?" (Camille, current teacher)

The school board recognised this "momentum". However, it was also aware that these white middle-class families would not simply apply for a place at the school, as had already indicated their disillusionment with both the character and the population of neighbourhood schools. As one member of staff eloquently and rhetorically asked, "Who would want to drop his privileged kid in here?"

The strategy
To circumvent this problem, it was decided in 2000 to establish a progressive school within the school building of *Cotton Bridge*, named *Park Lane*. It was hoped that this new school, which offered a new pedagogy and a yet-to-be-defined student body, would become popular so that one day it would be able to supplant *Cotton Bridge*. With regard to the pedagogy, Jena Plan was deliberately selected as it corresponded best with the school's vision and current pedagogy, as well as being seen as somewhat malleable.[14] At the same time, progressive education in general was selected due to its capacity to entice white middle-class families. In fact, the half-dozen progressive primary schools already operating in Ghent, most of which were providing Freinet education, were not only in high demand but were also characterised by a student population that was remarkably white and middle-class.[15] The fact that progressive education came to be perceived as a magnet for attracting white middle-class families was clearly illustrated by the former principal:

> We said "Look at all those Freinet schools, everybody suddenly wants Freinet education and we are located in a neighbourhood with a lot of potential clients, young people who are educated and so on". Hence we

thought "Let us also establish a progressive school". (George, former principal)

Thus, as a response to a context in which little support could be obtained for teaching socioeconomically disadvantaged minoritised children, the school board consciously started to develop a policy attractive to white middle-class families.[16] Indeed, through the implementation of progressive education, the school board aimed to attract desirable "clients", an influx that was perceived as having the potential to improve the quality of education. As such, the school board's interest in progressive education was driven both by a market rationale and a social justice impetus. More precisely, through marketing itself to white middle-class families, the school tried to promote social justice, here in the form of equal educational opportunities. Consequently, from the school year 2000-2001, two schools operated in the same school building. As the entrance doors swung open on the first day of September 2000, it seemed that the plan as outlined by the school board had a fair chance of succeeding due to the interest coming from white middle-class families. In fact, the first two class groups of *Park Lane* were crammed.

Action, however, was not limited to providing progressive education. In contrast to *Cotton Bridge*, *Park Lane* was also equipped with some new furniture. Even more importantly, the board took four related measures to manage the student population of *Park Lane*, specifically pertaining to the creation of an enclave within the school building in order that white middle-class families would not be deterred. First, it was guaranteed that in the first newly established class groups of *Park Lane*, only 30 per cent disadvantaged (read: immigrant) pupils would be admitted. Second, while not proclaimed at the time, the pupils that constituted this group were sophisticatedly "selected" on their perceived "threat", "approachability" and "economic status". Third, pupils were selected so as to attain a high degree of ethnic diversity within this group. Fourth, in the inception phase of the project, the student bodies of both schools were kept strictly separated. This not only led to a peculiar situation in which the respective pupils of both schools not only took up positions in different parts of the hallway, but also ate and played separately. The former principal acknowledged that this strategy was all but "Kosher". However, it was

felt that these measures were necessary to attract and retain the desired families:

> We are not in South Africa with black children on one side and white children on the other, but we noticed that when we would say (…) "We will mix them", we would have lost them all [i.e., the white middle-class families]. (George, former principal)

Before 2002, schools could easily refuse enrolment requests through a specific admission policy. Since the Act on Equal Opportunities in 2002, however, schools have become obligated to deploy the first-come, first-served principle. Nonetheless, even after this date, the board of our case study school was able to limit the number of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families in *Park Lane* due to a combination of three factors. First, although *Cotton Bridge* and *Park Lane* were de facto separate schools, de jure they were still treated as a single school. As such, the board was able to redirect a number of interested socioeconomically minoritised families to (or retain them at) *Cotton Bridge*. Second, as a result of the modifications in the Act of Equal Opportunities, from 2005 the board was able to institute a priority enrolment period for advantaged pupils, i.e., at *Park Lane*. Third, new classes at *Park Lane* were opened only when enough places could be filled by children of white middle-class families.

The consequences

Due to this selection policy, many socioeconomically disadvantaged minoritised families who were interested in transferring their children from *Cotton Bridge* to *Park Lane* were not able to obtain access. In contrast to their white middle-class counterparts, these families were placed on a waiting list. such differential treatment created resentment among teachers and parents at *Cotton Bridge*. Some parents felt that they were being treated unfairly to such an extent that they decided to take their children out of the school entirely:

> We had to keep all the migrants with us. That was also an issue that we [i.e., the staff from Cotton Bridge and the school board] fiercely discussed. In fact, I thought "They [i.e., the newly arrived white middle-class parents] speak of North-South partnerships and support to Africa,

but there cannot be three Mohammeds within one class?" (Jude, former teacher)

It was really hard. (…) Only a certain number of disadvantaged children, children from *Cotton Bridge*, were allowed into *Park Lane*. Nevertheless, everyone was eager to go. (…) You had two camps, with angry, angry parents. (…) You saw those parents looking to the other side, because "There it was better". There they had new furniture (…) They had to wait. So depending on the number of enrolments [of white middle-class families, they could possibly move to *Park Lane*]. It was hard for me because I could not explain it. (…) They saw it. They argued "Over there, there are a lot of Belgians and here there are no Belgians. We also want our children to be in the class with Belgians because of the language". There was a lot of anger with the people who were asking questions such as "Why can my child not go?" or "How are children selected?" This was a struggle that went on for years. We have also lost some parents in the process. (Naima, former bridge figure)

Nevertheless, and as will be highlighted in chapters 4 and 5, the board accurately identified the wishes of a faction of white middle-class families living in the neighbourhood. Hence, in the years following the initiation of the experiment, *Park Lane* became highly valued within white middle-class circles. This led the school board to open up more and more classes in *Park Lane* while at the same time closing classes in *Cotton Bridge*. Indeed, as some socioeconomically disadvantaged minoritised families were selected for *Park Lane*, the size of certain class groups at *Cotton Bridge* became smaller, rendering it logistically and economically necessary to merge some classes from the same grade. Moreover, in awaiting the transfer of their students from *Cotton Bridge* to *Park Lane*, some teachers at the former began employing the principles of Jena Plan, such as by placing children in mixed-grade classes. However, this practice was opposed by some socioeconomically disadvantaged minoritised families:

The people of *Cotton Bridge* were not really interested in "the very strange Jena Plan pedagogy". (…) We really had to put a lot of effort in

convinging those who preferred a more traditional system. (Courtie, current principal)

Thus, while many socioeconomically disadvantaged minoritised families were eager to transfer their children to *Park Lane* – mainly because they believed that a mixed population would improve their children's proficiency in the Dutch language – several also looked at progressive education with a certain distrust, an issue that will be picked up in chapter 6. According to the former principal, 20 children were taken from the school as soon as their parents learnt that these principles would be implemented in a more radical way in the future.

Table 1. Evolutions in the student population of *Cotton Bridge/Park Lane*.[17]

	Islamic religious education[a]	Language spoken at home not Dutch[b]	Mother poorly educated[c]
2001-02	76.38	85.26	.
2002-03	79.03	.	.
2003-04	78.90	.	.
2004-05	76.92	73.43	72.86
2005-06	68.60	.	.
2006-07	64.10	.	.
2007-08	55.83	.	56.94
2008-09	53.96	.	.
2009-10	50.00	37.07	47.47
2010-11	47.74	32.44	41.82
2011-12	42.50	28.53	36.27
2012-13	40.55	26.42	34.72
2013-14	39.73	.	.

Note: [a] Due to the fact that philosophies are only implemented in the curriculum from elementary school, the percentage of pupils following Islamic religious education only pertains to pupils enrolled in elementary classes of *Cotton Bridge/Park Lane*. [b] The language of a pupil at home is not deemed to be Dutch when the pupil does not or only talks to a minority of family members in the Dutch language. [c] The mother of a pupil is deemed poorly educated when she holds at most a degree of lower secondary education.

Yet, as *Cotton Bridge* shrank, it increasingly prepared to become part of *Park Lane*. In addition, the school board decided to no longer separate the student bodies of *Cotton Bridge* and *Park Lane*. In fact, in the school's hallway, classes of *Cotton Bridge* alternated with classes of *Park Lane*, as the 30-per-cent rule was increasingly loosened. This process continued until the 2010 summer

holidays, when *Park Lane* "took over" the last class of *Cotton Bridge*. As a result, *Cotton Bridge* ceased to exist. As could be expected (and was also foreseen by the school board), this process changed both the socioeconomic and ethnic composition of the population within the school building (see Table 1).

Consequently, at present the school's student body does not seem to correspond to the population of the city district (see Table 2).[18] Whereas during the school year 2012-13, 74.67% of pupils enrolled in a primary school in Brugse Poort were (1) homeless and/or (2) members of itinerant groups and/or (3) had a mother who did not hold a degree of secondary education and/or (4) lived in a family that received a school allowance in the previous school year, the specific figure at *Park Lane* was only 47.15%. Compared with the other five primary schools in Brugse Poort at the time of measurement, *Park Lane* had the lowest number.

Table 2. Overview of the student populations of all primary schools located in Brugse Poort during the school year 2012-13.

	Homeless		Itinerant[a]		Mother poorly educated[b]		School allowance[c]		Total disadvantaged students	
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)
Traditional Catholic school *Sacred Heart*	0	0.00	91	40.44	194	86.22	71	31.56	210	93.33
Traditional public school *Pinewood*	2	0.80	3	1.20	186	74.10	168	66.93	221	88.05
Traditional Catholic school *St. Joseph*	3	1.27	10	4.22	166	70.04	150	63.29	204	86.08
Progressive public school *Eden*	0	0.00	3	4.23	36	50.70	50	70.42	59	83.10
Progressive public school *Somerset*	0	0.00	0	0.00	22	52.38	19	45.24	29	69.05
Progressive public school *Park Lane*	3	0.78	2	0.52	134	34.72	136	35.23	182	47.15
Total	8	0.66	109	8.99	738	60.89	594	49.01	905	74.67

Note: [a] A pupil is characterised as "itinerant" when he/she is a member of an itinerant group. [b] The mother of a pupil is deemed poorly educated when she holds at most a degree of lower secondary education. [c] The probability that a family is eligible for a school allowance is dependent on its income related to its household composition. As such, the variable "school allowance" can be perceived as an indicator of the economic situation of families. However, to be eligible for a school allowance, the pupil needs to (1) have Belgian nationality or, (2) be an EU citizen living in Belgium for at least five years on a continuous basis, or (3) have parents who are citizens of a member country of the European Economic Area and of which at least one (a) works or has worked in Belgium for at least 12 months in a 32-hour week system or more in the last two years, or (b) is registered as self-employed for at minimum the last two years. This additional criterion could explain why relatively few pupils in the traditional Catholic school *Sacred Heart* are eligible for a school allowance, even though many are members of an itinerant group or have a mother who at most holds a degree of lower secondary education.

Conclusion

This article departed from the observation that whereas in the past the market was generally posited in opposition to social justice, this is no longer the case. Indeed, in the field of education, a market logic is increasingly being propounded as a way to promote social justice. Indeed, it has been suggested that by employing a market logic, inner-city schools can establish a mixed student population, potentially enhancing the educational opportunities of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised pupils as a result. In this article, we engaged with the question as to whether and to what extent such strategies represent a lever for social justice or (also) give rise to new forms of inequality. More precisely, attention was drawn to an inner-city school located in a gentrifying neighbourhood of Ghent, which since 2000 has actively attempted to establish a mixed student population by marketing itself to newly arrived white middle-class families.

Our study has yielded a mixed bag of results. By strategically opening up to white middle-class constituents and their wishes and concerns, the school board succeeded in establishing a "mixed student population". Whether this has augmented the educational opportunities of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families, we cannot say. However, our case study has made clear that such a strategy is highly effective in attracting and retaining white middle-class families. As such, market strategies can potentially act as a lever for social justice when a mixed student population effectuates a radical reading of equal educational opportunities. Nevertheless, it is also clear that the marketing policies employed by inner-city schools are not unproblematic. Certainly, our results accord with Gewirtz, Ball, and Bowe's (1995, p. 92) reflection that a market rationale "creates pressures which drive management decision-making within schools toward *commercial* and away from *educational* or *social* considerations". In our case study, the school leadership first and foremost felt compelled to take measures that were perceived as effective in attracting and retaining white middle-class families. This would not be so problematic were it not for the fact that when white middle-class interests direct policy, the interests of other families are easily overshadowed. Indeed, as indicated by Gewirtz, Ball, and Bowe (1995, p. 143), "[w]hilst the market might foster a greater degree of responsiveness to parental desires and

preferences, it is only the preferences of particular groups of parents which effectively 'count'".[19] In our case study this happened in at least three ways. First, the provision of extra resources to *Park Lane* reduced those available to *Cotton Bridge*. Second, in proactively responding to the wishes of white middle-class families, access for socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families was restricted, precluding the realisation of even a minimal reading of equality of opportunity, defined as *equal access* for all children, regardless of social origin. Likewise, as progressive education was identified as a means to attract white middle-class families, the wishes and concerns of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families on this matter were readily eclipsed, an issue that will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 6. Interestingly, the board of our case study school was aware of the fact that catering to white middle-class families led to practices that were not always "Kosher" and generated significant costs to be borne by socio economically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families. Nevertheless, such practices were deemed necessary in order to establish a mixed student population, with the end justifying the means. Whether this perspective is fair is contingent on what we value most, but such trade-offs highlight the limitations of a market logic as a lever for social justice. Indeed, this strategy could bring about exactly what it is supposed to prevent, namely inequality. This is because in order to be effective, a market logic requires that social justice is forced to the margins, even when it is the original impetus for the turn to the market. Consequently, the game that inner-city schools must play when resorting to a market logic – "resorting" in the sense that schools do not always seem to receive the necessary support to tackle unequal educational opportunities within welfare regimes – could well turn out to be dangerous.

Notes

[1] Based on Goossens, C., & Van Gorp, A. (2016). The myth of the Phoenix: progressive education, migration and the shaping of the welfare state, 1985-2015. *Paedagogica Historica, 52*(5), 467-484.

[2] It is important to make this distinction, considering the fact that the welfare state can be defined as a collection of programmes directed at securing and promoting the economic and social well-being of all citizens (Katz, 2008; Marshall, 1992). In this regard, the welfare state comprises five key mechanisms: (i) public assistance, (ii) social insurance, (iii) taxation, (iv) social services, and (v) social rights (Bouverne-De Bie, 2015; Katz, 2008). The mechanism of social rights safeguards a citizen's access to other mechanisms, such as social services including education. As such, the development of the welfare state in the twentieth century also enabled the concept of citizenship to evolve. Whereas in the early twentieth century, citizenship mainly comprised civil rights and political rights, the development of the welfare state initiated social rights that can be called upon on the basis of citizenship status. Consequently, depending on one's reading of the equality of educational opportunity, one might argue that welfare states (i) should provide equal access to education for all children, regardless of social origin, or (ii) should additionally guarantee that regardless of social origin, children have an equal chance to succeed.

[3] In contrast to intrinsic case research, the focus in instrumental case research is not on the case itself. Rather, the case is used as a tool to facilitate an understanding of a particular issue or phenomenon, here the blossoming of progressive educational initiatives in relation to migration patterns (Grandy, 2010).

[4] This was mainly the result of a pair-off of Fordism with a specific national policy facilitating suburban living. For an interesting and concise discussion regarding the elements causing urban flight in Flanders and Belgium in the period after the Second World War see, for example, Corijn (2012), De Corte, Raymaekers, Thaens, Vandekerckhove, and François (2003), De Decker and Kesteloot (2005), De Decker, Van den Brouck, and Loopmans (2012), and Kesteloot (2002).

[5] These treaties were not an exclusively Belgian phenomenon in post-war Europe. Indeed, in neighbouring countries such as France (from 1947), the Netherlands (from 1948), the former Bundesrepublik Deutschland (from 1955), Luxembourg (from 1957) and the former Deutsche Demokratische Republik (from 1965) officials signed similar recruitment agreements (see Dinç, 2011; Lucassen & Penninx, 1997; OECD, 2004).

[6] Since the first state reform of 1970, Belgium is divided into three communities, at present named the Flemish, the French-language and the German-language communities.

7   In fact, this freedom was enshrined in Article 17 of the Belgian constitution (at present under Article 24).

8   For example, some schools instituted aptitude tests that examined language levels or proper behaviour.

9   With regard to the enrolment policy, a pupil is characterised as disadvantaged when he/she meets one or more of the following criteria: (i) is a member of the itinerant population, (ii) is temporarily or permanently residing outside his/her own family network, (iii) is part of a family that is receiving an an income replacement (later replaced by is living in a family that received a school allowance in the current school year or the year before that), (iv) has a mother who does not hold a secondary education degree, and (v) is living in a family network in which the common language differs from Dutch (later replaced by does not or only talks to a minority of family members in the Dutch language, in which the total number of siblings are counted as one). In 2012, the fifth criterion that could characterise a pupil as disadvantaged was discarded (counting for enrolments from the school year 2013-2014 onwards). More recently, in 2014, the first two criteria were also discarded (going into effect for enrolments for the school year 2015-2016).

10   This decision applies to enrolments from the school year 2009-2010 onwards. For enrolments from the school year 2011-2012 onwards, it was decided not only to order pupils based on the distance between their residence and the school, but also on the distance between their parents' workplace and the school.

11   A bridge figure has a job description that is somewhat similar to that of school social workers in the US.

12   Pseudonyms are used for all schools and respondents to protect the privacy of the respondents. Respondents were ensured confidentiality by not disclosing any information provided by respondents or by doing this in such a way as not to reveal the identity of the respondents.

13   Furthermore, the two other schools in close proximity to *Cotton Bridge* were characterised by a similar student body.

14   The Freinet and Jena Plans were deemed "more open" than Steiner and Montessori, while Dalton schools derive their organisation from Montessori and include certain forms of individualisation (see Boes, 1998). On the relationship between Freinet and Petersen, see Boersma and Velthausz (2008).

15   The flagrancy of this situation was illustrated in an interview with the former Alderman of Education, who declared the white and middle-class character of progressive schools "unacceptable" (De Kock & Boddaert, 1998).

16   The fact that progressive schools are attractive to white middle-class families has been previously buttressed in both empirical (Viaene, 1992; de Bilde, De Fraine, & Van Damme, 2013) and theoretical research (Bernstein, 2003).

17 The numbers shown in the table are derived from documents located in the school archives of *Cotton Bridge/Park Lane*.

18 Table based on numbers of the "Agentschap voor Onderwijsdiensten" [AgODi]. See Agentschap voor Onderwijsdiensten, "Overzicht basisonderwijs 2012-2013," Agentschap voor Onderwijsdiensten, http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/wegwijs /agodi/cijermateriaal/leerlingenkenmerken/default.htm.

19 Indeed, "school marketing strategies are increasingly being founded upon a two-fold categorization of consumers. In the first category are those families which schools desire to attract because they are viewed as an asset to the school. In the second are those who are considered 'undesirable' because they are seen as a liability" (Gewirtz, Ball, & Bowe, 1995, pp. 138-139; see also Katz, 2008 on the usage of the concepts of first- and second-class citizens).

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CHAPTER FOUR

Blowing hot and cold about diversity

Abstract[1]

It has been argued that white middle classes act in the best interest of their children, even when these actions clash with their values. In urban contexts, parents often do this by avoiding ethnically diverse educational settings. Drawing on 35 interviews, this article aims to gain a deeper understanding of the school-choice process of white gentrifiers going against a dominant, white middle-class norm by selecting an ethnically mixed school in the context of Ghent (Belgium). Making use of critical race theory, it is suggested that, although these white gentrifiers have in their actions gone against the grain, they have done less so in their motives, as these are permeated by instrumental reasons.

Introduction

I would not want that there was no mix but I also feared an overkill to the other side… (Heather, respondent)[2]

A rich body of research in education has paid attention to the process of school choice, in particular to school aspects that inform parents' choices, such as academic performance (Karsten *et al.*, 2003; Schneider & Buckley, 2002), commuting distance (Karsten *et al.*, 2003), pedagogy (Clark, Dieleman, & de Klerk, 1992; DeSena, 2006; Stillman, 2012), religious denomination (Ball, 2003; Butler & Robson, 2003; Karsten *et al.*, 2006; Minow, 2011), school atmosphere (Ball, 2003), school curriculum (Cucchiara, 2013; Karsten *et al.*, 2006; Minow, 2011), school demographics (Clark *et al.*, 1992; Hamnett *et al.*, 2013; Saporito, 2003; Schneider & Buckley, 2002; van Zanten, 2003), school facilities (Karsten *et al.*, 2003; Schneider & Buckley, 2002), school identity (Karsten *et al.*, 2006; Minow, 2011; Parker, 2012) and tuition fees (Cucchiara, 2013).

Traditionally, literature on school choice has claimed that middle-class families carefully weigh these aspects in the school-choice process so as to maximise utility and advantage to their children (see Bourdon, 1974; Goldthorpe, 1996). Although the importance of a search for utility and maximum advantage has not been questioned, there is a growing consensus that school choice is not only driven by *self-interest* but also by a framework of *personal values* (Ball, 2003; Gewirtz *et al.*, 1995; Jordan *et al.*, 1994). As Ball (2003, p. 111) asserts, middle-class families "attempt to realise their desires for their children in the immediate and for the future within various social and ethical contexts". As a result, rather than being straightforward, the process of school choice is often complex (Gewirtz *et al.*, 1995), as self-interest might conflict with personal values on various aspects.

Several studies have suggested that this is certainly the case for white middle-class gentrifiers living in ethnically diverse urban neighbourhoods as they struggle with the issue of ethnic diversity (Hamnett *et al.*, 2013; Kimelberg, 2014; Quiroz, 2013; van Zanten, 2003). This paper builds on this body of educational research by focusing on the school-choice process of white middle-

class families that selected an inner-city, ethnically diverse public school. The next section reviews the literature on gentrification and schools and suggests the need for research on the school-choice process of gentrifiers who are opting for ethnically diverse schools. In the second section, critical race theory (CRT) is introduced as an analytical framework for this study. The third section discusses the specific research context by briefly going into the district under study, followed by an examination of the district's schools and its allocation system. The fourth section concentrates on the method and sample on which the analysis is based. In the fifth section, attention is paid to the complex and conflicting nature of the school-choice process by addressing the question as to why our sample of white middle-class gentrifiers *opted in* to an ethnically diverse public school. Finally, the concluding section discusses the main findings of this study and draws out some implications for educational policy.

Literature review

Although being a diverse and ambivalent group (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008), it has been argued that many white middle-class gentrifiers champion liberal, pluralistic and multicultural values (Allen, 1980; Bridge, 2006; Caufield, 1994; Jackson & Benson, 2014; Ley, 1996; Zukin, 2008). As Tissot (2015) shows in her study on the South End in Boston, many white (upper) middle-class gentrifiers celebrate ethnic diversity and, as such, distinguish themselves from suburban white middle classes (for similar findings in a UK context, see May, 1996). Indeed, despite the fact that it has been demonstrated that social relations in gentrifying communities are often no more than "tectonic" (Robson & Butler, 2001), it seems that many white middle-class gentrifiers stand genuinely positive towards ethnic diversity.

However, when gentrifiers start having children – a phenomenon that traditionally has only been observed scantily in the literature, due to the fact that many gentrifiers arrive childless in the city – these positive attitudes do not necessarily align with the need for cultural reproduction. In fact, several studies have demonstrated how many white middle-class gentrifiers are wary of ethnic diversity in the context of schooling (Ball, 2003; Boterman, 2013; Butler & Robson, 2003; Gewirtz *et al.*, 1995; Karsten *et al.*, 2003; Roberts & Lakes, 2016). As has been maintained by van Zanten (2003, p. 107), minoritised

pupils "are rejected or looked at with suspicion because they are constructed as a hindrance for the cognitive, personal and social development of middle-class children". In other words, in the field of education, the issue of ethnic diversity could entail a tension between values and self-interest.

In the trade-off between values and self-interest, self-interest has been concurred to often take the upper hand. Indeed, a bulk of studies demonstrate how white urban middle classes avoid ethnically diverse schools by deploying different strategies, depending on the context, such as moving to ethnically less-diverse areas (Boterman, 2013; Butler & Robson, 2003), taking refuge in the private sector (Butler & Robson, 2003; Clotfelter, 2004), applying for magnet schools (Saporito, 2003), enrolling in schools outside the district, whether or not by renting property in an area close to a desired school for a short period of time (Boterman, 2013; DeSena, 2006), or testing their children for talented and gifted programmes (DeSena, 2006). This is being buttressed by a recent study of Roberts and Lakes (2016, p. 203) in the context of Atlanta, Georgia. Investigating the school selection process of 30 middle-class mothers in gentrifying areas, the authors concluded that, although "mothers expressed an equity agenda honoring educational diversity, actual school-selection outcomes belied their liberal intentions" (for similar conclusions in a Dutch context, see Clark, Dieleman, & de Klerk, 1992).

Although research in this area has well been developed, most efforts have concentrated on white middle-class families *opting out* of ethnically diverse schools. Consequently, groups that have gone against the grain, this by *opting in* to ethnically diverse schools, have received much less attention (for notable exceptions, see Byrne, 2006; Kimelberg, 2014; Reay *et al.*, 2007). This lacuna has become a pressing research issue, as recent studies suggest that middle-class enrolment in urban, ethnically mixed schools may be increasingly common (see Billingham & Kimelberg, 2013; Cucchiara, 2013; Cucchiara & Horvat, 2009; Posey-Maddox, 2014; Stillman, 2012), reflecting a potential shift in the thinking of urban middle class families in cities throughout the Western world. Moreover, while existing studies in the field of education provide us with a nuanced understanding of white middle-class families portraying ethnic diversity as a *threat*, they often overlook the possibility of white middle-class gentrifiers framing ethnic diversity also as an *asset* for individual advancement.

As such, with regard to diversity, white middle-class values are placed in diametrical opposition to their interests. As a consequence of the former, it is easy to view white middle-class parents who have gone against the grain (i) as individuals who are indifferent towards issues of ethnicity or (ii) as disinterested selfless or even self-abnegating subjects who solely put their values into action. In fact, some scholars seem to have picked up the view that selecting an ethnically diverse school is an act of self-sacrifice, which can only deserve one's upmost respect:

> I have a deep admiration for those gentry parents who do enroll their children in the neighborhood school and set the stage for the integration that is possible in gentrifying neighborhoods. I believe school integration remains an important societal goal, and I am glad to have met others who not only share this belief, but have the courage to do something about it. No one will ever consider them heroes (…) But, after spending months interviewing gentry parents about their school choice decision-making process, I offer them my sincere respect. (Stillman, 2012, pp. xiv-xv)

This (dominant) view, however, is problematic not only because more often than not it is underlain with a sense of superiority and racist stereotypes,[3] but also because some studies are beginning to reveal a different and more complex picture than the one commonly drawn. For instance, in their ESRC research project *Identities, Educational Choice and the White Urban Middle Classes*, Diane Reay, Gill Crozier, and David James have started to question the assumption that the choice of a group of white middle-class families for ethnically diverse schools is solely guided by the enactment of liberal, multicultural and communitarian values (see e.g., Crozier, Reay, & James, 2011; Reay, Crozier, & James, 2011; Reay, 2008, Reay *et al.*, 2007; Reay *et al.*, 2008). Focusing on three conurbations (one of which was London), the authors argue that white middle-class interest in ethnical diversity should "be understood not only as recognition and valuing of 'the ethnic other' but also as a project of cultural capital acquisition" (Reay, Crozier, & James, 2011, p. 83). An equally complex picture is drawn in research carried out by Bridget Byrne on the experience of white middle-class mothers of young children in two South London areas, Clapham and Camberwell to be more precise (Byrne, 2006a; 2006b). After

interviewing 25 women, Byrne (2006b, p. 127) concludes that whereas respondents seem to espouse multiculturalism and prefer schools with some amount of ethnic diversity, one "could certainly have too much of a good thing". The current study aims to contribute to this emerging body of critical scholarship.

Our focus here is on the group of white middle-class gentrifiers that indeed went against the grain by opting in to ethnically mixed schooling, thereby avoiding both all-minority and all-majority schools. Making an appeal to critical race theory as an analytical framework, we contend that this group relates itself to diversity, neither as indifferent nor as disinterested. It is suggested that the school-choice process of these white middle-class gentrifiers is highly ethnicised, making a more complex and nuanced understanding of the school-choice process of the urban middle classes necessary.

To support this claim, we draw on in-depth interviews with 35 white middle-class parents who selected an ethnically mixed urban school in Brugse Poort, an ethnically diverse and gentrifying district of Ghent (Belgium). Ghent is a compelling case, as parents have relatively much control over the degree of ethnic diversity with which their children are confronted in school. As such, the Ghent context differs strongly from the one in previous research in which parents experienced a sense of "powerlessness" during the school decision-making process (Byrne, 2006b, p. 121). This is due to three reasons. First, as Ghent is characterised by a relative freedom of school choice, children are not allocated to schools. Second, throughout the Ghent educational landscape, there exists a great variety in the ethnic makeup of schools. Third, more than 99% of all primary schools refrain from collecting registration or tuition fees. Taken together, this enables parents to more or less select a school with a preferred ethnic makeup.

Critical race theory as an analytical framework

Critical race theory (CRT) is a lens for interpreting the meaning and role of race and racism in contemporary society (for an elaborated statement, see Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). Originating in the mid-1970s in the field of legal studies (see Bell, 1976; Freeman, 1978), since the mid-1990s, CRT has been

present in educational scholarship (see Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). In both fields, CRT starts from the premise that race is not biologically but socially defined. Yet, this does not mean that issues of race and racism do not matter (Möschel, 2011). Rather than having entered a colour-blind or even a post-racial society, where racism is aberrant, CRT asserts that we live in a society where racism is endemic, permanent and structurally ingrained on legal, cultural and psychological levels (Tate, 1997). Consequently, racism is viewed as a force that steers practices in a variety of societal domains and hence contributes to contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage (Matsuda *et al.*, 1993). Indeed, although race is a social construct, its effects throughout society are real and significant.

To analyse the role of race and racism in a variety of practices, CRT scholars often rely on a "conceptual toolbox" (Gillborn, 2008, p. 31). In this study, we especially make an appeal to two of these concepts, namely to the concept of *interest convergence* and its counterpart *interest divergence*. Taken together, these principles suggest that the answer to the question of whether white people will support or hinder racial equality depends on the benefits that can be gained. As Derrick Bell (1980, p. 523) argues, interest convergence suggests that "the interest of blacks [and by extension, all minoritised communities] in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites". In contrast, the principle of interest divergence suggests that white people will hinder racial equality when they understand and see that a direct advantage will accrue from it (Gillborn, 2013). It is important to stress that the principle of interest convergence and that of interest divergence relate both to *real* and *alleged* advances for minoritised communities. As a matter of fact, Bell (1976, 1980) viewed the landmark decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, in which the court ordered the end of state-mandated racial segregation in the US, as an example of interest convergence notwithstanding the fact that he also doubted whether desegregated schools would serve the interests of minoritised communities.

In this article, we employ the concept of interest convergence and interest divergence to examine the school-choice process of a specific group of white gentrifiers going against the dominant middle-class norm by selecting an ethnically mixed school for their children. By employing this conceptual

toolbox, it is endeavoured to focus attention on how these choices are permeated, not only by values but potentially also by interests. Moreover, by extending the concept of interest convergence and interest divergence to the field of school choice, we aim to open up new avenues to analyse processes of social reproduction from a critical race perspective. Before going into these matters more deeply, we will first provide an overview of Brugse Poort district, its schools and the system of school choice in Ghent, followed by a discussion of the methodology.

Reseach context

The District

Brugse Poort is one of the 25 city districts of Ghent (Belgium), located northwest of the city centre. It was developed in the early nineteenth century as one of the new industrial centres of the city. Housing a number of thriving textile mills, the district soon attracted a mass of people willing to work and, hence, evolved into a fully fledged white working-class district.

Yet, since the 1960s, Brugse Poort has started to ethnically diversify as (the then struggling) industry started to recruit labour migrants, mainly from Turkey and Maghreb countries. This process was facilitated by the national government that pursued several bilateral agreements in which the employment of labour migrants was settled. Migration to Brugse Poort firmly continued in the next decades as a result of subsequent processes of family reunion and family formation. Since the opening up of the European Union in 2004 and 2007, also migration from Central and Eastern Europe has drastically increased. As such, in 2013, 49.50% of people living in Brugse Poort were of foreign origin (9,031 out of 18,246 residents). Taking into account that the origin of 10.72% of the district's population is unknown (1,955 out of 18,246 residents), it is apparent that Brugse Poort has passed into a majority-minority district.[4]

Since the 1990s, Brugse Poort has also been confronted with an on-going gentrification process. Initially, gentrification has been spurred by the actions of individual white middle-class families that bought and rehabilitated former working-class houses. Since the 2000s, however, also property developers have

jumped on the bandwagon and hence fuelled the process of gentrification. Student complexes, gated communities and loft apartments increasingly characterise the view of the district. At present, one can even witness the development of a so-called "creative hub" that will house several IT start-ups and a "pop-up" that will be the habitat of a diverse mix of art and design galleries. These large-scale projects will go well with recently established businesses, such as an organic and fair-trade grocery store, "Belgian's very first indoor camping", and a "relaxation locality", which serves a mix of cocktails and renowned beers in a trendy setting that, according to the owners, is cleansed of "slot machines and fluorescent tubes". The planning and implementation of an urban renewal project in Brugse Poort from 1998 possibly explains this movement of capital (Smith, 1979), as the project explicitly endeavoured to initiate a "social mix" – a concept that has been recognised as a euphemism for legitimating gentrification strategies (see Bridge *et al.*, 2014).

Schooling in the District

As a booming industrial district in the nineteenth century, it did not take a long time until a network of (both public and private) schools emerged in Brugse Poort (i.e., from the 1850s). For over a century, the student bodies of these schools have been predominantly white working-class. However, the district's growing ethnic diversity from the 1960s has not gone unnoticed for schools. In fact, since the early 1970s, minoritised children started to make up part of the school population. In the next two decades, this process not only continued but also intensified – something that led to some schools becoming majority-minority and even all-minority. Up till now, this situation had not changed, due to two elements (see Table 1 for an overview of indicators on the socio-economic and ethnic makeup of schools located in the district). First, due to the youthful age structure of minoritised communities, they make up a majority of the school-age population living in the district. Second, many whites (including numerous gentrifiers) living in the district reject neighbourhood schools due to their ethnic diversity. Nevertheless, two schools of the district are at present majority-white. These schools, which we refer to as *Somerset* and *Park Lane*, are very popular with some faction of white gentrifiers, notwithstanding the fact that the makeup of these schools is still ethnically diverse.

School Choice

In Ghent, every legal person has the right to establish a school autonomously. One can therefore discern public schools (i.e., schools organised by public administrations, such as a community, a province or a municipality) from private ones (i.e., schools organised by another body, such as a diocese, a monastic order, a non-profit organisation, etc.). However, the public/private divide in education is not as clear-cut as in other contexts, such as the UK or the US. This is because more than 98% of all primary private schools in Ghent are publicly funded. In return, these schools are obliged to refrain from collecting registration or tuition fees. As a result, the process of school choice is less affected by financial means.

With regard to student allocation, the Ghent education system is marked by parental freedom of choice. This implies that parents are free to select a school in accordance to their personal beliefs, values and attitudes. It also implies that enrolment requests are ordered on the basis of the 'first come, first served' principle. In recent years, however, this absolute freedom has somewhat been restricted. Starting from the enrolment period for the school year 2009-2010, the Ghent education system orders children on the basis of the distance between their residence and the school. In this case, the shorter the distance, the higher the ranking a child obtains. This decision applies to enrolments from the school year 2009-2010 onwards. For enrolments from the school year 2011-2012 onwards, it was decided not only to order pupils based on the distance between their residence and the school but also on the distance between their parents' workplace and the school. Consequently, to a certain extent, school choice was limited, due to the installation of what are *de facto* catchment areas. Nonetheless, the presence of many majority-white schools in neighbouring districts, in combination with many loopholes in the educational legislation, makes it feasible for white middle-class families to game the system and avoid schools with more minoritised and socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils than is the case in *Somerset* and *Park Lane* (see Table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of schools located in the Brugse Poort or in the adjacent districts during the school year 2014-2015 (in percentage).[5]

School	Denomination	Progressive	Mother low educated	School allowance	Language home not Dutch
Brugse Poort					
Private school 'Sacred Heart'	Yes	No	83.82	37.02	95.00[a]
Public school 'Pinewood'	No	No	73.39	67.33	80.65
Private school 'St. Joseph'	Yes	No	73.33	68.22	50.42
Public school 'Somerset'	No	Yes	26.17	16.97	33.94
Public school 'Park Lane'	No	Yes	32.72	30.64	25.45
Mariakerke					
Private school 'St. Anne'	Yes	No	39.37	34.13	21.60
Private school 'St. Gregory'	Yes	No	21.38	20.13	16.98
Public school 'Oak Park'	No	No	21.45	23.48	10.91
Public school 'Paramount'	No	No	8.85	12.39	7.96
Drongen					
Public school 'Westwood'	No	No	21.01	19.93	11.59
Private school 'St. James'	Yes	No	12.19	6.81	7.53
Private school 'Holy Cross'	Yes	No	9.94	10.26	5.77
Public school 'Polaris'	No	No	13.47	10.20	3.27
Private school 'St. Matthew'	No	No	3.19	3.68	3.19
Watersportbaan–Ekkergem					
Public school 'Goldenview'	No	Yes	29.59	31.55	39.72
Public school 'Hazelwood'	No	Yes	39.05	47.93	34.32
Elisabeth–Behijnhof Papagaai					
Private school 'All Saints'	Yes	Yes	26.64	31.58	36.51
Public school 'Fair Hill'	No	No	26.59	23.81	28.37
Public school 'Bellevue'	No	No	12.28	10.09	11.40
Rabot					
Private school 'St. Mary'	Yes	No	62.92	34.44	66.89
Private school 'Elderflower'	No	Yes	11.47	35.78	16.51
Bloemekenswijk					
Public school 'Millenium'	No	No	88.00	56.33	85.33
Private school 'Trinity'	Yes	No	83.42	62.81	81.91
Public school 'Northview'	No	Yes	33.44	49.83	39.13
Downtown[b]					
Public school 'Hemsworth'	No	Yes	8.70	11.66	13.72

Note: [a] Due to issues of privacy percentages above 95.00% are not displayed. [b] The Brugse Poort is not adjacent to the city centre. We nevertheless included one city centre school because parents frequently referred to it during interviews.

Sample and method

The data presented in the next section draw on interviews with 35 white middle-class parents of whom the children were enrolled in the public and ethnically mixed progressive primary school *Park Lane* (ages 3-12). *Park Lane* is an interesting case as it is well-liked by a group of white middle-class families. Yet, *Park Lane* has not always received attention from white middle-class families. In the late 1990s, the student body of the school comprised 99% minoritised pupils, many of which from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. As the former school board felt it was necessary to reverse this tendency, a pilot project was set up in the year 2000 (see chapter 3 for an elaborate description). More precisely, it was decided to establish a new school within, but separated from, the already existing school. As the school board foresaw in a progressive pedagogical approach (i.e., Jena Plan pedagogy), set a maximum quota of 30% minoritised pupils, and carefully selected which minoritised pupils were allowed in this new school through a process of "filtered permeability" (Quiroz, 2013, p. 61) – measures that were legally possible due to the fact that both schools were *de jure* recognized as one – it was hoped to entice and retain a new and desired clientele. This is because these anticipatory measures were believed to be attractive to and served the interests of the white middle classes (cf. Ball, Maguire, & Macrae, 1998 on the privileging of certain families through an economy of student worth; Jennings, 2010 on the concept of schools' choice). As the project appealed to sought-after families, it was possible to expand it while at the same time allowing the already existing school to peter out. The net result of this process has been a continuing 'whitening' and a 'middleclassization' of the student body. Whereas during the 2004-2005 school year, *Park Lane* was characterized by 73.43% pupils whose language spoken at home is not Dutch and 72.86% pupils with a low-educated mother, one decade later these figures have dropped to 25.45% and 32.72%, respectively.

Participants were recruited through an advert posted on the *Facebook* group of the Parents Committee, which provided information on the researcher and the research topic. Parents were asked for an interview on the school-choice process for their children. Nevertheless, the reason why *Park Lane* was selected

for this research project (i.e., because of its ethnically mixed student body and high popularity among a group of white middle-class gentrifiers) was deliberately kept vague so as to obtain more reliable information on such sensitive issues as race and ethnicity. For one and the same reason, there was made no mention of ethnicity, education or occupation as a condition of participation, something that was moreover needless, given the fact that the group was predominantly comprised of white professionals. In fact, this was also the reason why the *Facebook* group was purposefully selected for the advert.

While several fathers responded to our call, mainly mothers agreed to participate in the study (23/35). This is because the majority of the members of the *Facebook* group were mothers (136/204), something that is unsurprising, given the large involvement of mothers in the schooling of their children (Jordan *et al.*, 1994; Reay, 1998). Geographically, all participants lived close to the school (all but one within a one-mile radius). Soon after graduating from college, in the first chapter of their professional careers, most participants (all except one) had bought a home. In all but three cases, this was also in the period before starting a family, the consequence being that only a minority of our respondents had taken schooling into account when acquiring property in the district (4/35). Compared to other city districts, Brugse Poort was and still is characterised by relatively cheap housing prices and is, moreover, strategically located, close to the main railway station and at walking distance from the city center. Combined with the planning and implementation of an urban renewal project, mainly these factors drew many participants to the district. With regard to socio-economic status, a large majority of participants were holding graduate (10/35) or postgraduate degrees (23/35). Moreover, most participants were self-employed (3/35) or were occupying professional, administrative or managerial positions (30/35), many of which in the education (n = 12), culture (n = 5), welfare (n = 5), healthcare (n = 3) or media sector (n = 2). Taken together, most if not all participants fit the profile of white middle-class gentrifiers, here defined as highly educated white persons with a high occupational status that had moved to and bought a property in the district (see Table 2 for an overview of respondents' characteristics).

Table 2. Characteristics of respondents (*N = 35*)

Characteristic	No. of respondents
Gender	
Females	23
Male	12
Marital status	
Married	29
Divorced	5
Widow	1
Migration background [spouse]	
Has a migration background	0 [2]
Has no migration background	35[27]
Highest academic degree [spouse]	
High school degree	2[5]
Bachelor's degree	10[8]
Master's degree	21[13]
Doctoral degree	2[3]
Occupational status [spouse][6]	
Never worked and long-term unemployed	0[0]
Working class	2[4]
Intermediate	13[13]
Salariat	20 [12]
Homeownership status	
Owning	34
Renting	1
Years living in the area	
1-5	1
6-10	20
11-15	6
16-20	6
≥ 21	2

It's important to note that in interviews we did not impose an a priori view of the nature of school choice by presenting parents with a list of possible reasons for selecting a school (for a critique on this approach, see Gewirtz *et al.*, 1995). Rather, we tried to capture parents' *process* of school choice by questioning (i) their views on various schools inside and outside the district, (ii) their reasons for (not) going on school visits to certain schools, (iii) the impediments perceived and encountered during the school choice process and (iv) how decisions on schools were made and what information was used in this process. As such, we draw attention to the ambivalences, the uncertainties and the contextualised nature inherent to the school-choice process. Afterwards, interviews were transcribed orthographically and later analysed thematically in *NVivo 10*. Throughout this approach, we also paid attention to the prevalence of specific sentiments. By using CRT as an analytical framework, we aim to

apprehend how issues of race inform these gentrifiers' school-choice process. Given our small sample size, the use of self-selection sampling and the focus on one school, however, results should be interpreted with caution.

Results

Interest Convergence

As could be expected, most respondents embodied and expressed strong liberal and multicultural sentiments (32/35). While a combination of job opportunities and low housing prices brought many of them to the district, many celebrated the district's diversity (for similar findings, see Billingham & Kimelberg, 2013). In fact, some respondents even juxtaposed their urban lifestyle "which makes your world bigger" to a rural one that, in their view, was characterised by conservatism and narrowness (*n* = 8). These sentiments also came to the fore in relation to education. For instance, many parents expressed their aversion to Catholic and elite schools (30/35). For some, this antagonism towards such schools also translated into an explicit preference for progressive education (16/35). Rather than searching for the best school in the city (like many *other* parents did), they consciously looked for schools in the neighbourhood:

> It makes no sense to live in a neighbourhood and to tell your child "This neighbourhood is not good enough for schooling, therefore we'll visit another one. However, this neighbourhood is all right for living". To me this does not seem to be a respectable starting point. As such, I really got annoyed by friends of whom the spouses started saying "Maybe, there is a better school somewhere else". (Nathan)

The choice for an inner-city public school was driven by an ambiguous interplay of several aspects. Parents pointed to the convenience of a school nearby in relation to transportation (30/35). In fact, as few of our respondents needed a car to get to work, many opted to commute by bicycle, sometimes combined with public transport (30/35). Next to schools within the district, most parents had therefore only looked to feasible school options in relation to transportation (i.e., schools that were located on the way to work or the train station). Taken together with their aversion to Catholic and elite schools,

parents' lists of potential school options were relatively small to begin with, notwithstanding the fairly high amount of school choice characterising the education system. Some parents nevertheless valued nearby schools, as it was felt these could strengthen one's connectedness to the neighbourhood in general and facilitate the establishment of local social networks in particular (19/35). More surprising was the fact that almost all respondents proclaimed to have chosen a neighbourhood school due to its diverse student body (32/35). Indeed, whereas many members of the white middle-class tend to reject public neighbourhood schools because of their ethnic makeup, respondents in our study mentioned the exact opposite:

> This is what I really like about *Park Lane*: the fact that it is balanced. It is the kind of mix you would find on the street, a great mix of nationalities. I really like the fact that they get in touch with all these nationalities. I really would not want an all-white school. (Abigail)

As the latter part of Abigail's comment already suggests, some respondents even discarded schools in adjacent districts because of their elitist and white status.

> I rejected *Bellevue* [public school in an adjacent district, see Table 1] because I got the impression that it was somewhat more elitist and whiter than most schools in the neighbourhood. Really, I would rather have my children growing up in a school that matches the neighbourhood. There's a lot of diversity, certainly in Brugse Poort, in Ghent in general too. Hence, I think it's natural that this diversity is reflected in the school. (Erin)

> This was the downside of *Hemsworth* [public school in an adjacent district, see Table 1]. *Hemsworth* is rather white. The ratio in *Park Lane* is six to four. Six whites against four, and I think that's the best possible proportion. This is because you assume your kid will have to live his entire life with other cultures. (Derek)

In almost all interviews, it became clear that school choice was highly ethnicised (33/35). Not only did parents seem to base their school selection on

issues of ethnicity but also did they have a good understanding of the ethnic makeup of neighbourhood and popular schools – something that, however, was unsurprising as many tried to obtain such information through conversations with acquaintances, friends, family and/or educational staff at school visits and/or through sifting online forums and school websites. Indeed, schools' ethnic makeup was anything but a matter of secondary importance. In this way, our respondents did not differ to a great extent from gentrifiers rejecting inner-city public schools, often noted in other research (see Ball, 2003; Boterman, 2013; Gewirtz *et al.*, 1995; van Zanten, 2003). But whereas the latter reject ethnic diversity, our respondents embraced it, at least to some extent. By selecting an inner-city public school, our respondents seemed to have gone beyond liberal, multicultural and pluralistic rhetoric and, as such, established a difference from other white middle-class constituents:

> One reason why I think it is important that our child is going to a neighbourhood school is that society has become really diverse. I believe it is an *asset* that she [respondent's daughter] is immersed in such diversity, that she is really going through all this. (Alexander, emphasis added)

> I think it is important for Flemish kids to get a broader perspective on the world. We are not the only ones here. It is not only privileged white kids on clean streets and water coming from the tap. It is important they learn to deal with it because the world has opened up. (Lauren)

In these comments, it is clear how our respondents perceive a racially mixed student body positively in today's society. But rather than exclusively being motivated by values, it seemed that instrumental reasons permeated these comments. In fact, none of our respondents gave some indication of perceiving a racially mixed student body as a means to make race a focal point of discussion and hence to politicise structural inequalities present in society. Instead, racial mix was mainly recognised and used to one's individual advantage. More specifically, respondents took multiculturalism in contemporary society as a given, not likely to change in the nearby future. As a result, these white gentrifiers perceived a racially mixed student body as an "asset" that could be appropriated as a means for acquiring multicultural

competencies, which were found to be essential in today's diverse society (for similar results, see Reay *et al.*, 2007). Indeed, parents were convinced it was necessary to go beyond business as usual so as to prepare their children "well" for life. In order to provide their children with at least an equally strong position as they held, it was felt that it would not suffice to create replicas of themselves by molding their children in their own image. Rather respondents were of the opinion that their children should become *evolved* versions of themselves that are *attuned* to the new realities, of which ethnic diversity is an important one. As such, our respondents are highly similar to the parents in the study of Crozier, Reay, and James (2011, p. 200) whose espousal of cosmopolitanism was underpinned by "the drive to recreate more contemporary versions of themselves and the lives of their children".

It is important to note that respondents' dispositions toward ethnically mixed schooling and multicultural competences were associated with what Reay *et al.* (2011, p. 31) have named the 'family habitus' (i.e., the active presence of a collective family history). In fact, parents' own educational trajectories (i.e., trajectories that were mapped out by their parents) and subsequent experiences seemed pivotal in the formation of such dispositions, and hence, in the process of school choice itself. For instance, a number of respondents indicated that, as a result of their own education in a different temporal and spatial reality, they only came into contact with ethnic difference once they moved to the city for post-secondary education. As this led to troublesome experiences with ethnic difference in the past and for some still does in the present (e.g., one respondent explicitly argued that she is still struggling with how to act and behave naturally in ethnically diverse environments), respondents preferred to avoid the ethnic makeup of their own schools for their children. In sum, the problems that respondents' experienced later in life as (what they believed to be) a consequence of their education in all-majority schools were internalized to form certain dispositions (e.g., that all-majority schools were not a proper form of education) that later on interacted with a specific social context to produce a choice for an ethnically mixed school.

Furthermore, by instilling multiculturalist dispositions *through* a process of rubbing shoulders with the ethnic other, we believe parents also aimed at instilling a specific (progressive) *middle-classness* in their children that is set

apart from the quality of being of *other* (conservative) white-class factions. In fact, what respondents seemed to aim at when selecting an ethnically mixed school is the reproduction of a specific middle-class self open and tolerant toward ethnic difference by means of an immersion in diversity. From this view, it is intelligible why white gentrifiers chose to integrate their kids in an ethnically mixed school. We have a clear example of what critical race theorists have tried to capture with the concept of interest convergence (Bell, 1980). White gentrifiers' interest in acquiring multicultural competences aligned with integration efforts. The fact that these gentrifiers recognised an ethnically mixed student body as a means for acquiring multicultural competences prevented that they felt squeezed between their liberal, pluralistic and multicultural values and their interests in their child, as has often been the case in other contexts (see Boterman, 2013; Bridge, 2006). It is, however, essential to note that we observed that some respondents tended to (over)emphasise the importance they attached to, and their positive feelings towards, the presence of minoritised pupils in Park Lane's student body:

> I find it [the ethnic mix in Park lane] fantastic. Every day I get there, I'm still pleased. I'm very content and I do not want to hear from people who are complaining about mixed schools. (…). You just cannot fault it, it's really a great mix! (Piper)

Although there certainly is a risk of falling into researcher speculation, the idea that some respondents were (over) emphasising the value they attributed to the presence of minoritised pupils became plausible/convincing when juxtaposing some of their statements. For instance, while Piper fiercely champions the ethnic mix in Park Lane, earlier in the interview her husband Aaron claimed (as one of the few respondents) that they "didn't think too much about" ethnic diversity when choosing the school. As if the combination of these statements was not strange/paradoxical enough, Piper later in the interview went on to say that she would be scared if a school would be characterized by a majority of minoritised pupils, this because of the "effect" it could have on her child. In the next section, we will return to, and elaborate on, these fears toward ethnic diversity. For now, however, we want to argue that the possibility of *post factum* exaggerations in relation to ethnic diversity are intelligible when taking into account their significance regarding self-representation on two levels. Indeed,

as has been argued, this specific group of urban white middle-class families wants to be (perceived as) both good parents and good citizens (Reay, 2008).

First, by stressing the unequivocal merit of ethnic diversity in Park Lane, for example, by saying that you "just cannot fault" the "great mix" present in the school, respondents seemed to have found a way to rationalise their school-choice process, this in a context where few feasible school options in relation to commuting distance were observed. They were, therefore, able to present and define themselves as good parents, something that was crucial, given that respondents felt they had to answer for their school choice to friends, colleagues and family. The theme of going against the norm and needing to answer for this behaviour was in fact something all respondents struggled with to a greater or lesser extent.

> I am recalling the comments I got when I enrolled my son. I got a lot of comments of people saying "Come on, you cannot do this?!" I used to reply by saying "He's only two and a half years old. It would be a shame if you would not do the same. If you want to keep your child within a reserve that is okay for me." But you soon realize you cannot ask them the same question. (Katie)

By using a pejorative term such as "a reserve" to describe all-majority schools, it seems that Katie tried to defend her own choice for the ethnically mixed *Park Lane* by stressing the worldly character of the school - a characteristic that, as a result of respondents' specific middle-class habitus - was a signifier of a "good" school. Nevertheless, the fact that she also referred to the young age of her son as a means to legitimize her choice illustrates that she is neither completely confident about the choice made, nor completely free from doubts about the potential "effect" minoritised pupils could have on her son.

Second, by accentuating their positive feelings towards ethnic diversity, respondents were also able to present themselves as good, ethical and progressive citizens valuing multiculturalism who explicitly denounce racism and discriminatory behaviour. Indeed, parents mentioned that they would feel "uncomfortable" when they would have enrolled their children in an all-majority school. As one respondent noted, such a choice "would go against

everything I stand for". In contrast, going against the grain was felt to be "kind of rock 'n' roll" and left participants feeling "proud". By reiterating the importance they attached to ethnic diversity, respondents made it very clear that they were not the ones who were taking "sanctuary" in "fortified" white schools. A particular intersection between class and race is situated here. In fact, throughout their discourses, respondents used ethnic diversity in symbolical ways to actively distinguish themselves as superior from *other* white *classes*, whom in Piper's words were "complaining about" ethnically mixed schooling and whom others referred to as "anxious," "boring," "traditional" and "*bourgeois*".

Interest Divergence

The fact that this group eschewed all-majority schools, however, did not mean that there could not exist such a thing as too great of a proportion of minoritised pupils within a school. This became very apparent when respondents started talking about an "appropriate," "good," "perfect" or even "healthy" ethnic mix:

> We consciously selected a neighbourhood school. There are middle-class people living in this district who send their kids to Zwijnaarde [a suburban majority-white city district of Ghent] because they believe their kids will not receive enough learning opportunities as a result of the high number of immigrants present in class groups. We on the other hand wanted to send our kids to a school in the neighbourhood. However, we also did not want a school of which 90 or 95% of the kids is of non-Flemish origin because we think it's important to have a healthy mix. (Matthew)

As can be observed, parents used these terms to describe the kind of racial mix they preferred. For our respondents, an adequate racial mix should not be comprised of too many minoritised pupils, as this situation was perceived to be "unhealthy". Whereas schools characterised by some diversity were regarded as "enriching," schools with a majority of minoritised pupils were rejected by our respondents, due to their alleged threat (31/35). Indeed, some respondents explicitly stated not wanting to become a "minority". Consequently, schools where their children would be "outnumbered" were discarded in advance. For

instance, in their process of school choice, none of our parents went on a school visit to *Sacred Heart*, a school that is literally adjacent to *Park Lane* (separated only by a wall) but which is characterised by a high number of minoritised pupils. This could also be explained by the fact that *Sacred Heart* is a denominational school. However, most respondents referred to the ethnic mix of the school as a drawback. In fact, one respondent, Beatrice, initially planned to visit Sacred Heart but when confronted with the amount of minoritised parents upon arrival decided to turn back. Moreover, only three respondents visited the close-by non-denominational public school *Pinewood,* also characterised by a majority of minoritised pupils. In contrast, the much-further-away majority-white *Hemsworth* received six visits from parents:

> We could see that some other schools in the neighbourhood really were minority-white schools and we were not comfortable with that. We absolutely do not have a problem with other cultures, we even find this enriching *but* it cannot have the upper hand. In other schools, however, we felt this was indeed the case. (Jessica, emphasis added)

> If we suppose *Park Lane* had a ratio of 8/10 [8 minoritised children, 2 white children], I would never send my kid there. (…) You cannot make your child the victim of your ideological choices. (Derek)

The last comment is very informative in this regard. First, it demonstrates how parents negotiate their supposed liberal, pluralistic and multicultural ideologies with the aim of letting their children thrive. Second, this comment also illustrates how a reconciliation between these two facets is not whitout problems as (too many) minoritised pupils are perceived as a liability in realising this aim. In fact, sentiments as these often came back throughout the data and seem to point toward a number of implicitly shared assumptions. First, it seems that most respondents shared the supposition that minoritised children were not equal to white (middle-class) children and that in fact their own children was superior. Second, and as a result of the previous, there was a fear amongst parents of contagion as many believed that the characteristics which they themselves assigned to minoritised children could be transferred to their children directly or indirectly as a result of an exposure to too much diversity. These beliefs will be discussed below in more detail. For now,

however, we wish to point out that, when bearing in mind this belief system, it becomes intelligible why respondents felt that selecting a majority-minority school would require to sacrifice their children and make them "the victim" of their choices. Consequently, whereas our respondents did not feel squeezed between their values and their interests with regard to schools with some proportion of minoritised pupils, they did feel so when it came to majority-minority schools. As such, respondents seemed to work towards integration while at the same time also aiming at isolation.

In all of this, *Park Lane* school emerged as a solution. It allowed respondents to select a neighbourhood school that, in their view, was acceptable – a school that reflects the composition of the neighbourhood, but in a filtered, a sanitised way. As we were highly interested in why respondents recognised minoritised pupils both as an asset and as a threat, three themes stood out that related to the view of minoritised pupils as a threat. First, some respondents expressed explicitly that a high proportion of minoritised pupils would negatively affect the academic quality of schools (n = 16). In fact, some even used the racial makeup of schools as an indicator of academic quality. This emerged strongly in the interview with Megan, who answered a question on the importance of academic quality in *Park Lane* school by stating:

> Of course it's important to hear a school board saying "Look, we only allow that many of immigrants," "We only allow that many of gypsies [Roma people]," "We allow that many children of which the father or mother has Dutch as a mother tongue". I really loved the mix, I thought it was really interesting. (Megan)

Interestingly, respondents differed in the way they drew a direct relation between poor academic quality and a high proportion of minoritised pupils. Some respondents felt that majority-minority schools put too much focus on Dutch language acquisition, which in turn limits the time available for acquiring other competences (n = 5). As a respondent commented:

> I was worried that she [respondent's daughter] would be afflicted if she belonged to a small percentage that has mastered the Dutch language. I

was worried by the fact that more attention would go to Dutch language than this is the case in another school. (Erin)

This view is highly similar to the one of parents in the study of van Zanten (2003), who questioned the schools' and teachers' capacity to effectively cope with ethnic diversity. Other respondents in our study, however, got the impression that the Dutch language skills of minoritised pupils were poorly developed and pointed to – in their view – a possible contagion risk for their kids (*n* = 11) (see also Butler & Hamnett, 2013). As noted by one respondent:

> Parents with some insights know that *Sacred Heart* is the Roma school. Instead of learning Dutch, they are unlearning Dutch. I'm not a racist, with all due respect, *but* I want to offer my kids a wide-ranging palette, not a one-eyed facet. (Emily, emphasis added)

Underlying these views are two assumptions. First, it is presumed that the Dutch language skills of (all) minoritised pupils are inferior, contrary to the language skills of white pupils. Second, it is believed that language skills of minoritised pupils and white pupils operate as communicating vessels. White pupils are constructed as being on the giving side, whereas minoritised pupils are constructed as being on the receiving side. The fact that minoritised children often bring "linguistic capital" (i.e., the intellectual and social competences that one can acquire through perpetual communication in more than one language [see Yosso, 2005 for an elaborated discussion on the cultural wealth of marginalised groups]) to school and that their children could potentially tap into this form was thus not recognised or valued by parents as something that could contribute to the desired "wide-ranging" education (see also Bourdieu, 1990 on the use of the word *reconnaissance* and the concept of symbolic capital). Consequently, the act of a white family enrolling their children in an ethnically mixed school is defined as a socially engaged one – something that some respondents mentioned throughout the interview (*n* = 9). In other words, some respondents perceived the outcome of their choice for an ethnically mixed school – a choice which was driven by the interplay of habitus, respondents' capital and the specific field structure – as anything but perpetuating social differentiation. In contrast, the choice for an ethnically mixed school was primarily seen as something that contributed to a greater

equality. The net result of such "misrecognition" (Bourdieu, 1990; Grenfell & James, 1998, 2004; James, 2015) was not only that parents cognised their own motives somehow as disinterested but also that they did not see their pursuit for a "good" school as partly driven by discriminatory tendencies.

Notwithstanding the generalising character of respondents' view toward the language skills of minoritised pupils, it proved powerful enough to discard scientific research. As illustrated by one respondent:

> We did not visit *Sacred Heart* because I heard from colleagues that the school was characterised by 100% immigrants with a lot of Roma people and Bulgarians. This frightened me, it frightened us. [In the scientific community] it is said that children in these schools achieve equivalent, I can also imagine that … but still … We did not make it our ambition to become pioneers. (Mary)

It is intriguing how this respondent expresses understanding how children could perform equally while at the same time being very cautious towards majority-minority schools. This ambivalence seems to point to deeply ingrained beliefs about majority-minority schools in general and minoritised pupils in particular. Also interesting is the use of the term "pioneer," a term that also popped up in other interviews (n = 5). As has been indicated by Smith (1996), the use of the term is arrogant in that it suggests a place is not socially inhabited. In fact, (it is as if) minoritised pupils in such schools are objectified as savages being a part of a hostile environment that has to be domesticated. It is exactly these two notions, namely the notion of savageness and hostility, that some respondents referenced when explaining why they rejected majority-minority schools. In fact, besides reasons of academic quality, some respondents made mention of problem behaviour among minoritised pupils. In explaining why she did not select *St. Joseph*, Michelle, for instance, stated that:

> There were already some bigger boys, you know those Eastern European boys, way too old. So you start to think "I do not want my kid taking an example from them". (Michelle)

Although most respondents embodied strong liberal and multicultural sentiments, the narratives through which respondents re-constructed their school choice process pointed toward the fact that some parents were not free from pervasive racialized discourses (cf. Byrne, 2006b). By associating visual body traits with certain (undesired) behavioural traits – traits that should not be taken as "an example" – Michelle, for instance, adopted a (gendered) racialized discourse and ended up acting upon it as this became a decisive reason to discard *St. Joseph* as a possible school for her son. Another respondent not only shared the view that behaviour is an issue with regard to minoritised pupils when explaining why she rejected *Pinewood* but also provides us with a sense of the behavioural traits that are at stake:

> In *Pinewood* I had the feeling there were mainly immigrant children. (…). I found it really odd, but that's just something that stuck with me, that there was a set of regulations at the door that said "We will not spit at each other," "We will not beat each other," "We will not offend each other's family". This is not what you expect hanging out at a school. Rather you expect "We will not run in the hallway," "We will not shout". I still remember I thought "The fact that these kids have to be reminded of these things is quite something". (Lisa)

Lisa's comment clearly illustrates how some respondents viewed minoritised children as troublemakers that could possibly incite their own kids to engage in problem behaviour (*n* = 7). While white children are constructed as normal, peaceful and rational subjects, minoritised children are defined as the opposite, namely as abnormal, violent and irrational. In turn, some parents felt that on a long-term basis this could change the (white) identity of their child, something that was undesired:

> I think we would end up with a kid that is not ours. You can already notice this right now. In the street, he [respondent's son] is playing with Arda, a Turkish boy. Now when these two have played together, our kid has become a Turk. He suddenly talks in a completely different way. I think if he had to sit in a class full of these kids day by day, we would lose our child. (Aaron)

It is striking to see how respondents extrapolated the individuality of an individual (e.g., that of Arda) to the individual's ethnic group, after which, they no longer perceived this individuality as individual as it was reduced to a typical example of that ethnic group (cf. Schinkel, 2017 on the concept of de-individualizing individualization). Indeed, as was the case with the previous quotes, it is possible to see how certain aspects of a group (in this case the nationality and/or migration background) implicitly are associated with certain unique dispositions (i.e., dispositions that are not shared across groups). What is interesting is that in all these cases a sense of superiority is tucked away. This points us to an important distinction that has to be made: whereas the white middle-class parents in our study do wish for their children to acquire multicultural competences, they do not wish for them to adopt the (real or imagined) traits of a culture other than their own. We believe this is also what Reay *et al.* (2007) are somewhat more optimistically pointing out in their study on identities, educational choice and the white urban middle classes when they claim that acculturation definitely could go too far for the liberal white-middle classes they interviewed. Intermingling with the ethnic other is embraced as long as it purely leads to the production of a confident, tolerant and worldly-wise white middle-class subject that not only understands but also is being comfortable with and around diversity.

As such, just as with the desire for diversity, respondents' caution towards 'too much diversity' was more than just about securing the development of conventional competences. In fact, through the avoidance of all-minority and majority-minority schools, respondents also worked towards the inculcation of what they thought to be *white* values. In short, when respondents selected an 'ethnically mixed school' they also seemed to aim at the reproduction of *whiteness* through an immersion in a sufficient degree of ethnic homogeneity. While stating that their children "could not come in to contact with too many cultures," parents equally stressed the fact that it was important for their children to recognise "the culture they know at home" so as not to "lose" their child. It is worth mentioning that the culture, which was being juxtaposed to the one of minoritised pupils, often came down to a white *middle-class* habitus. Here an interesting intersection between class and ethnicity comes into play. When parents described the ethnic other, through the formulation of ascribed characteristics – characteristics that moreover were contagious – use was made

of prevalent working-class stereotypes (e.g., in relation to language, communication and physical behaviour). This is because our respondents seem to judge minoritised pupils as working-class a priori and are viewing *middle-classness* mainly as a white social category and vice-versa (cf. Ball *et al.*, 2013). Consequently, respondents also seemed to perceive the ethnic other through the lens of working-class stereotypes. This entanglement of ethnicity and class became very clear when respondents discussed exceptional minoritised pupils. Aaron, for instance, reflected on the diversity he encountered during his schooling:

> The children of a different colour that I used to encounter at school were all adopted and were equally well-off as we were at home. They were as white as we were. (Aaron)

It is clear how in such statements "white" does not only signify colour or race but also class, middle-classness to be precise. Anxieties that parents expressed in relation to too much ethnic diversity (e.g., the fear that their child could become "a Turk") should thus also be interpreted as a concern with the acquisition of the proper white *middle-class* habitus. It thus seems that the sort of whiteness that our respondents were trying to reproduce is a very classed one.

A third and final reason why respondents rejected majority-minority schools referred to possible consequences of being a minority. More specifically, some respondents feared their children could become minoritised in the process of being a minority and hence become subject to practices of discrimination, victimisation and/or othering (*n* = 9). Talking about majority-minority schools, the following comments are clarifying:

> From our view this is like the world has turned upside down. (…) You start to think "Is my child going to be discriminated?". (Nathan)

Whilst several respondents referred to all-majority schools as sanctuaries or reserves, not a single one implicitly or explicitly suggested that these schools make them feel like "the world has turned upside down". We believe this is because respondents perceive and are used to (their) whiteness and middle-

classness (as being perceived) as the norm – in spite of the changing reality. When this 'norm' seems to be undermined/in jeopardy, even if simply and solely on the visual level, this causes a number of uncertainties that are all related to the idea of being a minority and the potential of becoming minoritised in this process - as has so often been the case the other way around. Although respondents were thus looking for diversity, it was one in which whiteness, middle-classness, and a specific habitus would always remain the norm both on a moral and visual level. Schools which meet these criteria have the potential to become "good" schools in our respondents' view, as they can make their child feel like a "fish in water" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 108; Grenfell & James, 1998), this in contrast to schools which fail to comply:

> I felt if I chose for such a school [a majority-minority school] my kid would be all by himself. (…) Perhaps this is a fear that is not justified but still I had the feeling "What if he does not find any connection to peers at the playground?" or "What if he has the feeling he is the stranger in the midst of a minority-white school?". (April)

As the three themes make clear, notwithstanding their liberal, multicultural and pluralistic values, respondents deliberately shunned majority-minority schools. This is mainly because our respondents did not transcend dominant ethnicised discourses working at the societal level and, as such, perceived a majority of minoritised pupils as a threat to the development and the wellbeing of their *white* middle-class children. As respondents' interests in their children diverged with radical integration, they felt no inclination to support such efforts. Choosing an 'ethnically mixed school', therefore, can also be understood as an example of interest divergence. Indeed, the choice of our respondents to integrate their children in an ethnically mixed school was also a choice to eschew majority-minority schools. This became very apparent when, through a process of white victimisation, some respondents noted how "there was just no alternative" to *Park Lane*, as they were living in a "minority district".

By stressing the (inferior) otherness of ethnic minorities, in terms of language skills, behaviour and values, white middle-class parents not only actively contributed to a process of stigmatisation and hence minoritisation of ethnic

minorities but also actively distinguished themselves as superior from the ethnic other. Moreover, as this demonisation discourse of ethnic minorities is broadly shared, it also set the stage for our respondents to rationalise their school choice. Respondents made it very clear that they selected neither an all-minority nor a majority-minority (read: bad) school. As such, by securing the interests of their children, respondents were able to act, define and present themselves as *good* parents. Indeed, while an immersion in diversity was felt to be "enriching" or an "asset" to the development of their children, parents made it very clear that they were not the ones that would allow their children to "suffer" in majority-minority schools.

Conclusion

In their study on white urban middle classes, Jordan *et al.* (1994, p. 12) have argued that parents tend to "put the family first," even when the resulting actions clash with the principles they uphold. A body of research has demonstrated how parents have translated this motto by avoiding educational settings characterised by ethnic diversity (see Ball, 2003; Boterman, 2013; Karsten *et al.*, 2003; van Zanten, 2003). In this respect, the white middle-class gentrifying parents in our study went against the grain by choosing to self-integrate in an ethnically mixed urban school. However, we argue that in their reasoning they did not do it completely. Our analysis indicates that, like other white middle-class parents, this group also acted in the best interests of their children. This is because this group acknowledges the ethnic diversity present in society as well as the need for their children to be able to deal with it. As such, unlike other white middle-class parents, these parents frame an ethnic "mix" in educational settings as an asset to the acquirement of multicultural competencies crucial in today's society. Moreover, ethnic diversity was also perceived by our respondents as a means to create a specific progressive *middle-class* subject and hence as a means for social reproduction. In other words, an ethnically mixed student body was perceived as no less than an amenity that could be appropriated in the best interest of the child. We therefore contend that the decision of these white middle-class gentrifiers for mixed schooling cannot be understood without considering how this decision converges with their child's best interest. This is neither to deny nor to downplay the importance of values played in their school-choice process. It is in fact clear

that parents were genuinely positive towards some amount of diversity and that values often intersected with interests in their accounts. Yet, we do want to stress the pivotal role that interests have played in their decision. We suggest that a focus on interests is also crucial for understanding the ambivalence of this group towards diversity.

Indeed, while variations between individuals were clearly visible, it must be noted that all respondents were, to a certain extent, blowing hot and cold about ethnic diversity in educational settings. Notions of integration often existed along notions of segregation in one and the same parental discourse. On the one hand, parents seemed strongly supportive of the diversity of the ethnically mixed school they've selected. On the other hand, the same parents also voiced strong reservations about integration in majority-minority and all-minority schools. It is our understanding that respondents worked towards moderate instead of radical integration, due to the fact that their interests converged with former and diverged with latter efforts. Our analysis shows how these parents frame a majority of minoritised pupils as a threat to the development and wellbeing of their *white* children, inter alia, by a process of ethnic stereotyping. As such, this article also shows that we have not entered a colour-blind society. Issues of ethnicity permeated the school-choice process of these white gentrifiers. Rather than approaching ethnic diversity as a social justice ethic (see de Oliver, 2016), ethnic diversity was deployed instrumentally by these parents who were seeking out the amount of diversity with the best cost-benefit ratio.[7] Indeed, parents looked at a ratio that would (i) enable the transfer of multicultural competences while at the same time not jeopardising the transfer of traditional competences included in the curriculum, (ii) ensure the construction of a specific (progressive) *middle-class* and *white* subject, which was set apart as superior from other *class* and *ethnic* groups, and (iii) allow respondents to act and to present themselves as good parents as well as good citizens. In all of this, the discourse of the mix provided an ethnic makeup à la carte, an integrated segregation, strictly tailored to the needs of white middle-class gentrifiers. Consequently, we concur that voluntary integration of a more radical kind is likely to fall on deaf ears, even among those who champion liberal, multicultural and pluralistic values (see Table 1). As such, our results also provide insight for education policies throughout the Western World, as it questions the feasibility of school integration efforts through the

implementation of choice plans. An obvious recommendation would be to restrict the amount of school choice. We argue, however, it is at least equally important to take on Derrick Bell's (1976; 1980) legacy by posing two simple questions. First, why should ethnically mixed schools be pursued? Second, do these schools serve the interests of minoritised communities? Certainly with regard to issues as the achievement gap, it is important to question whether a dominant focus on ethnic mix as a solution is wise. This is because the idea of ethnic mix as a means to combat the achievement gap has mainly been supported by mere correlations. Moreover, such an idea (i) is predicated on deficit discourses that demonize minoritised families and (ii) is devolving responsibility for educational quality from governmental and institutional bodies to individual families and their capabilities to invest in and keep an eye on a diverse range of school issues. We believe this shift in thinking from an exclusive focus on the question "whether we are doing things the right way" to one that also pays attention to the question "whether we are doing the right things" (cf. Vandenbrouck, Coussée, & Bradt, 2010), has the potential not only to open the way we think about ethnic mix but also to breach through long-standing educational inequalities.

Notes

1   Based on Goossens, C., Muls, J., Stevens, P., & Van Gorp, A. (2018). Blowing hot and cold about diversity: White middle-class gentrifiers and ethnically mixed schooling in Belgium. *Whiteness & Education, 3*(1), pp. 32-55.

2   Pseudonyms are used for all schools and respondents to protect the privacy of the respondents. Respondents were ensured confidentiality by not disclosing any information provided by respondents or by doing this in such a way as not to reveal the identity of the respondents.

3   Behind the (seemingly innocent) view of the selfless white middle-class parent whose choice for a ethnically diverse school should be applauded as a couragous act, two problematic assumptions are tucked away. First, minoritised pupils not only are perceived as fundamentally different but also as subjects who are entering school environments with cultural deficiencies – an assumption which, as has been demonstrated by Yosso (2005), often springs from a misinterpretion of Bourdieu's theorethical insights on societal reproduction. Second, it is believed that these assumed hierarchical differences operate as communicating vessels. More specifically, there is an idea that (radical) integration could benefit minoritised pupils while at the same time hurt white middle-class children. These assumptions are, indeed, echoed by Stillman (2012) who is referring to the 'detrimental effects' (p. xviii) of schools characterized by a high percentage of minoritised pupils on white middle-class children, while at the same time also stressing integration of white middle-class children as 'an important way to help improve the education environment of struggling inner-city schools' (p. xiv). By giving prominence to the assumptions that underly the view of the selfless and self-abnegating white middle-class subject, it not only becomes intelligible why these subjects are lauded as 'heroes,' but also why such terms, statements, and discourses are problematic.

4   People are registered as being of foreign origin on the basis of an identification key. First, the nationality of the father is studied. When the father does not have the Belgian citizenship at birth, the individual is registered as being of foreign origin. When the opposite is the case, the nationality of the mother is studied. When she does not have the Belgian citizenship at birth, the individual is once again registered as being of foreign origin. When the opposite is the case, the nationality of the individual is examined. Only when the individual does hold the Belgian citizenship is the individual registered as being of non-foreign origin.

5   Data were derived from a publicly accessible online database administered by the Flemish Ministry of Education. See http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/wegwijs/agodi /cijfermateriaal/leerlingenkenmerken. We had to exclude four schools because they were not included in the database.

6 Categories of occupational status are based on the European Socio-economic Classification (ESeC). This classification is the EU-variant of the International Standard Classification of Occupations 1988 (ISCO88).

7 This process is highly similar to the one described by Chan and Eyster (2009), in which diverse white socioeconomic status groups support affirmative action policies in higher educational settings to an extent that best serves their interests.

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CHAPTER FIVE

Progressive education in neoliberal times

Abstract[1]

Although the ideals of progressive education have been associated with educated middle-class professionals, it has been argued that this group does not practice what they preach. Indeed, it has been demonstrated that such families often opt into traditional education, a decision which according to scholars "does make sense" as parents prefer forms of schooling that advantage their children. Although it has been claimed that this tendency "to get ahead" has only become stronger in the past decades, progressive education has proven to be an enduring phenomenon and, in fact, seems to be on the rise. This study, therefore, examines the motives of 35 middle-class parents who selected a progressive school for their children in the context of Ghent (Belgium). Relying on the work of Pierre Bourdieu, it is suggested that these parents' choice for progressive education also "does make sense". Parents chose for progressive education as they believe society has changed, rendering a choice for traditional education unwise. Rather than being an alternative to education as a way to get ahead, progressive education thus comes into sight as an alternative route for getting ahead. As such, our results reveal why progressive education can flourish in neoliberal times.

Introduction

Notwithstanding its vagueness, progressive education has proven to be an enduring phenomenon (Semel & Sadovnik, 1999). As a matter of fact, although educational progressivism has never been widely implemented (Labaree, 2005; Tyack & Cuban, 1995) and found itself somewhat in a *baisse* after its heyday in the interwar period (Nash, 1964), it has never completely left the stage. On the contrary, it could be argued that since the 1960s there is a modest, yet renewed and growing interest in progressive education in many Western countries such as France (Gaiffe, Magnetto, Miquel, & Solunto, 2017), Germany (Rülcker & Oelkers, 1998), the Netherlands (Bakker, Noordman, & Rietveld-van Wingerden, 2006) and Belgium (De Coster, Simon, & Depaepe, 2009). This resurgence has nevertheless mainly been confined to the European continent – something that might be explained by the fact that for decades progressive education in the US was subject to damnation (see e.g., Hirsch, 1996; Ravitch, 2000); this not only for the right but also for the left (Labaree, 2005; Wraga, 2014). However, even in the US context progressive education has been slowly reawakening (Mirel, 2003; Semel, 1999); whether or not as a consequence of the magnet and charter system through which some progressive schools operate. Indeed, newspaper articles discussing the rising number of Montessori schools across the US (Barshay, 2018) or the growing popularity of Waldorf schools among Silicon Valley parents (Knowles, 2018) demonstrate how the choice for educational progressivism is becoming increasingly popular.

The increasing prevalence of progressive schools, however, raises questions about the motives of the ones involved (De Coster *et al.*, 2009), especially in times where people "have to achieve their class positions" (Savage *in* Ball, 2003, p. 7), this initially and not in the least via the acquisition of cultural capital through the educational system (Bourdieu, 1973; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). As a result, middle-class parents are, as has been demonstrated in various studies (see e.g., Ball, 2003; Butler & Robson, 2003), increasingly preoccupied with navigating an educational pathway that will provide their children with valuable competences. However, it is precisely this focus on valuable competences that does not seem to fit with a choice for progressive education.

Writing on the rationale for the inception of progressive practices, Mills and McGregor (2017), for instance, assert that:

> Schools shaped by paradigms of democracy and child-centered philosophies have largely developed in response to traditional forms of schooling and what their founders have seen as environments that, in various degrees, stifle young people's creativity, deny them their rights, fail to develop them as well-rounded citizens, damage their emotional and spiritual well-being, and are overly concerned with developing young people as "human capital."

This is confirmed by the wider literature, as most studies seem to demonstrate that actors link the structuring of human capital to a traditional and rigorous academic curriculum. Indeed, from policy discussions on academic rigor in the US (Wraga, 2010), to (school responses to) parental claims for setting in the UK (Ball, 2003; Reay, 1998), the general tendency of the last decades seems to be one of favouring conservative pedagogic practices. It has been argued that this tendency has only been reinforced in recent times, due to a process of neoliberalization and growing economic insecurity. Examining the school choice process of 36 middle-class families in the London area, Ball (2003, p. 74-75), for instance concludes that:

> The majority of the middle-class parents interviewed indicated their preference for what Bernstein calls 'standard European pedagogic practice', that is a traditional classroom arrangement which frames didactic teaching methods – a visible pedagogy.

Yet, schools employing progressive pedagogies continue to attract a group of parents. In fact, some studies actually demonstrate how, also in a context of thorough neoliberalization and growing economic insecurity, a group of urban middle-class parents (still) tend to look for progressive schools (Stillman, 2012). This observation raises the question as to why parents choose a form of schooling that reacts against a focus on human capital in times in which the acquisition of such capital is considered primordial for passing on advantage.

Drawing on interviews with 35 white middle-class parents whose children are enrolled in an ethnically-mixed progressive school in Ghent (Belgium), it is exactly this question we set out to examine in this article. The article is structured as follows: first, progressive pedagogies are defined by distinguishing them from traditional ones. In the same section, we also hint at the prevalence of progressive education today. Second, the literature concerning the pedagogical preferences of diverse class groups is discussed. Third, an overview of the research context is presented, followed by a description of the applied methods. Finally, the results of this study are introduced, followed by a discussion.

Progressive education

In this article, we distinguish progressive pedagogies (such as the Dalton Plan, Freinet, Jena Plan, Montessori, and Waldorf Pedagogy) from traditional ones. Progressive pedagogies emerged at the turn of the twentieth century from a discontent with the then existing forms of education. Spurred by organizations such as the *New Education Fellowship*, pioneers believed that a radical change in education was necessary in order to both meet the demands of a changed society and facilitate societal changes that were wished for (Darling & Nordenbo, 2003; Mirel, 2003).

Even though educational progressivism can be conceptualized as a revolt or alternative to educational traditionalism (Darling & Nordenbo, 2003; Reese, 2001), some scholars have questioned what this revolt or alternative exactly is covering (Cremin, 1961; Davies, 2002; Hofstetter & Schneuwly, 2009). Cremin (1961, p. x), for instance, has argued that educational progressivism has "meant different things to different people," making the search for an all-encompassing definition infeasible. Others, however, have claimed that it is possible to define educational progressivism as it is in fact "based on a clearly identifiable cluster of ideas" (Zilvesmit, 1993, p. 2), that often stem from continental romanticism or the political left (Howlett, 2013). Indeed, scholars have argued that diverse progressive curricula correspond. More precisely, it is claimed that these curricula are student-centred, organized around problems, challenges and projects (that often come about through the input of students), promoting an active student, and encouraging collaboration and cooperation.

Within progressive education, the role of the teacher consists primarily in providing an interesting and challenging environment for the students that enables them to construct knowledge. In addition, as educational progressivism is committed to democracy, schools are often organized as democratic miniature societies that allow for democratic education. For one and the same reason, diversity in student makeup is also valued. Finally, promoters of progressive education reject evaluation via grading which could introduce ranking and competition (for a more elaborate discussion on the characteristics of progressive education see Darling & Nordenbo 2003; Mirel, 2003; Zilversmit, 1993). In contrast, traditional pedagogies are characterized by teachers dominating the classroom and children who follow rigid and predefined curricula and accept adult authority and knowledge (Mirel, 2003). Thus, whereas traditional pedagogy is subject- and teacher-centered, progressive pedagogy introduces a Copernican revolution (Dewey, 1990) which places the child at the centre of the school (Mirel, 2003; see also Darling & Nordenbo, 2003). Although we are well aware of the versatile nature of educational progressivism, we do believe that the aforementioned elements provide a working definition for the purpose of this article. We define a progressive school as one that explicitly *represents* itself as employing (i) the aforementioned elements or (ii) the principles of a progressive educational reformer (such as Freinet, Montessori, Parkhurst, Petersen, and Steiner). In contrast, a traditional school is defined as one that does not explicitly *represent* itself as employing these elements or the principles of a progressive educational reformer.

Pedagogical preferences, class and ethnicity

It is widely recognized that progressive education was shaped, initiated and disseminated by middle-class professionals occupying positions of symbolic control (i.e., by a group constituting an embryonic form of what would come to be known as the "new" middle class) (Jenkins, 1989). In the same vein, it has been argued that progressive education has mainly been supported by a specific group of (white) middle-class parents. In what follows, we provide an overview of research that appears to underpin such a claim.

A first noteworthy endeavour in this area, has been a study carried out in the late 1950s by Melvin Kohn in the context of Washington, District of Columbia. Drawing on interviews with 344 mothers and 82 fathers of fifth-grade children, Kohn (1959) examined which characteristics working-class and middle-class parents value most for a child to develop. His analysis showed that parents' values were significantly related to their social position. For instance, working-class parents found it significantly more important that a child is "obedient" and "neat and clean". In contrast, middle-class parents put significantly more stress on a child being "happy," "considerate of others," "curious about things" and having "self-control". Moreover, Kohn also found significant within-class differences, with middle-class parents living in urban areas selecting significantly more of what could be called 'progressive' parental values as compared to their counterparts living in rural areas. Kohn argues that differences between groups can possibly be explained by differences in living circumstances and more precisely by a perception of the effects that these circumstances may have on the future life of their children. Nevertheless, as Kohn himself acknowledges, no definite answer is formulated to the question as to why there is a relation between social position and parental values. Moreover, although it is clear that specific parental values correspond to specific pedagogies, it remains unclear whether these values are also translated by parents in explicit pedagogical preferences. These questions have, nonetheless, been picked up by other scholars. Most known in this regard, are the efforts of Basil Bernstein. According to Bernstein (1975) the 'new' middle class prefers progressive education, while the 'old' middle class and the working class (especially from ethnic minority backgrounds) tend to speak out in favour of traditional education. According to Bernstein, the reason for this is that diverse pedagogies carry diverse class assumptions. Educational progressivism would be tailored to the living circumstances of the 'new' middle class, the way they can and wish to educate their children, the outlook on their children's future, and the prior knowledge of their children (Bernstein, 2003). As these pedagogies favour these "new" middle-class families, it is concluded that they are also highly favoured by these families (Bernstein, 1975; 2003).

However, one must be careful not to conflate parental discourse (i.e., pedagogical preferences) with actual parental practice (i.e., school choice). It has, in fact, been demonstrated that the interest of the "new" middle class in

progressive pedagogies does not mean that this group will automatically enrol their children in progressive schools (Ball, 2003; Brantlinger, 2003; Brantlinger & Majd-Jabbari, 1998). In short, arguments run mostly as follows: although (a group of) white middle-class families is expressing a progressive ideology, they do not necessarily practice what they preach. Drawing on interviews with 20 middle-class mothers living in a Midwestern US city, Brantlinger and Majd-Jabbari (1998), for instance, have shown that although mothers seemed to demonstrate a commitment to educational progressivism in their discourse, they were rather conservative in their practices:

> [T]he finding that middle-class mothers prefer conservative pedagogy for their children although contrary to what might be expected, does make sense. Mothers prefer forms of schooling that *advantage* their children. (Brantlinger & Majd-Jabbari, 1998, p. 452; emphasis added)

And:

> It might be reasonable to conjecture that in prosperous times, the middle class's progressive ideals and progressive self-image are fairly congruent with their personal desires for schooling. In times of economic stagnation or decline, however, ideals/image and interests diverge. (p. 453)

According to these scholars such inconsistency is mainly caused by concerns regarding the acquisition of cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), which is becoming increasingly important in a context characterized by globalization, neo-liberalization and growing economic insecurity. In fact, as argued by Ball (2003), the current economic insecurity in many Western countries, together with a widening participation in higher education (which is substantially changing the conversion rate between cultural capital and economic capital due to the changed scarcity of the former [Bourdieu, 1986]), has given rise to a situation in which middle-class parents are increasingly prudential and try to identify and manage risks in relation to the future of their children. Moreover, according to Ball (2003, p. 21), neoliberalism also operates on an ideological level through "the virtues of competitive individualism". This situation has been described by Michel Foucault in his lectures on

governmentalization and neoliberalism at the *Collège de France*. For Foucault (2008, p. 226), under neoliberalism a new form of governance is introduced in which the individual is increasingly addressed, approached and asked to view himself as an entrepreneur, "being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of [his] earnings". This "*homo oeconomicus*" as an individual enterprise invests in himself (e.g., by following 'valuable' courses) so as to acquire human capital (e.g., in the form of 'valuable' competencies) which allows the self to generate a stream of earnings (e.g., in the form of a salary). In other words, the entrepreneur of the self makes "educational investments" in order to build an effective "abilities-machine".

These findings make the question of why middle-class parents do choose progressive education all the more relevant. As they are seemingly going against the grain, should we view them solely as romantics, revolutionists or maybe as parents who are uncommitted to processes of cultural reproduction? As will become clear, we will argue for none of the above options. Drawing on Bourdieu's theory in general and his concept of hysteresis in particular, we will contend that a choice for progressive education does not contradict a process of cultural reproduction, as it might appear at first sight.

Research context

A progressive education Mecca

Ghent is a mid-sized city of 259,579 inhabitants, located in the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium. With regard to our research, Ghent is an interesting context as the city appears to be a progressive stronghold. According to the latest available data, no less than 28 out of 104 primary schools claim to employ a progressive pedagogy. This comes down to 26.92% of all Ghent primary schools, a staggering number compared to the 5.06% Flanders average.

The development of Ghent as a progressive education Mecca was set in motion half a century ago, when in the wake of the May 1968 events, several radical and revolutionary (student) movements were established that were explicitly aimed at interrupting the status quo. With regard to education, some students at the State University of Ghent founded the *Working Group for Revolutionary Teaching* as early as 1969. Through lectures and discussion sessions, this

Marxist- and anarchist-inspired group aimed at combating (the common) authoritarian education that according to the founders reproduced and strengthened existing inequalities. Group members were inspired by emancipatory educational practices such as Fernand Oury's institutional pedagogy, Alexander Sutherland Neill's Summerhill school, and Célestin Freinet's pedagogical invariants. It was believed that only progressive and democratic educational practices such as these were able to provide equality both in education and society (for an elaborated history on the resurgence of progressive education in the 1960s in Ghent, see De Coster *et al.*, 2009).

In the second half of the 1970s, two members of this group were assigned key positions in the Ghent urban education administration. Whereas in the first years progressive educational experiments were set up in particular urban schools, in 1985 the duo was able to establish a first progressive school. The success of this school paved the way for more progressiveness, this both through the establishment of new schools and through the transformation of existing ones. Taken together with the interest in progressive pedagogies coming from a significant amount of parents and existing schools, this led to the unique position that Ghent holds today with regard to progressive education.

Park Lane as a case study

In this study, we focus on parents with children enrolled in one particular Ghent progressive primary school, which we will further refer to as *Park Lane*. The school is located in *Brugse Poort*, a majority-minority neighbourhood that comprises a relatively high number of economically-vulnerable residents. For instance, on the eve of 2017, 9,843 out of 19,272 residents in the neighbourhood had a migration background which comes down to 51.10%, which is significantly higher than the 32.58% Ghent average. Moreover, with 17,531 euro in 2015, the average annual net income in the Brugse Poort was 20.43% below the city's average of 22,033 euro. However, for the last two decades, the neighbourhood has begun to gentrify. *Park Lane* is a thriving school that is in high demand with a group of white middle-class gentrifiers. As a result, the student body is characterized by a relatively high amount of well-off pupils without a migration background that approximates the Ghent average (see Table 1); this despite the school's location.

Table 1. Indicators of the demographic makeup of schools located in Brugse Poort during the school year 2017-2018 (in percentage).

School	Denomination	Progressive	Mother low educated	School allowance	Language home not Dutch
Ghent average	/	/	30.32	30.78	32.55
Brugse Poort					
Private school 'Sacred Heart'	Yes	No	78.66	52.57	94.47
Public school 'Pinewood'	No	No	61.79	72.33	71.54
Private school 'St. Joseph'	Yes	No	64.83	66.95	50.85
Public school 'Somerset' [a]	No	Yes	26.17	16.97	33.94
Public school 'Park Lane'	No	Yes	33.33	32.59	28.61

Note: [a] Data from the school year 2014-2015

On a pedagogical level, *Park Lane* operates as a Jena Plan school. This approach, originally developed by the German pedagogue Peter Petersen (1884-1952), is characterized by some principles that are also reflected in *Park Lane's* day-to-day activities. More precisely, in accordance with Petersen's pedagogy, the school board of *Park Lane* asserts that during a child's school career emphasis should not only be put on work, but also on conversation, celebration and play. As such, next to instruction, the operation of *Park Lane* is characterized by activities such as morning discussion circles, celebrations at the end of the week, pupil-driven project learning, preparations for a musical performance or play, etc. With regard to the grouping system, pupils are placed within mixed-grade classes (i.e., so called *Stammgruppen*) that reflect the natural structure of the family. In practice this means that grades are grouped by two in the lower levels (i.e., age 2,5 to 6) and by three in the middle and higher levels (age 6 to 12). For most of the time, pupils remain in their *Stammgruppe*. Only for so-called cluster activities (i.e., activities in which pupils work together with pupils from ages 2,5 to 12) and instruction activities (i.e., instruction sessions for a limited amount of time for subjects such as mathematics and Dutch language in which pupils are grouped according to their level), pupils leave their group. Pure instruction, nevertheless, remains limited as pupils are encouraged to learn independently and/or with the support of their peers. With regard to this focus on independence, pupils also

create a weekly schedule in consultation with their teacher in which all assignments are listed that have to be completed by the end of the week. As pupils are free to determine when they will work on these assignments during the school hours, it is believed they will learn to plan and to take responsibility for their actions. Finally, with regard to evaluation, pupils are not graded. Instead, student report cards give a qualitative description of a child's development so as to avoid demotivation or competition among pupils.

School choice in Ghent

As in many other contexts, the Ghent educational landscape is characterized both by public schools (e.g., schools organized by public administrations, such as a community, province or municipality) and private schools (e.g., schools organized by a diocese, monastic order or other [often non-profit] organizations). Nevertheless, the divide between public and private education is hardly as marked as in contexts such as the US or UK. In fact, no less than 98% of all private primary schools in Ghent refrain from collecting registration and tuition fees. This is mainly due to two reasons. First, when schools refrain from collecting such fees, they are entitled to public financing whether they are publicly organized or not. Second, when schools do not refrain from collecting such fees they have no right to issue official diplomas. Consequently, almost all schools operate as non-profit institutions, regardless of their public or private status.

In relation to student allocation, parents have the right to select a school in accordance to their personal beliefs, values and attitudes. This means that publicly funded (public or private) schools cannot set their own admission criteria. In contrast, enrolment requests are ranked on the basis of a 'first come, first served' principle. Recently, this principle has somewhat been adapted so as to combat school segregation within neighbourhoods. Starting from the enrolment period for the school year 2009-2010, children are ordered on the basis of the distance between their residence and the school. In this case, the shorter the distance, the higher the ranking a child obtains. Since the enrolment period for the school year 2011-2012, also the distance between the parents' workplace and the school is taken into account. Parents can nevertheless electronically apply for as many Ghent primary schools as they want, irrespective of issues of distance.

In sum, the Ghent educational landscape is characterized by (i) a relative freedom of school choice, (ii) a great diversity between schools, this both with regard to student makeup, denomination, the organizing body, and the employed pedagogy (see Table 1), and (iii) a widespread affordability for parents. As such, it could be argued that, compared to other contexts, there are fewer aspects that withhold parents to select the school they want. In other words, it is feasible that parents' school choice is to a greater extent based on their preferences than on other factors, making Ghent an interesting case for our research.

Methods

This study draws on 35 semi-structured interviews with white middle-class parents with children enrolled in *Park Lane*. To recruit participants, an advert comprising information on the researcher and the research topic was placed on the PTA *Facebook* group of the school. This medium was chosen deliberately as its members were predominantly white and middle class.

Although several fathers responded to our call, it were mostly mothers who agreed for an interview (23/35). This is due to the fact that the PTA *Facebook* group comprised mostly mothers (136/204), something that in itself is not surprising, given the large involvement of mothers in the schooling of their children (Jordan *et al.*, 1994; Reay, 1998). Respondents had between 1 and 4 children with 2.57 on average. As most respondents bought their home (34/35), hold graduate (10/35) or post-graduate degrees (23/35), and/or have a moderate (13/35) to high occupational status (20/35), most if not all fit the profile of (white) middle-class parents (see Table 2 for an overview of respondents' characteristics). Yet, it should be stressed that our respondents seemed to be part of a *specific* middle-class faction (class is here understood as a multifaceted construct which not only touches upon economic but also social and cultural aspects [see for instance Savage *et al.*, 2013]). For instance, when zooming in on the sectors in which our respondents were employed, we observe a clear overrepresentation in social or creative professions, such as the education ($n = 12$), culture ($n = 5$), welfare ($n = 5$), healthcare ($n = 3$), and media sector ($n = 2$). Moreover, on a political level, most respondents appeared to be left of

centre and embodied and expressed strong liberal and multicultural sentiments (32/35). Although respondents were not asked to fill in a questionnaire regarding their social ties, more often than not it became clear through the interviews that respondents had access to a list of high status contacts employed in professional fields. As such, our respondents matched in many respects what has been referred to as the 'new middle class' described as a class which is dominant on a cultural but less so on an economic level. It is important to stress that we did not target this *particular* faction of the middle class. Rather it seems to be the case that it is a particular middle-class faction who is enthralled by educational progressivism.

Table 2. Characteristics of respondents (*N = 35*)

Characteristic	No. of respondents
Gender	
Females	23
Male	12
Marital status	
Married	29
Divorced	5
Widow	1
Migration background [spouse]	
Has a migration background	0 [2]
Has no migration background	35[27]
Highest academic degree [spouse]	
High school degree	2[5]
Bachelor's degree	10[8]
Master's degree	21[13]
Doctoral degree	2[3]
Occupational status [spouse][2]	
Never worked and long-term unemployed	0[0]
Working class	2[4]
Intermediate	13[13]
Salariat	20 [12]
Homeownership status	
Owning	34
Renting	1

In interviews, we tried to capture parents' process of school choice by questioning (i) their views on various schools inside and outside the district, (ii) their reasons for (not) going on school visits to certain schools, (iii) the

impediments perceived and encountered during the school choice process and (iv) how decisions on schools were made and what information was used in this process. As such, we draw attention to the ambivalences, the uncertainties and the contextualised nature inherent to the school-choice process. When issues of pedagogy came to the fore, we asked the respondent to elaborate on his/her preferences. Once the data were collected, interviews were transcribed orthographically. Subsequently, all interview data were read multiple times and memos were added. Later on, transcriptions were thematically coded through the use of a qualitative data analysis software (*Nvivo 11*). It should be noted, however, that given our small sample size, the use of self-selection sampling, and the focus on one school in one city, results should be interpreted with caution.

Results

Progressive education as providing added value
As could be expected, the school choice process of our respondents was not straightforward but complex and as such driven by an ambiguous interplay of several aspects and considerations. In the first instance, parents appeared to prefer schools for their children that were located within the neighbourhood. On the one hand, this preference appeared to be rooted in pragmatic concerns. Going to a school nearby the home meant that children could be dropped off by foot or by bicycle and later on could move independently to school. On the other hand, neighbourhood schools also meant that ties with the neighbourhood and its residents could be forged. It is, however, important to stress that although proximity was an important criterion for the parents, it was nevertheless not considered an imperative requirement. Instead, distance seemed to be mainly used by the parents to narrow down their list of potential schools. However, when it would turn out that within this list no "acceptable" schools could be extracted, parents would never let themselves be pinned down by their wish for proximity.

This of course raises the question what parents define as an "acceptable" school. Indeed, within this narrowed down list of neighbourhood schools, it was obvious how parents spoke with more enthusiasm about some schools than about others. When asked why they preferred certain schools above others,

respondents often referred to concepts such as the "atmosphere" or "feeling" of a school. As parents were encouraged to elaborate, it became clear that these concepts often came down to two aspects. First, through the use of such terms parents tried to touch upon issues of school makeup in a subtle way. In fact, as was discussed in chapter 4, parents were consciously and deliberately searching for "socially and ethnically mixed" schools, thereby shunning both all-majority and all-minority schools. Such mixed schools would allow their children to acquire both multicultural competences, which the parents find crucial in today's society, and traditional competences of which the parents believed that these can hardly be acquired in all-minority schools (see chapter 4 for a more complete discussion). A second aspect that parents alluded to, relates to issues of pedagogy. Parents, for instance, indicated that they were looking for a school where their children would be allowed to act as children and therefore would be exempted from entering a rat race. Rather than concentrating on schools with knowledge-oriented and competitive systems, parents seemed to prefer schools that take into account the holistic development of the child and their well-being.

> Elementary school children should be able to play once in a while and should especially like to go to school. This is something you probably find more in progressive schools than in traditional schools. (Christine)[3]

> That they are formed as humans, this is what I find really important! (…) In the end, this grading system is not so important. You don't need to be so focussed on performance and competition and being the best. (Abigail)

> I have already worked in a lot of schools and the thing which always frustrated me as an educator is the fact that you are only allowed to work with children in a very limited way: very knowledge-oriented, cognitive, a lot of worksheets and workbooks and actually almost training children to have a burn-out within the next ten years. (…) I wanted my child to have the chance to become a complete human being, one that learns to do things with his hands, one that is allowed to be creative, is allowed to play drama, is allowed to sing, dance and move! (Aaron)

As became clear, respondents were not looking for the "best" school with regard to academic performance and deliberately rejected schools that they perceived as "elitist".

> Of course you want the best for your child but for me the best is not the best snob school (…) The idea that kids should compete and need to try to be the best… Kids should not be involved in that. (Megan)

> I was not looking for an elite school where I had the feeling "Here they will strive to get the utmost out of them". (Vanessa)

In contrast to parents in other research contexts (Brantlinger & Majd-Jabbari, 1998; Brantlinger, 2003; Reay, 1998), the parents in our study were not explicitly preoccupied with high standards, academic rigidity, a sufficient amount of school assignments and/or a strong sense of discipline. In the same vein, respondents often openly criticized educational drilling, blind obedience, and competitiveness.

> I knew what I did not want: the rigid, the catholic (…) the homework in the evening or the rattling off of multiplication tables. I think you do not learn easily that way. (Lauren)

For almost half of our respondents this came down to an *explicit* and *deliberate* search for schools that present themselves as progressive. By shying away from the schools that are commonly regarded as the ones that provide the best chances for future success in favour of schools that give consideration to the whole child in the here and now, parents definitely went against the grain. Yet, parents did not completely lack a focus on cultural reproduction. When digging deeper, we noticed that paradoxically the choice for progressive education not only stemmed from a focus on the child in the here and now but also from a permanent focus on the child's future. In relation to the latter, many parents noted that society has changed quite dramatically since the time they themselves went to school. Parents therefore maintained that it would not suffice to educate their children in the exact same way as they had been educated; notwithstanding the fact that their own education had provided them with a competitive starting position. Consequently, schools that would provide

their children with the exact same educational experiences were discarded as insufficient. Such insufficiency was often associated with traditional, catholic, and all-majority schools, not surprisingly the schools that were reminiscent of the ones where most of our respondents were educated. As such, it looks like our respondents wanted to avoid a situation which Bourdieu (1977) has tried to describe with the concept of hysteresis, namely a mismatch between the conditions of a field and the habitus of a particular agent (see also Hardy, 2008). Applied to our research context, it appears that parents were anxious that the habitus of their children, when formed and acquired in the field of what was referred to as "old-fashioned" education, would not match the conditions of the fields in which their children would need to operate as adults; this due to the fact that the habitus would be formed in a field that they perceived as lagging behind.

> *Paramount* [i.e., a public traditional school] (…) was kind of the school where we were at when we were young: very strict, according to the rules, everything very clean and nobody who would colour outside the lines. We are neither liberal wacko's nor very cultural types but we were looking for some creativity. Every school needs to create the people of the future with the recipes from the past. […] We had the feeling that this school resembles very much the school we were at. However, society has changed in the meantime and we believe that *Park Lane* is in line with what the future will look like. (Matthew)

> In the first place, I believe that a school should prepare for a changing society. Our society is now changing constantly and how we were educated at the time was very traditional. You arrive, you hang your schoolbag on your desk, you sit down and you stay there for the rest of the day. I'm putting things somewhat in black and white but this does neither require any creativity nor flexibility of thinking. I believe you should not educate children like this. Off course, they have to get the basics but it is much more important that they learn to think critically about what is happening and how they can deal with it ... (Sarah)

As the above quotes make clear, interviewees thus tried to avoid a future mismatch so as to enable their children to be successful agents. Rather than

providing their children with *an identical set of skills* as they themselves possess, it looks as if these parents wanted to provide their children with *a set of skills that will be valued identically* or higher in the future than their set of skills in the present (i.e., a set of skills that will be recognised and valued as 'capital,' as Bourdieu would say). In other words, the interviewees were not so much focused on the (inherent value of) skills per se, but on the *appreciation* or *value* of specific skills in the future. In this sense, our respondents do not seem to differ that much from the middle classes reported by Brantlinger and Majd-Jabbari (1998). They did, however, differ in their judgement of which skills will be valued in the future and hence in their assessment of which schools are able to develop such *valuable* skills (i.e., cultural capital) in their children. Whereas schools employing traditional pedagogies were perceived to be insufficient for acquiring *valuable* skills (i.e., cultural capital), progressive schools came into view as institutes that would afford added value.

> I also did a teaching training. I have seen the different formulas and I do believe strongly in the strengths of progressive education. (…) I think self-directed learning and planning are very important, very important skills for later on in life. I think working with mixed-age groups is very important. There are a lot of advantages to it: social skills (…), taking responsibility. (Sharon)

> We focused on the school's approach and how we thought our kids would enter the world after six years of schooling, with which skills, extra skills… I have been a study counsellor for 13 years at [a higher education institution]. When I observed why students dropped out in their first year of higher education it was not so much because of cognitive issues as it was because of issues of approach, planning and motivation. So this strengthened us in the belief that you have to rear your children in a different way. You have to teach them how to plan. You have to teach them how they should approach matters. You have to teach them to take initiative from motivation, not from coercion. (…) And these are things we do find in progressive education and not so much in traditional education. (…) We hope that if they absorb these skills up until they are 12, it will pay off later. (David)

Through their unusual school choice our interviewees tried to respond pro-actively to (in their view) changed conditions of fields. They aimed to provide their children with an educational environment that is thought to facilitate the acquisition of a specific set of *valuable* skills and competences (i.e., these that are adapted to, and as such are valued as a capital in, specific fields). This, in turn, would allow their children to play an important role in society, be it economically, socially or culturally. When asked about which skills and competences were found to be essential, our participants referred to "critical thinking," "creativity," "motivation to learn," "problem solving," "planning," "self-direction," "social skills," and "collaboration" of which the latter two were often explicitly related to both homogeneous and heterogeneous situations. It is interesting to see how these accounts on *valuable* skills and competences correspond both in terms of content and style to some professional discourses on these matters. Indeed, the resemblance between some frameworks in which skills are identified that are claimed to be or become essential in the information and knowledge society of the 21st century is striking (see for instance P21's "Framework for 21st Century Learning," NCREL/Metiri Partnership's "EnGauge 21st Century Skills," and OECD's conception of "Key Competencies for a successful life and a well-functioning society"). More precisely, just like our respondents, "[a]dvocates of 21st-century skills favor student-centered methods–for example, problem-based learning and project-based learning–that allow students to collaborate, work on authentic problems, and engage with the community" (Rotherham & Willingham, 2010, p. 19).

> Friday they are on the stage [i.e., for the week closure celebration]. I still remember very well that when I needed to give a talk, I was afraid of my fellow students (…). Now, I see her on the stage full of confidence, without being nervous. If you can take this with you to the future, like "Look I am showing you something that I worked on, I am open for feedback", than this is really good. These are the kinds of skills [I was talking about]. (…) Self-directed work is also very interesting. […] For instance, for mathematics my daughter needs to develop her own task and decide when she will work on it. This is something I also need in my job but that I have never learned. But what I think is sublime is the fact that this planning starts in kindergarten with "You have to have played in every corner this week". So the assignment is to play but actually you

have to plan already "Monday I will go to the doll corner, on Tuesday I will go there to draw". (April)

Independence, this is what I find important. That they are happy with themselves, that they have self-esteem, that they search their own path to stand strong later on in society. If this is being good in mathematics or being good at arts or being good at talking or say something convincing, does not matter. And this is in line with what Jena Plan stands for. (Alexander)

In sum, progressive schools were liked by the parents as these were perceived as institutions that could provide their children with "valuable" skills and competences in a playful and non-competitive setting that respects the child in the here and now. As our parents felt that these two considerations could be reconciled in a progressive school, they did not find themselves in the same dilemma as the middle-class parents in the research of Brantlinger and Majd-Jabbari (1998) who were sympathetic of progressive schools, yet in the end decided to go for a traditional school as they believed that this form of education would best secure the process of cultural reproduction. However, as will become clear in the next section, also our parents expressed worries about the process of cultural reproduction.

Progressive education as a risk investment
The fact that for our participants, progressive education came into sight as something that can "pay off" in the future, did not mean that they were free from doubts. Many parents were in fact worried about the development of a knowledge base and more 'traditional' skills in their children – skills which in their view were insufficient when taught alone but were nonetheless believed to be important.

In the end they still need to learn a few things… So you start to think "Will things work out after the sixth grade?". Because in the end they will need to move on [to secondary education]. (…) But then I think that [the schools employing] these methods, like Jena Plan or Freinet education exist already for quite some time. As such, you assume that these schools also have to work toward final attainment levels. (Rachel)

> This [the choice for a progressive school] is a risk which you take. (…) But there are other aspects like social skills which he [son of interviewee] really does learn there. I think that is important. (…) When you would feel like "He is not learning enough or they are not doing enough for him" then I would compensate for that myself. (Nathan)

Whereas the parents stressed the importance of both traditional and 21st-century skills through their discourse, at the same time many were somewhat anxious that a focus on the latter may come at the expense of the former, at least to some extent. Taken together, our interviewees seemed to perceive progressive education as a 'risk investment'. Schools employing progressive pedagogies are looked upon as institutes which demonstrate a respect for the whole child and offer potential high profits (i.e., the acquirement of 21st century skills) while at the same time also entailing elevated risks of loss (this in the form of traditional skills). Many parents felt that by selecting a progressive school, they did not go for the easy or safe option. In fact, it looked as if our interviewees estimated the odds that their children would not acquire a solid knowledge base and foundation of traditional skills more likely in a progressive school. As one parent noted, choosing a progressive school is "a gamble". The fact that these parents were nonetheless willing to take this risk should be explained by zooming in not only on their value system (which tended to take into consideration the whole child in the here and now) or on their search for value (and their consideration that added value can be extracted from progressive schools). Attention should also be paid on their specific capital structure (i.e., the composition and volume), their confidence in this capital structure, and their willingness to introduce the capital available from this structure. That our parents' (perceived) ability and willingness to control this risk was indeed important in their decision to choose progressive and ethnically-mixed schooling became clear throughout the interviews.

> Your child is a project and you want to endow it with something so you think "Will you choose performance education (…) or do you opt for life education?" (…) And in that time I said "I think it is important that my child goes to a school in the neighbourhood". I am strong enough to

cope when this would be necessary and I also think that I am alert enough to see when it would go awry, for whatever reason. (Katie)

I am not worried easily. However, I am alert. Once in a while, I will monitor things and I am confident that I can cope. Somehow, I think the school leaves a lot of room open for the pupil's own pace. I like that they are not overwhelmed by homework assignments. However, you need to know your multiplication tables. You have to train these. And if I notice that these are not known very well, I will take this up at home even if they [i.e., the school] say "You don't need to do this", I will do this. (Vanessa)

By noting that she is "strong enough," Katie is stressing her capital structure, thereby explaining how she is able to (take the risk and) choose a "neighbourhood" school (i.e., a school that is in her view non-elitist, progressive and comprising a significant amount of children with a migration background). Thus, while the habitus of our respondents prompted them to look for added value, their specific capital structure, confidence in this structure, and willingness to use it made sure that the choice for progressive education came into view as viable and hence logical. Indeed, the capital structure of these middle-class parents ensured that the risk of their child not acquiring a solid knowledge base and foundation of traditional skills could be controlled, which in turn provided them with the confidence to choose against the grain. In this sense, our interviewees did not differ much from the white middle-class mothers described by Kimelberg (2014) in her study on processes of school choice in Boston. As demonstrated by Kimelberg (2014, p. 209) these mothers' confidence in their own (cultural) capital – in particular, their ability to provide their children with an enriching learning environment *outside* the classroom – enabled them to rely less on test scores in the process of school choice and instead focus on other aspects of the educational experience.

That the confidence of our parents was anything but unfounded or unjustified, became evident when going through the data. For instance, on several occasions, parents unconsciously displayed their economic, social, and cultural capital. In turn, this capital stock proved valuable to monitor and model their children's school career and to remedy detected problems.

This school is good and a lot of good things happen at this school but sometimes some educational backlogs can arise due to circumstances. Because it's a lot [i.e., progressive education] (…) It is very ambitious. That not everything works out well or that not every goal is fully achieved, I actually understand that. But by saying that I understand, I do not say that we should leave this up to secondary education and that we should let it go. No, we try to keep abreast and if we notice, as we did now, that Ginger's [Robin's daughter] spelling is not good, we will have to do something about it. (…) And if we have to take our own responsibility by providing some homework - a thing that *Park Lane* disapproves by saying "As little as possible because they do enough in school", something I think is true and fully support – we'll do it. I think from time to time necessity will know no law. (Robin)

By indicating that educational backlogs "can arise" in an "ambitious" system such as progressive education, Robin seems to give a confident impression rather than a frightened one. This confidence, which was echoed by many other parents throughout the interviews, also seems to be induced by Robin's capital structure that she is willing to use. In fact, later on, Robin mentioned that this was exactly what she had already done in the past when she noticed that Ginger had some issues with mathematics and French (second language). Robin did not just tutor her daughter but also followed up the situation through informal conversations with acquaintances and the teacher. Such a strategy in which the progress of a child was monitored and adjusted through the employment of social and cultural capital showed to be very common. In this sense, progressive education also proved beneficial as parents are often allowed and even encouraged to enter and participate in the school, something of which several respondents were aware in advance and took into account when choosing a school. Nevertheless, a few parents indicated that they also perceived the employment of economic capital as a possibility, even if it were as a last resort.

Suppose that she [i.e., the interviewee's child] did not learn something, then there are still lessons, private lessons. So this was always in the back of my mind. (…) If I would have made that mistake [i.e., chose a wrong

school], then I will still try through private lessons. But I admit that there is a small concern. (Megan)

Conclusion

This study set out to explore why a group of middle-class parents is (still) opting into progressive schools in times where an increasing focus on acquiring human capital is inclining a growing number of middle-class parents toward traditional and rigorous forms of schooling (Ball, 2003). In this study, we have tried to demonstrate that the school choice process of a group of middle-class parents going against the grain by selecting a progressive school does not contradict the aforementioned theories but in fact also "does make sense". Our analysis actually indicates that these parents are equally focused on forms of schooling that will provide their children with an advantage (i.e., cultural *capital*) that can be employed in different fields. This focus is, in point of fact, one of the main reasons why these parents chose progressive education over more traditional forms of schooling. Rather than an *exclusively* romantic and active resistance against the teleological conceptualization of childhood (i.e., a productive phase in which children are prepared for their economic life as an adult), our respondents *also* preferred progressive educational strategies because these were perceived as forms that could prepare their children productively and effectively for the 21st century. Indeed, the skills that parents identify as essential for their children's future life, such as "critical thinking," "creativity", "problem solving" are also the ones that are emphasised in progressive schools. Progressive schools were conceived as institutions that could not only safeguard the well-being of the whole child in the here and now but also provide the child with *valuable* skills, matters which were both important to our parents. This explains why in times such as these, progressive education can hold a solid market position and a decent market share. After all, the choice for progressive education can just as well be an endorsement of a never ending competition in the search for value rather than a rejection or interruption of it.

In this vein, both the middle classes that avoid progressive schools as the ones that are enticed by these, appear to have taken on – at least to some extent – the role of the new "*homo oeconomicus*" (cf. Foucault, 2008). In both cases it comes down to the same thing, namely the pursuit of (perceived) added value

(i.e., human capital) so as to pass their advantage through their children in a world that has changed. The fact that both groups choose contrasting strategies to reach this goal has potentially not only to do with the fact that both groups also pursue other goals (e.g., pursuing the well-being of the whole child in the here and now), but also with the fact that both groups make different assessments based on their different capital structure and habitus. As a consequence of their specific 'progressive' habitus, high dose of cultural capital, and employment in the social, cultural, or health sector, it is, for instance, likely that the white middle-class families in our study perceived a potential threat of hysteresis more quickly, more prominent and/or fundamentally different. Likewise, it is plausible that, due to the same differences in habitus and capital structure, progressive education is more strongly perceived by these families as a form of schooling that responds to the demands of the 21st century. Moreover, even if both middle-class groups would assess the aforementioned threat of hysteresis similarly, it is reasonable to assume that their differences would still set them on the path to different strategies. For instance, whereas the choice for traditional and elite schools coupled with additional tutoring and enriching experiences appears more manageable for 'old' middle-class families (this due to the dominance of economic means in their capital structure), the choice for a progressive school looks more manageable for the middle-class families in our study (this because of their high doses of social and cultural capital which allows for extensive monitoring and remedying).

As argued by De Coster *et al.* (2009, p. 671), "[w]ithin the neo-liberal logic, the recovery of the "alternative schools" threatens to lead to a deceptive image that is being sold to customers – the parents". As we hope to have demonstrated through our research, the inverse is also true, that is, it is parents' adoption of the very same logic which allow progressive practices to appear (at least to a group) as forms of education worth buying into.

Notes

1 Based on Goossens, C., Oosterlynck, S., & Bradt, L. (submitted). Progressive education in neoliberal times: An alternative route for getting ahead? *Journal of Curriculum Studies*.

2 Categories of occupational status are based on the European Socio-economic Classification (ESeC). This classification is the EU-variant of the International Standard Classification of Occupations 1988 (ISCO88).

3 Pseudonyms are used for all schools and respondents to protect the privacy of the respondents. Respondents were ensured confidentiality by not disclosing any information provided by respondents or by doing this in such a way as not to reveal the identity of the respondents.

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CHAPTER SIX

Do as you/they think best

Abstract[1]

Throughout the Western world, there is a long tradition of progressive educationalist calling for child-centred, holistic and experiential curricula as a way to provide a proper education to *all* children. However, the voices of parents are often not included in the elaboration of such curricula. In this study, we engage with this tension by drawing attention to one progressive primary school located in an ethnically-diverse neighbourhood of Ghent (Belgium). Drawing on 29 interviews with both members of the school staff and lower-class minoritised mothers of whom the children are enrolled at the school, it is concurred that what progressive educationalists think best for children not necessarily coincides with what parents think best. Rather than determining who is right and who is wrong, the study concludes by offering progressive educationalist a potential roadmap for dealing with these conflicting perspectives in a meaningful way.

Introduction

Throughout the Western world, there is a long tradition of progressive educationalist calling for child-centred, holistic and experiential curricula as an alternative to traditional forms of education (Brehony, 2001; Darling & Nordenbo, 2003). Underlying these calls is the idea that schools fail to educate children properly. More precisely, it is believed that children are both learning the wrong things and learning the wrong way. Especially with regard to the education of lower-class and/or minoritised pupils, there is the view that schools are falling short. By putting forward progressive practices, educationalists on all levels try to break through the status quo and aim to do better for all children (Koerrenz, Blichmann, & Engelmann, 2018). However, these attempts are not without difficulty. As many other reformers coming from all strands of political thought (Levin, 2000), progressive educationalist tend to call for specific curricula while paying no heed to the ones who have most to gain or lose by its outcomes (Delpit, 2006). Indeed, as argued by Vandenbroeck (2009, p. 166), "very often, the voices of parents and children themselves are not included in the elaboration of such curricula, as if parents and children would all be quite happy with what experts have imagined". In other words, there seems to be a tendency to talk *about* rather than *with* people.

This paper, therefore, gives prominence to the perspectives of lower-class and minoritised families. In order to do this, attention is focused on a particular primary school of Ghent (Belgium), which since the year 2000 onward single-handedly decided to start employing progressive educational practices. Drawing on 29 interviews with both members of the school staff and lower-class minoritised mothers of whom the children are enrolled at the school, it is concurred that what progressive educationalists think best for children not necessarily coincides with what parents think best. In so doing, our aim is neither to determine who is right or wrong, nor to demonstrate a need for a lasting consensus. Rather, we wish to engage with the tensions that come into play when including parental perspectives into the equation. More precisely, in the discussion section, we will try to unravel how progressive educationalists can deal with this tension in a meaningful way. Before going into details, we will first discuss why child-centred, holistic and experiential curricula have been

put forward by progressive educationalists, followed by an overview of the research context and the employed methods.

Progressivism as an alternative

Progressive education emerged as an international phenomenon at the turn of the twentieth century from a discontent with the then existing forms of education (Koerenz, Blichmann, & Engelmann, 2018). Spurred by organizations such as the *New Education Fellowship*, progressive pioneers believed that a radical change in education was necessary so as to adapt education both to the society that was forming and to the needs of all children. This theme is, for instance, evident in the work of John Dewey, who in a US context has been called "the father of the progressives" (Labaree, 2004). In their book *Schools of To-morrow*, Dewey and Dewey (1962 [1915], p. 168) challenge old forms of education by arguing that these were "for people who did not earn their own livings" and were and still are "based on an aristocratic and leisure class". By developing a "new" form of education (Dewey, 1915 [1899]), progressive educationalists at the turn of the twentieth century hoped to also accommodate the common people, hence ameliorating their situation. Such a concern has been buttressed by historians of education. Arthur Zilversmit (1993, p. 17), for instance, has argued that a faction of progressive education "was tied to social reform," had "a genuine compassion for immigrants," and "shared Jane Addams's commitment to bettering the lot of the poor and dispossessed" (see also Weiler, 2004).[2]

This rationale also came back to the fore in the wake of May 1968 when, after a period of only mild interest, some reformers started grabbing back to progressive educational practices as a way to provide an alternative to (what was felt to be) an authoritarian education system that reproduced and strengthened inequalities. For instance, focusing attention to the context in Flanders, De Coster *et al*. (2009) show how several radical and revolutionary movements comprising students and educational professionals, pushed forward progressive and democratic educational practices in an attempt to establish equality both in education and society. Also in the US, similar initiatives have been rolled out. Most famous are the Central Park East Schools developed by renowned educationalist Deborah Meier in the 1970s and 1980s. These schools located in

East Harlem not only catered to a predominantly disadvantaged and minoritised student body but since the very start also consciously employed progressive educational practices so as to help all pupils realizing their full potential (see Meier, 1995 for more information).

Also today, progressive educationalists tend to make an appeal to child-centred practices as a way to provide a proper education to all children. This is not only evident from a recent work that presents Meier's schools as an answer to questions in urban education (see Tyner-Mullings, 2016), but also from many other accounts discussing progressive educational practices (see e.g., Reuter, 2007).

Progressivism and parents

While the previous section made clear that, from time to time, progressive educationalists have put forward child-centred, holistic and experiential practices as things that could benefit *all*, it is uncertain whether *all* agree with or support such vision. In fact, there are some indications that disadvantaged and minoritised parents are more likely to favour traditional pedagogies and/or prefer the traits that are believed to be developed predominantly by such pedagogies. A first noteworthy endeavour in this area, is a study carried out by Melvin Kohn in the late 1950s in the context of Washington, District of Columbia. Drawing on interviews with parents of fifth-graders, Kohn (1959) examined which characteristics working-class and middle-class parents value most for a child to develop. Parents could select and elaborate on three of seventeen possible characteristics, ranging from having self-control to being obedient. Results not only showed that parental values tend to vary between social classes but also that the values of the working class are quite traditional or conservative. For instance, rather than referring to the development of curiosity or self-control, working-class parents tended to put more stress on their child becoming "obedient" and "neat and clean" (Kohn, 1959); traits that are predominantly emphasized by traditional forms of education (Bernstein, 2003). In a more recent study, Tobin and Kurban (2010) examined what immigrant parents want for their children in early childhood and care programs. Drawing on interview data with teachers and immigrant parents in England, France, Germany, Italy, and the US, the authors infer that immigrant parents tend to underscore the importance of academics in general and direct

teaching of letters and numbers in particular in the curriculum. As these accents placed by parents were often at odds with the beliefs held by preschool teachers, Tobin and Kurban (2010, p. 83) conclude that the latter "often find themselves caught between two core professional values: their beliefs in constructivist, progressive, pedagogy on the one hand, and their belief in being culturally responsive and sensitive on the other". This tension, which inevitably includes a quandary for progressive educationalists, is accurately described by Vandenbroeck (2009, p. 167):

> [S]ome ethnic minority parents protest against what they view as a non-academic direction of multicultural curricula and ask for a more 'traditional' *magister*, directing the learning and disciplining the children when necessary. (…) As progressive academics or practitioners, how can we not take into account the perspective of parents who wish to 'conform' to standards of academic achievement (or to achieve this cultural capital as Bourdieu could have said), rather than to discuss holistic education? But on the other hand, how can we, if we have consecrated a major part of our lives to child centeredness? As a critical pedagogue I may argue that this parental question of conformity with the dominant norms and values is to be considered as 'internalized oppression' (Freire, 1970). But then again, wasn't it also Freire who said 'Dialogue cannot exist without humility? […] How can I dialogue if I always project ignorance onto others and not perceive my own?' (1970, 78).

In this paper, we engage with the previous research on the pedagogical preferences of disadvantaged an minoritised families with regard to primary education. In doing so, our aim is not only to tease out possible tensions that come into play when including parental perspectives into the equation but also to shed light on potential pathways to deal with such situation.

Research context

In this study, we focus on a progressive primary school which we will refer to as *Park Lane*. The school is located in an ethnically diverse neighbourhood of Ghent with a high number of economically vulnerable residents. More

precisely, according to the latest numbers (i.e., January 1, 2016), no less than 9,843 out of 19,167 residents in the neighbourhood had a foreign background which comes down to 51.1%, significantly higher than the 32.6% Ghent average. In addition, the neighbourhood's unemployment rate is higher than the city's average, respectively 12.1% to 9.5% (numbers from March 31, 2017). Likewise, in 2015 the average annual net income was 17,531 euro which is 20.4% below the city's average of 22,033 euro. In the years before 2000, the strong presence of disadvantaged and minoritised people in the neighbourhood was heavily reflected in the school's makeup. However, since the school started to employ progressive practices, it has become increasingly popular with a group of highly educated middle-class families. As a consequence, *Park Lane*'s student body now mirrors the Ghent school average. Both with regard to the percentage of pupils who do not speak Dutch (i.e., the official school language) at home and the percentage of pupils with a low-educated mother, *Park Lane*'s student body is highly similar to the Ghent school average, respectively 26.4% compared to 29.3% and 34.7% compared to 31.0%.

On a pedagogical level, *Park Lane* operates as a Jena Plan school. This approach, developed by the German pedagogue Peter Petersen (1884-1952), is characterized by a number of child-centred, holistic and experiential practices that are also present in the workings of *Park Lane*. More precisely, in accordance with Petersen's pedagogy, the school board of *Park Lane* asserts that during day-to-day activities stress should not only be put on work, but also on conversation, celebration and play. As such, *Park Lane's* operation is not only characterized by traditional instruction but by numerous activities, ranging from morning assemblies, week closure celebrations, field trips, individual and group work, pupil-driven project learning and preparations for a performance or play. With regard to the grouping system, pupils are placed within mixed-grade classes (i.e., so-called *Stammgruppen*) that are intended to reflect the natural structure of the family. In practice this means that grades are grouped by two in the lower levels (i.e., age 2,5 to 6) and by three in the middle and higher levels (age 6 to 12). For most of the time, pupils remain in this *Stammgruppe*. Only for so-called 'cluster activities' (i.e., activities in which pupils work together with pupils from ages 2,5 to 12) and 'instruction activities' (i.e., instruction sessions for a limited amount of time for subjects such as mathematics and Dutch language in which pupils are grouped according to

their level), pupils leave their group. Pure instruction, nonetheless, remains limited as pupils are encouraged to learn independently and/or with the support of their peers. With regard to this focus on independence, pupils also create a so-called 'week plan' in consultation with their teacher in which assignments are listed that have to be completed by the end of the week. As pupils are free to determine when they will work on these assignments during the school hours, it is believed that they will learn to plan and to take responsibility for their actions. Finally, with regard to evaluation, pupils are no longer graded so as to avoid demotivation or competition among pupils. Instead, student report cards give a qualitative description of a child's development. In addition, pupils are also encouraged to discuss their progress with their teacher and parents by going through their portfolio (i.e., an individual map in which the products of diverse activities are listed) during half-yearly held meetings (for an elaborated description on how Jena Plan schools operate see Gläser-Zikuda, Ziegelbauer, Rohde, Conrad, & Limprecht, 2012).

Methods

This study draws on interviews with 23 lower-class mothers with a migration background of whom the children are enrolled at the progressive primary school *Park Lane*. We deliberately singled out lower-class parents with a migration background as it is especially their children who are defined as the ones who will benefit from progressive education. As the Ghent education system is characterized by parental freedom of choice,[3] it can be expected that most participating mothers have consciously selected *Park Lane*, for whatever reason that is (parental motives will be discussed in the result section). Participants were recruited at the school when they were dropping of or picking up their children. More precisely, the first two authors (one of whom speaks Turkish) gathered on several occasions at the school and approached parents with a migration background. In the following conversation, information on the research and researchers was provided and parents were asked for an interview. Although mothers were not deliberately targeted, the resulting sample comprises exclusively women, something that can be explained by the fact that, just like in white middle-class families (Reay, 1998, p. 148), educational matters appear to be predominantly "mother's work" in families

with a migration background (Fleischmann & De Haas, 2016). Although most mothers held no post-secondary degree (22/23) and were unemployed (13/23) or employed in low-skilled jobs (10/23), some were, however, additionally vulnerable as they were foreign born (14/23), making communication in Dutch in almost all instances complicated if not impossible (see Table 1 for a complete overview of respondents). Interviews followed a semi-structured protocol and were conducted either in Dutch or Turkish, depending on the choice of the interviewees. The interviews took place in the school, in a nearby park or at their home, this according to their preference. With regard to the interview protocol, mothers were questioned about their school choice process and preferences with regard to pedagogy and the curriculum. In addition, mothers were encouraged to link these preferences to the actual education practice of *Park Lane*. In other words, mothers were asked whether they thought their pedagogical preferences matched *Park Lane's* progressive practice and, if they did not think so, whether they voiced their concerns and how these concerns are handled by the school staff.

In addition, six interviews were carried out with school personnel. More precisely, next to the former and current principal and the bridge figure (i.e., a full time employee who provides support to disadvantaged and minoritised families and who involves them into school issues) also one teacher per level was interviewed. In these interviews we were particularly interested in whether differences in the preferences of mothers and the actual practice at *Park Lane* were observed by the school personnel and, if so, how these differences were explained and handled. Interviews with the school personnel were conducted in Dutch and took place at the school. Later on, all interviews were transcribed orthographically. Transcripts were read multiple times and complemented with memos and already existing notes that were taken during and/or immediately after interviews. Finally, a thematic analysis was carried out using the qualitative data analysis software package Nvivo (version 11). This provided not only a firm basis to determine how often certain sentiments came to the fore but also a structure for communicating our results. It should be noted, however, that given our small sample size and the focus on one school in one city, results should be interpreted with caution.

Table 1. Characteristics of respondents (*N= 23*)

Name	Born	Education level	Occupational status	Homeownership status
Elif	Turkish-born [Turkish-born]	High school [High school]	Unemployed [Working class]	Owning
Zenyed	Belgian-born, Turkish background [Turkish-born]	High school [High school]	Unemployed [Working class]	Owning
Hiranur	Turkish-born [Turkish-born]	High school [High school]	Unemployed [Working class]	Renting
Miray	Turkish-born [Turkish-born]	High school [High school]	Unemployed [Working class]	Renting
Zehra	Turkish-born [Turkish-born]	Primary school [High school]	Working class [Working class]	Owning
Ecrin	Turkish-born [Turkish-born]	Primary school [Primary school]a	Working class [Working class]	Owning
Azra	Turkish-born [Turkish-born]	Primary schoola [No education]	Unemployed [Unemployed]	Owning
Yaren	Turkish-born [Turkish-born]	Primary school [High school]	Unemployed [Working class]	Owning
Öykü	Turkish-born [Turkish-born]	High school [High school]	Unemployed [Working class]	Owning
Evra	Turkish-born [Turkish-born]	High school [High school]	Working class [Working class]	Owning
Zümra	Dutch-born, Turkish background [Turkish-born]	High school [High school]	Unemployed [Working class]	Renting
Sümeyye	Turkish-born [Turkish-born]	Primary school [Primary school]	Unemployed [Working class]	Renting

Name	Born	Education level	Occupational status	Homeownership status
Betül	Belgian-born, Turkish background [Turkish-born]	High school [High school]	Unemployed [Working class]	Renting
Beren	Belgian-born, Turkish background [Belgian-born, Turkish background]	High school [High school]	Working class [Working class]	Owning
Meryem	Turkish-born [Turkish-born]	Primary school[a] [High school][a]	Unemployed [Unemployed]	Renting
Kübra	Turkish-born [Turkish-born]	Primary school [High school]	Unemployed [Working class]	Renting
Cemre	Belgian-born, Turkish background [Belgian-born, Turkish background]	High school [High school]	Working class [Working class]	Owning
Büsrar	Belgian-born, Turkish background [Belgian-born, Turkish background]	Bachelor [Master]	Working class [Working class]	Owning
Fatma	Turkish-born [Turkish-born]	High school [High school]	Unemployed [Working class]	Owning
Melisa	Belgian-born, Moroccan background [Moroccan-born]	High school [High school]	Working class [Working class]	Owning
Faiza	Belgian-born, Moroccan background [Belgian-born, Moroccan background]	High school [High school]	Working class [Working class]	Owning
Imane	Belgian-born, Moroccan background [Belgian-born, Turkish background]	High school [High school]	Working class [Working class]	Renting
Ajkuna	Kosovo-born [Kosovo-born]	High school[a] [High school][a]	Working class [Working class]	Owning

Note: pseudonyms are used for all respondents to ensure confidentiality. [a] Unfinished.

The perspectives

Although *Park Lane* initially made an appeal to the Jena Plan pedagogy as a way to mix their student body, most members of the school staff are convinced that the practices developed by Petersen have the power to provide all pupils with a proper education. During the interviews, members of the school staff indicated that the pupils in their school not only learned in a better way but that they also learned better things. As indicated by the principal:

> I think we are providing these children with traits, traits for life. (…) We provide them with some skills which I think are 21st century skills: co-operation, problem-solving, being flexible, and so on.

However, the fact that the school staff thought progressive educational practices are the best, did not mean that parents thought the same way. In fact, as in other studies on lower-class and/or minoritised families (Gewirtz, Ball, & Bowe, 1995), it seemed that the school choice process of our respondents was predominantly driven by distance or proximity, in which the shorter a school was located to the home, the more it was taken into account as an option. Moreover, many mothers indicated "not having much information" beforehand and as such going through the process somewhat uninformed or as one mother argued "as blind people" (cf. the notion of "disconnected choosers" of Gewirtz *et al.*, 1995). Although mothers were often not able to decipher schools and looked for schools in close proximity to the home, this did not mean that they were ambivalent toward schooling or to the importance of it for their children's future.

> I want them to take their education in a very good school. I think every parent is an idealist when it comes to their kids' education life. Education, the way of teaching at the school is the most important thing for me. (Meyrem)[4]

However, it did mean that many of them did not know that *Park Lane* was running as a progressive school when they were enrolling their children in the school.

Some parents are being here without really knowing what Jena Plan entails, who also do not really know that there are mixed-grade groups. Their kid is just sitting here because it is the closest [to home]. This can lead to some conflicts when things are not working out for a moment. Then they often put the blame on that [i.e., the Jena Plan pedagogy]. (…) They then are taken aback "Are they here with 19 pupils, grades 1, 2, and 3 together? So not like before in rows, all looking at the blackboard?". Sometimes you have this with whites to, that they need to adapt to it. But the Jena Plan method, I fully support it! (Fabian, teacher of a *Stamgruppe* in the middle levels)

The fact that the school employed a Jena Plan pedagogy often came as a surprise, certainly because most mothers (in contrast to the school staff) did not seem to support several aspects of progressive educational practices. In fact, we were able to discern at least six intertwining aspects of conflict between the mothers' pedagogical vision on the one hand and Petersen's pedagogy and the workings of *Park Lane* on the other hand. In what follows, we will discuss each of these aspects separately. First, many mothers explicitly objected the way in which pupils are grouped in *Park Lane*. According to them, rather than grouping children in *Stamgruppen* of multiple grades, children should be grouped in single grades. The reason for this is that it is believed that in a single-grade system, children will book more progress and, hence, be more successful. More precisely, mothers described mixed-age grouping as a "disorganized system" where the "age gap" is too big, both for teachers and pupils, as a result of which the latter risk getting "lost".

First, second, and third graders are taught in the same class by the same teacher. If I had known this before, I would have searched for other schools close to home. I am not really happy with this way of teaching. (…) I asked the teacher thousands of times how she can make sure that this is the best for the children and whether it is possible to change it or not. She said they cannot change the school's education system. Apparently, there is nothing we can complain about (…) We should accept that this is for the good of our kids. (Yaren)

Thus, while progressive educators are pushing forward mixed-grade classes as an innovative approach, there were indications that our mothers set such grouping system aside not only as ineffective but also as old fashioned. Indeed, in a profound disbelief, another mother openly wondered why a Belgian school would still hold on to a system that used to exist in Turkey in the past, hence pointing to the question of what exactly is progressive. This is not to say that we view 'things from the past' in general and mixed-grade classes in particular *de facto* as unprogressive. Rather we want to stress that educational options can appear as progressive or not depending on the perspective taken. Second, the opinions of mothers and *Park Lane* differed with regard to evaluation. More precisely, the progressive school recently changed its grading system in accordance with the Jena Plan pedagogy. Students are no longer evaluated via points but only via a qualitative description. This, however, is against the position that many of our respondents took.

> This new system confuses me a lot. I want to know to what extent my kids are successful or unsuccessful at the school. I need to see it concretely on paper. Teachers saying your kid is successful or not is not enough for me. I am sure most of the parents think the same way I do. There ought to be a scoring system after kindergarten when the child starts first grade. (…) The only thing she [i.e., the teacher] does is showing me the tests and exams that my child has taken so far. Yet, she never mentions an overall score. (…) Now how come they expect us to track the progress of our kids? (Zenyed)

Whereas the school board of *Park Lane* dropped their old point-based grading system as it was felt to be uninformative, many mothers in our study indicated the exact opposite, namely that a point-based grading provided them a clearer view on their child's progress. Indeed, it appeared as if mothers find it hard or even impossible to keep track of their children's progress via report cards comprising exclusively qualitative descriptions. Commenting on the changed grading system, another mother, for instance, indicated feeling "excluded" from her child's school life (cf. Bernstein, 1975). A third point of incongruence between the pedagogical preferences of mothers and the employed pedagogy of *Park Lane* revolved around styles of teaching. More precisely, some mothers felt that in *Park Lane* too much emphasis is put on self-directed learning,

inquiry-based learning, independent learning and/or peer learning at the expense of direct instruction which was preferred. Underlying this preference for direct instruction, is the view that an understanding of subject matter arises only, or most effectively, through instruction. Consequently, mothers believed that exercise and inquiry should follow understanding, not the other way around. Such a sentiment vividly came to the fore through Öykü's discourse:

> If the children don't know or understand something, they [i.e., the teachers] have to explain it to them. Explanation is understanding. If they do not receive any explanation they cannot understand it either. In order to give a correct answer, they have to understand. (…) I notice that my daughter and also my son do not understand much of the subject matter. I say "Well if the teacher is present and you do not understand something, you should ask the teacher". And they reply "I ask them mother but she tells me to try and solve it on my own". They have to understand first to be able to solve things. This is not an okay response from a teacher! (Öykü)

Next to different opinions on adequate grouping systems, evaluation, and teaching styles, the views of mothers and *Park Lane* also differed around issues of homework. As the school opposed homework, this both from a romantic idea (i.e., the vision that children should be able to act as children, whatever this might mean) and an egalitarian one (i.e., the belief that homework could strengthen existing inequalities), teachers either did not provide homework assignments or kept these to an absolute minimum. Although there was some support for both arguments, most mothers nevertheless seemed to be in favour of a significant amount of homework. In particular, mothers were convinced that homework was an essential determinant of the child's success. Many mothers, for instance, asserted that homework assignments allowed (i) their children to apply and repeat subject matters through exercise, (ii) teachers to keep track of their children's progress, and/or (iii) their children to become more disciplined. As mothers not only argued that their children should be disciplined through homework but also inside the school in general and the *Stamgruppen* in particular, we discerned discipline as a fifth aspect of conflict:

I really regretted sending my kids to this school (…) Here, at this school, they give children free rein which I really hate and causes me trouble at home. I cannot control my own children as their reins are too much loosened at the school. The school should be disciplining the children but they are not. Kids can do whatever they want at the school. I doubt whether my kids are aware of the fact that they go to school rather than going to a playground where they can act freely (…) The children should know the difference between education and entertainment. The school should not apply them both together at the same time, otherwise the kids get confused and become unaware of their educational life and responsibilities. How can they even progress without homework or solely by playing throughout their entire educational life? I have let the teachers know about my discomfort with them not giving my kids homework during the parents' evenings for a couple of times. Whenever I utter my complaints about their way of teaching, I have been repelled by the same answer "We do not give homework, this is how the progressive educational system works, you should have known that". (…) At parents' evenings, teachers are complaining about the fact that my kids do not study hard and they are not successful in class. What would they expect if they do not give the students homework so as to make them study hard? It is their fault my kids are unsuccessful. (Azra)

As becomes clear through Azra's statement, disciplining children and not giving them free rein is considered important so as to avoid "trouble at home" that can be caused by a mismatch between the school culture and the home culture. Yet, it is clear that the focus on discipline (this through homework assignments and the activities in the school) was also linked to something different. In fact, throughout the data it becomes clear that mothers view discipline (i.e., in the form of hard work in contrast to play) as a key to success in school and in life.[5] When children are forced to work hard, it is believed that they will also become aware of their responsibilities, adopt a rigorous work ethic and develop necessary and valuable skills (see also Lopez, 2001 on "the value of hard work"). Of course, this raises the question as to what skills are deemed necessary and/or valuable. Indeed, the answer to the question to what skills should be emphasized in the curriculum was, in fact, a final point in which the opinions of mothers differed from the ones of *Park Lane*. Although

often only implicitly present in their discourse, it appeared that mothers gave priority to what can be called 'basic skills' and competences in the curriculum, such as 'the three R's' (i.e., reading, writing and arithmetic). In contrast, *Park Lane* emphasizes educating the 'whole child', this through a diverse curriculum in which a significant amount of time also goes to the development of creative and social skills. This approach left some mothers rather feeling disgruntled as they felt that in this way an insufficient amount of time could be spent to things that matter. One mother, for instance, openly questioned whether the children enrolled at the school are even taught valuable subject matter by teachers.

> I think the language level of the children is not really good. I tell them [i.e., the teachers] "The classes are very easy. You do not oblige them to do anything. You do not look where things go wrong with the child." Language is very important. I myself have taught mathematics to the children. I myself have taught them how to read and write. I tell them "What is your job? (…) What do you do to learn them something?". (Sümeyye)

> We want our children to study and get good grades and have a good future, that's it. We do not think "Our children have to able to express themselves", no. (Imane)

In summary, most mothers in our study seemed to be preferring traditional or visible pedagogies. This, however, is not to say that no variation existed between respondents' discourses. A few mothers in our sample (i.e., Beren, Cemre, Büsrar and Melisa), for instance, indeed shared more ambivalent or even positive feelings regarding progressive educational practices. These mothers, for instance, indicated that 'a child should be able to stay a child' and that the children at the school seemed to learn through play and were overall happy. At the same time, these mothers monitored their children's progress quite extensively and remedied educational backlogs coming to the surface throughout this process. Quite interestingly, it turned out that the mothers who were ambivalent or positive toward progressive education were also the ones who were most fluent in Dutch and had the highest family doses of economic capital (e.g., all were owning their home and were part of two-

income households), social capital (e.g., although they carried out low-skilled jobs, all of them were integrated in professional settings and, hence, indicated to interact frequently with professionals on an informal level), and cultural capital (e.g., they and their partners all had degrees of high school or higher).[6]

> My father is a math teacher and my sister was bad in math, so my father used to teach my sister in math at home. I have seen this and I will also apply that to my own son. If I notice "He has a deficit somewhere", then I'll help him. (…). I will always follow up on the school. (…) If necessary, I'll ask for help. (…) I have a lot of acquaintances and people who are specialized in some studies. And if I would notice "There is a problem here that I cannot handle" then I will always be able to find someone in my environment who could give me advise. (Büsrar)

The explanation

These differences also explain why other mothers opposed educational progressivism. Indeed, while at first sight it might appear as if the mothers in our sample are just 'conservatives', preferring 'conservative pedagogies' (whatever this might mean as our example of mixed-graded grouping makes clear), it seems that mothers' pedagogical preferences are not only linked to their own educational experiences or beliefs but also to (their evaluation of) (i) the competencies and skills that are necessary and valuable to become successful in school and life, and (ii) the resources they have at their disposal to facilitate the development of these competencies and skills in their children. Or to put it in a Bourdieuan language: the pedagogical preferences of mothers are not only informed by their habitus but also by (their evaluation of) the conditions of fields and their capital structure and the one of their children. Mothers, for instance, were aware of the fact that a high proficiency in the Dutch language was essential for being able to run successful trajectories at school or later in life. For instance, many had experienced, and still are experiencing, the consequences of a poor proficiency in the Dutch language first-hand, something that is not likely to change in the future given the current popularity of assimilation policies. Often this became clear when mothers elaborated on the question as to why they did or did not do something:

It is the language problem again…We encounter this language barrier everywhere. (Zehra)

We're always standing outside. (…) This is how I feel. Because we do not speak the language, we're always standing on the side. This is how I feel all the time. You cannot participate. You cannot say anything… (Kübra)

Moreover, our respondents often evaluated that their children had a backlog in terms of Dutch prior to enrolling in school. They were also aware that such a backlog in the official school language could affect the development of other skills and competencies. As such, these mothers believed their children started their school careers somewhat vulnerable. On top of that, mothers deemed themselves somewhat incapable to respond to such situation. In fact, they (whether or not rightfully) believed that (i) their proficiency in the Dutch language was insufficient to facilitate and monitor their children's progress and/or (ii) they did not have enough competencies or resources (read: capital) to remedy potential educational backlogs, a sentiment that is in sharp contrast with the confidence displayed by white middle-class parents consciously choosing for progressive education (see chapter 5).

I do not know any Dutch. So, I cannot really help my kid, sometimes I help her in Turkish, though, if she translates her questions to Turkish. (Hiranur)

I cannot help my kids with their school life by teaching at home et cetera as I am uneducated. Well, even if I had taken education before, I still would not have been able to help them without knowing the language. As their father and mother are both uneducated and unable to take part in their school life, hopefully God will help them find their way… (Azra)

I only knew a few words in Dutch. I felt guilty when my children weren't doing so well in the school. (…) I tried to help or to follow things up like "What have you done today?" but I did not understand anything. (Ajkuna)

They [i.e., people who speak Dutch] can give their opinion. For example, in the morning they can have a conversation with the teacher, however, I cannot talk. I just leave my child at school and go back home. (Kübra)

I would very much like [to help] but because I do not get it, I cannot do anything. [When I would understand the matter] I would be able to support my child much more but because we do not understand… (Sümeyye)

Consequently, most mothers in our study believe that the best educational strategy is one in which their children are kept on a short leash, receive direct instruction in a single-grade class where the focus lies on the development of basic skills such as the three R's, are assigned homework, and are evaluated via a point-based system. While parents who evaluate their capital structure as sufficient, their proficiency in the official school language as adequate, and their children as being not particularly vulnerable, are often confident that their children will develop a set of basic skills (and hence could emphasize additional aspects in the curriculum) (see chapter 5), the mothers in our study were not so sure of this development. In other words, mothers tended to give priority to a rigorous academic focus on 'basic skills' via a 'visible pedagogy', as these skills were found essential yet believed to be more than difficult enough to develop given the circumstances in which they and their children found themselves in. To put it bluntly: mothers did not feel they had the luxury to emphasize, for instance, creative development when their child had problems speaking the official school language (i.e., Dutch).

They tell me that the system of the school is very different from that of other schools. But actually that is playing with the future of the children. (…) Language is very important to be able to study. (…) I have, however, let my children repeat a class, my daughter in first grade, my son in second grade, so that they would be better in language in the following grades. But that has not been a solution. (…) No, the system of the school really should change. (Öykü)

This is neither to say that the inherent value of, for instance, creativity was denied nor that it was ignored that creativity could make someone successful. Rather it is to say that the proficiency in basic skills would always play a role in, and act as a condition for, school success or the success thereafter and as such should be given priority.

> Without Dutch, without any language, what are you? You are nothing! I have experienced this myself in the beginning. I do not speak perfectly but I already understand [i.e., the Dutch language]. (…) If they [i.e., Ajkuna's children] know Dutch well, they will have better report cards. (…) School is everything. (…) If they have a nice degree, of course they will get a nice job. (Ajkuna)

Moreover, although there is certainly a risk of falling into researcher speculation, it appeared as if mothers, while not being able to ensure the development of basic skills, could, however, personally take care of the development of social and creative skills, and hence did not need the school for this. Some mothers, for instance, indicated doing handicrafts with their children at home or going to park which allowed both the mothers and their children to socialize with peers; the latter of which we could experience first-hand as the majority of interviews took place in a park adjacent to the school.

The response

As should have become clear through the quotations, mothers sometimes uttered their complaints to the school personnel about aspects of the Jena Plan pedagogy. This placed the staff in a difficult position as they found themselves caught between their beliefs in educational progressivism on the one hand, and the wish to listen to parents and involve them in the school on the other hand (see also Tobin & Kurban, 2010 for similar results in an early childhood and care context). Indeed, whereas this tension was not so much felt in relation to gentrifying parents, it could come into play in discussions with lower-class parents with a migration background who favoured traditional or visible pedagogies; a preference which was believed to be caused by 'conservative' or 'uninformed' views.

You notice that they [i.e., parents with a migrant background] are still more conservative with regard to their view on education and homework than many of these white parents who have come to live in this neighbourhood; who, for example, have come from the province,[7] who have studied in Ghent and stuck around. (…) So you always try to find a solution that everybody can accept and that fits with our way of working. Because when a parent comes around and says "I think my child doesn't get enough homework and I want that he/she gets two worksheets every week, one for arithmetic and one for spelling", I cannot say "Alright, here you have two" as this totally does not fit to the way we work around here. So you try to explain "Look, we do not work here in the way that you have possibly been used to in the past. (…) We work here like this". (Eric, teacher of a *Stamgruppe* in the higher levels)

[While highly educated middle-class parents have thought a lot about pedagogy], I think another category of parents think a lot less about these things. (…) Reading a book about pedagogy, or knowing who Rousseau is, what do they care? I think these parents are not aware what a school can be except from a machine that transfers knowledge. (Principal)

As becomes evident through the statement of Eric, the school personnel tried to search for a solution that is acceptable to all when pedagogical conflicts arose. However, they tried to do this without rejecting in any way the Jena Plan pedagogy. As this was almost always impossible, the staff often resorted to explaining how things worked at the school. As one member of the school staff noted, "it is up to us to convince these parents of the value of our project". Indeed, as the staff was convinced of the "value" of the Jena Plan pedagogy also for socioeconomically vulnerable and minoritised pupils, they felt it was necessary to stand their ground, even if opposition came from the families whom they were aiming to help. Mothers in our study, nevertheless, were not really satisfied by such responses and argued that, whenever they utter their complaints, they get the "usual answer" from the school staff, namely that "they [i.e., the teachers] cannot change the school's education system". Consequently, some mothers felt as if the teachers never listened to their "complaints and concerns by heart". Ultimately such strategy made it possible for the school

staff to maintain the educational practices they thought best. However, at the same time, this strategy caused mothers feeling unheard and disempowered.

Discussion

I do not know if the teachers and the other superior school staff are aware of the fact that this system does not really work at the end of the day, well at least for us and for our children… (Miray)

From time to time, a group of progressive educationalists has tried to respond to the needs of *all* children by turning to child-centred, holistic and experiential practices. However, this is not necessarily perceived as such by these families. Indeed, many disadvantaged and minoritised mothers in our study tend to oppose progressive pedagogies. Rather than a progressive system, mothers saw more value in a traditional approach characterized by single-grade grouping, point-based grading, direct instruction, homework assignments, thorough disciplining, and a focus on basic skills.[8]

So how can progressive educationalists deal with such situation? When professionally convinced that a system could benefit pupils, what to do when parents do not share this opinion and even oppose to it? As it seems paradoxical to try and help disadvantaged and minoritised pupils by ignoring and silencing the perspectives of their families, should they then do the exact opposite, meaning adapting an educational system to the wishes and preferences of disadvantaged and minoritised families, thereby abnegating any professional beliefs?

The staff of our case study school first and foremost tried to convince parents of the value of progressive education. Although genuinely entering into a discussion with parents when complaints were made, the staff was not willing to open the door for any alterations. The staff adhered to what they felt comprised a proper education, certainly as the perspectives of parents were attributed to conservatism and ignorance. Parental perspectives were regarded as problematic, something that needed to be overcome on the way to providing better education. Consequently, discussions were primarily seen as a way to manage parents and bring them into their camp. While this view of parents

and its ensuing strategies proved effective in safeguarding progressive practices at the school, it also tended to foreclose discussions on educational matters even before they took off. To rephrase Freire (1970), how can a dialogue take place if educational professionals project their ignorance onto others and not perceive their own? The mothers in our study seem to buttress this as they felt unheard and certainly did not have the feeling that any real dialogue took place.

Rather than trying to swiftly overcome parental opposition, it could prove out more meaningful to do the exact opposite, namely fully engaging with the perspectives of parents. This is, in fact, what is suggested by Lisa Delpit (2006, pp. 46-47) in her book *Other People's Children*:

> Educators must open themselves to, and allow themselves to be affected by, these alternative voices. (…) To do so takes a very special kind of listening, listening that requires not only open eyes and ears, but open hearts and minds. We do not really see through our eyes or hear through our ears, but through our beliefs. To put our beliefs on hold is to cease to exist as ourselves for a moment – and that is not easy. It is painful as well, because it means turning yourself inside out, giving up your own sense of who you are, and being willing to see yourself in the unflattering light of another's angry gaze. It is not easy, but it is the only way to learn what it might feel like to be someone else and the only way to start the dialogue.

Our results suggest that to enter into a dialogue is not only meaningful from a democratic viewpoint. It is not only a way to pay tribute to progressive educational values by making a democratic gesture.[9] It is first and foremost a means to provide responsive education to all children. This is because to enter into a dialogue allows to engage with the perspectives of their parents and the rationales behind these perspectives. Parental rationales are not necessary problematic but can, in fact, prove to be a valuable source of information.

Indeed, we have demonstrated that rather than dogmatic, old-fashioned or uninformed, the perspectives of mothers were highly rational. In fact, the preference of mothers for traditional forms of education was based on a conscious evaluation of a triad of relevant elements. First, an evaluation of what

skills and competencies are important to be successful in school and later on in life. Second, an evaluation of their children's prior knowledge and potential vulnerability. Third, an evaluation of their own skills and resources which can be used to facilitate and monitor their children's progress and remedy potential educational backlogs. In a Bourdieuan language, mother's based their preference for traditional educational on an evaluation of (i) fields and what constitute as capital in these fields, (ii) the current capital stock of their children, and (iii) their own capital stock and how this stock could be used for the benefit of their children. In turn, this evaluation caused mothers to prefer the forms believe that traditional education provided the best chance of upward social mobility.

By engaging with parents, this study has thus drawn a more complex picture. This is not to say that the mothers in our study got it right and that progressive educationalist should give in just like that. It is nevertheless a call to engage with parents as experts in search of such picture, thereby allowing their world to be turned upside down (Delpit, 2006). After all, such picture provides information that otherwise remains hidden, information that can inform progressive educationalists and help them to respond to the needs of all children. Indeed, as one Native Alaskan educator quoted in Delpit (1992, p. 249) eloquently argued: "In order to teach you, I must know you".

Notes

1   Based on Goossens, C., Utlu, I., Oosterlynck, S., Van Gorp, A., & Bradt, L. (to be submitted). Do as you/they think best? School responsiveness to the pedagogical needs of lower-class families with a migration background. *Critical Studies in Education*.

2   It should be stressed that, in practice, many progressive initiatives have failed to cater to a diverse student body. This has been described as 'the paradox of progressive education' and has been summarized through the cynical slogan "democratic education for the elite" (Semel & Sadovnik, 1999, p. 358).

3   During a certain period of time, parents are allowed to submit enrolment requests for all Ghent schools. After this period, enrolment requests are ordered on the basis of the distance between a child's residence and the school, in which the shorter the distance, the higher the ranking a child obtains.

4   Pseudonyms are used for all schools and respondents to protect the privacy of the respondents. Respondents were ensured confidentiality by not disclosing any information provided by respondents or by doing this in such a way as not to reveal the identity of the respondents.

5   As demonstrated by Bernstein (1975) 'play' is the essential feature of progressive pedagogies as through playing activities the child makes itself known to the teacher who, hence, is able to screen, evaluate and interfere in the child's developmental process. Consequently, only a very fine line exists between work and play in progressive educational practices; or in the words of Bernstein (1975: 24), "[i]n essence, play is work and work is play". Although many mothers in our study observed that progressive education is providing much room for play (this both literally and figuratively), they did not feel that playing activities could also be a form of work and thus an efficient way of learning.

6   It is important to note that these differences keep us from ethnicizing class differences (i.e., attributing certain perspectives and practices that are class-related to issues of ethnicity). Yet, it is equally important to stress that mother's perspectives should not only be linked to class but also have to do with their proficiency in the Dutch language.

7   As a city housing a large university and several university colleges, Ghent appeals to many high school graduates from outside Ghent. As these studies finish their higher educational studies, a significant amount of graduates decides to stay and settle in the city.

8   It is possible that this is just a toned down view as scholars have argued there are several reasons for parents with a migrant background to not fully speak up with regard to school issues (see for example Tobin, 2009).

[9]   A faction of progressive educationalists has, for instance, put an emphasis on democratic education (see for example Biesta, 2006; Dewey, 1916).

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CHAPTER SEVEN

The mix as an unproblematic fix?

Abstract[1]

It has been argued that processes of gentrification have the potential to tackle the inequalities faced by poor and minoritised communities not only in neighbourhoods but also in schools. Building on the emerging literature on school gentrification, this study examines this master narrative by drawing attention to a gentrifying inner-city school of Ghent (Belgium). Based on interview data, it is shown that the process of gentrification does not necessarily entail the annulment of existing inequalities but can in fact give rise to new inequalities. The article concludes by elaborating on the implications for policy and practice.

Introduction

During the last two decades, the concept of 'social mix' seems to have become a keyword in urban policy discourse throughout the Western world. Social mix policies, via gentrification, have been adopted in countries as Australia (Arthurson, 2012), Belgium (Van Criekingen, 2012), Canada (Rose *et al.*, 2013), Denmark (Christensen, 2015), England (Davidson, 2008), Finland (Dhalmann & Vilkama, 2009), France (Rose *et al.*, 2013), Germany (Münch, 2009), the Netherlands (Uitermark, Duyvendak, & Kleinhans 2007; van Kempen & Bolt, 2009), Scotland (Glynn, 2012), Sweden (Musterd & Anderson, 2005), and the United States (Popkin *et al.*, 2004). The rationale behind such promotion is that social mix will benefit poor and minoritised households, as it is claimed that desegregation will tackle a host of social ills characterizing disadvantaged neighbourhoods (see Cheshire, 2009 on this 'neighbourhood effect thesis'). This logic has also been extended to the field of schooling, as it has been argued that socio-ethnically mixed communities, via gentrification, can create mixed schools, which in turn can improve the chances of poor and minoritised pupils. As illustrated by Stillman (2012, p. 1) in a US context:

> Gentrification is changing the demographic makeup of neighborhoods across America. This reinvestment of capital in underprivileged, urban communities has the effect of putting the affluent and the poor on the same streets, and has the potential to do the same in schools. Racial segregation and concentrated poverty rarely breed an optimal environment for learning, and the arrival of the gentry in urban schools offers the potential to improve them.

Thus, just as with mixed communities, it is often assumed that mixed schools, through a process of "school gentrification" (Posey-Maddox, 2014), can only benefit the poor and minoritised pupils in urban areas. The aim of the present article is to interrogate this master narrative. In order to do this, attention is focussed on an all-minority school located in *Brugse Poort*, a gentrifying district of Ghent (Belgium). From the year 2000 onward, this school actively tried to realize a mixed student body by catering to the white middle-class newcomers. As the school succeeded in its aims, the school has been lauded as a good

practice of desegregation by both academics and the media (see for example Herregodts & Dams, 2009; Strobbe & Agirdag, 2012). Drawing on a variety of data sources, most notably interviews with members of minoritised working-class communities, whose perspectives have received only scant attention in the current literature on school gentrification (Siegel-Hawley, Thachik, & Bridges, 2017; Quarles & Butler, 2018), we aim to broaden truths on social mix policies. More precisely, it will be argued that the dominant discourse, which tends to frame social mix as a silver bullet for tackling all social ills, needs to be revisited. The remainder of the article is structured as follows. First, a discussion of the literature on gentrification and social mix will be provided. Second, an overview will be given of the district and school under study. In this, special attention will be paid to the gentrification process affecting both the neighbourhood and school level and to the role of urban policy makers and practitioners herein. Third, the methods and data used in the study will briefly be discussed before we will dwell upon our results in a fourth section. Finally, in a last section the conclusions of this study will be presented.

Literature review

The gospel of social mix and gentrification

Across the Western world, policy makers and urban planners are increasingly promoting gentrification, often euphemistically labelled 'social mix', the thinking being that it serves as a panacea for a variety of social ills characterizing many high poverty and minority neighbourhoods (Lees, Butler, & Bridge, 2012; Paton, 2014).[2] Also on the school level, a lot is expected from an influx of the middle classes. As has been argued by Billingham and Kimelberg (2013, p. 104):

> The factors that lead municipal officials to aggressively court the middle class to inner-city neighborhoods—an infusion of revenue, the promise of physical upgrades, and a presumed increase in stability—carry a similar appeal to leaders of inner-city schools. If urban public school districts can convince middle-class families to enrol their children, the thinking goes, disadvantaged schools (and *all* of the children in them) will reap the benefits of these families' financial contributions, political

power, and social capital in the form of improved facilities, higher quality academic programs, and greater oversight.

Exemplary for this thinking is the much discussed book by Kahlenberg (2003), "All Together Now: Creating Middle-Class Schools through Public School Choice". Backed by a bulk of research that has appeared since the seminal report "Equality of Educational Opportunity" of James Samuel Coleman and colleagues (1966), which demonstrates a correlation between socio-economic segregation and inequality of educational outcomes (cf. Kucsera , Siegel-Hawley, & Orfield, 2015; Logan, Minca, & Adar, 2012), Kahlenberg (2003) argues that the presence of a majority of middle-class families in schools is the best guarantee for school quality and hence for tackling inequality of educational outcomes. Supporters of such thesis often draw on arguments similar to the ones used by supporters of social mix on the neighbourhood level. For instance, it is claimed that middle-class parents will defend the school where their children are enrolled. More precisely, it is argued that such parents are more likely to insist on high standards and high-quality teachers and to ensure that available resources are properly used. Moreover, it is concurred that middle-class parents not only have a higher volume of economic, social, and cultural capital but are also more likely to make use of this stock of capital to ensure that the school has sufficient resources to educate their children. Finally, it is believed that middle-class parents could serve as role models, hence sparking the involvement of disadvantaged families in their children's school and school life. Such "idealized gentrification scenario" (Keels, Burdick-Will, & Keene 2013, p. 240) has received some empirical support. Drawing on 52 interviews with gentry parents in three neighbourhoods of New York City, Stillman (2012) shows how participants tried to improve the quality of the neighbourhood school in which they had enrolled or would soon enrol their children. Accounts, for instance, make clear how gentry parents formed groups to raise money to upgrade facilities, addressed teachers and principals on certain questionable pedagogical practices and volunteered great amounts of time in the neighbourhood schools. In the same vein, Edelberg and Kurland (2011) describe the story of a failing public school in Chicago that was transformed in a revitalized and vibrant one through the efforts of a group of gentry parents. Being one of the parents herself, Edelberg recalls how she and other gentry parents succeeded in collecting a half-million dollars in goods and

services from local merchants and companies during the transformation process which allowed them to install a community kitchen and to renovate the library, hallways, classrooms and other spaces. In addition, the gentry parents succeeded in establishing enrichment programs by forging partnerships with cultural institutions who provided satellite classes at the school. Finally, through a series of strategies, the gentry parents got the negative and dysfunctional teacher staff to leave voluntarily. In sum, social mixing and gentrification strategies are pushed forward based on a belief that these will come to the benefit of disadvantaged and minoritised communities in urban areas. This is eloquently summarized by Lipman (2012, p. 95):

> Mixed-income strategies in housing and education share a similar set of assumptions: deconstructing the 'poor' and dispersing them into mixed-income contexts will give them access to the cultural and social capital and the political and economic resources of the middle class, thus improving their economic and academic situation.

The gospel revisited

Although urban policy makers and planners draw heavily upon the above rationale to justify the necessity of mixed communities, social mix strategies targeted at the *neighbourhood level* have become subject to fierce criticism. In fact, social mix strategies have come under scrutiny from at least three angles. First of all, some scholars have started to question the motives behind social mix strategies, thereby insinuating that such strategies are often part of a larger, less benign agenda. For instance, in their book "Mixed Communities: Gentrification by stealth?", Lees, Butler, and Bridge (2012, p. 7) argue that rather than gentrification being the means for social mix, in reality social mix strategies are being used "on the way to complete gentrification". Second, a group of scholars are challenging the *effectiveness* of social mix policies, arguing that the benefits of social mix, if existing, are small (cf. Slater, 2013). Drawing on empirical research, some scholars maintain that gentrifiers (i) will often only bother to defend the amenities they like, thereby changing neighbourhoods according to their image, (ii) will only get in touch with long-time residents on a superficial level, hence precluding a change for tapping into each other's capital, and (iii) do not necessarily support the existing local economy but instead often take their business elsewhere (Butler & Robson, 2003; Davidson,

2008; Schuermans, Meeus, & De Decker, 2014). Third, some scholars claim that social mix policies also entail costs for disadvantaged and minoritised communities. Indeed, some studies indicate that in gentrifying neighbourhoods, long-time residents (i) are often faced with smaller networks that can help with finding suitable job positions, (ii) experience the loss of a sense of place, and (iii) have to deal with severe displacement pressures (Cheshire, 2009; Davidson, 2008; Smith, 1996). Taken together, this brings Lees (2008) to define social mix discourse as a "gospel" (p. 2450) as social mix policies "rely on a common set of beliefs about the benefits of mixed communities, with little evidence to support them" (p. 2463).

Notwithstanding the fact that social mix strategies via gentrification are increasingly being criticized on a neighbourhood level, they are not so on a school level. Indeed, quite surprisingly, a critical line of research that scrutinizes the "idealized gentrification scenario" in relation to schools (Keels, Burdick-Will, & Keene, 2013, p. 240) seems to be lacking. Yet, additional research that focusses on what happens within schools that are gentrifying, certainly with regard to issues of equity, is needed (Diem, Holme, Edwards, Haynes, & Epstein, 2019) as also on the school level, gentrification could entail a number of new inequalities. Some scholars have nevertheless begun posing critical questions (see Pearman, 2018 for an overview). A first noteworthy endeavour in this area is a study by Cucchiara and Horvat (2009) who examined parental involvement of gentrifiers in two urban public elementary schools located in the downtown area of a north-eastern US city. Their results indicate that although gentry parents in both schools were heavily involved, the consequences of such involvement differed greatly. For instance, while in one school parental efforts were focussed on securing resources or advantages for the collective, in another the benefits of parental involvement often did not reach the school as a whole as gentry parents focussed their efforts on their own children and the class in which they were enrolled (cf. Crozier, Reay, & James, 2011). Moreover, whereas gentry parents in one school respected and valued diversity, many of the efforts of gentry parents in the other school were concentrated on the attraction of middle-class families like them (cf. Freidus, 2016). Consequently, Cucchiara and Horvat (2009, p. 998) question "the sometimes simplistic discourse around middle-class parental involvement by showing it may not create widespread improvement". A second criticism is put forward by Posey-

Maddox (2014) who argues against an overly optimistic view of school gentrification by pointing out significant costs that are attached to such strategies. For instance, the author, inter alia, shows how the influx of white middle-class families engenders the professionalization of the Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) and hence also the expansion of fund-raising efforts and revenue for the school, while at the very same time also giving rise to processes of exclusion and marginalization of disadvantaged families. In fact, as the PTO becomes more professional, the skills to participate also change as a result of which low-educated parents start to feel "inadequate" as they feel like they need "a resumé to participate" (Posey-Maddox, 2014, pp. 108-109). In addition, Posey-Maddox (2014) shows that parents who seek and provide funds also often wield greater decision-making power with exacerbated status positions and marginalization of those who cannot provide financial assistance as a net result. Consequently, as has been argued by Posey-Maddox, Kimelberg, and Cucchiara (2014, p. 446):

> [T]he movement of middle-class families into some urban public schools raises important questions about the extent to which such changes disrupt existing patterns of segregation and inequality or contribute to new forms of marginalization and exclusion.

The current study aims to build on this emerging critical literature on gentrification and schools by zooming in on an urban public school located in a gentrifying district of Ghent (Belgium). Inspired by the future research agenda outlined by Posey-Maddox and colleagues (2014), we will engage with the concept of school gentrification by questioning whether and in what way processes of school gentrification disrupt existing forms of inequality and/or entail new inequalities.

Research context

The district
Brugse Poort is one of the twenty-five city districts of Ghent, a midsized city in Belgium of approximately 260,000 inhabitants. Located northwest of the city centre, Brugse Poort developed in the early nineteenth century as one of the new industrial centres of the city. Housing a number of thriving textile mills

and a steel-producing company, the district soon attracted a mass of people willing to work and, hence, evolved into a fully-fledged and vibrant white working-class district. Since the 1960s, however, Brugse Poort witnessed a series of factory closures leading to a process of neighbourhood decline. Moreover, many of the district's middle-class residents started to leave for the suburbs. From the 1970s onwards, Brugse Poort also began to diversify ethnically as the remaining industry started to recruit labour migrants, mainly from Turkey and Maghreb countries. Even after a so-called 'migration stop' was nationally enforced in 1974, migration to Brugse Poort firmly continued due to subsequent processes of family reunion and family formation on the one hand, and the opening up of the European Union more recently on the other hand. As such, Brugse Poort has become a superdiverse district, comprising 51.1% inhabitants of foreign origin (9,843 out of 19,272 residents) in the 2016 count. Socioeconomically, the district comprises a relatively high number of economically-vulnerable residents. For instance, in 2015, the average annual net income was 17,531 euro, which is 20% below the city's average of 22,033 euro.

Yet, since the 1990s Brugse Poort has started to gentrify. Whereas initially spurred by the actions of white middle-class families buying and rehabilitating former working-class houses, since the 2000s also property developers have jumped on the bandwagon. For instance, next to recently established businesses, one can also find a newly established student complex, gated community, a series of loft apartments, and a smart city accelerating hub. The planning and implementation of an urban renewal project in Brugse Poort, which started in 1998, possibly explains this movement of capital (Smith, 1979). In fact, although the urban renewal project in Brugse Poort was coupled to a social agenda, which foresaw investments in a Community Health Center, a social-artistic organisation and a social economy firm, the project also explicitly endeavoured to initiate a 'social mix' via an upgrading strategy of the physical environment.

The school
It is widely recognized that neighbourhood demographics have a profound effect on, and are reflected in, the student bodies of (public) schools (McPherson, 2011; Saporito & Sohoni, 2006). In fact, the demographic

composition of neighbourhoods is one of the most important predictors of school segregation. Turning to our research context, the handful of elementary schools in Brugse Poort have been no exception to this. Initially catering to white working-class constituents only, the student body of the schools became increasingly ethnically diverse at a time when the neighbourhood did too. Moreover, the reflection of minoritised families was even magnified in neighbourhood schools as a group of white families sought refuge in whiter schools in other districts.[3] Our case study school, which we will refer to as *Park Lane*, also followed this trajectory. Whereas the school initially had a moderate influx of minoritised families, it reached a tipping point followed by a subsequent process of white flight as a result of which *Park Lane* became an all-minority school in the beginning of the 1990s. The school board, however, experienced that they were not getting a lot out of pupils in such a situation and that overall the pupils performed poorly. To counter this situation, the school board sought knowledge, insights and additional public resources, however, without any results. With the failure of this strategy, the board started looking for an answer in the idea of a social mix. In fact, it was believed that a socially-mixed student body would benefit disadvantaged communities. Being aware of the fact that Brugse Poort was changing demographically, the school board knew it only needed to find a way to entice new families. This way was found in the establishment of a progressive enclave program (cf. Stillman, 2012). More specifically, in 2000 a project following a progressive Jena Plan pedagogy was set up within the school to which families could apply (see Gläser-Zikuda, Ziegelbauer, Rohde, Conrad, & Limprecht, 2012 for an elaborated description on the workings of Jena Plan schools). Although *de jure* part of the school, this project operated *de facto* as a new entity (e.g., initially pupils in this project entered the school through a different door and had a different playground) and applied its own admission criteria (e.g., initially a maximum quota of minoritised and socioeconomically vulnerable pupils was set at 30%). These measures, which were all taken pro-actively in order to entice white middle-class gentrifiers, did not prove unsuccessful. Today, *Park Lane* is a thriving progressive school that is in high demand with a group of white middle-class gentrifiers. Even though the maximum quota on disadvantaged pupils has been abolished, the student population has changed dramatically. Characterized by a relatively high amount of well-off pupils without a migration background, the student body now approaches the Ghent average,

despite of the school's location in a disadvantaged and diverse neighbourhood (cf. supra). For instance, whereas during the school year 2004-2005 *Park Lane*'s student body comprised 73.43% pupils whose language spoken at home was not Dutch and 72.86% pupils with a low-educated mother, one decade later these figures dropped to 25.45% and 32.72% respectively. Consequently, the story of *Park Lane* is often mentioned as a blueprint for, and a good practice of desegregation.

Data and methods

The data used in this article are derived from a six-year research project on gentrification in the context of Brugse Poort. The project paid special attention to the relationship between gentrification and schools, which is in fact an often overlooked site of gentrification research as most gentrifiers *arrive* childless in the city. The project comprises both data on the neighbourhood and our case study school, Park Lane. This article mainly draws on the data collected in relation to the latter. More specifically, this study will make use of 66 interviews with actors involved in the school, 8 with members of the school staff and 58 with parents of whom the children were enrolled at the school at the time of the interview (i.e., between April 2015 and July 2018). The interviews with parents can roughly be divided into two categories. On the one hand, 35 interviews were conducted with white middle-class gentry parents. On the other hand, 23 interviews were carried out with lower-class mothers with a migration background (see table 1 for more information on the parents' characteristics). Although we are aware that our sample does not fully capture the diversity present in *Park Lane*, we deliberately chose to focus on these two groups as they are the key figures discussed in social mix discourses. Whereas members of the former group are often defined as the ones who will improve the quality of urban public schools, members of the latter group are portrayed as the beneficiaries of gentrification. Interviewees were recruited in two ways. White middle-class gentrifiers were recruited through an advert posted on the *Facebook* group of the Parental Committee of the school, which provided information on the researcher and the research topic. In contrast, lower-class mothers with a migration background were recruited at the school when they were dropping of or picking up their children. More precisely, the first two authors gathered on several occasions at the school and approached parents

with a migration background. In the following conversation, information on the research and researchers was provided and parents were asked for an interview. Although mothers were not deliberately targeted, the resulting sample comprises exclusively women, something that can be explained by the fact that, just like with white middle-class families, educational matters appear to be predominantly "mother's work" (Reay, 1998, p. 148).

Table 1. Characteristics of respondents

Characteristic	White middle-class parents (*n* = 35)	Minoritised lower-class parents (*n* = 23)
Gender		
Females	23	23
Male	12	0
Marital status		
Married	29	23
Divorced	5	0
Widow	1	0
Highest academic degree [spouse]		
No degree	0[0]	2[1]
Primary school degree	0[0]	6[4]
High school degree	2[5]	14[17]
Bachelor's degree	10[8]	1[0]
Master's degree	21[13]	0[1]
Doctoral degree	2[3]	0[0]
Occupational status [spouse][4]		
Never worked and long-term unemployed	0[0]	13[2]
Working class	2[4]	10[21]
Intermediate	13[13]	0[0]
Salariat	20 [12]	0[0]
Homeownership status		
Owning	34	15
Renting	1	8

During the interviews with the parents we discussed, amongst other things, parents' (i) experiences at the school, (ii) involvement in their children's school life and school, (iii) contacts and interactions with other actors at the school (i.e., school staff and parents), (iv) identifications of resources and hindrances present at the school. It is important to note that we did not impose an a priori conceptualisation of what involvement means as such an approach could exclude parental understandings and activities that are outside conventional conceptualisations of involvement (cf. López, 2001). Rather, parents were

asked to elaborate on the concept of parental involvement and how they themselves were involved. Once the data were collected, all interviews were transcribed orthographically. Subsequently, all interview data were read multiple times and memos were added. These complemented the already existing notes that were taking during and/or immediately after the interviews. Later on, transcriptions were thematically coded through the use of the qualitative data analysis software *Nvivo*. Next to the interview data, complementary material was collected via observations in, and informal talks on, *Park Lane*. For instance, the first author participated, inter alia, in some Parental Committee meetings, school festivities and school tours for interested parents. Additionally, also media coverage and *Facebook* groups on *Park Lane* were followed up closely. Finally, also relevant documents from the school archive were analysed. More precisely, information was collected on changes in the student body and funding during the school's transformation process.

Results

A catalyst for school improvement

As a thriving inner-city school, *Park Lane* is not only characterized by a motivated staff but also by an involved parent community. Every morning, upon setting foot in the school, one can see parents entering classrooms, talking to the teachers, reading aloud to children and/or playing games with them; things which parents are welcomed to do so as the school has a policy valuing parental involvement. Contrary to the popular image of the uninvolved lower-class and minoritised parent (see López, 2001 for a critique), parental involvement is not limited to white middle-class gentrifiers. Our interview data showed that it was not uncommon for our minoritised lower-class mothers, for example, to chaperone on field trips, to cook at school festivities or to cheer children at weekly performances. Parental involvement, nevertheless, did differ by gender, migration background and class (cf. McGrath & Kuriloff, 1999). As already became clear during the recruiting phase of interviewees, it are mothers who are predominantly involved at their children's education and school, an observation that holds true across class and migration background. Turning to class and migration background, we noticed that minoritised lower-class mothers were involved in their children's school mainly through hands-on, operational and practical activities with children (such as the ones mentioned

above) which are organized by, and are under control of, the school. While many of the white middle-class parents we interviewed also participated in such activities, some of them were also involved at the school in a more technical manner (e.g., drawing out plans for renovations or discussing at a meeting how the road traffic safety around the school can be improved) and participated in activities without children (e.g., going to the school's parents party and other fund raising events at the school). This involvement was often initiated by, and under control of, parents themselves and had an organized character. In fact, since the influx of white middle-class gentrifiers, *Park Lane* had witnessed the establishment of a Parents Committee (PC), of which the vast majority of members are white middle-class, as well as a handful of work groups operating under the association's banner.[5] Through the PC and its work groups, a lot of projects have been realised for the school. More specifically, the school's infrastructure has significantly been upgraded. For instance, during the school year 2015-2016, the PC was able to redevelop the playground from a dreary space into a green and stimulating environment. For this to happen, the PC successfully applied for subsidies, organized a fundraising party, and called on the cultural capital of its members (e.g., a parent who was also an architect drew out the plans for the playground). In the same school year the PC also succeeded in purchasing 20 computers for the school from its own means. This happened after a member alerted the PC that he was able to get hold of computers that were being discarded at a bargain price by the company for which he worked. Next to upgrading the school's infrastructure, the PC has also increased learning opportunities for pupils at *Park Lane*. Among other things, the PC has established extracurricular activities, funded school trips, and organized several educational activities. That the PC and its work groups are a catalyst for school improvement, is being buttressed by *Park Lane*'s current principal.

> It is a very active PC who organizes a lot of activities. So you can really speak of a community that goes beyond the things the school is taking care of. Those parents have helped to shape things around here. (Current principal)

On a smaller scale, white middle-class gentry parents also have worked to improve the school outside of the PC. On several occasions throughout

interviews, the parents indicated how they improved the infrastructure and/or provided unique learning opportunities in consultation with the class teacher of their children.

> I remember that in the first or second year of kindergarten the teacher had an idea like "I want a giant dollhouse in here, one that is so big that they [i.e., the children] can play in it". So with two other fathers we started to work on it and two weeks later there was a kind of inside tree house. (Nahan, white middle-class father)[6]

> I used to work for the Faculty of Architecture of [higher educational institution]. I invited the whole class for half a day to make sketches and scale models and to build things and to give them a tour. (Beatrice, white middle-class mother)

Moreover, it seems that the same parents were very active in their efforts to monitor the school quality. We know, for example, of an instance in which parents went to the principal to obtain redress when, after two teachers had already stopped working, a third interim teacher did not show up to teach the class of their children. Throughout the interviews, some white middle-class gentry parents also mentioned to have addressed teachers when they felt the quality or method of instruction in a certain subject was inadequate. This is also buttressed by a teacher who claims that, in contrast to the period before 2000 when *Park Lane* was still an all-minority school, parents are now more "demanding". As should have become clear by now, the high involvement of white middle-class parents in the school together with their willingness to use their capital offers great potential. Yet, the influx of white middle-class gentrifiers is not entirely unproblematic. In fact, we were able to observe at least five tensions with regard to equity that are related to the demographic changes in *Park Lane*. In what follows, we will discuss each of them separately.

More is less

As we already argued in the beginning of the result section, lower-class mothers with a migration background often participated in hands-on, operational and practical activities with children organized by the school. However, most shunned activities without children and/or activities that were

technical in nature and were organized by parent groups. There were multiple reasons behind this fact. Some mothers, for instance, did not feel the same need to socialize with other parents, something that is possibly due to the fact that many mothers had a tight-knit family network that was living close by (cf. Lareau 1987). Also most lower-class mothers with a migration background were highly reserved to interfere in educational matters. Members of the school board and school staff were above all regarded as experts who were responsible for their children's education. More interestingly, however, our analysis made clear that the limited participation of these mothers was also linked to the high participation level of white middle-class families. To illustrate this, we focus on two activities in this area, namely (i) festivities and (ii) PC-meetings. With regard to the former, PC parents have throughout the years organized several drinks, wine and cheese evenings, and parties. These events are organized both as opportunities to get acquainted and as ways to provide the PC with a budget to finance the school or its own projects in favour of the school. Although visited by many, none of the lower-class mothers with a migration background in our study has participated once or more in such an event. Asked why this was the case, many referred to cultural aspects. This was not surprising as festivities organized by the PC not only served alcoholic beverages but were also built around a theme belonging to white middle-class culture (see Figure 1).

> The school sometimes organises special gatherings for parents like parties. They serve alcohol during these parties which is not suitable for us [i.e., practicing Muslim women] as you can imagine. Therefore, I never go to these gatherings. I do not want to be with the other parents who drink alcohol in a school party. There are hardly any Turkish parents attending these parties as far as I know. It's just a different culture, sometimes the difference feels too much. (Yaren, lower-class mother of Turkish descent)

> I do not like this kind of parents' gatherings. It is way too different from our cultural background. I think these activities are only organised for Flemish parents. We know that migrant parents having a strong Muslim background never attend these gatherings. (Azra, lower-class mother of Turkish descent)

Apart from being culturally tailored to white middle-class parents, activities were also logistically predominantly adapted to this group, as they mostly take place in the evening, at a time when middle-class parents have finished working. Such timing, however, is often incompatible with the responsibilities of the lower-class mothers with a migration background we interviewed. In fact, although a significant number of these mothers were unemployed, their partners were often doing long hours or shift work, meaning that they were forced to stay at home and watch the children.

Also PC-meetings were organized by default in the evening. Likewise, also here the lower-class mothers with a migration background we interviewed were largely uninvolved. Next to an unsuitable timing, there were also other reasons explaining this non-involvement. Like lower-class parents in other studies (cf. Lareau, 1987), the mothers in our study expressed doubts whether they were capable enough to be involved in a PC. However, interestingly we found that the very fact that the PC was dominated by white middle-class parents increased the doubts that mothers already had. This not only because the PC was operating as a professional organization but also because mothers felt incompetent next to this group of what they saw as highly educated Dutch-speaking white middle-class parents. This, for instance, becomes clear through Melisa's response when asked why she participates in hands-on activities with children but not in the PC.

> I don't know. (…) It is more theoretical. I like to take care of children. (…) You don't know in which group you'll end up. I don't know. You start to think maybe you have a lack of… It are people who have a certain level. (…) It is still a certain group. (…) I, for example, do not have a degree. I did not study. The people who are there, (…), they are on another level. (Melisa, lower-class mother of Moroccan descent)

In sum, our results question the idea that an influx of middle-class parents will increase participation levels of lower-class parents with a migration background by providing the latter with actively involved role models (Kahlenberg, 2003). In fact, rather than increasing participation, our two examples make clear that white middle-class involvement can also preclude the involvement of lower-

class parents with a migration background, even if it is in a mostly unintentional manner. When white middle-class parents are at the center stage, there is a risk (i) that some forms of participation will become tailored to the culture and context of white middle-class parents, and (ii) that the high level of professional competences of these parents will intimidate vulnerable families to participate.

Figure 1. Posters that promote upcoming festivities organized by the Parents Committee.

Hierarchization

As became clear in the previous sections, the parents who were active in the PC and its work groups were predominantly white middle-class gentrifiers. This dominance, however, gave rise to a hierarchization between parents. This happened in at least two ways. First, as members of the PC took the lead in independent school improvement efforts, they most often also decided what should be done and how it should be done. The consequence of this was that non-members were rarely involved or asked to participate in the process of decision making. As a matter of fact, on the few occasions that the lower-class

mothers with a migration background were indirectly asked to participate, it was more often than not to execute what already had been decided by the PC. In addition, the things that were asked always amounted to the same, namely cooking at, or preparing a dish for, an event. Although those questions were asked without ulterior motives, the net result was a division of parents into those who are making the decisions and those who are only carrying them out. This was also observed by some parents.

> I mean, how do I have to call them? Those alternative types. (…) It is a group that organizes a lot, like the wine and cheese evening, the Western party. (…) Almost all are in the Parent Committee. The others, the migrant parents, are not included. The only thing in which they are included (…) is when there's a party and they ask Moroccan moms or Turkish moms to bake cake. That is the only thing they are allowed to do. It is like it is the only thing they're capable of: cooking and standing in the kitchen. That's their view on these mothers. (Faiza, lower-class mother of Moroccan decent)

The fact that parents who are not involved in the PC are also not consulted in the process of decision making is also felt by some white middle-class gentrifiers. For instance, one parent who wanted to discuss whether some adjustments could be made to the newly renovated playground – this because her child was always covered in mud – felt turned away.

> Or you are completely enthusiastic about everything they do or "You have to organize it yourself!". (…) The Parent Committee is *incontournable*. (…) You do not have any control over their operation. I think also the school has little control over them because they are very happy that they are doing a lot. It is a position of power that is informal, therefore you cannot do anything about it. There is no consultation or say for parents who are not in the PC. (Beatrice, white middle-class mother)

As Beatrice's statement makes clear, parents who were not in the PC often felt as if they had no say in, and had to keep their mouth shut about matters of school improvement. In addition, Beatrice's statement also points us to a

second way in which the influx of white middle-class gentrifiers caused a hierarchization. In fact, as some white middle-class parents introduced new, for many vulnerable parents daunting, forms of involvement (e.g., the establishment and specific operation of the PC) and created new barriers for vulnerable parents to participate overall, a *de facto* division of parents into the ones who "are doing a lot" and those who are not, was created. In turn, this gave rise to a process in which those who were "adding value" were also approached as the ones who were "being of value" (Freidus, 2016), and as such the ones whom should be reckoned with and vice versa.

> It feels like there is a kind of invisible hierarchical order between parents: migrant parents, ruler Flemish parents. If these "sultan parents" bring up something, a recommendation (…) the school always takes their advice into consideration and alters their teaching method. If they demand something the school makes it real immediately. Therefore, the school never listens to us when we want to share our opinions. I stopped thinking about it, it annoys me a lot. (Hiranur, lower-class mother of Turkish descent)

This is not to say that lower-class parents with a migration background automatically had a greater say in *Park Lane* in the period preceding the school's gentrification processes. Rather it is to argue that a hierarchization is installed between groups of parents within *Park Lane*. Interestingly, we noted how the feeling of being pushed in a second-class position in the school was also linked to, and interacted with, experiences of gentrification and displacement in the neighbourhood. For instance, when describing the power of "*Park Lane* parents", Faiza argued the following:

> Those *Park Lane* parents [i.e., highly educated white middle-class parents] have a lot of influence. (…) [Before] everyone was the same. Everyone was equal. Everyone lived in a row house. Then people who studied at the university or university college and who have a degree and who feel superior because "I have studied. I'll know better" have bought a house in the neighbourhood. At *Park Lane* you see this too. (Faiza, lower-class mother of Moroccan descent)

Although this statement is a clear romanticization of the neighbourhood's past and easily gloss over the inter-racial tensions that have marked neighbourhood and school life over the past decades, such images nevertheless give us a "vision of the present," a vision of where the neighbourhood and school are now (May, 1996, p. 200). By projecting the image of a close-knit community from a time that never was, Faiza tried to point out the formation of (new) conflicts and exclusions in the neighbourhood and school. Moreover, this shows us that rather than separate entities, the neighbourhood level and school level are in a constant interaction. Consequently, the mixing of inner-city schools should also be analysed as such, that is to say attention should also be paid to the neighbourhood level.

Giving advice on behalf of "the" parents

A third tension that came into play in the process of school gentrification revolved around changes in *Park Lane*'s practice and the participation of parents in this. More precisely, over the past years, the school board of *Park Lane* has made some incremental changes. However, when the school wishes to make changes to its day-to-day operation or pedagogy, it is obliged to first seek the advice of the PTO. This organization, comprising both teachers and parents, has an official advisory authority. The PC, being the official committee of parents, is responsible for selecting the parents that will sit in the PTO among its members. As the vast majority of PC members are white middle-class parents (for reasons we discussed above), the resulting sample of PTO parents is equally so. That this can be problematic for lower-class parents with a migration background, became evident on various occasions throughout the years. In what follows, we will zoom in on one example regarding the evaluation of pupils.

Two years ago, the school board took up the idea to switch to qualitative descriptions of children's development instead of providing graded report cards, so as to be more in line with the Jena Plan pedagogy. As this proposal related to issues of pedagogy, the board first needed to seek the advice of PTO members. Representing all parents, PTO parents gave a mildly favorable opinion regarding the new evaluation system, resulting in the use of student report cards without grades. However, not all parents are happy with this

switch. In fact, almost all lower-class mother with a migration background in our study indicated to object this new evaluation system.

> This new system confuses me a lot. I want to know on paper to what extent my kids are successful or unsuccessful at the school. I need to see it concretely on paper. Teachers saying your kid is successful or not is not enough for me. (…) Now how come they expect us to track the progress of our kids? (Zenyed, lower-class mother of Turkish descent)

The reasons for such disapproval lies in the fact that these mothers already experienced many difficulties monitoring their children's progress due to their poor knowledge of Dutch (i.e., the official school language) and/or their lack of cultural capital. As such, for many of these mothers the old evaluation system based on numerical grades – grades which are clearly "visible" (Bernstein, 1975) – was a mainstay in an environment that is hard to decipher. Consequently, some of these mothers felt being cut off from their children's school life.

> They used to give report cards [i.e., with grades] regarding the progress of the kids three times a year. Now the school stopped doing that as well. I feel excluded from my own kids' school life. I want to know and see how my kids progress. There is no way to know about the scores of my kids anymore. (Azra, lower-class mother of Turkish descent)

Although some middle-class parents also remained wary of the new evaluation system, a core of highly participating middle-class parents applauded a qualitative-based evaluation. In contrast to lower-class parents with a migration background, these parents actually perceived the new system to be more informative.

> We get a lot more out of, not out of grades, but out of these descriptions. (…) Like, who is your child? How has it progressed? How has it changed? (…) We find this process to be much more valuable than a grade. (David, white middle-class father)

This example thus demonstrates that the dominance of white middle-class parents in advisory boards will not automatically lead to benefits that are shared

across groups but can, in fact, overshadow the needs and concerns of minoritised lower-class parents.

Enrichment for whom?

Members of the PC have also sought to supplement *Park Lane*'s curriculum by establishing extra-curricular enrichment programs. At the moment of the interviews two programs were running which were set up by the PC. First, in 2007, a French Club was established for children between the ages of five and ten. In this program, children are initiated into the French language in a playful manner. As such, the one-hour a week French Club serves as a preparatory course for official French lessons which start in the fifth grade. Even though PC members do not teach themselves, their role in the success of the program is all but trifling. Next to searching a suitable teacher, the PC coordinates the French Club by planning classes, managing enrolments, advertising the program and taking care of communication. Throughout the years, this French Club has always been well-attended. In this sense, the PC has managed to increase learning opportunities for pupils enrolled in the school. Yet, this improvement has shown to be somewhat selective. The registration list tells us that it are predominantly the children of white middle-class gentrifiers who tend to participate. The reasons behind this are diverse. A major barrier for vulnerable pupils to participate is the fact that the French Club is not free of charge. Indeed, although the initial goal was to issue the program gratis, enrolment in the French Club costs 95 euros per annum due to the fact that no subsidies could be found.

> I do not send my kids to the activities where you are supposed to pay some amount of money… (Zenyed, lower-class mother of Turkish descent)

However, there are also other reasons why vulnerable pupils are not likely to take part in extracurricular activities organized by the PC. This becomes clear when zooming in on the 'Creative Atelier,' a second extracurricular program which was established by the PC in 2008. In the first two years, the two-hour a week program, in which pupils from third grade and higher are initiated into visual arts, was fully under PC control. In fact, parents were not only responsible for planning classes, managing enrolments, advertising the program

and taking care of communication, but also for taking care of instruction. More precisely, one parent who also worked as an arts teacher took care of these classes. In 2010, however, the Creative Atelier was largely handed over to a public art institution of the city who continued the program in the form of satellite classes. An unintended but major advantage of this transferal was that vulnerable pupils now could enjoy a significant tariff reduction on the prevailing rate, resulting in an enrolment fee of 13 euros. Yet, enrolment of vulnerable pupils did not increase significantly in subsequent years. A reason for this could be that, the leisure activities of the children of lower-class mothers are largely unorganized (Coussée, 2008). However, as our interviews with minoritised lower-class mothers made clear, there was another more straightforward reason: most parents were simply not aware of the existence of extra-curricular programs in *Park Lane*. One reason for this is that the communication concerning these programs was not only taken care of by white middle-class gentrifiers but also, and possibly as a consequence, seemed adapted to this group (e.g., all communication took place in Dutch and predominantly online). In addition, our analysis made clear that parents' networks were highly segregated by class and migration background. Consequently, interaction between white middle-class families and vulnerable families was close to non-existent, making word of mouth communication between the two groups implausible.

> I don't see a lot of Belgian parents. I do see them but we don't talk. Sometimes a little bit like "Hello," "Hello", that is it, not much. With Turkish and Moroccans parents, foreigners, we do talk. (Betül, lower-class mother of Turkish descent)

In conclusion, due to segregated networks and barriers, one cannot assume that all pupils are able to reap the benefits of white middle-class involvement. With regard to our context, it is important to note that the barriers withholding vulnerable pupils to participate in extra-curricular programs were all but deliberately installed. Yet, as these barriers are not experienced as such by white middle-class families they can easily go unnoticed or untouched. Finally, these extra-curricular programs departed from the needs of children as perceived by the white middle-class promoters. However, this does not necessarily mesh with the needs identified by lower-class mothers with a migration background.

For instance, these mothers did not perceive the acquisition of the French language to be a priority, given the fact that their children were already learning two languages.

The drainage of public funds

Further complicating a rosy view of school gentrification, is the system of public funding. As in other countries such as the US, primary schools in Flanders can receive extra funds based on their student composition. When at least 10% of a school's student body characterizes as vulnerable[7], a school can get additional per capita funding to hire extra school staff. In the school year 2003-2004, for instance, *Park Lane* was entitled to 5 full-time equivalents. Although in the present *Park Lane* is still eligible for such support, the number of vulnerable pupils has significantly dropped and with it the funding did too. In the period between 2003-2004 and 2013-2014, for instance, financial assistance to *Park Lane* reduced with 1,5 full-time equivalents. To make matters even worse, in the beginning of the school year 2016-2017 the city's department of education announced that *Park Lane* would also no longer be granted a so-called 'bridge figure' as the percentage of vulnerable pupils in the school fell below the 50% threshold to qualify, respectively to 43% (a staggering number when knowing that in the school year 2001-2002 *Park Lane* student body comprised 83% of vulnerable pupils).[8] This loss was especially painful for vulnerable families as they received a lot of support from *Park Lane*'s bridge figure, Naima. In fact, next to carrying out her job responsibilities, namely strengthening the contact between vulnerable families and the school staff, she also helped vulnerable families in at least three other ways. First, she provided opportunities for vulnerable families to socialize with her and with each other and to express their concerns. More precisely, every morning informal coffee moments were organized for parents. Moreover, weekly a gathering was organized for mothers in which issues that concerned them in relation to education or the school were collectively discussed. Second, *Park Lane*'s bridge figure also worked to ensure that vulnerable families had a place in the school. In fact, when *Park Lane* was at risk of becoming an all-majority school, the bridge figure visited services that worked with vulnerable families with the question to actively promote the school, a strategy that somewhat paid off in recent years. Next, *Park Lane*'s bridge figure made it her business to always reserve some spots for vulnerable pupils when registrations opened for the

extracurricular activities organized by the city. Finally, she also managed to convince the chairman of the PC to stop by at mother gatherings to present the ideas of the association and to ask for feedback. Third, she also supported vulnerable families with a variety of individual problems, such as translating official letters, filling out forms to qualify for a school allowance, connecting parents to volunteers who read to children at home, etc. As a Muslim of Moroccan descent and longtime resident in the neighbourhood with more than 20 years of experience at the school, *Park Lane*'s bridge figure served for many as a confidant from whom they experienced a lot of support.

> She was a very nice person. I am still sad that she had to leave the school. We tried to stop the school from letting her go. (…) We also asked Naima why she has to leave. (..) She said she has to leave because the school does not need her anymore given the increasing number of Flemish students and decreasing number of migrant students at the school. She was a real "bridge figure," she used to help us a lot with everything. (…) In the end, she needed to go. I wish we could still have someone, a bridge-figure like Naima. That would help a lot. (Zehra, low-income mother of Turkish descent)

As news became public, the loss of *Park Lane*'s bridge figure hit hard. Soon several actions were taken by parents who opposed Naima's leave and tried to prevent it. At the end of September parents drew up a petition demanding a meeting with the Ghent Alderman of education. Next, in November one white middle-class parent, who was somewhat disgruntled by the passivity of the PC on this matter, organized a school protest in collaboration with some parents with a foreign background. Under the watchful eye of the press, many pupils, teachers, and interested parents marched through the streets of Brugse Poort, thereby holding banners and making their voices heard. Yet, not everyone was happy with this protest. In fact, several parents complained that they were misinformed about the protest and that they felt that their children were (ab)used for political issues. Finally, in December the Alderman of education came to visit *Park Lane* to listen to parents' concerns in the presence of the principal. This meeting was mainly attended by parents with a migration background, however, also some white middle-class parents were present. Parents, first and foremost, tried to convince the Alderman to fund a bridge

figure for an additional round of three years. However, some also expressed their frustrations. A lower-class mother of Moroccan descent, for instance, expressed feeling like a "second-class citizen" at the school. Despite all efforts, the Alderman ultimately decided not to grant a bridge figure to *Park Lane*, partly because this would not be fair to other schools, partly as Park Lane was already given an exemption in the previous round.[9] In sum, the influx of white middle-class parents in *Park Lane* not only resulted in benefits that were universally shared but also caused a loss of public funding for the support of vulnerable families.

Conclusion

Although often pronounced via the euphemism of 'social mix', in many cities throughout the Western world, gentrification has been propagated both on the neighbourhood and school level as an effective strategy to ameliorate the inequalities faced by many minoritised and/or lower-class families. At the neighbourhood level, gentrification strategies have become subject to fierce criticism. Not only have scholars started to question the motives behind such turn to gentrification, they have also begun to challenge its often proclaimed effectiveness while also pointing out its potential side effects. Yet, on the school level, urban education scholars have not fully engaged with the often paradoxical nature of gentrification. As has been argued by Billingham and Kimelberg (2013, p. 105)

> Crafting urban policies related to gentrification is a delicate and often contradictory process because, as most analyst agree, gentrification carries both negative and positive repercussions. City governments rightfully want to promote investment in the neglected urban core; yet efforts to do so often make city living out of reach economically for the poor. Housing scholars have had to deal with this conundrum for years; urban education scholars must acknowledge this same tension.

In this study, we tried to engage with this tension by drawing attention to an urban public school located in a gentrifying district of Ghent (Belgium). Focussing on the perspectives of both gentrifying families and minoritised lower-class families, we have demonstrated that the influx of gentrifying

families can, to some extent, indeed entail benefits for minoritised and lower-class families. However, this study – and this is not meant as a slight on the efforts of gentry parents – does question gentrification both as a strategy of school improvement and as a silver bullet against educational inequalities. We argue that there are two main reasons for this.

First, our results indicate that the current view on the beneficial nature of school gentrification seems rather overoptimistic. On the one hand, this is because the assumption that the fruits of gentry participation will always be universally shared does not hold. Indeed, as our case study made clear, none of the children of our lower-class mother with a migration background, for instance, participated in the extra-curricular activities established by gentry parents. On the other hand, this is because there is no guarantee that there will always exist an agreement among groups of parents on what constitutes as a benefit. For instance, in *Park Lane* a group of gentry parents actively supported a new evaluation system and perceived it as a vast improvement, whereas almost all of the minoritised lower-class mothers in this study, objected this new system as they – at least some of them – perceived this as a threat to their ability to be involved in the school life of their children.

Second, this study demonstrates that processes of school gentrification have the potential not only to mitigate existing inequalities but equally to install new inequalities and bring new forms of exclusions and marginalization to the fore. In fact, while the school-based involvement of gentry parents in *Park Lane* has improved the school on some levels, it equally created a hierarchization between groups of parents and caused minoritised lower-class mothers to shun some forms of participation. Moreover, the influx of gentrifiers in itself resulted in the loss of public funds for *Park Lane* to support vulnerable families.

Taken together, our study invites policy makers to reflect on their approach to the problem of educational inequality. More precisely, as in the study of Posey-Maddox (2014) our results tend to question whether the responsibility for educational equality should be a private concern of individual schools and families. Does it make sense that schools should cater to white middle-class families – families who can moreover make demands due to their newly acquired market position (cf. Diem *et al.*, 2019) – as to be able to ameliorate

educational inequalities (cf. Zanoni & Mampaey, 2013)? Does it make sense that minoritised lower-cass families should select a school very consciously and thoughtfully so as to be able to receive quality education for their children? And finally, does it make sense to expect from (gentry) parents to improve school quality and to do so in a way that benefits all families? We hope that our study not only has raised questions but also has shed some light on how to tackle them.

Notes

[1] Based on Goossens, C., Utlu, I., Oosterlynck, S., & Bradt, L. (submitted). Gentrifying an urban public school: An unproblematic silver bullet against educational inequalities? *Urban Education*.

[2] Although often only framed in terms of class, it has been argued that the dominant discourse more than not unfolds along racial lines (see Lipman, 2012).

[3] This was possibly due to the fact that the Ghent education system is marked by parental freedom of choice, meaning that enrolment requests are ordered on the basis of a 'first come, first served' principle. In recent years, however, this absolute freedom has become somewhat restricted. Starting from the enrolment period for the school year 2009-2010, children are ordered on the basis of the distance between their residence and the school. In this case, the shorter the distance, the higher the ranking a child obtains. For enrolments from the school year 2011-2012 onwards, it was decided not only to order pupils based on the distance between their residence and the school but also on the distance between their parents' workplace and the school. Moreover, since the enrolment period for the school year 2013-2014, each school reserves a fixed number of spots for both advantaged and disadvantaged pupils; the ratio which is determined by the demographic composition of the neighbourhood in which the school is located. Only when spots in one contingent are not filled up, they may be filled in by pupils who did an enrolment request in the other contingent.

[4] Categories of occupational status are based on the European Socio-economic Classification (ESeC). This classification is the EU-variant of the International Standard Classification of Occupations 1988 (ISCO88).

[5] In the past few years there were work groups related to festivities, extra-curricular activities, the playground, the garden, mobility, inside facilities, outside facilities, the school's annual flee market, talk sessions concerning upbringing and education, and intercultural exchange.

[6] Pseudonyms are used for all schools and respondents to protect the privacy of the respondents. Respondents were ensured confidentiality by not disclosing any information provided by respondents or by doing this in such a way as not to reveal the identity of the respondents.

[7] A pupil is considered vulnerable when he/she complies with one or more of the following criteria: (i) is a member of an itinerant population, (ii) is temporarily or permanently residing outside the own family network, (iii) is a member of a family network which is living from an income replacement (later on replaced by: is living in a family that received a school allowance in the current school year or the year before that), (iv) has a mother who did not hold a degree of secondary education, and (v) is living in a family network which the common language differs from

Dutch (later on replaced by: doesn't or only talks to a minority of family members in the Dutch language in which the total number of siblings are counted as one).

8   A bridge figure has a job description that is somewhat similar to that of school social workers in the US.

9   Following this, multiple lower-class families with a migration background informed with Naima to which school she would be assigned next, so they could enrol their children there.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

Improving the neighbourhood

Abstract[1]

While urban greening initiatives are becoming increasing prevalent, some critical scholars have started to question the neutrality of this movement. Specifically, scholars have demonstrated that urban greening can inflate housing costs and as such give rise to processes of gentrification and displacement. This article examines processes of green gentrification in a particular neighbourhood of Ghent (Belgium) that has been profoundly greened during the last two decades. Drawing on in-depth interviews with both gentrifying and long-time residents, we find that long-time residents are experiencing significant displacement pressures as a result of urban greening. However, rather than predominantly caused by soaring costs, displacement pressures seem to follow mainly from the political, social, and cultural changes encompassing greening initiatives. Consequently, a more complex picture of green gentrification is drawn in our study, one that has important implications for the way this process should be addressed.

Introduction

I n recent decades both city planners and citizens have increasingly been promoting greening strategies as a way to effectively respond to issues of urban liveability, public health, and climate change. Greening initiatives include, inter alia, the promotion of community gardens, parks, forests, recycling programs, street closures, street trees, sustainable housing, sustainable transportation, and urban farming. In their recently published book, Gould and Lewis (2017), however, argue that, despite the fact that these greening initiatives have the potential to address the issues mentioned above, they also entail a risk of causing or enhancing gentrification. This process, which has been described as *green, ecological or environmental gentrification*, has been observed by scholars in cities such as Atlanta (Immergluck & Balan, 2018), Chicago (McKendry & Janos, 2015), Detroit (Montgomery, 2016; Safransky, 2014), New York (Checker, 2011), Portland (Goodling, Green, & McClintock, 2015; Lubitow & Miller, 2013), San Francisco (Marche, 2015), Seattle (Dooling, 2009), Toronto (Dale & Newman, 2009), and Vancouver (Dale & Newman, 2009; Quastel, 2009). In bringing the concept of gentrification into the discussion on urban sustainability, critics claim that greening initiatives can be elitist in the sense that they can lead to greater inequality by displacing long-time residents (Gould & Lewis, 2017). Wolch, Byrne, & Newell (2014, p. 234), for example, state that:

> [U]rban green space strategies may be paradoxical: while the creation of new green space to address environmental justice problems can make neighborhoods healthier and more esthetically attractive, it also can increase housing costs and property values. Ultimately, this can lead to gentrification and a displacement of the very residents the green space strategies were designed to benefit.

This paper contributes to the debates on green gentrification by using a case study approach to examine how processes of displacement take shape through or are engendered by the reworking and controlling of space via urban greening initiatives. More specifically, attention is focused on a greening initiative called living streets (*leefstraten*) which aims to improve the appearance and liveability of urban environments through the introduction of green elements and was

initiated in a specific neighbourhood of Ghent (Belgium). In doing so, we are first and foremost interested in how urban greening initiatives that are built around ideological notions of 'urban liveability' (can) serve as a vehicle for place-making and/or displacement and in the complex interplay between public and private actors behind this. We do not aim to assess what is green or environmental about the Living Streets initiative, nor to determine whether this initiative has achieved its objective. By adopting a multidimensional notion of displacement, we aim to reach a more complex understanding of how processes of green gentrification and displacement (can) occur and play out in urban neighbourhoods. In what follows, we first review the literature on green gentrification and discuss the diverse nature of displacement. Drawing on Marcuse (1985) and Davidson (2009), we argue that the concept of displacement cannot be equated with processes of physical dislocation and that analyses based on such equations run the risk of capturing the process of green gentrification in an incomplete manner. Next, we provide an overview of the specific research context before moving on to the methods and sample on which the analysis is based. In doing so, special attention is paid to the history of gentrification in the neighbourhood and to the entanglement of the process with top-down greening initiatives. Finally, we present the main results of this study and discuss the main implications.

Green gentrification

Throughout the Western world, urban greening initiatives are becoming increasingly prevalent as city planners and citizens work towards a sustainable future. At first glance, environmentalism as a focus of attention seems to serve the public good in a variety of ways. For instance, urban greening can diminish the amount of greenhouse gasses (Gould & Lewis, 2017). Moreover, greening initiatives have the potential to promote public health (Wolch *et al.*, 2014). But the benefits of environmentalism could well extend to other spheres. In fact, city leaders are increasingly conceiving urban greening as a vehicle for remaking deindustrialized spaces into places set for urban growth, investment, and the return of the middle classes (While, Jonas, & Gibbs, 2004).

In recent years, however, this "going green" movement (Gould & Lewis, 2017, p. 1) has come under scrutiny as scholars from a variety of disciplines point to

issues of inequity. Indeed, although an understudied phenomenon (Anguelovski, 2016), a new area of research is developing in which the rhetoric of urban sustainability is increasingly called into question. Whereas promoters of greening initiatives have often treated discussions of urban greening as apolitical – this by drawing on universal values or scientific knowledge with respect to liveability, sustainability, climate change, public health and safety (Lubitow & Miller, 2013; Swyngedouw, 2009) – scholars are increasingly challenging such discourse. On the one hand, a number of scholars assert that the framing of greening initiatives as unquestionably good and hence as "too important to be dragged through the political mud" (Lubitow & Miller, 2013, p. 122) has "placed substantial constraints on the scope of legitimate contention and deliberation" (Davidson & Iveson, 2015, p. 546). In fact, one of the pivots of an apolitical or post-political consensus, it seems, is that it tends to marginalize, silence and/or render as illegitimate the voices of people who situate themselves outside this consensus (Swyngedouw, 2009). This is supported by Lubitow and Miller (2013), who examined a bikeway development in a gentrifying neighbourhood of Portland, Oregon. Drawing on observation and interview data, the authors conclude that the apolitical narrative around the development, which made an appeal to notions of 'safety', excluded, side-lined and trivialized views and concerns that were not in line with this narrative. On the other hand, some scholars are (re)politicizing such discussions by challenging the neutrality of greening initiatives. In particular, there is a concern that greening initiatives could, intentionally or not, kick-start or exacerbate gentrification, (Faber & Kimelberg 2014, p. 78).

This concern has received empirical support over the course of the last few years. Focusing on sustainable community development in three Canadian cities (i.e., Toronto, Vancouver, and Victoria), Dale and Newman (2009), for instance, find how environmental projects tend to overlook issues related to the social imperative, thereby displacing both traditional businesses and the low-income communities they serve. This is supported by Bryson (2012) in his study of the clean-up of a brownfield site in Spokane, Washington. The author not only describes how local residents expressed concerns over affordable housing and property taxes in relation to the project but also shows how policy makers proclaimed that no provisions were needed as no housing would be

removed or torn down – a neglect which resulted in housing prices shooting up by a quarter within a year of the project being announced.

The irony of this is that low-income and minoritised communities, who have traditionally been living in neighbourhoods with proportionally more toxic locally unwanted land uses (LULUs) and fewer green amenities (Anguelovski, 2016; Faber & Kimelberg, 2014; Wolch *et al.*, 2014), are potentially facing new forms of injustice as a result of the very thing that was supposed to improve the quality of life in the neighbourhood. In fact, the current research on green gentrification suggests that the promotion of environmental goods and the clean-up of environmental bads could burden long-time residents with financial distress and eventually lead to displacement – this certainly in localities characterized by a high proportion of tenants. In this context, Anguelovski (2016) critically notes that greening initiatives could paradoxically become new LULUs for socially vulnerable residents. This impression is in fact what is observed by Battaglia *et al.* (2014), who report on a tree-planting program carried out in two neighbourhoods of East Baltimore with a lack of green space. The program encountered opposition, inter alia because some neighbourhood members worried that it could induce gentrification and displacement. Agyeman (2013) has therefore argued that environmental sustainability should not be considered in isolation from issues of social sustainability. In order to reach an environment that is sustainable for everyone, or what Agyeman has termed "just sustainabilities," the author stresses the importance of a focus on the social needs and welfare of all citizens. In response to issues of gentrification and displacement, some residents, business owners, and academics are endorsing a "just green enough" strategy (Curran & Hamilton, 2012; Wolch *et al.*, 2014), a balancing act that aims at environmental remediation without gentrification and displacement.

When looking at the abovementioned studies, two critical observations can be made. First, there are few accounts that address the complex interplay between public and private actors in processes of green gentrification, particularly the interaction between the "green" place-making practices of gentrifying residents and municipal planning strategies directed at green gentrification (for an analysis of the latter, see Anguelovski, 2016). By doing so, we build on (a limited body) of recent work on green gentrification that precisely keeps the

focus on the multiple actors involved in it and how their practices and strategies intersect. Safransky (2014) and Montgomery (2016), for example, both on the basis of empirical research in Detroit, observe "public-private partnerships" in which private developers and the city council partner up for greening initiatives that increase land values. McClintock (2018) shows how local politicians in Portland mobilize citizen-based greening initiatives to engage in "ecological" city marketing. In the empirical analysis of this paper, we will zoom in on the role of civil society organizations – that is, organized citizens – in public-private interactions in greening initiatives. This is particularly interesting as it is widely acknowledged that systems of governing within the Western world are undergoing vast change due to a restructuring of market-state relations necessitated by a regime shift within capitalism (Jessop, 2002). It has been argued that in this context a shift occurs from government to "partnership-based forms of governance" (Jessop, 2002, p. 455) or a "governance-beyond-the-state" characterized by "a greater involvement of individuals or actors from both the economy and civil society" (Swyngedouw, 2005, p. 1992). Although such horizontally organized institutional arrangements have often been welcomed as empowering and democracy enhancing, some scholars have fiercely criticized these new regimes of governance operating through networks and partnerships by pointing to potential democratic deficits (Swyngedouw, 2005); hence, making questions about the role of civil society organizations in greening initiatives all the more prominent.

Second, the existing research on green gentrification has mainly claimed that greening strategies can be problematic in low-income neighbourhoods as these can lead to "displacement." Although we agree with this statement, the reality is that most of these studies have articulated the concept of displacement predominantly in physical terms (i.e., as a loss of physical place). In this view, the process of green gentrification always unfolds in the same manner. First, green amenities are initiated, making a targeted neighbourhood more popular. Second, this popularity results in soaring housing costs. Finally, as a result of these costs, vulnerable residents are physically dislocated and hence "displaced". We believe that this view of displacement is problematic because it expresses the concept of place in an abstract sense (i.e., as mere position), hence obscuring the very (socio-political) place tensions that are at work in processes of green gentrification. Indeed, when displacement is interpreted merely in a

physical way there is no issue with greening initiatives as long as these do not lead long-time residents into financial distress.[2] A failure to engage with the diverse nature of displacement thus could lead to an incomplete understanding of how neighbourhood transitions occur as a consequence of greening initiatives. One notable exception to this is a recent paper by McClintock (2018), which pushes the analysis of green gentrification well beyond this limited understanding of displacement in merely physical terms. He shows how bike lanes and community gardens make long-time African-American residents feel unwelcome.

This paper aims to work with a broader understanding of displacement and builds on the literature on green gentrification by examining how the greening practices and strategies of a variety of actors, notably the municipal authorities, individual citizens, and civil society organizations, interact and get entangled with issues as gentrification and displacement. In so doing, we engage thoroughly with the concept of displacement and focus attention on the lived experiences of various groups of residents.

The diversity of displacement

There are diverse understandings of what the concept "place" actually means (see e.g., Amin, 2004; Cresswell, 2004; Massey, 2004). Most would agree that places are not only located (i.e., they have objective coordinates) and shaped (i.e., they take on a material form), but are also lived and allow people to consume and produce meaning (Agnew, 1987 as cited in Cresswell, 2004). It is here that the concept "sense of place" emerges, referring both to the (distinctive) characteristics of a location and to the attachment of people to such a location. Following from this, the concept of displacement should be distinguished from the process of physical dislocation. This idea is apparent in the work of Marcuse (1985), who has discerned four forms of displacement, namely (i) direct last-resident displacement, (ii) direct chain displacement, (iii) exclusionary displacement, and (iv) pressure of displacement. Whereas the first three forms refer to processes of being forced to move from, or not being permitted to move into, a dwelling as a result of gentrification, the last form, "pressure of displacement," refers to a process whereby the options within which a certain space can be consumed and produced change significantly:

> [D]isplacement affects more than those actually displaced at any given moment. When a family sees the neighbourhood around it changing dramatically, when their friends are leaving the neighborhood, when the stores they patronize are liquidating and new stores for other clientele are taking their places, and when changes in public facilities, in transportation patterns, and in support services all clearly are making the area less and less livable, then the pressure of displacement is already severe. (…) Families living under these circumstances may move as soon as the can, rather than wait for the inevitable; nonetheless they are displaced. (Marcuse, 1985, p 207)

As such, Marcuse seems to break with the (often allegedly necessary) relationship between displacement and rising housing costs and thus essentially with a view that sees displacement exclusively as a process of physical dislocation. Building on this broadened conception from Marcuse, Davidson (2009, p. 223) critically notes that, since place is linked to the ability to produce and consume meaning, displacement cannot simply be equated with a loss of physical place:

> The problem with this understanding of displacement is that it reduces a socio-spatial *phenomena* [sic] to a purely spatial event. This leaves us with a number of problematic implicit assumptions, including the notion that spatial relocation equals (a sense of) displacement and that the absence of spatial relocation equates to the non-occurrence of displacement. Put simply, displacement understood purely as spatial dislocation tells us very little why it matters.

Taking into account that places cannot be seen as stable and pre-given entities but rather should be conceived as being constructed through place-making activities, Davidson suggests that a conceptualization of displacement should also include the wider political, social, and cultural changes going on in a certain place. Consequently, feelings of displacement may occur when a place radically changes as a result of gentrification in general and of the place-making activities of dominant groups in particular. Indeed, long-time residents may lose their sense of place when gentrification advances, regardless of whether

this process ultimately causes physical dislocation or not. In a recent article, Elliot-Cooper, Hubbard, and Lees (2019, p. 3) have build on this train of thought by arguing that changes such as these can severe "the links between residents and the communities to which they belong", something that according to the authors can lead to displacement via a process of un-homing. This thinking has received some empirical support as scholars have demonstrated that vulnerable long-time residents can experience feelings of displacement prior to the actual process of physical dislocation due to the new faces, the changing social histories, and the physical remodelling of the streetscape and its facilities that follow from gentrification (Atkinson, 2015; Shaw & Hagemans, 2015; Valli, 2015). In our empirical analysis we will build on this expanded notion of displacement by examining how greening initiatives can generate a process of gentrification and displacement and how a variety of public and private actors interact to produce feelings of displacement.

Research context

Brugse Poort: From grey to green
Brugse Poort is one of the twenty-five city districts of Ghent (Belgium), situated northwest of the city centre. It developed in the early nineteenth century as some large textile mills and a steel-producing company set up shop in the district. As these factories attracted a mass of people willing to work, a process of unplanned and speculative urbanization ensued, leading to a chaotic urban tissue, a lack of green space, poor housing, and a high population density, some of which remain to this day.

Since the 1960s, Brugse Poort has witnessed a series of factory closures through deindustrialization, leading to a process of neighbourhood decline. Moreover, many of the district's middle-class residents started to leave for the suburbs, thereby reflecting a wider process of urban flight. From the 1970s onwards, Brugse Poort also began to diversify ethnically as the remaining industry started to recruit labour migrants, mainly from Turkey and Maghreb countries. Migration into Brugse Poort continued at a steady pace during the following decades. Since the expansion of the European Union in 2004 and 2007, migration from Central and Eastern Europe has also soared. As a result, in the 2013, 49.50% of people living in Brugse Poort were of foreign origin (9,031 out

of 18,246 residents). Given problems of drug abuse, poverty, unemployment, illegal dumping, and burglary, Brugse Poort gained a bad reputation.

Since the 1990s, however, Brugse Poort has been subject to gentrification as many white middle-class families began buying and rehabilitating the terraced houses originally populated by the industrial proletariat. Whereas gentrification was spontaneous at first, from 1998 it became government-induced through the planning and implementation of an urban renewal project, named Oxygen for Brugse Poort (*Zuurstof voor de Brugse Poort*). Next to improving the quality of life for long-time residents, Oxygen for Brugse Poort explicitly aimed at the attraction of middle-class families through the regeneration of the district via a broad environmental strategy. Alongside the development of a brownfield site of nearly 15 acres into a community park, Oxygen for Brugse Poort provided for the (re)development of six green spaces and the creation of a safe pathway for cyclists and pedestrians running through the district. Although influenced by neoliberal discourses, it is important to note that urban renewal strategies in Brugse Poort were also coupled to a social agenda (Oosterlynck & Debruyne, 2013). This agenda, which took shape through a dialogue with local civil society, included, among other things, investments in a Community Health Centre, a social-artistic organization, and a social economy firm. Yet, urban renewal in Brugse Poort was not unanimously celebrated. The project met with resistance as some long-time residents had the feeling that greening was not an end in itself but only a means for capital accumulation and gentrification (see for instance Figure 1, bottom right). Moreover, some highlighted the fact that Oxygen for Brugse Poort entailed evictions as the plan foresaw the demolition of 89 terraced houses – something that was proclaimed as necessary to (i) make room for the development of green spaces and (ii) clean up part of the poor housing stock in the neighbourhood (Stad Gent, 2003). The opposition to the urban renewal project indicates how some (long-time) residents perceived green spaces as new LULUs (cf. Anguelovski, 2016), as greening was perceived as a means to fuel gentrification and hence initiate the displacement of vulnerable residents. Other groups, however, were noticeably more positive toward the greening of the neighbourhood. In fact, since 2015 some residents have been actively promoting additional greening through the creation of so-called living streets.

Figure 1. Top left, view of the densely populated district; Top right, demolition of 89 terraced houses; Bottom left, children protesting against this demolition, slogan reads "we're staying"; Bottom right, graffiti quote on the urban renewal project saying "It's not for greening, but for money!!". All pictures by Fixatief vzw except bottom left by the task group Stop the Demolition.

Living streets: An urban greening initiative

Living streets are an urban greening initiative that is driven by a hybrid configuration of public and private not-for-profit actors that include a civil society organization established (amongst others) by former city administrators, the municipal council, and loosely organized groups of residents. Both the non-profit organization and the municipal council provide the framework within which neighbouring residents can jointly take the initiative to make their street (partially) car-free for a period of two months. Artificial grass mats are rolled out and the reclaimed street is transformed into a décor in which one often finds picnic tables, raised garden beds, French boules courts, flowerbeds, and playhouses. Through a conversion of the vacated space, advocates aim to create a temporary place for greenery and social living. Throughout this period, advocating residents also experiment with sustainable transportation such as electric or cargo bikes for commuting and shopping. The ultimate goal is to

gain insights into transportation and street design and how these can be reimagined so as to make the transition to a climate-neutral city.

In order to create a living street, advocating residents have to gain local government approval. For this to happen, they need to inform and consult other street residents through open information sessions and home visits. Through these encounters, the wishes and needs of all street residents need to be mapped out. Moreover, if a problem arises, solutions need to be found. Although advocating residents take the lead, the coordination of the Living Streets initiative is done by Lab van Troje (Lab of Troy). This non-profit organization, which initially came up with the idea, facilitates the communication between advocating residents and city officials. Furthermore, the organization supports advocates by providing both building materials to create a living street and flyers to inform the neighbourhood. Lab van Troje was established by several attendees of a series of meetings convened by the city's environmental office and mobility department to discuss how to achieve a climate-neutral Ghent in 2050. Its aim is to initiate and coordinate experiments to stimulate the transition to a climate-neutral city.

Through an annual grant of 140,000 euros, the city council actively promotes the Living Street initiative. For the responsible councilman, living streets "are a great example of how people can *reconquer* [emphasis added] their city and street" ("Prijs van 50.000 euro," 2015) so that these can become "more pleasant and green" (Lab van Troje, 2014). What started off in 2013 as a small-scale initiative with two living streets has become an increasingly popular phenomenon. In the last round, 18 streets participated, of which no fewer than five rolled out in Brugse Poort (see Figure 2). As the initiative is lauded for its positive impact on issues of urban mobility and liveability, it has been picked up by several European cities, such as Brussels, Ivanic Grad, La Rochelle, Milton Keynes, Rotterdam, Turin, and Zadar. Yet, living streets are not without controversy. Throughout the previous edition, various acts of vandalism were reported that often seemed to centre around the struggle for space or at least were a (criminal means of) objection to the project. In Brugse Poort, for instance, some panels providing information about the Living Street project were vandalized with slogans saying "move!" and "selfish green

assholes!", thereby making questions about the relationship between greening initiatives and displacement pertinent.

Figure 2. One of the living streets in Brugse Poort. Picture taken in 2015 by city of Ghent (*Stad Gent*).

Data and methods

The results presented in the next section draw on interview data collected between June 2016 and February 2017. A total of 37 interviews were conducted with both long-time (*n = 20*) and gentrifying residents (*n = 17*). Most participants were recruited through adverts posted on Facebook groups concerning greening initiatives in the district. Additionally, residents who attended one of the living streets information sessions were approached to participate in the study. In order to explore the relationship between gentrification and greening initiatives, participants were categorized according to their socioeconomic profile. Participants were labelled as gentrifying when they mostly fitted the profile of a white middle-class gentrifier, here defined as a highly educated white person with a high occupational status who had recently moved to and bought a property in the district (see Table 1 for an overview of respondents' characteristics). In contrast, long-time residents can be roughly identified as working-class or lower middle-class persons who had lived in Brugse Poort as a child or have been living in the district for at least 25 years.[3]

Table 1. Characteristics of respondents (*N = 37*)

Characteristic	Longtime residents (*n = 20)*	Gentrifying residents (*n = 17)*
Gender		
Females	9	11
Male	11	6
Age		
< 31	4	0
31-40	5	11
41-50	4	4
51-60	2	2
> 60	5	0
Migration background		
Has a migration background	8	0
Has no migration background	12	17
Highest academic degree		
High school degree	16	2
Bachelor's degree	2	3
Master's degree	2	11
Doctoral degree	0	1
Occupational status[4]		
Never worked and long-term unemployed	1	1
Working class	8	0
Intermediate	8	2
Salariat	3	14
Homeownership status		
Owning	13	16
Renting	7	1

Interviews were conducted at a location of the participant's preference and lasted between 40 and 180 minutes. The interview protocol followed a semi-structured format and questioned participants' perspectives on (i) the neighbourhood and its identity through time, (ii) their ties in and with the neighbourhood, (iii) broader neighbourhood dynamics and the actors perceived to be implicated in these dynamics, (iv) greening initiatives in general and the living streets in particular, and (v) the politics at play in and the impacts of such initiatives, as well as the configuration of actors perceived to be pursuing these politics. Interviews were later transcribed orthographically and analysed in Nvivo 10. Given our sampling method and relatively small sample size, the results presented in the following section should be interpreted with caution.

For instance, it is likely that residents who were ambivalent or indifferent toward the issue of living streets neither responded to our call nor showed up at information sessions. Our objective, however, was not to get a precise image of the ratio of proponents to opponents with regard to neighbourhood greening. Given our focus on non-physical displacement pressures, it seemed reasonable to pay attention to residents who were highly involved in, or had an opinion about, the Living Street project. This is because we assume that when such pressures exist, we are most likely to identify them within this group.

Results

A new property hotspot

> [I]n order to prevent any mistake they've given all these gray streets, all those city-corpses lying next each other, the names of flowers, the names of trees … Not a branch, not a leaf, not a flower is to be seen … The people in cedar street have never seen a cedar, … they've never seen how the hazel starts to bloom with dark red buds, they've never felt the smooth bark of cherry trees, and have never caught the scent of blooming lilacs around them. (Boon, 2006, p. 376)

When renowned Belgian novelist Louis Paul Boon portrayed Brugse Poort in the 1950s, he drew an image of a dreary and shabby looking industrial district. While reading through this passage, one can see how Brugse Poort has undergone a metamorphosis. In fact, newspaper headlines such as "Everybody wants to live in Ghent (and most preferably in Brugse Poort)" (De Troyer, 2016) demonstrate how in recent years Brugse Poort has become known as a popular and hip neighbourhood, suitable for family life. This has been reflected in property prices, which rose by 36.45% in the period 2010-2014 – a staggering number compared to the total increase of 17.15% for Ghent in the same period. Soaring housing costs in Brugse Poort are already being felt by some residents – an alarming tendency when one takes into account the fact that 50.59% of the district's residents are tenants, more than double Flemish regional average (i.e., 23.90%).[5] Long-time residents frequently mentioned the fact that, as "the better sort" wants to live in Brugse Poort, housing costs have "gone up" and have become "expensive," making a permanent stay in the neighbourhood increasingly unlikely for them and their children. Jack, who

together with his wife and children has taken up residence in the house of his mother-in-law, expresses how buying or renting a place in the neighbourhood has become increasingly unattainable:

> Here [in Brugse Poort], they are asking at least 200,000 euro for a terraced house without making much of fuss. … If you don't have two incomes, it is no longer possible to acquire property. We're lucky to be able to live with my mother-in-law and to have no costs. My wife only earns 600 euros and I too only have a modest salary. If we were to live independently, we would be paying a 1000-euro rent and 200 euros on utilities. Combined with cable and internet, we would easily pay 1300 euros. (Jack, long-time resident)[6]

Accounts from long-time residents hence make clear that physical displacement pressures are being experienced as a result of government-induced gentrification. Next to its proximity to the city centre and its relative affordability, one of the pull factors to this property hotspot are the many greening initiatives that have been implemented. Indeed, throughout our interviews it became clear that the green spaces that were developed in the course of the urban renewal project were highly valued by many gentrifying residents. Blake, for instance, recalls his views on the neighbourhood when checking it out before acquiring property:

> I had cycled a few times through Brugse Poort and you just got the impression this was a great neighbourhood with some parks. … That is why we did not choose Ledeberg [another former industrial district of Ghent]. Ledeberg has a lot less green space. (Blake, gentrifying resident)

Previous greening initiatives thus seem to have partly engendered a process of gentrification as these drew to the neighbourhood a progressive faction of white middle-class families that are culturally oriented towards not only urban but also ecological lifestyles and who have in the literature been referred to as the "sustainability class" (Gould & Lewis, 2017, p. 112). It is therefore worth looking in more detail at the dynamics between greening initiatives and gentrification.

Brugse Poort: A great place?

Gentrifiers not only consume but also aim to produce urban green space. In fact, interviews indicated that it is mainly gentrifying residents who are promoting additional greening, inter alia, by taking the lead in the Living Street project:

> [Through the Living Street project] you get to know a lot of people in the neighbourhood. It feels more familiar now … Recently, I was going home at night by bicycle and I arrived at this nearby square and I was filled with love. I was thinking "This is a really nice neighbourhood." Although I was a little drunk, I really thought "This place is great". (Esther, gentrifying resident)

As illustrated by Esther's comment, gentrifying residents actively engage in place-making practices through their participation in the Living Street project. Indeed, by appropriating and transforming the concrete road into a place for greenery and social living, gentrifying residents are creating their/a sense of place and homeliness. These place-making practices contrast with the common place identity of Brugse Poort. In fact, according to gentrifying residents it has been normal in Brugse Poort "to park your car in front of your home and as such take up public space," this because many take the view that "a street's only function is to accommodate traffic". The changes in the fabric of Brugse Poort, the new materialities that are being introduced are, however, perceived by gentrifying residents as "very positive," as an incontestable good that serves the public interest. In their view, participation in the project is a way to be of service to Brugse Poort and its residents. For instance, advocating residents explained that through their "volunteering," they endeavoured to "upgrade" the neighbourhood, hence making it "more pleasant" for its inhabitants. These accounts strongly reflect assumptions held by gentrification proponents that gentrifiers will defend and improve their neighbourhood through a variety of actions (see e.g., Byrne, 2003; Duany, 2001). Whereas green gentrification increases housing costs, proponents argue that the process also brings benefits to low-income residents who manage "to stay put" (Hartman, 1984).

> By remodelling the street, by slowing down traffic, by making the street green, and by providing a place for social living, a place is created which is pleasant to live in. (Penny, gentrifying resident)

When reading through Penny's account, one could indeed easily conclude that the removal of environmental bads and the introduction of environmental goods improve the quality of life for long-time residents. Our analysis, however, showed that the Living Street project was highly contested, rather than unanimously welcomed. Multiple conflicts arose between gentrifying and long-time residents that centred around the struggle for space. These struggles were not so much about the materialities of space as about the meanings that are linked to it. For several long-time residents, the living streets project contrasted with the identity and character of Brugse Poort they used to know:

> Half of them aren't even from Brugse Poort and they want to upgrade the neighbourhood with living streets. But living streets have nothing to do with Brugse Poort, totally nothing! That this used to be a run-down neighbourhood? Yes, that is correct, but it was a run-down neighbourhood open to all. (Guy, long-time resident)

What long-time residents were thereby noting is that the Living Street project not only changed the very fabric of Brugse Poort but also its identity. Guy, for instance, was suggesting that the project was remodelling the orientation of the neighbourhood to a place which was no longer "open to all." Although such statements romanticize the neighbourhood's past and easily gloss over the inter-racial tensions that have marked neighbourhood life over recent decades, the images they evoke nevertheless give us a "vision of the present," a vision of where the neighbourhood is now (May, 1996, p. 200). By projecting the image of a close-knit community from a time that never was, long-time residents try to point out the formation of (new) conflicts and exclusions in the neighbourhood. Indeed, sentiments like these often came to the fore because living streets themselves were perceived as something of, by and for a selective class – a class that was very much related to what Gould and Lewis (2017, p. 112) named the "sustainability class". In fact, several long-time residents argued that they considered the Living Street project to be a "privatization" of public space by a "clique" or "community" of what at times was referred to as

"hippies," "hipsters," "ecologists," "middle-class families," and "newcomers". Related to this, some residents argued that it would not be "appreciated" if they were to go and enjoy the living streets, while others noted that they would end up "sitting alone". This feeling was echoed by Marilyn, who was keeping herself away from the project:

> [The living street advocates] have created islands and I am against it. They are proclaiming that they are there for everyone but you should go and get a look at who is sitting there … I know I have the right to go and sit there. However, I don't go there because I don't feel up to it. I prefer sitting at Fonteineplein because there I sit between my people. Then I sit on the place that was created by the city to make the neighbourhood come together. (Marilyn, long-time resident)

This process of segregation and/or self-segregation also worked the other way around. Gentrifying residents, for instance, frequently mentioned how they did not go to sit at Fonteineplein (i.e., a public square with trees around it) because the square was felt to be "unattractive" and "claimed" by minoritised residents. For some gentrifying residents, this was even one of the reasons to advocate for living streets as through this initiative, green spaces could be created that were according to one's tastes and over which one could have a certain degree of control.

Whereas gentrification proponents proclaim that a rising tide lifts all boats (Duany, 2001), accounts by long-time residents called into question these supposed trickle-down effects. Indeed, several long-time residents revealed how they felt neither allowed nor willing to tap into these new "liveable" and "green" neighbourhood spaces. The perception that living streets were a project of, by and for "a clique" that was different from "our people" caused long-time residents to link the project to the rapid changes that have been going on in the neighbourhood. However, these changes also resulted in living streets being almost immediately perceived as selective. Throughout our interviews, long-time residents frequently mentioned how new businesses, organizations and a "better class" took up residence in the neighbourhood. Whereas this influx was celebrated at first, many gradually changed their opinion. This is mainly because long-time residents came to the conclusion that these new businesses

and organizations were catering to a selective public and that gentrifying residents were not interested in making real connections. Moreover, long-time residents have seen how through this process many long-time residents and shops have left the neighbourhood, which led to a loss of place. Opposition to the Living Street project should thus also be understood as an active opposition to these changes, this because living streets were seen as a symbol and part of a changing neighbourhood.

Contestation over this greening initiative, however, also revolved around issues other than the perceived privatization of public space and gentrification in a more general sense. More specifically, interviewees considered that the greening of Brugse Poort changed certain expectations of how to act and behave in the neighbourhood. These social expectations were a source of conflict between residents in the struggle for space. Faiza, for instance, recalled a discussion she had with some living street advocates in which she linked the redevelopment of the road to the implicit norm of travelling in more sustainable ways and leaving your car further away:

> I told them [the living street advocates] "Am I not free to do what I want? If I don't want to ride a cargo bike, then I'm not going to. You cannot force me, right?" And they reply by saying "Yes, but people expect that they will always have a parking spot in front of their house". I say "But you expect to have a green space in front of your house … Well, I expect to see my car when I open the door." (Faiza, long-time resident)

It is important to note that opposition from long-time residents to these expectations was not only driven by mere aesthetic preferences or tastes that were related to issues of habitus. Rather, the position that residents took was also associated with the context in which they lived. In fact, as many long-time residents were employed in low-skilled jobs (see Table 1) – jobs which were often heavily dependent on car use due to (i) their concentration in remote areas with few public transport options available, (ii) the related work schedule, and/or (iii) the duties of the jobs themselves – multiple interviewees expressed the unfeasibility of travelling other than by car. The appropriation of parking spots for greenery and social living, together with the implicit norm of parking further away, was therefore viewed with hostility in a neighbourhood

characterized by severe parking problems. This was illustrated by Mourad, who cleverly juxtaposed his context to that of advocating residents:

> I never thought I would be saying this but I've forgotten the issue of drug dealers in the neighbourhood because they've never bothered us … But they [i.e., the living street advocates] are telling you what to do … They are changing your way of living. Not everyone is lucky enough to sit there with a glass of wine for the entire day. Not everyone is lucky enough to have the opportunity to work from home. We need to work. We need to earn our bread … I am encountering difficulties because I am a cabdriver … We always try to reach a client within 15 minutes. When I need to walk 15 minutes to my car alone, I will get into trouble. (Mourad, long-time resident)

Indeed, while the Living Street initiative is making the neighbourhood more "pleasant" and "liveable" for gentrifying residents, the opposite could be the case for other residents whose presence and ways of living are increasingly coming under threat. The latter is the result of two related processes.

First, it is clear how some ways of life are becoming increasingly difficult to maintain as the automobile is being pushed out of certain spaces. In fact, throughout interviews long-time residents consistently noted how the neighbourhood has changed for the worse and how the Living Street project has made things "less liveable". As such, some residents felt that advocating residents "took the greatness out of Brugse Poort". Accounts such as these not only challenge the assumption that long-time residents will be able to reap the benefits of gentrifiers' hard work to make the neighbourhood "liveable," but also question whether the concept of liveability itself is something than can be looked upon as objective. What makes up a liveable neighbourhood thus seems heavily dependent on the context in which one lives. Consequently, what the Living Street project seems to be putting into practice is neither an objective nor a shared vision of *liveability* but rather an elitist one that reflects the lifestyle of the urban professional.

Second, as living streets are rebranding the neighbourhood into a "healthy," "green," and "sustainable" place, bodies and practices that do not meet this

image are coming under scrutiny and are increasingly excluded. Several long-time residents felt that they were being labelled by advocating residents as "asocial" or "embittered". Moreover, some interviewees had the feeling they were being "bullied" and "pushed out" by gentrifying residents who wanted "them and their cars gone". Although the full implications of this process have yet to be played out, it points towards an impression shared by several long-time residents that their presence and conduct is being marginalized as the greening of the neighbourhood advances. This led some residents to believe that they were being left with only two choices, either "adapt or move".

While the Living Street project is being lauded for giving back the streets to residents, it seems that the project is also working against residents. Whereas gentrifying residents are carving out a place strictly tailored to their tastes and ways of living, long-time residents are feeling increasingly out-of-place and are no longer associating themselves with the neighbourhood.

No say in the neighbourhood
Conflict over the Living Street project, however, also centred around the ability to claim rights to define and cast space. In fact, many long-time residents not only resented the living streets in themselves but also the way they came into being. Several interviewees felt that the project had been "imposed" and "forced down one's throat". For these residents, Brugse Poort used to be a place of equality and freedom in which they could break free from the socio-political hierarchy reflected in a broader society in which many found themselves at the bottom. Such romanticized and nostalgic sentiments often came to the fore when interviewees were pointing toward the remodelling of the neighbourhood. In fact, the Living Street project was perceived as epitomizing and reinforcing a change in neighbourhood governance. Whereas in the past it was felt that one could dwell among equals, now one had the feeling that gentrifying residents were taking the driver's seat. Several long-time residents described entering a new reality of "*foie-gras* politics" in which they were only allowed to give ear to, and agree with, decisions not made by them. Through these accounts, interviewees also noted the political effectiveness of advocating residents and the ease with which these managed to close off several streets from car usage for a period of two months:

> [Advocating residents] can get anything they want. They come up with an explanation. They have connections. They know their way around … It is a clique, the chosen ones. They can do anything, they are allowed to do anything and they do not care about anyone but themselves. In the past, this was a nice neighbourhood. (Imane, long-time resident)

As Imane's comment illustrates, the ease with which advocating residents crossed boundaries with the public sector and rearranged the neighbourhood according to their view of it caused not only feelings of indignation but also a loss of a sense of belonging.

This was certainly the case as many long-time residents felt that their voice did not matter – or no longer mattered – to municipal policy makers. For instance, one resident born and raised in Brugse Poort proclaimed that the "long-time population didn't count any longer" to city leaders. In turn, another interviewee said that he and other long-time residents had the feeling they were "no longer welcome in the city". These statements correspond to the well-documented emergence of entrepreneurial modes of urban governance (While *et al.*, 2004), in which the aim of city leaders to bring back and retain middle-class families allows the interests of such families to come to the fore at the expense of those held by low-income communities. The impression of epistemic exclusion, namely that the voice, the knowledge, opinions, and interests of certain groups are of no concern for city leaders, was indeed widely shared by long-time residents. Amy, for instance, recalls how her and her husband's opposition to the Living Street project was largely ignored:

> You feel like you're not being understood but you also have the feeling that they [i.e., public officials] are not listening. For example, in the beginning I sent two e-mails to the ombudsman of the city of Ghent. Eventually I got a reply saying "Madam, we will forward your complaint to the organization [i.e., Lab van Troje]". In other words, you can shut your mouth because they don't care. My husband went to the open information session and was asked if they [i.e., advocating residents] could have his name because they were interested in what he said. But in the end you don't hear from them because they don't care. (Amy, long-time resident)

As Amy's comment suggests, long-time residents felt that they were up against a set of actors (advocating residents, non-profit organization, public officials, ombudsman) between which boundaries were rather fuzzy and which jointly marginalized their voice. Several interviewees, for instance, maintained that their "opinion didn't matter". Nevertheless, our analysis made clear that often advocating residents, members of Lab van Troje and/or the city ombudsman genuinely entered into a dialogue and looked for solutions when problems were reported to them by long-time residents – a process which could be time consuming. For example, we know of instances where advocating residents insulated someone's door against (potential) noise disturbance coming from the living street, set up a living street differently to minimize nuisance, reserved parking space in the living street for a person suffering from an illness, and parked their own cars further away, to name but a few.

However, this does not change the fact that the Living Street project stems from an implicit yet predetermined notion of liveability – a notion which seems not to be open for discussion. As such, rather than starting from a *tabula rasa* which would allow and encourage engagement with different ideas on what makes up a liveable street, the project holds on to the idea that a liveable street comes down to the removal of certain environmental bads to make way for certain environmental goods. In turn, views that challenge such a notion of 'liveability' or its encompassing configuration of a liveable street tend to be trivialized and rendered illegitimate. Indeed, as the Living Street project was believed to be serving the public interest, some advocating residents openly wondered "why an issue was made out of [the project]" and dismissed the opposition of some residents, who situated themselves outside the consensus, as "ridiculous," "sour," "conservative," and "outdated". These limitations (i.e., the failure to transcend and discuss a predetermined notion of liveability) seem to symbolize and sprout from the unequal power relations between advocating and opposing residents. Indeed, not only has the concept been developed and introduced by a selective group – a concept which moreover reflects their interests – it also received support from city officials who hold the decisive power:

> I went to this meeting prior to the initiation of the living streets … The majority of the attendants were against it … Lab van Troje was doing their presentation when I asked them "Will this go through or is it still uncertain? Have we come here to have a say or are we just here to take note of the plan?" … They told me nothing was decided yet. In the end, however, they got images and told us they were going to do this and that. So actually, everything had already been decided. (Nicole, long-time resident)

To complicate matters further, it seems that through the living street network responsibility was shifted to particular residents and civil society (e.g., as Amy's statement makes clear, complaints addressed to the city were not answered but instead forwarded to Lab van Troje). However, as these actors were not elected, they could neither be voted out nor held accountable (cf. Rigolon & Németh, 2018). Within such an 'accountability void', opposing residents seemed to have a hard time in making their voice heard and contesting the initiative in an effective way. It is important to note that during the interviews long-time residents frequently emphasized that they didn't need to get their own way – this whether or not they were in a weak bargaining position. In fact, several interviewees explicitly indicated that they could well imagine living streets being "convivial" and "enjoyable" for certain families. Long-time residents therefore did not object to the aim of gentrifying residents to achieve a sense of place and homeliness. However, they did object that the place-creation practices developed by gentrifying residents were jeopardizing their own sense of place and homeliness. To resolve this issue, some long-time residents argued that a sort of compromise should be reached that was acceptable to both parties. Nevertheless, it was felt that only they were willing to reach such an agreement.

Taken together with the perceived lack of interest on the part of city officials for their concerns, long-time residents felt that they neither had nor could have any impact upon the future direction of the neighbourhood, something which resulted in feelings of disempowerment:

> This is my neighbourhood! Of course, it is also the neighbourhood of those ecologists … I just think it is terrible that we no longer have any

> say in our own neighbourhood. … Half of the people do not agree with this project. It is terrible that a group of people succeeds in ruffling the feathers of a whole district. We have lived here for ages. They have just arrived but they are making the rules. (Cynthia, long-time resident)

By emphasizing that she has been "living here for ages," Cynthia is trying to claim rights based on her historical ties to the neighbourhood. Although such "autochthonous claims" have been criticized as undemocratic – in that they often work to force assimilation upon newly arrived residents (for a critique, see Amin, 2004; Massey, 2004) – these claims can also be seen as a last-ditch effort in a context in which many felt powerless. In other words, what long-time residents seem to be after when holding on to such claims is not the production of unequal power relations but the destruction of such relations.

Feelings of powerlessness were often conjoined with the perceived ease with which gentrifying residents (were allowed to) exert influence over Brugse Poort. In fact, some long-time residents were under the impression that advocating residents were impregnable. In this context, Marilyn, for example, noted that after the previous edition of the Living Street project one picnic table and some planter boxes were not taken away by advocating residents for a whole year. The fact that advocating residents were able to get away with non-compliance with mutually made agreements – this even after the police station and other officials had been informed – typified to long-time residents that advocating residents not only acted "arrogantly" but also received, unlike themselves, unconditional support from city leaders and that, in practice, there was a rather selective public-citizen partnership at work here. This sentiment was echoed by other long-time residents, who compared their rights with those of advocating residents. Aamir, for instance, recalled how a request for a one-day street closure on the occasion of *Eid al-Fitr* at the location of the mosque was denied for security reasons. When linking this request to the one made by living street promoters, Aamir explicitly wondered why his faction's voice did not matter as much as that of other factions who were able to pull the strings. These instances make clear how in a context of gentrification, long-time residents, whether or not justified, are increasingly experiencing a stratification into first- and second-class citizens. As long-time residents find themselves at the bottom of this rearranged hierarchy, some no longer have the feeling that

Brugse Poort (also) belongs to them. Taken together with the changed identity of the neighbourhood and the increasing marginalization of certain ways of living, this causes feelings of being out-of-place and a tendency to withdraw from the spaces that once used to be places of homeliness:

> I really am a stranger in my own neighbourhood. We have the impression that we aren't getting a say on a thing around here. This creates a situation in which you come home, get in, close the door and don't want to have anything to do with what is going on outside. … I always used to say "Brugse Poort is great, I like living here," but that they have taken away. (Bilal, long-time resident)

For some residents, displacement pressures have become so "severe" (Marcuse, 1985, p. 207) that they are planning to move out of the neighbourhood. This decision is often linked to the idea that things will only change for the worse in Brugse Poort. Indeed, several long-time residents expressed their anxiety that (parts of) the Living Street project would become permanent – something which seems not implausible given the fact that the project has served as a source of inspiration for street reconstructions. In contrast, other residents expressed concerns about processes of gentrification in general. The net result, however, is the same, namely, residents who are increasingly considering leaving the neighbourhood in ways that hardly can be described as voluntary:

> There are more and more of those people who are moving here. Each home that is vacated, which is up for sale, is being bought by them … They are really alternative people … They are just like aliens: an invasion which is bullying the others into leaving … I'm moving in September because I can't handle it any longer. … I have the feeling a lot of people are leaving, mostly people who have lived here for ages. But it [the Living Street project] is represented oh so beautifully … I am closing my window, closing my curtain, I am using earplugs and I put my headphones on. Outside, there are the elites, … about ten families. They are organizing this. They decide which activities will be held. Other people are counting down the days to July 16th when it [i.e., the Living Street project] will be taken away. (Faiza, long-time resident)

Conclusion

If we are to develop a rich understanding of (green) gentrification, we need to give serious consideration to the diverse nature of displacement (Davidson, 2009). As we argued at the start of this article, to conceive displacement as physical dislocation is to do an injustice to the very place tensions that are at work in processes of (green) gentrification. This paper has examined how urban greening can be entangled with issues such as gentrification and displacement by adopting a multidimensional notion of displacement. It has also shown that – at least in the perception of opposing residents – the boundaries between the public actors, such as municipal officials and local politicians, and the private actors, such as non-profit organizations and loosely organized citizens, that are pushing these initiatives through are quite blurred and fuzzy, which further adds to feelings of powerlessness amongst opposing residents.

Whilst previous research has conceived the relationship between greening on the one side and gentrification and displacement on the other almost exclusively in economic terms, this study points out a more complex picture. Focusing on a greening initiative in a gentrifying neighbourhood, this article has shown that urban greening can induce a variety of displacement pressures, including not only physical displacement but also the loss of a sense of place. The reason for such a widespread displacement lies in the fact that green gentrification is causing more than just soaring housing costs. In fact, when these initiatives are launched, led, and supported exclusively by a group of gentrifiers, who have been named the sustainability class, the chances are not only that they will be based on elitist notions of liveability but also that such notions will trump the sense of place of others. Indeed, our results indicate that greening initiatives promoted by gentrifying residents have significantly redefined the place-identity of the neighbourhood and its socio-political hierarchy, which in turn has led to increasing feelings amongst long-time residents of being out-of-place and marginalized. One should, however, be aware that the strong feelings and sentiments expressed by long-time residents in relation to the Living Street project are not only intertwined with this greening initiative but also with the process of gentrification in a more general sense. Although, due to our selection method, we may have missed out on a significant proportion of residents who are ambivalent or indifferent towards

the Living Street project, this does not undermine our finding that indeed for at least a sizeable section of the population, displacement pressures are occurring as a result of greening initiatives in Brugse Poort.

This article does not argue against the greening of low-income neighbourhoods, which have traditionally been confronted with few green amenities (Anguelovski, 2016; Faber & Kimelberg, 2014; Wolch *et al.*, 2014). On the contrary, it would be unwise to (partially or fully) maintain environmental injustices in an attempt to forestall new injustices that often come with the gentrification of a neighbourhood. However, as our analysis makes clear, it would be imprudent to celebrate and support (all) urban greening initiatives in low-income neighbourhoods by definition. In this respect, some authors have argued that urban greening in low-income neighbourhoods should be accompanied by protective measures, such as rent controls (Wolch *et al.*, 2014). While such proposals deserve more attention, we argue that financial relief alone is not enough. In order to avoid other displacement pressures, it is also essential to approach place-making as a process that is shot through with power differentials that need to be attended to. This implies not only that city leaders relinquish a growth agenda as an impetus for initiating or supporting urban greening – as this growth agenda is inevitably wedded to the well-off segments of the populations – but also that greening initiatives are embedded in a democratic process in which power relations are evened out and public-private boundaries can be crossed by all sections of the citizenry to the same extent. It is important to note that this democratic process is not automatically established when power is devolved from the governmental level to citizens and/or to actors within civil society. Rather, we call on policy makers to take up two matters.

First, we encourage policy makers to take responsibility for both the environmental and social consequences of greening initiatives, even when these initiatives are (also) driven by non-profit organizations and/or took shape via institutional arrangements that engage in the act of "governing-beyond-the-state" (Swyngedouw, 2005). This is not only because environmental non-profit organizations involved in these horizontally networked forms of participatory governance often only focus on their core domain, but also because policy makers are the only ones within these (opaque) ensembles who are elected and

thus have a responsibility to the wider public (cf. Rigolon & Németh, 2018). As our results make clear, in the absence of accountable actors, a situation in which critical questions are not answered and where the citizens asking those questions are sent from pillar to post is not that far away. Ultimately, such 'governing-beyond-the-state' could paradoxically lead to an increasing foreclosure of available space for any real contestation and hence, as we have demonstrated, a process of disempowerment and feelings of displacement amongst a group of citizens who do not participate or are not included in these institutional arrangements.

Second, rather than persisting with a post-political consensus, we want to push policy makers to make room for (thorny) discussions of the kind of (green) environment that is wanted, even when this would give rise to a substantial amount of dissent. As argued by Swyngedouw (2009, p. 611), "[t]he key political question is one that centres on the question of what kind of natures we wish to inhabit, what kinds of natures we wish to preserve, to make or, if need be, to wipe off the surface of the planet (…) and on how to get there." Multiple socio-physical green configurations are possible; however, none is neutral (cf. Swyngedouw, 2007). Each configuration carries a unique assemblage of social consequences as it allows, gives rise to or facilitates certain practices, processes, discourses and people, while at the same time also marginalizing, hindering, or excluding others. Indeed, as the discussion of Fonteineplein makes clear, not all socio-physical 'green' configurations will necessarily lead to gentrification. Likewise, green and livable neighbourhoods could, but should not necessarily, be equivalent to street closures and the introduction of artificial grass mats, raised garden beds, and picnic tables, which has mainly privileged gentrifying groups over others. It is thus necessary to let go of predefined and incontestable notions of what makes up a green and liveable environment and treat environmental issues for what they are (i.e., inherently political). If not, this could lead not only to a process of post-political silencing (cf. Lubitow & Miller, 2013; Swyngedouw, 2009), but also, and as a result of the former, in feelings of displacement.

In a sense, all of this comes down to the incorporation of social justice in the process, procedure, and outcome of greening initiatives (Agyeman, 2013). As has been argued by Julian Agyeman (2013, p. 160), there is a "need for 'social

sustainability' issues to be foregrounded in a sustainability agenda that is still dominated by green, environmental, and stewardship narratives and concerns". Only then will it be possible to arrive at just sustainabilities of, by and for all residents that avoid a stratification into winners and losers through a self-fuelling process of green gentrification.

Notes

1 Based on Goossens, C., Oosterlynck, S., & Bradt, L. (accepted with revisions). Livable streets? Green gentrification and the displacement of long-time residents. *Urban Geography.*

2 We believe that this conception also explains the current lack of attention to the experiences of long-time residents in the literature on green gentrification.

3 This does not mean that there are no long-time middle-class residents in Brugse Poort in general and in our sample in particular. However, in both cases they are a small minority, something which is unsurprising given the district's history.

4 Categories of occupational status are based on the European Socio-economic Classification (ESeC). This classification is the EU-variant of the International Standard Classification of Occupations 1988 (ISCO88).

5 Percentages have been calculated on the basis of the official 2011 census figures, which can be downloaded from http://www.census2011.be/download /statsect_nl.html

6 Pseudonyms are used for all respondents. Respondents were ensured confidentiality by not disclosing any information they provided or by doing this in such a way as not to reveal their identity. All quotations have been translated by the authors.

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CHAPTER NINE

General discussion and conclusion

Abstract

This chapter offers a general discussion and conclusion to the dissertation. The first section presents the main findings to the formulated research questions. Next, these findings will be discussed in relation to dynamics at play in other neighbourhood schools and in the neighbourhood itself. Following this, the implications of the findings for policy and practice will be reviewed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the dissertation which nevertheless open up some potential avenues for future research.

Introduction

T his dissertation engaged with the topic of mixing initiatives in education. These initiatives have been celebrated, both inside and outside the academic community, as a step toward equal educational opportunities. Indeed, several studies have established that pupils who are socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or have a migration background significantly perform better in schools populated by a critical mass of white middle-class pupils. Nevertheless, it remains unclear how mixed environments and mixing initiatives may influence other inequalities in schools. Rather than examining whether the mix is indeed a fix (see for instance Agirdag, Van Houtte, & Van Avermaet, 2012; Franck & Nicaise, 2018; Kucsera, Siegel-Hawley, & Orfield, 2015; Ledoux, Driessen, Vergeer, van der Veen, & Doesborg, 2003; Logan, Minca, & Adar, 2012; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005; Stiefel, Schwartz, & Chellman, 2007), this dissertation deliberately veered off the beaten track. More specifically, we employed the concept of gentrification as a prism to gain insight into the bigger picture of mixing initiatives in relation to issues of equality. The choice to analyse school mixing via such a prism was as unconventional as it was logical. First, while gentrification has rarely been employed by scholars examining mixing initiatives on the school level, it has commonly been used as a perspective to describe and analyse mixing initiatives on a neighbourhood level (see for instance Bridge, Butler, & Lees, 2012). Second, gentrification is increasingly the backdrop against which mixing initiatives on the school level take place. As a consequence, the choice for gentrification as a prism should be seen as a 'radicalization' of what was already present but had rarely been acknowledged. The six studies outlined in this dissertation aimed to contribute to this bigger picture by examining a particular mixing initiative in a gentrifying neighbourhood. Each study brought several aspects to the fore that, when taken together, provide an answer to the research questions. In what follows, the main findings of this dissertation will be discussed in relation to the three research questions presented within the introductory chapter. Next, as gentrification draws attention to the idea of interactivity, these findings are tied to dynamics at play in other neighbourhood schools and in the neighbourhood itself. This is followed by a critical discussion on the implications for policy and practice. To conclude, the

limitations of the dissertation are identified and some potential avenues for future research are offered.

Overview of the research questions and findings

In the first section of this conclusion the main findings of the dissertation will be discussed in relation to the three central research questions.

Research question 1: What effect do mixing initiatives in education have on the *access* of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families?

Research question 2: What effect do mixing initiatives in education have on the *position* and *voice* of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families?

Research question 3: What effect do mixing initiatives in education have on the *needs* of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families?

In short, our findings tend to emphasize the limitations of school mixing initiatives as a lever for equality. More specifically, our findings demonstrate that both (i) the process of working toward the mix and (ii) the process of the mix at work can have a number of ramifications for the access, position, voice, and needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families. As a result, in answering our central research questions, we will refer to both processes.

Access

As displacement has been proven to be a key component of gentrification (Atkinson, 2000; Glass, 1964; LeGates & Hartman, 1982; Marcuse, 1985; Newman & Wyly, 2006), this dissertation consciously drew attention to issues of access in mixing initiatives on the school level. Our findings tend to highlight the fragility of access in mixing initiatives. In fact, our findings reveal that the access of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families can be threatened in both a *direct* and *indirect* way as a result of mixing, hence undermining diversity.

First, when inner-city schools want to work toward more mixed environments they will have to search for ways to attract and retain white middle-class families, this as the entrance of white middle-class families in inner-city schools does not automatically follow processes of gentrification (see chapter 1 and 3). In turn, this fixation can compel schools to (proactively) cater to the wishes of these families; a strategy which has been put forward and encouraged by a number of scholars and educational professionals touting the potential of mixed environments for socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised communities (Edelberg & Kurland, 2009; Stillman, 2012; Zanoni & Mampaey, 2013). This process of 'marketisation' would not be as problematic if it were not for the fact that catering to private wishes can have far-reaching public consequences. Our findings are illustrative in this regard. Indeed, while the school board successfully managed to identify and respond to the wishes of white middle-class families to be a majority in the school — this initially via (i) separating the student populations of both schools, (ii) putting a quota of 30 per cent on the amount of minoritised pupils allowed in *Park Lane*, (iii) selecting this 30-percent-group, and (iv) diversifying this group — it became clear that such measures directly undermined the access of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families who are a majority in the neighbourhood. The former principal, for instance, indicated initially denying access to some minoritised families by putting them on the "waiting list", a strategy which he defined as anything but "Kosher" but nevertheless crucial to avoid alarming recently enrolled white middle-class families and scaring off other potential white middle-class families. The case of *Park Lane* thus illustrates the pitfalls of intentional mixing strategies. By catering to the wishes of white middle-class families — which was necessary, as illustrated in chapter 4, in order to be able to attract these families — school boards may paradoxically eclipse the access of the very families who are object of these strategies. Recently, Diem, Holme, Edwards, Haynes, and Epstein (2019) made a similar observation in the context of Dallas (Texas). The authors illustrated how a mixing initiative, which allowed schools to close, rebrand and reopen as "transformation schools" where half of the seats were set aside for advantaged pupils, ultimately led to a number of instances where children from the local community lost access to their neighbourhood school.

Second, our findings also reveal another interesting fact with regard to access. More specifically, this dissertation reveals that a 'socio-ethnic mix' — whatever that may be — is not necessarily a stable and permanent condition. In fact, as argued by gentrification scholars focusing on the neighbourhood level, it may very well be that the phenomenon of a socio-ethnic mix is merely transitory (Lees, Butler, & Bridge, 2012). While the former is somewhat harshly put in our context, the reality is that *Park Lane* is having a hard time retaining a significant number of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families since it launched its mixing initiative. Indeed, as was demonstrated in chapter 3, the student body of the school has consistently become more white and middle-class ever since the launch — even after the school board dropped the measures discussed above. According to the latest figures (i.e., February 1st, 2017), the percentage of pupils (i) who receive a school allowance, (ii) whose mother is low-educated, and (iii) who do not speak Dutch has fallen far below the neighbourhood's average, respectively 32.58% to 53.9%, 33.33% to 49.2%, and 28.61% to 49.6%. This is also noted by *Park Lane*'s current principal who fears her school is transforming into an "elite institute". Whereas in the 1990s *Park Lane* was confronted with a flight of white families after the percentage of socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised pupils exceeded a certain threshold, at present the school is confronted with the exact opposite. Indeed, currently at *Park Lane*, socio-economically disadvantaged and/or minoritized families are underrepresented while affluent families are overrepresented.[1] So why is *Park Lane*, a school that for decades was able to attract socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families without much effort, no longer popular with these families? Our findings suggest that the influx of these families has not only been undermined in a *direct* way but also in an *indirect* way. The latter through changes which have made *Park Lane* less attractive for, and less adapted to, these families. This is both the result of the (i) the process of working toward the mix and (ii) the process of the mix at work. Chapter 6, for instance, illustrated that the other main measure taken to attract gentry families (i.e., the provision of progressive education) was perceived by disadvantaged mothers with migration backgrounds as not adapted to the needs of their children. As one disadvantaged mother with a migration background expressed "If I had known this [i.e., the fact that *Park Lane* employs a progressive pedagogy] before, I would have searched for other schools close to home". In addition, chapter 7, pointed to changes in the school

culture and the loss of specific support services for socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families – changes which were looked upon with sorrow by these families. As a consequence, it cannot be assumed that socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised pupils will continue to 'reap the benefits' once inner-city schools have attracted white middle-class families. On the contrary, the number of socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised pupils that rubs shoulders with the children of the gentry could very well decrease as the process of school gentrification continues.

The case of *Park Lane* is steeped in as much irony as it is disillusioning. Indeed, our findings indicate that the threat to a socio-ethnic mix could very well be the mixing itself. In fact, the measures that were taken by the school board in order to establish a socio-ethnic mix and the subsequent effects of this mix, all tend to displace socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families in either a direct or indirect way. The case of *Park Lane* thus reveals the difficulty of creating and, above all, maintaining a mixed student population. Schools embarking on an adventure to mix their student population may very well find themselves in a catch-22 situation. In order to establish a mixed student population, inner-city schools are forced to cater to white middle-class families. However, given the fact that the wishes of white middle-class families do not necessarily coincide with the interests of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families, this can give rise to measures that are against the interest of the latter. Together with the effects of the influx of white middle-class families itself, this could in turn displace socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families. The challenge of mixing is thus to find ways not only to attract white middle-class families but also to retain socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families. With regard to the latter, our findings point to the importance of paying attention to potential processes of exclusion that can arise from school mixing.

Position and voice

Given the notion that individuals do not necessarily acquire an equal position within mixed environments on the neighbourhood level (see for instance Tissot, 2015), this research question sought to explore the implications of mixing initiatives on the school level with regard to the position and voice of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families. We suggest that

mixing initiatives on the school level have a number of ramifications in relation to these issues. Again, these ramifications are due to both (i) the process of working toward the mix and (ii) the process of the mix at work.

First, initiatives that push forward a socio-ethnic mix as a lever for educational equality, paradoxically render the very families for which these initiatives were designed not only as *at risk* but also as *a risk*. The main reason for this lies in the problem definition on which such initiatives are based.[2] Such initiatives are not based on the premise that due to the functioning of the education market, socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families are sorted to the schools with the worst resources. Rather than starting from the notion that concentrations of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families in schools are, in part, the *consequence* of educational inequalities,[3] mixing initiatives start from the exact opposite notion, namely that such concentrations are the *cause* of educational inequalities.[4] Such initiatives are based on the assumption that the influence on school quality of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families is less favourable as compared to the influence of middle-class families without a migration background. Indeed, socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families are imagined to directly or indirectly trigger school quality in a way that is more negative or less positive than middle-class families without a migration background.[5] As a result, socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families are portrayed as unfavourable as well as unfortunate. This is, for instance, evident in the work of Kahlenberg (2003, p. 37) who classified schools where socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils make up most of the student body as "pathological environments". This was also the definition used by most of the interviewed white middle-class parents who stressed the importance of a "healthy mix" — a composition that comprised enough families like them (see chapter 4).[6] In other words, mixing strategies are undergirded by the notion that some families not only face but also cause inequality, either directly or indirectly. Indeed, the agent that induces the inequality that socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised families encounter is their own reflection. It follows, then, that the idea of mixing as a lever toward equality of educational opportunity implies a hierarchization of groups and, hence, ipso facto an installation of inequality. At the top of the ladder are middle-class families without a migration background of whom it is assumed that they posit the

right characteristics and exhibit the right behaviour to positively influence the school and its student body. In contrast, socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised families are positioned at the foot of the ladder as they are believed to exert a negative influence on the school and its student body. Such notions also came to the fore in interviews with white middle-class parents, some of whom explicitly defended their choice for *Park Lane* as a socially-engaged one (see chapter 4). As a result, the notion of mixing as a silver bullet strategy against inequality of educational opportunity has a paradoxical nature as it installs what it tries to combat, namely inequality.[7] In addition, the assumption that white middle-class families are crucial to academic success can compel school boards to behave in such a way that confers additional status and power on white middle-class families. As a matter of fact, school boards that endorse such notions will be tempted to cater to these families in order to entice them to, or retain them at, the school. It follows, then, that that any real debate on the measures taken within such a mind-set will be hard, that is when these measures are deemed necessary to entice white middle-class families. In turn, this can side-line the voice of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families. Our findings are illustrative here. In fact, the findings of chapter 3 indicate that as our case-study school assumed white middle-class families had a favourable influence, the board deliberately catered to these families in an attempt to establish a mixed student population. For instance, the school board proactively responded to the desires of a group of white middle-class families by employing progressive educational practices and by restricting access for socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised families. It is telling that this all happened without consulting the families already present in the school. Even now, the room for debate on certain issues such as progressive educational practices is small, as discussed in chapter 6. As our findings in this chapter revealed, many disadvantaged mothers with a migration background felt unheard when they uttered their complaints about some aspects of the pedagogical project of the school. As one respondent eloquently argued, it was "therefore" (i.e., because the school dominantly listened and catered to white middle-class families) that the school never listened to them (see chapter 7). While such a stance secures a permanent presence of white middle-class families at the school, at the same time it tends to disempower socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised families.

Second, the dominant involvement of white middle-class parents in certain school issues could also install new inequalities. For instance, our findings indicate that a group of white middle-class parents were very prominent in school improvement efforts through their participation in the Parents Committee. This was also noted by *Park Lane*'s principal who defined the white middle-class families active in the Parents Committee as those who "have helped to shape things around here". In turn, this prominence ensured that these parents had a disproportionate (i) leeway to shape the school in their image and (ii) leverage to influence school leadership. Moreover, the dominant involvement of white middle-class parents can easily turn attention away from the voices of other parents. In *Park Lane*, this happened in at least two ways. First, our findings revealed that the minimal participation of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised parents in the Parents Committee was related to the dominant presence of white middle-class families. In fact, socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised parents had strong reservations about becoming active in the Parents Committee as they felt incompetent next to highly educated parents whose mother tongue was also the official school language. Moreover, the committee's professional structure and the schedule of meetings — both adapted to the professional middle-class — made the doubts of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised parents only stronger. Next to being the central body from which school improvement actions and activities are organized and directed, the committee also operates as a channel through which parental concerns are communicated to the school. As a result, it became harder for these families to make their voices heard which in turn made the school culture evolve in such a way that it decreasingly reflected theirs. As such, this dissertation resonates with the findings of Posey-Maddox (2014, p. 109) which demonstrated that, as a consequence of the reinvestment of middle-class parents in an inner-city school of a large urban district in Northern-California, socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised parents felt like they needed "a résumé to participate". Second, and as a consequence of the previous issue, our findings also indicated that the views of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families were often overlooked when the school board wanted to make certain changes to its day-to-day operations or pedagogy. This is due to the fact that the school sought advice from the Parent-Teacher Organization. As the parents in this organization are selected from the members of the

Parents Committee, this meant that it was dominantly white middle-class parents who gave an advice on behalf of 'the parents'. However, as was discussed in chapter 7, the views held by these families do not always correspond with those of socioeconomically disadvantaged minoritised parents — something which has also been noted by Cucchiara (2013, p. 145) in her research on a mixing initiative in Philadelphia where she argued that "class affects not just what parents are *able* to do but what they think is *necessary*". As a result, the views of socioeconomically disadvantaged minoritised parents tended to be overshadowed at crucial moments. This, for instance, became evident when the board was able to change its evaluation system despite the fact that almost all interviewed disadvantaged mothers with a migration background tended to oppose to this change.

In sum, in a scenario where there is a fixation on white middle-class families as the main driver of school quality, chances are that the voices of other families remain unheard. In fact, as chapter 7 made clear, this is what some disadvantaged mothers with a migration background perceived when feeling as if they were being pushed in a second-class position (see also Katz, 2008 on the stratification of people into first- and second-class citizens in processes of marketisation). In contrast, gentrifiers at the school were perceived to be bestowed with the position of "sultans" whose ideas and advice were always taken into consideration by the school board. The case of *Park Lane* thus demonstrates the difficulty of evening out unequal power relations in mixing initiatives. In fact, when departing from the idea that enticing and retaining white middle-class families is crucial to a school's success, families are put in a pecking order in advance. Furthermore, this idea can compel school boards to dominantly or even exclusively cater to white middle-class families. Finally, when these families are prominent in school improvement efforts, this can provide them with additional power while at the same time silence socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families. Taken together, the unequal status positions between families are likely to be exacerbated in intentionally-mixed schools. These results strongly resonate with the research carried out by Cucchiara (2013) in the context of Philadelphia. More specifically, Cucchiara (2013, p. 165) who examined a particular initiative to market an inner-city school to white middle-class parents, pointed to the fact that although "parents are nominally 'equal' in their relations with schools", the

initiative tended to give white middle-class parents "additional power and leverage". This of course begs the question of how schools seeking a mixed student population can equally make sure that parents have an equivalent position and voice within the school. Or in other words, how can schools provide equality in the face of hierarchy (cf. Blomey, 2004)?

Needs

While white middle-class families have been placed at the centerpiece of school improvement (Kahlenberg, 2003; Putnam, 2015), our findings demonstrate the limitations of promoting mixed environments as a way to effectively respond to the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families. As a matter of fact, the needs of these families can be undermined as a consequence of (i) the process of working toward the mix and (ii) the process of the mix at work.

First, the measures that are taken to establish a socio-ethnic mix could easily run counter to the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families as perceived by these families. As discussed in the previous sections, the fixation of *Park Lane*'s school board to attract white middle-class families, prompted them to cater to these families, inter alia, by employing progressive educational practices (see chapter 3). While our interviews reveal that these practices were highly valued by white middle-class families enrolled in *Park Lane* —as progressive pedagogies were perceived as forms of education in which their children could acquire valuable 21st-century competences while at the same time remain children (see chapter 5) — this was not the case for socioeconomically disadvantaged minoritised families. In fact, as pointed out in chapter 6, these families tended to oppose progressive educational practices as they felt that these practices were not adapted to the needs of their children. Indeed, the disadvantaged mothers with a migration background we interviewed, put forward a number of rational arguments in favour of traditional pedagogies. For instance, mothers argued that a responsive education should accentuate basic skills — such as the acquisition of the Dutch language — as due to their position in society they had experienced first-hand how important such skills were. Moreover, they indicated that because their children were somewhat vulnerable when they started their careers and they themselves were unable to monitor and remedy their children's progress,[8] the

development of such skills would already be challenging enough when the focus would be put exclusively on this acquisition, let alone when emphasis would also be put on other things such as creative development. In sum, the disadvantaged minoritised mothers in our study not only opposed progressive pedagogies because they felt it was an ineffective form of education, they also tended to oppose progressive education because, in contrast to white middle-class families (see chapter 5), they tended to identify different needs in their children, needs that they felt were not sufficiently being picked up by progressive pedagogies. In short, these mothers felt that schools employing progressive educations were not only teaching in the wrong way but were also teaching the wrong things. As we indicated in chapter 6, this is not to say that these mothers got it all right. However, by not fully engaging with the perspectives of socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritsed families – this partly as progressive educational practices were pushed forward as a way to entice white middle-class families – the staff missed out on valuable clues that could help to improve the school quality for these families.

Second, our findings reveal that an effective response to the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families can be undermined when white middle-class pupils increasingly start to make up 'mixed' student populations — which as we have demonstrated is not unlikely as a socio-ethnic mix is not necessarily stable. The reason why an increase of white middle-class pupils can obstruct an effective response has to do with the way school systems in many welfare states are financed. In fact, in many regions (including Flanders) the school financing system is structured so that schools with more vulnerable pupils also receive more funds, this to enhance equal educational opportunities. As a result, when the population of a school becomes less vulnerable, this can lead to a significant drainage of public funds. The case of *Park Lane* is also illustrative on this point. Indeed, as discussed in chapter 7, the student population of *Park Lane* has become increasingly characterized by middle-class children without a migration background. This process, however, had some serious repercussions. Not only has financial assistance to the school been reduced with 1.5 full-time equivalents, but recently the school was also forced to say goodbye to its bridge figure (i.e., a figure who tries to support vulnerable families)[9]. Along with strengthening the position and voice of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised

families, this practitioner also actively tried to respond to the needs of these families. In sum, our findings reveal that mixing policies can collide with other existing policies targeted at unequal educational opportunities, and hence paradoxically can impair the opportunities of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised pupils. That a drainage of public funds is not alien to mixing is supported by Posey-Maddox (2014), who revealed in her study that the school had lost eligibility for several grants and enrichment programmes and was also under threat of losing its Title I funds due to the student population's changing socio-economic demographics.

Third, our findings reveal that the improvement efforts of white middle-class parents do not necessarily serve the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families. For instance, although a group of white middle-class families has worked to improve *Park Lane*, these efforts have not always addressed the needs of all families. Indeed, as highlighted in chapter 7, white middle-class parents succeeded in supplementing *Park Lane*'s curriculum by establishing extra-curricular programs. However, the children of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families have largely been absent from these programmes. There are three reasons why this is the case. First, these programmes are not free of charge. Our interviews made clear this created a barrier for some families to enrol their children in these offerings. Second, our findings also pointed to the fact that while parents are *integrated* within the school, the contact between them is *segregated* by class and migration background. In this sense, our findings show that mixed environments do not necessarily lead to mixed interactions, and hence question the amount of 'mixing' taking place in mixing initiatives. As interactions between white middle-class parents and socioeconomically disadvantaged minoritised parents was close to non-existent, most socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised parents were not even aware of the existence of these programs. Third, even the parents who were aware of these programs did not enrol their children in these programmes. We believe this is because these extra-curricular offerings depart from the needs of children as perceived by the white middle-class promoters. As indicated above, the needs identified by socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families do not necessarily correspond with those identified by white middle-class families. Indeed, whereas the former tend to put a premium on the acquisition of the

Dutch language (i.e., the official school language) — mainly for reasons we have discussed above — the latter tend to highlight other aspects.[10] This is, for instance, evident from the extra-curricular enrichment programs that were established by parents, namely the "French Club" and the "Creative Atelier".[11] The absence of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised pupils from these programs does not result from a disinterest in extra-curricular activities as such. On the contrary, the extra-curricular activities directly organized by the city or by voluntary organizations were relatively high in demand with socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families. For example, several of the interviewed disadvantaged mothers with a migration background enrolled their children in "*Uilenspel*", an activity in which a volunteer pays a home visit for one hour a week to work on basic skills such as language (often by reading books together). As *Park Lane*'s bridge figure used to coordinate the contact between the parents and this organization, many families have now lost the opportunity to enlist their children in this program.

Transcending a mixing school

As became clear in the introductory chapter, gentrification as a prism does not only draw attention to issues of access, position, voice, and needs but also to the idea of interactivity. Indeed, the process of gentrification is based on the idea that what goes on in one place is related to what goes on in another. Production explanations, for instance, claim that when a middle-class family decides to move to the inner-city and buy and rehabilitate a dilapidated home, it widens the rent gap resting on other properties, thereby, making this area more attractive while at the same time making other areas less attractive for other investments. Also consumption explanations depart from the notion of interaction. These theories would argue that, in the same scenario, this middle-class family contributes to a certain culture and aesthetic in an area which could entice other like-minded families to move to this area, and hence avoid other areas. In this vein, it is not surprising that Glass (1964, p. xix) indicated that "once this process of 'gentrification' starts in a district it goes on rapidly". As such, the effects of school mixing could influence, and be influenced by, things happening outside the mixing school in question. In what follows, we will, therefore, consider the relation of our case-study school both to other schools located in the neighbourhood and to the neighbourhood itself. More

specifically, it will be contended that mixing schools are inextricably entangled with their wider environment, be it neighbouring schools or the neighbourhood in which they are located.

The entanglement of schools

Based on our findings, this dissertation questions whether school mixing can be generalized. There are, in fact, good reasons to doubt that all schools in a certain area can attain a student body characterized by a significant amount of white middle-class pupils when this area gentrifies. This is due to a combination of two facts. First, when neighbourhoods gentrify, gentrifiers almost always remain a minority (Butler & Robson, 2003). This was also the case in the neighbourhood under study in this dissertation, namely Brugse Poort. Whilst Brugse Poort may have come to be known as 'hip' and may have seen an influx of highly educated white middle-class families, after two decades of gentrification it is a majority-minority neighbourhood with more than half of its taxpaying residents earning less than 15,000 euros net annually.[12] Second, as demonstrated in chapter 4, most white middle-class residents who opted in neighbourhood schooling did explicitly search for schools characterized by a majority of others like them. Even though most of these residents genuinely valued diversity, in their opinion one "could certainly have too much of a good thing" (Byrne, 2006, p. 127). Indeed, white middle-class residents shunned majority-minority schools as they felt that these could impair the development of their children. As one respondent eloquently argued, "you can't make your child the victim of your ideological choices".[13]

Taken together, although gentrifying residents rarely make up a majority on the neighbourhood level, they strive to be one on the school level. The consequence of this is that white middle-class residents tend to cluster in a few neighbourhood schools, thereby avoiding other schools. This is very evident in Brugse Poort. Although in the 1990s, both *Park Lane* and *Sacred Heart* (i.e., the school that is literally adjacent to *Park Lane*, only divided by a concrete wall) had a student body that was characterized by a concentration of disadvantaged pupils, only *Park Lane* has succeeded in attracting a critical mass of middle-class families without a migration background. Indeed, notwithstanding the efforts of *Sacred Heart* to entice this group of parents,[14] the student bodies of both schools stand in stark contrast to each other. According

to the latest numbers (i.e., February 1ˢᵗ, 2017), the student body of *Sacred Heart* comprises 78.66% pupils of whom the mother is low-educated and 94.47% pupils who do not speak Dutch (i.e., the official school language) at home, compared to 33.33% and 28.61% for *Park Lane* respectively. This tendency to cluster was, for instance, excellently illustrated by one gentrifying mother who went to visit *Sacred Heart* but upon arrival decided to turn back when seeing no one like her. By drawing attention to such behaviour, we neither wish to condemn these parents nor to hold them responsible for the fact that some schools still feel that they cannot provide quality education. Similar to Bourdieu (1989, p. 27), we do not have a single ambition to make individuals feel guilty or giving them a bad conscience. Related to this, our goal is not to determine whether gentrifiers have the moral right or even the parental duty to shun particular neighbourhood schools (cf. Clayton & Stevens, 2004; Swift, 2003; Vancaeneghem, 2019 for such a discussion). Rather the point we wish to make here is that the combination of these two facts makes the generalizability of school gentrification quite unlikely, causing a division in gentrifying neighbourhoods between schools that succeed in attracting a critical mass of white middle-class families and schools that fail to do so. It can even be argued that mixing as a strategy of a particular school demands that nearby schools do not mix. In other words, in order for a school to successfully mix it is necessary that some other schools fail in the same attempt. Consequently, the problem is not only that school mixing as a strategy seems to not be generalizable, and hence creates a division into 'winning' and 'losing' schools which in turn can strengthen existing inequalities between schools.[15] The problem is also that the success of one school is linked to the failure of another. In that sense, school mixing which that carries the promises of educational equality, is *based on* the installation and the continuation of inequality. Inequality is thus not only the simple *consequence* of some schools successfully mixing, it is also the *prerequisite* to such success. Indeed, when a school is successful in establishing a mix, it reduces the chances of other schools doing the same thing (e.g., *Park Lane* as compared to *Sacred Heart*). This is not only because a mixing school creams off white middle-class families but also, in doing so, renders other schools as relatively less appealing to white middle-class residents who need to choose a school in the future. This demonstrates the relevance of transcending an overly narrow focus in educational research on mixing initiatives on mixing schools themselves. Indeed, as the effects of mixing seem to extend well beyond the

schools that mix, it is only logical that these effects would also be included in discussions on school mixing, which, as we have shown, can be established by examining school mixing via the prism of gentrification.

The entanglement of school and neighbourhood

While it is clear that mixing (initiatives) in education often takes place in gentrifying neighbourhoods, studies have seldom examined both levels at the same time (see Bulter & Robson, 2003; DeSena, 2009 for notable exceptions). Indeed, neighbourhoods and schools have been mainly treated as separate entities that do not influence each other. By drawing attention to both the neighbourhood level and the school level, this dissertation has shown that both levels should not be seen in isolation from each other. In fact, this dissertation demonstrates that the school level and the neighbourhood level are inextricably entangled, and hence influence each other. First, it is shown that what plays out on the neighbourhood level also has an effect on what plays out on the school level. The point here is not solely that mixing processes in a neighbourhood can give rise to the mixing of schools (see chapter 3). The point is also that the way this process of neighbourhood mixing plays out and is experienced can influence the way mixing at the school level is perceived. However, before going into this, it should first be noted that by juxtaposing different interviews, we noticed that the perceptions of vulnerable households were highly similar with regard to the mixing of the school and the mixing of the neighbourhood. Compare, for example, the feelings of vulnerable parents who argue that, in contrast to "sultan parents" whose demands are "immediately" met, the school "never listens" to them (see chapter 7), with the feelings of vulnerable residents who argue that, in contrast to gentrifying residents who "can get anything they want" from the city, they "no longer have a say" in the neighbourhood (see chapter 8). Or what to think of the similarities between vulnerable parents who note that they "are not included" in the decision making process around school activities (see chapter 7) and vulnerable residents who contend that it is mainly gentrifiers "who are making the rules" (see chapter 8). Or consider the parallel between vulnerable parents who argue that progressive education "does not really work" for people like "us" and for "our children" (see chapter 6) and vulnerable residents who assert that "not everyone is lucky enough" to reap the benefits and avoid the costs of the Living Street initiative (see chapter 8). Finally, compare the feelings of

vulnerable parents who "regretted" sending their kids to *Park Lane* (see chapter 6) with vulnerable residents who contended they were "moving" out of Brugse Poort as a result of gentrifiers who were "bullying the others into leaving" (see chapter 8). In sum, this dissertation shows that the perceptions of vulnerable households about the way mixing on the neighbourhood level and school level play out are highly similar with regard to issues of access, position, voice, and needs. Interestingly, vulnerable parents perceive these processes neither as isolated phenomena nor as separate issues. On the contrary, processes happening on the neighbourhood level and on the school level were perceived as entangled — as a development where one group of residents tries to appropriate different neighbourhood spaces and are facilitated by public actors in this endeavour. For instance, in chapter 7, we quoted a disadvantaged mother of Moroccan descent who suggested that the people who "feel superior" and always think they "know better" on the neighbourhood level, also have "a lot of influence" in *Park Lane*. While we did not dwell on this theme throughout the individual chapters, it did frequently come to the fore in our data. Several of the vulnerable parents and residents we interviewed indicated that the ones who were changing the neighbourhood were "exactly the same type" as the white middle-class families enrolling in *Park Lane*. The fact that the (actors behind the) processes on the neighbourhood level and the school level were seen as the same, has important implications. On the one hand, this allowed that feelings and experiences from one level shaped how certain processes are perceived at another level. On the other hand, this also allowed that feelings on certain processes could culminate. For instance, following the departure of *Park Lane*'s bridge figure, one mother argued feeling like a "second-class citizen" (see chapter 7). When such statements are abstracted from other processes at play at the school level *and* the neighbourhood level, this can easily come across as either dramatic or gibberish. Consequently, this dissertation suggests that the effects of mixing inner-city schools cannot be fully *understood* when excluding the neighbourhood level from analyses.

Moreover, we argue that the effects of mixing inner-city schools cannot be fully *captured* when excluding the neighbourhood level from analyses. This brings us to our second point. More specifically, we contend not only that what plays out on the neighbourhood level has an effect on what plays out on the school level but also that things work the other way around. Indeed, we suggest that many

activities that were taken by gentrifying residents in Brugse Poort have been facilitated by the mixing of *Park Lane*. This is because this created a networking hub for gentrifying residents (i.e., a place where they could meet like-minded people living in the neighbourhood). Before selecting a school, most gentrifying parents knew relatively few people like them who were living in the neighbourhood. In fact, as was briefly pointed out in chapter 4, for a majority of gentrifying parents the choice of *Park Lane* was also driven by a desire to establish a local social network. Even though contact between parents rarely crossed boundaries of class and migration background, this did not mean that there was no contact between parents. More specifically, in interviews, gentrifying parents indicated that they met other parents like them through the school, which was facilitated by the friendships of their children and the regularly held festivities at the school. In turn, these networks served as contexts for initiative to change the neighbourhood. While we did not go into this issue throughout the individual chapters, the role of *Park Lane* as a catalyst for neighbourhood change caught our attention in our study of the Living Street initiative. For instance, it was striking to note that each living street that was established in Brugse Poort during the 2016 edition, was instigated by multiple gentrifying families with children enrolled in *Park Lane*. Our interviews made clear that this was not just a coincidence. For instance, some gentrifying residents mentioned (i) approaching other street residents they knew from *Park Lane* to ask if they would be interested in co-organizing a living street or (ii) being inspired to also organize a living street after being invited to a living street by organizing residents they knew from *Park Lane*.

In summary, this dissertation shows that the neighbourhood level and the school level are inextricably entangled and, therefore, should also be examined as such. The effects of school mixing spill over into the neighbourhood while also being shaped by the neighbourhood. Indeed, the mixing of *Park Lane* has facilitated the creation of networks of gentrifying residents. These networks have subsequently been employed by the same residents to change and appropriate the neighbourhood. In turn, some of these changes gave rise to feelings of displacement with vulnerable residents. Finally, these feelings also shaped and added to the feelings of vulnerable parents around processes happening in school. In all of this, employing gentrification as a prism can prove helpful. This is not only because gentrification is a critical perspective to

examine mixing initiatives on the school level but also because it warns us against disconnecting the school from the neighbourhood in such analyses.

Implications for policy and practice

After discussing the results presented throughout this dissertation, it is relevant to turn back to where we started. That is to say, to the debate on socio-ethnic mix and whether mixing should be pursued as a way to minimize unequal educational opportunities. Although this dissertation has aimed to gain insight into the bigger picture of mixing initiatives in relation to issues of equality, it is important to stress that neither are we able to *settle* the debate on mixing in education, nor do we have the intention to do so. As a result, policy makers and educational professionals in search of ready-made and conclusive answers, will be left both disappointed and empty-handed. The reason for this is straightforward: the question on whether mixing should be pursued is first and foremost a normative one (Hemelsoet, 2014).[16] Indeed, the question refers to what people value and what they value most. As Hemelsoet (2014) illustrated, this can differ significantly from person to person. For instance, while some might put a premium on student outcomes, others might attach a great weight to education as an institution that equalizes not only outcomes but also status positions of families. In turn, some might maintain that mixed environments should be pursued whatever the cost, that is, when mixing proves to be a lever for closing the achievement gap. Others might even insist on mixing whatever its effect on student outcomes as they feel it is the right thing to do or as they believe it could instil students with democratic values. Indeed, as argued by Lees, Butler, and Bridge (2012), "as a 'moral landscape' it is hard to argue against 'social mixing'". It goes without saying that in all these instances scientific research cannot dictate the right position. However, this does not mean that the results presented throughout this dissertation are meaningless or neutral (see for instance Bouverne-De Bie, 2015). Indeed, while this dissertation cannot, and in our opinion should not, *settle* the debate on mixing in education, it has the potential to *inform* and to *disturb* it. According to us, this happens in at least three ways.

First, the manner in which this study has been designed and structured, urges policy makers and educational professionals to pay attention to other matters in addition to the learning outcomes of pupils in (determining their stance on)

school mixing. Indeed, as was argued in the introductory chapter, the debate on school mixing has largely been centred around the question as to whether mixed schools can enhance the student outcomes of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritsed pupils. Recently, this became clear once more in a highly publicized discussion on socio-ethnic mix in the context of Flanders.[17] Academics, politicians, journalists, school leaders, and parents expressed their opinion on the desirability of mixed schools and mixing initiatives. For instance, many commentators maintained that mixed schools should be pursued. They argued that mixed schools are more effective in enhancing student outcomes in comparison with schools characterized by a concentration of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised pupils which are believed to concentrate problems (cf. Temmerman, 2019; Vancaeneghem, 2019). Others argued that schools where socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised pupils make up most of the student population potentially also offer a high quality of education (cf. De Gendt & Kocak, 2019; Salumu, 2019). In contrast, this dissertation demonstrates the relevance of looking beyond performance criteria and instead also considering the access, position, voice, and needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised families in processes of school mixing. Moreover, this dissertation also encourages academics, policy makers and educational professionals to put the focus not only on mixed environments themselves, but also on the way they are created and evolve. Indeed, as this dissertation made clear, a socio-ethnic mix neither comes out of thin air nor remains stable once established. Yet, it appears as if this is what most actors in the discussion assume. Although in a Flemish context, policy makers sometimes often do note how mixed environments can be established, none mention how these can or should be maintained (see for instance Crevits, 2014; Decruynaere, 2014; Kabinet Vlaams minister van Onderwijs, 2019). Finally, this dissertation also compels these actors to take neighbourhood processes into account, as the school level and the neighbourhood level prove to be in a relationship of mutual influence.

Second, this dissertation provides a specific reading of school mixing by conveying information on these 'other matters'. Indeed, if this study has illustrated one thing it is that intentional school mixing can install a variety of new inequalities in an attempt to tackle old ones (i.e., unequal educational opportunities). In this vein, intentional school mixing could establish exactly

what it tries to overcome, namely inequality. In this case, the solution could very well also turn out to be the problem. From the problem definition underlying them to the measures that need to be taken to instigate them, from their played out realities to their instability, at every step of the way intentionally mixed environments can be riddled with inequalities. While this information does not settle the debate, it does make certain lines of action more (il)logical than others. More precisely, it is clear that when policy makers attach importance to the access, position, voice, and needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families, our findings do not necessarily speak in favour of mixing initiatives, that is when no additional measures are taken to combat its side-effects. By highlighting its paradoxical nature, this dissertation certainly raises a note of caution with regard to intentional school mixing as a method or silver bullet against inequality. While this cautionary note first and foremost refers to marketing initiatives taken by individual schools,[18] it also concerns controlled choice plans, such as the system of *dubbele contingentering* currently running in major Flemish cities. On the one hand, it is clear that these plans will not entail the side-effects that rise to the surface with a process of marketisation. As such, these plans could be perceived as a more appropriate way of mixing schools. Nevertheless, it is important to note that also these plans entail a number of costs that are borne dominantly by socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised families when no additional measures are taken. Indeed, as aforementioned, new inequalities arise not only as a result of the measures taken to instigate a mix but also as a result of the played out realities of mixed environments.

Third, by including the voices of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families — voices that are remarkably absent from the debate on school mixing (Quarles & Butler, 2018) — this dissertation encourages policy makers and educational professionals to talk *with* rather than *about* people. Indeed, this dissertation shows that such a shift does not only do justice to the people around which the discourse on mixing is centred but is also germane. By drawing attention to these voices, valuable information can be gathered on the problem at hand, that is unequal educational opportunities. This does require, however, that we dare to put at stake the solutions we hold onto. Nevertheless, such a shift ensures that we take the problem rather than the solution as a point of departure. In this vein, this dissertation can be read as a plea to change the

debate from one on socio-ethnic mix to one on unequal educational opportunities and the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families.

Alongside informing and disturbing the debate, this dissertation also points to important sources of support for socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families in schools in general and in mixed schools in particular. [19] Indeed, this dissertation emphasizes the valuable role of the bridge figure for these families. This holds especially true in a mixed environment where the access, position, voice, and needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families are easily overshadowed. In this sense, this dissertation highlights the limitations of the current allocation model in which bridge figures disappear when schools become mixed. In point of fact, this model is based on the idea that bridge figures are less or no longer needed in mixed environments. While this certainly holds true with regard to some matters (e.g., as mixed schools comprise less vulnerable families, there are also less individual problems — such as the trouble that parents experience with translating official letters — that need to be attended to),[20] it does not with regard to other matters. On the contrary, bridge figures draw attention to the access, position, voice, and needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families – all of which as we have seen come under threat in mixed environments. While of course not being a panacea for all side-effects of mixing initiatives, it is clear that bridge figures can play an important role in mixed schools, certainly as they are also highly valued by families themselves. While bridge figures are unique to our research context, the observation that specific support services for socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families remain important in mixed environments holds value for a broand range of contexts.

Finally, this dissertation urges policy makers to adopt measures on the neighbourhood level, that is when they attach importance to the access, position, voice, and needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families. More precisely, our findings not only indicate that the processes at play on the school level are also at play on the neighbourhood level but also that both levels are inextricably intertwined. Consequently, when policy leaders wish to promote mixed schools where all families have access and

feel welcome, heard, and equal to one another, it will be crucial to make sure that this also the case on the neighbourhood level. In other words, action on the school level will not suffice to ensure that mixed schools are socially just.[21] In this vein, in our research context, the role of the *Brede School* (i.e., a publicly-financed partnership between schools and social organizations with an agenda that is similar to that of the community school in the US) could be expanded. In point of fact, this partnership already departs from the observation that student performance is influenced by a variety of factors that are exogenous to the school (Joos & Ernalsteen, 2010). This idea could be radicalized so as to include not only school performance but also the elements discussed above.

Limitations and directions for future research

This dissertation should be read in light of a number of limitations. In what follows, the main shortcomings will be discussed together with some future avenues for researchers examining processes of school mixing. First, it should be acknowledged that neighbourhoods and schools are always in a constant motion. When we started to draw attention to Brugse Poort, the urban renewal project had yet to be completed. Moreover, whereas the many upgraded façades of terraced houses already revealed clear signs of gentrification (see for instance Holston, 1991 on the façade as a symbolic notation about the self), businesses in the neighbourhood predominantly catered to socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families, that is according to gentrifiers at the time (Staes, 2016). Living streets had not been introduced, nor could anyone in Brugse Poort take an educated guess as to what should be understood under an "incubator-accelerator" (and the main researcher of this dissertation must admit that even now, when a smart city hub for promising start-ups has been established in the neighbourhood, he is still not able to do so). The context in *Park Lane* was also different. At the time, the school had only completed its transformation process three years earlier. Whereas the history of *Cotton Bridge* was still fresh in the memory of many parents back then, at the moment many are no longer acquainted with this passage. In addition, the student population of *Park Lane* is still undergoing changes. For instance, in the period between February 1st, 2012 and February 1st, 2017, the percentage of pupils (i) who receive a school allowance went from 40.00 to 32.58 and (ii) whose mother is low-educated went from 36.27 to 33.33. In contrast, the percentage of pupils

who do not speak Dutch at home has remained relatively stable and went from 28.53 to 28.61. In this vein, it could be argued that the story of *Park Lane*'s 'mixing process' has not fully been played out, and hence that the time frame of the study has been too short. It could, therefore, be interesting to follow up with schools such as *Park Lane* and examine how they fare in the future. In fact, it is striking to see that while the percentage of families with a migration background has somewhat stabilized, the percentage of socioeconomically disadvantaged families is still decreasing. A few years back, one interviewee predicted that the only diversity that would remain in *Park Lane* would situate itself on the level of ethnicity, with parents ranging from "white cargo cyclists" to "black cargo cyclists".[22] This of course begs the question as to why the percentage of socioeconomically disadvantaged families seems to decrease further while the percentage of minoritised families has been stabilized. Moreover, it raises the question of how the student population will evolve. Will the remaining 'social mix' prove to be a transitory phenomenon, as scholars focussing on processes of mixing on the neighbourhood level tend to argue (Lees, Butler, & Bridge, 2012)? It would be relevant to go deeper into this issue (in *Park Lane* or elsewhere), as scholars mainly point to the importance of socioeconomic rather than ethnically mixed schools in tackling inequality of educational opportunity (Agirdag *et al.*, 2012; Kahlenberg, 2003; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005).

A second limitation concerns the exclusive focus in chapters 3 to 7 on the parents and the school staff of *Park Lane*. In fact, one could question why a study on a social mix initiative which aims to combat unequal educational opportunities between pupils leaves the perspectives of these pupils out of the equation. We deliberately chose to focus on parents due to their key role in the school choice process, the contact with the school, and school improvement efforts. Nevertheless, it would be interesting to examine if certain processes, such as changing status positions, can also be observed among children in mixing schools. For instance, we know that in the initial phase of the transformation of our case-study school, *Park Lane* children came up with the rallying cry "*Park Lane* kids rock, *Cotton Bridge* kids suck". It would be relevant for future research to examine whether socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised children also run a risk of becoming marginalized in mixing initiatives and how this relates to the possible marginalization of their

caregivers. Although we do not know of any accounts that describe how to interview children on mixed environments specifically, there are guides that describe how to design, plan, undertake, and analyse interviews with children in a way that is child-centred and does justice to children (see for instance O'Reilly & Dogra, 2017).

Third, throughout this dissertation we have juxtaposed the perspectives of two groups. On the neighbourhood level, the perspectives of gentrifying residents have been set against the perspectives of long-time residents. On the school level, the perspectives of gentrifying parents have been contrasted with the perspectives of disadvantaged parents with a migration background. As such, this dissertation focussed attention to the key figures discussed in social mixing initiatives. However, in doing so, we have, to some extent, made abstraction from the diversity that exists within both the neighbourhood and the school. It would be interesting to also draw attention to other groups and their role in processes of mixing. Indeed, as suggested in chapter 6, the perspectives of mothers with a migration background tended to vary depending on their capital stock. For instance, mothers with a migration background but a relatively high stock of financial, social, and cultural capital were more ambivalent or positive toward progressive education. Returning to the first identified shortcoming, it would be relevant to focus on middle-class families with a migration background or, as one of our respondents indicated, to "black cargo cyclists".

A fourth limitation relates to the fact that only a single school was selected for this study. While this allowed us to probe in great depth into one case, it made it difficult to distil the common denominator in the process of school mixing. Indeed, the task of determining what was particular to our case and what was not, was anything but evident. The emerging literature on school gentrification, nevertheless, made it possible to draw parallels with other cases. Next to the selection of another mixing school, it would have been equally interesting to select a school in Brugse Poort that was not undergoing a process of mixing. Indeed, as neighbourhood schools prove to be entangled (see subsection 'the entanglement of schools'), it would be worthwhile to go a bit deeper into this issue.

Finally, this dissertation relied heavily on interview data. While interviewing facilitates the exploration of aspects that cannot always be observed (Patton, 2002), it also has a few weaknesses. For instance, interviewing does not always fully capture the context of people's experiences (Patton, 2002). Moreover, interviewing precludes transcending the selective perceptions of participants (Patton, 2002). Lastly, it does not allow us to document aspects that might escape the awareness of participants in the school and the neighbourhood (Patton, 2002). Certainly in relation to the studies described in chapter 7 and 8, other methods of data collection such as qualitative observation could have been relevant. We have tried to compensate the flaws inherent to interviewing in two ways. First, we double-checked and contrasted interviewees' statements with one another. Second, we have not been totally unfamiliar with the context. With regard to the neighbourhood level, the researcher paid regular visits to the neighbourhood,[23] followed the neighbourhood's *Facebook*-group, and frequented some living streets. With regard to the school level, the researcher paid regular visits to the school, has participated in some meetings of the Parents Committee, followed the Facebook-group of the Parents Committee, and enjoyed some school festivities. As this did not happen systematically, it would be interesting for future research to combine interviews with observational data.

Notwithstanding these limitations, we hope to have stirred up the debate – a debate that in our opinion, first and foremost, should centre around inequalities and the families facing these. So let us talk *with* rather than *about*, let us *affect* and be *affected by*, let us dare to put at stake and question… Let us dialogue!

Notes

1   In fact, otherwise the student body of *Park Lane* would reflect the socio-ethnic makeup of the student population of Brugse Poort, this is due to the new pupil allocation system which has been in operation since the enrolment period for the school year 2013-2014 and which is directed at transforming schools into neighbourhood schools (i.e., schools with a makeup similar to the student population of the area in which they are located).

2   It should be noted that the goal of every social intervention is to address a social problem. In this vein, mixed environments have been proposed as a solution to address the problem of inequality of educational opportunity. As was revealed throughout chapter 3, the board of our case-study school came to perceive a mixed student population as a remedy for a "hopeless situation" in which the learning outcomes of most pupils in the school were "limited". However, it is important to stress that no solution is neutral as all of them are based on a unique problem definition (Bouverne-De Bie, 2015). For instance, some actors could propose to make unemployment benefits digressive as a solution to the problem of unemployment. Such a 'solution', however, highlights the problem as one of a lack of diligence with certain individuals rather than one of, let us say, economic crisis. With this in mind, it becomes clear that also mixing initiatives depart from a certain vision on the problem which in turn also defines the problem.

3   We deliberately say 'in part' as concentrations of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families in schools are also a consequence of other inequalities, the most important being geographical inequality manifested as residential segregation (see chapter 1).

4   The idea that socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised are worse off when they are concentrated in the same environment is highly related to the neighbourhood effect thesis. As was discussed in the introductory chapter, this thesis has been criticised for confusing cause and effect.

5   This via a characteristic they do or do not posit or a behaviour they do or do not exhibit (see chapter 1).

6   The notion of a 'healthy mix' is pervasive in Flemish educational discourse and is mainly used to stress the importance of having a critical mass of middle-class families without a migration background in schools. As such, it are mainly schools with a concentration of socioeconomically disadvantaged families with a migration background who are deemed to be unhealthy. A few years back this once again became very clear when the principal of a school consortium decided to close one of the consortium's schools because it was perceived to be no longer "healthy" because the influx of many socioeconomically disadvantaged families with a migration background. According to the principal, the school, therefore, no longer was able to provide maximum learning opportunities to its pupils. Moreover, the principal

argued that "migrant and disadvantaged pupils have more chances in a school with a healthy social mix" ('"Te zwarte school' sluit de deuren", 2011).

7   As such, the installation of inequality is a consequence inherent to the notion of mixing as a means toward equal educational opportunities.

8   As was demonstrated in chapter 6, the feeling of not being able to monitor their children's progress was reinforced by *Park Lane*'s evaluation system which used qualitative descriptions which were viewed by these mothers as uninformative (see Bernstein, 2003 on the invisibility of progressive pedagogies).

9   A bridge figure has a job description that is somewhat similar to that of school social workers in the US.

10 As became clear in chapter 5, the fact that the majority of white middle-class families were confident that their children would develop a set of basic skills, allowed them to emphasize a holistic development.

11 As was demonstrated in chapter 6, the acquisition of creative competences or a third language (i.e., next to the home language and school language) is not identified as a priority by many socioeconomically disadvantaged minoritised families.

12 The mean annual net income of taxpaying residents living in Brugse Poort is just 80 per cent of the mean annual net income of taxpaying residents living in Ghent.

13 This theme also came to the fore in a recent opinion piece of a highly educated couple living in an ethnically-diverse district of Ghent who decided to move their children from an all-majority school to an all-minority school. According to this couple, other highly educated parents responded to their choice by praising them while at the same time indicating that they themselves were not willing to "sacrifice" their children (De Gendt & Kocak, 2019).

14 For instance, *Sacred Heart* voluntary participates in "School in je Buurt" (School in your Neighbourhood), an initiative which organizes group visits to neighbourhood schools (see also chapter 1 on the initiative School in Sight). By bringing participating parents (i.e., mostly middle-class families without a migration background) into contact not only with neighbourhood schools but also with each other, the initiative aims to encourage parents to select a neighbourhood school and, in turn, to desegregate the school system. Or, as one newspaper said it in less euphemistic terms, the aim is "to make concentration schools 'whiter'" ('School in je buurt', 2012). When in 2016, I joined these visits in *Brugse Poort* in the context of this dissertation, it was noticeable that *Sacred Heart* was very welcoming to parents (e.g., it was the only school that offered parents coffee and cookies). However, as was evident from the questions posed by parents, many participants were concerned over the current student population as well as over the school's recourses (e.g., the school building gives a decayed and dilapidated impression).

15   We deliberately say 'strengthen' as white middle-class families will not cluster in the school that has the worst resources of all schools located in the neighbourhood (see also the previous note).

16   Of course this does not mean that we have refrained from taking a stance within the research process. In fact, from the very start (e.g., the choice to focus on the meaning of mixing initiatives for the access, position, voice, and needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families) the process has been normative and has been deliberately informed by an orientation toward social justice (see also Bouverne-De Bie, 2015).

17   Although the discussion emerged after the publication of a study pointing to the relationship between the *socioeconomic* makeup of the school population and individual outcomes, characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and migration background were soon included in the debate. For instance, one columnist argued that the "white majority" should undertake action so as to create opportunities for others (see Cafmeyer, 2019).

18   Also initiatives such as *school in zicht* which run, in this or in a changed form, in eight Flemish cities fall into this first category (see Albertijn & Smeyers, 2009 for more information on such initiatives). In fact, through the organisation of school visits for middle-class parents, schools are pitted against each other, and hence are encouraged to cater to middle-class families so as to have more chances in comparison with other neighbourhood schools to attract these families.

19   This is also experienced by these families themselves. For instance, last year four families with a migration background approached the Ghent Alderman of Education concerning one family with a migration background who got advice to transfer their child to a special-needs school. The families argued that this advice proved that *Park Lane*'s bridge figure was no longer around. While not ruling on whether such statement holds truth, it does illustrate that socioeconomically disadvantaged minoritised families view a bridge figure as someone who defends their interests.

20   However, even in this case it could be questioned whether it makes sense that vulnerable parents cannot call on these services when selecting a mixed school. In a sense this comes down to being 'sanctioned' by public policy for supporting a goal set by public policy.

21   Contrary to the educationalisation of social problems, this dissertation thus emphasizes the need for the socialization of educational problems (see Depaepe, Herman, Surmont, Van Gorp, & Simons, 2008; Smeyers & Depaepe, 2008).

22   The image of the cargo bike (*bakfiets*) is often associated with highly educated middle classes living in urban areas. In fact, it has been argued that the cargo bike has become a symbol of status (Gents Milieufront & Fietsersbond Gent, 2011). As

such, the term cargo cyclist (*bakfietser*) is a class-laden concept that has been used to refer to this group in a somewhat scornful way.

23   During the investigation period, the main researcher also lived in Brugse Poort for one year.

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APPENDIX ONE

English summary

While driven by a variety of motives, most, if not all, will agree that educational opportunities ought to be distributed equally. To date, however, it is clear that equal educational opportunities remain a pipe dream in many countries around the world. In Belgium, for instance, results from the PISA-studies reveal that students' educational outcomes are related to both their socioeconomic status and migration background, with pupils who are socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or have a migration background significantly performing worse (OECD, 2010; 2016a; 2016b). In an effort to respond to these blatant inequalities, scholars have put forward "mixed schools" as a solution.

The idea that mixed schools can enhance the outcomes of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised students is based on half a century of research demonstrating that school composition matters (Putnam, 2015; see Coleman *et al.*, 1966 for the first seminal study on this topic). More specifically, a number of scholars have demonstrated that socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised students tend to perform worse in schools characterized by a majority of socioeconomically disadvantaged students (Agirdag, Van Houtte, & Van Avermaet, 2012; Ledoux, Driessen, Vergeer, van der Veen, & Doesborg, 2003; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005) and/or minoritised students (Kuscera, Siegel-Hawely, & Orfield, 2015; Ledoux *et al.*, 2003; Logan, Minca, & Adar, 2012; Stiefel, Schwartz, & Chellman, 2007). Throughout the Western world, such schools are predominantly found in urban areas (Boterman, 2013; Cucchiara, 2013; Hamnett, Butler, & Ramsden, 2013). Drawing on this strand of research, some scholars have argued that concentrations of socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised students in urban schools have led to "pathological environments" which deprive children of equal opportunities (Kahlenberg, 2003, p. 37; Putnam, 2015).[1] In a context in which white middle-class families are increasingly returning to the inner-city, initiatives are therefore arising to integrate these families in such problematized schools. In fact, as the areas surrounding some of these schools have started to gentrify, mixing has become both an increasingly viable and popular strategy (Stillman, 2012). Currently, one can even find blueprints on how to attract gentry families, the idea being that this could lead to wholesale improvement (cf. Edelberg & Kurland, 2009). While no consensus has emerged on what explains the relationship between school composition and

individual student outcomes (Reardon & Owens, 2014), mixing initiatives have generally been welcomed as an important step toward equal educational opportunities.

The debate on socio-ethnic mix and whether or not inner-city schools should pursue such makeup as a way to minimize unequal educational opportunities has, however, mainly been confined to one question. This question is whether mixed environments will boost the performance of socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised students (see also Agirdag, Van Houtte, & Van Avermaet, 2012; Glatter, 2012; Kuscera, Siegel-Hawley, & Orfield, 2015; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005 for illustrative studies on this topic). Of course the question whether mixed environments are a lever for equal educational opportunities is a legitimate and important one. Nevertheless, such fixation raises the question as to what is the meaning of mixing initiatives for other issues of (in)equality in education – certainly as "knowledge about the effectiveness of interventions is not, as such, a sufficient basis for decisions about educational action" (Biesta, 2007, p. 9). That the debate on mixing could be enriched by transcending a fixation on questions of effectiveness, is evident when taking a peek over the fence of the school and having a look at the level of the neighbourhood. In point of fact, on the neighbourhood level a similar tendency exists. Also here, policy makers and practitioners are taking steps to mix populations in general, and deconcentrate socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised communities in particular, as a way to combat a variety of social ills (see for instance Arthurson, 2012; Christensen, 2015; Davidson, 2008; Dhalmann & Vilkama, 2009; Glynn, 2012; Münch, 2009; Musterd & Anderson, 2005; Popkin et al., 2004; Rose et al., 2013; Uitermark, Duyvendak, & Kleinhans, 2007; Van Criekingen, 2012; van Kempen & Bolt, 2009). However, in this case, scholars have not only focussed on the question whether the mix is a fix. Informed by a gentrification perspective, attention has also been drawn to questions regarding displacement, struggle, marginalization and other inequalities in mixed environments and mixing initiatives (see for instance Atkinson, 2015; Cheshire, 2009; Davidson, 2008; Davidson & Lees, 2005; Smith, 1996; Wyly & Hammel, 2005). All of this has led to a deeper understanding of mixing on the neighbourhood level – an understanding which also had an impact on the way mixing is evaluated. Indeed, generally speaking,

the view of scholars on mixing on the neighbourhood level has been a lot more critical.

To date, research on mixing on the school level and mixing on the neighbourhood level have largely developed independently of each other. As a consequence, the questions posed by scholars examining mixing on the neighbourhood level have rarely been picked up by educational scholars. A noteworthy exception to this rule has been the recently emerging literature on school gentrification which has consciously employed the concept of gentrification as a prism to analyse processes of mixing on the school level. These preliminary studies have shown that mixing initiatives on the school level can (paradoxically) also install a number of new inequalities, apart from their effect on student performance (see for instance Cucchiara, 2013; Diem *et al.*, 2019; Freidus, 2016; Posey-Maddox, 2014; Siegel-Hawley, Tchachik, & Bridges, 2017).

Research questions

In line with this strand of research, this dissertation deliberately veers off the beaten track. More specifically, the overarching objective of this dissertation was to contribute to the emerging literature on school gentrification by gaining insight into the bigger picture of mixing initiatives in relation to issues of equality. This research aim was tackled through the following research questions:

Research question 1: What effect do mixing initiatives in education have on the *access* of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families?

Research question 2: What effect do mixing initiatives in education have on the *position* and *voice* of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families?

Research question 3: What effect do mixing initiatives in education have on the *needs* of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families?

Research context

In order to provide an answer to the research questions, the dissertation adopted a case study research design. More precisely, attention was turned to Brugse Poort, one of the 25 city districts of Ghent, a mid-sized city in Belgium of approximately 260,000 inhabitants. Located northwest of the city centre, Brugse Poort developed in the early nineteenth century as one of the new industrial centres of the city. Housing a number of thriving textile mills and a steel-producing company, the district soon evolved into a fully-fledged and vibrant white working-class district with a vibrant community life. Since the 1960s, however, Brugse Poort witnessed a series of factory closures leading to a process of neighbourhood decline. Moreover, many of the district's middle-class residents started to leave for the suburbs. From the 1970s onwards, Brugse Poort also began to diversify ethnically as the remaining industry started to recruit labour migrants, mainly from Turkey and Maghreb countries. Migration to the district continued in the following decades due to subsequent processes of family reunion and family formation on the one hand, and the opening up of the European Union more recently on the other hand. Yet, since the 1990s Brugse Poort has started to gentrify. Whereas initially spurred by the actions of white middle-class families buying and rehabilitating former working-class houses, from 1998 it also became government-induced through the planning and implementation of an urban renewal project which explicitly sought to establish a "social mix" – a concept which has been recognized as a euphemism for legitimating gentrification strategies (see Lees, Butler, & Bridge, 2012). More recently, also property developers in search of profit have jumped on the bandwagon, and hence fuelled the process of gentrification. In sum, Brugse Poort is a diverse district with a variety of layers that have crystalized at various points in time and that relate to each other in a certain tension.

Within Brugse Poort, attention was drawn to one particular primary school (ages 3-12), which we refer to as *Cotton Bridge/Park Lane*. This school was the first out of six primary schools in Brugse Poort to respond to processes of gentrification by actively pursuing a mixed student population. By marketing itself to newly arrived white middle-class families, the school went from a student population characterized by a concentration of socioeconomically

disadvantaged pupils with a migration background to a population comprising a majority of middle-class pupils without a migration background. In more concrete terms, in 2000 a project following a progressive Jena Plan pedagogy was set up within the school to which families could apply (see Gläser-Zikuda, Ziegelbauer, Rohde, Conrad, & Limprecht, 2012 for an elaborated description on the workings of Jena Plan schools). Although *de jure* part of the school, this project operated *de facto* as a new entity (e.g., initially pupils in this project entered the school through a different door and had a different playground) and applied its own admission criteria (e.g., initially a maximum quota of minoritised and socioeconomically vulnerable pupils was set at 30 per cent). As the project appealed to sought-after families, it was possible to expand this new school (i.e., *Park Lane*) while at the same time allowing the already existing school (i.e., *Cotton Bridge*) to peter out. Today, *Park Lane* is a thriving school that is in high demand with a fraction of white middle-class gentrifiers. Even though the maximum quota on minoritised and socioeconomically vulnerable pupils has been abolished, the school succeeds to attract a critical mass of middle-class families without a migration background, to say the least. In this process, *Park Lane* became a model for other schools with similar plans, located either within or outside the neighbourhood. As such, the school offers thus a compelling case both because of its successful efforts to mix its student population and its location in a gentrifying neighbourhood, the décor against which discussions on social mix in education increasingly take place.

Methods

In the dissertation, we mainly made an appeal to interview data. Interviews were deliberately chosen over other methods for collecting data such as observations, as the research questions compelled us to also explore aspects that cannot easily be observed (Patton, 2002). In more concrete terms, the dissertation draws on just over a hundred interviews. These interviews were conducted with crucial actors in the Ghent education policy (n = 3), staff members of *Park Lane* (n = 8), parents of whom the children are enrolled at the school (n = 58), and neighbourhood residents (n = 37). With regard to the parents and the neighbourhood residents, we purposefully selected socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised households (n = 43) as well as gentry households (n = 52). Interviewees were recruited in a variety of

ways, depending on the category they fell into. As key actors within the Ghent education policy and members of the school staff were identified beforehand, they were directly contacted via mail for an interview. White middle-class parents of whom the children are enrolled at the school were recruited via an advert on the *Facebook* group of the Parental Committee. In contrast, socioeconomically disadvantaged minoritised parents were recruited at the school when they were dropping of or picking up their children. Neighbourhood residents were recruited via adverts on relevant *Facebook* groups or at information sessions on neighbourhood initiatives. Once the data were collected, all interviews were transcribed orthographically. Subsequently, all interview data were read multiple times and memos were added. These complemented the already existing notes that were taking during and/or immediately after interviews. Later on, transcriptions were thematically coded through the use of the qualitative data analysis software *Nvivo*.

Overview of the studies

In total, six empirical chapters sought to meet the research aim. A first empirical chapter drew attention to the mixing process of our case-study school. Besides going into the measures taken by the school board in order to establish a mixed student population, the chapter also discussed the context around and rationale behind this endeavour together with its consequences with regard to social justice. The following two empirical chapters shifted the focus from the perspective of the school, to the families who are sought-after by mixing initiatives, namely white middle-class families. More precisely, the chapters teased out the school choice process of white middle-class families who selected our case-study school for their children. In doing so, the chapters explored whether and in which way the measures taken by the school board so as to attract white middle-class families help to explain the success of the school's social mixing initiative. In a fourth empirical chapter, prominence was given to the pedagogical preferences of white middle-class parents' counterpart, namely socioeconomically disadvantaged parents with a migration background. This is interesting, especially as in order to be able to reach a social mix at their school, the school board started to employ particular educational practices so as to attract white gentry families. A fifth empirical chapter moved the attention from the means to mix a school (i.e., the effectiveness, necessity, and

consequences of particular measures) to the end itself (i.e., the actual operation of a gentrifying school). The chapter examined the ways in which mixed environments are able to disrupt existing forms of educational inequality and/or in fact contribute to new forms of inequality. Lastly, a sixth empirical chapter left our case-study school as an object of study to look at the broader context in which this social mix initiative takes place. More specifically, this chapter drew attention to a particular greening initiative that was initiated by gentrifying residents on the neighbourhood level. In so doing, the chapter provides an insight into the parallels between mixing on the school level and mixing on the neighbourhood level as well as into how these two levels are intertwined and might mutually reinforce each other. As such, each chapter brought several aspects to the fore which, when taken together, provide an answer to our central research questions.

Main findings and conclusions

Access

With regard to the first research question, our findings tend to illustrate the pitfalls of mixing. In point of fact, our results reveal that the access of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families can be threatened in both a direct and indirect way as a result of mixing. First, the goal of attracting and retaining white middle-class families, can compel schools to (proactively) cater to the wishes of these families; a strategy which, in fact, has been put forward and encouraged by a number of scholars and educational professionals touting the potential of mixed environments for socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised communities (Edelberg & Kurland, 2009; Stillman, 2012; Zanoni & Mampaey, 2013). This process of 'marketisation' (see also Cucchiara, 2013; Gewirtz, Ball, & Bowe, 1995) would not be as problematic if it were not for the fact that catering to private wishes can have far-reaching public consequences. In fact, our interviews revealed that white middle-class parents preferred schools where they would be a majority. The board of our case-study school responded to these dispositions, inter alia, by initially (i) putting a quota of 30 per cent on the amount of minoritised pupils allowed in *Park Lane* and (ii) selecting this 30-per-cent group on their perceived "threat", "approachability" and "economic status". While these measures proved highly effective in attracting and retaining white middle-class

families, they also directly eclipsed the access of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families.

Second, our findings reveal that the influx of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families can be threatened in more than a direct way. It can also be that when schools "mix", they become less attractive for, and less adapted to, these families, hence leading these families to shun intentionally-mixed environments. Our findings are illustrative here. For instance, in an attempt to entice white middle-class parents, the board of our case-study school decided to employ progressive educational practices. Whereas our interviews showed that white middle-class families are indeed disenchanted by schools that are traditional and where you cannot "colour outside the lines", they also showed that socioeconomically disadvantaged minoritised parents perceive progressive educational practices as not adapted to the needs of their offspring. Moreover, also the consequences of mixed environments can disenchant these families. Our findings indicate that the position and voice of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families in our case-study school was marginalized as a result of processes of mixing (see discussion research questions 2 and 3). In addition, the findings also demonstrate that, due to the influx of white middle-class families, our case-study school was no longer eligible for specific support services for socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families. As our interviews made clear, these changes were looked upon with sorrow by these families. This has also been reflected in the student population of our case-study school. More precisely, since the school launched its mixing initiative, the student population has consistently become more white and middle-class – this even after the board dropped the measures discussed above. This has also been noted by the current principal who fears her school is transforming into an "elite institute".

The case of *Park Lane* thus highlights the difficulty of creating and – above all – maintaining a mixed student population. Schools embarking on an adventure to mix their student population may very well find themselves in a catch-22 situation. In order to establish a mixed student population, inner-city schools are forced to cater to white middle-class families. However, given the fact that the wishes of white middle-class families do not necessarily mesh with the interests of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families, this

can give rise to measures that are against the interest of the latter. Together with the effects of the influx of white middle-class families itself, this could, in turn, displace socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families. The challenge of mixing is thus to find ways not only to attract white middle-class families but also to retain socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families. With regard to the latter, our findings point to the importance of paying attention to potential processes of exclusion that can arise from school mixing.

Position and voice
Our findings suggest that mixing initiatives can have a number of ramifications with regard to the position and voice of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families. Again, these ramifications are due to both (i) the process of working toward the mix and (ii) the process of the mix at work. First, initiatives that push forward a socio-ethnic mix as a lever for educational equality, paradoxically seem to render the very families for which these initiatives were designed not only as *at risk* but also as *a risk*. The main reason for this lies in the problem definition on which such initiatives are based. Such initiatives are based on the assumption that the influence on school quality of socio-economically disadvantaged and/or minoritized families is less favourable as compared to the influence of middle-class families without a migration background. As a result, socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families are portrayed as unfavourable as well as unfortunate. It follows, then, that the idea of mixing as a lever for equality of educational opportunity implies a hierarchization of groups and, hence, ipso facto an installation of inequality. In addition, our findings illustrate how this assumption (i.e., the idea that white middle-class families are crucial to academic success) can compel school boards to behave in such a way that confers additional status and power on white middle-class families. As a matter of fact, school boards that endorse such notions will be tempted to cater to these families in order to entice them to, or retain them at, the school. As a result, any real debate on the measures taken within such a mind-set will be hard, that is when these measures are deemed necessary to entice white middle-class families. In turn, this can side-line the voice of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoristised families. Our findings are illustrative here. In fact, the findings reveal that as our case-study school assumed a favourable influence of white middle-class families, the

board deliberately catered to these families in an attempt to establish a mixed student population. For instance, the school board proactively responded to the desires of a fraction of white middle-class families by employing progressive educational practices and by restricting access for socioeconomically disadvantaged minoritised families. It is telling that this all happened without consulting the families already present in the school. Even now, the room for debate on certain issues such as progressive educational practices is small. Our findings, for instance, reveal that many lower-class mothers with a migration background felt unheard when they uttered their complaints about some aspects of the pedagogical project of the school. As one respondent eloquently argued, it is "therefore" (i.e., because the school dominantly listens and caters to white middle-class families) that the school "never listens to us". While the school's strategy secures a permanent presence of white middle-class families, at the same time it also tends to marginalize the voices of socioeconomically disadvantaged minoritised families.

Second, the dominant involvement of white middle-class parents in certain school issues could also install new inequalities. For instance, our findings indicate that a fraction of white middle-class parents were very prominent in school improvement efforts through their participation in the Parents Committee. However, this prominence provided these parents with a disproportionate (i) leeway to shape the school in their image and (ii) leverage to influence school leadership. Moreover, the dominant involvement of white middle-class parents can easily turn attention away from the voices of other parents. In *Park Lane*, this happened in at least two ways. First, since the influx of white middle-class families, *Park Lane* had witnessed the establishment of a Parents Committee which soon became a channel through which parental concerns were communicated to the school. While white middle-class families were highly active in this committee, socioeconomically disadvantaged minoritised families were not. Our interviews, however, reveal that the non-participation of the latter is related to the dominant presence of the former. In fact, socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised parents had strong reservations about becoming active in the Parents Committee as they felt incompetent next to highly educated parents whose mother tongue was also the official school language. Moreover, the committee's professional structure and the schedule of meetings – both adapted to the professional middle-class –

made the doubts of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised parents only stronger. As a result, it became harder for these families to make their voices heard. Second, and as a consequence of the previous issue, our findings also indicated that the views of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families were often overlooked when the school board wanted to make certain changes to its day-to-day operations or pedagogy. This is due to the fact that the school sought advice from the Parent-Teacher Organization. As the parents in this organization are selected from the members of the Parents Committee, this meant that it were dominantly white middle-class parents who gave an advice on behalf of 'the parents'. However, as our interviews made clear, the views held by these parents did not always mesh with those of socioeconomically disadvantaged minoritised parents. For instance, members of the Parent-Teacher Organization gave a mildly favourable opinion on the school board's idea to change its evaluation system from graded report cards to qualitative descriptions, this despite the fact that almost all interviewed lower-class mothers with a migration background tended to oppose to this.

In sum, in a scenario where there is a fixation on white middle-class families as the main driver of school quality, chances are that the voices of other families remain unheard. In fact, as chapter 7 made clear, this is what some lower-class mothers with a migration background perceived when feeling as if they were being pushed in a second-class position (see also Katz, 2008 on the stratification of people into first- and second-class citizens in processes of marketisation). In contrast, gentrifiers at the school were perceived to be bestowed with the position of "sultans" whose ideas and advice were always taken into consideration by the school board. The case of *Park Lane* demonstrates the difficulty of evening out unequal power relations in mixing initiatives. In fact, when departing from the idea that enticing and retaining white middle-class families is crucial to a school's success, families are put in a pecking order in advance. Furthermore, this idea can compel school boards to dominantly or even exclusively cater to white middle-class families. Finally, when these families are prominent in school improvement efforts, this can provide them with additional power. Taken together, the unequal status positions between families are likely to be exacerbated in intentionally-mixed schools. This of course begs the question how schools seeking a mixed student

population can equally make sure that parents have an equivalent position and voice within the school. Or in other words, how can schools provide equality in the face of hierarchy (cf. Blomey, 2004)?

Needs

While white middle-class families have been placed at the centerpiece of school improvement (Kahlenberg, 2003; Putnam, 2015), our findings demonstrate the limitations of promoting mixed environments as a way to effectively respond to the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families. As a matter of fact, the needs of these families can be undermined as a consequence of (i) the process of working toward the mix, and (ii) the process of the mix at work. First, our findings show that the measures that are taken to entice white middle-class families, and hence establish and retain a socio-ethnic mix, can easily run counter to the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families as perceived by these families. For instance, the fixation of *Park Lane*'s school board to attract white middle-class families, prompted them to cater to these families, inter alia, by employing progressive educational practices. While our interviews revealed that these practices were highly valued by white middle-class families enrolled in *Park Lane* – as progressive pedagogies were perceived as forms of education in which their children could acquire valuable 21st-century competences – they also pointed out that this was not so for socioeconomically disadvantaged minoritised families. In fact, these families tended to oppose progressive educational practices as they felt that these practices were not adapted to the needs of their children.

Second, our findings reveal that an effective response to the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged minoritised families can become problematic when white middle-class pupils increasingly start to make up 'mixed' student populations. The reason why an increase of white middle-class pupils can obstruct an effective response has to do with the way in which school systems in many welfare states are financed. In fact, in many regions (including Flanders) the school financing system is structured so that schools with more vulnerable pupils also receive more funds, this to enhance equal educational opportunities. As a result, when the population of a school becomes less vulnerable, this can lead to a significant drainage of public funds. For instance, the student population of *Park Lane* has become increasingly characterized by

middle-class children without a migration background. This process, however, had some serious repercussions. Not only has financial assistance to the school been reduced with 1.5 full-time equivalents, but recently the school was also forced to say goodbye to its bridge figure (i.e., someone supporting vulnerable families by strengthening their position, amplifying their voice, and trying to respond to their needs).

Third, our findings reveal that the improvement efforts of white middle-class parents do not necessarily serve the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families. For instance, while white middle-class parents succeeded in supplementing *Park Lane*'s curriculum by establishing extra-curricular programs, our findings reveal that the children of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families have largely been absent from these programmes. There are three reasons why this is the case. A first reason is the fact that these programmes are not free of charge. Our interviews made clear this created a barrier for some families to enrol their children in these offerings. Second, our findings also pointed to the fact that while parents are *integrated* within the school, the contact between them is *segregated* by class and migration background. In this sense, our findings show that mixed environments not necessarily lead to mixed interactions. As a result, most socioeconomically disadvantaged minoritised parents we interviewed weren't even aware of the existence of these extra-curricular offerings. Third, these offerings departed from the needs of children as perceived by white middle-class parents. However, as has been indicated already, the needs identified by socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families do not necessarily correspond with those identified by white middle-class families. Indeed, whereas the former tend to put a premium on the acquisition of basic skills under which the Dutch language (i.e., the official school language), the latter tend to highlight a more holistic education. This is, for instance, evident from the extra-curricular enrichment programmes that were established by parents, namely the "French Club" and the "Creative Atelier". In contrast, the extra-curricular activities directly organized by the city or by voluntary organizations were relatively high in demand with socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families. For example, several of the interviewed lower-class mothers with a migration background enrolled their children in "*Uilenspel*", an activity in which a volunteer pays a home visit for one hour a week to work on

basic skills such as language (often by reading books together). As *Park Lane*'s bridge figure used to coordinate the contact between the parents and this organization, many families have now lost the opportunity to enlist their children in this program.

Transcending 'the' school

Apart from the above findings, this dissertation also indicates that mixed schools are inextricably intertwined with their wider environment. This means that mixed schools can affect and be affected by other environments, whether it be neighbouring schools or the neighbourhood in which they are located. With regard to neighbouring schools, our findings tend to question whether school mixing can be generalized. There are, in fact, good reasons to doubt that all schools in a certain area can attain a student body characterized by a significant amount of white middle-class pupils when this area gentrifies. This is due to a combination of two facts. First, when neighbourhoods gentrify, gentrifiers almost always remain a minority (Butler & Robson, 2003). This was also the case in the neighbourhood under study in this dissertation, namely Brugse Poort. While Brugse Poort may have come to be known as 'hip' and may have seen an influx of highly-educated white middle-class families, after two decades of gentrification it is a majority-minority neighbourhood with more than half of its taxpaying residents earning less than 15,000 euros net annually. Second, our interviews make clear that most white middle-class residents who opted in neighbourhood schooling explicitly searched for schools characterized by a majority of others like them. In fact, white middle-class residents shunned majority-minority schools as they felt that these could impair the development of their offspring. As one respondent eloquently argued "you can't make your child the victim of your ideological choices". Taken together, although gentrifying residents rarely make up a majority on the neighbourhood level, they strive to be one on the school level. The consequence of this is that white middle-class residents tend to cluster in a few neighbourhood schools, thereby avoiding others schools. This was also the case in the neighbourhood under study. The point we wish to make here is that the combination of these two facts makes the generalizability of school gentrification quite unlikely, causing a division in gentrifying neighbourhoods between schools that succeed in attracting a critical mass of white middle-class families and schools that fail to do so. In a scenario where mixing is deemed to be a lever for equal educational

opportunities, this observation is problematic, to say the least. However, it does not stop at this observation. As a matter of fact, it can be argued that mixing as a strategy of a particular school demands that nearby schools do not mix. In other words, in order for a school to successfully mix it is necessary that some other schools fail in the same attempt. Consequently, the problem is not only that school mixing as a strategy seems to not be generalizable, and hence creates a division into 'winning' and 'losing' schools which in turn can strengthen existing inequalities between schools. The problem is also that the success of one school is linked to the failure of another. In that sense, school mixing that carries the promises of educational equality, is *based on* the installation and the continuation of inequality. Inequality is thus not only the simple *consequence* of some schools successfully mixing, it is also the *prerequisite* to such success.

With regard to the neighbourhood, this dissertation shows that the perceptions of vulnerable households about the way mixing on the neighbourhood level and school level play out are highly similar with regard to issues of access, position, voice, and needs Moreover, our findings reveal that both levels should not be seen in isolation from each other. On the contrary, this dissertation demonstrates that the school level and the neighbourhood level are inextricably intertwined, and hence mutually influence each other. First, our findings reveal that the way processes of neighbourhood mixing play out and are experienced can influence the way mixing at the school level is perceived. In fact, our interviews pointed out that socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised parents view these processes as the same, namely as a development where one group of residents tries to appropriate different neighbourhood spaces. This has important implications. On the one hand, this allowed that feelings and experiences from one level shaped how certain processes are perceived at another level. On the other hand, this also allowed that feelings on certain processes could culminate. For instance, mother argued feeling like a "second-class citizen" after it was decided that *Park Lane*'s bridge figure needed to go. When such statements are abstracted from other processes at play at the school level *and* the neighbourhood level, this can easily come across as either dramatic or gibberish. Consequently, our findings suggest that the effects of mixing inner-city schools cannot fully be *understood* when excluding the neighbourhood level from analyses. Moreover, our findings reveal that the

effects of mixing inner-city schools cannot fully be *captured* when excluding the neighbourhood level from analyses. This is because what happens at the school level can have an effect on what happens on the neighbourhood level. More precisely, mixed schools can create a networking hub for gentrifying residents (i.e., a place where they can meet like-minded people living in the neighbourhood). In turn, these networks serve as contexts for initiatives to change the neighbourhood. This potential role of mixed schools as catalysts for neighbourhood change was revealed through our study of a resident-driven greening initiative in the neighbourhood. More precisely, our findings revealed that this initiative was largely instigated by gentrifying families with children enrolled in *Park Lane*. Moreover, our interviews revealed that this was more than just a coincidence. In summary, this dissertation shows that the neighbourhood level and the school level are inextricably entwined and, therefore, should also be examined as such.

Implications for policy and practice

Although this dissertation has aimed to gain insight into the meaning of social mix initiatives in schools in relation to issues of equality, it is important to stress that neither are we able to *settle* the debate on mixing in education, nor do we have the intention to do so. The reason for this is straightforward: the question on whether mixing should be pursued is first and foremost a normative one (Hemelsoet, 2014). Indeed, the question refers to what people value and what they value most. It goes without saying that scientific research cannot dictate the right position. However, this does not mean that the results presented throughout this dissertation are meaningless or neutral (see for instance Bouverne-De Bie, 2015). Indeed, while this dissertation cannot, and in our opinion should not, *settle* the debate on mixing in education, it has the potential to *inform* and to *disturb* it. This happens in at least three ways. First, the manner in which this study has been designed and structured, urges policy makers and educational professionals to pay attention to other matters in addition to the learning outcomes of pupils in (determining their stance on) school mixing. This dissertation demonstrates the relevance of considering the access, position, voice, and needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised families in processes of school mixing. Moreover, this dissertation also encourages academics, policy makers and educational professionals to put the focus not only on mixed environments themselves, but also on the way they

are created and evolve. Indeed, as this dissertation made clear, a socio-ethnic mix neither comes out of thin air nor remains necessarily stable once established. Finally, this dissertation also compels these actors to take neighbourhood processes into account, as the school level and the neighbourhood level prove to be in a relationship of mutual influence.

Second, this dissertation provides a specific reading of school mixing by conveying information on these 'other matters'. Indeed, if this study has illustrated one thing it is that intentional school mixing can install a variety of new inequalities in an attempt to tackle old ones (i.e., unequal educational opportunities). In this vein, intentional school mixing could establish exactly what it tries to overcome, namely inequality. From the problem definition underlying them to the measures that need to be taken to instigate them, from their played out realities to their instability, at every step of the way intentionally mixed environments can be riddled with inequalities. While this information does not settle the debate, it does make certain lines of action more (il)logical than others. By highlighting its paradoxical nature, this dissertation raises a note of caution with regard to intentional school mixing as a method or silver bullet against inequality. While this cautionary note first and foremost refers to marketing initiatives taken by individual schools,[2] it also concerns controlled choice plans, such as the system of *dubbele contingentering* currently running in major Flemish cities. On the one hand, it is clear that these plans will not entail the side-effects that rise to the surface with a process of marketisation. As such, these plans could be perceived as a more appropriate way of mixing schools. Nevertheless, it is important to note that also these plans entail a number of costs that are borne dominantly by socioeconomically disadvantaged and minoritised families when no additional measures are taken. Indeed, as aforementioned, new inequalities arise not only as a result of the measures taken to instigate a mix but also as a result of the played out realities of mixed environments.

Third, by including the voices of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families – voices that are remarkably absent from the debate on school mixing (Quarles & Butler, 2018) – this dissertation encourages policy makers and educational professionals to talk *with* rather than *about* people. Indeed, this dissertation shows that such a shift not only does justice to the

people around which the discourse on mixing is centred but is also germane. By drawing attention to these voices, valuable information can be gathered on the problem at hand, that is unequal educational opportunities. This does, however, require that we dare to put at stake the solutions we hold onto. Nevertheless, such a shift ensures that we take the problem rather than the solution as a point of departure. In this vein, this dissertation can be read as a plea to change the debate from one on socio-ethnic mix to one on unequal educational opportunities and the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families.

Alongside informing and disturbing the debate, this dissertation also points to important sources of support for socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families in schools in general and in mixed schools in particular. Indeed, this dissertation emphasizes the valuable role of the bridge figure for these families. This holds especially true in a mixed environment where the access, the position, the voice, and the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families are easily overshadowed. In this sense, this dissertation highlights the limitations of the current allocation model in which bridge figures disappear when schools become mixed. In point of fact, this model is based on the idea that bridge figures are less or no longer needed in mixed environments. While this certainly holds true with regard to some matters (e.g., as mixed schools comprise less vulnerable families, there are also less individual problems – such as the trouble that parents experience with translating official letters – that need to be attended to),[3] it does not with regard to other matters. On the contrary, bridge figures draw attention to the access, the position, the voice, and the needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families. Moreover, they are also highly valued by these families in mixed environments. While of course not being a panacea for all side-effects of mixing initiatives, it is clear that bridge figures can play an important role in mixed schools.

Finally, this dissertation urges policy makers to adopt measures on the neighbourhood level, that is when they attach importance to the access, voice, position, and needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged and/or minoritised families. More precisely, our findings not only indicate that the processes at play on the school level are also at play on the neighbourhood level but also

that both levels are inextricably intertwined. Consequently, when policy leaders wish to promote mixed schools where all families have access and feel welcome, heard, and equal to one another, it will be crucial to make sure that this also the case on the neighbourhood level. In this vein, in our research context, the role of the *Brede School* (i.e., a publicly-financed partnership between schools and social organizations with an agenda that is similar to that of the community school in the US) could be expanded. In point of fact, this partnership already departs from the observation that student performance is influenced by a variety of factors that are exogenous to the school (Joos & Ernalsteen, 2010). This idea could be radicalized so as to include not only school performance but also the elements discussed above.

Notes

1. Also in Flemish educational discourse – where often an appeal is made to the notion of the 'healthy' or 'unhealthy' mix – this idea is pervasive. A few years back this once again was illustrated when the principal of a school consortium decided to close one of the consortium's schools because it was perceived to be no longer "healthy" following the influx of many socioeconomically disadvantaged families with a migration background. According to the principal, the school, therefore, no longer was able to provide maximum learning opportunities to its pupils. Moreover, the principal argued that "migrant and disadvantaged pupils have more chances in a school with a healthy social mix" ("'Te zwarte school' sluit de deuren", 2011).

2. Also initiatives such as *school in zicht* which run, in this or in a changed form, in eight Flemish cities fall into this first category (see Albertijn & Smeyers, 2009 for more information on such initiatives). In fact, through the organisation of school visits for middle-class parents, schools are pitted against each other, and hence are encouraged to cater to middle-class families so as to have more chances in comparison with other neighbourhood schools to attract these families.

3. However, even in this case it could be questioned whether it makes sense that vulnerable parents cannot call on these services when selecting a mixed school. In a sense this comes down to being "sanctioned" by public policy for supporting a goal set by public policy.

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APPENDIX TWO

Nederlandstalige samenvatting

Wereldwijd leeft in veel landen het idee dat onderwijskansen gelijk verdeeld dienen te worden. Gelijke onderwijskansen blijven tot op heden echter vaak een ijdele hoop. In België tonen cijfers van PISA-studies bijvoorbeeld aan dat de leerresultaten van leerlingen gerelateerd zijn aan zowel hun sociaaleconomische status als aan hun migratieachtergrond, waarbij leerlingen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond significant zwakker presteren (OECD, 2010; 2016a; 2016b). In een poging om een antwoord te bieden op deze ongelijkheden, pleit een aantal academici voor 'gemengde scholen'.

Het idee dat gemengde scholen de zwakke leerresultaten van leerlingen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond kunnen corrigeren, is gebaseerd op een halve eeuw aan onderzoek dat wijst op het belang van schoolcompositie (Putnam, 2015; zie Coleman *et al.*, 1966 voor een eerste baanbrekende studie op dit vlak). Meer concreet tonen verschillende studies aan dat leerlingen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond zwakker presteren op scholen met een meerderheid aan leerlingen met een lage sociaaleconomische status (Agirdag, Van Houtte, & Van Avermaet, 2012; Ledoux, Driessen, Vergeer, van der Veen, & Doesborg, 2003; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005) en/of een migratieachtergrond (Kuscera, Siegel-Hawely, & Orfield, 2015; Ledoux *et al.*, 2003; Logan, Minca, & Adar, 2012; Stiefel, Schwartz, & Chellman, 2007). Daarop voortbouwend definieert een aantal academici scholen met dergelijke concentraties aan leerlingen als "pathologisch", omdat deze scholen, omwille van hun populatie, leerlingen zouden depriveren van optimale leerkansen (Kahlenberg, 2003; Putnam, 2015).[1] In de westerse wereld bevinden deze 'concentratiescholen' zich voornamelijk in stedelijke gebieden (Boterman, 2013; Cucchiara, 2013; Hamnett, Butler, & Ramsden, 2013). In een context waarin blanke middenklassegezinnen in toenemende mate terugkeren naar de stad worden gemengde scholen echter steeds meer denkbaar (Stillman, 2012). Bovendien ontspringen er initiatieven om deze gezinnen te integreren in dergelijke concentratiescholen. Ondanks het feit dat er geen consensus bestaat omtrent wat de relatie tussen schoolcompositie en individuele leerresultaten bepaalt (Reardon & Owens, 2014), worden deze 'mixinitiatieven' veelal verwelkomd als een relevante stap richting gelijke onderwijskansen.

Het debat omtrent een sociaal-etnische mix en het bewust nastreven daarvan heeft zich echter voornamelijk toegespitst op een enkele vraag. Deze vraag betreft of gemengde scholen de resultaten van leerlingen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond zullen verhogen (zie Agirdag, Van Houtte, & Van Avermaet, 2012; Glatter, 2012; Kuscera, Siegel-Hawley, & Orfield, 2015; Rumberger & Palardy, 2005 voor een aantal illustratieve studies). Uiteraard is de vraag of gemengde scholen een hefboom kunnen zijn voor gelijke onderwijskansen legitiem en van belang. Een dergelijke fixatie kan echter ook de aandacht afleiden van andere relevante zaken. Dit is geen onbelangrijk gegeven, te meer daar kennis over de effectiviteit van bepaalde interventies binnen het onderwijs *an sich* onvoldoende inzicht biedt om onderwijsgerelateerde beslissingen te nemen (Biesta, 2007).[2] Dat het debat rond een sociaal-etnische mix binnen het onderwijs kan worden verrijkt door effectiviteitsvraagstukken te overstijgen, wordt duidelijk wanneer over de schoolmuur heen wordt gekeken. Zo valt een parallel te trekken met wat zich op buurtniveau afspeelt. Ook hier ondernemen beleidsmakers en praktijkwerkers stappen om bevolkingsgroepen te mengen en wijken met een meerderheid aan bewoners met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond te deconcentreren, zodoende een resem aan sociale problemen aan te pakken (zie bijvoorbeeld Arthurson, 2012; Christensen, 2015; Davidson, 2008; Dhalmann & Vilkama, 2009; Glynn, 2012; Münch, 2009; Musterd & Anderson, 2005; Popkin *et al.*, 2004; Rose *et al.*, 2013; Uitermark, Duyvendak, & Kleinhans, 2007; Van Criekingen, 2012; van Kempen & Bolt, 2009). Ondanks deze gelijkenis behandelen academici, die gemengde omgevingen en mixinitiatieven op buurtniveau bestuderen, niet louter vraagstukken omtrent effectiviteit. Veelal vertrekkend vanuit een gentrificatieperspectief schenken zij evenzeer aandacht aan aspecten als verdringing, strijd, marginalisering en andere ongelijkheden, die mogelijk kunnen opspelen in gemengde omgevingen en mixinitiatieven (zie bijvoorbeeld Atkinson, 2015; Cheshire, 2009; Davidson, 2008; Davidson & Lees, 2005; Smith, 1996; Wyly & Hammel, 2005). Dit heeft bijgedragen tot een dieper begrip van gemengde omgevingen en mixinitiatieven op buurtniveau. Deze onderzoeken stippen daarbij onder meer aan dat mixinitiatieven niet enkel baten maar ook kosten kunnen voortbrengen.

Beide onderzoekslijnen hebben zich tot op heden grotendeels los van elkaar ontwikkeld. Derhalve worden de vragen die onderzoekers omtrent mixinitiatieven en gemengde omgevingen op buurtniveau stellen nauwelijks opgepikt door onderwijsonderzoekers. Een meldenswaardige uitzondering daarop betreft echter het onderzoek omtrent schoolgentrificatie. Dit recente onderzoek hanteert gentrificatie doelbewust als een prisma waardoorheen mixinitiatieven op schoolniveau worden geanalyseerd. De eerste resultaten uit deze studies leveren alvast een beter inzicht op in mixinitiatieven en gemengde omgevingen, door aan te tonen dat deze op schoolniveau (paradoxaal genoeg) ook een aantal nieuwe ongelijkheden kunnen voortbrengen; dit afgezien van hun mogelijke positieve effect op individuele leeruitkomsten (zie bijvoorbeeld Cucchiara, 2013; Diem *et al.*, 2019; Freidus, 2016; Posey-Maddox, 2014; Siegel-Hawley, Tchachik, & Bridges, 2017).

Onderzoeksvragen

In het verlengde van voorgaande bespreking bewandelt dit proefschrift bewust geen platgetreden paden. Eerder dan te bestuderen of mixinitiatieven individuele leeruitkomsten kunnen bevorderen, heeft dit proefschrift als overkoepelend doel inzicht te verwerven in de betekenis van mixinitiatieven in relatie tot gelijkheid. Dit doel wordt behandeld via drie onderzoeksvragen:

Onderzoeksvraag 1: Wat is de betekenis van mixinitiatieven voor de *toegang* van gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond?

Onderzoeksvraag 2: Wat is de betekenis van mixinitiatieven voor de *positie* en *stem* van gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond?

Onderzoeksvraag 3: Wat is de betekenis van mixinitiatieven voor de *noden* van gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond?

Onderzoekscontext

De geformuleerde onderzoeksvragen werden beantwoord aan de hand van een casestudy. Daarbij werd de aandacht gevestigd op de Brugse Poort, één van de

25 wijken van Gent, een middelgrote Belgische stad van ongeveer 260,000 inwoners. Gelegen ten noordwesten van het stadscentrum ontwikkelde deze wijk zich aan het begin van de negentiende eeuw als één van de nieuwe industriële centra van de stad. De aanwezigheid van enkele florerende textielfabrieken en een staalproducent zorgden ervoor dat de Brugse Poort zich spoedig ontpopte tot een volwaardige arbeidersbuurt met een rijk gemeenschapsleven. Sinds de jaren zestig van de vorige eeuw belandde de wijk echter in een neerwaartse spiraal als gevolg van een reeks fabriekssluitingen. Bovendien trokken vanaf diezelfde periode vele middenklassegezinnen, op zoek naar een meer suburbaan leven, weg uit de wijk. Vanaf de jaren zeventig begon de resterende Gentse industrie echter arbeidsmigranten te rekruteren. Deze migranten, die voornamelijk afkomstig waren uit Turkije en de Maghreb-landen, vestigden zich veelal in de bestaande Gentse arbeiderswijken, vanwege de daar aanwezige industrie en goedkope huisvesting. Om deze reden begon de Brugse Poort in deze periode te 'verkleuren'. Ook in de volgende decennia bleef migratie naar de wijk een gegeven. Dit was voornamelijk een gevolg van daaropvolgende processen van familiereünie en -vorming enerzijds en het openstellen van de Europese Unie meer recent anderzijds. Naast deze migratie tekende zich vanaf de jaren negentig ook een proces van gentrificatie af in de wijk. Waar gentrificatie aanvankelijk werd aangedreven door blanke middenklassegezinnen die arbeidershuisjes kopen en opknappen, stuurde de stad vanaf 1998 actief mee via het plannen en implementeren van een stadsvernieuwingsproject. Zo had het project, dat de naam "Zuurstof voor de Brugse Poort" meekreeg, als expliciet doel om een "sociale mix" te bewerkstelligen – een concept waarvan in academische kringen wordt beargumenteerd dat het als eufemisme wordt gebruikt om gentrificatiestrategieën te legitimeren (zie Lees, Butler, & Bridge, 2012). Meer recent hebben ook projectontwikkelaars 'bijgedragen' aan de gentrificatie in de wijk. Op zoek naar rendabele financiële investeringen (cf. Smith, 1979), kopen deze ontwikkelaars veelal meerdere percelen op ter herontwikkeling. Samenvattend kan gesteld worden dat de Brugse Poort een diverse wijk is, die bestaat uit een aantal demografische lagen die zich op verschillende momenten in de geschiedenis hebben uitgekristalliseerd en zich hedendaags in een zekere spanning tot elkaar verhouden.

Binnen de wijk Brugse Poort werd er gefocust op één specifieke basisschool, waaraan wordt gerefereerd met het pseudoniem *Cotton Bridge/Park Lane*. Deze school speelde, als eerste van zes basisscholen gevestigd in de wijk, in op processen van gentrificatie door actief een gemengde populatie na te streven. Door zich af te stemmen op recent neergestreken middenklassegezinnen zonder migratieachtergrond slaagde de school erin om haar populatie te transformeren van een concentratie van leerlingen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond, naar een meerderheid van leerlingen met een hoge sociaaleconomische status zonder een migratieachtergrond. Meer concreet besliste het schoolbestuur vanuit een dergelijk streven in 2000 om een progressief Jenaplanproject op poten te zetten binnen de reeds bestaande traditionele school, waarvoor gezinnen zich konden registreren (zie Gläser-Zikuda, Ziegelbauer, Rohde, Conrad, & Limprecht, 2012 voor een uitvoerige beschrijving van de Jenaplanpedagogiek). Ondanks het feit dat het project *de jure* slechts een afdeling van de school was, functioneerde het *de facto* als een aparte entiteit. Sprekend daarvoor is het feit dat beide populaties initieel via een aparte ingang het schoolgebouw binnenkwamen alsook een aparte speelplaats kregen toegewezen. Bovendien werden in het nieuwe project aparte toelatingscriteria gehanteerd. Zo werd aanvankelijk een maximum quotum van dertig procent kwetsbare leerlingen ingesteld. Het was mogelijk om deze school (i.e., van *Park Lane*) uit te breiden en terzelfdertijd de oorspronkelijke school (i.e., *Cotton Brigde*) uit te laten doven, omdat dit project aansloeg bij gegeerde families. Tegenwoordig is *Park Lane* een goed draaiende school, die erg populair is binnen bepaalde kringen van blanke middenklassegezinnen. Om deze reden is *Park Lane* een model voor andere scholen met gelijkaardige ambities, zowel voor scholen binnen als buiten de wijk. Omwille van haar succesvolle pogingen om de schoolpopulatie te mengen en vanwege haar ligging in een gentrificerende buurt – het decor waartegen mixinitiatieven binnen onderwijs zich toenemend aftekenen – is de school een interessante case voor dit proefschrift.

Methode

Om de bovenstaande case te analyseren, werd binnen dit proefschrift hoofdzakelijk een beroep gedaan op interviewdata. Interviews werden bewust verkozen boven andere methoden van datacollectie zoals observaties, omdat de

onderzoeksvragen afdwongen om in te zoomen op de betekenis van mixinitiatieven voor de toegang, positie, stem en noden van gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond, hetgeen niet steeds geobserveerd kan worden (Patton, 2002). De resultaten van dit proefschrift zijn gebaseerd op interviews met sleutelfiguren binnen het Gentse onderwijsbeleid (n = 3), personeelsleden van *Park Lane* (n = 8), ouders van wie de kinderen naar school gaan in *Park Lane* (n = 58) en buurtbewoners (n = 37). Wat betreft de ouders en buurtbewoners zijn bewust gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond (n = 43) geselecteerd, naast blanke middenklassegezinnen (n = 52). Op deze manier is getracht om niet enkel *over,* maar ook *met* deze gezinnen te praten en bijgevolg tegemoet te komen aan een relevante lacune in het bestaande onderzoek omtrent mixinitiatieven binnen het onderwijs (Quarles & Butler, 2018). De respondenten zijn op verschillende manieren gerekruteerd, afhankelijk van de categorie waartoe ze behoorden. De sleutelfiguren binnen het Gentse onderwijsbeleid en de personeelsleden van *Park Lane* zijn rechtstreeks aangeschreven via e-mail met de vraag tot een interview, omdat zij vooraf zijn geïdentificeerd. De blanke middenklasse-ouders van wie de kinderen schoollopen op *Park Lane* zijn gerekruteerd via een bericht in de Facebookgroep van het oudercomité van de school. De ouders met een lage sociaaleconomische status en een migratieachtergrond zijn op de school zelf gerekruteerd, wanneer ze hun kinderen kwamen ophalen of afzetten. De buurtbewoners zijn daarnaast gerekruteerd via berichten in relevante Facebookgroepen of via informatiesessies omtrent buurtinitiatieven. Alle interviews zijn op orthografische wijze uitgetypt. De transcripties zijn bovendien meermaals gelezen, waarbij memoranda zijn toegevoegd. Deze vormden een aanvulling op de reeds bestaande notities, die tijdens of meteen na de interviews zijn gemaakt. Tot slot zijn de transcripties ook thematisch gecodeerd, met behulp van de data-analysesoftware *Nvivo*.

Overzicht van de hoofdstukken

Via zes empirische hoofdstukken is getracht tegemoet te komen aan het onderzoeksdoel. Het eerste hoofdstuk vestigt de aandacht op het 'mixen' van de casestudyschool. Dit is gedaan door in te zoomen op de door het schoolbestuur genomen maatregelen om tot een gemengde populatie te komen, en door stil te

staan bij de redenatie achter en context rond dit initiatief. Daarnaast wordt ingegaan op wat dit alles heeft betekend op het vlak van sociale rechtvaardigheid. De twee daaropvolgende hoofdstukken verschuiven de blik van de casestudyschool naar de gezinnen gegeerd door de school. De hoofdstukken reconstrueren het schoolkeuzeproces van blanke middenklassegezinnen die *Park Lane* voor hun kinderen selecteerden. Daarbij wordt nagegaan of en op welke manier de door het schoolbestuur genomen maatregelen om blanke middenklassegezinnen aan te trekken ook effectief de succesvolle transformatie van de schoolpopulatie helpen te verklaren. In het vierde hoofdstuk ligt de focus op de pedagogische preferenties van ouders met een lage sociaaleconomische status en een migratieachtergrond. Dit is relevant, te meer daar het schoolbestuur een specifieke pedagogiek begon te hanteren zodoende blanke middenklassegezinnen aan te trekken. Het vijfde hoofdstuk verlegt vervolgens de aandacht van de middelen om een school te mengen (i.e., de effectiviteit, de noodzaak en de gevolgen van specifieke maatregelen) naar het doel zelf (i.e., de werking van een gentrificerende school). Het hoofdstuk bestudeert of en op welke wijze gemengde omgevingen in staat zijn om bestaande vormen van ongelijkheid te verstoren en/of kunnen bijdragen aan nieuwe vormen van ongelijkheid. Ter afsluiting verlaat een zesde hoofdstuk onze casestudy school als object van studie zodoende het buurtniveau van dichtbij te bestuderen. Dit hoofdstuk focust zich op een ecologisch initiatief, dat mede getrokken is door recent neergestreken blanke gezinnen uit de middenklasse. Op deze manier biedt dit hoofdstuk inzicht in de parallellen en de relatie tussen mixprocessen op buurt- en schoolniveau. Aldus schuift elk hoofdstuk een aantal aspecten en perspectieven naar voor, die samen een antwoord bieden op de onderzoeksvragen.

Voornaamste bevindingen en conclusies

Toegang

Wat de eerste onderzoeksvraag betreft, wijzen de resultaten op enkele valkuilen van mixinitiatieven. De bevindingen tonen aan dat de toegang van gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond kan worden bedreigd als gevolg van mixinitiatieven en dit zowel op een directe als indirecte manier. Ten eerste kan de fixatie op het aantrekken en behouden van blanke middenklassegezinnen ervoor zorgen dat scholen (proactief) gaan

inspelen op de wensen van deze gezinnen. Dit is een strategie die eveneens naar voren geschoven en aangemoedigd wordt door een aantal academici en onderwijsprofessionals, die het potentieel van gemengde omgevingen voor gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond benadrukken (Edelberg & Kurland, 2009; Stillman, 2012; Zanoni & Mampaey, 2013). Dit proces van 'vermarkting' (zie bijvoorbeeld Cucchiara, 2013; Gewirtz, Ball, & Bowe, 1995) kan echter problematisch uitdraaien daar het inspelen op *private* wensen verregaande *publieke* gevolgen kan voortbrengen. Uit de resultaten van het onderzoek blijkt dat blanke middenklassegezinnen graag een meerderheid vormen binnen de school. In een poging om deze gezinnen aan te trekken, stelde het bestuur van de casestudyschool daarom aanvankelijk een maximum quotum van dertig procent in voor het toegelaten aantal leerlingen met een migratieachtergrond in *Park Lane*. Bovendien werden leerlingen uit deze groep geselecteerd op hun gepercipieerde "bedreiging", "aanspreekbaarheid" en "economische status". Afgezien van het feit dat deze maatregelen uitermate effectief bleken in het aantrekken en behouden van blanke gezinnen uit de middenklasse, versperden ze terzelfdertijd ook direct de toegang voor de gezinnen die object zijn van deze initiatieven.

Ten tweede blijkt uit de resultaten dat een sociaal-etnische mix – wat dit ook moge zijn – niet noodzakelijkerwijs een stabiel of permanent karakter heeft. Dit komt doordat de toegang van gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond op een directe manier beperkt wordt, maar ook doordat deze gezinnen zelf intentioneel gemengde scholen beginnen te vermijden, omdat deze scholen als minder aantrekkelijk en aangepast ervaren worden. De bevindingen van dit onderzoek zijn daarbij illustratief. In een poging om blanke middenklassegezinnen aan te trekken besloot het bestuur van de casestudyschool onder meer een progressieve pedagogiek te hanteren. Enerzijds tonen de interviews aan dat deze blanke middenklassegezinnen inderdaad een afkeer hadden van scholen die als traditioneel werden gezien en waar niet buiten de lijntjes kon worden gekleurd. Anderzijds wijzen de interviews echter ook op het feit dat ouders met een lage sociaaleconomische status en een migratieachtergrond methodeonderwijs percipieerden als niet afgestemd op de noden van hun kinderen. Een moeder met een lage sociaaleconomische status en een migratieachtergrond gaf het belang daarvan

duidelijk aan: "Als ik dit [i.e., het feit dat *Park Lane* een progressieve pedagogiek hanteert] vooraf had geweten, had ik naar andere scholen gezocht dicht bij huis". Bovendien lijken de gevolgen van gemengde scholen deze families weg te jagen. Zo tonen de resultaten aan dat de positie en de stem van gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en een migratieachtergrond in de casestudyschool enigszins werden gemarginaliseerd als gevolg van mixprocessen (zie bespreking onderzoeksvraag 2 en 3). Daarenboven verloor de casestudyschool een groot deel van haar ondersteuningsaanbod voor kwetsbare gezinnen, als gevolg van de instroom van blanke gezinnen uit de middenklasse. Uit de interviews blijkt dat dit alles met lede ogen werd aanschouwd door gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en een migratieachtergrond. Deze tendens wordt ook gereflecteerd in de populatie van de casestudyschool. Zo valt op hoe de school sinds het aanvatten van haar mixinitiatief consistent meer blank en kansrijk is geworden, zelfs in de periode nadat het bestuur besloot om haar eerder ingestelde quotum te laten varen. Dit is ook de huidige directeur niet ontgaan, die vreest dat haar school verandert in een "elite-instituut". De casus van *Park Lane* wijst dus op de moeilijkheden om een mix te creëren en bovenal om deze te behouden. Scholen die een gemengde populatie ambiëren, kunnen zich namelijk snel in een catch-22-situatie bevinden. Immers, om een gemengde populatie te realiseren, worden stedelijke scholen gedwongen om in te spelen op de wensen van gegeerde blanke middenklassegezinnen. Vanwege het feit dat deze wensen niet noodzakelijk overeenstemmen met de noden van gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond kan dit aanleiding geven tot een beleid dat indruist tegen de noden van deze laatste groep. Wanneer dit samen wordt genomen met de effecten die de instroom van blanke middenklassegezinnen teweeg brengen, kan dit leiden tot de verdringing van gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond. De uitdaging van mixinitiatieven bestaat er dus in om blanke middenklassegezinnen aan te trekken, maar ook om gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond te behouden. Wat betreft dit laatste aspect duiden de resultaten van het onderzoek op het belang van een blijvende aandacht voor mogelijke processen van exclusie, die kunnen voortvloeien uit mixprocessen.

Positie en stem

De bevindingen wijzen op een aantal mogelijke implicaties van mixinitiatieven voor de positie en inspraak van gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond. Deze implicaties zijn zowel een gevolg van (i) de maatregelen die genomen worden om een gemengde schoolpopulatie te realiseren en te behouden en (ii) de manier waarop gemengde omgevingen opereren. Ten eerste definiëren initiatieven die een sociaal-etnische mix als hefboom voor de onderwijskwaliteit naar voren schuiven de gezinnen waarvoor deze initiatieven gelanceerd worden paradoxaal genoeg niet enkel als *in gevaar*, maar ook *als gevaar*. De belangrijkste oorzaak daarvan ligt bij de probleemdefinitie waarop deze initiatieven zijn gebaseerd. De initiatieven vertrekken immers vanuit de assumptie dat gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond ervoor zorgen dat de schoolkwaliteit minder gunstig is dan deze zou zijn onder invloed van middenklassegezinnen zonder migratieachtergrond. Als gevolg daarvan worden gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond niet enkel geportretteerd als onfortuinlijk, maar ook als onvoordelig. Het idee van mixen als een hefboom voor gelijke onderwijskansen impliceert dan ook een hiërarchisering en *ipso facto* een installatie van ongelijkheid. Bovendien illustreren de resultaten dat deze assumptie (i.e., het idee dat middenklassegezinnen zonder migratieachtergrond cruciaal zijn voor onderwijskwaliteit) scholen ertoe brengt om op zodanige wijze te handelen dat aan deze gezinnen extra status en macht wordt verleend. Schoolbesturen die een dergelijke notie omarmen, zullen immers geneigd zijn om in te spelen op de wensen van deze gezinnen. Daaruit volgt dat een echt debat omtrent de maatregelen die genomen worden binnen een dergelijke gedachtegang moeilijk tot onmogelijk wordt, althans wanneer deze maatregelen noodzakelijk worden geacht om blanke middenklassegezinnen aan te trekken. Dat kan er vervolgens weer voor zorgen dat de perspectieven van gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond enigszins opzij worden geschoven. De bevindingen van dit onderzoek zijn op dit vlak erg betekenisvol. Zo speelt de casestudyschool in op de wensen van deze gezinnen, omdat er vanuit is gegaan dat zij een gunstige invloed kunnen hebben op de schoolkwaliteit. De school is onder meer begonnen met het hanteren van een progressieve pedagogiek en het beperken van de toegang voor gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond, om daarmee

blanke middenklassegezinnen aan te trekken en te behouden. Het is sprekend dat dit alles is gebeurd zonder de op de school reeds aanwezige gezinnen te consulteren. Ook op dit moment blijft de ruimte voor discussie omtrent bepaalde aspecten zoals de gehanteerde progressieve pedagogiek nog erg beperkt. De bevindingen tonen bijvoorbeeld aan dat veel moeders met een lage sociaaleconomische status en een migratieachtergrond zich niet gehoord voelen wanneer ze hun bedenkingen en klachten uiten omtrent bepaalde elementen van het pedagogisch project. Zoals één respondent aangaf, is het "daarom" (i.e., omwille van het feit dat de school dominant luistert naar en inspeelt op blanke middenklassegezinnen) dat de school "nooit naar ons luistert". Ook al zorgt een dergelijke strategie ervoor dat een permanente aanwezigheid van blanke gezinnen uit de middenklasse wordt veiliggesteld, marginaliseert deze strategie terzelfdertijd de stem van gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond.

Ten tweede kan de dominante aanwezigheid van blanke middenklassegezinnen op bepaalde terreinen ook nieuwe ongelijkheden installeren. De bevindingen laten bijvoorbeeld zien dat een gezelschap van blanke middenklasse-ouders zeer prominent aanwezig was in het oudercomité, dat tot doel heeft de school te ondersteunen en te verbeteren. Deze aanwezigheid voorzag deze groep ouders evenwel van een disproportionele (i) speelruimte om de school naar hun eigen beeld te vormen en (ii) autoriteit om het schoolbestuur te beïnvloeden. Bovendien kan de prominente aanwezigheid van blanke middenklassegezinnen de aandacht afleiden van de perspectieven van andere gezinnen. In *Park Lane* gebeurde dit op minstens twee manieren. Ten eerste is sinds de instroom van blanke middenklassegezinnen een oudercomité opgericht, dat onder meer fungeert als doorgeefluik om bezorgdheden van ouders te communiceren aan de school. Waar blanke gezinnen uit de middenklasse erg actief zijn in dit comité, zijn gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond dit niet. De interviews tonen echter aan dat deze afwezigheid gelinkt is aan de dominante aanwezigheid van de blanke middenklassegezinnen. Ouders met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond blijken erg terughoudend te zijn om te participeren in een dergelijk comité, omdat ze zich naast de hoogopgeleide ouders wiens moedertaal eveneens de officiële schooltaal betreft enigszins incompetent voelen. Bovendien worden deze twijfels versterkt door de professionele

organisatiestructuur en de inroostering van de bijeenkomsten, die allebei zijn aangepast aan de nieuwe middenklasse. Als gevolg daarvan is het moeilijker voor deze ouders om hun stem te laten horen. Ten tweede, en als gevolg van het voorgaande punt, tonen de bevindingen aan dat de percepties van gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond vaak over het hoofd worden gezien wanneer de school iets wil veranderen aan haar dagelijkse werking of pedagogisch project. Dit komt doordat de school advies zoekt bij de schoolraad. Daar de ouders zetelend in deze raad worden geselecteerd door het oudercomité, spreken exclusief blanke middenklasse-ouders in naam van 'de ouders'. De interviews hebben echter aangetoond dat de zienswijze van deze ouders niet zomaar overeenstemt met die van ouders met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond. Zo gaven de leden van de schoolraad een voorzichtig positief advies omtrent het idee van het schoolbestuur om de punten op het rapport te vervangen door kwalitatieve beschrijvingen. Dit advies werd opgevolgd, ondanks het feit dat vrijwel geen van de geïnterviewde ouders met een lage sociaaleconomische status en een migratieachtergrond zich kon vinden in een dergelijk nieuw systeem.

De casus toont bijgevolg aan dat het gevaar bestaat dat andere gezinnen worden gemarginaliseerd, wanneer blanke middenklassegezinnen gedefinieerd worden als de meest relevante aanjagers van de schoolkwaliteit. Dit komt overeen met wat door ouders met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond wordt ervaren. De interviews tonen aan dat deze ouders het gevoel hebben dat blanke ouders uit de middenklasse zich een positie als "sultans" aanmeten, wiens ideeën en advies steeds in beschouwing worden genomen door het schoolbestuur. Daarnaast zitten deze ouders met het gevoel dat zijzelf in een tweederangspositie worden gedwongen (zie ook Katz, 2008 omtrent de stratificatie van mensen in eerste- en tweederangsburgers in processen van vermarkting). Kortom, *Park Lane* wijst als casus op de moeilijkheden om ongelijke machtsrelaties uit te vlakken binnen mixinitiatieven. Gezinnen worden vooraf in een pikorde geplaatst, wanneer er wordt uitgegaan van het idee dat het aantrekken en behouden van blanke gezinnen uit de middenklasse cruciaal is voor het succes van een school. Bovendien kan dit idee schoolbesturen ertoe aanzetten om dominant in te spelen op de wensen van blanke middenklassegezinnen. Als laatste kan de prominente aanwezigheid van dergelijke gezinnen in acties die de verbetering

van de school tot doel hebben deze ouders voorzien van bijkomende macht. Samengenomen kan dit ervoor zorgen dat de statusposities tussen ouders worden uitgediept in intentioneel gemengde scholen. Dit roept uiteraard de vraag op hoe scholen die een gemengde populatie ambiëren er toch voor kunnen zorgen dat alle ouders een gelijkwaardige positie en evenveel inspraak verkrijgen. Of meer concreet: hoe kunnen scholen zorgen voor gelijkheid in een hiërarchische situatie (cf. Blomey, 2004)?

Noden

Binnen de onderwijsliteratuur worden middenklassegezinnen zonder migratieachtergrond veelal gezien als de drijvende kracht achter processen van schoolverbetering (Kahlenberg, 2003; Putnam, 2015). Desondanks tonen de bevindingen van dit onderzoek de beperkingen aan van mixinitiatieven als effectief antwoord op de noden van gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond. Meer in het bijzonder ondermijnen mixinitiatieven een dergelijke effectieve respons, als gevolg van (i) de maatregelen die genomen worden om een gemengde schoolpopulatie te realiseren en te behouden en (ii) de manier waarop gemengde omgevingen opereren.

Ten eerste laten de bevindingen zien dat de maatregelen, die genomen worden om blanke gezinnen uit de middenklasse aan te trekken zodoende een gemengde schoolpopulatie te realiseren, gemakkelijk kunnen ingaan tegen de noden van gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond. De fixatie van *Park Lane* op het aantrekken van blanke middenklassegezinnen zette het schoolbestuur van deze school ertoe aan om in te spelen op de wensen van deze gezinnen. Zo begon de school onder meer een progressieve pedagogiek te hanteren. Hoewel de interviews laten zien dat deze progressieve pedagogiek erg werd gewaardeerd door blanke middenklassengezinnen – dit omwille van het feit dat een dergelijke pedagogiek wordt gezien als een vorm van onderwijs waarmee de kinderen 21$^{\text{ste}}$-eeuwse vaardigheden kunnen verwerven – tonen deze interviews eveneens aan dat dit niet het geval was voor gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond. Deze families stonden eerder negatief tegenover dit methodeonderwijs, omdat deze pedagogiek werd ervaren als minder afgestemd op de noden van hun kinderen.

Ten tweede blijkt uit de resultaten dat een effectief antwoord op de noden van gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond bemoeilijkt kan worden wanneer de schoolpopulatie in toenemende mate uit kansrijke leerlingen zonder migratieachtergrond gaat bestaan. De reden daarvoor ligt bij de wijze waarop onderwijssystemen in vele welvaartsstaten gefinancierd worden. In veel regio's, waaronder in Vlaanderen, wordt het onderwijs op dusdanige wijze gefinancierd dat scholen met meer kwetsbare leerlingen ook meer middelen ontvangen, dit teneinde deze leerlingen beter te voorzien van gelijke onderwijskansen. Als gevolg daarvan kan een school middelen zien wegvloeien wanneer de populatie minder kwetsbaar wordt. Ook in *Park Lane* kan een dergelijk proces worden geobserveerd. Niet alleen werd de financiering van de school teruggeschroefd met 1.5 voltijdse equivalent, ook verloor de school haar brugfiguur (i.e., iemand die kwetsbare gezinnen ondersteunt door hun positie te versterken, hun stem naar voren te brengen en in te spelen op hun noden).

Ten derde tonen de resultaten aan dat de acties van blanke middenklassegezinnen om de school te verbeteren niet noodzakelijk een antwoord bieden op de noden van gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond. Zo valt in *Park Lane* op dat kinderen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond grotendeels afwezig zijn in extra-curriculaire programma's, die opgezet zijn door blanke middenklassegezinnen. Hiervoor zijn drie redenen op te merken. Allereerst dient betaald te worden voor deze programma's, wat voor sommige gezinnen een drempel vormt om hun kinderen in te schrijven. Ten tweede tonen de bevindingen aan dat ondanks het feit dat ouders *geïntegreerd* zijn in de school, het contact tussen hen *gesegregeerd* verloopt naargelang klasse en migratieachtergrond. In dit opzicht blijkt uit de resultaten dat gemengde omgevingen niet noodzakelijk leiden tot gemengde interacties. Als gevolg daarvan bleken tijdens de interviews veel ouders met een lage sociaaleconomische status en een migratieachtergrond niet eens op de hoogte te zijn van deze programma's. Tot slot zijn deze programma's aangepast aan de noden van kinderen, zoals gepercipieerd door blanke ouders uit de middenklasse. Zoals echter is aangetoond, komen de noden van de gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond niet

noodzakelijk overeen met deze van blanke middenklassegezinnen. Waar de eerstgenoemden het belang aanstippen van basisvaardigheden, zoals het verwerven van de Nederlandse taal, benadrukken de laatstgenoemden de waarde van een holistische opvoeding. Dit blijkt ook uit de extra-curriculaire programma's die zijn opgezet door ouders, met name het "Frans speeluurtje" en het "crea-atelier". Kinderen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en een migratieachtergrond blijken daarentegen wel te participeren aan extra-curriculaire programma's die vanuit de stad of Verenigingen Zonder Winstoogmerk (vzw's) worden georganiseerd. Zo geeft een aantal geïnterviewde moeders met een lage sociaaleconomische status en een migratieachtergrond aan dat ze hun kinderen hebben ingeschreven in "Uilenspel", een programma waarbij een vrijwilliger wekelijks een uur langskomt bij gezinnen om te werken aan basisvaardigheden, zoals de Nederlandse taal. Veel gezinnen verloren echter de mogelijkheid om deel te nemen aan dit programma, omdat de brugfiguur van *Park Lane* het contact tussen ouders en deze organisatie aanvankelijk coördineerde.

Naast 'de' school
Naast bovenstaande bevindingen laat dit proefschrift ook zien dat gemengde scholen onlosmakelijk verbonden zijn met hun wijdere omgeving. Dit betekent dat gemengde scholen beïnvloed kunnen worden door hun wijdere omgeving, maar hier tegelijkertijd ook zelf invloed op kunnen uitoefenen. Daarbij springen zowel naburige scholen als de buurt waarin deze scholen gelegen zijn in het oog. Met betrekking tot naburige scholen trekken de bevindingen in twijfel of mixinitiatieven breed uitgerold kunnen worden. Er zijn immers een aantal redenen om enigszins sceptisch te staan tegenover de gedachte dat alle scholen binnen een bepaald gebied een gemengde populatie kunnen realiseren wanneer dit gebied gentrificeert. Dit is het gevolg van een combinatie van twee factoren. Ten eerste blijven blanke middenklassegezinnen vrijwel steeds een minderheid wanneer buurten gentrificeren (Butler & Robson, 2003). Dit is ook het geval in de buurt waarin *Park Lane* is gevestigd, de Brugse Poort. Niettegenstaande dat de Brugse Poort naam heeft verworven als een 'hippe' wijk, die een groot aantal hoogopgeleide blanke middenklassegezinnen heeft mogen verwelkomen, heeft na twee decennia van gentrificatie een meerderheid van de bewoners in de wijk een migratieachtergrond en heeft een meerderheid een inkomen lager dan 15,000 euro. Ten tweede laten de interviews zien dat

blanke middenklassegezinnen op zoek zijn naar scholen waar ze een meerderheid vormen. Deze bewoners schuwen scholen met een meerderheid aan leerlingen met een migratieachtergrond, vanuit de gedachte dat dit ongunstig is voor de ontwikkeling van hun kinderen. Zoals één respondent eloquent verwoordde "Je kan jouw kind geen slachtoffer maken van jouw ideologische keuzes". Kortom, blanke middenklassegezinnen blijken ernaar te streven om een meerderheid te vormen binnen de school, ondanks het feit dat ze in gentrificerende buurten veelal een minderheid vormen. Het gevolg daarvan is dat deze gezinnen samentroepen in een paar buurtscholen. Dit was eveneens het geval in de Brugse Poort. Omwille van deze twee factoren is het dan ook onwaarschijnlijk dat alle scholen binnen gentrificerende buurten erin kunnen slagen om een gemengde populatie te realiseren. Het is daarbij meer reëel dat een opdeling zal ontstaan tussen scholen die erin slagen een kritische massa blanke middenklassegezinnen aan te trekken en scholen die daar niet in slagen. Het stopt echter niet bij deze observatie. Zo kan worden beargumenteerd dat om een mix te realiseren in één bepaalde school, het noodzakelijk is dat een aantal andere scholen in een gentrificerende buurt niet mengen. Bijgevolg is het probleem niet enkel dat mixinitiatieven niet te generaliseren vallen en aldus een opsplitsing in 'winnende' en 'verliezende' scholen voortbrengen. Het probleem is eveneens dat het succes van één bepaalde school gerelateerd is aan het falen van een andere. In die zin zijn mixinitiatieven die de belofte van onderwijsgelijkheid met zich meedragen gebaseerd op het installeren en continueren van ongelijkheid. Anders gezegd is ongelijkheid niet zomaar een gevolg van het feit dat sommige scholen erin slagen om hun populatie te mengen, maar is dit ook een voorwaarde voor dit succes.

Met betrekking tot de buurt duidt dit proefschrift op het feit dat de ervaringen van kwetsbare gezinnen omtrent het uitspelen van gemengde omgevingen op buurt- en schoolniveau erg gelijkaardig zijn. Bovendien bewijst dit proefschrift dat beide niveaus niet los van elkaar kunnen worden gezien. Ten eerste tonen de bevindingen aan dat de wijze waarop mixinitiatieven op buurtniveau zich ontspinnen en ervaren worden een invloed kunnen hebben op de wijze waarop mixinitiatieven op schoolniveau worden ervaren. Zo blijkt uit de interviews dat ouders met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond beide processen als gelijkaardig beschouwen, met name als een ontwikkeling

waarbij een groep bewoners zich diverse ruimtes in de buurt trachten toe te eigenen. Dit heeft enkele relevante implicaties. Enerzijds zorgt dit er namelijk voor dat gevoelens en ervaringen afkomstig uit een welbepaald niveau mede vormgeven aan hoe bepaalde processen worden gepercipieerd op een ander niveau. Anderzijds laat dit ook toe dat bepaalde gevoelens culmineren. Zo gaf één moeder bijvoorbeeld aan zich een "tweederangsburger" te voelen, nadat duidelijk werd dat de brugfiguur van *Park Lane* diende te vertrekken. Wanneer dergelijke verklaringen worden geabstraheerd van andere processen op school- *en* buurtniveau, kunnen deze gemakkelijk als dramatisch of onbegrijpelijk overkomen. Bijgevolg suggereren de bevindingen dat de geïdentificeerde effecten van mixinitiatieven op schoolniveau niet geheel kunnen worden *begrepen* wanneer men het buurtniveau niet meeneemt in analyses. Daarnaast tonen de bevindingen aan dat niet alle effecten van mixinitiatieven op schoolniveau kunnen worden *waargenomen* wanneer het buurtniveau niet wordt meegenomen in de analyses. Dit komt doordat de gebeurtenissen en ervaringen in de school sporen kunnen nalaten in de buurt. Meer bepaald bieden gemengde scholen recent neergestreken blanke middenklassegezinnen een plaats waar netwerken kunnen worden gevormd met gelijkgestemden die woonachtig zijn in de buurt. Deze mogelijke rol van gemengde scholen als katalysator voor veranderingen in de buurt kwam duidelijk naar voor binnen de studie omtrent een ecologisch initiatief in de Brugse Poort. Zo laten de bevindingen zien dat dit initiatief in grote mate werd getrokken door blanke middenklassegezinnen van wie de kinderen naar school gingen in *Park Lane*. De bevindingen tonen bovendien aan dat dit meer dan enkel toeval was. Samenvattend toont dit proefschrift aan dat het buurt- en schoolniveau onlosmakelijk met elkaar zijn verbonden en bijgevolg ook zo bestudeerd dienen te worden.

Implicaties voor het beleid en de praktijk

Hoewel dit proefschrift als doel stelde om inzicht te verwerven in het grotere plaatje rond mixinitiatieven in relatie tot gelijkheid, is het belangrijk te benadrukken dat we niet in staat zijn het debat rond mixen te *beslechten* noch deze intentie hebben. De reden daarvoor is eenvoudig: de vraag of een gemengde populatie dient te worden nagestreefd, is eerst en vooral normatief (Hemelsoet, 2014). De vraag heeft immers betrekking op datgene waar we

belang aan hechten en wat het meest van belang is. Het behoeft geen uitleg dat wetenschappelijk onderzoek niet kan bepalen wat daarin de juiste positie is. Echter, dit betekent niet dat de bevindingen van dit onderzoek betekenisloos of neutraal zouden zijn (zie bijvoorbeeld Bouverne-De Bie, 2015). Ook al kan dit proefschrift het debat niet *beslechten*, heeft het wel het potentieel om dit te *voeden* en te *verstoren*. Dit gebeurt ten minste op drie manieren.

Ten eerste dwingt de manier waarop deze studie is ontworpen en gestructureerd beleidsmakers en onderwijsprofessionals om aandacht te schenken aan een aantal aspecten die voorbijgaan aan leerresultaten, om hun positie omtrent mixinitiatieven binnen het onderwijs te bepalen. Zo toont dit proefschrift de relevantie aan om de toegang, stem, positie en noden van gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond in acht te nemen. Bovendien moedigt dit proefschrift academici, beleidsmakers en onderwijsprofessionals aan om niet enkel aandacht te schenken aan gemengde omgevingen *an sich*, maar ook aan de wijze waarop deze tot stand komen en evolueren. De resultaten van dit onderzoek laten immers zien dat een sociaal-etnische mix niet zomaar uit de lucht komt vallen noch noodzakelijk stabiel blijft zodra deze is gerealiseerd. Ten slotte zet dit proefschrift voorgaande actoren er ook toe aan om het buurtniveau in beschouwing te nemen, daar de resultaten aangeven dat buurt en school elkaar wederzijds beïnvloeden.

Ten tweede voorziet dit proefschrift een specifieke lezing van mixinitiatieven binnen het onderwijs, door informatie aan te reiken omtrent deze 'andere zaken'. Als dit proefschrift immers één ding heeft aangetoond, dan is het wel dat mixinitiatieven een resem aan nieuwe ongelijkheden kan binnenbrengen in een poging om bekende ongelijkheden te verminderen (i.e., ongelijke onderwijskansen). In dat opzicht is het mogelijk dat mixinitiatieven exact realiseren wat ze trachten tegen te gaan, met name ongelijkheid. Hoewel dergelijke informatie het debat geenszins beslecht, maakt deze informatie bepaalde vormen van handelen meer logisch dan andere. Door de paradoxale natuur van mixinitiatieven te onderstrepen, werpt dit proefschrift ten minste een aantal bedenkingen op bij de inzet van deze initiatieven als wondermiddel tegen ongelijkheid. Deze bedenkingen hebben eerst en vooral betrekking op initiatieven waarbij individuele scholen zich 'vermarkten' om zodoende een

gewenst cliënteel aan te trekken. Desondanks gaan deze bedenkingen ook systemen van gecontroleerde schoolkeuze aan, waaronder bijvoorbeeld het systeem van 'dubbele contingentering', dat momenteel loopt in grote Vlaamse steden. Enerzijds mag het duidelijk zijn dat dergelijke systemen niet dezelfde neveneffecten voortbrengen die aan de oppervlakte komen bij processen van vermarkting. Anderzijds is het echter van belang om te onderstrepen dat ook deze systemen een aantal kosten met zich meebrengen, die grotendeels gedragen worden door gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond; dat is wanneer er geen bijkomende maatregelen worden getroffen. Zoals de resultaten van dit onderzoek aantonen, borrelen nieuwe ongelijkheden immers niet enkel op als gevolg van de maatregelen die worden genomen om een gemengde schoolpopulatie te realiseren, maar eveneens als gevolg van de wijze waarop gemengde omgevingen ertoe neigen uit te spelen.

Ten derde moedigt dit proefschrift beleidsmakers en onderwijsprofessionals aan om *met* eerder dan *over* mensen te spreken. Door de stem binnen te brengen van gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond laat dit proefschrift zien dat een dergelijke verschuiving niet enkel recht doet aan de mensen om wie mixinitiatieven zijn opgebouwd, maar dat deze verschuiving ook zinvol is. Door de aandacht te vestigen op wat deze gezinnen te vertellen hebben, kan namelijk waardevolle informatie worden verkregen over het probleem ter zake, met name ongelijke onderwijskansen. Dit impliceert echter dat we de oplossingen waaraan we vasthouden op het spel durven te zetten. Daarnaast zorgt deze verschuiving ervoor dat het probleem eerder dan de oplossing als vertrekpunt wordt genomen. In dit opzicht kan dit proefschrift ook gelezen worden als een pleidooi om het debat rond een sociaal-etnische mix te verschuiven naar een debat omtrent ongelijke onderwijskansen en de noden van gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond.

Behalve het debat te voeden en te verstoren, wijst dit proefschrift ook op relevante steunbronnen voor gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond. Daarbij stipt dit proefschrift de waarde van een brugfiguur voor deze gezinnen aan. Dit geldt met name in gemengde omgevingen, waarin de toegang, positie, stem en noden van gezinnen met een

lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond gemakkelijk overschaduwd worden. In dit opzicht onderstreept dit proefschrift de beperkingen van het huidige financieringsmodel, waarbij brugfiguren verdwijnen zodra scholen erin slagen om een gemengde populatie te realiseren. Dit model steunt namelijk op de gedachte dat brugfiguren minder of niet langer nodig zijn in gemengde omgevingen. Hoewel dit uiteraard geldt voor bepaalde zaken,[3] is dit niet het geval voor alle zaken. Brugfiguren vestigen bijvoorbeeld eveneens de aandacht op de toegang, positie, stem en noden van gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond. Bovendien worden brugfiguren erg gewaardeerd door deze gezinnen. Hoewel brugfiguren geen wondermiddel vormen voor alle neveneffecten van mixinitiatieven, is het duidelijk dat brugfiguren een relevante rol kunnen spelen in gemengde scholen.

Ten slotte spoort dit proefschrift beleidsmakers aan om maatregelen te nemen op buurtniveau. Dat is namelijk van belang wanneer zij waarde hechten aan de toegang, stem, positie en noden van gezinnen met een lage sociaaleconomische status en/of een migratieachtergrond in gemengde scholen. Zo wijzen de resultaten niet enkel op het feit dat processen aanwezig op schoolniveau zich ook manifesteren op buurtniveau, maar eveneens op het feit dat beide niveaus zich in een relatie van wederzijdse beïnvloeding tot elkaar verhouden. Wanneer beleidsmakers gemengde scholen willen bevorderen waarin alle gezinnen toegang hebben en zich bovendien welkom, gehoord en gelijkwaardig voelen, is het daarom essentieel dat dit eveneens geldt op buurtniveau. In dit opzicht kan in deze onderzoekscontext de rol van de 'Brede School' worden uitgebreid. Dit samenwerkingsverband vertrekt immers vanuit de observatie dat leeruitkomsten worden beïnvloed door een resem aan factoren die exogeen zijn aan de school (Joos & Ernalsteen, 2010). Dit idee zou kunnen worden geradicaliseerd zodoende niet enkel de leeruitkomsten, maar ook bovenstaande besproken facetten te omvatten.

Notes

1. Ook in het Vlaamse onderwijslandschap – waar wordt gesproken van een 'gezonde' of 'ongezonde' mix – is een dergelijk idee diepgeworteld. Een aantal jaar terug werd dit geïllustreerd toen de directeur van een zekere scholengroep besloot om één school te sluiten omwille van de hoge aanwezigheid van kansarme leerlingen met een migratieachtergrond. Volgens de directeur kon de school daardoor niet langer een optimale leeromgeving garanderen en zouden kansarme leerlingen met een migratieachtergrond meer kansen krijgen in "een school met een gezonde sociale mix" ("'Te zwarte school' sluit de deuren", 2011).

2. Biesta (2007) geeft bij wijze van voorbeeld aan dat, zelfs indien er sluitend bewijs zou zijn dat lijfstraffen erg effectief blijken om storend gedrag te controleren, het voor de hand ligt dat we dergelijke praktijken dienen te vermijden, omwille van een aantal andere redenen die niet gerelateerd zijn aan effectiviteitsvraagstukken.

3. Aangezien gemengde scholen minder kwetsbare gezinnen omvatten, zullen er normaalgezien ook minder individuele problemen – zoals de moeilijkheden die sommige ouders ondervinden bij het vertalen van officiële documenten – opduiken die aandacht vereisen.

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APPENDIX THREE

Data Storage Fact Sheets

% Data Storage Fact Sheet 1

% Name/identifier study: Research in school archives
% Author: Cedric Goossens
% Date: May 6, 2019

1. Contact details
===

1a. Main researcher

- name: Cedric Goossens
- address: Henri Dunantlaan 2, BE-9000, Ghent.
- e-mail: C.Goossens@UGent.be

1b. Responsible Staff Member (ZAP)

- name: Prof. dr. Lieve Bradt
- address: Henri Dunantlaan 2, BE-9000, Ghent.
- e-mail: Lieve.Bradt@UGent.be

If a response is not received when using the above contact details, please send an
email to data.pp@ugent.be or contact Data Management, Faculty of Psychology
and Educational Sciences, Henri Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Ghent, Belgium.

2. Information about the datasets to which this sheet applies
===
* Reference of the publication in which the datasets are reported:

Publication 1: Goossens, C., & Van Gorp, A. (2016). The myth of the phoenix:
progressive education, migration and the shaping of the welfare state, 1985-2015.
Paedagogical Historica, 52(5), 467-484.

Publication 2: Goossens, C. (2019). Gentrification comes to school: Social mix and
the struggle against educational inequality. (Doctoral dissertation).

* Which datasets in that publication does this sheet apply to?:

Publication 1: The sheet applies to all the statistical data used in the publication.

Publication 2: The sheet applies to the all the statistacal data used in the third
chapter.

3. Information about the files that have been stored
==

3a. Raw data
----

* Have the raw data been stored by the main researcher? [X] YES / [ ] NO
If NO, please justify:

* On which platform are the raw data stored?
  - [X] researcher PC
  - [ ] research group file server
  - [X] other (specify): The archives of the case school

* Who has direct access to the raw data (i.e., without intervention of another person)?
  - [X] main researcher
  - [ ] responsible ZAP
  - [ ] all members of the research group
  - [ ] all members of UGent
  - [X] other (specify): The principal of the case school

3b. Other files
----

* Which other files have been stored?
  - [ ] file(s) describing the transition from raw data to reported results. Specify: ...
  - [X] file(s) containing processed data. Specify: An excel file illustrating changes in the social makeup of the student body of the case study school.
  - [ ] file(s) containing analyses. Specify: ...
  - [ ] files(s) containing information about informed consent
  - [ ] a file specifying legal and ethical provisions
  - [ ] file(s) that describe the content of the stored files and how this content should be interpreted. Specify: ...
  - [ ] other files. Specify: ...

* On which platform are these other files stored?
  - [X] individual PC
  - [X] research group file server
  - [ ] other: ...

* Who has direct access to these other files (i.e., without intervention of another person)?
  - [X] main researcher

- [X] responsible ZAP
- [ ] all members of the research group
- [ ] all members of UGent
- [X] other (specify): Server administrator of the department

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* If yes, by whom (add if multiple):
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  - address:
  - affiliation:
  - e-mail:

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% Data Storage Fact Sheet 2

% Name/identifier study: Interviews with school staff and parents
% Author: Cedric Goossens
% Date: May 6, 2019

1. Contact details
==

1a. Main researcher

- name: Cedric Goossens
- address: Henri Dunantlaan 2, BE-9000, Ghent.
- e-mail: C.Goossens@UGent.be

1b. Responsible Staff Member (ZAP)

- name: Prof. dr. Lieve Bradt
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- e-mail: Lieve.Bradt@UGent.be

If a response is not received when using the above contact details, please send an email to data.pp@ugent.be or contact Data Management, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Henri Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Ghent, Belgium.

2. Information about the datasets to which this sheet applies
==
* Reference of the publication in which the datasets are reported:

Publication 1: Goossens, C., & Van Gorp, A. (2016). The myth of the phoenix: progressive education, migration and the shaping of the welfare state, 1985-2015. Paedagogical Historica, 52(5), 467-484.

Publication 2: Goossens, C., Muls, J., Stevens, P., & Van Gorp, A. (2018). Blowing hot and cold about diversity: White middle-class gentrifiers and ethnically mixed schooling in Belgium. Whiteness and Education, 3(1), 32-55.

Publication 3: Goossens, C. (2019). Gentrification comes to school: Social mix and the struggle against educational inequality. (Doctoral dissertation).

* Which datasets in that publication does this sheet apply to?:

Publication 1: The sheet applies to all the interview data used in the publication.

Publication 2: The sheet applies to all the interview data used in the publication.

Publication 3: The sheet applies to the all the interview data used in the third, fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh chapter.

3. Information about the files that have been stored
==

3a. Raw data
----

* Have the raw data been stored by the main researcher? [X] YES / [ ] NO
If NO, please justify:

* On which platform are the raw data stored?
  - [X] researcher PC
  - [X] research group file server
  - [ ] other (specify):

* Who has direct access to the raw data (i.e., without intervention of another person)?
  - [X] main researcher
  - [X] responsible ZAP
  - [ ] all members of the research group
  - [ ] all members of UGent
  - [X] other (specify): The server administrator of the dapartment

3b. Other files
----

* Which other files have been stored?
  - [ ] file(s) describing the transition from raw data to reported results. Specify: ...
  - [X] file(s) containing processed data. Specify: Transcriptions of the interview recordings.
  - [X] file(s) containing analyses. Specify: An Nvivo file that contains a coding scheme.
  - [ ] files(s) containing information about informed consent
  - [ ] a file specifying legal and ethical provisions
  - [ ] file(s) that describe the content of the stored files and how this content should be interpreted. Specify: ...
  - [ ] other files. Specify: ...

* On which platform are these other files stored?
  - [X] individual PC
  - [X] research group file server
  - [ ] other: ...

* Who has direct access to these other files (i.e., without intervention of another person)?
  - [X] main researcher
  - [X] responsible ZAP
  - [ ] all members of the research group
  - [ ] all members of UGent
  - [X] other (specify): The Server administrator of the department

4. Reproduction
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* If yes, by whom (add if multiple):
  - name:
  - address:
  - affiliation:
  - e-mail:

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% Data Storage Fact Sheet 3

% Name/identifier study: Interviews with neighbourhood residents
% Author: Cedric Goossens
% Date: May 6, 2019

1. Contact details
===

1a. Main researcher

- name: Cedric Goossens
- address: Henri Dunantlaan 2, BE-9000, Ghent.
- e-mail: C.Goossens@UGent.be

1b. Responsible Staff Member (ZAP)

- name: Prof. dr. Lieve Bradt
- address: Henri Dunantlaan 2, BE-9000, Ghent.
- e-mail: Lieve.Bradt@UGent.be

If a response is not received when using the above contact details, please send an email to data.pp@ugent.be or contact Data Management, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Henri Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Ghent, Belgium.

2. Information about the datasets to which this sheet applies
===
* Reference of the publication in which the datasets are reported:

Publication 1: Goossens, C., Van Wymeersch, E., & Oosterlynck, S. (2018). Addertjes onder het (kunst)gras. Rooilijn, 51(3), 188-197.

Publication 2: Goossens, C., Bradt, L., & Oosterlynck, S. (Accepted with minor revisions). Livable streets? Green gentrification and the displacement of longtime residents in Ghent, Belgium. Urban Geography.

Publication 3: Goossens, C. (2019). Gentrification comes to school: Social mix and the struggle against educational inequality. (Doctoral dissertation).

* Which datasets in that publication does this sheet apply to?:

Publication 1: The sheet applies to all the interview data used in the publication.

Publication 2: The sheet applies to all the interview data used in the publication.

Publication 3: The sheet applies to the all the interview data used in the eighth chapter.

3. Information about the files that have been stored

==

3a. Raw data

----

* Have the raw data been stored by the main researcher? [X] YES / [ ] NO
If NO, please justify:

* On which platform are the raw data stored?
  - [X] researcher PC
  - [X] research group file server
  - [ ] other (specify):

* Who has direct access to the raw data (i.e., without intervention of another person)?
  - [X] main researcher
  - [X] responsible ZAP
  - [ ] all members of the research group
  - [ ] all members of UGent
  - [X] other (specify): The server administrator of the dapartment

3b. Other files

----

* Which other files have been stored?
  - [ ] file(s) describing the transition from raw data to reported results. Specify: ...
  - [X] file(s) containing processed data. Specify: Transcriptions of the interview recordings.
  - [ ] file(s) containing analyses. Specify: ...
  - [ ] files(s) containing information about informed consent
  - [ ] a file specifying legal and ethical provisions
  - [ ] file(s) that describe the content of the stored files and how this content should be interpreted. Specify: ...
  - [ ] other files. Specify: ...

* On which platform are these other files stored?
  - [X] individual PC

- [X] research group file server
- [ ] other: ...

* Who has direct access to these other files (i.e., without intervention of another person)?
  - [X] main researcher
  - [X] responsible ZAP
  - [ ] all members of the research group
  - [ ] all members of UGent
  - [X] other (specify): The Server administrator of the department

4. Reproduction
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