

# Spatial capital, gentrification and mobility: evidence from Swiss core cities

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In this paper we are critical of the fact that the gentrification literature has moved away from discussions about the reclaiming of locational advantage as a marker of gentrifiers' social distinction within the middle classes. We begin the process of re/theorising locational advantage as 'spatial capital' focusing on the mobility practices of new-build gentrifiers in Swiss core cities. Gentrification is a relatively new process in Swiss cities and is dominated by new-build developments in central city areas. We focus on two case studies: Neuchâtel and the Zurich West area of Zurich. We show that Swiss new-build gentrifiers have sought locational advantage in the central city, and in so doing have gained the 'spatial capital' that they need to negotiate and cope with dual career households and the restrictive job markets of Swiss cities. The mobility practices of these gentrifiers show how they are both hyper-mobile and hyper-fixed, they are mobile and rooted/fixated.

**key words** spatial capital locational advantage mobility new-build gentrification Switzerland cities

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## Introduction

Since the mid-1980s, for the most part gentrification has been analysed in terms of the new middle classes marking out their social distinction from the suburban masses (see Lees *et al.* 2008, chap. 3); in comparison, analyses of locational advantage and mobility practices (e.g. Berry 1985; Black 1975; LeBoy and Soustelie 1979; Sternlieb and Hughes 1979) have all but disappeared. By way of contrast, debates about urban and environmental sustainability have focused on the locational advantages of inner-city living. To combat environmental problems and to regulate urban sprawl, policymakers are urging populations to live in high density, compact cities, in which mobility practices will become more localised and less automobile-dependent. Gentrification is now sold to us as a sustainable urban form: the British urban renaissance, for example, is premised on the compact urban form and value is placed on proximity: the shorter the commute to work, the more environmentally

sustainable it is (Lees 2003a). Indeed, in many of the most influential texts of the past decade to have impacted urban policy, space and spatiality play an increasingly central role (e.g. Castells 1998; Florida 2005; Putnam 2000). Yet according to urban planners (Batty 2008) and urban morphologists (Talen 2003), we still have underdeveloped theories on cities as spatial entities, especially at the detailed level of experience.

At the same time, social theorists like Urry (2000 2007) have attempted to reconceptualise sociology away from the traditional approaches of spatial mobility and social mobility, urging researchers to consider a broader range of mobilities in globalised late modern societies: an emphasis on mobility over fixity and on circulations and fluxes. Geographers have followed suit (see Adey 2009). But for us the mobilities literature<sup>1</sup> has gone too far (see also Shaw and Hesse 2010), indeed, Urry seems to recognise this (see Adey and Bissell 2010). We would argue that mobility and fixity are two parts of the same coin. Our argument shares some

similarities with emerging work that views mobility as a stabilising process, as a way of belonging to particular communities, and thoughts about connectivity in mobility and attachment to home (for example, Andreotti and Le Gales 2008; Andreotti *et al.* forthcoming; McCormack 2008; and the work and activism of Valery Alzaga).<sup>2</sup> Cresswell (2010), citing Hannam *et al.*'s (2006) treatise 'mobilities need moorings', tacks fixity onto the very end of his long list of things the mobilities paradigm/turn needs to do in moving towards a politics of mobility. But fixity should not be tacked onto research on mobility, it should be up front and right beside it.

In this paper (following arguments first made in Butler and Lees 2006), we argue that it is necessary to study both mobility and rootedness, by looking at the mobility experiences of individuals and the fixity of place of residence. We do so through an investigation of the residential choices made by Swiss gentrifiers living in new-build developments at the centre of Swiss core cities,<sup>3</sup> choices that allow them to increase their 'spatial capital'. Focusing on both residency and workplace, we show how these gentrifiers use locational advantage to negotiate dual career households and the restrictive job markets of Swiss cities.

Drawing on Bourdieu (1984 1987 1993), we begin by conceptualising different forms of capital and we criticise these for underplaying spatial advantages. We move on to show how sociologists and others have begun to extend ideas of capital towards mobility and we define the concept of 'spatial capital'. We then re-read the gentrification literature with spatial capital as a guiding thread, before turning to empirical data on the residential motivations and mobility practices of gentrifiers living in new-build developments in two Swiss core cities: Zurich and Neuchâtel.

## Spatial capital and mobility

For Bourdieu (1984 1993), individuals were not defined by social class but by the differing amounts of capital they possessed and their position in social space, which was made up of these different types of capital. Bourdieu (1987) defined economic capital as monetary income and financial assets; cultural capital as an embodied disposition that reflects the habitus, it has two kinds – that incorporated through education and knowledge and the symbolic kind that demonstrates moral and aesthetic values; and social capital as that which is mobilised

through social networks and relations. These different forms of capital are played out in the 'field', a kind of social arena in which Bourdieu recognises the centrality of social relations to social analysis.

We argue that Bourdieu's analytical framework enables us to understand the strategies pursued by gentrifiers in their attempt to establish inner city neighbourhoods as sites of cultural reproduction and community (Butler 1997), but this tells us only a little about locational choice. Butler with Robson (2003, 11) are right to argue that perceptions of space and place are crucial in explaining how capital is deployed in building gentrified neighbourhoods, but they tend to focus on social networks and class identity. By way of contrast, recent work has begun to extend the notion of capital towards that of mobility, placing spatial capital in the frame.

Several sociologists have stressed the necessity of addressing the phenomenon of mobility beyond the actual practices of individuals and of taking into account their potential mobility; they have advanced the concepts of 'spatial capital' or 'motility' (Flamm and Kaufmann 2006; Kaufmann 2002; Kaufmann *et al.* 2004; Lévy 2000) as well as 'network capital' (Urry 2007). Spatial capital encompasses three interdependent elements: access, competence and appropriation (Flamm and Kaufmann 2006; Kaufmann *et al.* 2004). First, access is related to the range of possible mobilities according to place, time and other contextual constraints. It refers more exactly to the means of transportation and communication that are available in a given place and at a given time. Second, competence refers to the skills of individuals. These can be physical (e.g. the ability to cycle), acquired (e.g. a driving licence) or organisational (e.g. the ability to plan and synchronise activities). Finally, appropriation refers to the strategies, motivations, values and practices of individuals. It includes the way individuals act in terms of access and competences (be they perceived or real) and how they use their potential mobilities.

Several arguments for considering mobility as spatial capital have been put forward (for a more thorough discussion, see Kaufmann *et al.* 2004 and Urry 2007). First, as for other forms of capital, an unequal level of spatial capital endowment (in terms of access, competence and appropriation) characterises different members of a society, reflecting the different degree of use, and mastery of, the spatial aspects of life. In this sense, spatial capital

is a factor in social differentiation. Second, spatial capital can be accumulated, it may be transformed into travel and it may be exchanged with other forms of capital. For example, a person could pay more money for their dwelling/home in order to benefit from what is perceived to be a more favourable location (locational advantage). Third, spatial capital is not simply determined by the other forms of capital. It depends on access, competence and appropriation that depend in turn on several variables such as residential location (availability of public transport, etc.), purchasing power (that enables the use of different means of transport, etc.), age (driving licence, etc.), awareness of environmental issues (in the choice to own a car, for example), and so on.

These points also raise issues related to the consequences of developments in transport and telecommunications technology. As Kaufmann *et al.* (2004) point out, two positions on social change and spatial mobility can be identified. For many scholars, the shrinkage of space-time and new mobility patterns are creating fundamental social changes (see Harvey 1989, on time-space compression). Other scholars, however, downplay these impacts and stress the 'robust nature and enduring necessity of traditional human communication procedures' and the 'compulsion of proximity' (Boden and Molotch 1994). This debate echoes one that has long taken place in urban studies – on the post-city age and on the death of cities spurred on by the increasing mobility of people, goods and information (Jacobs 1961; Webber 1964).

### Spatial capital and gentrification

Numerous gentrification scholars have investigated the renewed residential attractiveness of central cities for the 'new' middle class (see Lees *et al.* 2008 2010). Among their concerns has been an interest in what makes gentrifiers different to middle class suburbanites. Butler (1997), drawing on Lockwood (1995), conceptualises and compares these two groups as the 'urban seeking' versus 'urban fleeing' groups. But this binary is rather simplistic and if anything it is breaking down in the face of recent studies that point to the suburban mindsets of contemporary gentrifiers (Lees 2003b; Butler 2007a). We would argue that one of the features distinguishing contemporary gentrifiers from the suburban middle classes is their mobility and this, we argue, can be addressed through the concept of

spatial capital. Re-reading the gentrification literature with spatial capital as a guiding thread, we can pull out in more detail the residential motivations of gentrifiers and their mobility practices.

The literature that has investigated why the central city has become attractive for the 'new' middle classes (Bromley *et al.* 2007; Hjorthol and Bjornskau 2005; Tallon and Bromley 2004) has identified two logics or sets of motivations. The first one, the valorisation or distinction logic, is based on the urban way of life and on symbolic aspects such as conspicuous consumption, aesthetic values, the rejection of suburbia as mass-produced, standardised, socially undifferentiated (Caulfield 1994; Ley 1996). In terms of Bourdieu's conceptual frame, these aspects could be gathered under the concept of cultural capital. The second range of motivations, practical and utilitarian logic, stresses the convenience of urban life and questions of proximity and accessibility. Traces of this second logic are thin in the literature on gentrification. This could be explained by the fact that mundane and practical factors are perhaps more important in provincial gentrification, which has been under-scrutinised in comparison with metropolitan gentrification, where lifestyle considerations are the prime attractions (Tallon and Bromley 2004). It could also be the result of antipathy towards the more traditional transport geography literature. In this paper we argue that these practical aspects are important, for one of the reasons why gentrifiers choose to live in the central city is to increase their spatial capital.

Gentrification authors who have addressed this practical logic have usually discussed it in parallel with the increasing participation of women in the labour market (Bondi 1991) and the resulting growth in dual-career households (Rose 1984; Warde 1991) or in relation to young urban parents (Karsten 2003). Central locations help them to combine work, social and family life and mitigate the time-space constraints of the suburbs and automobile dependence, and are even argued to 'preserve the marriages of dual career households' (Costa and Kahn 2000, 1289)! In addition, Rose and Villeneuve (1998) argue that female professionals are more likely to find work downtown and that this makes inner city locations more attractive to professional couples. Jarvis *et al.* (2001) demonstrate well the complexities of managing the space/time demands of multiple persons in a household and the stitching together of access to various parts of the city at various times of the day.

Some authors have considered the mobility practices of gentrifiers and have stressed the importance of walking and cycling. For example, research conducted in Norway underlines the fact that gentrifiers valorise 'liberation from motor transportation' (Hjorthol and Bjornskau 2005, 353). Hamnett and Whitelegg (2007) also found that one-third of the gentrifiers they surveyed in Clerkenwell, London, said that their main residential motivation was the fact they could walk to their workplace. In Canadian cities, Danyluk and Ley (2007) argue similarly that gentrifiers are characterised by a higher propensity to walk and to cycle to their workplace. Donzelot (2004) advances a more general argument on the attitude/behaviour of gentrifiers with regards to mobility. He argues that gentrifiers are neither characterised by a voluntary immobility nor by the constrained mobility of suburbanites but by a certain degree of ubiquity. He asserts that they valorise proximity and its advantages, but as members of a global elite also want to be elsewhere on the globe quickly and easily through either real or virtual networks.<sup>4</sup> Similarly Butler and Lees (2006) discuss the importance of both local face-to-face communication and global presence for super-gentrifiers in Barnsbury, London. In addition, recent research by Middleton (2008 2009) in inner London found that walking played a key role in maintaining existing social relations as opposed to creating new ones (as policymakers pushing a communitarian logic hope will happen). She found that walking made negotiating work, childcare and family life easier for gentrifiers.

Of course, if gentrification appears as a strategy for some groups of the middle class to increase their spatial capital, it can have the opposite effect on the 'displaced' population (on displacement, see Lees *et al.* 2010). In addition to the loss of their neighbourhood (and therefore of social capital) through gentrification, displacement can also result in a loss of spatial capital. He (2010) shows that the gentrification displacees evicted to the fringes of Shanghai are unable to commute from this new place of residence. With their displacement came the destruction of their spatial capital. Other gentrification scholars have talked about the dislocation of displacees from urban amenities and services as socially unjust. Visser and Kotze (2008) are concerned about the way that the mass of daily downtown workers and shoppers in Cape Town are excluded from centrally sited gentrified residential developments by virtue of their poverty.

To date, the creation *and* destruction, expansion *and* contraction of spatial capital has been understudied in the gentrification literature. This paper begins the task of addressing this omission. It does so by focusing on new-build gentrification in Switzerland.

## The emerging case of gentrification in Swiss cities

Gentrification is a relatively new process in Swiss cities (Rérat *et al.* 2008 2010) and it is somewhat of an exception in the wider gentrification literature (on this wider literature see Lees *et al.* 2008 2010). Switzerland is economically stable, there are no slums or badly deprived areas in Swiss cities, the Swiss tax system prevents disinvestment in buildings (encouraging owners to regularly renovate them), the institutional framework makes it very difficult for property owners to cancel leases (as such, evictions are rare), and owner-occupation is very low in urban areas (less than 10%) – the wealthy tend to buy property on the outskirts of the city. Due to the fact that gentrification emerged late in Swiss cities and because there are limited opportunities for classical (sweat equity) gentrification, the bulk of the gentrification is developer-led. Some of this is in the form of the redevelopment of factories and warehouses into residential apartments, but since 2000 there has been a significant increase in new-build developments, marketed at upper and upper-middle income groups. We are clear, however, that this is not a process of European re-urbanisation (the *stabilisation* of inner city residential districts by increasing in-migration of new or non-traditional household types with explicitly city-minded housing preferences and decreasing outmigration after a long period of negative migration balance; see Haase *et al.* 2010). It is without doubt a process of new-build gentrification.

As we show in the case studies to come, these developments demonstrate the features of 'new-build gentrification' listed by Davidson and Lees (2005):

- 1 reinvestment of capital;
- 2 social upgrading of locale by incoming high-income groups;
- 3 landscape change; and
- 4 direct or indirect displacement of low income groups.

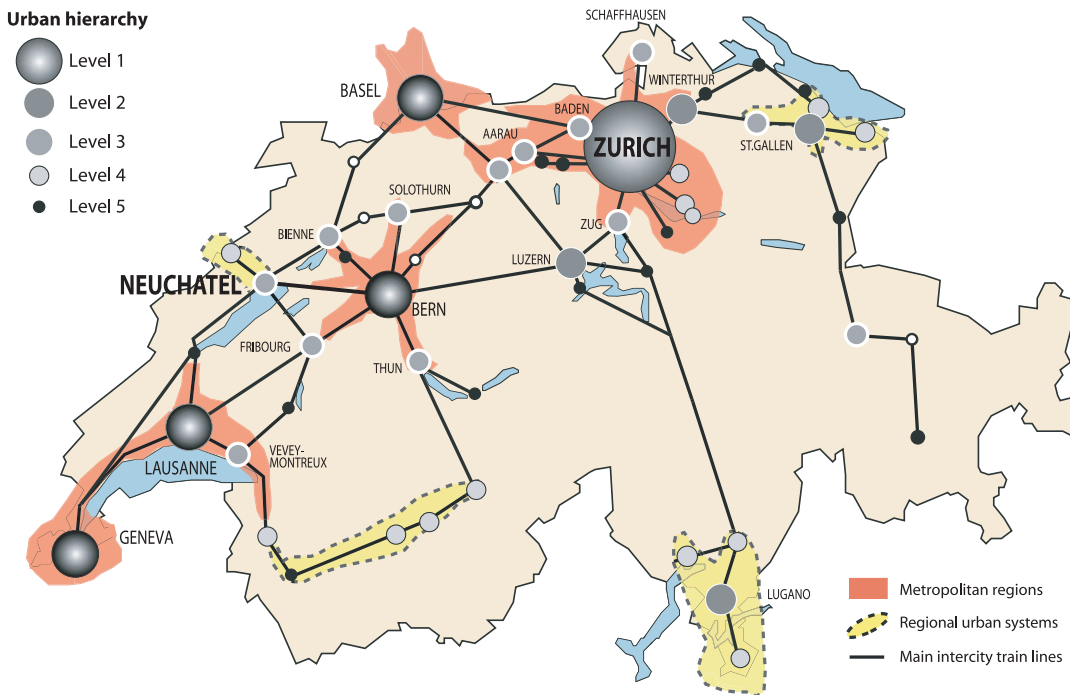
But they also demonstrate some peculiarities resulting from the Swiss context. For example, in comparison to governments elsewhere in Europe, North America and beyond (Lees and Ley 2008), Swiss national and local governments are fairly ambivalent about gentrification (Rérat *et al.* 2010). Local authorities do not invest in residential or commercial buildings, and there are no state-led regeneration projects in Swiss cities. But they do facilitate new-build gentrification developments by using planning tools, like increasing the density allowed, rezoning industrial into mixed use areas, etc.

Finally, it is important to point out that the Swiss urban system is somewhat different to much of the rest of Europe and North America. Switzerland is characterised by a polycentric urban system (Figure 1) that reflects its decentralised political organisation (Bassand 1997). According to the Federal Statistical Office, in 2000 73 per cent of the population lived in 55 urban areas of various sizes. The infrastructural frame of the Swiss urban system is reinforced by highway and railway networks. The Swiss rail network is dense and connects all the urban centres with inter-city trains.

According to the International Union of Railways, Switzerland is the top country in the world in terms of the yearly distance travelled per inhabitant, and the second (behind Japan) in terms of the number of trips per inhabitant (International Union of Railways 2006). The particularities of the Swiss urban system are important factors in the choice of residence and mobilities of Swiss new-build gentrifiers, as we demonstrate in the following case studies.

### Case studies

The empirical material in this paper is drawn from case studies of new-build gentrification in Zurich and Neuchâtel. Focusing on both a large metropolitan city and a medium-sized provincial city avoids the 'scale and context' problematic voiced in the gentrification literature. For as Butler (2007b) argues, smaller provincial cities are insufficiently large to embrace the variation in social habitus and sense of belonging that can be found in metropolitan cities. The two cities from which the case studies are taken demonstrate well this important difference in geographical and sociological scale.



Adapted from Da Cunha & Both (2004)

Figure 1 Switzerland: a polycentric urban system

Zurich is a German-speaking city, the economic capital and the largest urban centre in Switzerland (359 000 residents, 1 132 000 including the suburbs). It is a metropolitan city characterised by a high degree of urbanity. The research focused on a neighbourhood close to the centre called Zurich West<sup>5</sup> that was one of the most important industrial areas of the city. In the 1980s it began to de-industrialise, some of the abandoned industrial land was given over to office developments, or taken over by marginal cultural activities (some illegally, some on short leases). These galleries, bars and clubs (re)discovered the area and began the process of turning a 'no-man's land' into a fashionable neighbourhood or 'Trendquartier'. Once investors and landowners began to realise this new potential, they reclaimed the buildings they owned and evicted many of the cultural activities. Over the past 10 years, Zurich West has seen the construction of a series of new-build developments of 100 units or more (Plate 1). The new dwellings are a mix of lofts, duplexes, triplexes and more traditional developments inspired by 19th-century housing (e.g. bigger bedrooms and smaller common spaces), and these have attracted flat shares.

There were no pre-existing residential dwellings located within the sites of the new-build developments in Zurich West, however, classic gentrification has begun to occur in the neighbouring areas of Gewerbeschule and Langstrasse – the working-class neighbourhoods that housed the industrial workers of Zurich West.<sup>6</sup>

By way of contrast, Neuchâtel is a medium-sized French-speaking city (33 000 residents, 80 000

including the suburbs). The developments studied in Neuchâtel were mainly located near the city centre and the train station. They included redeveloped industrial buildings of different sizes but mainly newly built developments on industrial wastelands (vacant land that had not been the target of reinvestment until then) and, less so, on previously built land (Plate 2). The developments are high quality and very different in size, and some are loft dwellings. In Neuchâtel direct displacement did occur as 65 dwellings were torn down to make way for the 578 dwellings that were built. In addition, there has been classic displacement in several buildings (about 70 dwellings) around the train station, which have been rehabilitated (gentrified) with the concomitant population change.<sup>7</sup>

Promoters and investors have been the main driving force behind Swiss new-build gentrification. The new-build developments in both cities were/are capital-led by private investors. Property financialisation (property increasingly being viewed as a financial product) was important in attracting the real estate market into new-build gentrification (Rérat *et al.* 2010). The new-build developments were constructed for, and marketed at, upper to upper-middle income households who could afford to buy or pay the high rents. In Zurich West there were four kinds of developer – institutional investors (insurance or pension funds), stock market listed property funds, a newly founded cooperative, and former industrial companies that wanted to valorise the land they owned. In Neuchâtel there were just two kinds of developer – institutional investors who



Plate 1 New-build gentrification in Zurich West



Plate 2 New-build gentrification in Neuch atel

tended to build the bigger projects and rent the apartments, and real estate companies who built the smaller developments and then sold apartments individually to get a quick return on their investment.

## Methodology

The resident profiles of these new developments were studied in 2007 as part of a project called 'Back to the City?' The aim of the project was to find out why people were choosing to live in the new-build developments in Neuch atel and Zurich West. Questionnaire surveys were mailed to all the households living in those developments built between January 2001 and August 2007 (493 apartments in Neuch atel and 630 in Zurich West). The response rates were high: 46 per cent in Neuch atel and 45 per cent in Zurich West. In addition, a series of semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted in Neuch atel in order to refine the questionnaire survey. The questionnaire survey contained a mix of closed and open-ended questions, and throughout the respondents were given scope to elaborate on their answers. Qualitative data from the survey and from the interviews has been used to support and underpin the quantitative data. In addition, a series of in-depth interviews (n=24) were undertaken at the end of 2007 with key actors in the real estate market who were directly involved in the new developments (for further details see R erat *et al.* 2010). The empirical material gathered enables us to determine the resi-

dential motivations of these households, in particular their mobility practices.

Residents living in the new dwellings had incomes well above average, but these cannot be compared to city-wide data because Swiss income statistics are of poor quality. Instead, we use level of education as a proxy: 51 per cent of individuals living in the new developments in Neuch atel, and 67 per cent in Zurich West, had university qualifications (compared with less than 25% of the population in Neuch atel and Zurich). At the household scale, 64 per cent in Neuch atel and 80 per cent in Zurich West included at least one person with a university degree. Other indicators confirmed that the new-build residents had economic capital that was above average. Home-ownership, for example, was more widespread in the new-builds (39% in Neuch atel; 28% in Zurich West) than in the housing stock of the city as a whole (11% in Neuch atel; 7% in Zurich). Swiss new-build gentrifiers then are not the classical gentrifiers that initiated gentrification in other European cities like Paris and London who were low in economic capital and high in cultural capital (see Butler 1997), rather they are high in all forms of capital – economic, cultural and, as we shall see, spatial capital too. These new-build developments are at the heart of the class remaking of Swiss core cities: a much wealthier gentrifying cohort is moving in, they are more likely to own their property or pay inflated rents, and they are very different from those around them.

**Table I** Kinds of households (in percentages)

|                        | Zurich West | Neuchâtel |
|------------------------|-------------|-----------|
| Couples with children  | 12          | 37        |
| Childless couples      | 34          | 31        |
| People living alone    | 34          | 22        |
| Single-parent families | 3           | 6         |
| Flat shares            | 17          | 4         |
| Total of households    | 100         | 100       |

Source: Questionnaire survey 2007.

A degree of diversity was found in the kinds of households (see Table I): 85 per cent of the dwellings in Zurich West contained non-family households, a third lived alone, another third were childless couples and almost a fifth lived in flat shares. In Neuchâtel the situation was more complex and diverse. Non-family households occupied the majority of the dwellings (57%) but were much less present than in Zurich West. Childless couples were almost as numerous as in Zurich West, but their profile was different: some of them were empty nesters, whereas in Zurich West they were mainly young couples. Nuclear families were found in four flats out of ten in Neuchâtel, but this can be explained by the fact that these new developments are larger and more suitable for family gentrifiers. It could also show the differences between metropolitan gentrification, based on non-family households, and provincial gentrification, where traditional families are more numerous.

### Spatial capital and new-build gentrifiers in Swiss core cities

The households under study were asked to rank a series of factors related to their residential choice, such as accessibility, location, urban amenities (see Table II). In Neuchâtel, seven factors were judged as (very) important by more than half the households. Except for the quietness of the neighbourhood, they were all related to proximity and accessibility: proximity of the city centre (78%), being able to walk or cycle (74%), urban public transport services (73%), proximity of commerce and services (71%), proximity of the train station (62%) and proximity of their workplace (62%).

The same practical aspects were valorised in Zurich West, but to an even higher degree: proximity of the city centre (92%), urban public transport services (91%), being able to walk or cycle (87%), proximity of their workplace (76%), proximity of

**Table II** Percentage of households ranking the suggested factors as 'important' or 'very important' in their choice of residence

|   | Neuchâtel | Zurich West |
|---|-----------|-------------|
| Proximity of the city centre                        | 78        | 92          |
| Urban public transport services                     | 73        | 91          |
| Possibility to walk, to cycle                       | 74        | 87          |
| Cultural offerings (theatre, cinema, etc.)          | 46        | 78          |
| Proximity of workplace                              | 62        | 76          |
| Proximity of commerce and services                  | 71        | 76          |
| Proximity of the train station                      | 62        | 68          |
| Diversity of the urban population, animation        | 29        | 62          |
| Proximity of parks, green space and the lake        | 48        | 60          |
| Night life  | 20        | 53          |
| Presence of friends and family in the city          | 30        | 46          |
| Security in the neighbourhood                       | 54        | 39          |
| Reputation and image of the neighbourhood           | 32        | 35          |
| Kind of population living in the neighbourhood      | 28        | 34          |
| Accessibility in car, availability of parking space | 54        | 32          |
| Quietness in the neighbourhood                      | 65        | 19          |
| Proximity of school and nurseries                   | 38        | 9           |
| Reputation of schools                               | 22        | 7           |

Source: Questionnaire survey 2007.

commerce and services (76%), proximity of the train station (68%). However, some other aspects (indicative of a metropolitan habitus, see Butler 2007b) appear to be more important than in Neuchâtel: the cultural offerings (78%), the diversity of the urban population and the animation of city life (62%), the proximity of green spaces (60%) as well as night life (53%).

The importance of these factors in the residential choices of these new-build gentrifiers indicates both the particular importance of spatial capital and their significant personal knowledge of the spatial capital of their chosen residential area. Interestingly, neighbourhood and community characteristics, factors which to date gentrification authors have tended to highlight (e.g. Butler 1997), appear here much further down the hierarchy. In addition, schools also appear as much less important; this stands in stark contrast to recent work on gentrification and circuits of schooling in other contexts (e.g. Butler and Robson 2003).<sup>8</sup>

As stated earlier, authors who have investigated the renewed residential attractiveness of city centres (e.g. Bromley *et al.* 2007; Hjorthol and

Bjornskau 2005; Tallon and Bromley 2004) argue that there are two main sets of motivations to be found in choice of residence: a practical logic (the convenience of city life) and a valorisation logic (the urban way of life). It is evident from the Swiss cases that the practical advantages of living in a core city are much more important. Again this goes against the grain of the gentrification literature, which suggests that an urban way of life is more important than practical issues in gentrifiers choosing to live in the inner city. However, it may also reflect the late arrival of gentrification to Switzerland, such that Swiss new-build gentrifiers are not the pioneer gentrifier type, a type that had significant pro-urban and pro-diversity leanings.

As we have shown, residential choice is highly correlated with the physical proximity of urban amenities and infrastructures, but it is also highly correlated with the ease of walking, cycling and public transportation. In comparison to these more sustainable modes of transport, a much lower proportion of households (54% in Neuchâtel and 32% in Zurich West) regard the car as (very) important. If we look at the vehicles owned by households (car and/or bicycle) as well as the public transport passes they have purchased (the national pass, half-fare card, and/or regional pass<sup>9</sup>), we gain more detailed information. The results from the questionnaire surveys can be compared with the more general micro-census on transport released by the Federal Statistical Office in 2005 (Table III). The differences in terms of ownership of vehicles and public transport passes can be explained by several effects, such as a structural effect (the population under study differs socio-demographically – age, kind of households – and socio-economically – income, education, etc.) and a location effect (residential location influences

mobility practices, people living in dense areas tend to walk, cycle and use public transport more).

The percentage of households owning vehicles and public transport passes is high. In comparison with the population of Switzerland as a whole, and in comparison with those living in core cities or their suburbs, people living in the new-build dwellings in Zurich West and Neuchâtel are proportionally much more likely to have a public transport pass. This is particularly the case in Zurich West, where the proportion with a national pass or a half-fare card was more than double that observed at the scale of core cities as a whole. The divergence is even larger for the regional pass (people in Zurich West are five times more likely to have a regional pass). In Neuchâtel, the differences are less marked but the percentages are very clearly above the rest of the core cities (+32% for half-fare cards, +44% for national passes and +97% for regional passes).

Yet, at the same time, the majority of the households own a car. The number observed in Neuchâtel (86%) comes close to the numbers observed in the suburbs at the national scale. By contrast in Zurich West the percentage of households owning a car is smaller (59%), whereas ownership of bikes is very high (83%). This difference with Neuchâtel (67%) can partly be explained by the fact that the latter is topographically hilly, making cycling more difficult.

Taking into account the availability of vehicles and season tickets, the new-build gentrifiers in Neuchâtel and Zurich West do not appear to be a captive population, in the sense that they are not dependent on only one means of transportation. The majority of the households are potentially *very* mobile and seem to be able to combine different means of transportation according to their needs. The results noted here contradict arguments about gentrification and rising transportation costs (e.g. LeBoy and Soustelie 1979): quite the opposite, gentrifiers are hypermobile (most of them have both a car and a public transport pass at their disposal) and when they try to reduce commuting by car it seems to be for practical and ideological reasons and not for financial reasons.

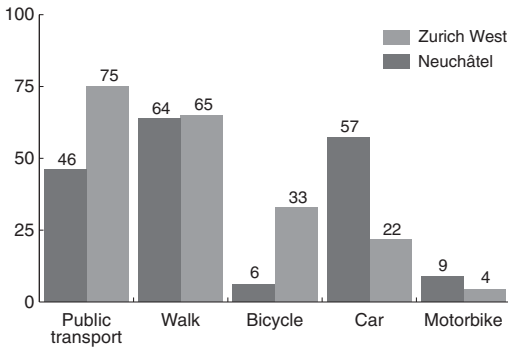
### Mobility practices

A consideration of mobility *practices* enables us to refine these results. Figure 2 shows the proportion of households using different means of transportation at least four times a week. In Zurich West, the modal choices of the inhabitants correspond first of all to

**Table III Percentage of households owning a vehicle and percentage of people aged six and above holding a public transport pass**

|                | Neuchâtel | Zurich West | Core cities | Suburbs | Switzerland |
|----------------|-----------|-------------|-------------|---------|-------------|
| National pass  | 12.70     | 19.10       | 8.8         | 5.5     | 6.2         |
| Half-fare card | 38.34     | 59.01       | 29.1        | 27.0    | 26.5        |
| Regional pass  | 18.94     | 47.85       | 9.6         | 6.0     | 6.2         |
| Car            | 86.16     | 59.21       | 66.9        | 87.8    | 81.2        |
| Bicycle        | 66.52     | 83.39       | 63.7        | 73.4    | 70.6        |

Source: Questionnaire survey 2007, and Federal Statistical Office, Micro-census 'transport' 2005.



**Figure 2** The proportion of households using different means of transportation at least four times a week

Source: Questionnaire survey 2007

public transportation (75%) and walking (65%). The car plays only a secondary role; it ranks fourth. In Neuchâtel, walking appears first (64%), followed by the car (57%) and public transportation (46%). The topographical nature of the city, as said before, discourages most of the inhabitants from using their bike every day, and as such the modal use of the car is higher in Neuchâtel. These results also echo some of the differences between a large metropolitan city that is less easy to get around by car (Zurich) and a medium-sized, more provincial city (Neuchâtel).

The results show that these gentrifiers tend to favour different modes of transportation and have the means to choose between different options at different times and for different reasons. Although the car is far from being absent, its role is reduced in comparison with those who reside in the suburbs.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, avoiding automobile dependence was often stressed by the households interviewed in Neuchâtel even though most of them owned a car:

I don't think a car is necessary [but we own one]. I don't like cars actually. So I have to live in the centre because it would be too difficult to rely on public transport in the suburbs. To be very central is for me very important. [...] We didn't want to move to the suburbs where we would have become too dependent on the car. [Woman, early 30s, married, two children]

Having recourse to different transport options and the practical aspects of life in the central city was pointed out by this former suburbanite:

Before, we had to use the car every time, now we can walk, cycle, take public transport ... It's practical. Look, my wife has just gone to the pharmacy, she'll be

back in 5 minutes. It would have taken much more time before. [Man, mid-60s, married]

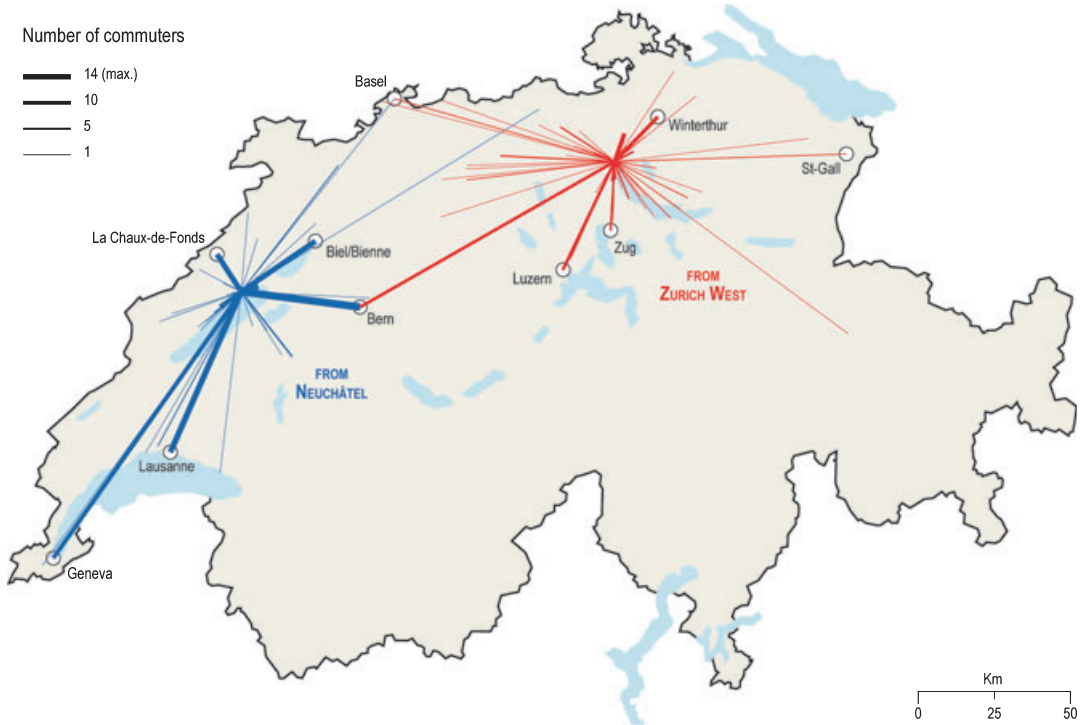
A second feature of the mobility practices of gentrifiers is their place of work, a clear majority of them work within the boundaries of Neuchâtel (61%) or Zurich (72%). We can see here again the importance attached to proximity and consequently the possibility to walk, cycle and use urban public transport in everyday life. This result is related to the predominance of dual career couples in the developments.

Couples in which only one partner is employed and has a full-time job (the 'traditional male breadwinner') were rare in the developments, although more numerous in Neuchâtel (25%) than in Zurich West (only 8%), indicative of the differences between provincial and metropolitan gentrification. The very high level of work commitment shows the importance of female participation in the labour market (and the gender dimension of gentrification). This can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, two salaries are needed to access these new dwellings in Swiss core cities. On the other hand, to live in a central area enables couples to continue their professional careers and to negotiate the complexities of their everyday lives. A suburban location would imply other trade-offs and a different set of negotiations over everyday life.

The workplace destinations of the commuters living in the new dwellings are presented in Figure 3. Besides the logic of proximity, we can identify the logic of connectivity. The proportion of inter-urban commuters, that is to say people living in a core city and working in another one, amounts to 21 per cent in Neuchâtel and 10 per cent in Zurich West. For these commuters, to live in a central area means to be localised on one of the nodes of the railway network that constitutes the physical frame of the Swiss urban system. This is shown by this man who lives in Neuchâtel but who has never worked there:

I chose Neuchâtel because my friends are here. But I could live anywhere as long as it is close to a train station. I have worked in Geneva, in Lausanne and now in Bern, I have to travel, to take the train every day. The station is the most important thing [...] but I like to be able to go to the cinema without taking the car, to live in the city... [Man, mid-40s, divorced]

These inter-urban commuters benefit from the railway network and its services (interval-service timetable,<sup>11</sup> intercity trains, etc.). They constitute an important proportion of the gentrifiers, particularly



**Figure 3** Destinations of commuters who live in Neuchâtel and Zurich West

Source: Questionnaire survey 2007

in the case of the medium-sized city Neuchâtel, whose labour market is limited and which is located about 16 minutes by train from Biel/Bienne, 33 minutes from Bern, and 41 minutes from Lausanne.

Yet interestingly the logic of proximity in the case of inter-urban commuters is not totally absent. For example, in the case of couples, more than half of the partners have a job in the city of residence. Where the couple had children, the man was almost always the inter-urban commuter and the woman had a job – often part-time – within the boundaries of the city. This correlates with Hanson and Pratt's (1988) argument that women manage work around residential location, while for men work comes first and residential location afterwards. The trade-off between different residential locations reflects some practical aspects and the gender division of tasks within the household:

We clearly wanted to live where one of us worked. It could have been either Bern or Neuchâtel. We didn't want to live in-between, because both of us would have

had to commute, to take the car, etc. We wanted to live somewhere where we could use public transport. So we chose Neuchâtel because we like it and because I have a part-time job. [...] It is more practical with the kids ... to drop them to the nursery because it's on my way to work. My husband has to commute [...] so it was very important to be very near the station, to shorten the maximum trip between our home and the station. [Woman, early 30s, married, two children]

According to another woman interviewed, the gender division of labour within the household and the organisation of everyday life would be very different if they moved to the suburbs:

I would like to stay here [in a new-build apartment in Neuchâtel] for some years but my husband would like to move to the suburbs, to buy a house ... It wouldn't be a big change for him but for me yes! I don't like to drive, we waste much less time walking ... I like walking, I can go shopping on foot and as we live near my workplace, I can do things quickly, go to the nursery, etc. I don't know what it would be like to live outside the city on a practical level, in terms of everyday life. I don't know ... [Woman, late 20s, married, one child]

### Mobility patterns

In the introduction, we argued that spatial capital could be regarded as an additional source of inequality as well as an element of social differentiation. We advanced the hypothesis that the 'urban-seeking' middle class may distinguish itself from the 'urban-fleeing' middle class through spatial capital, in addition to the other forms of capital normally highlighted in gentrification research. The questionnaire survey and interviews show that the residential choice made by new-build gentrifiers was closely linked to the decision to create and gain high spatial capital. Significantly, the practical aspects of spatial capital are the *main* factors attracting them to the new developments in these core cities. In terms of mobility, three patterns can be identified (Figure 4): the suburban pattern, the proximity pattern and the connectivity pattern. They do not exclude each other and are often found in combination in the motivations and practices of these gentrifiers. This combination enables Swiss gentrifiers to gain a particular level of spatial capital.

The first mobility pattern is called suburban as it relies on the car, which is the dominant mode of transport in the suburbs. This pattern, which is criticised heavily in the sustainability literature where the compact city thesis demands the rejection of the car (Newman and Kenworthy 1999), is not totally absent amongst Swiss new-build gentrifiers, since the majority owns a car. For many households though, its role is limited and it is complementary to other means of transport. For some, the fact of not having a car can be explained by financial reasons (the trade-off between having a car or

renting an expensive flat) or by environmental awareness. Although the survey did not address this question, another study has shown that 30 per cent of the households choosing not to own a car in Switzerland do so for ideological reasons. Most of these correspond to the typical profile of gentrifiers: they have a high level of education, a good income and live in central areas (Haefeli and Bieri 2008). This provides a good example of the dissociation between economic capital and spatial capital.

The second pattern underlines the possibility of proximity, the convenience of living in a core city, the fact of having 'everything to hand'. Swiss gentrifiers attach much importance to the proximity of urban amenities and infrastructures and this reflects the importance of walking, cycling and urban public transport, as well as the desire to avoid – or at least to reduce – automobile dependence. In a marketing advertisement that was aired on local TV to market the *Puls5*<sup>12</sup> development in Zurich West, a man wakes up, switches on his coffee machine and goes down to the shop on the ground floor of his building to buy some fresh bread, by the time he gets back into his flat his coffee is ready! The advantages of proximity are clearly shown.

The third pattern is more specific to Switzerland; it is related to connectivity and based on the Swiss railway network. Some people decide to live in a core city (a node on the network) and work in another one. For the most part, this logic of connectivity concerns only highly qualified people (Schuler and Kaufmann 2005) and requires financial means above the average when the national pass is combined with the ownership of a car.

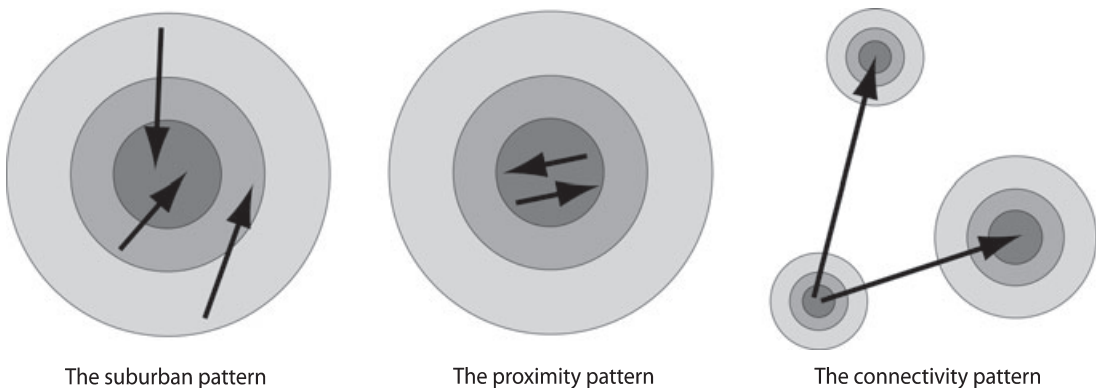


Figure 4 The three mobility patterns characterising Swiss gentrifiers

Other researchers have shown that for this kind of commuter, the trip is not necessarily a time period that has to be minimised but a time period whose quality has to be maximised (see Kaufmann 2008; Urry 2007, 107). The trip can be valorised for activities such as reading, having a rest, socialising or working (aided by technologies such as mobile phones, laptops and wireless internet) (Lyons and Urry 2005; Watts 2008). The Swiss gentrifiers were clear that the journey was not wasted time.

As inter-urban commuters are characterised by a high level of education, cities try hard to attract them in order to increase their tax revenue. This is illustrated by a marketing campaign launched in 2007 by Olten, which is a medium-sized city located at the crossroads of the main railway and motorway axes in the country and situated between Basel (24 minutes by train), Bern (27 minutes), and Zurich (31 minutes). A dozen large posters were hung up along the railways leading into the main station. Each poster had the slogan 'Clever Pendlers live here', a picture showing a scene of 'everyday life' and a quip comparing Olten with other Swiss cities (e.g. 'Almost as lively as Luzern. Just much greener'). The logic of connectivity and gains in spatial capital were the main arguments used to attract residents to Olten in this advertisement.

Statistically these inter-urban commuters are still a rather limited group, but their numbers are growing (Schuler and Kaufmann 2005). Several high status developments have been built in railway station locales and, according to a census undertaken by the Swiss Federal Railways, 200 potential redevelopment areas (with a total of 2.8 million square metres) could be redeveloped (Jaccoud *et al.* 2008). These new developments, whose core market is gentrifiers, will likely facilitate this kind of mobility even more.

## Conclusion

The case studies of new-build gentrification in Zurich West and Neuch atel highlight the particular importance of 'spatial capital'. The gentrifiers under study were potentially very mobile and had at their disposal a high level of spatial capital, which makes them distinct from other social groups in Swiss cities. They chose to locate in these new and very central developments for a number of reasons. Locating in a central, dense and multi-functional area allowed them to avoid the time-

space constraints of a suburban pattern of mobility in which the car dominates. This can be seen as the expression of a liberal and anti-suburban ideology and as the endorsement of urban sustainability (Danyluk and Ley 2007). Their new location also enabled them to manage the complexities of everyday life more easily. Most of the couples were dual-career households and their residential location enabled them to attain the high spatial capital they needed in order to reconcile their professional, social and family life, and to manage an increasingly fragmented everyday life in a wider time-space zone. In addition, thanks to their location they could cope better with employment structures. This resonates with Butler with Robson's (2003) argument that gentrification is 'a coping strategy' for the urban middle classes. In the case of Switzerland, jobs occupied by the middle to upper classes are overrepresented in core cities because of their functional and economic specialisations. Due to the decentralised characteristics of the Swiss urban system, service sector jobs are fragmented in many labour markets. To be located on a node in the network is a strategic way to be able to access different labour markets, to cope with the uncertainty of professional life and with the fact that flexibility has become a job requirement. Spatial capital is especially important in medium-sized (provincial) cities which have more limited professional labour markets. More generally, opportunities for mobility have increased in European cities due to changes in technology, the globalisation of the workplace/labour force, and the increased flexibility of employment, as such new processes of social differentiation are emerging and deserve our attention.

Yet, paradoxically, the high degree of mobility and the long distance of commuting for some gentrifiers can be seen as the expression of their wish for a settled way of life and for a sense of territorial belonging (Kaufmann 2008). By becoming inter-urban commuters, they avoid moving to another region in order to protect their social capital (contacts with friends, family, etc.) and/or because of the location of their partner's job. In fact, they substitute moving to another region by developing their spatial capital. As such, their residential choices and mobility practices complicate the notion of rooted, indigenous urban locals versus new incomers that still characterises a good part of the gentrification literature, in particular the displacement literature.

The mobility patterns and practices of Swiss new-build gentrifiers show that they are both potentially hyper-mobile (they have accrued enough spatial capital to be very mobile) and hyper-fixed (they have strategically chosen particular fixed central city locations where they are locally rooted). They are 'mobile and rooted'. They are in control of their social and spatial distances, mobilities which Urry (2000) and others have perhaps moved too far beyond. We would argue that, in order to look at social differentiation, we need to study both the mobility of individuals and the fixity of their place of residence. But this should not mean focusing just on gentrifiers (the upper and middle classes) but on 'other' central city residents too – the working classes, the working poor and the unemployed (cf. Slater *et al.* 2004; Slater 2006). Their high degree of spatial capital also differentiates these gentrifiers from 'other' urban residents with less or little spatial capital and less or little ability to create or accrue it. We also need research into the new forms of spatial urban inequality that are caused by a lack of spatial capital.

This research on Swiss core cities reinforces the desirability of urban sustainability, but it also shows that only a select group can afford to develop their spatial capital in this way. What we are witnessing here is a reclaiming of locational advantage that began to disappear with the dynamics of urban sprawl. In addition, gentrifiers also seek to create high spatial capital making them hypermobile, and this raises the question of the ecobalance of long-distance commuting. It shows that what matters is not density, but degree of accessibility to density.

By way of conclusion, we would like to argue that the issues about locational and technological advantage and rising energy prices and commuting costs that were discussed in the early gentrification literature (e.g. Berry 1985), but then all but disappeared, deserve our attention again. These issues are appearing on the radars of some mobilities researchers (e.g. Dennis and Urry's (2009) examination of mobility, climate change and the energy crisis), yet not on the radars of gentrification researchers. They should be. Which inner city residents are more likely to (choose to) own the relatively expensive technologies of electric/hybrid cars? Which inner city residents are likely to own both an electric/hybrid car to travel locally and a petrol car to travel out of the city? Are these new technologies used as signifiers of social differentiation, of social

distinction? In future oil crises who will be locational winners in the city and who will be locational losers? These are important questions for gentrification researchers, mobilities researchers and transport geographers, and they point to the need for our different sub-disciplines to come together in creating a more sophisticated appreciation of these issues for the future sustainability of our cities.

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## Notes

- 1 On 'the new mobilities paradigm' see Hannam *et al.* (2006), on 'the mobile turn' see Urry (2007).
- 2 See for example the *Turbulence* magazine/newspaper project, <http://www.turbulence.org.uk>. Accessed 7 September 2010.
- 3 In Switzerland the term 'city' translates as 'core city'. It is usually the biggest municipality in the urban region and historically where urbanisation started. It is therefore bigger than the Anglo-American or European city centre.
- 4 An example of this global circulating elite or this transnational capitalist class is given by Ley (2010), who has studied 'millionaire migrants', people from Hong Kong who share their life between Canada and their country of origin where they still run businesses. These very mobile people are nicknamed 'astronauts' because of their frequent flights between both countries and they have of course acquired a high level of spatial capital.
- 5 The empirical data were taken from the project 'Back to the City?' financed by the Swiss National Science Foundation. Subsequent discussions between Loretta Lees and Patrick Rérat took place during his postdoctoral fellowship period with her in Geography at King's College London, where both authors began the task of situating the Swiss case in the gentrification literature and in bringing together the literatures on gentrification and mobilities.
- 6 On displacement pressure, see Marcuse 1985; on indirect displacement see Davidson and Lees 2010; Slater 2009.
- 7 This population turnaround is the result of the construction of new-build developments in central locations, the desire by some population groups (young adults, small households, middle to upper class) to settle in core cities more than before, and the result of

an increase in international migrants since 1980 (due to a good economic situation in Switzerland and the coming into effect of the agreements on the free movement of people between Switzerland and the European Union). By the mid-1990s, non-Swiss citizens constituted around 30 per cent of the population of Swiss core cities and in some central districts up to 50 per cent.

- 8 This can be explained by the local context: in 2007/08, according to the Federal Statistical Office, 95 per cent of children attended a state school. There are very few private schools in Switzerland and most state schools have comparable reputations, although there are some signs now in larger cities like Zurich that Swiss families are choosing not to send their children to local state schools that are perceived to have large numbers of immigrant children in them.
- 9 The national pass gives free access to the entire railway network and to most city and regional networks (buses, trams, etc.). The half-fare card gives a 50 per cent discount off all individual fares.
- 10 There are no comparable data at the scale of suburbs. However, the inhabitants of the new-build developments who did move in from the suburbs (13% of the population under study in Neuch atel and 8% in Zurich West) clearly changed their mobility practices. A majority claimed to use the car less since moving (76%; 69%) and to travel more on public transportation (55%; 69%) and by foot (62%; 64%).
- 11 This kind of timetable means that there is at least one train between two destinations every hour and always at the same minute (e.g. 6:24, 7:24, 8:24, etc.).
- 12 *Puls* to signify this is where the heart of the city pulses now, and 5 the number of the borough of Zurich West.

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