Environment and Planning A 2012, volume 44, pages 221 – 236

doi:10.1068/a4496

Gentrifiers and their choice of housing: characteristics of the households living in new developments in Swiss cities

Patrick Rérat
Institute of Geography and Research Group in Territorial Economy, University of Neuchâtel, Espace Louis-Agassiz 1, 2000 Neuchâtel, Switzerland; e-mail: Patrick.rerat@unine.ch
Received 19 February 2011; in revised form 21 July 2011

Abstract. This paper draws on the literature on residential mobility in order to address the housing choice of gentrifiers and its different dimensions (profile, trajectories, and motivations). The gentrification literature is reviewed in regard to these dimensions. Empirical material is based on questionnaires sent to the inhabitants of new high-status developments (new-build gentrification) in two Swiss cities (Zurich and Neuchâtel). By pointing out some of the characteristics found in the Swiss context, the results contribute to an understanding of the attributes of contemporary gentrifiers, such as their diversity in terms of life-course position, the transitory stage that living in a gentrified neighbourhood may represent, and the predominance of the convenience of urban life (proximity and mobility) in their motivations.

Keywords: gentrification, new-build gentrification, housing choice, residential mobility, life course, motivations, Switzerland

1 Introduction

Gentrification is a 'resilient term' (Bondi, 1999). In other words, it constitutes one of the rare fields of research that have remained a part of urban studies throughout the past forty years. In Glass's seminal definition, gentrification refers to the displacement of certain groups by wealthier ones in central and working-class areas, and to the material rehabilitation of those areas (Glass, 1964). Since then, processes of urban change have evolved and so too has the definition of gentrification to include other/new forms of social upgrading, other/new spaces, and other/new actors (see Lees et al, 2008; Slater et al, 2004).

Whilst the concept of gentrification was initially restricted to the rehabilitation of existing housing in inner-city areas ('classic' gentrification), several authors have termed the construction of high-status housing 'new-build gentrification' (Davidson and Lees, 2005; 2010). They look upon new buildings as a part of gentrification because these projects partake in the revaluation dynamics of central areas initiated by and/or to the benefit of the middle and upper classes (Davidson and Lees, 2005; 2010; He, 2010; Kern, 2010; Mills, 1988; Rérat et al, 2010b; Rose, 2010). Davidson and Lees (2005) argue that, as in 'classic gentrification', there are four principal characteristics of new-build gentrification: (1) capital is reinvested in disinvested urban areas (often on brownfield sites, but not always, such as in demolition/reconstruction operations); (2) a gentrified landscape/aesthetic is produced; (3) in-movers are the urbane new middle class; and (4) it causes displacement of low-income groups—whilst not direct displacement (except in the case of demolition/reconstruction), it does cause indirect economic and sociocultural displacement (through inflation in property value in neighbouring areas, and as a result of modification of the social structure of the neighbourhood).[1]

This extended definition of gentrification has been put forward in theme issues of *Environment and Planning A* (D P Smith and Butler, 2007), *Population, Space and Place* (Rérat et al, 2010a), and *Espaces et Sociétés* in the French-speaking context

[1] For more on displacement and new-build gentrification, see Davidson (2008).

(Bourdin, 2008; Rérat et al, 2008). According to several authors, it enables increased understanding of the social upgrading of cities in the context either of rehabilitation or of new developments (Lees et al, 2008; Rérat et al, 2010b). It has been challenged by some scholars, however, who prefer to use the terms residentialization and reurbanization, and restrict the notion of gentrification to classic processes with direct eviction effect (Boddy, 2007; Haase et al, 2010).

Gentrification first affected central working-class neighbourhoods that were 'colonized' by more affluent groups; since then, however, the spatiality of gentrification has become much more diverse. Studies have considered many national contexts, looking at the different levels of the urban hierarchy as well as other types of space, such as rural and touristic spaces (Atkinson and Bridge, 2005). The implicit thesis in this body of work is that these processes of urban change do not have a universal character, but take on different forms in relation to their local and national context of emergence. Thus several authors have called for a broader 'geography of gentrification' in order to take into account the contextuality of this phenomenon (Butler, 2007a; Lees, 2000; Ley, 1996).

Gentrification has evolved over time, as have the roles and characteristics of the actors involved (households, developers, local authorities, etc). Three waves of gentrification have been identified (Hackworth and Smith, 2001), the first of which is sporadic gentrification and is initiated by pioneering households. The second consists in the anchoring of gentrification, where the main protagonists are private investors. The third relies on the progentrification attitude of public authorities, and can be termed state-led gentrification.

This paper focuses on the characteristics of gentrifiers and draws on Rose's assertion that the conceptualization of gentrifiers needs to be continually refined and disaggregated in light of the inherent dynamism of gentrification processes (Rose, 1984). In other words, the characteristics of gentrifiers differ according to the form, the context, and the wave of gentrification. Twenty-five years after Rose's paper, these questions were revisited in a special session entitled "Who are the gentrifiers in contemporary urban and rural spaces?" organized by Darren Smith and Joana Sage at the Conference of the Association of American Geographers in Las Vegas in 2009.[(2)] According to their call for papers, "recent studies confirm that historical representations of prototypical gentrifiers are narrow and out-dated", and the questions regarding "who and what constitutes a gentrifier may have gone astray on the radar of scholars of gentrification".

Addressing such issues, this paper first draws on the literature on residential mobility in order to conceptualize housing choice. Through a review of the literature it then identifies the main characteristics of gentrifiers (profile, trajectories, and motivations). In the empirical section it discusses the characteristics of modern-day gentrifiers by focusing on their housing choice in the new developments in two Swiss cities (Zurich and Neuchâtel). This study aims to investigate the characteristics of gentrifiers in contexts that have thus far been somewhat neglected in research, including a certain form of gentrification (new-build gentrification), a certain country (Switzerland), and a certain level of the urban hierarchy (a medium-sized city in the case of Neuchâtel).

2 Characteristics of the gentrifiers

2.1 Theoretical insights about housing choice

Gentrification studies have long been divided between the "liberal humanists who stress the key role of choice, culture, consumption and consumer demand, and the

[(2)] A first draft of this paper was given during this session and also as part of a talk at the University of Brighton. The author is grateful to the organizers and to both audiences for their constructive comments.

structural Marxists who stress the role of capital, class, production and supply" (Hamnett, 1991, page 174). While scholars from the first group interpret gentrification mainly as the outcome of lifestyle choices made by the new middle class (Ley, 1996), the second current considers that the original cause of gentrification lies in the mobility of capital and in the historical cycles of investment/disinvestment in urban areas (N Smith, 1984), and argues that gentrification has moved from being a local anomaly to becoming a generalized and global urban strategy (Atkinson and Bridge, 2005; N Smith, 1996). However, the need to go beyond the positions of economics and culture has often been stressed over the last two decades, since these are "two sides of the same coin" (Lees, 1994, page 144).

Similar debates have taken place in residential mobility and migration studies and have opposed determinist and humanistic approaches (Boyle et al, 1998; Cadwallader, 1992). Determinist approaches play down the role of individuals and assume that their movements represent an inevitable response to the broad environment in which they live. Humanistic approaches see the individual migrant as an active decision maker who has a real choice to migrate, but pay little attention to the structures that individuals cannot control (housing prices and availability, public policies, etc).

The term 'housing choice' or 'residential choice' might not seem to overcome this duality at first sight, given its positive connotations (for a detailed discussion, see Van Ham, forthcoming). However, housing choice should be considered the result both of aspirations and of constraints (Bonvalet and Dureau, 2000; Brun and Bonvalet, 2002). More precisely, the choice of a dwelling depends on a household's needs and preferences within a choice set determined by each household's resources and restrictions (financial means, job location, etc), as well as by both constraints and opportunities within the housing market (availability of dwellings in a given residential context, prices, etc) (Mulder and Hooimeijer, 1999; Van Ham, forthcoming).

The concept of housing choice signifies that households have some degree of freedom, even within a limited choice set. This theoretical positioning legitimates the analysis of three ranges of features, the first of which is household profile (life-course position, socioeconomic status, etc), since gentrification, as any residential or migratory phenomenon, is a selective process. The second of these features is the 'trajectory', which encompasses the characteristics and locations of past, present, and future dwellings and sets housing choice within the life course. The third involves household motivations, which explain the choice of dwelling. Housing is a composite good that can be described by its various characteristics, including tenure, size, quality, and (relative) location (Van Ham, forthcoming). Residents take these characteristics into account when they make decisions, but most of them have to trade off various elements to choose "a dwelling meeting their most important needs and preferences within their budget and the choice set offered by the housing market" (Van Ham, forthcoming).

Applying the perspective of housing choice to gentrification may help to explain why some parts of the middle classes decide to live in the inner city, while many more decide to move to the suburbs (Hamnett, 1991). It may also provide evidence of the diversity of gentrifiers, and in this sense heeds Rose's call to refine the conceptualization of gentrifiers (Rose, 1984). In the following sections we address these questions by rereading the gentrification literature through the lenses of these three dimensions of housing choice (profile, trajectories, and motivations).

2.2 Profile

Gentrification has sometimes been explained by the rise of the new middle class, or 'service class' (Ley, 1996), or by the professionalization of the labour force (Hamnett, 1991). Other scholars have pointed out that this rise is a necessary but not sufficient

precondition for gentrification (Hjorthol and Bjornskau, 2005). In reality, activities related to the service class have always been predominantly located in central areas. Moreover, it would appear that the majority of this population group partakes in suburbanization. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the same argument of economic restructuring (deindustrialization and professionalization) is also used to explain urban sprawl (see, for example, Squires, 2002, page 3). This may sound contradictory, but can be explained in terms of scale: the growth of highly skilled services leads to an increase in the importance and concentration of the service class in the urban and metropolitan regions. However, other factors are also necessary to explain the distribution of the service class between central areas and inner/outer suburbs. These factors are discussed further below.

The typical gentrifier has long been identified (Ley, 1996): small and usually childless middle-class households, often unmarried, primarily under 35 years of age, employed mainly in the advanced services (professional, administrative, technical, and managerial occupations), and highly educated. Many researchers have shown the fragmentation and fluidity of the middle class and the great diversity of its consumption practices (Warde, 1991). Gentrifiers themselves also differ from several points of view (type of dwelling, level of income, kind of household, lifestyle, etc), and therefore represent different submarkets (Ley, 1996).

Consequently, there are other processes in addition to economic restructuring which explain the growth and diversity of gentrifiers: life-course position (D P Smith, 2002); the increase in nonfamily young adult households (Van Criekingen, 2010); the increasing participation of women in the job market; the growing number of women living alone and in dual-career households (Bondi, 1999; Kern, 2010; Rose, 1984); the role of gay communities (Lauria and Knopp, 1985); and the growth of a transnational and circulating elite (Butler and Lees, 2006; Lees, 2003; Sassen, 2001).

A further explanation for the diversity of gentrifiers relies on the three waves of the process of gentrification (Hamnett, 2003). In the first wave, artists are in many cases the forerunners of gentrification, occupying buildings with a low rent but with a promising location (Ley, 2003), as shown for example by the phenomenon of loft living (Zukin, 1982). Their lifestyle works as an attractor for students and marginal gentrifiers, which are then followed by a cultural middle class that encompasses persons active in the arts, design, media, education, health care, etc. In the third wave, gentrifiers are said to have a higher income (with no 'sweat equity', as they buy products designed by developers) and to be more 'established' (such as families).

2.3 Trajectories

The second dimension of housing choice is household trajectory: that is, the characteristics and locations of their past, present, and future dwellings. A central question is the former place of residence. Whilst some early studies postulated that gentrification would provoke a back-to-the-city movement, it is now established that most gentrifiers are not former suburbanites, but city dwellers who relocate within the city. In other words, the dominant trend is a stay-in-the-city phenomenon (Hamnett and Whitelegg, 2007; Laska and Spain, 1980; Ley, 1996).

Other aspects related to trajectory, such as the stability of the current housing choice and future housing projects, are rarely analyzed in the literature. Some authors consider gentrification as a rejection of suburbia (Caulfield, 1989), whilst others have shown that the move into a gentrified neighbourhood could represent a stage both in life course and in housing career, and might in fact simply postpone a move to the suburbs. Moving to the suburbs may then be motivated at a later date by concerns

such as raising children in a more suitable environment, or providing them with a better education (Bridge, 2006).

Another dimension of the trajectory of gentrifiers is their tenure status. Engels (1999, page 1475) showed that the inverse relationship between the tenure status of in-moving gentrifiers and gentrified out-movers is usually taken for granted: the former are essentially assumed to be homebuyers, and the latter to be renters. The distinction is not always quite so clear, however, as a large sector of private homeowners may exist prior to the in-migration of gentrifiers; in addition, gentrification may be partly attributed to middle-class renters (1999, page 1475). Van Criekingen (2010) identifies in Brussels a phenomenon of rental gentrification where life course, geographical trajectory, and tenure status are interlinked. In some neighbourhoods, the rental cost of accommodation is increasing and thus pricing out working-class families whilst attracting young adults in nonfamily households. Renting in an inner-city neighbourhood has limited temporal boundaries, however, since later many of these young adults will move to more socially homogeneous residential environments in (sub)urban municipalities.

2.4 Motivations

Two main logics are usually identified in the residential motivations of gentrifiers (Bromley et al, 2007; Hjorthol and Bjornskau, 2005; Tallon and Bromley, 2004). The first and most common of these stresses the valorization of the urban life by gentrifiers. To live in the inner city is regarded as a 'middle-class desire', as a strategy of distinction of the new middle class, in order to avoid the suburbs being perceived as too mundane and common (Caulfield, 1989). Ley (1996; 2003) places within this valorization logic the aesthetization and commodification of art and ways of life associated with artists, as well as conspicuous consumption (ethnic restaurants, bars, galleries, boutiques, etc).

The second logic stresses the convenience of urban life and practical aspects related to proximity. These can also differentiate suburbanites from gentrifiers, since the latter want to avoid the time–space constraints of the suburbs and to use transport modes other than the car (Danyluk and Ley, 2007; Hamnett and Whitelegg, 2007; Hjorthol and Bjornskau, 2005; Rérat and Lees, 2011). For Donzelot (2004), gentrifiers are potentially very mobile and often on a quest for ubiquity. Practical aspects seem particularly important for dual-career couples, who have to balance their work, social, and family life (Karsten, 2003).

On the whole, this second logic is less present in the literature than is the valorization logic. This could be explained by the fact that it is more relevant to secondary centres (Tallon and Bromley, 2004), which have appeared less often in gentrification studies (Dutton, 2003), whilst the valorization logic predominates in metropolitan areas.

Finally, some studies indicate additional motivations, as well as certain constraints that gentrifiers have to deal with. Butler and Robson (2003) find that gentrifiers in London wish to live among households sharing the same characteristics, although they are also looking for social mix. They aim to accommodate the different aspects of life in a global city, in which case gentrification can be regarded as a coping strategy. In other parts of London (such as the high-status developments in the Docklands), Butler (2007b) notes that some motivations differ from the ones usually found among gentrifiers and are closer to those of suburbanites, with a strong accent on security and a refusal of social mix.

3 Context

In comparison with other countries, gentrification appeared rather late in Switzerland.[3] This can be explained through a series of factors related to the real estate market, such as the property rate, which is generally low in Switzerland (one third of the total accommodation), and even lower in urban areas (less than 10%). The difficult access to property in cities may induce wealthy households—some of which could contribute to gentrification—to leave the centre for the outskirts. Furthermore, the institutional framework makes it problematic for property owners to cancel leases, which offers protection to lessees and limits the process of classic gentrification.

The existing research on gentrification in Switzerland is based mainly on population censuses, which took place every ten years until 2000. These censuses provide insights about the residential attractiveness as well as the population composition of cities, and show a general rise in the social status of those living in cities during the 1990s (Hermann et al, 2005). In Zurich, for example, the number of disadvantaged social groups has decreased, and younger and better qualified individuals with higher incomes have settled in the centre (Heye and Leuthold, 2004).

In the context of Zurich, researchers active within INURA (International Network for Urban Research and Action) have analyzed the supply side of gentrification. They have outlined developments in Zurich's municipal urban policies and criticized their role in the rise in social inequality (Hitz et al, 1995; INURA, 2004). Another study has shown that the majority of new-build development in Zurich was replacement building (ie, a new construction on a plot that had been cleared preliminarily). This phenomenon is associated with socioeconomic upgrading and implies direct population displacement (Koll-Schretzenmayr and Kramp, 2010).

On the scale of the urban system, an analysis based on migration flows (Rérat et al, 2010b) has shown that in the 1990s, cities were still on the whole characterized by a negative migration balance of higher socioprofessional categories (SPC+), although this situation is more nuanced when put into a historical and geographical perspective. SPC+ left the cities far less in the 1990s than in the 1970s, and a clear trend reversal was observed in some cases (in Zurich, Zug, and Winterthur, for example). As a result of regeneration projects, the renewed attractiveness of cities for SPC+ has strengthened since the 2000 Census, and with SPC+ distinctly overrepresented in recent dwellings, new-build gentrification is now the dominant form of gentrification in Switzerland (see the empirical part of this paper).

4 Case studies and methodology

The empirical material for the current research is taken from two case studies: the city of Neuchâtel (NE) and the district of Zurich West (ZW). The profile, trajectories, and motivations of the residents of new developments were determined through a questionnaire posted to all households living in dwellings built between January 2001 and August 2007 (493 in NE and 630 in ZW). The response rates were higher than is usually the case in the Swiss context: 46.3% in NE and 44.8% in ZW.

Neuchâtel is a medium-sized French-speaking provincial city (33 000 residents; 80 000 including suburbs). The housing developments studied were of different sizes and mainly located near the city centre and the train station (figure 1). They were built mainly on former industrial sites and vacant land, but also on some previously built land, inducing the direct displacement of sixty-five dwellings. In addition, there has been classic displacement in several rehabilitated buildings (about seventy dwellings) around the train station and the new developments. An analysis of this displacement

[3] It should be noted, however, that a strong squatter movement was active in Zurich and Geneva throughout the 1980s in response to speculative real estate activities (see Stahel, 2006).

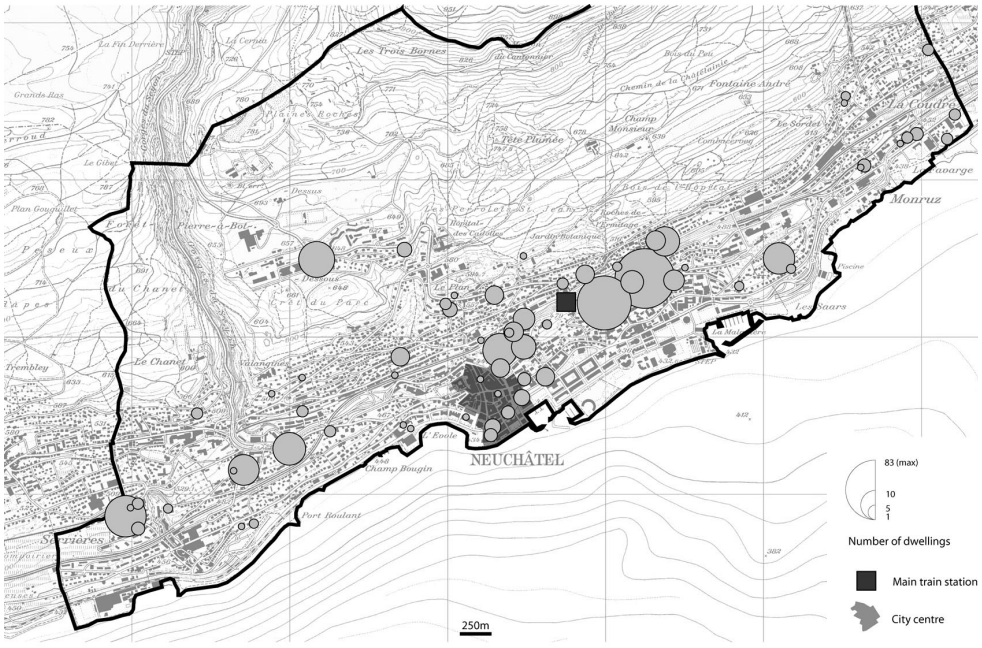

Figure 1. New-build developments in Neuchâtel (reproduced by permission of swisstopo; BA100158).

in adjacent neighbourhoods and in the case of ZW is, however, out of the scope of the paper.

Zurich is a German-speaking city, the economic capital and the largest centre in Switzerland (359 000 residents; 1 132 000 including suburbs). The research focused on a neighbourhood close to the centre called Zurich West. When this previously industrial district began to deindustrialize in the 1980s, some of the abandoned buildings were given over to cultural and nighttime activities, turning ZW into a fashionable area (INURA, 2004). But once investors and landowners began to realize this new potential, they reclaimed the buildings they owned and evicted many of the cultural activities. Thus over the past ten years, ZW has seen the construction of new-build developments of a hundred units or more (figure 2). As there were no preexisting dwellings in ZW, there was no direct population displacement.(4) Classic gentrification is occuring, however, in the neighbouring and formerly working-class areas of Gewerbeschule and Langstrasse.

The new developments in both cities were financed by private investors. In NE these included institutional investors (such as insurance companies or pension funds), who built the larger projects and rented the apartments, and real estate companies that built the smaller developments and then sold each apartment individually to get a quick return on investment. In ZW, the developers were mainly institutional investors, stock market listed property funds, and former industrial companies. In terms of size, the dwellings are generous (table 1), the majority comprising more than four rooms (three bedrooms and a living room). Dwellings in NE tend to be larger, although some of the dwellings with few rooms in ZW are large loft apartments, which have fewer, but larger, rooms.

(4) For more on new developments and eviction effect in other areas of Zurich, see Koll-Schretzenmayr and Kramp (2010).

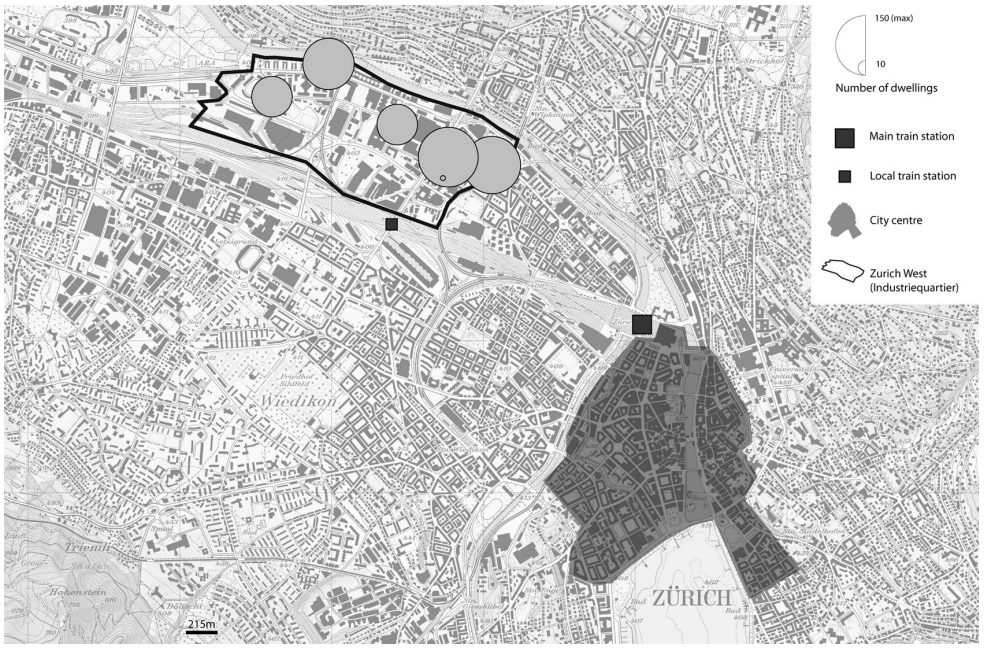

Figure 2. New-build developments in Zurich West (reproduced by permission of swisstopo; BA100158).

Table 1. Size of the dwellings (source: questionnaire surveys, 2007).

Number of rooms	Zurich West (%)	Neuchâtel (%)
1 – 1.5	10.5	1.4
2 – 2.5	16.4	10.1
3 – 3.5	22.8	16.4
4 – 4.5	31.3	44.3
$\geqslant 5$	19.0	27.9
Total	100.0	100.0

Focusing both on a medium-sized provincial city and on a much larger metropolitan city avoids the 'scale and context' problematic recently voiced in the gentrification literature. In the context of the UK, for example, Butler (2007b) argues that the smaller, provincial city of Bristol is simply insufficiently large to embrace the variation in social habitus and sense of belonging that can be found in the much larger global metropole of London. Indeed, several differences distinguish provincial and metropolitan gentrification. Gentrification tends to appear later in second-tier or third-tier cities, where it is sometimes a consequence of the proximity of bigger centres (Dutton, 2003). As stated above, gentrification in nonmetropolitan contexts relies on a diversity of households and on motivations based on the practical and mundane attractions of city centre life rather than on lifestyle and cultural attractions, which are the main pull factors in metropolitan cities (Tallon and Bromley, 2004). The two cities of Neuchâtel and Zurich were deliberately selected to take into account this important difference in geographical and sociological scale.

5 Characteristics of the inhabitants of the new dwellings

5.1 Profile

The inhabitants of the new dwellings are characterized by a relatively high level of cultural and economic capital. The level of education is very high in the new projects, where the proportion of people with a university degree accounts for 50.7% in NE and 67.4% in ZW, though accounting for less than a quarter of the cities' total population.[5] People with low qualifications, on the other hand, are almost absent in recent developments (NE: 5.6%; ZW: 1.4%) but represent about 30% of the cities' total population. Another indicator reveals an economic capital above average: homeownership is much more widespread in the new projects (NE: 38.8%; ZW: 27.7%) than in the cities' total housing stock (NE: 11.2%; ZH: 7.1%).

Another important feature of the inhabitants' profile is their life-course position. In ZW, almost two thirds of the inhabitants are between 25 and 44 years old (figure 3), which is above what is usually found in the literature. This may be explained by the fact that new-build dwellings are rather expensive and require financial means usually not yet accumulated in the early stages of a labour career. In NE the overrepresentation of 25 to 44-year-olds is also found, but to a lesser extent (39.9%). Two secondary peaks—of children aged less than 10 years (indicating young families) and of preretirement adults (empty nesters)—indicate a wide diversity of gentrifiers in the city.

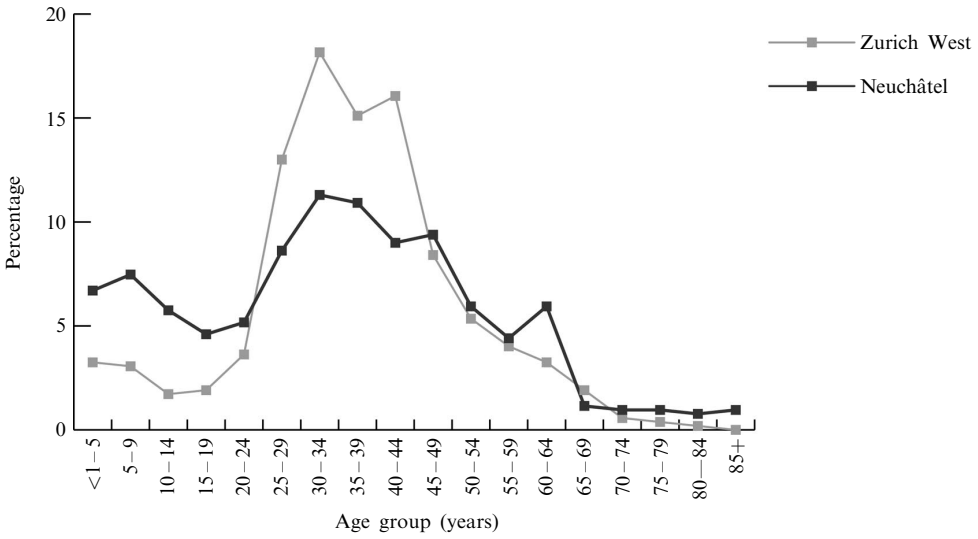

Figure 3. Population by age group in % (source: questionnaire surveys, 2007).

Investigation into the kind of household adds further information to these results (table 2). ZW complies with the literature, since nonfamily households occupy 85.6% of the dwellings: one third of the population of ZW are persons living alone, another third are childless couples, and almost a fifth are flatshares. In comparison to the city as a whole, however, persons living alone are underrepresented, since a new dwelling is often too expensive for a sole salary. In Switzerland, flatshares used to concern only students and it is only recently that we find young, employed, and highly educated adults sharing flats (although this has been more common in bigger cities such as London).

In NE the situation is more complex and diverse. Nonfamily households occupy over half of the dwellings (56.6%) but are much less present than in ZW. Moreover, whilst

[5] Comparisons between the survey and the population of cities are drawn from the 2000 census.

Table 2. Type of household in percentages (source: questionnaires, 2007; censuses, 2000).

Household type	Zurich		Neuchâtel	
	new dwellings (Zurich West, 2007	whole city (2000)	new dwellings (2007)	whole city (2000)
Couples with children	11.9	16.1	37.3	20.9
Childless couples	34.1	22.9	31.2	24.6
Persons living alone	34.1	50.7	21.9	46.1
Single-parent families	2.5	4.4	6.1	5.8
Flatshares	17.4	5.4	3.5	2.2
Other	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.5

childless couples are almost as numerous in NE as in ZW, their profile is different, including a higher proportion of empty nesters than in ZW, where they are mainly young couples. Nuclear families are found in two flats out of five in NE, almost double that found in the city as a whole. Such a significant presence of families is rather unusual according to the gentrification literature, but can be explained by some of the characteristics of the regeneration projects in NE, which made them appear more suitable for families (dwelling size, residential environment, etc).

5.2 Trajectories

Initially, the new dwellings induced a stay-in-the-city phenomenon, since the majority of their inhabitants had already lived in the city before moving to the new neighbourhoods (NE: 57.1%; ZW: 70.3%). People from the suburban region correspond to 13.2% (NE) and 8.4% (ZW) of the total population of the new dwellings, which suggests that the new developments were less attractive to suburbanites. People from other parts of Switzerland represent 25.8% (NE) and 16.7% (ZW), whilst migrants from abroad are clearly underrepresented (3.9% in NE and 4.6% in ZW; by comparison, foreigners account for about 30% of the resident population and represented 10.3% and 15.8% of all movers in Neuchâtel and Zurich, respectively, between 1995 and 2000). The predominance of local people may be explained by the fact that such dwellings are rare and much sought after, and that it was easier for households who knew the local housing market to access these flats.

To live in NE or ZW was a clear objective for the majority of households. In NE 55.3% did not consider living outside the city boundaries, suggesting that, even in a small city, the quest for centrality often excludes neighbouring municipalities. In ZW 90% of the households who considered living in a location other than ZW looked elsewhere within the city. This can be regarded as an indicator of attractiveness not only of a central location but also of certain neighbourhoods for gentrifiers. Such neighbourhoods tend to be other areas where 'classic' gentrification is taking place (Boroughs 3, 4, 6, and 8).

The current housing choice remains stable for those who own a home: 80% in NE and ZW estimate that the probability of their moving is very low or excluded. In Switzerland, ownership has a great influence on mobility, either as a brake when the household owns the home or as a trigger to move when the household aspires to leave the rental market. The projected moves of renters, however, differ between the case studies. A move seems probable for 62.3% in NE against 27.7% in ZW, although half of those in NE and eight out of nine in ZW do not exclude the possibility of relocation within the city. These results may sound paradoxical given the overrepresentation in ZW of households more likely to change in structure (flatshares, people living alone, childless couples), but there are several possible explanations. First, as the labour

Table 3. Percentage of households rating the factors as important or very important (source: questionnaire surveys, 2007).[a]

Factor	Zurich West	Neuchâtel	Difference	*p*-value
Proximity of the city centre	92.0	77.6	−14.4	0.001
Location of the dwelling	91.8	90.4	−1.4	ns
Urban public transport services	91.4	73.3	−18.1	0.001
Possibility of walking or cycling	87.0	74.0	−13.0	0.001
Size of the dwelling	82.5	86.7	4.2	ns
Characteristics of the dwelling (design, originality)	78.3	82.5	4.2	ns
Cultural offerings (theatre, cinema, etc)	77.6	45.6	−32.0	0.001
Proximity of workplace	74.9	61.5	−14.4	0.001
Proximity of shops and services	75.6	70.6	−5.0	ns
Balcony or garden	75.5	81.6	6.1	ns
Proximity of the train station	68.1	62.4	−5.7	ns
Rent or price of the dwelling	63.0	61.60	−1.4	ns
Diversity of the urban population; events, festivals, etc	62.2	29.2	−33.0	0.001
Proximity of parks, green space, and the lake	60.3	48.4	−11.9	0.01
Living in a new dwelling	52.9	64.0	11.1	0.05
Nightlife	52.7	19.5	−33.2	0.001
Presence of friends and family in the city	45.8	29.6	−16.2	0.001
Security in the neighbourhood	38.6	53.9	15.3	0.001
Reputation and image of the neighbourhood	35.2	32.0	−3.2	ns
Kind of population living in the neighbourhood	34.1	28.2	−5.9	ns
View	33.8	65.3	31.5	0.001
Accessibility by car; availability of parking spaces	32.2	54.4	22.2	0.001
Quietness of the neighbourhood	18.6	65.0	46.4	0.001
Proximity of schools and nurseries	9.5	37.9	28.4	0.001
Reputation of schools	6.7	21.7	15.0	0.001

Note. ns—not significant.
[a] χ^2 tests have been used to determine if the difference between case studies for each item is statistically significant.

market is smaller in NE, young actives may think of moving to another region for their professional career. Second, the local rent level is generally high in the context of the local housing market in NE, and some young residents may prefer to spend the same amount of money on ownership, even if it means leaving the city. Third, the current dwelling may represent a transitory stage for families, who may later consider moving to other dwellings, perhaps when the children have grown up. Thus, for some households, the current housing choice does not mean a final refusal of the single-family house in the suburbs. Indeed, one renter in five in NE esteems it likely or very likely that they will later move to this kind of housing. In such cases it would appear that living in a core city may correspond to a particular stage in the life course.

5.3 Motivations

Households living in new dwellings were asked to rate a series of features of their residential context. Three groups of factors emerge (table 3): the comfort of the dwelling, the convenience of living in a central area, and the valorization of urban life.

First, certain characteristics of the dwelling are seen as important or very important by more than 75% of households (including location, size, design, etc). These features were among the most frequently quoted in both case studies, and by all types of household, whatever their life-course position. This may be explained partly by the fact that most of the people asked had previously lived in the city, and may have been waiting for an opportunity in the housing market before moving to a higher quality dwelling. These factors are not specific to urban areas, however, and there are other reasons for which residents may seek a central location.

Second, factors related to proximity and accessibility were judged as important or very important by a majority of households. These factors included the proximity of the city centre, urban public transport services, the possibility of walking/cycling, and the proximity of shops, services, the train station, and the workplace. These were often valued to an even higher degree in ZW. On the whole, the convenience of city life is based on the physical proximity of urban amenities, on walking, cycling, and public transportation. Thus the role of the car is reduced, which is without a doubt one of the big differences between the city and the suburbs, where travel by car usually predominates.

An additional indicator regarding practical aspects is the workplace location. A clear majority of inhabitants works within the boundaries of NE (60.7%) and Zurich (71.6%). Besides this logic of proximity, a logic of connectivity is also identified. The proportion of interurban commuters (people living in one core city and working in another) amounts for 21.4% in NE and 9.8% in ZW. For the interurban commuters, to live in a central area means to be localized on one node of the railway network that constitutes the physical frame of the Swiss urban system. They constitute an important proportion of the gentrifiers, particularly in the case of a medium-sized city like Neuchâtel, whose labour market is limited and which is within 40 mins by train of larger centres (mainly Bern and Lausanne).

Third, some elements related to the valorization of urban life appear: cultural offerings (theatre, cinema), the diversity of the urban population, the animation of city life, and the nightlife. Their importance is more pronounced in ZW than in NE, which in this case indicates the influence of the size of the city. Finally, other aspects of the urban environment and of the neighbourhood, such as schools, appear to be much less important.[6]

6 Conclusion

Since Glass coined the term, gentrification has been studied in a wide range of contexts. Its definition has evolved over time to include new forms of social upgrading, such as new-build gentrification. The same can be said about gentrifiers, confirming Rose's intuition (1984) that their conceptualization needs continually to be refined in light of the dynamism of gentrification processes.

This paper has addressed the characteristics of gentrifiers in the context of new developments in two Swiss case studies. To conclude, some of the results regarding the profiles, trajectories, and motivations of gentrifiers will be discussed in relation to the literature. These elements indicate the importance of life-course position in

[6] This can be explained by the fact that in 2007/08, according to the Federal Statistical Office, 94.6% of children attended a state school. There are very few private schools and most state schools have comparable reputations, although there is some indication now in larger cities like Zurich that Swiss families are choosing not to send their children to schools in central neighbourhoods with what they perceive to be large numbers of immigrant children in them. As a result, such families may move to other parts of the city or suburban municipalities where the proportion of allophones is lower.

gentrification, the difference between urban contexts (metropolitan versus provincial gentrification) and the importance of practical aspects in gentrifiers' motivations.

The majority of the inhabitants of the new dwellings are aged between 25 and 44, which confirms the importance of life-course position in gentrification processes (D P Smith, 2002; Van Criekingen, 2010). This population is older than the usual gentrifiers, however, which may be explained by the nature of new-build gentrification, where households tend to possess greater economic resources and to be more 'established' (eg, families and empty nesters) than in classic processes (Karsten, 2003). The trajectories of these households confirms that a stay-in-the-city phenomenon is dominant, while the back-to-the-city movement is limited (Laska and Spain, 1980; Ley, 1996). Prospective movers were mainly interested in the city itself, which can be interpreted as a refusal of the suburbs (Caulfield, 1989); this refusal may be only temporary, however, since households may later consider other locations outside the city boundaries, perhaps when their children have grown up, or when they have the financial means to access homeownership (usually easier in the suburbs).

These results show that gentrification and urban sprawl coexist not only on the scale of urban regions, but also at the individual level. Further research is needed—notably in the form of longitudinal analyses—to better understand gentrification in a life-course perspective and to place the move to a gentrified neighbourhood in the geographical and residential trajectory of incoming households. Questions for further research might include the following: What will happen in new developments such as the ones studied here? Will they witness a turnover of residents (with some middle-class households moving out to the suburbs and others moving in)? Or will the population remain fairly stable so that the growing urbane new middle class will be directed elsewhere in the city, extending the gentrification frontier to other neighbourhoods (and generating the eviction of low-income residents)?

The current study focused on both a medium-sized city and a metropolitan city. Differences in terms of life-course position between ZW and NE confirm at first sight the hypothesis of a provincial gentrification based on a diversity of households (including families) and a metropolitan gentrification primarily involving nonfamily households (Bromley et al, 2007; Tallon and Bromley, 2004). The wider diversity observed in NE (higher proportion of families and empty nesters) is explained by the size of the city, the residential contexts, and by the particularities of the housing projects under study. In NE, dwellings are larger in terms of number of rooms (and thus correspond more to the needs of families), and a higher proportion has been sold (homeownership is less accessible to young adults). At the same time, developments in ZW may not have been very attractive for families, given the size and configuration of the housing projects, the high level of road traffic, and the fact that the residential context is still marked by its former industrial vocation.

The 'scale and context' problematic (Butler, 2007a), and the opposition between provincial and metropolitan gentrification (Lees et al, 2008; Tallon and Bromley, 2004; Dutton, 2003) appear mainly through three results. First, in metropolitan ZW, flatshares of young professionals are quite numerous, whilst this way of living is much less common in NE. Second, the motivations of gentrifiers are based much more on lifestyle considerations in ZW (cultural offerings, nightlife, diversity of the population, etc) than in the smaller city. Third, the higher proportion of interurban commuters in NE reveals that provincial gentrification is not a purely endogenous process, but benefits in part from the dynamics of higher levels of the urban hierarchy. Here also some further research is required, in order to expand geographically the analysis of gentrification and to explore the specific forms, spaces, and actors of gentrification in small/medium cities.

Finally, when looking at residential motivations, the convenience of city life appears to be of utmost importance. Gentrifiers highly value the proximity of daily frequented places, and prefer alternative modes of transport to the car. These practical aspects are often underestimated in the literature (see, however, Bromley et al, 2007; Danyluk and Ley, 2007; Hamnett and Whitelegg, 2007; Hjorthol and Bjornskau, 2005; Tallon and Bromley, 2004). Our results show that gentrifiers can be very mobile, as shown by an important minority of interurban commuters. Whilst this result may be specific to countries sharing certain characteristics with Switzerland (such as dense railway networks and a highly decentralized urban system), it also indicates in a more general sense the changing relationship of parts of the middle and upper classes with proximity/mobility (Rérat and Lees, 2011). The emergence of very mobile middle and upper classes as well as the social implications of new-build developments (direct and indirect eviction effects) deserve more attention from researchers, particularly in the frame of the current debates on spatial planning that promote urban densification and on the definition/implementation of urban forms more in line with the principles of sustainable development.

Acknowledgements. The author would like to thank Roger Besson, Étienne Piguet, and Ola Söderström (Institute of Geography, University of Neuchâtel) who were involved in the project 'Back to the City?' (Swiss National Science Foundation; request 107033) and the anonymous referees.

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