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# MOTHERING THE POST-INDUSTRIAL CITY: FAMILY AND GENDER IN URBAN RE-GENERATION

MARGUERITE VAN DEN BERG

# MOTHERING THE POST-INDUSTRIAL CITY: FAMILY AND GENDER IN URBAN RE-GENERATION

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

*ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor*
*aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam*
*op gezag van de Rector Magnificus*
*Prof. dr. D.C. van den Boom*
*ten overstaan van een door het college van promoties*
*ingestelde commissie,*
*in het openbaar te verdedigen in de Agnietenkapel*
*op dinsdag 1 oktober 2013, te 14:00 uur*

door

Marguerite Anna van den Berg
Geboren te Dordrecht

Promotores:
Prof.dr. W.G.J. Duyvendak
Prof.dr. G.B.M. Engbersen

*Faculteit der Maatschappij en Gedragswetenschappen*

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To Daniel

## *Acknowledgements*

When I started working on this dissertation, I wanted to write of the phenomenon of parenting guidance, not necessarily a post-industrial Rotterdam. It was only after my fieldwork period that I decided I should write of Rotterdam and the way it imagines its future. But in a way, it was hardly a surprise: I have always felt affection and fascination for this dynamic place. I hope that I have succeeded in writing with empathy for my home city, its inhabitants, mothers, children, teachers and policy makers, while maintaining a critical stance. Rotterdam already suffers quite enough from Rotterdammers highlighting its faults, adding insult to injury. I will defend this dissertation in Amsterdam, but was inspired for it in Rotterdam and it was written between 010 and 020 – both metaphorically and, in fact, on the train. Although Rotterdam's future is insecure, I would like to be part of it.

Rotterdam could become my object and research site only because of the welcoming and kind cooperation of the mothers, fathers, children, teachers, student-interns, managers and policy-makers I worked with and I thank them for it. A special word of thanks should go to the people of Bureau Frontlijn, Stichting Welzijnswerk Feijenoord, Stichting de Meeuw and Twinkeltje.

In academia, I owe much to the Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research and the Sociology Department of the University of Amsterdam. I was fortunate enough to work there in a wonderfully luxurious position: four years of doing my own research. The AISSR provided an intellectual climate in which I felt very much at home and learned heaps. In particular, I thank the members of the PhD club "cultural and political sociology", the members of the program group "dynamics of culture and citizenship", Oskar Verkaaik for his advice in the early and later stages of research and Gerd Baumann for teaching me to think in conceptual triangles. The reader of this dissertation will discover many.

Jan Willem Duyvendak was especially important in his role as my supervisor. Besides his academic qualities, there is one quality in particular that I value and admire in him: an unrelenting curiosity. This gave me much confidence. Whenever I told him of my findings and interpretations, he made me feel like they were worth reporting.

I started my academic career as a student first and a researcher later at Erasmus University. Thinking about this dissertation started there. Godfried Engbersen's role as my supervisor is in a way a reflection of this personal history. I thank him for introducing me to sociology years ago and for important advice in the different stages of research and writing.

During my time as a PhD student and before that, I was fortunate enough to visit two universities abroad. In 2007 and 2010, I visited the Graduate Center of the City University New York. These were both wonderful experiences in which I learned a lot and I would like to thank John Mollenkopf and Philip Kasinitz for their time and effort to welcome me there. In 2011, I

visited the Georg Simmel Zentrum at Humboldt Universität in Berlin. I thank those at the Zentrum and especially Talja Blokland for their kind hospitality.

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I thank my friend Claartje ter Hoeven for her companionship, loyalty, humour and empathy. It has been years since we talked tentatively of the idea to do research and write dissertations and it has been much fun to experience this journey together. Marije van der Meij has often inspired me by her curiosity and outspokenness and I am happy that she and Claartje act as paranymph for my defence.

I thank my mother and father for teaching me many things, amongst which the love for Rotterdam. I also thank them for being such loving grandparents to Daniel. I thank my sisters Adeline and Milena for being their cheerful selves and fun aunts. I am also very fortunate to have become part of the warm Schinkel-family and thank Els, Kees, Anders and Eva for much Sunday-afternoon laughter.

Most of all, I am grateful to Willem Schinkel. This dissertation has been the topic of so many conversations and Willem has read so many versions of chapters. Willem's originality, wisdom and humour have inspired me time and again. But most importantly, to paraphrase Leonard Cohen (always a good idea if you want to keep your cool): I really like to live beside you, baby. I dedicate this dissertation to our son Daniel, who has already brought me so much joy: my very own next generation Rotterdammer.

Rotterdam, July 2013

*"Their mothers (...) had filled them in with countless acts, like countless dabs of paint applied to a portrait."*

Rachel Cusk[1]

△

*"Nergens ter wereld werd zo hard gewerkt, werden zulke risico's genomen, durfden de mensen zo praktisch en op winst berekend te handelen en zulke grootse plannen te ontwikkelen."*

Thea Beckman[2]

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*INTRODUCTION*

# DEPARTING FROM THE INDUSTRIAL URBAN PAST

## *Drinking espressos, playing in the sun*

Imagine a short film: the camera first captures a seagull crossing the blue sky. The camera lowers and brings into focus the quintessential urban image: a skyline and busy streets. A young man drinks an espresso on his balcony in the morning sun. A young woman on a terrace finishes her orange juice. A man in a turtleneck sweater folds a shirt in a fashionable boutique. We see modern art in a museum, people shopping for exotic foods, enjoying the summer sun in the park. Children are playing. The music accelerates, we see people getting off the metro, shopping, moving. We see mothers carrying children to the playground, children shouting and running, young people on the streets at night, a barman mixing drinks, a businessman on the backseat of a car.[1]

The video shows Rotterdam, the Netherlands. It is a very particular representation. In this version of Rotterdam, people consume and play. Not so long ago, Rotterdam was promoted as the "work city": a city of industry and hard working men. While these images have not entirely disappeared (although they are absent in this film), they are supplemented by representations of consumption and play. The 2011 film is part of the marketing campaign of Rotterdam. It is to showcase Rotterdam's most charming features and to attract visitors, businesses and new inhabitants. Like many other cities, Rotterdam[2] struggles to move away from the industrial past and into a new future of affluence, or at least economic viability.

Something else in the film stands out too: the images of mothers and children at play. Their prominence in this video is not coincidental. Children do, actually, make up quite a large portion of the Rotterdam population (COS, 2012a). Rotterdam is the youngest city in the Netherlands and one of few in Europe that is not aging. But more importantly: in Rotterdam, children and mothers play an important role in policy efforts to regenerate the city. The cheerful images of babies, children and a merry-go-round serve a purpose. They advertise Rotterdam as the place to raise children, as the place for children to grow up and become the next generation of Rotterdammers.

## *Mothers and children in urban policies*

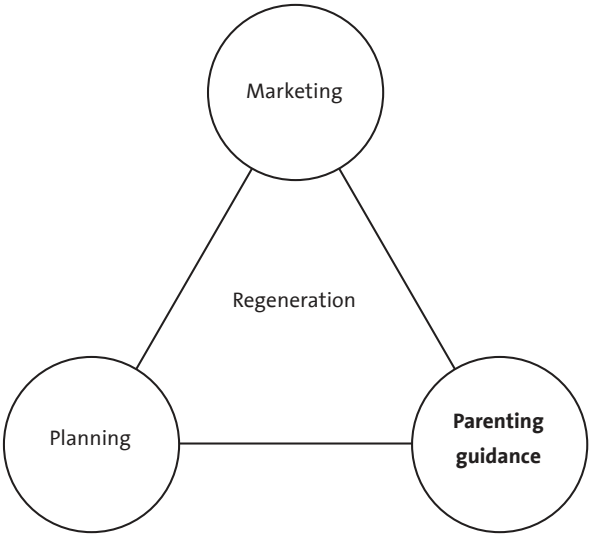
This next generation holds many promises. For government, the child is an important idea and a target for change (N. Rose, 1989). Childhood is typically one of the most governed phases in the cycle of life. Children are traditionally thought of as innocent and open. They can be a "ready canvas on which all manner of social phenomena and anxieties are inscribed" (C. Katz, 2006: 108). Parents – and mothers especially – are held responsible for children and the promise they hold. If children are an innocent blank canvas, socialisation – childrearing – is to make the promise become reality (Lawler, 2000). Because of this, many contemporary urban policies aim to intervene in family life. This dissertation deals with this prominence of children and mothers in such urban policies. It departs from the observation that *mothers*, in particular, matter in urban policy making and the

*Still shot from the promotional film, Rotterdam 2011* [2]

struggle of former industrial cities to reinvent themselves. I was curious about why mothers and children featured so very prominently in urban policies in Rotterdam and also how this resulted in policy practices and what was *done* in these practices.

I focus on three categories of policy in this thesis: 1) city marketing, 2) urban planning[4] and 3) parenting guidance[5]. I investigate how Rotterdam remakes the city's mythology in marketing strategies in order to fit the desired future. And I analyse urban planning policies that aim to change the physical structure of brick, concrete, parks and playgrounds. In imagining urban futures beyond the industrial past, policy makers devise campaigns, images and buildings and facilitate businesses. But they also imagine future populations. Urban policy entrepreneurs think of populations as important urban features or aspects of urban brands and as actors in safety and "liveability" policies. And when it comes to imagining a future economy beyond industry, concerns about the future labour force rise. These concerns about the city – its safety, economy, liveability – crystallise in parenting guidance practices. I will investigate in the chapters to follow just how these are thought to address a wide range of issues and why they are sometimes presented as the silver bullet to the city's problems. Interestingly, mothers are recognised as key actors in these policies and addressed as the primary and sometimes only ones responsible for children and youths.

My dissertation is thus built on a collection of different types of data and an analysis of three categories of urban policies to regenerate the city. The three terms "marketing", "planning" and




*Three emic categories of urban policy - three categories of data collection*

"parenting guidance" are emic terms: they are used by those agents developing and executing the policies.

In the figure above, the term "parenting guidance" is in bold font. That is because the majority of my argument in this dissertation, and the majority of my research on which this argument is built, is about parenting guidance. I did ethnographic, participatory research in practices of parenting guidance in Rotterdam. I give a full and detailed explanation of these practices and my part in them in chapter 3. Here, it suffices to say that parenting guidance is organised by social work agencies and other agencies within the municipality in cooperation with schools and community centres. Most practices in which I participated were parent *courses* (that consisted of one meeting, a series of meetings and one continuous class during a couple of months). But I also participated in more long-term one-on-one guidance arrangements in which social workers or students in social work set out to help parents manage their everyday life and childrearing practices. The participants were almost exclusively mothers and they participated voluntarily.

For 14 months in 2009 and 2010, I took the metro, tram or bus to Rotterdam neighbourhoods where parenting guidance was organised and being done. I went along with social workers, pedagogues and student-interns on "house visits", meant to guide mothers in their own homes, I participated in series of courses and I dropped in on organised debates and "themed meetings".

I was interested in what goes on in the room. What happens when policy ambitions for the city enter a classroom, school kitchen, family home or community centre where "parenting guidance" is taking place? What do professionals such as teachers, pedagogues and social workers produce together with participating mothers? And how does this relate to imagined urban futures and the new post-industrial economy?

### *Urban Europe beyond the industrial past*

Rotterdam is one example of a larger phenomenon: former industrial cities in the West have been struggling with their economies and labour markets since the 1970s, when industry rationalised and production was outsourced to other parts of the world. Deindustrialisation hit hard in cities like Liverpool, Marseille, Luik and Rotterdam. These urban economies were booming during decades of industrial expansion and are now adjusting to new economic realities. In a way, Europe as a whole is struggling with economic uncertainty and rising unemployment levels – especially since the start of the current economic crisis. Like urban administrations, the European Commission and national governments worry about the labour force and creating employment by attracting business and economic innovation. For example, in a recent report the European Commission urges for innovation and educational flexibility to combat "skill imbalances" in Europe. It says: "Skills mismatch is an increasing economic problem (in the EU) (...) (and this) affects economic competitiveness" (European Commission, 2012: 16). This "mismatch" between the skills needed for new economic activities and those acquired by the actual labour force prompt educational and social policies for the EU, as they do in Rotterdam. These set out to *change the characteristics of the actual population to fit the economic demands of the future*. Europe, nations and cities alike thus *imagine future populations*.

While cities are part of nations and Europe (and some particularities of the Dutch context, such as repertoires of paternalism are part of my analysis), they also behave like separate entrepreneurial entities in interurban competition. Individual cities compete to attract businesses, visitors and certain groups of inhabitants in order to revitalise and secure economic viability. In the academic field of urban studies, scholars have written about this phenomenon and they have designed a myriad of conceptual frameworks for understanding it, such as – famously – "cities as growth machines" (Molotch, 1976) and "entrepreneurial cities" (Harvey, 1989). Following early examples like New York and Glasgow, cities around Europe have developed such entrepreneurial strategies. Amidst much economic uncertainty, they envision their future as an important node in international networks, as a centre for highbrow culture, as the place where sellable ideas are thought of and restaurants frequented, where young people find their path towards success and international businesses want to stay put. Local and national governments alike develop

strategies for desired urban futures. They employ Richard Florida's ideas of the creative class and find ways to attract artists, bankers and universities. They spend large budgets on extensive marketing. They compete to become European Capital of Culture or host international events such as footballing finals or G8 summits in the hope that the spotlight on their city will bring revenue. They build high quality neighbourhoods Jane Jacobs-style, with stores, restaurants, businesses and playgrounds next to each other. And they employ government strategies to influence the composition and characteristics of their populations.

### *Re-generation and genderfication*

In this international marketplace of cities, mothers matter. The next generation of urbanites is one entry point for entrepreneurial urban strategies in which it is seen as an instrument to regenerate the city. Here, I want to leave the broader context of the EU and the nation and zoom back in on Rotterdam as a case of a city trying to move beyond its industrial past.

The Rotterdam administration identifies the city's demographic makeup as one of the most important causes of the city's problems. Rotterdam is too poor, too poorly educated, too "black" and too "lagging behind"[6] or so say the policy texts. For example, in 2004, the new administration of the late Pim Fortuyn analysed the situation in Rotterdam and stated that:

> *"The colour is not the problem (for Rotterdam, MvdB), but the problem has a colour."* (Rotterdam, 2004a: 12)

And more recently, statements about "selective out-migration" of "opportunity rich" use a different idiom, but are similar nonetheless. "Selective out-migration" (COS, 2010) is a term taken to mean that higher earning inhabitants in the 30-45 age bracket are more likely to leave Rotterdam as a place of residence than other categories of inhabitants. And the attraction of the city for the "opportunity poor" is considered the other side of the same coin, inhibiting the development of Rotterdam. For example, in a 2011 policy report analysing the social situation in the south of Rotterdam, the authors state:

> *"Cheap housing attracts opportunity poor and people with a small income. As a consequence, the social upgrading of South as a whole has not sufficiently taken shape."* (Team Deetman/ Mans, 2011: 4)

And in response, the mayor Aboutaleb stated that:

> *"What is at stake is the social upgrading (*sociale stijging*) of the people. People make the city, not the buildings. The school results (as measured in Cito test scores, MvdB) are too poor. That way, you know what the future of Rotterdam South is going to be like if you don't decide to invest in those people in a major way. For example in education, to upgrade. (...) If you invest in children of four years old, this will render results in sixteen years. It is a long-term investment."*[7]

I analyse the logic and terms such as "opportunity poor" in more detail in the chapters to follow. What is important here is that demographic characteristics such as education levels, age, class background and so on are quite explicitly considered the core of Rotterdam's problems. These characteristics were of much less import in industrial times, when the harbour provided manual jobs. But cities struggling to stimulate new economies are concerned about such demographics, especially because personal and social skills and characteristics are pivotal in such an economy.

Rotterdam has struggled with deindustrialisation and the resulting unemployment for some decades now. On top of that, it deals with conflicts related to ethnic diversity, the flight of higher-educated populations and rapidly aging post-World War II modernist urban planning. Building on rich historical repertoires of urban planning and paternalist policies, the Rotterdam administration has developed a range of policies to change Rotterdam's demographic composition in order to fit desired futures of a post-industrial economy. On the basis of my research, in the chapters to follow I show that it aims to do so in roughly two ways. One route is the *actual replacement of the current population with a better suited one*. The efforts to build more expensive homes, to gentrify neighbourhoods, to attract higher-educated parents with their children, to market the city to a more affluent population and to "disperse" lower-educated "opportunity poor" are concrete strategies towards this goal of replacement (in chapter 1 and 2, these issues are dealt with more thoroughly). Another route is to *change today's children into the desired population*: to educate, "upgrade" (to use the mayor's term) and invest in the young members of the current population so that they can finish school, become "opportunity rich" and find jobs in the future economy. Strategies that are to bring about this change are, for example, programmes to prevent early school leaving, after-school programmes, preschools (*vroeg- en voorschoolse educatie*) and "parenting guidance". Both routes are what I term urban re-generation: efforts to renew the city by either investing in the children (the next generation) of the current population or replacing the current population of children by a new generation of better suited children. Urban re-generation as a concept is a variation on the term urban regeneration. It supplements it because it focuses on the city as a *reproductive milieu*, where urban regeneration usually points to material and economic restructuring. Urban re-generation identifies the cities' reproductive milieu and the

next generation as important routes for social engineering and planning.

Related is the phenomenon that I termed genderfication[8]. I elaborate on both genderfication and urban re-generation in chapter 2, where I make my argument about Rotterdam's aims for change (see also Van den Berg, 2012; Van den Berg, 2013). Genderfication is a variation on the concept of gentrification. In general terms, gentrification is a process in which space is produced for more affluent users (cf. Hackworth, 2002: 815). Following this definition of gentrification, I define *genderfication* as the production of space for not only more affluent users, but also for specific gender notions. My research shows that (and this is the subject of chapter two) Rotterdam has tried to feminise the city in recent marketing enterprises: it launched a campaign that was to showcase Rotterdam's "feminine side". Genderfication can also be found in the production of "child-friendly neighbourhoods": a set of urban planning policies in which Rotterdam aims for dual-earner families, subscribing to gender-equal ideals. The aims of genderfication and urban re-generation hence explain the families and young children in the promotional video with which I opened this introduction. And they are interesting departures from a history of masculine imagery of muscled manual labourers, high-rise buildings, and industrial waterfronts.

### *Mothering the post-industrial city: an elective affinity*

In this thesis, I look at parenting guidance practices within this context of urban re-generation and genderfication. Parenting guidance as practice can be looked at using different views. For instance, to look at the practices that I studied in a framework of new nationalisms has proven fruitful too (Van Reekum & Van den Berg, forthcoming; Van den Berg, 2013). But when looked at in the light of a city struggling to remove itself from an industrial heritage, an interesting and innovative analysis becomes possible: *one about the possibility of mothering a post-industrial city*.

When I participated in the practices that are at the core of this dissertation, I soon identified a common theme to them. However different the practices were (I discuss these differences in chapter 3), they also had something powerful in common: they were all focused on reflection and communication. As a policy instrument, parenting guidance and parent courses are already a reflexive and communicative intervention: they are meant to prompt discussion, debate, thought and negotiation. But my claim in this dissertation goes further: reflection and communication were *done* in parenting guidance practices. I am interested in the work of doing reflection and communication. The practices were not geared towards the transferral of pedagogical knowledge or parenting tips as much as one might expect. In fact, professionals teaching the classes were often uneasy in their role as a teacher. Rather, they stressed their equality to the mothers and engaged in discussion and egalitarian conversation. This also meant that whether we debated issues ranging from food and eating to school choice and child abuse, the substance of the

practices was subject to particular *forms*. We *practiced* communication and reflection in a most egalitarian fashion. I first started noticing this when every meeting I participated in started and ended with an evaluation of the meeting itself. These meta-reflections were very common and soon I came to see that many activities in the courses, debates and guidance meetings could be seen, in fact, as ways to *practice* reflection and communication. Parenting guidance dealt with many issues and perspectives on parenting. We talked about the sexual development of children, food, schooling, democracy and use of libraries. But what was most interesting in the practices that I studied was not this content per se, but *the dominance of the form* in which these issues were discussed. The form was decisively egalitarian and repetitive: we practiced debate, egalitarian talk, negotiation, evaluation and observation. Mothers and teachers together practiced reflection and communication in what I have come to term "ritual-like activities" (this theme is elaborated on in chapter 6). Participants in parenting guidance practices thus cooperated in these activities and through this cooperation produced reflexive and communicative subject-positions: they open up the possibility of becoming reflexive and communicative within the situation, or rather, the possibility of *doing* reflection and communication.

By stating that there was cooperation, I by no means intend to say that there was no conflict in the rooms that I visited. In chapter 5, I show how certain tensions were pronounced or solved. The point is, though, that no matter how often and extensively mothers discussed the parenting norms of the teachers or challenged the professional knowledge with their own lived experiences, they did engage in discussions, debates, and exercises, and through this participation cooperated in the production of reflexive and communicative subject-positions. Whether a mother agrees with a teacher or not, and whether or not the teacher gets to execute her plan for the meeting, the point that I will make in chapter 6 is that both teacher and mother engage in reflection and communication, even (or: precisely!) in the most fundamental disagreement.

In the practices that I studied, the everyday activity of mothering is negotiated, but the activity itself is not exactly practiced. Mothering as practice happens in many other sites and settings. Mothers are mothering at home, in the shower as they plan their day, in the supermarket as they decide on their children's diet. If we think of what the term "mothering" represents, we might even come up with a definition that incorporates practices of fathers, grandparents, siblings, nannies, mobile phones and schoolteachers. I have not studied these practices of mothering, just the negotiations in parenting guidance and the practices within these classes, guidance meetings and so on. That means that I have made no analysis on the basis of which I can conclude whether or not the parenting guidance accomplishes what it sets out to do or whether or not mothering practices in fact do change as a consequence of the policy practices. In its stead, I investigate a very

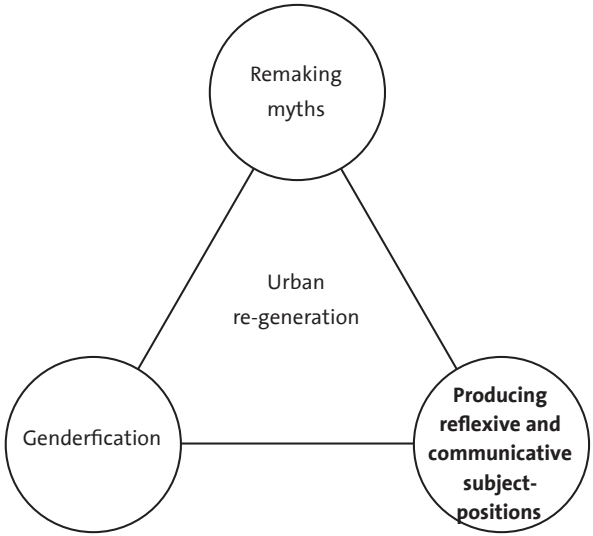
specific location of negotiation about mothering and *production of subject-positions* through this negotiation: those in forms of parenting guidance in Rotterdam.

The specificity of this context notwithstanding, I argue that there are similarities between the type of subject-positions that were produced in the practices I studied and a vocational ethic needed for any post-industrial economy. The particularities of the reflexive and communicative subject-positions produced there in fact show a remarkable resemblance to descriptions of what is expected of employees in an interactive service economy. I have studied parenting guidance practices in relative isolation: I studied only these practices and did not follow mothers or teachers for a longer period of time or aimed to know what their mothering practices or teaching practices beyond the classes or meetings were. Even so, parenting guidance as a practice is, of course, not isolated. It is located in a place and time where industrial production is moved elsewhere and new jobs and careers are available in an interactive service economy. I propose, therefore, to see the production of reflexive and communicative subject-positions in light of the evolvement of the Rotterdam economy towards a post-industrial interactive service economy. I think of this relationship as a *Wahlverwandtschaft*: an elective affinity between the production of reflexive and communicative subject-positions and a twenty-first century vocational ethic. The concept elective affinity is borrowed from Weber and used here as a heuristic tool. Because if we see what happens in the parenting guidance practices in the light of the post-industrial economy, an innovative perspective is possible on what is done in the practices and what that means beyond the practices themselves. It brings to light how this particular production of subject-positions is relevant to the city in the twenty-first century.

The figure below resembles the triangle above, but in this one, I use the etic terms of this dissertation: my terms as a researcher to analyse what I recorded in the field and from other sources.

## *The use of theory*

My research on parenting guidance practices is informed by a body of work that is often referred to as "relational sociologies" (cf. Emirbayer, 1997). This primarily means that I focus on what happens *between* mothers and teachers in a particular moment, situation and room. I am interested in what was *done in practices* that I witnessed, far more than in what the different actors think about the practices or what the backgrounds of the different actors are and how these characteristics can or cannot explain certain behaviours. In its focus on situations this part of my research is positioned in a tradition that has come to be referred to as "everyday life sociology" (Baert, 1998): focused on particular situations, specifically located in time and place. But other than for instance Erving Goffman (one of the key figures in this intellectual tradition), I use the term *transactions*[9]




*The analytical – etic – categories of this dissertation*

rather than interactions. Transactions are, in fact, the primary unit of analysis in this research and dissertation. The term "transaction" has an important advantage vis-à-vis "interaction": it does not presuppose separate and fixed entities that exist prior to the situation. When the term "interaction" is used, often the actors or variables in the situation are thought of as fixed and the outcome of the interaction as the result of the different attributes of the variables (Emirbayer, 1997; Dewey & Bentley, 1949[10]). Transaction as a concept emphasises the way in which entities and actions derive their meaning from the situation or transaction itself. Transactions are, thus, the dynamic relations and processes that unfold in situations, rather than an exchange or tie between entities that existed before the situation. That means that the actors going into a transaction are not the same as those in one. The transaction itself changes the entities in it. In a transactional perspective, the researcher focuses on the process, but also on what is produced in this process: the way in which elements that play a role in the transaction form the transaction and are altered by it at the same time. I thus think of the productions of mothering as *in between* people and objects involved in the transaction. Parenting guidance is not only a collection of policy measures designed by policy makers and executed by professionals and teachers. They are as much a production of the transactions of the mothers and the teacher, teaching material, children present, the coffee and biscuits offered and the language used. People, objects, the space

and the potential endless list of other entities together play a role in these transactions and all have their influence on the outcomes. To limit my scope in the empirical research, I focused on transactions between teachers and mothers in each other's presence (cf. Goffman, 1959), and included spatial and other dimensions when I deemed them relevant to the type of production taking place. The production of reflexive and communicative subject-positions in the parenting classes is, thus, a joint activity. Both mothers and teachers (and I) are necessarily transformed by and in the transactions that I witnessed, although I have not researched what consequences this transformation has beyond the transaction itself. I *focused on the transactions and what was produced within them*.

I have endeavoured to develop interesting perspectives on my findings, building on a range of sociological theories and perspectives in gender studies and urban studies. I did this when I analysed concrete situations in my ethnographic material and in the cases of policy and marketing that I analyse in chapters 1 and 2. I combined perspectives when I felt that there was something to be gained by combining them. The result is something of a mosaic of theoretical perspectives. Because of this approach to theory, the reader will not find a theory chapter in this dissertation. Rather, each chapter introduces perspectives that I found useful in thinking about the particular problematic of that chapter. Throughout the time I worked on this dissertation, I have brought my ethnographic data and theoretical perspectives in constant interaction with each other. That means that at some points, the theoretical perspectives I worked with made more sense when I looked at them with particular pieces of data in mind, or ethnographic data prompted amendments to theory. At other times, I better understood what I encountered in the field when using a particular perspective or, alternatively, needed new or other theoretical perspectives to make sense of data. I was looking, in other words, for "ah ha effects" (Willis & Trondman, 2000: 12) both ways: theory made more sense or appeared too limited when looking at it with my ethnographic data and my data made more sense or needed elaboration when looking at it with particular theoretical perspectives. What I did could be termed "theoretically informed ethnography" (or theoretically informed content analysis, in my cases of "La City" and the "child friendly city"). In the words of Willis and Trondman (2000: 12) this entails: "a two-way stretch, a continuous process of shifting back and forth, if you like, between 'induction' and 'deduction'". This also means that at some points, the theoretical perspectives I started out with needed amendments or were too limited to interpret what I encountered in the field. This was, for instance, the case with perspectives on resistance that I found, in the end, not particularly helpful to interpret what it is that mothers are doing in parenting guidance practices. In this particular instance (in chapter 5) and others, I have written of my search for a fit between theoretical perspectives and ethnography.

In the intellectual journey that is in the following pages, I looked for ways to shed light on

phenomena that I encountered, to develop perspectives that help us understand the twenty-first century city and the logics of urban policies. This entails some risk-taking in the sense that my writing of theory is not as complete as often found in theses; the reader will find no reviews of bodies of work here. I use the books, articles, perspectives and analytics that helped me understand my object of concern and do not cover the range of perspectives and sources that I did not use, as is often asked of scholars in theses and journals. There is something to be gained by this approach: rather than discussions of scholars in conversation with each other and critiquing each other, I present my own perspective in the chapters to follow: *I tell the story of mothering a genderfying, re-generating post-industrial city*.

The figure below presents the reader with an overview of the line of argument in this thesis and my use of theory in it. It presents the six chapters and the important concepts in each chapter: urban re-generation, genderfication, mythmaking, ethnography, translations, transactions, mediations, government, elective affinity, ritual-like transactions and subject-positions. The model also reflects the way in which these concepts relate to each other in the context of this dissertation. Moreover, I have included the names of those whose work I have used to develop these theoretical perspectives and conceptual frameworks. For instance, the term "government" is associated with Foucault and Rose and "transactions" with Dewey and Bentley and Emirbayer. This way, the conceptual mosaic that is the result of my use of theory in this dissertation is presented in a graphic way. In this presentation, the reader can find on one page the theoretical orientations of this work, the ways in which I relate these to each other, the way in which I use them for my research and interpretation of data and what place they have in the narrative of this dissertation.

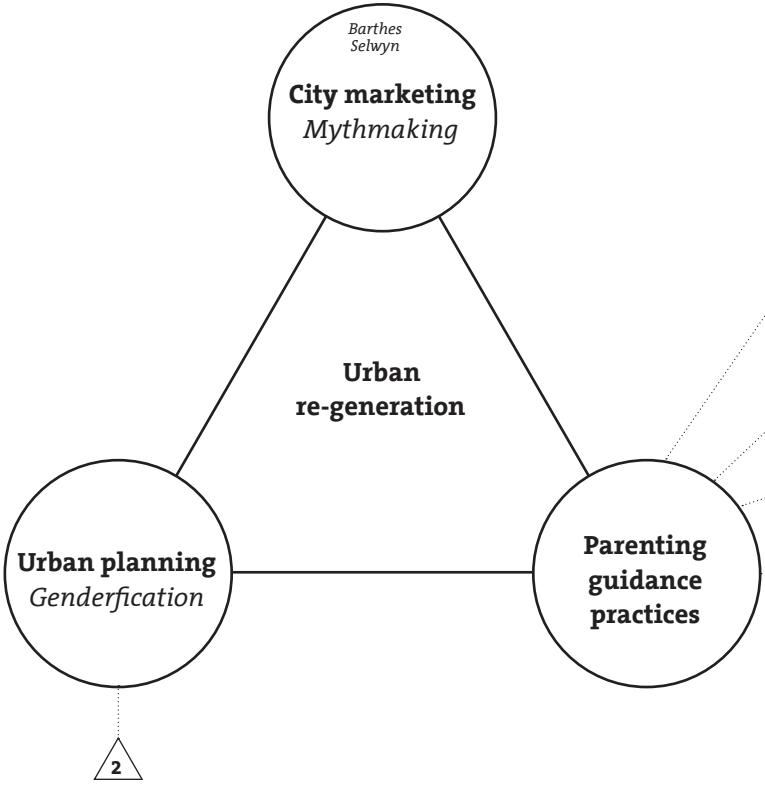
Starting this research in 2008, I very much relied on critical perspectives in urban studies, feminist theory and sociology to develop my research. Perspectives based in the work of David Harvey, for example, served as first searchlights as they highlighted logics of urban entrepreneurialism (1989) and revanchism (Smith, 1996; see Schinkel & Van den Berg, 2011 for another example of my work based on these perspectives). The injustices of gentrification and urban boosterism were among my first concerns and feature – to some extent – in chapter 1 and 2 of this dissertation because indeed these perspectives are relevant to the object studied here: the industrial city reinventing itself. But I soon needed other theoretical repertoires to make sense of my data or, to confront with my data and I developed perspectives on urban re-generation, urban myth making and genderfication as a result.

In a similar way, the ubiquity of the category "normal" in the practices I studied soon led me to perspectives developed in the field of governmentality studies. Building on the work of Michel Foucault, scholars like Nikolas Rose (1989) gave me tools to analyse just what "the normal" as a

Repertoires of: - Planning - Paternalism *Duyvendak Boomkens*

1 - ***Mothering*** *Rich*

- Rotterdam



3

## *Ethnography*

*Willis & Trondman*
*Wacquant*
*Flyvbjerg*

4

## *Translations*

*Latour*

*Government: the normal*

*Rose*
*Foucault*
*Cruikshank*

5

## *Transactions I: Mediations*

*Dewey & Bentley*
*Emirbayer*

*De Certeau*
*Scott*
*Abu-Lughod*

6

## *Transactions II*

*Producing reflexive and communicative subject-positions*

*Althusser*
*Foucault*
*Starfield*

*21st century vocational ethic*

*McDowell*
*Hochschild*

*Ritual-like transactions*

*Goffman*
*Verkaaik*
*Asad*
*Mahmood*

*Elective affinity*

*Weber*
*Engbersen*

category is and – importantly – what it *does*. Governmentality as a perspective helped me along in understanding the practices that I studied, but it also has – like all theoretical perspectives – limits of its own. I supplemented my analysis of "the normal" in parenting guidance practices with an analysis of chains of translations that is loosely based on the work of Bruno Latour (1999). That way, I was able to shed light on changing definitions of "the normal" and what these changes signified. The analysis in chapter 4 is the result of this combination of perspectives.

But I was unsatisfied with the room provided by these analytical tools to analyse conflict and strain in transactions (and this is not to be taken as a critique on governmentality studies, rather as a supplement). The definitions of the "normal" were indeed ubiquitous and they did guide the transactions to some extent, but mothers and teachers alike debated them constantly and were very eager to make amendments. First inclined to view these strained transactions through the lens of resistance theories, I soon opted for an approach based on the writings of Michel de Certeau (1984) focusing on mediations of policy: forms of "making do" that alter the transaction. The perspectives that guided my analysis in chapter 6 have already been outlined above: there I look at what is done in the practices that I studied, at what it is that mothers and teachers produce together in ritual-like transactions. And I argue in this chapter that there is something to be gained by looking at these productions of reflexive and communicative subject-positions and a twenty-first century vocational ethic as an elective affinity, a *Wahlverwandtschaft*.

### *Policy contingency*

However much this dissertation is about the deindustrialising city of Rotterdam in the years 2008-2010, it is also and importantly about transactions in the community centre in a 1930s built neighbourhood, in the living room of a flat that is about to be demolished, in the kitchen of a lively elementary school and in a portakabin on a playground in between large 1950s flats. I researched transactions in very specific locations and thus very specific moments of policy executions. And I write about transactions in 2009 or 2010 and between specific actors. The presence of a particular teacher or mother, the particularities of a room, the presence or absence of a blackboard, the breaking news on TV the night before and the weather are all potential game-changers, or rather transaction-changers and policy-changers. Mothers and professionals may very well come to a different transaction if they were to meet in another time and place. This is, in fact, very likely.

As a consequence, the execution of policy is highly contingent. As I will show in chapter 4, *translations* of policy take place between different locations of the production of policy. By this, I mean that a policy instrument that is designed in an office, or meeting of public administrators is not the same instrument at the level of the executor of policy. A general goal of "parenting guidance", as such defined at the municipal or even national level of policy-making, is translated

to "parent courses" at the level of the sub-municipality, is translated to "courses about sex-education" in the offices of the social work agency, is translated to a discussion of birth control methods in the parent room of an elementary school. In this thesis, I refer to this phenomenon with the idea of "chains of translations", that I borrow from Bruno Latour (as I already mentioned above).

I am not the first to note the contingency of policy execution. In the academic field of policy research, scholars are usually aware of the consequences of what they often term "discretion": the room to manoeuvre of varying actors in policy-implementation. Michael Lipsky (1980) asserted that practices of individuals in public services determine much of policy's outcomes. In his footsteps, many have researched how policy agents produce and also change policy at the level of implementation and execution (one example in the Dutch context is Engbersen, [1990] 2006). My research is based in this tradition and focuses on the *coproduction* of policy practices. It looks at policy practice as *the product of the work of both the executors and objects of policy*.

By no means do I mean to say that the execution of policy is always a watered-down version of policy design. But I do trace different steps of translations of policy-making in chapter 4 to show how a certain policy can transform quite dramatically and become something that the original policy-designers would have never anticipated. This pertains to the content of the policy: the issues talked about in the courses, the instruments used. In addition, I show in chapter 5 how transactions are often strained, how there is conflict between mothers, between teachers and mothers, sometimes even between teachers, if more than one teacher are present. In transactions, policy is mediated. One of the factors in these strained transactions is a sense of sluggishness and lethargy that I analyse in chapter 5. The idea of "policy-implementation" entails activity. It points at actions by actors in particular situations. But much of what I observed in parenting guidance was, in fact, rather boring, low-energy and sluggish. Sometimes to the frustration of those participating in the practice, nothing much happened.

So policy-implementation is the end-result of chains of translation and at times characterised by lethargy. Taken together, it would be easy to conclude that nothing much worth noting happens in the execution of parenting guidance. That the effect of such policies remains at least elusive and maybe, it is even futile. In discussions of social policy – public and academic – this is a recurring argument and termed the "futility-thesis" (Hirschman, 1991). In addition, many would argue that the fact that there are translations of policy means that there are perverse effects (compare for example Engbersen, 2009): the problem at which the policy is directed might actually be exacerbated by the policy, or other problems might arise as a result of the policy intervention: the "perversity-thesis" (Hirschman, 1991). Indeed, policy almost always creates unwanted results, new problems or perverse effects. And I draw attention to some of these effects in my focus on

translations in chapter 4.

Yet, the policy interventions of parenting guidance do, actually, "do" something that cannot be captured as perversity. To say that these interventions are futile or perverse is an effect of focusing on the claims of the policy designer and executors about what it is that the policy should or should not "do". For example, to say that mothering practices do not change as a result of parenting guidance policies would be to focus on what it is that the social workers, urban administrators or course designers set out to accomplish. Much of what happens in the practices and of what they produce is left out of such a scope. In this thesis, I am not looking to conclude anything about the effect of policy in such a sense. To investigate such effects is to obfuscate all other phenomena produced in the transactions. In this thesis, I do look at what is produced in the transactions, but I look at it beyond the aims of the policy makers and executors. The aims of the policy makers and executors are part of my research, but as an object of investigation: as one stage in chains of translations. By focusing on these translations and transactions, I thus show how policy is contingent, while remaining observant of what it is that the transactions produce. In a way, the observation that policy is contingent upon situations was already built in my research design when I decided to look at transactions in particular parent classes and parent guidance meetings. But in chapter 4 and 5, I also show empirically just what this contingency looks like and how we can understand it.

That is not to say, however, that I talk about these specific locations in time and space alone or in isolation. I embed what was going on in the classes, living rooms and kitchens into the larger context of urban re-generation. The larger context of the city as a whole that is trying to redesign its future and is re-generating itself can best, or so I argue, be understood within such specific situations. Following from this starting-point, I look at what is "done" in the parenting guidance and at what parenting guidance as a practice does. By looking at these practices in the context of urban re-generation, I could see the resemblance between what was done in them and what was a desired urban future: the elective affinity between reflexive and communicative subject-positions and the post-industrial vocational ethic.

Parenting guidance practices are one distillation point of the city. Mothers' worries about the future of their children, their running jokes, personal histories and political views enter the transactions as do teachers' professionalisms, student- interns' insecurities, personal histories, ideals and ambitions. Social work agencies' professional goals, political struggles at the Coolsingel (city hall), poverty, ethnic tensions, religion, sexual harassment, budget cuts and rising unemployment figures all find their way into the practices. These dimensions of the urban play out in particular ways when mothers and teachers meet with policy ambitions between them. In parenting guidance practices, much of what the city wants to become or fears it is already

becomes visible, as much as that the city is produced in such concrete practices. The city today is a fragmented one, as Jack Burgers (2002) argued. It is *done* or visible in local statistics, policy texts, politician's discourses, inhabitant's transactions, marketing videos and policy practices. The urban is divided into these local settings, these situations, or fragments, and is being produced in them. Parenting guidance practices are, thus, one place to see the city, to observe it and to see how it is produced.

### *Rotterdam as a strategic case*

Rotterdam is a strategic case to study the dynamics of a former industrial city aiming for a future beyond this industrial past. It is a case from which we can learn lessons that are more generally applicable for European former industrial cities struggling to establish a new economy. Robert K. Merton (1987) stressed the importance of strategic research materials and strategic research sites for sociology. Strategic research materials and strategic research sites enable the researcher to investigate problems in a way that can lead to "provisional generalisations" (ibidem: 14).

I build on this work of Merton and also more recent work of Flyvbjerg (2006) to claim the importance of case-study research. The point is not so much to generalise my findings as such (to say, for example, that what goes on Rotterdam, goes on elsewhere in the same way) but to *learn* from what I studied in this particular case (cf. Flyvbjerg, 2006). My analysis of mechanisms of urban policy and logics of urban re-generation as well as genderfication processes can serve as searchlights for other scholars and analysis in other locations.

In the Netherlands, Rotterdam has been the quintessential industrial city for decades. It rapidly expanded as a result of growing harbour activity and massive flows of people moving to Rotterdam to find work. When compared to other cities in the larger metropolitan area *De Randstad*, Rotterdam suffers most from deindustrialisation. It is adjusting to the post-industrial economy much slower than Amsterdam (the Dutch capital and only approximately 60 kilometres away). And, importantly, this is experienced in government and public opinion as an important and urgent problem. On top of that, Rotterdam is one of few cities in Europe that is getting younger. And this, too, is often seen as a governmental problem (this is the subject of parts of chapter 2 and 3). This combination of factors (a young population and the quintessential Dutch industrial city) makes Rotterdam an excellent strategic research site to study family and gender in urban re-generation.

There are clues that in other former industrial cities, too, generations are policy instruments and mothers are an important target group for social policy meant to re-generate. For example, in urban areas in France, "parenthood" is an important category in urban social policies (Boucher, 2011). And in cities in the UK and the US among other national contexts, "parent involvement

policies" in schools have proliferated (for the UK, see the work of Vincent, 2001; and Crozier, 1998 and Crozier & Davies, 2007; for the US, see for example Lopez, et al., 2001 and Epstein, 2001). Even though most scholars do not consider these efforts in the context of urban regeneration per se, critical scholarly work does examine the targeting of migrant and working class[11] parents as categories for policy by schools and local administrations. And the way in which parent involvement at school is an entry point for government to change behaviour of parents. These clues suggest that parenting is a category in policy in many urban settings and that a consideration of these efforts in relation to other forms of urban re-generation, gentrification, city marketing, planning efforts et cetera can be fruitful and innovative in contexts besides Rotterdam as well.

So I consider Rotterdam a strategic case to study family and gender in urban re-generation. But I find it relevant to analyse this particular location for the sake of this analysis alone, too. I now have lived in Rotterdam for over thirteen years, and before that I was raised in a Rotterdam suburb. Besides a piece of academic work, this dissertation is also a way for me to engage critically and emphatically with the city that is my home. Rotterdam, it seems, is always under attack. From analyses of why Rotterdam is first on the "wrong lists" to the dystopian images that I present in the following chapters, Rotterdam is associated many times with social problems, poverty, crime and general roughness. However much Rotterdam's rough beauty is praised and sang about, and Rotterdammers are considered wonderful "down-to-earth" people (I analyse these representations in more depth in chapters 1 and 2), living in Rotterdam is often something you have to explain to outsiders. And in the blame-game that frequently follows the analyses of the "wrong lists" and "problem areas", Rotterdammers or the Rotterdam population loses much too often. As Rotterdam social scientist Joke van der Zwaard put it poignantly and ironically recently (in May 2013), the logic in policy and public debate is often this: "Rotterdam is such a beautiful city, the inhabitants are a pity though" (*Rotterdam is een mooie stad, alleen jammer van de inwoners*)[12]. Besides a scholarly work about re-generation, policy contingency and genderfication, this thesis is, thus, also my way of engaging with public debates on Rotterdam's future and the injustices in current popular analyses and consequent policy actions.

When I write of what "Rotterdam" *does* in this dissertation – when I write of Rotterdam as agent[13] – I mean the Rotterdam administration unless otherwise specified. In practice, this means that I refer to different successive administrations and many participating political parties and administrators. The Rotterdam administration is made up of many actors. But when I write of the aims of the "Rotterdam administration", I write of the aims in formal policy documents that I analysed for this dissertation. Moreover, I include some texts and other communications (such as images, commercials et cetera) that were produced by Rotterdam Marketing (2008a, 2008b), which is a public service that works for the Rotterdam administration. There is much

consistency and continuity in how the Rotterdam administration has governed in the years in which I did my research (2008-2010). The prominence of family, mothers and children in urban re-generation efforts and the felt urgency to depart from Rotterdam's industrial past have featured in the policies of several administrations that were designed and executed by many actors. My empirical research took place in the years 2008-2010 and the policy texts that I analyse mostly cover these years too[14]. The case studied in this dissertation thus pertains not only to a particular location, but also to a particular moment in time: 2008-2010. The effects of the economic crisis on public budgets for urban planning, parenting guidance and marketing became apparent mostly after these years. I have not systematically researched policy in the years after 2010. The way in which the economic crisis translated to budget cuts and policy programmes is, thus, not fully included in this dissertation. However, some recent policy cases show striking continuities with what I analyse in this dissertation. The most ambitious policy program in Rotterdam in 2013 is *Nationaal Programma Rotterdam Zuid* (NPRZ; Programmabureau NPRZ, 2012). This national program is designed to enhance the educational levels, employment and housing/living conditions (*woonkwaliteit*) in the South of Rotterdam. NPRZ is a policy program meant to bring about – in my terms – urban re-generation. Children are the most important target group of the program, and this comes to the fore primarily in the production of "children's zones" (original in English) in which parenting guidance in the home and schooling are two of the most important policy instruments. The "children's zones" promises to children in the South of Rotterdam: "We will prepare you for a successful future" (Programmabureau NPRZ, 2012). And parenting guidance "behind the front door" (in part to be executed by the public services that were part of the research for this dissertation) is considered one of the most promising policy measures. Moreover, the plans aim for a more "balanced" population and the proposal is to build 873 new homes in 2012-2014, aiming for inhabitants that are higher-educated and have relatively high incomes.

There is, thus, much continuity. But the ambitions are a bit more modest than they were in the years in which I did my research due to the effects of the economic crisis. The scale on which such housing improvements are proposed is not as massive as was the case in 2008-2010 and the years prior to that. These changes notwithstanding, though, urban re-generation in terms of the investment in the children in the current population and the replacement of poor and marginalised groups by "higher income" and "higher-educated" groups still is the dominant policy frame.

### *Beyond ethnicity and race*

Like all representations, the Rotterdam promotional film with which I opened this introduction left certain aspects out. A striking absence in this film was Rotterdam's ethnic and racial diversity.

The children, mothers, youngsters and businessmen shown in the film are all white. Besides a black and Chinese woman shopping for food and a black waitress, the ethnic or racial "other" is absent from the film. This selective representation is surprising for the most ethnically diverse city in the Netherlands. In 2001, when Rotterdam was European Capital of Culture, the city chose to highlight what was called "multiculturalism" as an asset. The theme for this year of events was "Rotterdam is many cities", and symbolically, this phrase was put on billboards throughout the city in many different languages. Ten years later, Rotterdam does not seem to place racial and ethnic diversity in the marketing spotlight anymore. Ethnic diversity is, however, certainly *not* left out of the scope of policy making in Rotterdam. Much has been written about Rotterdam's struggles with ethnic conflict, racism and cultural differences. Uitermark and Duyvendak (2008), for example, argued that a particular brand of Rotterdam urban revanchism is specifically targeted at ethnic minorities and Muslims in particular; it consists of policies efforts geared towards a reconquering the city from the ethnic other. And Van der Waal and Burgers (2011) asked the question of how ethnocentrism and post-industrial job markets are related. Indeed, in public *and* scholarly debates on Rotterdam, ethnicity, culture and race have been foregrounded so much that at times it seems like it is all we see. One of the goals of this thesis is to examine what is going on in Rotterdam *besides* ethnicity and cultural conflict. My research supplements existing research on ethnic or racial dynamics with an analysis of the role that gender, age and family have to play in urban re-generation, because I think that such an analysis can bring to light mechanisms that have not been analysed before. However, ethnicity as an analytical category is not absent from this dissertation. Ethnicity and culture were meaningful categories in many practices that I witnessed and in policy-making too. But I have not started my research looking for ethnicity, race or cultural conflict. I analyse ethnicity in this dissertation when it became an important category in the transactions that I studied. The women in the parenting guidance practices were, in practice, often immigrants or immigrants' daughters. But "native" Dutch women were part of the classes and guidance meetings, too. Participants of the practices were not selected on the basis of their ethnic background. They were addressed as mothers first and as the inhabitants of particular geographical areas second.

### *A roadmap for the dissertation*

This dissertation consists of two parts of each three chapters. The first part is called *Family and urban re-generation* and deals with the urban context of Rotterdam and re-generation ambitions. In chapter 1, *Repertoires: mothering, planning and Rotterdam*, I present repertoires that are important to understand my empirical cases. Here, the question is: why intervene in mothering? The repertoires that are relevant to my study of parenting guidance and re-generation are those

of 1) planning and paternalism, 2) mothering practices and motherhood ideals and 3) repertoires of Rotterdam as a "city of exception"[15]. In chapter 2, the central question is: how to depart from the industrial city of the past? In this chapter, I analyse Rotterdam's ambitions for change and some important policy strategies for genderfication and urban re-generation. The festival "La City '08" is analysed here, as are the "Child friendly city" plans and certain policy strategies that may be termed revanchist. In chapter 3, *Producing and researching parenting guidance*, I introduce my ethnographic cases and place them in their urban context. The central question of chapter 3 is: which parenting guidance practices? I describe the urban context of Bureau Frontlijn, social work agencies, boroughs, streets and school buildings. And I analyse policy texts for legitimations of parenting guidance policies and the logics in the design. Moreover, I give my methodological considerations for this study and the design of my empirical research here.

In part II, *Learning to mother*, I deal with the practice of parenting guidance in depth on the basis of my ethnographic material. In the first chapter of this second part of this dissertation, chapter 4, *Translations – food, knowledge and sex*, I analyse "chains of translations" of policy. To be more precise: I trace definitions of the "normal" in parenting guidance and how these definitions are translated into practices. The central question here is: What is "normal" mothering? And how is this translated into interventions? But because policy is always a coproduction, my analysis of the practices does not end with these translations. In chapter 5, *Transactions I: mediating policy*, I look at what happens with these interventions in practice, in between mothers and professionals. In this chapter, the central question is: What happens when mothers and professionals meet and work together with policy ambitions between them? I look, specifically, at *mediations* of policy: at the ways in which responses of mothers transform policy, create something different and new. In chapter 6, *Transactions II – Rituals of reflexivity and the post-industrial economy*, the final step of my analysis of parenting guidance practices is made. In this chapter, I relate the practices to the larger narrative of this dissertation: that of urban re-generation. Here, the central questions are: What do the transactions produce? And how does this relate to imagined urban futures and the post-industrial economy? This chapter, thus, moves beyond the transactions themselves and looks at what they produce. Here, I argue that mothers and teachers coproduce reflexive and communicative subject-positions and that these resemble what is required of employees in the new service economy. I propose to look at this resemblance with the concept of "elective affinity": the reflexive and communicative ways of doing and being that were made possible in the ritual-like transactions in the practices and the twenty-first century vocational ethic are related in something like a "chemical marriage" (Engbersen, 2001).

*PART 1*

# FAMILY AND URBAN RE-GENERATION

*CHAPTER I*

# REPERTOIRES: MOTHERING, PLANNING, ROTTERDAM[1]

### *Borrowed meanings: interpretative repertoires*

Parenting guidance policies and the transactions in which I participated are full of meanings that are, in a way, borrowed. Catalogues of meaning are used as interpretative repertoires in the transactions between professionals and mothers. Notions of motherhood in another era come up, dystopian images of the place in which children are raised set the scene, or views of democracy and personal autonomy are positioned as ultimate goals. In this chapter, I set out three broad categories of meaning that are relevant to the situations I encountered in my fieldwork. First, I set a scene of mothering. I interpret histories of mothering work, of motherhood as an institution and ideology and of Dutch mothering practices and thus relate the elements of a mothering catalogue. Second, I analyse Dutch traditions of planning and paternalism that are used in the practices I encountered as an interpretative instrument to understand the relationship between experts and mothers, the state and the family. Third, an analysis of the narratives and mythologies of Rotterdam help to understand the sense of exceptionality that guides many Rotterdam social policies.

These catalogues of meaning thus work as interpretative repertoires. I take interpretative repertoires to mean collections of meaning, words, concepts, narratives and images that are used by actors to interpret concrete situations. Repertoires inform what people say and do in concrete situations. To use a metaphor of Nigel Edley (2001: 198), interpretative repertoires can be thought of as books on a shelve, available for borrowing when needed. They are "relatively coherent ways of talking about objects and events in the world" (ibidem: 198). The books on the shelves that I analyse in this chapter are thus 1) mothering ideologies, histories and practices, 2) paternalism and urban planning and, 3) Rotterdam narratives of an industrial, masculine dystopia. These books are used in practices to legitimise certain actions, to explain phenomena or to understand particular dynamics, preferences, practices et cetera. But they are not only discursive instruments in the sense of "building blocks" for talk only (Edley, 2001). They inform action as well: what people *do* in certain situations, too, is informed by ways of thinking and talking about certain phenomena. The repertoires are activated in these situations in ways of doing as they are in ways of talking.

Of course, many more books are on these shelves and are used to borrow meanings in the practices of the parenting classes. However, the three repertoires that I deal with here constitute an interesting framework to understand the practices I studied because they were most dominant and they set the stage on which parenting guidance is legitimised as a policy practice. Policy intervention in the most private sphere is – at least in the case of parenting guidance – hardly discussed. I encountered a massive consensus about the necessity and usefulness of these practices and I think that this can be understood in the light of repertoires of paternalist thinking and feelings of Rotterdam's exceptionality. The matter-of-fact way in which these interventions are targeted at mothers (and not fathers or others active in raising children) can be understood as a new episode in motherhood ideologies.

## *Mothering work contested*

*Moeders worden nooit meer mensen. Moeders blijven moeders.*
Tom Lanoye, 2010

**Motherhood as ideology and experience: Adrienne Rich**

How mothering work is done, who is doing it, what possible consequences for children's development are and how mothering practices serve larger groups is always contested. I do not claim to be discussing these contentions at full length here. I do however want to sketch 1) the way in which mothers (in the West) are historically often conceptualised as the most important *environment* of children and 2) the ways in which thought about what mothering is and what mothering should *contribute to* has developed historically. I will return to these themes throughout this thesis, but an introduction in such broad strokes I think helps the contextualisation of research here.

For these purposes, I depart from Adrienne Rich's *Of Woman Born*. Rich's intervention set the agenda for feminist discussions of motherhood from 1976 on and still informs much thinking about motherhood and mothering (O'Reilly, 2004a). Rich writes of her own experiences of mothering in the United States of the 1950s and 1960s, but also critiques the institution of motherhood. She distinguishes two meanings of motherhood: a potential relationship and an institution (Rich, 1976: 13). The second, she argues, superimposes the first in what she and others call patriarchy, and has been the cornerstone of much social and political structures. This institution has ensured that women are the ones made responsible for children's care and education. Rich insightfully observes how, when we think of children's environments, we think of mothers. In her words: "In the eyes of society, the mother *is* the child's environment" (53, italics in the original). The 1950s and 60s division of mothers in their own houses rendered them especially powerless in an intense privatisation of the home, in which "woman is the embodied home" (42). Motherhood thus was a "powerless responsibility" (52), and was as such presented as women's natural condition. Once women became mothers, the most important individuality they had to nourish was their children's and not their own. Motherhood, as such, brought the end to the autonomous self of women, as is also poetically captured by Belgian novelist Tom Lanoye when he says that "Mothers never again become people, mothers remain mothers". In motherhood manuals of the time, women were urged to remain calm, patient and Madonna-like[2], because what was at stake was precisely the child's subjectivity, not the mothers' (see for other analyses of US 1950s and 60s manuals for women: Hochschild, 2003 and Ehrenreich & English, [1978] 2005). These characterisations of motherhood and motherhood ideals should be located not only in the

West in the post-war years, but also in higher middle class, white households. bell hooks has, among others, shown many classist and racist assumptions in second wave feminist thought (for this argument see: hooks, [1984] 2000). There are many texts on non-white and non-middle class perspectives on motherhood (see for example O'Reilly 2004b on motherhood in the work of Toni Morrison, or Walkerdine & Lucey's (1989) work on UK working class mothering). The middle class white practice of privatisation, the separation of genders and ideals of childrearing were, however, set as norms for all. They therefore still resonate as catalogue of meaning.

Instead of questioning these motherhood styles alone, Rich called for a radical questioning of the *institution* of motherhood. Questioning *styles* was and is the practice of paediatricians, psychologists, social workers and other experts. Indeed, the danger of questioning mothering as practice and not motherhood as institution, is that women are placed in a double bind; they are at once the ones responsible for the creation of children's problems *and* the ones responsible for solving these same problems. They are at once "problem" and "protector" (Nakagawa, 2000; compare Van den Berg & Van Reekum, 2011). And this has proven to be a legitimation of blaming-the-mother-discourses. Such discourses base themselves on a radical interpretation of motherhood in which the mother is responsible for neutralising all other environmental factors, such as poverty, structural inequality, disease or abuse.

The motherhood ideology that Rich analysed is distinctly modern. It was the separation of production and reproduction that was the result of the Industrial Revolution that made such ideas possible. As production came to take place in factories and reproduction in the home, a quite dramatic change in perspectives on children, mothers and the family occurred. Rich wrote in the 1970s in the United States of her mothering experiences of the 1950s and 1960s. In the US of that time, Fordism was at its height. David Harvey (1990) argued how after the Second World War, Fordism as a "total way of life" (135) came into full being. Henry Ford intended his manufacturing methods to be accompanied by the creation of a new type of man as early as the beginning of the 20th century (he even designed social work programmes to educate his workers into this new type of man, Harvey, 1990: 126), but it was only after the Second World War, and supported by the new welfare state that the stable system of corporate capital, organised labour and Keynesian policies was perfected. This "new society" relied heavily on women providing a stable home environment. Adrienne Rich's experiences of motherhood were thus thoroughly coloured by modern and post-war ideologies of family and home. And still, these decades of stability and relative prosperity inform many ideals of love and care (Coontz, 2005). Harvey argues that something changed around 1972. He speaks of a sea-change in the organisation of production and society towards a regime of flexible accumulation (1990). Like earlier economic transitions, this led to changes in the home. In the words of Linda McDowell, after 1972, the transition resulted in a "new gender order":

one that was established without "Father and Ford" (1991). How this change affected mothering and childrearing advice is one of the main objects of study in this thesis. But first, I want to write of the specific way in which motherhood changed as a result of the Industrial Revolution.

**A new social order: modern motherhood**

Social roles changed as a result of the new organisation of production and consumption of the 19th century. The private sphere and the sphere of the market were radically divided and not in a neutral way: the private sphere became distinctly feminine, the public sphere masculine, and crossing these lines came to be seen as a moral offense. This had profound consequences for women and for mothers in particular. As Ehrenreich and English eloquently put it: "when production entered the factory, the household was left with only the most personal biological activities - eating, sex, sleeping, the care of small children, and (...) birth and dying and the care of the sick and aged." ([1978] 2005: 13). This in no way meant that women in general were not participating in production processes in the 19th and 20th century, but it did mean that production increasingly took place outside of the private realm and that a distinct ideology of home and family took form. Ehrenreich & English ([1978] 2005) argue that the fin-de-siècle "Woman Question" – the question about the role of women in society – had its material base in the emergence of Industrial capitalism and had a series of contradictory consequences: women became more free *and* more restricted. "Woman" as a social issue was resolved in a new equilibrium in which Romantic views prescribed for the "mysterious" woman to remain outside the masculine (public) spheres and in the feminine, domestic sphere of the home. In this ideology, the home came to be seen as the moral sphere, a sanctuary away from the amoral character of the market. The home was thought of as a "sanctuary", the "last refuge" for modern men and children (Abramovitz, [1988] 1996; Ehrenreich & English, [1978] 2005).

These ideas became the basis of motherhood as an institution that Adrienne Rich questioned, and this particular constellation of motherhood was thus perfected in the Fordist decades after the Second World War. Theories of the "natural", "biological" mother-child bond were especially influential in this period. Famously, Bowlby stressed the importance for the biological mother to be present and in the vicinity of the child in order for him or her to develop a "natural" attachment to her and, via this attachment, "normal" behaviour. In fact, he argued that deprivation of mother love in the early years of a child's life could explain deviance later on (see for overviews of his argument: N. Rose, 1989; Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989; Lawler, 2000). The mother was thus made responsible for the behaviour of her children. And for these reasons, motherhood and childrearing increasingly became a job, an occupation, something that needed to be taught in books, girl schools and civilising offensives. While in many national contexts, many women worked, it was their first

and foremost (unpaid and domestic) job to produce the able-bodied workers for the market.

The modern motherhood ideology thus lead to a new focus on how mothers *socialised* their children. Teaching specific work skills was replaced by teaching character traits that were deemed important for work in the industrialised economy (Abramovitz, [1988] 1996). As a consequence, the role of the mother thus went much beyond taking care of children alone. Mothers were increasingly expected to *educate* their children, to keep their husbands from drinking and to be guardians of morals. Women thus became important instruments of government in the industrial age. Their behaviour was both the target of government *and* the instrument for governing the private sphere of the family (N. Rose, 1989; Donzelot, 1977). To ensure reproduction processes, a myriad of programmes to influence the behaviours of mothers were designed in the 19th and 20th century in emerging welfare states. Nikolas Rose studied the way in which government works through "moulding the petty deals of the domestic conjugal and sexual lives of (...) parents" (1989: 121). The child as an idea was a target of policy for authorities in welfare states and as such connected to whatever aspirations these authorities had for the future. Experts intervened in the private lives of citizens to construct the ideal modern family. That modern family was to be responsible and autonomous and the "natural devotion" of the mother was to ensure the realisation of this ideal with the help of experts (N. Rose, 1989: 200).

**Socialising democratic subjects**

As mentioned before, the Fordist organisation of production and society of the 1950s and 60s allowed for a radical realisation of modern family ideals. With fathers earning income in the market and mothers providing a stable home, corporations providing jobs and the state a welfare safety net, authority was firmly in place. Starting in the 1960s and intensifying in the 1970s, however, protest against these set power relations grew. In Harvey's (1990) account, the regime of accumulation of the after-war years, undermined itself through its rigidity: precisely the set power relations were what ushered in the regime's demise.

The oil crisis of 1973 and the 1970s and 1980s political and economic restructuring were accompanied by changing social relations and cultural views. Feminisms of the late 1960s and 1970s (and likewise other social movements), including Adrienne Rich's writing, can be seen to some extent to be a response to the power relations of the after-war years. The givenness of these power relations was precisely what was attacked. And so was the "natural" authority of parents over children. What was constructed from then on as "authoritarian" parenting – the idea that what father or mother says goes and children obey - came to be seen as anti-democratic. Autonomy and democracy surfaced as most important elements of raising children. But although there was some experimenting with alternative family forms and care arrangements, the nuclear

family did remain the most dominant form and mothers remained to be seen as the most important environment of children. What changed however, were ideas about *what* mothers were guarding: not power relations as they were and the production of workers for the market, but, instead, autonomous, democratic subjects. Part of the voices in the advocacy of this new ideology of democratic parenting were Frankfurt School intellectuals (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989).

Especially Theodor Adorno critiqued authoritarianism. In fact, in his 1966 radio address called "Erziehung nach Auschwitz" (Education after Auschwitz), he stressed the importance of autonomy and the resistance to heteronomy: "The single genuine power standing against the principle of Auschwitz is autonomy (...): the power of reflection, of self-determination, of not cooperating" (4). Adorno thus insisted that to prevent a future Auschwitz, education for autonomy was imperative. This example gives an idea of the heavy moral argument behind the perceived necessity of autonomy in those years. But because of the tradition of the nuclear family and the motherhood ideology, the person to produce these autonomous and democratic citizens remained (and today still is to a large extent) the mother.

In 1989, Valerie Walkerdine and Helen Lucey published their still inspiring *Democracy in the Kitchen; Regulating Mothers, Socialising Daughters*. In this book, they argued that parenting strategies of the working classes (in the United Kingdom) were deemed pathological in much research and that 1960s and 1970s ideals of autonomy were essentially middle class values. What they termed the model of "sensitive mothering" was a collection of middle class practices that were based on the idea that the mother is the most important educator of her children and that she should, therefore, always respond to her child's needs. Her *sensitivity* to her child's needs was, in theories of parenting that were – again – informed by Bowlby's research, considered most important in guarding democracy. Walkerdine and Lucey showed how those particular middle-class values are validated in liberal and progressive discourses on parenting that simultaneously pathologise working-class "authoritarian" ones. Ironically, precisely leftist thinkers (like those of the Frankfurt School) thus provided ammunition to question working-class parenting practices, because those thinkers "held authoritarianism to be the very basis of oppression" (Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989: 25) and located authoritarianism with the working classes. Mothering, Walkerdine and Lucey argued, more and more came to be seen as a pedagogical task, of producing reasonable citizens that are autonomous, empowered and free. In this sense, they said: "the path to democracy begins in the kitchen of the sensitive mother" (101). For mothers, this resulted in much responsibility, and intensive, time-consuming mothering practices.

I will return to the ideas of *Democracy in the kitchen* later in this thesis because of the insightful analysis of the inequalities in thinking about parenting practices. In this paragraph, I think it suffices to say that parenting was in the West, indeed, located with mothers in a radical

way in modern ideals of the separation of genders. In the eyes of many still today, the mother is the primary environment of the child. Combined with more recent ideals of autonomy and democracy, mothers are consequently the ones made responsible for structural inequality, democracy and harmony.

### *Dutch motherhood ideologies and practices*

Arguably, this is even more radically the case in the Netherlands. Many authors have argued that when compared to other European contexts, the Dutch have a very strong domestic tradition in which the mother ideally cares for the house and the children and the father works outside of the home (Kloek, 2009; Kremer, 2007; Van Daalen, 2010). Interestingly, though, for the Dutch, this did and does not automatically result in an experience of inequality, as mothers traditionally enjoyed much autonomy. To many of the Dutch, gender equality does not necessarily translate to a gender equal division of labour or care. The cultural repertoire that is the result of this specific historic background turned out to be highly relevant in the practices that I researched. In the transactions in the practices and in the policy texts legitimising these practices, the mothers were simultaneously constructed as in need of a process of emancipation from their family *and* spouses and they were addressed in their role *within* the family, namely that of the mother. "Progressive" ideas of gender equality in the Netherlands appear alongside a strong motherhood ideology and family practices that leave most caring duties to mothers (I elaborated on this argument with Jan Willem Duyvendak, Van den Berg & Duyvendak, 2012).

When reviewing literature on motherhood and domestic life in the Netherlands, a Dutch family ideal that consists of at least three elements surfaces. First, a strong preference for *self-care*, that is to say that the Dutch government stimulates parents to take care of their children themselves, instead of providing comprehensive schemes of childcare or promoting intergenerational care. Most Dutch parents share in this ideal: they too feel that parents are the ones that should take care of their own children and that children are best taken care of in the domestic sphere (Kremer, 2007). Second, the ideal prescribes the form of the *nuclear family*. Single parenthood is defined as a problem and, again, the division of care tasks and work is thought to be solved among the partners within the domestic sphere. Third, currently, a large portion of the Dutch as well as the government, share the ideal of *parental sharing* (Kremer, 2007). The Dutch state actively engages in facilitating mothers and fathers to share the care for children. For example, employees have the legal right to change their job from fulltime to part-time to have more time to spend with children (Kremer, 2007). The combination of work and care duties by both parents became the goal of the Dutch government in the 1990s because of the emancipation of women, but, as Plantenga has argued (2002), also because the Dutch government more broadly focuses on part-

time employment as a route to higher employment rates and labour market flexibility. In fact, the Netherlands have been termed "part-time paradise" (Duyvendak & Stavenuiter, 2006). And women (mothers in particular) are typically the ones working in those part-time jobs.

There are large discrepancies between the gender-equal ideals of the Dutch and their far more traditional practices. For example, the vast majority of care work for children in the Netherlands is the responsibility of mothers and therefore deserves the term "mothering work" (cf. Reay, 1995). In fact, the image of the Scandinavian countries in which much more responsibility for children is allocated with the state, often functions as a negative reference point when children's interests for the best care (as given by the mother) are played out against women's interests to paid employment (Kremer, 2007). However much the Dutch government aims for a model of two parents working and equally sharing caring duties, the everyday practice in the Netherlands turns out to be that fathers work fulltime and mothers have a part-time job for two or three days a week. In 2011, 64% of Dutch women worked more than 12 hours per week and only 27% of Dutch women worked fulltime (Merens et al., 2012). Women's emancipation in the Netherlands in practice thus often means a "half-revolution" (Hochschild, 1989; Kremer, 2007) of part-time paid employment and, as a result, lower status jobs and less career opportunities no matter how much the Dutch pride themselves on their gender-equal values (Wekker, 2004; Schinkel, 2011a; Van den Berg & Schinkel, 2009).

This opposition between ideals and practices is the result of a specific Dutch history of the family. Compared to other West-European countries, a rather radical interpretation of the nuclear family became dominant in the Netherlands very early on. The bourgeois ideal originated in the seventeenth century and prescribed a high level of domesticity and a very strong gender division of labour (Van Daalen, 2010). Els Kloek has shown in her study "Vrouw des huizes. Een cultuurgeschiedenis van de Hollandse huisvrouw" (2009) ("A cultural history of the Dutch housewife") that culturally, there has been a remarkable continuity in ideas and narratives about motherhood in the Netherlands. At least in ideals, Kloek argues, Dutch women prioritised their role of housewife: managing the household, keeping things clean and orderly. However, within this ideal, the highly gendered spheres did not necessarily mean unequal gendered relationships. In fact, Dutch housewives and mothers have historically often been depicted as bossy and entrepreneurial and in historic sources that Kloek analysed, foreign commentators stated how to them, Dutch women were strikingly equal to their spouse within the domestic sphere. Specifically, Dutch women were called "housewives" instead of "wife" or "spouse", referring to their rather autonomous role of "house manager". As such, she was often depicted as not the dependent "other half" of her husband, but rather his equal or even superior within the home.

Dutch nationalist narratives of ideal family life were very much based on the idea of the

housewife and fulltime mother that is equal to the father. In fact, for centuries and arguably still to some degree today, it was a measure of good taste and citizenship if women did not need to work outside the home and could spend most of their time on the household and the children (Kloek, 2009). To the Dutch, a gendered division of labour did not and still does not automatically signify inequality. Instead, *autonomy within* the household was and is an important aspect of Dutch motherhood repertoires

To be sure, elements of this Dutch motherhood repertoire were and are to be found all over Europe and the United States. However, Rineke van Daalen (2010) suggests that the Dutch maintained a particularly radical nuclear family ideal. In fact, from historic sources, it appears that the Dutch lived in nuclear families before the industrial revolution entered the Netherlands (wich, incidentally, was relatively late when compared to other European countries). In the 19th and 20th century, Van Daalen argues, the different denominations in the Dutch system of pillarisation actively promoted the breadwinner model and motherhood ideal, in the form of civilising offensives in which higher middle class women and later on professionals taught lower class mothers how to mother. Pillarisation was a vertical organisation of society and social institutions into segments ("zuilen" in Dutch) along denominational or ideological lines. The hegemony of this motherhood ideology in the Netherlands was also reflected in the low labour participation of Dutch women when compared to women in surrounding countries. Research shows that for example that in 1920, in France 42% and in Germany 33% of women participated in paid labour, whereas only 18% of Dutch women did so (Diederiks et al., 1994: 345).

After the sexual and gender revolutions of the 1960s and 70s, it took Dutch women some decades longer to increase labour market participation than women in other West-European countries. And it took the Dutch state until the 1990s to put an end to formal gender differentiated policies in which, for example, motherhood was considered a legitimate basis for state entitlements (Korteweg, 2006). The breadwinner model of the Dutch welfare state was abandoned and the Dutch state urged women to earn economic independence (Lewis, 2005). As a consequence, from 1996 onwards, single mothers no longer received state support. Notwithstanding these formal changes, Anna Korteweg showed how policy practices in the Netherlands remained thoroughly gendered (2006). The cultural repertoire of domestic motherhood was not abandoned with the entrance of gender equal policies. Rosi Braidotti captured this in her analysis of the "Dutch paradox" (Braidotti, 1991: 7) of progressive ideas about gender relations on the one hand, and traditional practices on the other.

Interestingly, Dutch women are currently often presented (in public discourse as well as in policy) as the "endpoint of emancipation" (Wekker, 2004: 490). This presentation serves to exclude "other" women (black, migrant and refugee) from the liberated image of the Dutch national

identity. I have dealt with these presentations and exclusions elsewhere with Willem Schinkel, and will not repeat that argument here (Van den Berg & Schinkel, 2009). Here, it suffices to say that the Dutch model of emancipation that "other" women should appropriate, or so some argue today, does not necessarily put paid labour centre stage. Autonomy is important, but for the Dutch, this can be accomplished within the home.

### *Dutch paternalism – a tradition of planning*

In 2008 and 2010, two books were published in the Netherlands that immediately reached relatively large audiences with stories of nineteenth century poverty, urbanity and early private efforts to "elevate" and "upgrade" (in Dutch: "verheffen") the poor. First, Suzanna Jansen's "Het pauperparadijs" (2008 "The Pauper Paradise"), relates the story of the author's family history of poverty, re-education (in a special re-education camp) and, ultimately, emancipation. Second, Auke van der Woud's "Koninkrijk vol sloppen" (2010 "Kingdom of Slums") investigates the history of nineteenth century Dutch urban slums: the dirt, (lack of) sewage and early private education programmes. Both books investigate nineteenth century poverty and inequality with twenty-first century eyes and –strikingly- bourgeois ("burgerlijke") citizens' reactions to it. Jansen's book uncovers the emergence of a sense of responsibility for poverty with relatively affluent burgers. In 1818, Johannes van den Bosch established a total institution for the poor, designed to eradicate poverty altogether. Jansen's ancestors would come to live there. The story of her family poignantly shows the arbitrariness of such efforts; with the death of Van den Bosch, the institution withered and metamorphosed into a punitive camp.

Auke van der Woud shows how it took until halfway through the nineteenth century for early educational arrangements for the urban poor to be established. Those private initiatives strove to "elevate" poor youths by teaching them the virtues of order. Dutch sociologists that were inspired by the work of Norbert Elias came to call these efforts civilising offensives (most notably De Regt, 1984). I define a civilising offensive as a more or less planned effort to teach certain kinds of civility to a group of subjects that are deemed to be in lack of that civility. Civilising offensives can be state efforts, but are often also private undertakings to "uplift" and "normalise" the working classes, as in the cases of Jansen's and Van der Woud's books. The term civilising offensive denotes policy regimes in a specific Dutch historical context in which civility and the ambition to civilise continuously re-emerge as their primary focus.

Contemporary social policies to "elevate", "emancipate" or "civilise" thus build on a rich history of private and public practices. When it comes to intervening in the daily life of citizens, The Netherlands has many "books on the shelf" or repertoires to use. Paternalistic policies are social policies aimed at supervising and directing lives in return for supporting them (cf. Mead, 1998).

Paternalistic social policies not only set criteria of entrance into social policy schemes but enforce certain behavioural requirements through close supervision. Notwithstanding the etymology of the term paternalism (going back to the Latin word for father-pater), historically *women* were the ones giving and receiving the most guidance. Because women were considered the guardians of morals and civilising offensives sought to intervene in the moral sphere, women were targeted. To be decent though poor was a woman's task (De Regt, 1984). But the moral education was also *performed* by women. Like Jane Adams in Chicago, well-to-do-ladies taught the poor women in Rotterdam and Amsterdam how to keep house and raise children.

The public paternalism of the state arguably reached its height in the after-war years, when state intervention was largely unquestioned. In this period, targeted groups were called "anti-social" and those deemed such were housed in segregated neighbourhoods where they were taught how to run a respectable household that remained clean, quiet and orderly (Dercksen & Verplanke, 1984). The fifties and sixties were the years of the establishment of the welfare state, and this was, indeed, paternalistic welfare because support was exchanged for intervention into behaviour. As the Dutch sociologist Van Doorn (1984) argued, a powerful enlacement (*vervlechting*) of the state and civil society was the result, and it took until the 1980s for the government to aim at *dis*enlacement.

Culturally, paternalism was fiercely attacked throughout the 1960s and 70s. Jan Willem Duvyendak (1999) argues how, as ideals of autonomy and democracy became popular, ideals of planning were under pressure. Leftist ideals of the development of autonomous selves thus discredited the planning of societal change. Duyvendak consequently argues that a period in which government aimed to plan for change was followed by a much less political and sociological aim for government to *facilitate* its citizens from the 1980s onwards. During the 1980s and 1990s, the prominence of citizen's perspectives grew and paternalism remained the negative reference point of much social policy. In the late 1990s, paternalism was rediscovered, now formulated in terms of 'unsolicited intervention', 'outreach programmes' and 'prevention programmes'. Today, paternalist interventions selectively target groups of inhabitants who are not *yet* considered full citizens (Schinkel & Van Houdt, 2010). They have to be helped by social professionals to *become* autonomous, modern, and progressive. The 'paradox of paternalism' (the idea that the government should intervene, yet people should remain autonomous subjects), now seems to be solved by implementing paternalistic policies for very specific groups of citizens who are "not yet" autonomous. This way, paternalism is very much publicly supported, yet for *other* people (Van den Berg & Duyvendak, 2012).

**An urban tradition**

Those new, selectively targeted forms of paternalism are most prevalent in the city. Dutch cities in the twenty-first century saw the re-emergence of paternalist policies of which the focus on *inclusion* of the "marginalised" and the belief in altering their behaviour are important ingredients (Uitermark & Duyvendak, 2008; Schinkel & Van den Berg, 2011; Van den Berg & Duyvendak, 2012). Much has been written about the criminalisation of the urban poor in for instance the United States (Wacquant, 2001; 2008). But in the Netherlands, the left hand of the state is not so much *superseded* by the right hand as it is *supplemented* by it, to use Bourdieu's terminology (Bourdieu, 1999; Wacquant, 2001). In other words: while safety policies and repressive policy strategies have been deployed in Dutch urban areas and increasingly so (Van Houdt & Schinkel, forthcoming), they are supplemented by efforts to alter behaviours of inhabitants of selectively targeted urban areas. Parenting guidance can be seen as one such effort.

These strategies supplement physical restructuring and town planning. René Boomkens indeed argued how urban planning became "a national project after the Second World War" (2008: 10). The "self-evident" presence of spatial planning ambitions is, for example, evident in the fact that planners' jargon (*Vinex*, *groeikernen* et cetera) is now fully integrated in Dutch everyday talk. The Dutch contemporary city and especially Rotterdam are thus heavily influenced by government interventions. In fact, urban planners in Rotterdam famously used the bombings of 1940 to realise their ideal modernist city. The functionalism of the modernist planning after the war spatially segregated the four functions of habitation, work, recreation and traffic (Van Ulzen, 2007). After the Second World War and through the 1970s, Rotterdam primarily focused on building residential areas outside of the city centre and did not aim for a spatial mix of residential and economic functions, as urban planners do today. Rotterdam provided space for the automobile and for a city centre that was to function as a work and recreation space. Today, Rotterdam is trying to depart from precisely this heritage.

Although spatial planning came under attack from the 1980s on, just as paternalist policies did, the spatial determinism that was at its heart remains omnipresent. Rotterdam's Urban Vision 2030 is an especially salient example. This "spatial development strategy" shows a Rotterdam that desires to be an "effervescent city", a "city lounge", full of young professionals, "high potentials", artists and students. At least until the full effect of the economic crisis on the city's budget became clear, extensive urban renewal programmes were implemented and higher-educated residents attracted with newly built housing. Boomkens (2008) defines this spatial determinism as the idea that "it is possible to conduct social policy through spatial interventions" (11). And, indeed, the theme of the 2009 Architecture Biennale in Rotterdam revealed such thinking: "Open City: Designing coexistence". This event aimed to find an answer to the question: "how architects and

urban planners can contribute to the diversity, liveliness and liveability" of the city (Catalogue IABR, 2009: 7). It appears that the idea of planning ideal future cities is still very much alive.

### *Rotterdam: Repertoires of dystopian thinking, industrialism and masculinity*[3]

To understand how this plays out in the urban context of Rotterdam, I draw the contours of repertoires of thinking about Rotterdam as the quintessential Dutch urban dystopia, industrialism and masculinity. Rotterdam is the second largest city in the Netherlands. It has a little over 600.000 inhabitants and 600.000 more in the direct suburban vicinity[4]. Rotterdam is the poorest, youngest, most industrial and at the same time the most ethnically diverse city in the Netherlands. Rotterdam has become the ultimate embodiment of the Dutch urban dystopia, in part because of these reasons. In 2000 a journalist for one of the largest daily newspapers of the Netherlands (based in Amsterdam), *de Volkskrant*, wrote an impression of Rotterdam thus:

> *"On the street level, Rotterdam is still gloomy. (...) At night, strange-looking people harass you with panhandling. (...) The square in front of the station is unfriendly to pedestrians. (...) Going left to walk to the theatre is not an option, because in this dark alley, too, junkies dominate. Greetings from the city without a heart."*
> (De Volkskrant, August 26th, 2000[5]).

This excerpt can stand as an (perhaps somewhat extreme) example of many depictions of Rotterdam since the 1990s. Rotterdam, the former mayor Opstelten famously stated, is first on many of the "wrong lists". With this statement, he referred to safety problems, poverty levels, ethnic tensions and unemployment. In other words: social problems are often depicted as more pressing and prominent in Rotterdam then elsewhere in the Netherlands. More recently (in 2011), Opstelten's successor Aboutaleb was interviewed in a national TV show, where he was introduced by the host with the words: "You are the mayor of a city with major problems." In this interview, Aboutaleb agreed with the analysis in a policy report that characterised problems in the South of Rotterdam as "un-Dutch"[6]. And this characterisation of the city's problems is almost always accompanied by a sense of urgency, as it was in this interview, when the mayor said that "the social upgrading of the people (...) is going too slow." With Willem Schinkel, I characterised this dystopian and urgent talk of Rotterdam as a *moral discourse of emergency* (Schinkel & Van den Berg, 2011). A telling example of this discourse was the way in which the Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment Pieter Winsemius said in 2006 that the situation in poor urban areas (especially in Rotterdam) had deteriorated so terribly that he expected public disorder soon (as cited in Schinkel & Van den Berg, 2011). In his assessment, a time bomb was ticking in

these areas and administrators needed to act sooner rather than later. This moral discourse of emergency was shared by politicians and administrators in Rotterdam when they stated that Rotterdam deals with "disproportional problems" (Rotterdam Municipality, 2004a) in certain areas.

This dystopian thinking is bound up with characterisations of Rotterdam as an industrial city. For example, the "un-Dutch" problems in the South of Rotterdam are said to stem from the massive influx of poor workers from Dutch rural areas to the city in the nineteenth century, migrating there to work in the growing harbour (for example in Team Deetman/Mans, 2011). The image of a "working class" or "blue collar city" that was the result of these developments still dominates discourses on Rotterdam. Every written or oral history of the city of Rotterdam starts with the harbour (Becker et al. 2004; Engbersen & Burgers, 2001; Van Ulzen, 2007). The harbour has been the most important symbol of Rotterdam for decades. The image of Rotterdam as "working city" finds its origins in nineteenth and early twentieth century decades of ever growing harbour activity. This growth attracted masses from the rural areas of Zeeland and Brabant. This was largely the effect of the construction of the Nieuwe Waterweg (a large canal directly connecting the North Sea to Rotterdam) in 1872 and the harbour's transit function to the fast developing areas of Western Germany. Rotterdam's economy was dependent on the large harbour for decades after 1870. Especially in the years after the Second World War until the second half of the 1970s, the Rotterdam transport and manufacturing economy was booming and of huge importance for the Dutch economy as a whole. However, the rationalisation of production and the outsourcing of labour to low income countries gave rise to unemployment and a political and administrative struggle to provide jobs and economic growth. Rotterdam remains the largest harbour of Europe and the 4$^{th}$ on the world wide ranking (Shanghai, Ningbo/ Zhou Shan and Singapore are first, second and third, Port of Rotterdam, 2013). And the harbour is still presented as Rotterdam's unique selling point, for example in marketing materials. In fact, the current promotional slogan of the city is "Rotterdam: World Port, World City".

The harbour is thus still important in the way in which people – and not in the least administrators and politicians – think of Rotterdam. A second element in thinking about Rotterdam is the 1940 World War II bombings and the rebuilding of the city (most of the city centre was bombed by the Nazis and burnt out in the days after). The Rotterdam Marketing Bureau characterises Rotterdam as a "war child" (Rotterdam Marketing, 2008a), still in need of rebuilding. And a recent book to celebrate Rotterdam and to promote it to tourists and international business says:

> *"Most Rotterdammers have been used to it all their lives: a walk through the city centre usually ends up with muddy shoes. There is always construction going on somewhere."* (Van der Horst et al., 2008: 9)

In these narratives of the city as industrial and post- World War II, its "international allure", "no-nonsense attitude" and "working class/blue collar" identity appear frequently. One of the great Dutch writers of the 20th century, F. Bordewijk, characterised the city as international when the main character of the book *Character* ([1938] 2009: 344) says:

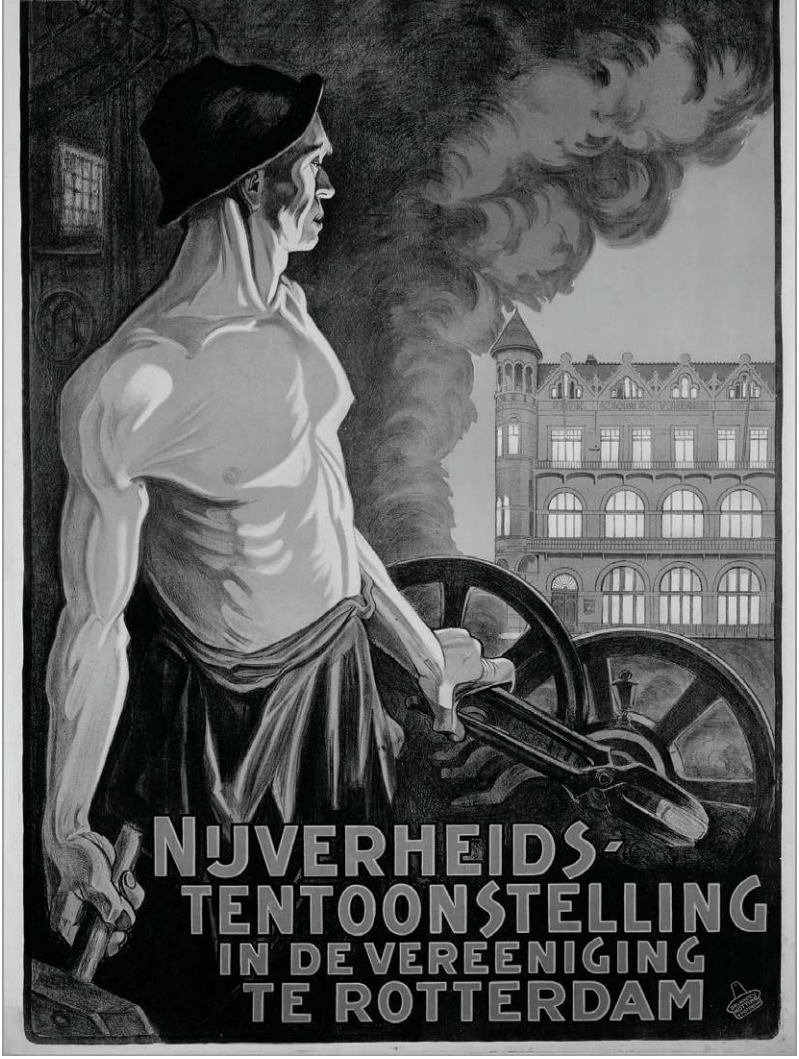
> *"Amsterdam is our national city. Rotterdam is our international city. (...) It has received its mark by the sea, because the sea goes beyond boundaries, the sea is the only true cosmopolitan in this world."*

The feature of the "no-nonsense attitude" comes to the fore in the popular sayings that "In Rotterdam, shirts are sold with their sleeves already rolled up" (Martens & Dekker, 2008) and the adagio that "Actions speak louder than words" (*Geen woorden maar daden*). These sayings are used constantly in newspapers and statements by politicians and policy-makers. Blue collar work in the harbour is often cited as the *cause* or *history* of the down-to-earth mentality of Rotterdammers, for instance in the popular nostalgic song "Greetings from Rotterdam", by the Berini's (which is sung in heavy dialect):

> *"When, instead of blood, the river Maas flows through your veins*
> *Then deep inside your heart you know this is your city*
> *The most beautiful place on earth is where you were born*
> *To that city, where people are still down-to-earth*
> *I have lost my heart*
> *The old harbours, an industry beautiful in its ugliness*
> *It's always Christmas in Pernis[7]"*

"Christmas in Pernis" refers to the lights on the cranes and pipes in one of the old harbour areas with heavy industry. The rough and masculine character of working in the harbour and of the harbour itself are celebrated in the song as romantic elements of Rotterdam's identity. This is also reflected in this quote in a promotional book on Rotterdam by Peter de Lange et al. (2001: 53, original in English): "In the old days, yes, Rotterdam was a city of bully boys and tough guys, of muscle-bound working men." But the book quickly follows this statement with the idea that:

> *"Today's Rotterdammers are much wiser. (...)The city no longer has such a need for musclemen. The majority of the people of Rotterdam are normal people. To be unusual, a city needs a lot of normal people."*




*Poster for Nijverheidstentoonstelling Rotterdam 1900-1925*[8]

The working class image is in this quote very explicitly associated with a strong, *masculine gender identity*: Rotterdam, in this representation, a muscleman. It is stressed that today's Rotterdammers are much "wiser", which in this particular text refers to their higher-education, and much more "normal", which later in the text is equalled by the author to "middle class".

Today, the masculine imagery of the harbour, the "no-nonsense attitude" and the "international allure" are invoked to market Rotterdam for the future, but also deemed problematic.

The city administration finds the dominant blue collar image of Rotterdam to be mitigating vital innovations, and the Rotterdam administration today says that (Rotterdam Municipality, 2008a: 17):

*"Rotterdam has a story that is longer than that of a workers city. There has always been more to Rotterdam than the harbour."*

In the representation of Rotterdam's history in the planning texts, Rotterdam was a "work city" with modernist planning, but this period lasted until the 1980s, to be followed by a period of "correction" and – currently – the "post-industrial city" (Rotterdam Municipality, 2008a: 19-20).

### *Activating repertoires*

The sense of disproportionality and "exceptional" problems that characterises thinking about Rotterdam today informs thinking about the necessity of intervention. Because administrators, journalist, politicians and others are often invoking these dystopian images, they create a sense of urgency and exceptionality that can legitimise quite far-reaching interventions into Rotterdammers' private lives, especially when combined with a tradition of paternalism and state-intervention. These traditions and repertoires provide the building blocks for the legitimations of the practices that I study in this thesis. The matter-of-fact way in which people talked of interventions in the most private lives of Rotterdam citizens, as though intervention in parenting practices no longer needed any legitimation, can be understood when seen in the light of these repertoires of paternalism and Rotterdam dystopia. Furthermore, if the legitimation for intervention is accomplished thus, targeting *mothers* instead of fathers or others involved in raising children such as child-minders, grandparents and so on, appears as natural and logical at least in part because of a particular Dutch traditions of thinking about motherhood and mothering work. The repertoires that I have distinguished in this chapter serve as analytical tools for me in this thesis to understand the practices I studied. They inform – and this is part of my focus in the chapters to follow – the ways of speaking in the practices about motherhood, mothering work, the possibilities of intervention and planning, responsibilities and living in Rotterdam. Even more so: they inform what is *done* in the practices.

Rotterdam[9] seeks ways to transform. City marketers and urban administrators aim to construe a new image with selective reference to the Rotterdam's past, and they intervene in families and housing to establish a new and improved city that will be able to thrive in the post-industrial future. Rotterdam sees itself having to change its image and its built environment against the odds of the fierce image of the typical heavy-industrial urban dystopia. The ways in which Rotterdam tries to depart this industrial past, is dealt with in the following chapter, when I analyse Rotterdam's aims for change.

*CHAPTER II*

# RE-GENERATION AND URBAN GENDER BENDING[1]

## *A reassuring story? From the modernist to the post-industrial*

> *"There is a reassuring story being told in the world today. Through it many people, undisturbed and baffled by the ever-expanding, increasingly destructive powers of man, have regained their belief in the future, in the ultimate triumph of good over evil. They have heard it from friends, they have read it in the newspapers, they have listened to it being related on the wireless. The lucky ones among them have seen it with their own eyes. For it is a story that is being told in deeds rather than in words. It is the story of Rotterdam, the city where man has rebuilt what man had destroyed. Nay, more than that. Both the port and the city have risen again, more efficient and more beautiful than they ever were before. Thus Rotterdam has become, as it says on its coat of arms, stronger through struggle. There is not a shadow of doubt about that."* (Rotterdam PR, 1955: 3, original in English)

Today, dystopian images or Rotterdam often overshadow such "reassuring" stories. The reassuring message in the above quote is the opening paragraph of a 1955 booklet of the Rotterdam Public Relations Office. It shows a determination to overcome the destruction of the World War II bombings and a utopian, distinctly modern and modernist view of the future of Rotterdam. The booklet looks back at the "damage defying description" that was the result of the Nazi bombing of the city centre in May 1940. Almost the entire centre was burnt out in the days after the bombing and the harbour, too, was hit hard. Famously, modernist planners seized the opportunity to not rebuild, but build anew. Modern roads for automobiles and skyscrapers had been planned and build in the decades before the war, bur the empty space that was the result of destruction provided a planners' carte blanch (Van Ulzen, 2007).

The 1955 booklet sings the praises of this new, modern, healthy, forward-looking city that rose out of the "unbroken spirit" of Rotterdammers.

> *"In spite of all the hardships, the job (of cleaning up after the bombing, MvdB) was finished before the end of the year and the centre of Rotterdam (...) had by then become one vast open space ready for future building." (...) " whatever the new city centre was going to be and look like, (Rotterdammers) realised that good results could be achieved only if an all-embracing plan were drawn up for the entire area." (8).*

The "all-embracing plan" included high-rise, space for automobiles and modern garden cities. In the booklet, pictures of pre-war slums are followed by the much "healthier" dream of "bright"

*A 1960s flat in the garden city of Pendrecht, ready to be demolished in 2009, photo MvdB*

communal gardens. "Light" and "air" were the magic words of the future in 1955. Contrasting the "higgledy-piggledy place, with buildings designed and erected in a haphazard manner" was the "spacious, airy complex of carefully zoned buildings designed for a city devoted to commerce and industry". (31). For these purposes, the city's functions were separated into grouped spaces and collective buildings.

This modernist dream of the forties, fifties and sixties is now the city's nightmare. The zoning of work and shopping areas, the building of residential areas outside of the city centre, the motor ways dissecting the city: all are results of the efforts of post-war planners and eyesores for the current administration and its planners. Today's regeneration of Rotterdam consists of precisely the departure of these ideals and materialised spaces. Rotterdam now wants to *mix* urban functions instead of separating them and build for the *post-industrial* future. Precisely the departure of the industrial and modern character that was the object of praise in the 1955 promotional book is now its goal.

In the 1955 promotional booklet, gender surfaces as an important ingredient when it emphasises the role of housewives on Rotterdam's reconstruction.

> *"Many think it was the men who built the new centre of Rotterdam. That is not true. It was really the women, the housewives, who reinvested Rotterdam with its specific character, its personal touch. The men were bold enough to conceive a grand plan for its reconstruction. (...) However, once the big office blocks headed by the new bank buildings had been completed, it was found that the typical atmosphere of a city centre had not yet been created. That did not make itself felt until more shops had been built. The big department stores, the attractive fashion stores, and especially the enchanting variety of smaller shops have drawn the shopping public – which, after all, is predominantly female – back to the city centre. With them the old bustle returned to the centre of a city from which it had been absent so long." (44)*

In this excerpt, a clear gendered division of labour appears: the men designed the material city and the women (or, rather "housewives") graced this new and modern city with their presence and "personal touch". They did so, the excerpt says, by going shopping. This narrative and version of events now seems very dated. We will not likely find this particular romantic view of "housewives" and their "rational" men in today's texts and images of Rotterdam. But as I will show in this chapter, when analysing contemporary plans and representations of the city, striking *continuities* appear alongside clear *departures* from this industrial past. The aims for change in Rotterdam work in a similar way as a kaleidoscope. A kaleidoscope uses mirrors to produce different patterns of imagery, maintaining some elements and changing some each time you twist the tube. The ambition is to reshuffle aspects of the image of Rotterdam, the actual physical realities and the population in a way that allows the city to become something new and to become a success.

In this chapter, I analyse Rotterdam's aims for change and some actual practices that are employed to bring about the desired success. First, I look at the logics used in policy to understand the current economic situation of the city of Rotterdam. I look at common analyses of causes of and solutions to current economic troubles and the way in which Rotterdam can be compared to other former industrial port cities such as Marseille in France, and Antwerp in Belgium. Then I analyse three cases of policy interventions that are meant to bring about the desired change for Rotterdam: 1) a case of city marketing, 2) a case of urban planning and 3) two cases of revanchist intervention in urban poor areas. My choice for these cases is strategic; the materials[2] I used for these analyses can be considered "strategic research materials" (Merton, 1987). That is to say that these materials teach us something about the logics of city marketing, planning and policy in a city aiming to de-industrialise.

### *Departing from an urban industrial economy*

However much Rotterdam celebrates its harbour and related industries, there is also a large consensus among economists, policy makers, politicians and administrators that Rotterdam needs to *depart* its industrial past if it is going to be an economically successful city in the future (Van der Waal & Burgers, 2011; Van der Waal, 2009; Kloosterman & Trip, 2004) . This consensus is largely informed by the need to create employment. The Rotterdam economy boomed from the 1950s to 1973 because of the harbour, but since then, the economy has been struggling. And, as we know now, Rotterdam is not alone in this predicament. Other large industrial cities such as Antwerp, Liverpool, Marseille and Hamburg and have had to deal with similar hardships. It seems that precisely the cities that were booming during the decades of industrial expansion in the West, have the hardest time adjusting to new global economic situations and interurban competition (Van der Waal, 2009; Van der Waal & Burgers, 2011; Mangen, 2004).

Since 1973, Rotterdam's unemployment figures grew tremendously and by the end of the 1990s, Rotterdam was the city with the highest unemployment in the Netherlands. Much has been said about this by Dutch (urban) sociologists, geographers and economists and most in comparison to Amsterdam, the Dutch capital and a much more successful post-industrial city. What I think is most important to recount from these studies here, is that today, it seems that the Amsterdam economy is creating more jobs in service sector employment - for both higher and lower educated workers – than Rotterdam *and* is doing this faster. Because of this, Burgers and Musterd (2002; see also Van der Waal, 2010) have argued that Saskia Sassen's famous polarisation model (the idea that in global cities the amount of higher-earning and higher-educated jobs grows, resulting in a higher demand for lower educated jobs in the service sector) fits the Amsterdam job market quite well, while the Rotterdam economy seems to be characterised by a mismatch: the large numbers of lower educated inhabitants cannot find jobs because the jobs that are created are higher professional ones. Van der Waal & Burgers (2009) and Burgers & Musterd (2002) thus suggest that international competition has led to a labour market composition in Rotterdam that provides jobs for the higher-educated in banking, business and for professionals while leaving the lower educated unemployed because their sets of skills are no longer needed in the new economy. Why exactly globalisation and economic restructuring affects Rotterdam in such a different way than Amsterdam remains somewhat an unanswered question. It seems, though, that at least two factors play a role: 1) the relative diversity in Amsterdam's economy when compared to Rotterdam's assures Amsterdam of more economic flexibility and 2) Rotterdam's new vacancies for higher-educated personnel are filled by people living in the vicinity of Rotterdam and not by actual Rotterdam inhabitants. The latter would hypothetically create a demand for services within the city and thus a polarised job market with job creation for the lower educated as well.

But it seems that for Rotterdam, this effect is not realised.

Following the above problem analyses, administrators and politicians in Rotterdam develop strategies to narrow the gap between the unemployed and the job market. Two categories of strategies are especially important to the analysis of the parenting guidance programmes that are the central object of this thesis: 1) the enhancement of the attractiveness of the city for business and investment, 2) investments in the knowledge and skills of the Rotterdam population. The first has to do with the idea that an attractive urban space will attract visitors, investment and inhabitants (see Van den Berg, 2012). The idea that "quality of space" will lead to economic growth is based on the idea that economic restructuring has resulted in more or less footloose businesses. Service sector companies are far less tied to place than industrial businesses were in the past. In the past decades, this resulted in a market inversion (Hernes & Selvik, 1981 in Burgers, 2006): businesses are not competing for locations anymore. Instead, locations are competing for business. In the very influential theories of Richard Florida, a place is considered attractive if the "creative class" resides there. This "creative class" (cf. Florida, 2002), including artists, but also bankers, accountants and architects, is the most desired group of inhabitants today and in today's thinking about urban governing, creativity is most important in attracting investors as well. A dominant idea in place marketing today is thus that the attraction of a creative class will lead to an interesting cultural climate that will attract investors, and will consequently lead to job growth and revenue throughout the economy. The second category of strategies of Rotterdam to depart the industrial past is the enhancement of the skills of the population in the hope of closing the gap between the skills asked in the job market and the relatively low education levels of Rotterdammers. Strategies that fit this category include programmes to end early school leaving, parent involvement programmes for schools (see Van den Berg & Van Reekum, 2011), and some of the parenting guidance programmes that I have researched for this thesis.

**Other ship-to-chip-cities: Marseille and Antwerp as entrepreneurs**

Rotterdam is not alone in its aims to change from a "ship to a chip city" (the metaphor is Dangschat & Ossenbrügge's, 1990). Cities like Antwerp, Genua, Liverpool, Hamburg and Marseille are other European examples of such changing urban port economies. What these cities have in common is not just their similar histories, but also strategies to depart these. They became what David Harvey has called "entrepreneurial" (1989). Especially former industrial cities met severe economic challenges in the 1970s, as manufacturing, steel and other industries rationalised and moved their production across the world. Pittsburgh, New York and Glasgow are early examples of cities where governors saw themselves forced to behave like entrepreneurs and "place market" their city as a product to attract new investors and compete with other urban areas for new

economic opportunities. US cities were the first to develop these strategies because they were more dependent on their local tax base and, thus, on their local economies (Ward, 1998: 46). The "I ♥ New York" campaign is the first famous example of city boosting and Boston and Baltimore led the way in developing strategies to change their cities into consumption places. These formulas have been highly influential in the development of entrepreneurial strategies elsewhere from the 1980s on (Ward, 1998). Later on in this chapter, I argue that certain Rotterdam policies can be seen as forms of urban entrepreneurialism, but first I would like to contextualise the case of Rotterdam with two short explorations of other ship-to-chip cities: Marseille and Antwerp.

Marseille is in some ways strikingly similar to Rotterdam. Like Rotterdam, Marseille is the second city of the country, following only Paris. With 860.000 inhabitants it is larger, but still relatively comparable in size to Rotterdam and like Rotterdam, Marseille has seen tremendous economic decline over the past decades resulting in a range of contemporary urban problems. In the years between 1960 and 1990, Marseille lost half of its industrial jobs (Mangen, 2004). This loss of employment was hardly compensated in the tertiary sector. Actual compensation came almost solely from jobs in the public sector (Mangen, 2004). Coupled with ethnic tensions that became apparent in the large housing estates of Marseille (Body-Gendrot, 2000; see also Bauhardt, 2004), and relatively high crime figures, the economic situation gave rise to serious concerns in the local and national government about the city's future and image. To some, Marseille with its crime ridden neighbourhoods and rundown city centre was an eyesore and not particularly worthy of being the second metropolitan area of France (Mangen, 2004).

Because urban policy in France is in large part a national endeavour, Marseille became an important target of planning from the Ministère de la Ville in Paris. First under president Mitterrand, and later also under Chirac and Sarkozy, Marseille has been an important focal point in nationally planned urban policies and this was reflected in two appointments of important figures in Marseille to the post of Minister of urban policy (Mangen, 2004). Like the Dutch, the French selected urban areas (the Zones Urbaines Sensibles) for special attention on the national level. Mitigating fierce place wars (such as those in the United States), the Marseille budget is quite substantially distributed on the national level (Savitch & Kantor, 2002). Under the pressure of the populist right and especially since the 2005 riots in the French banlieus (although Marseille remained relatively calm), urban policies now are much more repressive and focused on crime and safety than they were before. Sarkozy (first as Minister of Interior, later as President) especially came down hard on the youths in the large poor housing estates, calling them "racaille" (scum). Like Rotterdam, Marseille is simultaneously repressive towards these groups of marginalised youths and facilitative of a new urban middle class (these strategies are, like in Rotterdam, to "recapture" the city), using "quality of place" strategies such as investments in the cultural sector

and in seafront development. In fact, Marseille became the European Capital of Culture in 2013, like Rotterdam was in 2001.

Like Marseille and Rotterdam, the port city of Antwerp saw economic decline coupled with ethnic tensions and the rise of populist politics. Although different in many ways, Antwerp struggles with unemployment like other former industrial cities and has developed various entrepreneurial strategies during the 1990s to boost its local economy. Unlike Marseille and Rotterdam, Antwerp and Belgium do not have long histories of urban policy and planning. In fact, Justus Uitermark (2003) argued that a certain anti-urbanism that may have its roots in the reaction against the rapid industrialisation and urbanisation of the nineteenth century, prevented an urban focus in policy and politics in Belgium. It took until the 1990s for urban policies to develop under the severe pressure of the populist right wing party Vlaams Blok that, in fact, built its very success on an urban and xenophobic agenda. Although the Vlaams Blok party never took office in Antwerp or Belgium, other political actors saw themselves forced to formulate policies against the spatial segregation and concentration of immigrants from (primarily) Morocco and focused on safety and "liveability".

In a parallel development, Antwerp positioned itself in the 1990s as a culturally exiting city with special attention for fashion. The European Capital of Culture in 1993, Antwerp successfully marketed itself as an Avant-Garde fashion city without actually being a fashion trading hub (like Milan or Paris). Javier Gimeno Martínez (2007) argued that "Antwerp's status as a fashion capital was created within the logic of organised tourism and mega-cultural events" (2449). That is to say that by positioning fashion as Antwerp's most characteristic creative industry and by presenting and conceptualising fashion first and foremost as art, Antwerp succeeded in fulfilling its post-industrial ambitions of becoming a progressive creative hub. In fact, the fashion image was also discursively put to work against the felt "negative" image that was the result of the success of Vlaams Blok (Gimeno Martínez, 2007). It helped to produce "cosmopolitan" images to balance out the "xenophobic" messages that were communicated as a result of the populist right's success.

At any rate, both Marseille and Antwerp today deal with hardships that are the result of economic restructuring and interurban competition and both have developed strategies in the fields of urban policies for "liveability" and safety on the one hand and the marketing of their cultural sectors on the other hand. In the following paragraphs, I analyse similar strategies of the city of Rotterdam in greater detail.

### *Gender Bending Rotterdam: "La City '08"*

Many Western cities are characterised as masculine (see for example the work of Elisabeth Wilson, 1991). Tall towers, steel constructions and working men in the streets all fit into common

categories of the masculine. This is even more the case when it comes to industrial cities. The harbours and the physical work needed on the docks make us think of muscled men. The fact that Rotterdam, specifically, is perceived as a masculine city has everything to do with its working class mythology and modernist built environment, as I wrote in chapter 1. In this paragraph, I analyse in detail an imagineering strategy of the city of Rotterdam to change the city's gender. Imagineering refers to the *rewriting* of meaning that is attached to urban environments and the social and economic effects this produces (see for further elaboration Van den Berg, forthcoming).

According to the city marketing bureau, Rotterdam suffers from a masculine image that needs adjustment in order to become the "Creative city" ("Urban Vision 2030") it aspires to be. To change the masculine imagery, Rotterdam organised a cultural event and campaign in 2008 called "La City". "La City" was a month-long chain of events in fashion, music, dancing, arts, sports and dining. It also involved a national marketing endeavour to highlight the "feminine" side of Rotterdam. The Rotterdam city council decided on the organisation of the festival. "La City" was deliberately designed by the administration and the marketing bureau to cleanse the city of the working class image that according to the officials and marketers was mitigating vital innovations and future economic growth. Strategies were designed to adapt a new symbolic economy (Zukin, 1995) by giving Rotterdam a more *feminine mythology* to fit the future.

This desired future was to be less working class, less focused on production and less masculine. "La City" highlighted the city as a place for consumption and introduced a new economy in Rotterdam: one that is service-based and post-industrial . One of the other strategies - for which Florida's work (2002) is very influential - to accomplish this goal is to stimulate a "creative industry" and attract gay inhabitants to live and work in the city. Rotterdam employs these strategies as well, but has chosen to primarily focus on attracting dual earning middle class families to live in the city. The aspired new economy is to replace the lost jobs for men in the harbour and industry by new jobs for men and women in tourism, healthcare and creative industries. Blue collars are to be replaced by pink collars; masculine "work" by, slightly exaggerated, feminine "professions". "La City" is an excellent case to illustrate the extreme ideological lengths that cities are willing to go, to depart their heavy histories.

**A masculine mythology: The muscleman**

Imagineering is a form of mythmaking. I argue that what the city of Rotterdam is aiming at with the event "La City" is to alter the mythology of the city and thus rewrite and change meanings. For my analysis of this mythmaking, I build on the theories of Roland Barthes ([1957] 1993) for two reasons: 1) because this way, we can better understand the discursive strategy that is "La City" and the way in which the old and new narratives relate to each other. 2) Because "mythology"

as a concept will allow us to move away from the vocabulary that is used by the city marketers themselves. For Barthes, a myth is a meta-language: a way in which a sign becomes a signifier, or, rather, a way in which extra meaning is given (and imposed) to what is seen and interpreted. Myth makes first order images into second order meanings. In this sense, myth does not mean "unreal" or "fake" as it often does in everyday use. Myths, rather, distort meaning instead of letting meanings disappear, although they are often "vehicles of forgetfulness" (Selwyn, 1996: 3). This distortion is to "simultaneously reveal and conceal, undercommunicate and overcommunicate" (Selwyn, 1996: 3). In Barthes' terms, this is a process of *inflexion*. Myth functions to *naturalise* certain narratives of history and meaning. In this perspective, imagineering is about influencing particular inflexions. It serves to present a certain shallow narrative of history as matter-of-fact, not to be questioned: "Myth has the task of giving a historical intention a natural justification and making contingency appear eternal." (Barthes, [1957] 1993: 142). Modern cities in the global marketplace need to produce *uniqueness* and, for that purpose, produce narratives and images to change the meanings that are attached to the city. To stand out from other cities, they produce unique selling points: they highlight their unique vistas, scenery, historic treasures or specific food culture.

The mythology of Rotterdam is a collection of myths. The myths of Rotterdam are the "international orientation", "working class population", the status of "metropolis of the Netherlands" where people have a "down-to-earth" and "no-nonsense attitude". The mythology or narrative that is told around these myths consists of at least two elements: the harbour and the World War II bombings. I described these elements of the mythology of Rotterdam in chapter 1.

What I analyse here is the attempt by the local government to influence the already existing inflexions of history that are myths. This can be compared to the way in which Barthes analysed for instance the way in which commercials and marketers make myths and use existing cultural repertoire and myths to do so (see for example his short essay "The New Citroën", Barthes, [1957] 1993). Rotterdam aims to *influence the inflexion* in the mythology of Rotterdam to fit their new entrepreneurial strategies. What happens here seems to be paradoxical: On the one hand, the repertoire of the masculine "working city" mythology is constantly invoked to construe a coherent present day mythology despite the fractures in the city's history (after all, a mythology selects certain myths or shallow historic narratives), for instance when the "Actions speak louder than words" adagio is put to work by politicians. On the other hand, a *new fracture* is forced with a *departure* from the "working city", or the "working class city". The city's administrators are seeking ways to construe a new mythology with selective reference to the city's past. A new mythology is formed in which certain myths are maintained, some are departed and others are influenced. A way in which the paradox of the city's mythology is resolved is the way in which the fractures in the city's history are celebrated as a *sign* of Rotterdam's daring attitude.

> *"(Rotterdammers) are not afraid to take risks. (...) For some reason, the people of the city have always been open to the great and the new. (...) that is because they live in a port city (...) they have seafaring blood flowing through their veins and the mentality of daring to take risks and looking beyond the horizon has not disappeared."*
> (Van der Horst et al., 2008: 17, original in English)

This quote from a promotional book is a perfect example of how the mythology is construed to be *natural*: although Rotterdammers no longer *work* in the harbour, they still have seafaring and daring *blood*. To the myth, it is of no relevance that today, most of Rotterdam's inhabitants are not the children or grandchildren of Rotterdammers that worked in the harbours or industries.

The old myth of the "working ethos" of the city is adjusted to fit a new mythology of doing and daring and is adjusted to fit new strategies. Myths that were once compatible parts of the mythology are now rearranged and juxtaposed: the "working city" is a "daring city" that moves "beyond the harbour" and can ultimately even change its gender.

**Rotterdam Entrepreneurial City: "Rotterdam dares!"**

Rotterdam's strategies to depart the myth of the muscleman are typical forms of urban entrepreneurialism. The Rotterdam public sector has, in the words of Phil Hubbard, taken "over characteristics once distinctive to the private sector: risk-taking, inventiveness, promotion and profit motivation" (1996: 1141). These characteristics are also often associated with masculinity. Risk-taking and competition are not only the symbols that the city of Rotterdam uses to define itself, they are also the symbols that fit neatly in common sense views of the masculine. In fact, the entrepreneurial city has even been said to be inherently masculine (Hubbard, 2004: 667). Interestingly, the masculine, the entrepreneurial and the Rotterdam identity overlap in this respect. Rotterdam's masculine identity that derives from its working class mythology here serves to legitimate an entrepreneurial strategy to, paradoxically, install a more feminine mythology and identity for the city.

Rotterdam aims to present itself as a culturally interesting city in large part because the idea is that the attraction of a creative class will lead to job. Just as the entrepreneurial is most often associated with the masculine, the creative is associated with the feminine. Not only are employees of the service and creative sectors women far more often than in other economic sectors, the "creative" itself is considered a feminine trait. The masculine entrepreneur that is Rotterdam thus has to get in touch with its feminine side in order to attract much desired feminine creativity.

In this context, it is important to note that the entrepreneurial Liveable Rotterdam administration launched a new slogan for city promotion purposes that expresses its entrepreneurial


*The Rotterdam dares/ Rotterdam durft! logo, originally in dark blue*

ambitions, but also taps into the Rotterdam masculine myth of risk taking: "Rotterdam dares!"

The logo of the Rotterdam dares campaign refers back to the harbour, blue collar work and Rotterdam's roughness in the aesthetic imperfections of cracks and shades in the dark blue colour of deep waters, while using an old-fashioned font that is to remind people of the most productive decades of the city. The exclamation mark at the end can also be analysed to symbolise the daring and doing attitude that is said to be part of the essence of Rotterdam-ness. Rotterdam is stressing its uniqueness in the aesthetics of its campaigns, while also creating diversions for the people of Rotterdam and a mythology to unite Rotterdammers. These aesthetics are ideologically charged. They communicate the masculine, neo-liberal entrepreneurial attitude of the administration and political strategies to a wide audience. They make these strategies into a *brand* of doing and daring that is associated with Rotterdam, therefore making the entrepreneurial political strategies that the administration employs more acceptable to the public, because the public identifies with exactly the characteristics of Rotterdam that the brand communicates. The rhetorics and aesthetics of the "La City" event are interesting, because of the paradoxical *underscoring of at the same time as the departure* from the above sketched mythology and aesthetics with new, more feminine aesthetics and narratives to be told.

**The Festival "La City": Aesthetics and Actions**

On the tenth of July in 2008, the front page of newspapers showed a picture of a gigantic cocktail glass, made of ice filled with a pink cocktail made especially for Rotterdam called "My Rotterdam" or in short (referring to the very feminine Marilyn Monroe): "MonRo". DJ Helene di Firenzi, unknown to the larger audience, but according to the organisers the ideal spokeswoman of "La City '08" because of her "daring attitude" and "male profession" (Rotterdam Marketing, 2008b), climbs the stairs to the cocktail ice glass of four meters while smoking a large cigar.

Adorned in masculine artefacts (a power suit and cigar), the DJ symbolises the kind of woman that Rotterdam is looking for: the educated, assertive, non-traditional (maybe even promiscuous) woman that is thought to be needed for the aspired new, post-industrial, economy. "La City" is to establish a mythology that 1) includes women and families, but, most importantly 2) attracts more middle and higher class inhabitants and visitors and 3) can catalyse a shift towards

*The "La City" cocktail against the background of the Erasmus Bridge*[3]

a post-industrial economy. The event and marketing material does this by combining Rotterdam's "daring" image with a particular brand of femininity:

> *"Rotterdam* dares *to show her feminine side. During "La City '08", the city takes its feminine interests and ambitions in focus, with a month long of innovative initiatives and sparkling events in fashion, art, dance, business, sports, emancipation and personal hygiene. Rotterdam will be more* tempting *than ever, for women and men"* (italics MvdB)[4]

This quote from the promotional booklet of "La City" focuses on the innovativeness of Rotterdam. The booklet seems to say that Rotterdam may have been a "muscleman" in the past, but that it is now a creative temptress. The "city as woman" is a tempting femme fatale, luring new people with its virtues: "stylish, powerful, creative, inspiring, sparkling and full of surprises"[5]. In fact, the evaluation of the festival in 2009 pointed out that Rotterdam was successfully portrayed as a city in which traditions are broken (success was measured in the relative amount of people that agreed with this statement in a questionnaire). The evaluation report notes this specific outcome as the most important effect of the event (Rotterdam Marketing, 2008b) What is interesting here, is that the city invokes the image of an eroticised temptress in order to attract more women and especially more families to the city. There seems to be a tension here between the figure of the "eroticised woman" on the one, and "the mother" on the other hand. But the temptress is primarily invoked to break with the mythology of the rough men of the harbour. Both images are extremes on the axes of gender. Rotterdam uses the hyper feminine to change the mythology of the hyper masculine. Moreover, the image of the promiscuous woman can serve to exclude Muslim women and other inhabitants of Rotterdam that are deemed "traditional".

The *logo* of "La City" is laden with ideology as well. The phrase "La City '08" was printed in a round font that was especially designed for the occasion.


*The "La City" logo, originally light blue on the left and pink on the right: fading from blue to pink*[6]

This roundness refers to "the feminine form" and is to express the "softer", "feminine" side of the city (Rotterdam Marketing, 2008b). On top of form, the message of the festival was brought to the fore by the changing colours in the logo: fading from blue to pink. Alternately, the image of a pink stiletto shoe frequently appeared in articles on the festival and on the festival's materials themselves. The message is clear: Rotterdam is trading the steel-nosed shoes of the harbour for the pink high heels of the cocktail bar. (Representations of) the city is moving like a transvestite from blue to pink, from masculine to feminine and does so by promoting an image of femininity that is not only quite traditional and stereotypical (alas for the tradition breaking ambitions), but also very much bourgeois and white.

Moving beyond the aesthetics, the actual *actions* or activities show a similar pattern of gender transgression and class upgrading. One of the most important activities in the "La City month" was the "Ladies Night", a night of shopping with extended opening hours of the stores in the city centre. The activities of "La City" were very much about consumption and "pampering". They were divided into three subthemes: Body, Mind and Soul:

> *"*Body *stands for pampering,* Mind *stands for development: mental exertion and enrichment (but also personal and professional relaxation, of course),* Soul *stands for inspiration, turmoil and temptation" (Rotterdam Marketing, 2008b: 3).*

Examples of activities were concerts, dance parties, lectures, fashion shows, sporting events and "Meet and Eat experiences". The feminine is in this instant more or less equated to consumption.

Cities have been the décor of (conspicuous) consumption since at least the second half of the nineteenth century. And very early on, consumption and femininity were connected (Laermans, 1993; Wilson, 1991). The early department store for consumers (instead of customers) has become a symbol for the change from a *production* based society to one that is *consumption* centred. Modern consumer culture was a parallel process to women's emancipation. Talking about leisure spaces for women without men and women's free movement often means talking about consumption spaces, as it did in "La City". The actions and activities of the city of Rotterdam in

"La City" symbolise its ambition to partake in the move of many global cities towards a more service-based economy. What better way to shake off the myth of the "blue collar workers city" than to combine the myth of the active, traditions-breaking city with a more feminine gender that is embedded in leisurely activities and luxury and thereby introduce a new, pink collar economy?

"La City" uses this cultural repertoire in a marketing endeavour to change the gender identity of Rotterdam. Rotterdam is bending its gender. The city's administrators and marketers are construing a new, more feminine mythology with selective reference to the city's past. The myth of Rotterdam as a "daring city" used to be told in the context of the masculine, "blue collar/working class city" and harbour. Now, precisely this myth of "tradition-braking" is invoked to embrace on the one hand masculine entrepreneurial strategies and on the other the city's feminine side, middle class families and a "pink collar economy".

Rotterdam is one example of a former industrial city adjusting its mythology. The selective reference to the old myths and repertoires in the construction of a new one is meant to produce new realities: a class upgrading in terms of the population, space and economy. Like many other cities, Rotterdam is aiming for a more affluent population, "mixed" neighbourhoods with more middle class dwellings and a new, post-industrial economy. The association with femininity is an entrepreneurial strategy that is to accompany other forms of "social upgrading", and also make the real and large-scale restructuring of the city and the city's economy easier to digest. The mythology is gendered, as is the real gentrification strategies that are at the centre of Rotterdam's future vision. The production of a feminine mythology with "La City" is to fuel economic growth *and* to frame who belongs in the city and who does not. In the next paragraph, I analyse a particular form of gentrification as urban planning practice: *gender*fication and what I term urban re-generation in Rotterdam in the case of the "child friendly city" plans.

### *Urban re-generation: City children and genderfied neighbourhoods*

Because of the huge stress that is put on the "quality of space" for the urban economy in today's thinking about urban government, many entrepreneurial strategies of Rotterdam take the shape of planning interventions in housing and the spatial organisation of the city. While "La City" was primarily a *discursive* strategy to change images and meanings, many strategies are aimed at changing the *material* built environment of Rotterdam. One collection of strategies that has become immensely popular in the Rotterdam government but elsewhere as well is state-led gentrification. In fact, in the eyes of many policy makers in former industrial cities, gentrification is a "positive urban policy" (Lees et al., 2008: 198). Gentrification policies are so widespread in Rotterdam and the rest of the Netherlands that the term seems to have lost its original critical meaning. Administrators and planners are aiming for more middle class inhabitants in former

working class neighbourhoods and at a "social mix" of different groups in their populations. Interestingly, women and families play an increasing role in gentrification policies today.

The term gentrification generally refers to the process where affluent people or businesses buy property in formerly poor or working class neighbourhoods and occupants are displaced. Lia Karsten showed how YUPP's ("Young Urban Professional Parent"; 2003: 2573) increasingly make a "positive choice for the urban way of life" (2003: 2573). Especially certain groups of dual earner families seem to find the city an attractive place to live, because of the proximity of amenities, a liberal climate for those that want to depart from patriarchal ideals and the proximity to work, which makes the combination of work and family life much easier (Karsten, 2003; Warde, 1991; Lees et al., 2008). Changes in the way in which people think about differences between men and women, and proper roles for each sex, influence gentrification policies. Men taking on care work in the home change the form of gentrification, as do women entering the labour market. Altered behaviour of men and women and new gender roles spur new forms of gentrification (Bondi, 1991; 1999) and this has not gone unnoticed by city administrators. The city of Rotterdam is after YUPP's and aims at attracting them through a spatial strategy of urban design.

The phenomenon of the YUPP shows a hiatus in theories of lifecycles and gentrification. Many theorists emphasised that gentrifiers are mainly young adults that live in gentrifying areas *prior* to having children (see for example Bondi, 1999; McDowell, 1999). When planning a family, and thus entering a different phase of the lifecycle, many former gentrifiers seem to buy property outside of the city. But in the case of the YUPP, precisely having children is a motive to buy property in the city. The Rotterdam administration is deliberately associating family with gentrification and thus aiming at the YUPP. The gentrification efforts of Rotterdam are thus exactly targeted at young people *with* children (compare: Boterman, 2012).

The 2010 plan "Building Blocks for a Child Friendly City" (Rotterdam Municipality, 2010a) gives a detailed strategy for the future planning of especially older inner city poor neighbourhoods. I interpret this plan as an 'instant gentrification' (D. Rose, 2004: 280) strategy and an exemplary case of the shift in focus of cities that aim for gentrification from single young men and women to *middle class nuclear families* as gentrification pioneers. Rotterdam explicitly takes its cue for these policies from Vancouver's history of recovery (Van den Berg, 2013). This Canadian city is often considered an international emblem for urban "liveability" (Punter, 2003). The city was successful in attracting desired inhabitants to its urban core by focusing on dual earner families. Vancouver developed a gendered strategy to attract these groups: it built family friendly housing in inner city neighbourhoods and provided spatial solutions for the combination of care and work (Hutton, 2004; Punter, 2003). Rotterdam's plans for a "family friendly" or, alternately, "child friendly" city are inspired by these examples.

In this paragraph I analyse the Rotterdam plans for a "child friendly" city by looking at three texts: 1) "Building Blocks for a Child Friendly City" (Rotterdam Municipality, 2010a), which is the main text to set out the plans, 2) the "Child-friendly Boroughs Monitor", an annual monitor that is designed to track the effects of the plan, (Rotterdam Municipality, 2010b) and 3) the "Urban Vision Rotterdam 2030", which outlines the more general urban planning of Rotterdam (Rotterdam Municipality, 2008b). I view the plans for the "child friendly city" as part of what I term urban re-generation. In the case of the plans to attract families, urban re-generation means the replacement of the current population of parents and children with a new population of families that are better suited in terms of education and income levels. I define urban re-generation as efforts to renew the city by either investing in the children (the next generation) of the current population or replacing the current population of children by a new generation of better suited children. Urban re-generation as a concept supplements the much used term of urban regeneration in the sense of material and economic restructuring in its focus on the city as a *reproductive milieu*.

**Stopping "selective out-migration" by "family friendly planning"**

Rotterdam considers "selective migration" of the "opportunity rich" to be the root of all urban problems. This comes to the fore most clearly in this quote from the City Council:

> *"The capacity to absorb in certain areas is challenged and exceeded by a continued in-flow of people without and the continuing out-flow of people with opportunities. This is the core of all problems of Rotterdam."* (Rotterdam Municipality, 2004)

The image is invoked here that without an immediate stop to this process, further deterioration of the city will be inescapable. Note how a discourse on "opportunities" is put to work here.

The other side of the "upgrading" of the city as a whole is formed by policy efforts to manage "youth". The unequal character of these projects comes to the fore in the construction of one category of children as "opportunity rich" or "potential" and a second category of "opportunity poor", "risk youth" and "nuisance" (see Schinkel, 2009). "Opportunity rich" on the one hand and "opportunity poor" on the other are signifiers for a variety of factors. In Rotterdam youth policies, "opportunities" are a signifier of educational levels, for instance when a 2004-2007 youth policy plan states: "Too many Rotterdam youths have a low education and, thus, too few opportunities" (Rotterdam Municipality, 2004b: 7). And in other instances, "opportunities" signify employment, ethnicity, knowledge of the Dutch language, or even health[7]. Generally, though, "opportunity rich" and "opportunity poor" are categories that are used in the exceptional spatial policy measures to prohibit the renting of houses to people with a low income (less than 110% of the social minimum[8])

in specific areas under the "Umbrella and Exception Law", also known as the "Rotterdam Law" (see Schinkel & Van den Berg, 2011 for further elaboration on this law and its consequences). In these cases, "opportunity poor" is a euphemism for "poor", because it is defined as people with a very low income.

Changing the demographics of Rotterdam thus focuses on limiting the number of "opportunity poor" and attracting the "opportunity rich". The administration argues that a logical way to do this is by attracting more families:

> *"(Families with children) strengthen the social cohesion and the economic activity of the city. They provide the ideas and the energy for the future Rotterdam. They are the future in which the city invests."* (Rotterdam Municipality, 2010a: 9)

New families of which the parents are dual earners and have a higher education (as is made explicit in the plan) *are* the future of Rotterdam, it turns out in this quote, and they are also the ones in which the city invests. This quote is telling because the plan indeed focuses on spending public budgets to provide housing and attractive milieu for the "opportunity rich".

**When "child-density" is and is not a problem**

The plan insists that a "family friendly city" is accomplished by working on four "building blocks": housing, public space, amenities and routes. Public space and routes speak more or less for themselves: the efforts under these headings focus on sporting areas, parks, playgrounds and traffic safety. The efforts to strengthen family amenities are interesting because the plan speaks of the necessity of families in order to keep amenities affordable. It says: "If families leave, the quality and quantity of amenities withers" (Rotterdam Municipality, 2010a: 13). What is interesting here is that in most of the boroughs in which this plan proposes to invest, there *are* already many families with young children. In fact, some of these boroughs are the most "child dense" (the amount of children per hectare) of all the boroughs in the city, such as Afrikaanderwijk or Rotterdam Noord. The neutral language of "families" and "amenities" disguises the way in which very specific families are targeted: the municipality will invest in amenities such as schools, sporting clubs and child care if it will attract the higher middle classes.

The municipalities' efforts for gentrification by families find their concrete distillation in the definition of "family friendly housing". In the guideline, a "family friendly house" is 85 square meters in size or larger, has a private outdoor space, an elevator if it is not on the ground floor and has a separate bedroom for each child. In fact, if the latter is not the case, the municipality now considers a house "overcrowded" (Rotterdam, 2010b). When applied on the current housing stock

of Rotterdam, the city states that certain neighbourhoods have less than 10% "family friendly houses" (Rotterdam Municipality, 2010a; 2010b). The plan proposes to change this not only by building new homes, but also by converting two smaller apartments into one. This leads to less dwellings and the displacement of current inhabitants. This is, however, exactly what is the more or less latent goal here, as is made explicit:

> *"An* accidental advantage *of this is the dilution of these highly populated boroughs."* (italics MvdB)

Interestingly, the middle class boroughs and the city centre are areas for planned residential "condensation". Under the neutral guise of remaking the city into a "child-friendly" one, the dispersion of the lower classes and a "heightened density" of middle class families is an important goal. The plan speaks of attracting more families and the need for children in order to have "life" in the city. But when it comes to the poorer neighbourhoods, exactly the density of children becomes a problem. In the urban planning texts, "*child friendly*" is a proxy for *middle class friendly*. The city does not apply the guidelines for "family friendly housing" so that all families in Rotterdam can have such a house at an affordable price. Instead, prices will go up, creating affordability problems for large groups and new, more affluent families will move into these neighbourhoods, leaving many of the poorer families displaced. Or this is at least what the administration plans to happen.

Before moving on to an analysis of the gender notions underlying the plan, what I would like to note here is that the programme is accompanied by an annual monitor that is highly publicised. 6 months after releasing the "Building blocks" plan (Rotterdam Municipality, 2010a), the first "Child-friendly borough monitor" (Rotterdam Municipality, 2010b) was published. It is hardly surprising that so soon after the presentation of the plan, already 7 of 11 "pilot boroughs" turned out to have become "significantly more child-friendly", even though the text of the monitor report explains that an entire investigation was not yet possible due to insufficient data (Rotterdam Municipality, 2010b). This is a very good example of the performative nature of "managing through measurement" (Noordegraaf, 2008). The measurement of "child-friendliness" is meant to make the existing qualities of Rotterdam visible. "Child friendliness" is in part accomplished by claiming it. The "child-friendly city programme" in this case works as a city marketing tool, just like the "La City" event does.

**The gender subtext: genderfication**

The families that Rotterdam is looking for are dual-earning, middle class, nuclear families. In the "child-friendly city programme", space is produced for families that subscribe to specific gender

ideals, for instance when the combination of work and care is made easier by the provision of childcare facilities close to "family friendly houses". At the intersection of class and gender, this means that class upgrading of neighbourhoods is given a distinctly gendered form and is done using gendered strategies. I propose the term *genderfication* to help understand the gender dynamics in the strategies of the city to change its gender composition. I define genderfication as the production of space for different gender relations. For this definition, I build on Hackworth's definition of gentrification as "the production of space for progressively more affluent users" (Hackworth, 2002: 815). The advantage of this broad definition of gentrification is that it can be applied to the production of space beyond residential properties in working class neighbourhoods. Moreover, it focuses on the social production of space, and is thus well suited to look at meaning making and at the production of space "through human intentions" (Molotch, 1993: 887). Building on Lefebvrian theories of space, genderfication points to shifts in the do's and don'ts that space signifies (Lefebvre, 1991:121). Space is produced for a specific gendered order. In the Rotterdam case, the modernist space that was produced after the Second World War, ordered the patriarchal separation of the sexes, the clear separation of private and public space and clearly distinguished gender roles. Genderfication changes this order into one in which the public and private sphere are much more intertwined, where men care and women work in the (home) office and where children are brought up in dual earning families and in day care facilities.

What Rotterdam aims for is not *just* more families and children, but in fact women, children *and* men that subscribe to certain specific norms about raising children and dividing labour. In other words: Rotterdam is seeking middle class groups with specific gender roles and norms. And these specific gender notions are dominant in the YUPP- higher middle class that Rotterdam desires. The production of space for these gender norms is a means to produce space for progressively more affluent users (and thus gentrification), but can be distinguished from gentrification because it does order space in a clearly gendered way. Thus, genderfication is to establish gentrification in the end, but has specifically gendered features, uses gendered strategies and thus works differently and produces specifically gendered outcomes. Informed by intersectionality perspectives, we can thus see how Rotterdam's efforts are not just about class upgrading and gentrification, but instead consist of gendered strategies to attract "desired" new inhabitants. Those have sufficient income to buy a family home in the city, they live in nuclear families, share work and care tasks, aim for gender equality and earn dual incomes.

**Producing space for gender-equal task sharing**

From the analysis of the plans for the child-friendly city, it becomes apparent that the gender ideal that guides genderfication in Rotterdam consists of norms of 1) gender-equality, 2) dual-earning

and 3) the nuclear family. Genderfication assumes a specific shape in the case of Rotterdam: it leads to building larger, more expensive (as compared to the current housing stock) owner-occupied homes for middle class nuclear families, with ground level front doors, 3 to 5 bedrooms, parks in front of the houses and day care facilities in direct proximity. As Liz Bondi (1991) argued, the restructuring of urban space and definitions of gender are closely linked. "Changing patterns of production and reproduction have caused women and men to adjust their uses of space and time such that 'the process of gender constitution and the process of constituting urban environments are inextricably linked'" (Bondi, 1991: 194, quoting Mackenzie, 1988: 27). The spatial organisation of the city is a reflection of dominant gender ideals. Spatial organisations reaffirm and co-construct dominant gender norms, precisely because they make certain gendered practices possible and obstruct other organisations of production and reproduction. The combination of paid work and caring for a family, for example, is obstructed if childcare facilities are not located close to home or work and parents have to commute in a modernist city.

The first element of the genderfication in the case of Rotterdam, i.e. gender-equality, is expressed in the farewell to modernist planning that consisted of the zoning of spaces for work and family that is declared in the "Building Blocks" plan. As I wrote earlier in this chapter, Rotterdam is a typical example of such a modernist city. This kind of zoning is a spatial expression of a patriarchal social structure and this spatial organisation itself produced patriarchal gender relations. It shows how urban planners in Rotterdam worked on the basis of the separation of production and reproduction in gendered spheres. Now, Rotterdam attracts middle class families precisely on the basis of their moving away from modernist zoning with a new spatial mix of urban functions. The most telling example of this is the goal of the city to become an attractive *residential* city. The Rotterdam Urban Vision 2030 (Rotterdam Municipality, 2008b) states:

> *"To be able to live in the city there must be good housing and suitable employment. Employment, in turn, thrives only when the city can offer favourable conditions for business development with high quality housing."* (10)

These goals are presented as neutral in the plan, as it says that both goals are "inextricably linked" (10). In this quote, the current ideal of the effect of "quality of space" on the urban economy is obvious. After the Second World War and in the 1970s, Rotterdam primarily focused on building residential areas outside of the city centre and did not consider residential and economic functions to be linked spatially at all. The ideal in the beginning of this century is that women and men share their responsibilities of work and family and that in order for the new, more gender-equal family to live in the city, work, play, home and care facilities should be mixed and provided on a

neighbourhood-level in order to make the combination of work and care both more equal and accessible. The modernist ideal of the separation of production and reproduction in gendered spheres is thus departed in favour of a production of a gender equal space of mixed urban functions.

The second element of the Rotterdam gender ideal, "dual earning", is expressed in the form of larger, more expensive family houses. Dual earners generally have more to spend than traditional breadwinner families and can therefore afford such a house. Moreover, dual earners are working increasingly from their homes in order to, again, be able to combine work and care duties. This is expressed spatially in the plans in the form of home offices. The merging of smaller and cheaper apartments into larger dwellings is one of the main instruments of the plan "Building blocks for a child friendly Rotterdam". Moreover, the first two elements, "gender equal" and "dual earner" also find their concrete distillation in the investment of the city in community schools (*brede scholen*) in which after school programmes and childcare facilities are most often included. This enables parents to combine care and work duties.

The third element of the gender ideal is expressed in the form of the provisions of homes for nuclear families. A family, in the urban plan for the "Child-friendly city" consists of parents and children under the age of 18 living together in one unit[9]. This is an expression of the general practice of families in the Netherlands. But the above mentioned guidelines for a "family friendly house" show how families with approximately 3 to 5 members are the norm (see the "child friendly monitor", pp. 8 and 9). Interestingly, the gender subtext of the plan for the "Child-friendly city" here expresses precisely the bourgeois, heteronormative, modern, ideal of the nuclear family with 1 to 3 children and both parents present. In the *form* that genderfication assumes here, we see on the one hand a departure from the modern ideal of the breadwinner household and on the other hand an affirmation of the ideal of the nuclear family.

## *Revanchist interventions – the other side*

*Never the boys from the posh bit up by the park, they're just boys,*
*but our lot are "youths", our working-class lads are youths, bloody terrible, isn't it?*
Zadie Smith[10]

In 2002, citizens of Rotterdam voted for the populist party of late Pim Fortuyn in large numbers. The election results gave way to a new political and policy discourse that focused on safety issues. Many inhabitants complained that they had lost their neighbourhoods to immigrants, junks and criminals. The dystopian images of Rotterdam legitimated the construction of Rotterdam as a "laboratory" for urban politics and policy, in which "zero tolerance policing" and "strict safety

policies" are combined with efforts to "elevate" the "lower classes" and "youths". The other side of genderfication and urban re-generation is the problematisation of youth, the "penalisation of nuisance" (Van Swaaningen, 2005) and revanchist interventions.

The concept of revanchist urbanism was developed by Neil Smith in the context of New York in the 1990s (N. Smith, 1996; see also Van den Berg, 2007). Smith identified a reaction in popular media and in public policies to the "supposed "theft" of the city, a desperate defence of a challenged phalanx of privileges, cloaked in the populist language of civic morality, family values and neighbourhood security" (N. Smith, 1996: 211). Revanchism is about the identification, elimination or disciplining of the "enemies of within": of the migrants, the poor and the homeless. MacLeod (2002: 616) argued that "the revanchist city framework might stand accused of being a slave to New York." However, many scholars have attempted to use "revanchist urbanism" as a heuristic tool to understand developments in the UK (MacLeod, 2002; Atkinson, 2003), Ecuador (Swanson, 2007) and the Netherlands (Uitermark & Duyvendak, 2008; Van der Horst, 2003). When using the concept in a more flexible manner, it enhances understanding particularly of the *political* dimensions of contemporary urban inequalities (compare MacLeod, 2002; Uitermark & Duyvendak, 2008). In post-Fortuyn Rotterdam, the call to "reclaim the city" for "ordinary Rotterdammers" was often heard (Duyvendak, 2011).

**Revanchist interventions 1: "Youth" as a spatial problem**

Notwithstanding the efforts to attract families with children, generally, "youth" is a spatial problem in the eyes of Rotterdam policy makers and police. In Rotterdam, paternalist and punitive "youth" policies are connected to genderfication and re-generation. Without doing justice to the complexity of this dynamic (see Schinkel, 2009; Van Swaaningen, 2005), I will highlight some elements of measures that are taken to deal with "undesirable youths", and "opportunity poor", because, as became clear in the analysis of the "Child friendly city" plan, not all children are considered necessary ingredients of a lively city. In fact, some are said in policy to be precisely the cause of "liveability problems" and thus delegitimised as urban citizens.

"La City" is one of the elements of a long term strategy of the city of Rotterdam to turn the city's public spaces into a "City Lounge" (Rotterdam Municipality, 2008a). The "*City Lounge*" is to make Rotterdam an attractive residential and consumption city as are the "Child friendly city" plans.

> *"The concept of the city lounge indicates the most important goal of Rotterdam: to develop the city centre into a quality spot for meeting, staying and entertaining for inhabitants, corporations and visitors."* (Rotterdam Municipality, 2008a: 10, translation author)

The municipal council agrees that Rotterdam's residential quality needs to be improved and therefore public "lounging" is necessary. Rotterdam wants to encourage people to be a "flâneur" (Rotterdam City Information Center, 2008) and to enjoy the streets and parks of Rotterdam as "leisure spaces" (Rotterdam Municipality, 2008a). But "the City Lounge" is a strategy that invites very particular populations to be a "flâneur" and considers other Rotterdammers that meet each other in the streets as nuisance. Contemporary safety policies and municipal laws ("APV's") prohibit groups of more than three people spending time together in any part of public space (De Pers, 2008; see also Schuilenburg, 2012). In Dutch, this is called a *Samenscholingsverbod*, which literally translates as "Prohibition of assembly" or "Prohibition of gathering in public". Rotterdam is the only municipality in the Netherlands that enforces this prohibition permanently and in all places, thereby subjecting its citizens to a paradoxical constant state of exception and arbitrariness. The "city lounge" is thus not for everybody, as in practice, especially young men are often told by the police to "lounge elsewhere". The effects of the prohibition remain to be researched, but the law can be seen as a form of what Dutch criminologist Van Swaaningen has termed the "penalisation of nuisance" (2005: 295) and was established as a tough policy measure against "annoying youth" (*overlastgevende jeugd*, Rotterdam Municipality, 2007). Exceptional policy measures such as Mosquito's (little boxes that put out a very high sound that only young people can hear, find very irritating and urges them to leave) are used to prevent youngsters from gathering on the streets in designated areas (Boonstra & Hermens, 2009). The idea that legitimises these measures is that "nuisance" can quickly deteriorate into "criminal behaviour" (Schinkel, 2009). Social and safety policies see the very idea of groups of "youth" in itself as a spatial and criminal problem. In general, the youngsters that are targeted by these policies and laws most often come from working class backgrounds, are often immigrant's children and are almost exclusively male (see RMO, 2008[11]). The gender and class position of "annoying youth" is the exact opposite of the position of the group targeted by "La City" and the plans for a "Child friendly city".

**Revanchist interventions 2: the Intervention teams[12]**

One of the most debated revanchist strategies in Rotterdam were the "Intervention Teams" (Schinkel & Van den Berg, 2011). The practice finds its origins in 2001, when a team of street-level bureaucrats of the municipality, the city's housing bureau, the local social service agency, the public housing agency, the local tax authority and the police united in the first team to jointly visit houses in the "Strevelsweg", a street in the south of Rotterdam. The team was put in place by the Rotterdam administration as a solution to the perceived deterioration of this particular street, but also to find "innovative" ways of fighting urban decline in general. The "Strevelsweg" is located in "Bloemhof", one of the poorest neighbourhoods of the city (part of my ethnographic

research took place there too). Built in the beginning of the 1900s, many houses were (and still are to a certain extent) inhabited by recent immigrants (both with and without legal status) and poorly maintained. According to the municipalities' information[13], the "Intervention Team" visited 700 houses during a period of five months. Various forms of behaviour, forms of housing and inhabitants themselves deemed deviant were targeted. It was an ambitious project to enhance the liveability of the city of Rotterdam, soon to be followed by forms of physical restructuring. Currently, the street is one of the "spots" where the municipality is hoping to establish a form of "state-led gentrification" (Uitermark et al., 2007).[14]

The "Intervention Teams" are a follow-up of what was then called the "Strevelsweg method" and entailed an implementation throughout Rotterdam. In 2009, "Intervention Teams" visited 22.500 homes in Rotterdam (Van der Meer, 2009). "Intervention teams" are especially deployed in areas that are considered "unsafe" and designated "Hotspots" (see Schinkel & Van den Berg, 2011, for a more detailed analysis of this logic). The Rotterdam administration defines "Hotspots" as one or more streets characterised by "an accumulation of problems relating to physical environment, houses and public space. In the social environment, social structures and healthy potential for individual and group development are lacking and, moreover, crime and nuisance are present" (Rotterdam Municipality, 2005c: 73). The administration selects "Hotspots" on the basis of the "Rotterdam Safety Index", a quantitative tool combining subjective and objective measures of "safety" with context variables, one of which pertains to the number of non-native Dutch residing in an area (Noordegraaf 2008).

The "Intervention Team's" methods have changed somewhat over time. However, the core has remained the same: addresses are selected on the basis of a selection of "unsafe" neighbourhoods, as defined by the "Safety Index". In the "Hotspots" thus selected, the "Intervention Teams" visit all dwellings. Once the team has entered the apartment or house, they investigate a wide range of things: whether or not the house is fireproof, if the inhabitants have legal statuses, how many inhabitants there are and how many there should be according to the city's administration, which inhabitants are entitled to public benefit and which should be fined for tax fraud. Also, the teams search for criminal practices, illegal prostitutes and hemp plants. The people deemed responsible for these practices face police actions. The list of items is much longer, because the teams explicitly declare to not focus on specific problems, but to employ an "integral approach". This also entails that the officials write down whatever they find important. As one team-member said: "we come for everything, really" (cited in: Rotterdam Ombudsman, 2007: 101). The executive bureau that was founded by the municipality especially for this policy practice, Bureau Frontline, identifies five goals of the "Intervention Teams":

*"1. The tracing and ending of illegal letting of rooms;*
*2. The control and ending of nuisance from (drugs) buildings;*
*3. Helping inhabitants on their way to paid work or social services;*
*4. Activating the so-called care-network;*
*5. Ending fraud with income support" [translation authors][15]*

It is the combination of enforcement and care that is considered "innovative", "integral" and necessary for the inhabitants of these specific areas by politicians and some academics (Cornelissen & Brandsen, 2007). Inhabitants of the "Hotspots" are led to believe that they are obligated to open up their homes to the control of the "Intervention Teams". A complicated set of practices and legitimisations of the practices make it difficult even for law experts to know exactly what the legal basis of the "house-visits" is (to use the euphemism often used by the municipality). To illustrate how confusing the practice of the "Intervention Teams" can be for the inhabitants an article by the Dutch columnist Carrie Jansen, visited by an Intervention Team herself, offers a good an example of contestation. Expecting government officials for an entirely different matter, Jansen was not aware of letting an "Intervention Team" enter her house in a Rotterdam "Hotspot". Once inside, the officials explained that they were not the officials Jansen was expecting, but were instead there to "look at everything, for example whether or not you grow Hemp in your house or if you house illegal immigrants." In my underwear drawer?" (2008: 16) Jansen asks in her essay, because as the official was explaining his mission to her, his colleague was going through her personal items in the bedroom. Each member of the "Intervention Team" gave her a different reason for their visit: from having too many doorbells to living in a "Hotspot area". And every member was working for a different institution: from the housing agencies to the police. When Jansen asked for the legal basis of their visit, they all had different answers (Jansen, 2008). This far-reaching intervention in the private lives of those living in "Hotspot" areas is legitimised on the basis of the "emergency-state" of the "Hotspots": it is an activation of the repertoire (as analysed in chapter 1) of Rotterdam as an urban dystopia in need of exceptional measures.

## *Conclusion*

Rotterdam aims to depart from its industrial past and employs entrepreneurial strategies to do so. Like other former industrial cities, Rotterdam imagines a future of a consumption based economy (the "City Lounge"), a well-educated population and a public space free of "nuisance".

Encouraging "lounging", a "feminisation" and a "child friendly city" are one side of the implications of the ambitions of the city of Rotterdam to transform. The "prohibition of assembly", the "penalisation of nuisance" and "Intervention teams" are a different side of the same story.

Both consist of strategies to produce space for middle class and more feminine groups. When trying to enhance the attractiveness of Rotterdam for potential middle class residents, young men from lower class backgrounds are the first category to exclude. And interventions in the most living in "Hotspots" became a plausible solution to "liveability problems".

Supplementing urban regeneration in the form of material and economic restructuring, Rotterdam is now focusing on the city as *reproductive milieu*. Rotterdam sets out to "elevate" and "upgrade" the urban youngsters of the lower classes into the middle class of the future or to replace these children and youngsters with families that are "opportunity rich". These two focus points show that Rotterdam is trying to transform the city by bringing in a new generation. In short: to establish what I term urban re-generation. The parenting guidance practices that are the main concern of the remainder of this thesis are a form of urban re-generation too: they are meant as investments in the next generation of Rotterdammers.

*CHAPTER III*

# PRODUCING AND RESEARCHING PARENTING GUIDANCE[1]

## *Introduction: On the urban ground*

> *On a morning in June of 2009, I visited a parenting class in Pendrecht, Rotterdam. After the more formal education of the early morning, we (a couple of mothers, teachers and I) go outside to visit the neighbouring elementary school, where a special ceremony is about to take place. The local administrators and the manager of the school are there to reveal a piece of art that is embedded in the school playground. It is called the "Rosette of respect" and is to enhance the capacity of children to interact with each other with respect and "contribute in a positive way to the neighbourhood of the school" (so says the invitation to the ceremony). The idea is that whenever children are fighting, they can come to the rosette and make amends. The rosette is revealed while all the children of the school are in the playground singing songs about respect. Right after, there is a theatrical act of two teenagers performing a hip hop dance.*

In the streets of Rotterdam, prescriptions for behaviour like this "Rosette of respect" are everywhere. The physical presence of behavioural and social norms is quite normalised. Rules for behaviour in the metro, on the bus, on a specific street corner or playground, rules for greeting your neighbours, for cleaning your doorstep and for "playing with your children"[3] are omnipresent.

In the case described above, the norm of mending conflict – taught by teachers to children in schools – is further affirmed by the physical presence of a piece of art in the pavement. The use of the hip hop act was a way for the school board to reach out to urban kids and to connect to what is anticipated to be their life world, while at the same time aiming to change aspects of urban kids' behaviour. Likewise, children are asked to play hopscotch in specially designated red tiles provided by the municipality instead of using crayons to paint their own track. The strong tradition of urban planning translates in these physical artefacts on the ground: in the pavement

*The Rosette of respect*[2]


*A sign in a Rotterdam street. The first rule reads: "We greet each other in a friendly manner and welcome new neighbours"*[3]

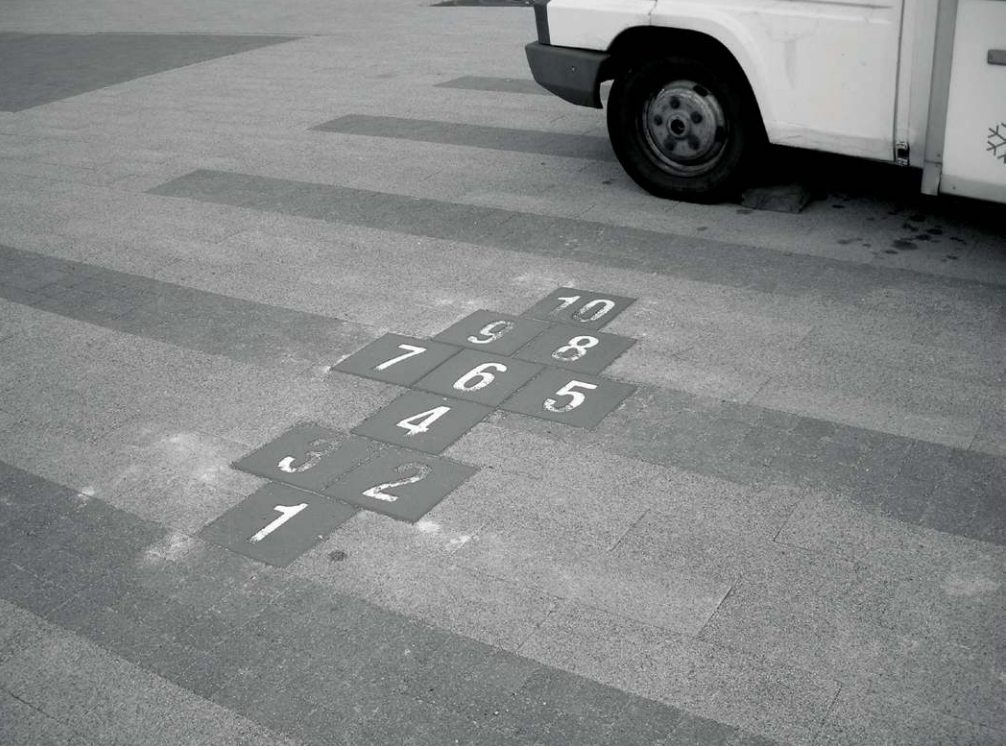
and on street signs. These objects are seemingly trivial. But the historic and cultural repertoire of urban planning that I described in chapter 1 becomes apparent and actualised in these tangible objects and prescriptions.

This chapter is about such concrete contexts of my research: it is about parenting guidance *on the ground*. Here, I zoom in on the practices that I researched ethnographically and the context in which they came about. This chapter sketches the surroundings, institutional context and policy ambitions that set the stage for my object of study: transactions in parenting guidance. In this chapter, my focus is fourfold: 1) I analyse what Rotterdam's concrete policy ambitions for parenting guidance consist of, as these are at stake in the practices. 2) Then I zoom in even further and introduce the two cases of my ethnographic research: the Bureau Frontlijn and social work agencies in Rotterdam. 3) As a further elaboration on context, I spend a few words on the Rotterdam boroughs in which I did my research and in 4) I describe my approach to the ethnographic research that is the basis of this thesis and my methodological considerations.

## *Policy ambitions*

### Language and ambition

The language of muscles and daring that is part of the Rotterdam mythology is omnipresent in Rotterdam politics and policy as well. Policy programmes are called "the power of Rotterdam", "The city of doing: for results Rotterdam-style" and "Action programme risk youth"[5]. The politicians and administrators that develop these programmes use this cultural repertoire and motivate their policy choices by it, placing concrete policy measures in a continuous context. I wrote in chapter 1 of how the Dutch tradition of policy planning and paternalism also provides a repertoire for




*Tiles for hopscotch provided by the municipality for children, photo MvdB*

contemporary planning. And indeed, a new ethos of interventionism and paternalism is apparent in the Rotterdam policy programmes that planned parenting courses and parenting guidance front and centre during the time I did my research (2009-2011).

When reading the programmes that structured social policy in those years, and rereading them as I was writing this in 2012, I was struck by the quite enormous administrative ambitions of the Rotterdam government. The amount of faith in policy measures to enhance parenting practices in Rotterdam (at least in policy texts) is astounding. Especially for the administration of 2006-2010, parent guidance and parenting in general were focal points. This was and is largely informed by Rotterdam demographics: Rotterdam is the only city in the Netherlands (and one of few in Europe) where the population is getting younger. Concerns about the living conditions and future of Rotterdam youth feature in almost all policy texts. These find their way in two strands of policy logic: 1) children should be protected from potential danger and risk, including their parents and 2) the future of the city as a whole depends on today's children and therefore, investment in children is necessary to produce a desired Rotterdam. The first strand was very influential in part because of the tragic and mediatised death of a young girl who became known as "het maasmeisje": the victim of parental violence and failing public services. This led to a range of policy measures, among which databanks and archives to monitor youth and parenting (Schinkel,

2011b). These policy initiatives are not at the centre of this thesis. I focus, rather, on forms of policy that set out to teach parents skills to become more effective in their parenting practices.

**Urban re-generation**

I contend that these practices are instruments in the second strand of policy logic: the aim for a better urban future for Rotterdam and the role that parents and parenting practices play in efforts to accomplish this desired future. Most policy programmes speak of this future Rotterdam and of the administration's agenda to accomplish it. The education and upbringing of children is a most important recurring theme in almost all texts on social policy in Rotterdam. In the administrative plans of 2006-2010, for instance, it says that:

> *"Too many children are set back from too early on. We have to change this. Rotterdam needs all talents. The city will work on this together with all parents (opvoeders: those raising children, MvdB). Together, we will motivate the new generation to connect to society and to stay connected. Rotterdam is a youngster city. A city where youngsters grab their opportunities and live up to their ambitions."*
> (Rotterdam Municipality, 2006: 3)

Like the plans for the future of city planning that I described in chapter 3, Rotterdam has also developed plans for the "social strategy" of the city and its future "social quality" that sketches the desired future of Rotterdam for the year 2020 when it comes to the city's social characteristics. The plan is called "The power of Rotterdam" (*De Kracht van Rotterdam*, Rotterdam Municipality, 2010c) and has "youth" as its primary and only focal point. It develops the idea of Rotterdam as an emancipatory space, where there is room for talent and those who are children now can become the highly educated inhabitants of the future.

> *"In 2020 (...), the percentage of higher-educated inhabitants has grown. Not just because the city has become attractive for this group, but because children of lower educated Rotterdammers have climbed the social ladder."*
> (Rotterdam Municipality, 2010c: 19)

This is what I termed re-generation in the previous chapter: the regeneration of the city by replacing the current generation by a new and better suited generation *supplemented* by investing in children to become a better suited generation for the future. This social advancement of the current population of Rotterdam children is aimed for with different policy measures and

it is targeted at three different groups of inhabitants: the "strong", the "vulnerables" and the "survivors/ those slipping away". For the "strong", the plan develops measures to make sure they continue to live in the city instead of moving away (I have described the anxieties of the Rotterdam administration about "selective out-migration" in chapter 2) and, alternatively, to attract "strong" young people from other parts of the country. For the "vulnerables", investments in education and other policy fields are planned to make sure that they can find their way in the "emancipation machine" that Rotterdam wants to be: to create opportunities for social advancement. For the "survivors and those slipping away" a more repressive approach is taken to keep social problems "manageable". Parenting courses fit in the second category of policy initiatives in which people are "stimulated" to become more "active" and become able to find their own way in the emancipatory machine that Rotterdam wants to be.

**Responsibility**

In the social strategy for 2020, the causes for the problems with youth in Rotterdam are not analysed, but – in a passing comment – responsibility is assigned:

> *"At the moment, the education levels of Rotterdam youth lag behind. They could be much higher. (...) Youngsters aren't provided with enough foundation at home".* (Rotterdam Municipality, 2010c:18)

In other policy texts, this assignment of responsibility is further developed. For instance, in the plans for "risk youth" of 2007-2010 (Rotterdam Municipality, 2007), responsibility for youth lies with parents, but parents are assisted to be able to deal with this responsibility by professionals in childcare, social work and youth work. Thus, part of responsible parenting is to know when to ask for assistance and to be able to follow expert's advice.

As part of youth policies in the period in which I started my research, a series of public debates on parenting and raising children took place in Rotterdam. The series of was called "We raise children together" (*Opvoeden doen we samen*), thus suggesting a communal, or at least shared responsibility for children and children's behaviour. In fact, the posters that accompanied the project showed pictures of individual children with printed next to it the role of the individuals that shared the responsibility for that particular child: the mother, the father, the soccer coach, the fifth grade teacher, the grandfather, neighbour and so on. In in the introduction to chapter 4, I analyse the subjects chosen for these debates.

But for now, it is important to note that the responsibility for youth and consequently the future of Rotterdam is assigned primarily to parents raising their children, but parents are assisted


*One of the posters advertising the debates on childrearing in 2007, showing that Dylan's father and mother are responsible for him, but also, among others, his six uncles and aunts*[6]

by professionals for this task. As a consequence of this distribution of responsibilities, parenting guidance is a policy measure that is to reduce social problems in the city and create the desired future of higher-educated, "opportunity rich" inhabitants.

**Target groups/ conceptual slippages**

When target groups for parenting courses are defined, there are many conceptual slippages. In some cases, parents are mothers, in other cases, parents in need of guidance are considered "allochthonous"[7], in others, they are thought of as "vulnerable" or "lower educated". A good example of such conceptual confusion is in the policy brief "More than just language! The Rotterdam action programme for integration of allochthonous parents and women". In the brief, the terms "parents" and "women" are continuously used as synonyms, for example when it says that:

> *"(Rotterdam presents) in this programme, citizenship courses for allochthonous parents and women. The goal (is) to enhance the participation of allochthonous women in the Rotterdam society."* (Rotterdam Municipality, 2005a: 3)

In the first sentence in this quote, parents and women are presented as two separate categories, but in the second sentence, the central goal of the plan is defined in terms of the participation of women alone. In other words: in this plan, parents appear to be mothers. The gender-blind term "parents" here obscures the gendered goals that are at the core of the plan: the participation of women as mothers in certain spheres of society (compare Reay, 1998, see also Bonjour, 2011 for an analysis of responsibilisation of *women as mothers* for the integration of their children; see also Van den Berg, 2007). In other texts, there is some conceptual slippage when "parents" turn out to mean "allochthonous" parents. In such instances, involvement in raising children is defined

as an integral part of "participation in Dutch society". *Motherhood* is presented then as one of the elements of the *integration* of migrants into Dutch society, which is why, to give a concrete example, two thirds of Rotterdam's budget for citizenship courses (for migrants' integration into Dutch society) was reserved in 2002 for mothers and one third for unemployed inhabitants (Rotterdam Municipality, 2002), about which the alderman declared:

> *"Because this way, we can prevent that children grow up in an environment without knowledge about the values and norms of our country."*
> (Rotterdam Municipality, 2002: 17)

Mothers are, in such a case, an entry point into the community at large. We can also see shifts in conceptualisations of parenting and integration when the 2005 policy plan for parental support says:

> *"In Rotterdam, we have the problem of parents that grew up in a totally different 'culture of parenting' and therefore do not know what is expected of them and their children."* (Rotterdam Municipality, 2005b: 5)

The target groups of parenting guidance as a preventative policy practice and as a form of urban re-generation are thus somewhat vague; policy texts obfuscate their own goals. However, from this analysis, specific target groups surface. First, mothers are a primary target group, not fathers. Second, what are considered "allochthonous parenting practices" and "cultures of upbringing" are considered a problem, rendering the "autochthonous" parents a neutral and unproblematic category. And third, lower educated parents are targeted. It can be said, therefore, that the target groups of parenting guidance are gender, class and ethnically specific. The reach of *practices* of parenting guidance, however, is not necessarily limited to these target groups and in fact often includes members of groups for which these courses are not primarily designed (I describe the actual attendance of mothers below).

**Activity – active citizenship as mothering**

Much social policy in Rotterdam is laid out in the language of "participation" and "activation". "Activation" is indeed the term with which policy text often describe what it is that social workers do. Activity in such instances can mean a lot of things: often it is to mean paid employment, but today, activity in the form of voluntary work, of caring for your elderly mother or of being an "active citizen" is also included. Andrea Muehlebach analysed how activity was related to citizenship and certain kinds of activity legitimised citizenship in her research on volunteering in Italy (2011; 2012). Muehlebach makes the case that this logic is one of the remains of Fordist times: belonging

is related to a particular active role in society. In Fordism, this role is found in paid employment, in Post-Fordism, a similar logic now focuses on unpaid labour. Muehlebach researches volunteering in the service sector and doing unpaid care work. The women in my research are activated into the unpaid labour of *mothering the next generation* as part of and legitimation for their citizenship (I have elaborated on this theme in an article written with Jan Willem Duyvendak, Van den Berg & Duyvendak, 2012).

In June 2007, I visited the presentation of a policy advisory report to the Rotterdam municipality in Pendrecht, Rotterdam of which I made field notes. The advisory report was called "Social activation of allochthonous women" and was written by the "Sociaal Platform Rotterdam", an advisory board for social policies. The report was based on a research report called "Allochthonous women participate!"(*Allochtone vrouwen doen mee!*, De Gruyter et al., 2007).

> *The researchers present their findings to approximately 100 people in the small community theatre in Pendrecht. Both the Rotterdam alderman Orhan Kaya and the borough-administrator (Deelgemeentebestuurder) Lionel Martijn are present to respond to the advisory report. Martijn responds by problematising that the research showed that 75% of allochthonous women were not interested in taking up volunteering work. He concludes from these findings that most women are not interested in "becoming active."*

Martijn's line of argument resembles the moral logic that Muehlebach encountered in Italy. He values very particular kinds of activity and even goes as far as asserting that other activities are forms of passivity. In the advisory report, a more precise picture of "activation" surfaces:

> *"(We) support a robust activation programme (...) There are much efforts already taking place in Rotterdam, ranging from cycling and swimming lessons, language courses, parenting courses to activation programmes towards paid employment. (...) It is crucial to form a policy programme that matches the interests and needs of women themselves. (...) For women that are further away from the labour market, accessible activities are needed".* (SPR, 2007: 1-2)

In the research report and in the advisory report, "allochthonous women" were the object of concern, not mothers in particular. But in several instances, mothers are targeted; for instance in the "activation" programmes that consist of parenting courses. What is important for my analysis here is that policy geared towards mothers in Rotterdam often aims for particular forms

of "activation" and that this does not necessarily mean paid employment. On the contrary, as paid employment is expected to be unattainable for many women, "activation" is sought in mothers' parenting skills, physical exercise, and volunteering.

Likewise, in the plans of the Rotterdam administration for the years 2006-2010, accessible parental support is defined as a form of "activating care" geared at enhancing the "self-reliance" of citizens and their "participation in society" (Rotterdam Municipality, 2006: 11). The special policy plan for the south of Rotterdam (*Pact op Zuid*) goes even further by announcing that "the norm" for youth in the South of Rotterdam should be that "Every child and youngster has a right to a participating parent" (JOS Rotterdam, 2009). If a child's parent is not considered to be "active" or "participating", the plan promises to provide a special coach for the child. The idea is that only by such interventions, the Rotterdam administration can prevent children from becoming the "inactive" citizens of the future. By "activating" mothers, children will be raised within a norm of "activity" and as a consequence, will not grow up to become the unemployed "inactive" citizens that the municipality worries about. Thus, concluding, "activation" is often geared at mothers "being active" *in their role as mother*. The idea that women should be "active" *as mothers* comes to the fore in the idea that "if you educate a mother, you educate a family" (Rotterdam Municipality, 2005a: 3). The idea here is that women are the key to the development of the larger group. This theory can be found not only in Rotterdam social policy, but, for example, also in international development policies and NGO strategies such as many micro-credit schemes (Kabeer, 1995; Rahman, 1999). Targeting society at large by targeting women in their role of responsible and active mothers is thus a global phenomenon. In Rotterdam, this paradigm led to a formal priority given to mothers for (in some cases mandatory) citizenship courses (Van den Berg, 2007; see for a good analysis of this particular phenomenon: Bonjour, 2011). The citizenship courses are designed to learn immigrants to be Dutch citizens. This included the Dutch language, but, as the Rotterdam brief states:

> *"In addition to language, citizenship is about being involved in raising your children."* (Rotterdam Municipality, 2005a: 4)

This is also reflected in the following quote from the 2006-2010 policy plans of the administration:

> *"Rotterdammers in employment, that is the motto. Participating, because non-participation leads to lagging behind. That goes for the city as a whole, but for every human being as well. That is why every Rotterdammer should invest in him or herself. (...) we will help (...) but our help is not free of obligation and always geared towards activation. (...) young Rotterdammers receive extra attention. They have to be*

> *prepared well for tomorrow's society. And everyone raising children (from parents to teachers, from family coach to policeman) plays their part."*
> (Rotterdam Municipality, 2006: 6)

Interestingly, the terminology that is used in this quote and in policy texts in general is full of references to time and speed. Mothers should be "active" and "stimulated" towards activity so that they will not be "lagging behind". I argue therefore that parenting guidance is a policy strategy *to speed up mothers*. As a strategy, parent guidance aims to influence *the use of time* of mothers in Rotterdam. They are aimed at accelerating the pace of urban inhabitants. They aim to influence citizen's consumption of time. For example by incorporating more activities in a week or asking them to take part in a series of classes and thus arrange their life around this schedule. In addition, this activation looks at the future. It is geared at the next generation and at a future Rotterdam inhabited by "active citizens". The theme of time and speed is further developed in chapter 5.

## *Policy Practices: Bureau Frontlijn and Social Work*

So how did these ambitions of "activity", "participation" and "emancipation" translate to actual practices? What was done in practice with these policy goals? I have researched these translations in two types of policy practices in Rotterdam: the programmes of Bureau Frontlijn and parenting courses of social work.

### Bureau Frontlijn: Innovation vis-à-vis mainstream policy

The first setting in which I did the ethnographic research for this project was Bureau Frontlijn (which translates literally as *Bureau Frontline*). In the Rotterdam field of social work, Frontlijn occupies a unique position. The bureau was put in place in 2006 by the Rotterdam government precisely to create innovative policy practices. It is the invention of Barend Rombout, an ex-police officer and policy critic. I first encountered Rombout in a meeting for an entirely different research project that was to deal with Antillean inhabitants of Rotterdam in 2004. The purpose of this meeting at the time was to deliberate the position of Antilleans in Rotterdam "integrally". In practice, this meant that representatives of different services and local organisations were present at this meeting to discuss what should be done about urban problems that were deemed to be especially salient in Antillean groups of inhabitants. I was at the meeting as a research assistant to a project that was to evaluate the city's efforts to deal with these problems. I was not involved in the conversation, but took notes. I remember distinctly the way in which Rombout intervened in other people's presentations on the subject rather aggressively and angrily, arguing that the other people present had no "real" sense of the severity of problems that, according to him, Antilleans in

Rotterdam dealt with. I recount this anecdote (I have no fieldwork notes of this meeting) because this way, I introduce you to Rombout the way I was introduced to him and it shows his sense of urgency for dealing with urban problems.

At the time, Bureau Frontlijn did not exist yet. But it was a time in Rotterdam for innovative approaches because in the landslide elections of 2002, Pim Fortuyn's populist party Leefbaar Rotterdam was elected into the local government (Noordegraaf & Vermeulen, 2010; Noordegraaf, 2008; Uitermark & Duyvendak, 2008). Leefbaar Rotterdam's claim was to fundamentally challenge the establishment in Rotterdam politics and government and to, alternatively, *really* solve Rotterdam's problems. In this political climate, Rombout was heralded as the one to come up with innovative forms of policy "from the ground up" (Bureau Frontlijn, 2009) that went beyond well-established paths of policy intervention.

Initially, Rombout set out to do this in the field of safety policies. But soon, he included many other fields into his programmes. Formally founded in 2006 as a bureau within the municipality Rotterdam, Frontlijn's mission is to come up with "new solutions" for problems in "lagging behind neighbourhoods"[8]. This aim for innovation is one of its crucial features. The "Intervention Teams" that I wrote of in the previous chapter (and: Schinkel & Van den Berg, 2011), were Frontlijn's main focus point in the first years. Frontlijn's innovation ideally comes "from below", "from the ground up". The idea is that innovation in social policy is best when it comes from insight into practices in the metaphorical "line of fire" or the "urban jungle" (Hartman & Tops, 2005: 20; for theoretical perspectives on Frontlijn policy innovation in Rotterdam also see: Tops, 2007). While causing irritation with many politicians, social workers and civil servants in Rotterdam because of these claims, the Rotterdam administration at the time celebrated and embraced Rombout and his projects, for instance when the City Council awarded the Intervention Teams a prize for innovative policy practices, the 'Get Cracking Award' (*Aanpak Prijs*) (Engbersen et al., 2005: 102). Notwithstanding this institutional embrace, Rombout remained an angry critic of much of Rotterdam's policies and – at least rhetorically – Frontlijn remained somewhat outside of mainstream policy making.

As Frontlijn grew and expanded, policy innovation in itself became less and less the primary concern. In their mission statement it still is (at the time I am writing this, 2012)[9], but increasingly, Frontlijn directly intervenes in the lives of Rotterdam citizens to solve their problems and enhance citizen's problem-solving abilities. The idea is that Frontlijn listens to citizens and their perspective first hand and because of this is better able to solve problems in a practical, efficient, hands-on manner. In their own words: "We go into the neighbourhoods and try to listen to people. We value practice more than theoretical models."[10] And: "There has been too much talking (...) and too few solutions. (...) That is why Bureau Frontlijn is here. Brought to life to cause trouble and show

results. To rebel against the establishment, if necessary. Because we are not here for talking and chatting. We are here for real results." (Rombout, 2009: 10) With this type of statement, Frontlijn is positioning itself vis-à-vis established policy makers and practitioners. Moreover, it uses the masculine Rotterdam cultural repertoire that I analysed in chapter 2: practice above theory, doing before talking, aiming to get the job done. As Noordegraaf and Vermeulen argued, in the years of the Leefbaar Rotterdam administration, Rotterdam used "traditional stereotypical images such as 'sleeves rolled up'" (2010: 522) to advocate new government interventions like those of the Bureau Frontlijn. Interestingly, almost all those executing Bureau Frontlijn programmes were female and often very feminine: the "street-level" Frontlijn employees in parenting guidance were students in social work or pedagogic studies. Behind the masculine rhetorics of rolled up sleeves are young students with neatly manicured hands and high heels.

**The "Mother and Child Programme" and "Project Practice Counselling"**

At the time of my research, in 2009 and 2010, Frontlijn was involved in the field of parent guidance, youth work, safety and poverty reduction programmes in several neighbourhoods. In the context of this research, my interest went out to the parent courses that the "Mother and Child Programme" provided. So I decided to talk to those that were responsible for organising this particular programme. At this time (January 2009), Frontlijn had finished a pilot on the "Mother and Child Programme" (MCP) in Pendrecht and Kralingen (two neighbourhoods in Rotterdam) and planned to implement the programme in many other areas (Tudjman & De Jong, 2009). In a first interview, the project manager of MCP explained to me how at that time just under a 100 mothers in Rotterdam had participated in one form or another in the practices. The Frontlijn manager convinced me that studying the MCP would be most useful and interesting in combination with a study of the "Project Practice Counselling" (PPC). In Frontlijn's view, the programmes were meant to work in tandem. The programmes were still in a somewhat embryonic phase, as they were constantly further developed and altered. MCP and PPC were, however, considered by the alderwoman and some local bureaucrats one of the most promising projects in combating poverty and "recapturing" urban areas, as evident from the alderwoman's preface to Frontlijn's report on the projects (Bureau Frontlijn, 2009).

The idea behind both MCP and PPC was that mothers in Pendrecht and other poor neighbourhoods often lacked in "social and cultural capital" (Bureau Frontlijn, 2009). Frontlijn used these terms following Gabriel van den Brink, a Dutch professor in Public Administration (Van den Brink, 2006) to point at the perceived lack of social and other skills necessary to being part of this "bureaucratic society" (Bureau Frontlijn, 2009: 1). At the time of my research, the design of the programmes was to enhance the "social and cultural capital" of "lagging behind" mothers in

poor areas to enhance these areas, combat poverty and better the prospects of Rotterdam youth. Frontlijn set out to do this by first helping mothers with their daily lives in PPC. For PPC, students went on house visits to intervene in the practicalities of daily life in a range of spheres. The idea was to first bring a basic sense of order. I witnessed interventions in women's finances, administration and housing most frequently, but the idea was to also clean up the house, make sure the children go to school, give parental advice and so on. The philosophy behind these interventions was that mothers would learn the skills necessary for contemporary society by watching the students, practicing themselves and by following their advice. If an initial anticipated urgent phase in which the mother lived in chaos had passed, the design of the programme was that mothers would enrol in MCP. In my six months of ethnographic research there, I never witnessed such a succession of participation. And the Frontlijn managers too, were disappointed with the amount of mothers from PPC enrolling in MCP. However, MCP was meant to complete the education of mothers and the enhancement of their "social and cultural capital" by learning mothers to mother in a classroom setting. I have further analysed the idea of the succession of PPC and MCP and the phased approach of Frontlijn in chapter four.

From the first interview onwards, the Bureau Frontlijn was very welcoming to my participation in their practices and my ethnographic research. It is important to note that precisely because of the ambitions of innovation and the quest for institutional legitimation of Bureau Frontlijn, they were very welcoming to almost all kinds of visitors. During my six months of research there, I met several researchers, politicians and policy makers on "work visit" and others looking around and asking the students and mothers questions. Both the students and the mothers in MCP and PPC were quite used to being observed regularly by policy makers, politicians and even TV crews because of the promises that these projects held to many.

I followed the Frontlijn's manager's advice to simultaneously research the Project Practice Counselling and the Mother and Child Programme. Both MCP and PPC focus on mothers of children below the age of 4. Fathers were not targeted by Frontlijn, even though at times they were included in the practices. Frontlijn's focus on mothers and small children derives from their selective use of pedagogical attachment theories, theories of child development and studies of the effectiveness of early intervention. At least theoretically, Frontlijn uses the municipal administration of Rotterdam citizens (*De Gemeentelijke Basis Administratie*) for the selection of their target group. The idea is to select mothers of children below the age of four from this large data bank to then visit the mothers at home and see if they need help and to ask them to participate. In practice, I witnessed many mothers enrol in PPC and MCP via other routes: participating mothers brought their friends over or neighbourhood schools advised mothers to participate. Like in all the practices that I studied, the women participated voluntarily. No participants in these two programmes were obliged to

welcome Frontlijn students into their home or to join the weekly classes of MCP. In fact, explicit informed consent was asked by the students and Frontlijn's officials from the mothers before entering their houses. Women's participation in the Frontlijn programmes can be explained from a myriad of reasons. Most important in my experience (I have not systematically studied women's reasons for participating) was their expectation that Frontlijn could assist them in problems of a bureaucratic nature. These problems varied from conflicts with housing associations and pressure from debt collectors to tax problems and bureaucratic mix ups. Because many citizens experience difficulty when dealing with such problems, social work students that speak Dutch fluently, can read and write and have more general knowledge of such bureaucracies, can help. This practical assistance was an important incentive for mothers to participate.

Both PPC and MCP are executed primarily by students. Besides the cost-effectiveness of this policy design, Frontlijn argues that working with students helps create an accessible approach: "Students are young, critical and have an open vision and no prejudices. They are exceptionally well suited to look 'broadly'."[11] In practice, this meant that third year students in higher vocational training of pedagogy and social work executed the programmes. The students enrolled in internships with Frontlijn via their educational institutions and typically participated for a period of eight or nine months. They were supervised by employees of Frontlijn and (for the internship) by their study supervisors at the applied sciences universities (HBO opleidingen) of Rotterdam.

Frontlijn embarked upon their mission to influence mothering practices in Rotterdam with their Mother and Child Programme as early as 2006. This consisted of weekly meetings of students and a group of mothers in a classroom in a particular neighbourhood. The project aimed at altering mothering practices to enhance the development of the children and the future of Rotterdam (this link was explicitly and repeatedly made by managers of Frontlijn: their ambition was to "upgrade" Rotterdam). Experiencing the limitations of weekly meetings for the attainment of Frontlijn's goals, Rombout and other Frontlijn employees decided on expanding their parental guidance programme with their Project Practice guidance. PPC was developed to assist mothers in their everyday lives. The MCP meetings followed a rather traditional class format. The students discussed certain pedagogical issues with mothers and watched mothers in their interaction with their children to then intervene in order to enhance the quality of these interactions. I attended the weekly meetings of the Mother and Child Programme in the borough of Pendrecht for a period of six months. Usually, three to five mothers gathered in the temporary building on the playground of an elementary school in Pendrecht on Wednesday mornings.

Mothers attended with their children and usually, four students were there to "guide" (The Bureau Frontlijn uses this term, *begeleiden*) the mothers. Sometimes, the Frontlijn supervisors of the students were present as well, mainly to see how the programme was working out and to see

how the students were performing. For MCP, students were responsible not only for the execution of the programme, but also (in practice) for the development of teaching material. These students prepared assignments, topics for debate and games during the week for their weekly meetings with the mothers. The mornings typically started with a brief introduction in which mothers and children were together and sang a few songs, after which two students played with the children in one room while the mothers were in the other room, discussing diverse issues. After a short coffee break, the second part of the mornings consisted of what Frontlijn termed "interaction activities". This meant that mothers and children were asked to participate in some kind of assignment together. The students would observe this interaction and "guide" the mother where they deemed this was necessary.

In PPC, third year social work students "counsel" mothers in their everyday life: they have weekly "home visits" in which a "to do list" is discussed of household chores, budget management and parenting. Here, the underlying idea is – again – to intervene early in the lives of new Rotterdammers by helping mothers in their daily lives. PPC is not a parenting course. And I started out wanting to study parenting courses in Rotterdam. However, PPC was thought of by Frontlijn as inextricably bound up with MCP. Also, because of its focus on mothers, small children and the future of Rotterdam, it did turn out to be a very good case for this research. Like in MCP, I participated for six months in PPC (simultaneous to my participation in MCP). Usually, this meant that I would go to the first floor of the small building in Pendrecht in which Frontlijn set up their bureau. Here, approximately twenty students would gather each Monday to Thursday morning. The students were distributed into duos and families were assigned to one such duo. For most of the period in which I participated, I, too, was part of a duo with one student, who I shall call Lara. This way, I could go along on Lara's house visits and other meetings with members of the families that she encountered in this internship for her social work studies. There were days on which I went along with other students, though, depending on the ad hoc nature of Frontlijn's work.

Usually, Lara and I went out one or two times a day to a meeting. In between these meetings, we hung out in the large room in the office. Besides this room, there were two computer rooms: one for the supervisors and management and one for the students. Students competed for a place at the computer desks because there were at least twice as many students than computers. As part of Bureau Frontlijn's aim for cost-effectiveness, the building can best be termed minimalistic. It lacked not only space for Frontlijn's workers, but also many amenities. In the large room where I spent many hours waiting for the next meeting and writing up field notes, I met and chatted with the other students and supervisors. On occasion, I would witness meetings with mothers here as well, as some meetings took place in Frontlijn's office rather than in the mother's homes.

*The portakabin of Bureau Frontlijn, in which MCP mornings took place, photo MvdB*

**Social Work Rotterdam**

Notwithstanding Frontlijn's rhetorical positioning outside of mainstream policy making, it is actually very close to government in Rotterdam. Its employees are civil servants of the municipality and Frontlijn is to "answer directly" to the administration, consisting of the aldermen and mayor. The organisations with which I continued my research are more independent of politics and government. These organisations offer social work services to the local government instead of actually being part of the Rotterdam administrative core. Parenting guidance is part of what constitutes social work in Rotterdam. Other activities aimed at the empowerment, "activation" and integration of citizens are also organised by these local agencies. Social work organisations in the Netherlands are almost always not-for-profit. They offer public services and execute policies for local government. In Rotterdam, this local government was at the time divided into sub-municipalities (*Deelgemeenten*), or boroughs that are to a certain extent autonomous. Their administration is elected every four years like the Rotterdam administration. Domains of government are distributed on either the local or sub-local level and responsibilities for social work are administratively located at the borough-level. Depending on the political ambitions of these local politicians, certain types of social work are requested from the social work agencies operating in the borough. In Feyenoord, the largest borough of the South of Rotterdam, local

government asked the local social work organisation to provide parenting courses for its citizens. In the 2010 policy programme of Feyenoord, "parenting support" was one of the prioritised policy goals. At that time the goal of the Feyenoord administration was that all "children and youths from 0 to 18 years of age will receive a good upbringing" (Deelgemeente Feyenoord, 2010). The concrete policy measure to reach this goal was to offer parenting courses and "outreaching" types of parental support. In Kralingen-Crooswijk "parenting guidance" or "parent support" was also a priority. I participated in programmes in the borough of Feyenoord and Kralingen-Crooswijk for a total period of eight months. Both organisations employed trained pedagogues and social workers, both used established teaching methods in their practices and both are employed by the sub local government. Because of the large similarity of these organisations, I treat them as one case in this thesis.

The parent courses that the social work agencies offer are most often organised in close interaction with elementary schools in the area. The courses are included in school programmes for parent involvement. Many schools in Rotterdam have a special parent room. Parents can come into this room right after they have brought their children to school to have a cup of coffee and chat. The coffee is provided by the parent consultant, who is employed by the school. Parent consultants make sure that the room is cosy and welcoming, make coffee, talk to parents and organise courses and meetings varying from First Aid classes to the parenting courses that I encountered. Today parent consultants are employed by the schools, but before, they were employed by a special fund for the creation of jobs in Rotterdam social work. Starting in 1995, Rotterdam employed migrant women as "neighbourhood mothers" (*buurtmoeders*, for a good study on this subject, please see Van der Zwaard, 1999). This was to, on the one hand, create employment for women with little formal education, and on the other hand create the opportunity for schools to organise accessible parent involvement activities (Stichting de Meeuw, 2002). Most parent consultants that I encountered were of Moroccan or Turkish descent. This influenced the selection of women participating in the courses; in a parent room run by a consultant with a Moroccan background, many (though definitely not all) participating mothers were also of Moroccan descent.

In many cases, the parent consultant worked together with the pedagogue of the social work agency to plan a programme of courses for parents. And in almost all cases, the parent consultants were present during the courses and participated in the conversations. Only incidentally, though, would they teach part of the class. In the courses in which I participated, this happened only once. None of the parenting courses that were offered by the social work agencies that are in this study were obligatory. Mandatory parenting courses do exist in the Netherlands, but the majority of parents are included in this form of social policy voluntarily. Parents would drop in the parent room after they had accompanied their child into their classroom, have a cup of coffee and then


*Elementary school in Feyenoord, photo MvdB*

stay to participate in the course that was offered or leave again. Their participation was very informal. Almost nowhere were they requested to register as a participant. Parent consultants usually did advertise a course, but often, parents were surprised to find a scheduled programme when they came in for coffee and a chat. In such a case, they would decide to participate according to their day's schedule and mood.

The social work agencies work predominantly with well-established, sometimes "evidence-based" teaching methods. These methods are almost always designed by national agencies for which the design of such methods is one of their primary tasks. Methods are designed for parenting courses that consisted of a succession of meetings (three to six) or for "themed meetings" (*themabijeenkomsten*) that are more incidental and take only a couple of hours. I participated in both. "Themed meetings" were offered more frequently than parenting courses and because of this, a wide range of subjects is discussed in parent rooms of elementary schools. The most frequently offered parent courses were "Childrearing and so on" (*Opvoeden en zo*) and "Dealing with Adolescents" (*Omgaan met pubers*). These courses were designed by the Netherlands Institute for Care and Wellbeing (NIZW, now in Netherlands Youth Institute) for the Dutch national government. They are designed as preventative forms of youth policy, aiming at a "good relationship between parents as children" and "the pedagogical competence" of parents

*A typical parent room*[12]

(NIZW, 2006: 17). Moreover, these courses are primarily designed for "parents in 'lagging behind' situations" (*ouders in achterstandssituaties*): "parents with low incomes and low educational levels, autochthonous parents and parents from ethnic minorities" (ibidem: 18).

"Themed meetings" were also based on existing, well established teaching material but these were more varying in topics. There are "themed meetings" on such wide raging topics as bedwetting, sex education, bullying and safe outdoor play. One example is a "themed meeting" named "Parenting with value(s)" (*Waarde(n)vol opvoeden* (LOOPP, 2001). The material for these meetings was designed by the agency LOOPP, the National Association of Parental Aid and Pedagogical Prevention and consists of 2 videotapes (that were not used in the ethnographic cases) a booklet with 'background information' for the professional (with articles by researchers and experts in the field for professionals), a booklet with a manual for parenting courses in general, a manual for this course in particular, some overhead sheets that can be used by the professionals, plasticised cards for interactive methods, and some additional material in the form of leaflets.

I selected meetings and courses from the (quarterly or biannual) schedules of the agencies. I came into contact with the professionals teaching the courses through the agencies' management, like with Frontlijn. And like Frontlijn, most professionals and agencies were very welcoming to my participation. I would usually telephone the professional teaching a particular course or "theme meeting" to ask if it was OK to join. Often, it was and I went to the place at the scheduled time. But quite often, the courses were cancelled, shortened or rescheduled. I have analysed this in chapter 5, but here it is relevant to note that in my experience roughly one in four courses did not effectuate.

Most teachers of the parenting programmes of social work were HBO (higher vocational training) trained pedagogues, educational experts or social workers. Most were pedagogues

because of their expertise on the development and behaviour of children. All teachers that I met and worked with were white and female. Participants in the classes were almost exclusively mothers. Parenting courses were not explicitly targeted at mothers, but in effect, fathers rarely attended. A myriad of reasons are responsible for this skewed attendance. The planning of parenting courses during the day when many fathers work was in part responsible, but also the fact that the classes were predominantly female and as a consequence, many fathers did not feel comfortable in such a female group. Moreover, the fact that the courses were predominantly organised in elementary schools preselected mothers because mothers, in practice, are the ones that most often take their children to school. "Father groups" do exist in Rotterdam, but several managers and social workers I talked to explained how difficult it was for them to motivate fathers to participate (see Van der Zwaard & Van der Kreuk, 2012). The mothers most often had children between the ages of 4 and 12, because many classes were provided on elementary schools for parents of pupils. Many also had older children and quite large families. Most of the participants were migrants or the daughters of migrants and mostly of Turkish, Moroccan and Hindu-Surinamese descent. That is not to say that the parenting classes were organised solely for migrant women or that only migrant women participated. But as I described above, parenting guidance is offered to Rotterdam citizens in particular areas where parenting problems are deemed most serious and in these areas, many inhabitants are of foreign descent.

The courses as I described them here are one element of a very broad supply of parenting guidance in Rotterdam. The social work organisation in Feyenoord, for example, also offers special courses for teen mothers and parents with children with ADD. And other organisations offer obligatory parent guidance for parents of delinquent children or parent coaches for parents with severe problems themselves. In fact, there is such a wide variety of parent guidance that at times it was difficult to discern the positioning of the parent courses that I researched in this particular field. In short, the parent courses of the social work agencies that I research are a type of accessible parent guidance that is considered as part of preventative youth policies. Parents can participate as they like whether they experience trouble with raising their children or not. As such, these courses are the type of parenting guidance that reaches most Rotterdam parents quantitatively. I have not made an exhaustive inventory of the quantity of the offered courses nor of the amount of parents participating. But an indication is that in Kralingen-Crooswijk, according to the agency with which I worked, in 2010, 113 parents participated in courses and another 291 participated in "themed meetings"[13]. And in Feyenoord, in the months January, February and March of 2009, the social work agency offered 10 parent courses and 51 "themed meetings"[14].

## *Locations: Pendrecht, Feyenoord, Kralingen*

**Pendrecht**

Most of my research with Bureau Frontlijn was located in Pendrecht. Pendrecht was built in the 1950s when Rotterdam was in need of relatively cheap housing for families after the World War II bombings. The 1950s promotional booklet that I referred to in chapter 2 celebrates the new neighbourhoods like Pendrecht for their "space and air". Large quantities of houses were built here in a relatively short period of time. Pendrecht offered relatively cheap rental housing for families. It is a typical "garden city", a suburban type living space and a result of the 1950s urban zoning that separated working and living.

Towards the end of the millennium, many people left Pendrecht and the neighbourhood deteriorated in the eyes of citizens and policy makers alike. At the time of my research, Pendrecht had just been included in a list of neighbourhoods that needed special attention from the national government in their Big Cities Policies (the so-called *Vogelaarswijken*). In fact, it was considered by the national government as the second worst neighbourhood in the country. This judgment was based on a number of indicators like income of inhabitants, employment figures, quality of housing educational levels and "liveability" indicators (Dutch parliament, 2006-2007). Besides investments in social work and education, Pendrecht is one of the primary sites for government-led gentrification in Rotterdam. Apartment blocks were taken down and new family homes built from 2000 onwards. In addition, Pendrecht started a marketing campaign of its own, to highlight all positive aspects of the neighbourhood: "Pendrecht is goed bezig!" which translates as "Pendrecht is on the right track!". This is evident in the streets of Pendrecht primarily because of the large banners displaying Pendrecht residents that are celebrated as neighbourhood "heroes".

Some of the parents that participated in Frontlijn's programme and are in my research lived in apartment blocks that were to be demolished soon. And others lived in damp and rundown apartments for years before they could move into another home, because the housing associations did not invest as much in maintenance now they were building new and tearing down the old. Given this particular situation, it is no surprise that one of the primary concerns for mothers participating in Frontlijn's programme was their housing and how Frontlijn's students could help them move soon.

**Feyenoord**

Feyenoord is the largest borough in the South of Rotterdam. Approximately 70.000 people lived in Feyenoord in 2010 (COS, 2012b). Several neighbourhoods in Feyenoord were listed for the Dutch Big Cities Policies like Pendrecht. For example, Bloemhof (one of the neighbourhoods in my research), was listed as the fourth worst neighbourhoods in the country. Bloemhof is a pre-

*Pendrecht, Rotterdam*[15]

*A flat in Pendrecht, photo MvdB*

war neighbourhood with (in part) very small housing that was part of socialist concrete housing projects of the second decade of the twentieth century (like *de Kiefhoek*). And today still, Bloemhof is a relatively poor neighbourhood with small rented housing.

The neighbourhood Feyenoord (which is part of the wider borough Feyenoord) is also pre-war. It was built to accommodate large groups of immigrants from the Dutch Southern provinces at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century as a result of the success of the Rotterdam harbour. It is structured around several small harbours and bordered by the river Maas. Some of the streets are recently renovated and consist of the old turn-of-the-century build. But much of the housing in Feyenoord is the result of the 1980s regeneration efforts, or *stadsvernieuwing*: grey brick rectangular buildings. From some of the streets here, you can still see the Unilever factories.

**Kralingen-West**

Kralingen-West is the only neighbourhood in my research that is in the North of Rotterdam. It is very different from Feyenoord and Pendrecht, particularly because this part of Rotterdam was not originally built to accommodate labourers in the harbour or post-war families. It neighbours one of richest neighbourhoods in the city and the country: Kralingen-Oost. Large villas and romantic streets dominate there. The Erasmus University of Rotterdam is located here, and students dwell in the whole of Kralingen. Kralingen-West is pre-war and much of it dates back, like in Feyenoord and many other areas in Rotterdam, to the 1980s and its large scale regeneration efforts. Much of the housing in Kralingen-West is rented social housing and like in the other neighbourhoods that I described, many apartment blocks are designated to be demolished.

## *Researching parenting guidance practices*

**On the ground: methods**

To investigate transactions between mothers and teachers in Rotterdam, I needed to look at the practices of parenting guidance first hand. Ethnography is most suitable for this purpose and I decided to primarily use ethnographic methods for this research. Following the views of Willis &


*"Pendrecht is goed bezig!"*
*campaign banner, photo MvdB*

*Bloemhof Rotterdam, one block of housing to be demolished next to a newly built apartment block, picture MvdB*

Trondman (2000), I understand ethnography as a collection of research methods that involve "the disciplined and deliberate witness-cum-recording of human events" (5). In my research, this meant that I participated in the parenting guidance practices that I describe above. I wrote extensive field notes about the encounters of teachers and mothers. I was interested in what goes on in the room where parenting guidance is taking place. I consistently and intently looked at what happened in *between* mothers and teachers. The object of observation of this dissertation is *transactions* in parenting guidance practices, as I already explained in the introduction to this thesis. That means that unlike many ethnographers, I am not primarily interested in the lived experiences of the ones participating in the practices, nor am I looking for their perspectives on the transactions or their everyday life. Rather, I studied a range of moments, or situations, in which professionals executing social policy and individual mothers consuming these policies met: instances in which they encountered each other. The primary objects of my research are – to be sure – transactions in parenting classes, not the agents participating in them. I did not follow particular individuals (mothers or teachers) for a long period of time or get to know agents in any intimate way. In order to understand what the practices of parenting guidance do and what happens between agents in the transactions that I studied, long term relationships with either mothers or teachers were of less importance than the extensive writing up of what happened in a collection of situations.

Even so, I interviewed 10 teachers and 7 managers of the organisations that provided parenting guidance, 12 mothers that participated in the programmes of either Bureau Frontlijn or the social work agencies and 1 designer of the particular course "Growing up with love". These interviews were largely to expand my knowledge of the practices and to reflect upon them with agents in the field. Interviewing helped me to study the interpretations of agents of what happened "in the room". But the ethnographic research forms the core of the data on which


*Feyenoord, next to the river Maas, photos MvdB*

this thesis is based because of the above explained reasons. In fact, interview data turned out to be much less powerful in the context of this study because it always involves looking back, interpretation and individual aspirations.

For my ethnographic research, using theory as a tool proved very useful. Again, Willis and Trondman's (2000) views of ethnography are helpful here. They write of TIME: of theoretically informed methodology for ethnography. I wanted to write of the complex everyday transactions in parent guidance, of the way in which single remarks turned transactions upside down, how the material makeup of the room mattered and how mothers and teachers in conversation negotiate specific meanings of mothering. For these purposes, ethnography provided the best methodology because of its focus on the "thickness", or "richness" of data. But I wanted to illuminate these practices using theory and developing theoretical perspectives as well as writing up my notes on complex transactions. TIME refers to the continuous connection between theory and ethnographic data. It "is a two-way stretch, a continuous process of shifting back and forth, if you like, between 'induction' and 'deduction'" (ibidem: 12).

**In the room: participation, observation, experience**

Access to the practices that I set out to study posed no great problems for me because I wanted to participate in more or less open settings: none of the parents were in any formal way obliged to be there and the classes were open to anyone that wanted to participate. I entered the field as an invitee of the teachers. I would first get into contact with the organisations providing the parenting guidance. On the basis of my first conversations with the managers of these programmes and in some cases also teachers, I would decide whether this particular location would make an interesting case. As I wrote above, both Bureau Frontlijn and the social work agencies were very welcoming to my participation. They were convinced of the quality and necessity of their work and were in some cases quite eager to show me. While there were individual teachers that expressed some discomfort with me being present in their classes, others were eager to get feedback from me on their teaching (which I was often unable to give them this the way that they wanted) in a constant reflexive stance towards their work.


*Kralingen-West, 1980s apartment blocks, photos MvdB*

Usually, the teachers I came into contact with gave me their weekly or monthly schedule of where and what they would be teaching and I would be, so to say, "signing in", meeting them in the scheduled time and place. In those locations, the mothers were confronted with my presence and I introduced myself as a university researcher interested in parenting guidance. I encountered distrust a couple of times, for example in the form of further questions about my motives. Some of the time, the mothers would interpret my presence there as part of an internship for a particular educational programme they presumed I participated in to become a teacher of parent courses myself. This had to do with the fact that I often previously had met the teacher and this was evident to the mothers. In a way, the mothers were quite used to interns, especially in the case of Bureau Frontlijn. And some of the time, mothers were delighted that somebody "from the university" would want to talk to them. In any case it was obvious to all the mothers that I met that I was not "one of them": that I was not there to participate in a course as a mother. Rather, my presence was usually interpreted as part of the policy practices that the mothers were used to.

In my research, I both participated and observed: I did *participant observation* in both senses of the term. I was always open and honest about my intentions and my role as a researcher. But when I was in the classrooms, I did not only observe what was going on, because I did join in on some of the discussions and was part of jokes, assignments, examples and so on. This was important primarily because there is no way of being in the room when a parenting class with between 3 to 20 participants takes place and being a "neutral" observer, pretending not to be there, or "on the outside". And this was even more the case in the "Practice Guidance" programme of Frontlijn. But even more so: all participants interpret my being there in a certain way and this influences what happens in the room. Not participating and remaining an outsider would have been very uncomfortable for myself and the other participants and would have obstructed my research greatly. My being there almost certainly changed transactions in the classroom, but the influence of the observer should not be exaggerated. In the words of Mitchell Duneier: "most social processes have a structure that comes close to insuring that a certain set of situations will arise over time these situations practically require people to do or say certain things because there are other things going on that require them to do that, things that are more influential than the

social condition of a fieldworker being present." (1999: 338).

On a more theoretical note, the courses were in part designed to make visible what mothers are doing in everyday mothering practices in order to change these practices. This visibility is produced by the teachers who ask the mothers to recount to us what they do in "normal" situations. And all the mothers that I interviewed understood quite well that these courses were in fact organised because the Rotterdam government wanted some influence on their behaviour and most had previous experiences with being the object of research. Because of these reasons, the women's responses to my participation were especially interesting. They illuminated the way in which women that consume policy or take part in policy practices relate to being scrutinised and problematised and showed me their reflexivity about this position and their sense of humour about it.

I recorded what I witnessed in the practices in field notes. I wrote short notes in a notebook during the classes and made more extensive field notes on the basis of these. I am able to use quotations in the texts in this thesis because I was able to write down (some) exact quotes in my notebook during the classes. From the start of my fieldwork, I was interested in the negotiations about motherhood that took place in the classes and this theoretical perspective informed what I did and did not write down. The data on which this thesis is based thus largely consists of text. I wrote down what I thought were relevant negotiations in transactions in the classes. Taping conversations in audio or even filming the classes would have been most interesting, but not possible. Most classes I participated in consisted of only a couple of meetings or were even organised for a single morning or afternoon. This did not give me enough time to build up a level of trust between myself and the participants to record transactions in any other way than writing. I did however make drawings of the classes and the elements in the classes. So besides text, the thesis is also based on these drawings and maps of classrooms and the spatial positioning of objects, children, teachers, blackboards and mothers.

As I participated in the field and wrote my notes, I used my more private experiences of going along with teachers and "being in the room". In a way, I used my body as a research tool. I take my cue for this exploration from ethnographers that stress the importance for researchers to reflexively explore their own experiences in the field as part of their ethnography (Wacquant, 2004; 2008). Especially in chapter 5, this proved useful to research some dimension of the transactions I studied. But I will remain cautious of rather narcissistic story telling as associated with the most extreme examples of auto-ethnography (for an overview, see Ellis & Bochner, 2000). I am convinced nonetheless that my personal experience in the context of my research gave me insight into some aspects of the transactions that I studied. I spent quite some time in the presence of (aspiring) professionals in the field of social work and therefore my body was at least in part socialised in and for these contexts. My "sociology from the body" (Wacquant, 2004), using

embodiment as a research tool, told me something about time and power in the transactions that I studied and I have written about this in chapter 5, where I analyse the sense of sluggishness and lethargy in the transactions I studied.

**But which rooms? On case selection**

In the introduction, I explained the way in which I see Rotterdam as a strategic case to study dynamics of a former industrial city aiming for a future beyond this industrial past. I use the case Rotterdam to *learn* something about these dynamics (cf. Flyvbjerg, 2006), to develop "sensitising concepts" (Willis & Trondman, 2000). I selected the cases of Bureau Frontlijn and Rotterdam social work in a similar logic. Flyvbjerg (2006) distinguishes types of cases for qualitative research. For the case selection in this research, I distinguished an *extreme case* (Bureau Frontlijn) and a *critical case* (Rotterdam social work). An extreme case is useful to obtain information about an unusual situation that can nonetheless be important to get a central (theoretical) point across (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Bureau Frontlijn is unusual in its (above described) unorthodox approach to social policy and its position as "enfant terrible" in the field of Rotterdam public services. The rhetorics of urban re-generation were most loud and aggressive at Bureau Frontlijn: the managers, executors and students in the programmes talked of "bringing order" and "upgrading Rotterdam" quite often and were very much convinced of the importance of their programme for the future of Rotterdam as a whole. The logics of urban re-generation and the role of parenting guidance in it could thus be observed there in its most extreme form, allowing me to develop a theoretical perspective on these practices.

A *critical case* is of strategic importance in relation to the general problem, that is: a critical case can *increase the plausibility* of the generalisability of the findings concerning a practice under study. Rotterdam social work was a critical case in this research in the sense that it is the form of parenting guidance that reaches (quantitatively) most parents (mothers) in Rotterdam. It is accessible, informal and did not presuppose any type of long-term commitment of mothers, like Frontlijn did to some extent. Although I do not necessarily generalise my findings in this ethnographic study, researching practices of social work in Rotterdam allows me insight into the form of parenting guidance that is most common. Together, Bureau Frontlijn and social work provided entrances in the logics of urban re-generation and parenting guidance in contemporary Rotterdam. Both are selections of "strategic research materials" (Merton, 1987): both give insights into the mechanisms and logics of parenting guidance practices in Rotterdam. To be sure: I do not systematically compare the two cases throughout this dissertation. Rather, I look at common themes: I am interested in what logics and mechanisms I encountered in *both* Frontlijn and social work.

**Other data: course materials**

For the following chapters, I analysed the course materials that are used by teachers and mothers in parenting guidance practices. For both the practices of Bureau Frontlijn and social work, teachers used course materials, such as books, leaflets, props for assignments, PowerPoint sheets et cetera. I analysed the way in which these materials are used in the practices that I researched ethnographically, but I analysed the materials themselves as well to look for logics about parenting, target groups for parenting guidance and types of assignments provided there. In the case of Frontlijn, the material used in the Mother and Child Programme was usually prepared by the students providing the classes. In the case of social work, the course material was usually designed by national agencies (as described above). To give an example of my analyses: In the material for the course "Growing up with love" (*Opgroeien met liefde*), the issue was sex and the sexual development of children. Here, I looked for definitions of sex and sexuality, and also for definitions of "*normal* sexual development" as the category of "the normal" was dominant in the practices based on this course material. The course was developed by the Rutgers Nisso Groep[16] to train parents to become their children's competent sex educators. It was thus developed on the national level by a subsidised organisation whose first purpose it is to educate the public about sex. I used these course materials to answer questions about the production of parenting guidance practices, to look at assumptions and ideals on which they are based and to have a fuller understanding of the practices on the urban ground because material in the texts, videos et cetera are used in these practices.

## *Concluding remarks*

In the following chapters, I present the analysis of my ethnographic observations and other research materials. Chapter 4, 5 and 6 all deal with parenting guidance practices and form the empirical core of this dissertation. In chapter 4 I analyse translations of policy and the way the category "normal" works in practice. Moreover, I analyse three issues that were much discussed in the transactions: food, knowledge and sex. This way, chapter 4 deals with what happens in the room and on the urban ground, but it does so by first looking into what happened before that: what categories of issues are considered important for parents to talk about in the phases in which policy is designed and organised? And how do these focuses play out in situ?

*PART 2*

# LEARNING TO MOTHER

*CHAPTER IV*

# TRANSLATIONS: FOOD, KNOWLEDGE AND SEX

## *The normal*

### Debating the "normal"

When I started this research project in 2008, parenting and raising children was front and centre in the political and public debate in Rotterdam. Before the full scope of the effects of the economic crisis for urban government became clear, parenting guidance and preventative youth policies were in full bloom, as I described in chapter 3. I will introduce the theme of this chapter using a particular project of the then-alderman Leonard Geluk. Geluk was responsible for policies on "Youth, Family and Education" in 2008 for the Christian Democratic Party. He was very active in setting up preventative programmes for "youth at risk" and started a series of public debates on parenting and raising children in the years 2007-2009, called "We raise children together" (*Opvoeden doen we samen*). The debates were organised to include citizens, professionals (in the field of social work, education and parenting guidance), administrators and politicians on issues regarding childrearing and they took place in community centres, schools and the Rotterdam World Trade Centre. In the Netherlands, at least in first decade of the 2000s, it was quite common for municipalities and other state actors to initiate debates on topics that administrators or politicians deemed important. In Rotterdam, for example, the debate series on parenting was preceded by a series of municipally organised debates on Islam (I analysed these together with Willem Schinkel in: Van den Berg & Schinkel, 2009).

What I would like to highlight here as an introduction to this chapter, is what the debates were about and how this choice of issues was legitimised. I think this is relevant to my study because of the explicit aim of the Rotterdam administration at this point in history to come to a set of what they called "self-evident" values (*vanzelfsprekendheden*) of what should be regarded as "normal" when it comes to childrearing in Rotterdam. In the words of the alderman: "The point of these meetings was to come to a joint opinion about what we in Rotterdam think is normal when it comes to raising children." (JOS Rotterdam, 2008: 3). Much could be said about the conceptualisation of public debate here and the way it is used as an instrument of government, but my aim is to use the case of the debates on childrearing to introduce the importance of the category "normal".

The short report that recounts the debates (JOS Rotterdam, 2008) starts with an explanation of the reasons for the administration to initiate the debates. This is first done in the format of a pin board with short quotes or what are made to look like newspaper clippings. The fragments of texts are not actually from newspaper articles, but are visually designed to look like they represent what can be read in the papers about today's youths. There are ten fragments or clippings, of which four are about sex. "90% of the children under the age of 12 have visited pornographic websites", is one, for example, and another one reads: "70% of all women with Chlamydia is between the ages of 15

and 24 years old" (JOS Rotterdam, 2008: 4). Three other fragments are about the (child's) body too: they refer to alcohol and marijuana use, overweight and appropriate dressing. On the next page of the report, the "clippings" are further interpreted in a more traditionally formatted text. The first paragraph here reads:

> *"The administration worries about childrearing in Rotterdam. Certain things are not going well. Children are more often obese in Rotterdam than elsewhere in the Netherlands. We also notice children going to school without breakfast. Sometimes children are on the streets far too late in the evenings. And unfortunately, sexually inappropriate and dangerous behaviour also occurs in Rotterdam. These worries have resulted in the debate campaign 'We raise children together'."*
> (JOS Rotterdam, 2008: 5)

What happens in this quote is, first, the drawing of a worrying picture of Rotterdam. It suggests that children that live in Rotterdam deal with a set of problems more frequently than elsewhere. The repertoire of the exceptionally dystopian Rotterdam is activated here. This moral discourse of emergency and exceptionality is used for the legitimation of these debates and other policy measures. Second, the quote highlights three specific sets of problems as the legitimation of the policy measures: obesity, the presence of children in inappropriate places on inappropriate times and sexual behaviour. The report goes on to discuss many more issues in the following pages, but later on, the stress on sex and food is apparent again when two special educational programmes are introduced: a programme for the sex education of children in schools and a school health programme against obesity.

**Governing the "normal": governmentality**

In this chapter, I argue that it is no coincidence that these topics are seen as the most pressing problems. In fact, government interference into the most private lives of families and individuals has proven to be a very effective way of producing particular subjects. To study this logic and the way in which it played out in the parenting guidance practices I researched, I employ, at least for this chapter, a perspective that is inspired by governmentality studies. Perspectives that are usually referred to with this term are mostly based on the writings of French philosopher Michel Foucault. Governmentality was once described by Foucault as a collection of "techniques and procedures for directing human behaviour" (Foucault, 1997: 82 quoted in N. Rose et al., 2006: 83). Government today is concerned with populations and governmentality refers to a mentality that is to be found in modern political thought and action, a set of strategies to exercise power,

for the "conduct of conducts" (this is the frequently used English translation of "conduire des conduits", Foucault, 1994: 237; see for a good English overview of literature on governmentality: N. Rose et al., 2006). The object of government is the population. Michel Foucault argued that the emergence of the problem of population resulted in the development of the art of government (1976; [1994]2000). The idea that a population has regularities of its own, and its own behaviour, gave rise to strategies to govern this population *as* a population. Through this development, Foucault maintains, the family "becomes of secondary importance compared to population and an element internal to population; (...) The family becomes an instrument rather than a model." ([1994]2000: 216). In other words: the family is an important entry point for government and its technologies, but the *population* is the object of concern. The "conduct of conducts" refers to the ways in which government seeks to "influence habits and ways of thinking" (Nettleton, 1991: 100), using the family as an instrument. Government in this perspective is not necessarily in the hands of the state, but rather a product of a collection of agents, such as experts, professionals, institutions and markets. It is made possible through knowledge of populations and through the positioning of norms instead of the upholding of laws. The production of norms of conduct is a most important government technique and it is because of this focus that I find it useful to employ governmentality perspectives here for the analysis of "the normal" in parent guidance programmes.

To be clear: I in no way mean to view parent guidance programmes and other forms of social policy analysed here as techniques to limit personal autonomy and freedom. Quite the contrary. As Nikolas Rose (1989) has eloquently described, freedom is not opposed to government, but rather a part of governing, or a technique. The self and the most private are intensely governed, forming subjectivities that are free in specific ways (N. Rose, 1989; Rose et al., 2006; Cruikshank, 1999; see also Schinkel & Van Houdt, 2010). A term that Foucault developed to point at these forms of government is biopower (Schinkel & Van Houdt, 2010). Biopower is to govern life itself, to regulate bodies, birth, health, illness and sex. Biopower depends on norms. I propose – for the moment – to understand the parent guidance practices that I study here as forms of biopower and government, because this perspective will help to zoom in on definitions of the normal and consequently also the pathological.

**The normal and the pathological**

The debate series with which I introduced this chapter explicitly state what is "normal" when it comes to children and childrearing. Strikingly, the "normal" was defined often in policies and practices that I recorded. To produce desirable behaviour of mothers and to produce a desirable population for Rotterdam (as are the governmental goals), government defines what is "normal"

and what is "pathological" or "abnormal", because to accomplish the first, a definition of the second is necessary (compare Mol & Van Lieshout, 1989). But norms are not necessarily followed. In fact, Canguilhem (the French philosopher that influenced Foucault in his thinking about "the normal", 1989), proposed to view norms as propositions to produce unity where there is difference. An interesting question is then what norms and definitions of the "normal" are based on, how are these negotiated and the object of transactions? Those transactions are the object of chapter 5. Here, I look at the way in which the "normal" is defined in the process of policy-making: how policy goals become concrete interventions. Definitions of the "normal" are relevant because, in the words of Rose (1989: 130): the "normal" is to signify that which is 1) "natural and thus healthy", 2) "that against which the actual is judged" and 3) that which is to be produced through government.

Consequently this chapter is to answer the question: What is considered "normal" in the parent guidance programmes that I researched? And what does that mean for distinctions between "normal" and "abnormal" families and mothers? I go into the *content* of what is constituted as "normal" and "pathological" in the practices that I studied in quite some detail. The ethnographic material that I collected enables me to give an in depth account of the specifics of the "normal" and the "pathological" in contemporary government in Rotterdam. The object here is thus primarily what is and what is not considered normal in the practices that I studied.

**Translations**

I do so by focusing on the way in which *translations* of the "normal" take place between different locations of government. If the "normal" is the primary technique of parenting guidance and government, translations of the "normal" take place into practices. What a teacher in a class considers "normal" in interaction with mothers often differs from what the designer of the course material had in mind or what the politicians initiating the course programmes aim for. That does not mean, however, that these actors necessarily disagree on what is normal. Disagreement on policy goals is frequent, but what I am after here is how a goal gets translated into another form. What do policy goals and necessarily abstract ambitions end up like? To understand this dynamic in parenting guidance practices, I focus on *chains of translations* of the normal, using an analysis that is inspired by Bruno Latour's concept of translation.

Latour uses the term translations in his study of science. In his book "Pandora's Hope" (1999), for example, he joins a research expedition into the Brazilian forest and savannah. He discovers that the raw data that scientists encounter are transformed in transportations from one domain (or context) to another. A chain of translations is necessary to, in Latour's case, write a report on the forest that is based on an analysis of soil. Science here starts with a place where the forest may

be receding and ends in a written report about this problem, through a chain of mediated signs (codes, numbers, tables, samples etcetera) that all refer to the same issue. In my ethnographic work, I was fascinated by similar changing notions and chains of translations. Like science, social policy consists of translations of goals and objectives to actual practices that refer to the same phenomenon but are fundamentally different nonetheless. And in the context of this chapter, most relevant is the chain of translations of the "normal".

In the chapters following this one, the type of subjectivity that is produced through these strategies and techniques is further analysed. But first, I focus on three particular spheres of life, objects of biopower and government that came up in my ethnographic research as especially salient: food, knowledge and sex. In all three domains, the "normal" is made explicit as it is translated.

### *Food*

Eating is a daily routine in families. Because of this, food provides an excellent entry point for government to a range of aspects of life. Talking about food and "guiding" eating routines is an extremely powerful tool for government because all mothers (at least all mothers I encountered in my fieldwork) agree that they should want "the best" for their children when it comes to food and, consequently, most mothers are quite eager to discuss just what "the best" is with professionals and other mothers.

Food is one of the first issues that a mother – and a mother-to-be – receives advice on. Campaigns to keep pregnant women from consuming certain foods and to stimulate young mothers to breastfeed their children are omnipresent and have been in some form for centuries now (De Regt, 1984). Eating is thus from the conception on one of the most heavily governed aspects of life. Children are often conceptualised as the bearers of needs (Lawler, 2000) and food is one of the most undisputed needs children have. In such conceptualisations, mothers are the first to meet these needs. Mothers are typically the ones in families governing food practices in gendered divisions of labour in families (Cairns et al., 2010). Families and mothers in particular are both targets and instruments of strategies of government, because they are the ones responsible for the provision of food to children and through mothers and their "food rules" and practices, children's conducts, habits and subjectivities can be governed.

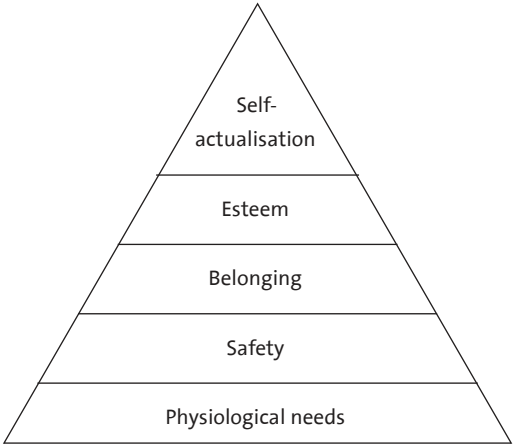
At the start of my research, I was expecting food to be an issue in parenting guidance, but I was expecting it to be presented primarily as a subject connected to health. This expectation was based on the material with which I introduced this chapter in which talk of food was connected to obesity and the general health of children and the Rotterdam population. Of course, in the classes, children's health was an issue, as was obesity. But soon, it became clear to me that food had yet

another function: it was a relatively safe subject for professionals and aspiring professionals such as the students of Frontlijn to discuss more contentious and fraught issues such as finances and general socialisation. Mothers are generally comfortable talking about eating routines in their houses and the ways in which they provide food for their children. In fact, many mothers I met in the practices experience the provision of food as one of their main tasks as a mother. Mothers often indicated to spend a lot of time monitoring the nutrients-intake of their kids, earning them the nickname (used by some professionals) "vitamin-counters" (*vitaminetellers*). Because mothers are comfortable in this role, it gave professionals an opportunity to talk to and with mothers about daily domestic routines and issues that were considered problematic or difficult to discuss. Food is in this way a very private issue that is relatively easily translated into a more public one. Preparing and consuming foods mostly takes place within the home, but by talking about eating routines and kinds of food in the context of parenting guidance practices, food becomes the object of debate and public scrutiny. One of the roles of food in parenting guidance practices is, thus that of a tool for professionals. Another is that of an entry point for government.

**From Maslow to dinner tables**

The issue of food was especially salient in the practices for mothers and children that were organised by Bureau Frontlijn. But before I analyse translations of food in Frontlijn's programme, I first follow the translations in policy that result in Frontlijn's focus on food: the translation from Maslow's pyramid of needs to policy interventions. Frontlijn aims to develop the social and cultural skills of "groups" that are (translated from Dutch literally) "lagging behind" (*achterstandsgroepen*). Workers of Frontlijn have written down their philosophy for intervention and working with these groups in their booklet "Growing with lagging behind groups" (*Meegroeien met achterstandsgroepen*, Frontlijn, 2009). In this booklet, but also in many of the occasions I witnessed as part of my fieldwork, interventions were based on the famous 1940s model of Maslow: the pyramid of needs.

For the American psychologist Abraham Maslow, the pyramid was no coincidental form. It was meant to reflect a *hierarchy* of needs (Maslow, 1943). In the appropriation of Maslow's model by the course designers of Bureau Frontlijn, the pyramid and its hierarchies are adopted *and* altered. Maslow's theories were one element of the programme's philosophy. The interpretation of Maslow's theories by Frontlijn is as follows. "Lagging behind groups" have a deficient set of cultural and social capital and this is why they are "behind", "poor", "stressed" or otherwise worse off than others. Frontlijn intervenes to develop these cultural and social skills, but can only do so, the booklet suggests, by first attending to the "basic needs" of the "participants", because this way, eventually, "self-actualisation" and "independence" can be achieved. In the words of Frontlijn: "a person can only grow if fundamental needs are minimally satisfied" (8).

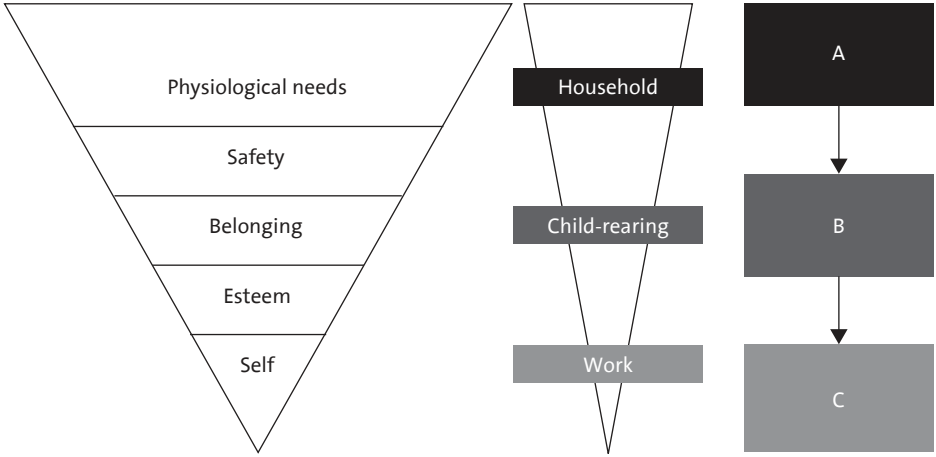



*The Maslow pyramid of needs (Maslow, 1943)*

In Frontlijn's practices, the level of "self-actualisation" in the Maslow pyramid is translated to the goal of finding *paid employment*. This level can only be accomplished when the other levels of need in the Maslow pyramid are satisfied.

> *"The transition to paid employment can only be made when on the one hand the household is in order and, on the other; risk factors in childrearing are minimised".*

Finding paid employment and, through this, independence is the ultimate goal of the interventions of Frontlijn. But Frontlijn and its employees argue that this can only be achieved when basic needs are satisfied. So in this translation, they adopt the hierarchical quality of Maslow's model. In the above quote, "basic needs" or, in Maslow's terms "safety" and "physiological needs" are translated into an "orderly household" and "childrearing risk factors". This adaptation of Frontlijn must be interpreted as a criticism of much policy in Rotterdam and the Netherlands aimed at "activating" people into paid employment *without* first addressing all other pressing issues. They use the pyramid model to critique policies that do not depart from the idea of a hierarchy of needs. The idea that intervention into the most private realms of those "lagging behind" is necessary *before* paid employment is possible is in fact one of the main elements of the Frontlijn philosophy. And they have translated this general idea into a new model that is loosely based on Maslow's pyramid: the "ABC-model" and, consequently, into a phased approach to helping




*The ABC model (Frontlijn, 2009: 9). A is red, B is orange, C is green.*

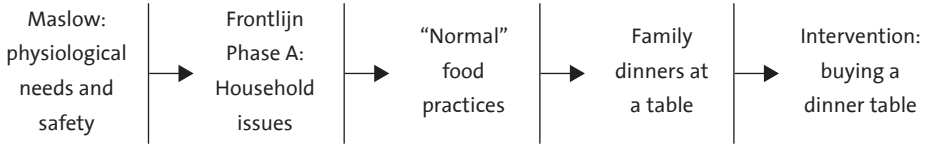
"groups lagging behind". This "ABC-model" and the phasing of interventions resembles the original Maslow pyramid but is simultaneously a reduction of meaning and an addition of new meanings. The pyramid is inverted, it is turned upside down. And in this inverted model, the element of *time* is added. The "ABC-model" translates Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and then supplements it with a *phased model* for intervention. The third part of the model symbolises the phased approach.

In phase A – also coloured red in the original to indicate urgency – the "basic needs" are attended to and the mother (since Bureau Frontlijn focuses on mothers) is coached on specific activities in the category "household", including, cleaning, general measures for better hygiene, safety within the home, grocery shopping and – indeed - feeding her children. When, for example, the students and professionals of Frontlijn go on a first "house visit", they make an inventory of the household situation, using a checklist. On this list, one of the questions (for the employee of Frontlijn to answer) in the category "health and assistance" is: "Does the family eat one hot meal and two cold meals a day?" Usually, the students and professionals ask the mother in the household this question and if she answers no, it is defined as an "action point" needing special attention in the months that the family receives "guidance" from Frontlijn.

On top of that, one of the things Frontlijn employees check when on a "house visit" is whether or not the family owns a dinner table and a cooker hood. When I asked the manager of the Frontlijn "Practice Guidance Programme" (phase A) about what makes their programme different from others, he answered:

> *"We really are necessary as a supplement to all these other public services, because we truly work in an outreaching way. But for real. We do it all. And you know, this is precisely what is necessary for these families in which a range of things go wrong. If you wouldn't work like that, before you know it, a professional comes to a home to talk about childrearing, while there's no dinner table to eat at, you know? We really try to address all those primary issues."*

This excerpt of an interview illustrates how this professional translates policy goals into a practice. The general goal of making sure that basic needs are met in families, so that they can start to think about childrearing and eventually paid employment, is translated here into the presence of a dinner table within the home. Basic needs are translated into household matters, those are translated into a checklist on which dinner tables are an item. The Maslow pyramid is translated into a specific kind of furniture. And in this particular case, *food*, or eating is translated into furniture. In practice, this topic on the checklist usually resulted in the students and Frontlijn employees going to a second hand furniture shop with mothers to buy a family table and chairs.




*The translation from Maslow's pyramid of needs to the intervention of buying a dinner table*

Note how in the "ABC-model", the middle of Maslow's pyramid with the elements "belonging" and "esteem" is translated into "childrearing" practices. These are targeted in the theoretical model of Frontlijn not primarily by the "house visits" and "practice guidance" (*Praktijkbegeleiding*), but by the Mother and Child Programme, that consists of an educational programme for mothers to attend with their child or children. In both cases (MCP and PPC), though, the focus of food is a translation of a theory of human needs.

**What "food" means in policy practices**

In the practices of Frontlijn, there were multiple ways in which food was discussed and used as a tool. Besides the translation of food to a dinner table discussed above, many other translations took place. Here, I go into three particular translations: 1) food and health, 2) food and finances

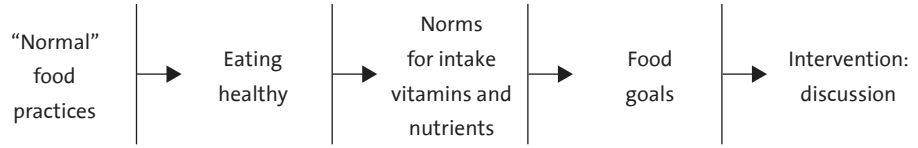
and 3) food as social and socialising activity. Food and health was not the main combination I encountered in the Mother and Child Programme but it was, however, an important aspect. This was apparent, for instance, in the following case in which the students that provided the Mother and Child Programme prepared an educational morning about food including an assignment for the mothers. From my fieldwork notes:

> *Everyone in the classroom is given a small folder with information on food that is to be discussed today. The information is about healthy foods and what are appropriate and healthy amounts of different kinds of foods for adults and children. The student (Wendy) that prepared this particular morning explains: "what is important about food is that you develop healthy eating routines and that you eat on regular times of the day and with enough variety."*
> *One mother, Aisha, says that she often counts vitamins and minerals in the food of her little girls. But she also points out that sometimes, the national guidelines for healthy eating are a bit ambitious. Aisha asks the students: "are we really supposed to eat all that food, or are these norms more like a maximum?" The students immediately agree and Wendy replies: "Of course, I couldn't eat all that is on these guidelines, I tell you! You should really look at them as guidelines, as norms to reach for." Aisha: "Yeah, but with this issue, you know, you always think that you're not doing enough, and I'm sure that is not what you are aiming for, right?" Wendy: "No, of course not. You should just eat stuff from each category of food in the guideline, to make sure you take in a good variety." Aisha: "Ok. You see: I think that is a much better message."*

In this interaction, the goal of the course is to educate the mothers about healthy foods. The morning is designed discuss different kinds of foods and ideal healthy diets. It is to enhance the level of knowledge of food. The students presume here that the mothers are not yet aware of what kinds of foods are healthy for themselves and their children. This can be explained by the framing of this group of mothers in Frontlijn's programme as "lagging behind" and having "deficient cultural and social capital". But Aisha can hardly be said to be "lagging behind" in cultural capital because she is, in fact, at the time of this interaction finishing a Master's degree in mathematics at the university and thus, in fact, higher-educated than the students. She initially started with the Programme because it was a way for her to get out of the house with her twin girls at a time when she was living in an apartment without an elevator and feeling very isolated and secluded to her home, she tells me later in an interview. Because the students would come and pick her and her daughters up by car, the girls got to play with other children under supervision and there were no

financial costs for Aisha, the Programme was an attractive arrangement for a while.

The transaction gets interesting when Aisha confronts the students with her doubts about the norms. Out of this negotiation in the above excerpt of field notes, a particular definition of the idea of "norms" arises: A "norm", in this case, is not necessarily to be met entirely, but, rather, something to strive for. In fact, Wendy immediately undermines her claim about what healthy eating is when she stresses that she, too, cannot eat the quantity of food that is proposed in the norm. Moreover, Wendy, in her response to Aisha, stresses the qualitative aspects of the norm and deemphasises the quantitative aspects of it, stressing the need to eat some product out of each box.



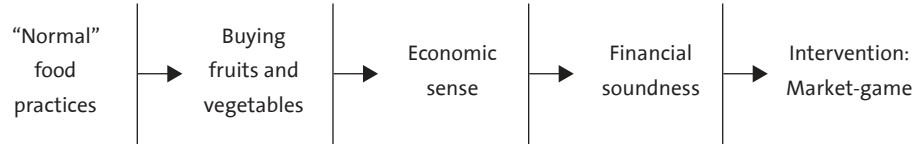

*The translation from healthy eating to food goals and a discussion*

Another assignment about food in the Mother and Child Programme is not primarily about health or eating, but about sound *financial management*. This is one instance in which food is an entry point into a much more sensitive issue: money. From my field notes:

> *After the break, the students have arranged the children's room for an interaction activity. That is to say that in this assignment, mothers are supposed to interact with their small children and are guided by the students on this interaction. The children (all under the age of four) were given money-boxes and have to spend their coins on an imaginary market. The students wear costumes to pretend they are the salesmen on the market, selling fruits they bought earlier at the supermarket. The point of the assignment is that the mothers guide the children and that the children develop an economic sense. Most children hardly understand the activity, although they enjoy walking around the students in funny dress and playing with their coins. The mothers try hard to make their children understand what the purpose of the assignment is. After the assignment is over, the students want to evaluate with the mothers: "Did you enjoy buying all that fruit?" "What you will have noticed is that buying fruit doesn't have to be so expensive. But eating fruits is very healthy. You know, because these bananas cost 2 euros."*

Many of the women in the Bureau Frontlijn programmes are participating because they agreed on needing help when it comes to their finances. Money is therefore a recurring theme. In the Frontlijn theory, money problems should be dealt with in phase A of the ABC model and indeed, the protocols for "house visits" in the "Practice Guidance" part of the programme focus heavily on the financial organisation of a household; the students write letters to debt collectors and try to help the mothers to spend according to their budget. In fact, "guidance" with grocery shopping is a standard part of the programme.

In the above example of the Mother and Child Programme, indeed, money issues were connected to healthy eating to put financial soundness on the agenda once more. The translation here is from basic needs, to a focus on food and eating, to a discussion of financial soundness. This final translation is made possible through the translation of food into buying food and from buying food into an economic sense; in the last quote in the above excerpt of my field notes, the aspiring-professional points out to the mothers how eating right and not spending too much money can go together.



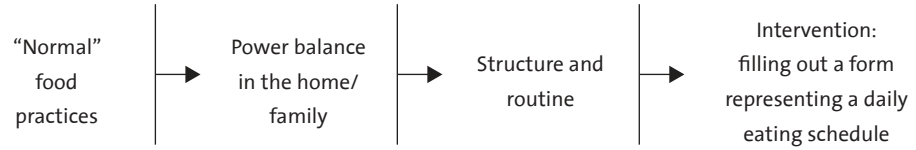

*The translation from food to financial soundness, to a market-game*

Strikingly, the students tried to do so by teaching the *children* about money and what it is like to spend it. With the children being too small to fully understand the game they were playing, the message is primarily communicated to the mothers and ironically denying the fact that a healthy diet is, in fact, often quite expensive.

Sometimes food is translated into sociability and correct socialisation. I recorded the following example in my field notes. Following the discussions that I analysed above between Aisha and Wendy, later that morning, Wendy goes into other aspects of eating:

> *"*Normal *is that you as a mother decide on what times during the day you eat. Your child may decide how much it eats. It is really not a good idea for you to punish your child for not eating. But you can stimulate your child and invite him or her to eat. What is really important when it comes to eating is structure and routine (*regelmaat*).*

Here, talking about food and eating is to address power balances (or perceived imbalances) in the home, general daily structures and the production of homeliness and a generally nurturing environment for children. In this instance, a very clear definition is given of what is "normal". And in this case, "normal" does not pertain to the quality or quantity of food itself, but, instead, to the power balance between mother and child because, as Wendy says, it is "normal" for mothers to have the power to decide when to eat. Structure and routine and a clear distribution of power within the home are elements of "the normal" in this case.



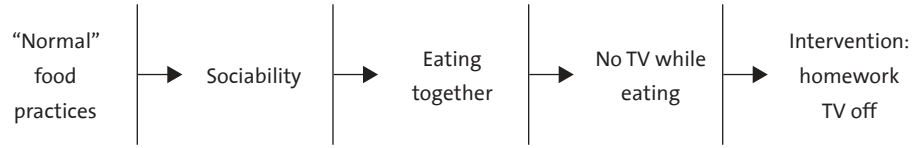

*The translation from food and eating practices to filling out a form*

Here, the normal is translated into a particular idea of an appropriate power balance in the home, and this idea is further translated into a form that the mothers were to fill out. The form asked questions about when, how and how much was eaten in the homes of the women and was designed to help the women reflect on their habits. At the end of the chain of translations, the "normal" can be found in a form to fill out.

Another concrete norm for the structure of family life that is linked to food is television watching. Professionals communicate often that TV is something to limit. Besides the interpretation of television as not sufficiently educational, many professionals indicated to parents that TV obstructs a homely and truly *social* family life. When children have trouble eating and mothers experience power struggles with their children over food, the most common advice of professionals is to try to make the activity of eating more sociable, for example by setting a "nice looking" table. In the next excerpt, the students of Frontlijn have given the mothers homework: to try to eat with their children without turning the TV on.

> *Denise (one of the students) asks: "So, Barbara, tell us how it went, eating without your TV on?" Barbara replies: "Well, for the children, it really doesn't matter. They find something else to do while they are eating. It is very quiet in the house, though, without the TV on. That's strange to me. You start listening to everything." Denise asks: "And how do you think this works out for the development of your child?" Barbara shrugs and looks at the other mothers.*

In this interaction, the norm that the students communicate is that eating should be done together, as a family, without TV watching. Eating is thus defined as a social activity. The end of the chain of translations here is the homework assignment to eat without the TV on.




*The translation from food and eating to the homework assignment to eat without TV*

Barbara did her homework this week, but immediately stresses that turning off the TV did not mean that she and the children engaged in conversation or some other form of activity together besides eating. Instead, the children found "something else to do". Denise seems pleased that Barbara did the assignment and wants to further stress the benefits of turning off the TV and eating together by asking Barbara the direct question in what way she thinks this produces benefits for the development of her children. Barbara does not have an answer to this question, underlining the distance between the student's aspirations of optimal child development and Barbara's everyday experience of raising children.

**Classed food, governing eating behaviour**

*The path to democracy begins in the kitchen of the sensitive mother.*
Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989: 101

This distinction between Barbara and the students is typical for the way in which food practices produce difference. Food is the "symbolic medium par excellance" (Morse, 1994: 95, quoted in O'Connell, 2010) for boundary work. Children are typically disciplined (O'Connell, 2010) or civilised (Elias, [1939] 2011) through eating practices and this explains the importance of food and eating beyond health issues for parent guidance programmes like Frontlijn's. Food practices and taste preference have long been established in sociology and anthropology to be markers of (class) difference (Douglas, 1975; Bourdieu, 1996). As I have shown above, the parenting classes that deal with food are meant to produce much more than healthy children and citizens alone. In chapter 6, I go into the type of subject-positions that are produced in parenting guidance practices, but here, I stress the way in which food classes are *classed* and how food is an entry point for government.

Frontlijn's practices result in a validation of middle class practices, while pathologising lower class ones (compare Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989: 22). The "normal" is translated to eating at a table, eating healthy but in a budget, eating together as a family and without the TV on. These specific examples of translations show how particular middle class norms are defined as "normal" and how this necessarily produces pathology, because to mark out the "normal", the "pathological" is necessary. To translate the basic need of children and families to eat into the purchase of a dinner table is an especially poignant case in point. In this particular translation, a very specific classed norm is imposed on families in financial distress. Moreover, when financial problems of the mothers are obstructing healthy food practices, this is effectively denied by the aspiring-professionals when they repeatedly claim how healthy foods like fruits are not necessarily more expensive than less healthy foods. Food thus proved to be an especially powerful subject to which to attach particular middle class norms about when (in a regular structure), what (fruit and vegetables, one hot meal, two cold meals) and how (together, sitting at a table, without TV) to eat and, consequently, behave in general.

### *Knowledge*

Beyond the most basic human needs like food, most parenting guidance practices focus on learning and the cognitive abilities of the next generation in some form. I interpret this as a translation of the macro-level ambitions of the city of Rotterdam to become a successful post-industrial city. Many professionals and managers in the field of social work and education spoke to me in interviews of what they considered the challenge of bringing together the future Rotterdam economy and the educational levels of the population. A school manager said it most eloquently:

> *"Before, you could walk over the water from one side of Maashaven (a harbour near the city centre, MvdB) to the other over the ships. That is no longer possible. Those ships aren't here anymore. Now, in the same spot we have the "creative factory" (a building in which entrepreneurs in the "creative industries" let space for their business, MvdB). We need to take our responsibility and make sure that our children can connect to this new economy."*

Frontlijn's managers and professionals, too, are convinced of their and Rotterdam's responsibility to make sure that the next generation will be well-educated enough to find jobs in the new economy. And Frontlijn translates this into a particularly optimistic philosophy and set of strategies. According to Frontlijn's main manager, if interventions into families' lives would

start early enough and would be both consistent and of a structural nature, all children should be able to achieve at least higher vocational training (his words in the interview were: "we'll have only *Havo-kindjes*") .

In Frontlijn's philosophy, but generally in most parenting guidance programmes, the connection to the economy of the future is to be made by enhancing the educational levels of today's children. The school manager that I cited above aims at accomplishing this goal through educating children in elementary schools in innovative ways. And in the early intervention philosophy of Frontlijn, this general goal is translated into interventions in the lives of families with children under the age of four. In fact, even in phase A of the "ABC-model", an important translation takes place as one of the main topics of the months of provided "Practice guidance", is a library visit of mother and child together, guided by the students. For my analysis here, a particular library visit that I accompanied is especially relevant.

> *Mrs Abena has two sons of ages five and three. She has not been willing to go to the library with the students until now, even though she has been "guided" by Frontlijn for more than a year. The library visit is one of the many items in her dossier that are still not satisfyingly completed, according to the professionals and students. When the students' supervisor wants to discuss a strategy to accomplish the goal with the student that is responsible for "guiding" Mrs Abena, Clarissa (the student) mentions that she is herself not quite comfortable with going to the library, because reading to small children "in funny voices", she says, is not her "forte" (sterke punt). Still, Clarissa is obliged to take Mrs Abena and her sons to the library and today is the day. Clarissa's supervisor stresses the importance of this topic once more to make sure Clarissa complies.*
>
> *Once Mrs Abena arrives at the central office of Frontlijn in Pendrecht, she searches her bags for letters that she would like to discuss with Clarissa instead of going to the library. She says: "this is what we need to do today, Clarissa". Clarissa proposes to deal with these letters that concern a new apartment for the Abena family next week in the next house visit she is to make so that today, the library visit can take place.*
>
> *Once we go outside, it turns out that Clarissa does not know where the local library is, even though it is within a 100 meters range of the central office of Frontlijn. Mrs Abena's sons point her in the right direction. Once we get there, the library is not open for another half hour, so we have to wait for a good half hour while Mrs Abena complains about today's target and tries to change the conversation back to the letters that she wanted to discuss earlier.*


*The Pendrecht library*[1]

> *Once we are in the library, the boys run towards the computers. Clarissa turns off the computers so that they can choose a book and read. The boys are already members of the library and as it turns out, Mrs Abena takes them quite regularly to choose some books to lend. Clarissa has been asked by her supervisor to make sure to show Mrs Abena that a library visit can be fun. Frontlijn wants Mrs Abena and the children to read for half an hour, it says in the protocol. Clarissa confesses to Mrs Abena: "You know, I don't like to read too, you know. I practically never read." First, Clarissa reads with the children while Mrs Abena sits and watches them. She smiles and says when her eldest tells stories to go with the illustrations in the book: "I'm proud of my boy". After a while, the boys want their mother to join them and she does. After exactly thirty minutes Mrs Abena says: "Clarissa, it's enough now, right? Are we done yet?", and Clarissa agrees.*

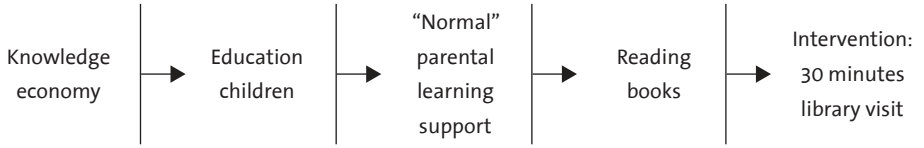
The library visit that Clarissa and Mrs Abena are obliged to perform is a symbolic moment in which the importance of reading books, of knowledge production and of being educated is affirmed. The act marks a transition from the uneducated "lagging behind" position that the Bureau Frontlijn assumes Mrs Abena to have, to the educated, knowledge intensive future that is aspired for Mrs Abena's sons. In that sense, it also signifies – at least for Bureau Frontlijn management – Rotterdam's transition from a working class city to a creative, high skilled city and children's future from one of manual unskilled labour to creative brain work. The symbolic act

here is to refer to this aim for the future.

The act is highly symbolic, because Bureau Frontlijn makes no effort to ensure Mrs Abena's involvement in her sons' educations or in the reading skills of the two little boys in a more structural way beyond this visit. Rather, the act is to highlight the importance of knowledge and cognitive skills for the Abena family and Clarissa. It does so by following a relatively strict format: 1) the library visit is to take thirty minutes, 2) the activity has to be reading (rather than using the computer, as the Abena boys alluded to), 3) the student is to demonstrate the act by showing the mother how reading to children is done, 4) the mother is to take over this activity and, 5) the children are to lend books. In this example, the general goal of the Rotterdam knowledge economy is translated to a thirty minute visit to the local library to read a book with small children on site.

Clarissa is asked to perform and guide this symbolic act, but expresses discomfort about it to her supervisor and disinterest in reading when in the library. The tension between Clarissa's own position and the norm of knowledge, education and reading that is expressed in the symbolic act results in specific transactions in several moments during the afternoon that I described above. First, Clarissa is not able to find the library. For Frontlijn, she is the one to "guide" the family, but as it turns out in this moment, the members of the Abena family – notably the little boys – are better acquainted with the local educational infrastructure than is Clarissa. Once again, the framing of the families as "lagging behind" by Frontlijn obscures the knowledge and skills that this particular family does possess in this moment. Second, Clarissa's discomfort in the act and her resistance to take part in it is expressed in the fact that she has not taken the time to check the opening hours of the library, resulting in time spent idly while Mrs Abena eloquently expressed her desire to attend to matters that are urgent to her. Third, while in the library, Clarissa expresses her dislike of reading. She thereby undermines the symbolic act that is set up in the Frontlijn protocol.

Mrs Abena, in turn, indicates her resistance to the visit early on, first resisting going at all, and then stressing the urgency of other matters to be dealt with. Both women are in the act of the library visit against their expressed will. Anti-bureaucratic philosophies and sentiments in the Frontlijn Bureau notwithstanding, Frontlijn here translates the general goal of the knowledge economy and better educational results of children into a thirty minute symbolic act that is rather bureaucratically and ritualistically handled. It is a topic on a checklist, an item to check in "guiding" mothers, a motion to go through so that attention is paid to education and knowledge without any real expectation of actual educational results. Both women express their dislike of the act, leading them to doing the exact minimum of what is expected from them; as soon as the thirty minutes are over, both agree that they have accomplished the set goal. As a consequence, these thirty minutes of relative disinterest undermine the message and symbolic weight that is attached to the act in the policy design.




*The translation from knowledge economy to library visit*

The library visit is the end of a chain of translations that first translates the general goal of accomplishing a knowledge economy for Rotterdam to the enhancement of the educational levels of children. "Normal" support of parents to their children in issues of learning and education is then defined in this chain of translations as the practice of reading books. Bureau Frontlijn then translates this policy goal into the intervention of reading books with children that is then (and this is the final translation) to be performed in the local library with the mother participating. This analysis of the translation from the general goal of the future knowledge economy to a thirty minute library visit shows how what starts as a professional's reflexive practice of translating general policy goals into concrete items for practice changes into a symbolic act that is ritualistically performed. Besides the logics of governmentality and the setting of norms, logics that are internal to the organisation of policy produce particular results. Translations in social policy are thus also the product of local logics. Professionals apply "general, scientific knowledge to specific cases in rigorous and therefore routinized or institutionalised ways" (Noordegraaf, 2007: 765; compare Freidson, 2001). In the ambiguous context in which the students "guide" the mothers in the "Practice guidance programme", the search for concrete actions that can be derived from general policy goals leads to an "overemphasis on the highly visible behaviour" (Kerr, [1975] 1995: 12) of a library visit when the improvement of educational levels of the next generation is the general goal. This symbolic act has become the goal itself: the "terminal value" of the policy, instead of the "instrumental value" (Merton, 1940: 563).

### *Sex*

Besides eating practices and the future knowledge economy, important concerns of the Rotterdam administration are about sex and sexual deviance. This is reflected in the way in which the childrearing debates were legitimised, as I described in the introduction to this chapter. These debates focused heavily on sexual issues and reflected a particular concern about the sexual behaviour of the Rotterdam population and especially its youth. This concern reflects government's will to govern the most private spheres of life and to govern life itself. Sex is an especially potent aspect for government to influence behaviours and aspirations of today's children and the future's

adult population.

I was surprised to find, in the field, that many parenting guidance practices were, in fact, about sex. For Bureau Frontlijn, sex was not such a salient subject, but in the second half of my ethnographic fieldwork, in which I participated in programmes that are provided by social work agencies in Rotterdam, sex, sexual development and sexualities were recurring themes. This was the case because the physical and emotional development of children and adolescents were often on the agenda, especially in practices that were designed for parents of children in puberty. But at the time of my fieldwork, I often encountered an especially targeted course on sex education, called "Growing up with love" (*Opgroeien met liefde*). To give a rough idea of the prevalence of this course in the period in which I did my fieldwork: in the first quarter of 2010, six out of twelve course programmes in the borough of Feyenoord were called "Growing up with love". This is a course that was developed by the Rutgers Nisso Groep and NIGZ (two national expertise centres/ agencies for respectively sexual health and general health promotion) to train parents to become their children's competent sex educators. The course was thus developed on the national level by an organisation whose first purpose it is to educate the public about sex. But it was offered on local level by the social work agencies in the particular boroughs of Rotterdam.

**Normal desire/ desiring the "normal"**

Sex is such a potent subject at least in part because when it comes to sex and the sexual development of children, parents themselves are especially interested in what counts as "normal". In my ethnographic fieldwork, parents often expressed their concern about whether or not their child's behaviour is "normal". Parental insecurities on this difficult and sometimes taboo subject were answered by professionals and course-developers that gave specific interpretations of the "normal" sexual, physical and emotional development of children. In the particular case that I discuss in this paragraph, – "Growing up with love" – charts of the "normal" physical and emotional development of children are presented to parents in the course material. These charts are based on scientific research that the designers of the courses translate for parents into simplified packages of knowledge.

From the course texts and my data material, three specific meanings that are given to "the normal" and sex and one specific meaning given to "the abnormal" and sex come to the fore. I thus found 3 particular translations of "normal sex" and 1 specification for sexual abnormality: 1) that love and sex are connected, 2) that children are innocent though sexual beings, 3) that homosexuality is normal, albeit in a decisively heteronormative frame and 4) that sexual *abnormalities* are cultural phenomena. All four translations of the "normal" found further translations in the course materials and the policy practices that I encountered in my fieldwork.

**Sex and love**

The very fact that the course for training of parents to become adequate sex educators is called "Growing up with love", is a testament of the connection that is made between love and sex. The name of the course refers first - the course texts explain- to the love that parents have for their child. Second, the name refers to the idea that "normal" sex takes place in a romantic relationship. In the texts, the love between parents and children is referred to as a "warm nest", which "contributes to a healthy sexual development of children." (Rutgers Nisso Groep/ NIGZ, 2007: voorwoord). A "warm nest" is defined as a family in which parents show interest for their child, know what their child is up to (this is explicitly called monitoring) and support their child. The idea is that if parents behave in this manner, children will feel more free to ask questions about sex and discuss insecurities with their parents. Because of this, the texts say, they will behave more "healthy" sexually. This, in turn, means at least that adolescents will have sex for the first time at a later age, will be "more confident" in expressing what they want and do not want in relationships and will be "better protected against pregnancy and illnesses"(Rutgers Nisso Groep/ NIGZ, 2007: 4) when they do decide to have sex. The general goal of producing "healthy" and "normal" sexual behaviour is here translated into a particular definition of the "normal": the connection between sex and love. That is further translated into a particular picture of a parent-child relationship ("a warm nest") that implies the practice of talking about sex. Sex talk is thus at the end of this chain of translations.


*The translation from "normal sex" to "sex talk"*

In the second meaning, the name of the course refers to the norm of "lust in love" (WRR, 2007; Wouters, 2005); the idea that sex is optimal and "normal" in a context of romantic love. This is reflected in the course text in the definition of sexuality itself:

> *"Sexuality is more than just making out and making love[2]. (...) It is about relationships and feelings, about love and being together (intimacy), about being in love, choice of partner and relationship building. (...)"* (Rutgers Nisso Groep/ NIGZ, 2007: 3-4)

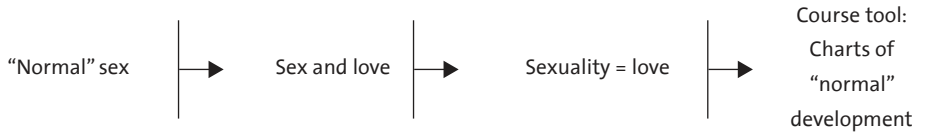
This definition of sex is deliberately broad in the courses texts, because the developers want to speak about the social aspects of relationships, feelings and responsibilities, one of the designers

of the course explained to me in an interview.

In the normalising chart of "sexual development phases" of children that are represented in the course material, first "sexual encounters" (kissing and petting) are located in the context of the first time that adolescents or children (10-15 years of age) "go steady" (*verkering hebben*) and "have crushes/ fall in love" (*verliefd worden*) (Rutgers Nisso Groep/ NIGZ, 2007: 43). This variant of "normal" is equated to the categories "modern" and as "Dutch" when different "cultural groups" are discerned and it is said that:

> *"In a modern sexual upbringing, children usually have room to experiment sexually in a responsible way. (...) In most Dutch families, children are therefore allowed to go steady and have sex before marriage. It is important, in such cases though, that they view sex as something special, 'you don't have sex with just anyone'"*
> (Rutgers Nisso Groep/ NIGZ, 2007: 100, italics MvdB)

I will come back to these particular equations of "Dutchness" and the norm later on when I focus on the problematisation of sex and sexual development in immigrant communities. Here, the "normal" is again first defined as sex in the context of love. This leads to a definition of sexuality that includes love and being in love and is finally translated into a tool for professionals that teach the course: charts of "normal" sexual behaviour in which the connection between love and sex is made explicit again.

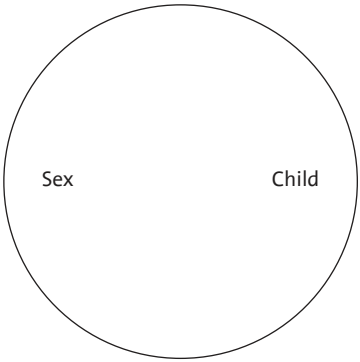



*The translation from "normal sex" to charts of "normal" sexual development*

**The sexual child**

In the course mornings in which I participated, parents are first invited to think about the connection between sex and children in the following assignment. From my field notes:

> *The teacher puts up a large sheet of paper to draw a circle. In the middle of the circle, she writes the words "sex" and "child". Parents are asked to name whatever they think of with these two words in a brainstorm-like session.*




*The sex/ child brainstorm figure*

This assignment was the introduction into the theme, in which the tension that both professionals and parents felt between the words "sex" and "child" was resolved in a particular way[3]: by speaking of the sexuality of children, whilst stressing their innocence. This is done by speaking of their sexual development and *being*, but maintaining the idea that they are not yet sexually *active*. There is thus an opposition underlying the texts between being and acting. This also comes to the fore in this interaction that I recorded in my field notes:

> *Yvonne (the teacher) points to a little boy of approximately 1 year old that is on one of the mothers' lap. She asks the mother of the little boy: "Do you think that babies have a sexuality already? Does he have a sexuality?" The woman responds somewhat shocked. Her eyes widen, she draws back physically and she fiercely shakes her head. Yvonne nods her head like yes and says: "Yes, he is, because he, too, is discovering his body and his feelings, isn't he?" She refers to eating, drinking, pooping, peeing, cuddling and how babies discover through those activities what they like and dislike and what their needs are. Then Yvonne claims: "Sexuality is not just about sex, right? It is also about feelings."*

Yvonne is, in this interaction, trying to convince the mothers of her broad definition of sexuality. This mother denies because she thinks of sex having to do with sexual acts between two adults, while Yvonne speaks of the child as a sexual being when she says "does he *have* a sexuality?" and stresses different bodily and emotional aspects of life. This broad definition of sexuality does not automatically become dominant in the classrooms. In fact, it is the object of negotiations as not all

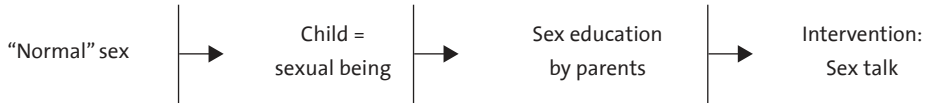
parents agree (like in the excerpt above). But this definition is necessary for the teacher, because this way, she can legitimise her aim to talk about sex and children at all. Parents are encouraged to subscribe to this broad definition of sexuality in the course material, for example in the following hypothetical case that is presented to parents in order to explain children's sexual feelings. This excerpt of the written course materials is to present parents with a norm of how to interpret children's curiosity.

> *The hypothetical case:*
> "Your daughter of five years old has seen how a couple in love was hugging and kissing in the streets. She asks you: "What are they doing?"
> *Explanation:*
> *Parents are sometimes startled with their children's questions at this age because they think that their children have sexual feelings already. That their children are aiming to kiss and have sex themselves. Most of the time, this is not the case. They only ask this question because they are curious. They want to know everything, to understand the world around them."* (Rutgers Nisso Groep/ NIGZ, 2007: 139)

The purpose of such hypothetical situations is for them to be discussed in the context of the course in structured debate. The child is presented here as "curious" but not yet sexually active herself. In another example in the course texts, this is further developed:

> *"Many parents think that their child only needs sex education when he or she is going to be sexually active. (...) But the sexual development of children begins long before they become sexually active themselves."* (Rutgers Nisso Groep/ NIGZ, 2007: 124)

Parents, according to this statement, should educate their child about sex before she is going to be sexually active herself and because the child's sexual development starts many years before sexual activity is an issue.




*A second translation from "normal sex" to "sex talk"*

The particular translation of the "normal" here is the idea of a child as a sexual being. This idea of

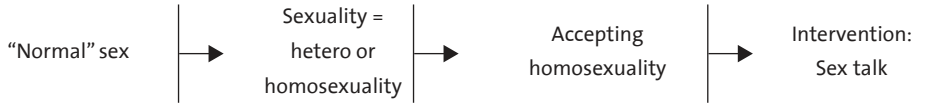
children's sexuality is further translated into the policy goal of sex education by parents. Again, the end of the chain of translations here is *sex talk*. The general policy goal of producing "normal sex" is translated into talking about sex and children's sexualities in the context of the parent course. Parents are invited to talk about sex and children in the context of this course not because of an idea of children as sexually active, but because of an idea of children as sexual beings and, importantly, because they are developing into the (sexually active) adults of the future.

**Heteronormative gay-acceptance**

The possibility that children discover their homosexuality over time is made explicit various times in the course texts. It is, for example, included in the definition of sexuality when it says that "sexuality is also (...) being attracted to boys or girls (hetero- or homosexuality)" (Rutgers Nisso Groep/ NIGZ, 2007: 4). The discovery of sexual identities or sexual orientation is located in the pre-puberty phase, when the child is 10 to 15 years of age "at this age, boys and girls slowly find out whether they are attracted to boys or girls". Again, the theme is further developed with a hypothetical situation about which the professional is asked to engage in debate with the parents.

> *The hypothetical case:*
> Your son of 14 years old tells you that he thinks he is in love with a boy in his class and asks you: "Is that strange?"
> *Explanation:*
> *Your son asked you in confidence. This is special, because many adolescents would not dare to ask such a question out of fear for what parents, family and friends might say. It could be that you are startled by such a question, because you always assumed that your son was heterosexual. The fact that your son asks this question does not automatically mean that he is gay. It could be that he is in an experimental phase. There are boys and girls that have crushes on boys and girls both (they are bisexual).*
> *You can tell your son at this age that we all have a sexual orientation. We discover this about ourselves over time. This is not always easy and it can take a while before it is clear for a person what his or her sexual orientation is. This is why it is a good thing that your son takes his time to discover his orientation and not be pushed in a box. He will find out eventually on his own whether he is gay or straight.*
> *By listening to your son and accepting his feelings, you will get very far. Let him know that you are there for him, because adolescents that fall in love with someone of their own sex can feel very lonely.* (Rutgers Nisso Groep/ NIGZ, 2007: 141-142)

This quote suggests to parents to be accepting of or at least patient about their child's homosexuality and it is in that sense (at least in an internationally comparative perspective) progressive. The course in general promotes the acceptance of homosexuality. This fits the Dutch self-definition of a sexually liberated and inclusive nation (Mepschen et al., 2010). What also becomes clear in this quote is, however, that the discovery of one's sexuality is, 1) a highly private and individual matter, 2) a choice between categories and 3) that parents, when confronted with the above question, should start a conversation about sexual identity and homosexuality at all. Adolescents, the quote suggests, discover over time whether they are gay *or* straight. In time, it "becomes clear" for individuals, this quote says, in what category they fit.




*The third translation from "normal sex" to "sex talk"*

The inclusion of homosexuality in the definition of a "normal" sexuality in the course texts here leads to the advice given to parents to be accepting of homosexuality. The final translation in this chain is to talk about sexualities and sexual identities with children.

This conceptualisation of sexuality is further contextualised with a decisively heteronormative frame of clear dichotomous gender roles. And, as we know, we need clear heterosexual gender roles to constitute heteronormativity. The norm of heterosexuality is reproduced through the production of what it means to be masculine or feminine (Thorogood, 2000). The best way to illustrate this frame is to highlight the way in which a "normal" physical and emotional development of children is framed and presented. The texts that are used in the courses distinguish between five "sexual development phases" (from 0-3 years, 4-6 years, 7-9 years, 10-15 years and 16-18 years old). For each phase, a particular set of activities, curiosities and physical developments are presented as "normal". The charts specify that gender roles become more clearly defined in phase 2: between the ages of four and six. The text says: "they (children, MvdB) develop clear ideas about 'what a boy does' and 'what a girl does'" (Rutgers Nisso Groep/ NIGZ, 2007: 42). This is further illustrated with this drawing (that is used to spur debate in the meetings, see below), in which the girl is dressed in a pink skirt and plays with a doll and the boy is dirty from playing football outside. The illustration is accompanied in a folder for parents about their child's sexual development with the text: "sweet girls and tough boys".

*Title: "sweet girls and tough boys"*[4]

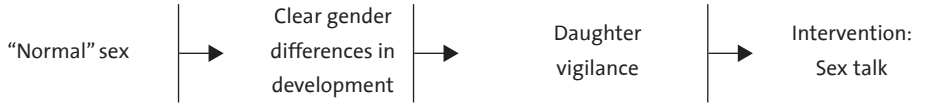
In phase 3 of the "normal development" (7-9 years), too, gendered role patters and a gender division are presented as normal, where it says: "boys think that girls are stupid and childish, girls think boys are too wild and are 'acting tough'" (Rutgers Nisso Groep/ NIGZ, 2007: 42). Thus, according to the normalised charts of development, children develop into girls *or* boys, gay *or* straight. When the phase of puberty sets in (this is presented to be "normal" between the ages 12 and 15), first crushes are predicted. Again, drawings are used to spur debate in the courses and one such picture is this one of a couple in puberty.

*Title: "Interaction/ expectations boy and girl" (Rutgers Nisso Groep, NIGZ, 2007: 64)*

In practice, this played out as follows:

> *Yvonne shows some pictures and asks us to respond. One shows a girl and a boy together. Yvonne says that they're in love. The girl has a thought cloud with the girl leaning on the boy's shoulder, the boy has a cloud of them kissing. In the cloud, he also tries to go under the girl's jacket with his hand. The mothers in the class immediately respond: "girls always want romance, boys always want sex!". They all agree. When I suggest that sometimes, it can be the other way around too, the women set me straight and deny this possibility and claim that the picture shows how it usually is. Yvonne agrees with the women and adds that this is the reason why girls should be extra careful when it comes to sex and love.*

In this negotiation, the teacher and mothers quite easily agree on a specific interpretation of normal adolescent gendered desire. My input in the discussion was meant to see if there would be mothers that would like to agree on other interpretations, but this attempt did not resonate. In fact, Yvonne even further highlights gender differences when she concludes that because of these differences, girls should be extra careful, thereby introducing the classic theme of girls and women being victims and boys and men being hunters. In this chain of translations, the "normal" is translated to the charts of child development in which clear gender differences are distinguished. These differences lead to the advice given to parents to be extra vigilant when it comes to the sexual development and behaviour of girls. And again, this vigilance is to take the primary form of talk.




*The fourth translation from "normal sex" to "sex talk"*

In another interaction in a different class, this theme came to the fore as well. I would like to introduce here the odd case out of my research: Robert. Robert is a middle-aged higher-educated white father of two young daughters (2 and 7 years old). He is not a member of the target groups as defined by the social work agencies and the municipality. But Robert has a very specific concern that explains his presence in this particular class (of "Growing up with love").

> *Robert came to the meeting especially, he tells us, because his 7-year old daughter is very curious about sex. She showed behaviour that he and his wife find difficult to deal with. He says how he finds it complicated to respond properly because he finds his daughter too young for a lot of things. His wife and he did explain to her how children are made and born. She found this, he says, "all mighty fascinating". It takes the whole meeting for Anne – the teacher – to understand that Robert means to tell us that his* daughter *is the one pushing the boundaries of what he finds appropriate, not the boys in her class. Anne first responded with a story of how you can teach your children to say no.*
>
> *Robert has to start three times over to tell us, in a rather nervous mood, that his daughter is, in fact,* more *sexually active than he finds desirable. He does not think that the general charts of "normal" sexual development that Anne draws apply to*

*his daughter. After a while of miscommunication back and forth, Robert goes on to tell us that his daughter has a boyfriend with whom she tried French kissing. Other boys in the class wanted to "go too". His daughter mentioned this at home and quite liked both the activity and the attention. Robert dislikes her behaviour and feels anger towards the boys. "My first reaction is: who are those boys?! Let me have a word with them!"*

Robert is struggling with his question and story because of the gendered and aged frame both he and Anne use to interpret sex. Anne first takes a long time to understand that Robert's daughter is a 7 year old girl and not a young adolescent. In her frame, as well as in Robert's, feelings of lust and sexual curiosity do not belong in the body and mind of a girl this young and therefore, Anne experiences difficulty even just hearing Robert's story. Children's sexual feelings are actively negated in this negotiation, even when they come in this very overt form. Also, Robert has to explain several times that his daughter is the one in the active role in this situation, not the boys in her class. Anne first understands the story within her gendered frame of "the normal", in which aggressors are male and victims female, men active and women passive. The idea of a very young girl harassing boys is so far beyond the frame of what is "normal", that at first it cannot even be heard.

**Sexual abnormalities as cultural phenomena**

I will come back to Robert and this particular interaction in the next chapter. But here, I think it is important to note that this is one of the very few times that a father with this particular profile came to the classes. Ironically, in the course texts and in the interactions in the classrooms, problems having to do with sex or social problems in general were mostly allocated with the "cultural other," and not with families like Robert's.

On the basis of my analysis of the course texts and interactions in the classrooms, I argue that in the courses that focus on sex, sexual *abnormalities* are considered *cultural phenomena*. The psychological, physical, biological or other factors that are historically part of explanations of sexual abnormalities are almost absent in the parenting guidance practices (and course texts) and cultural patterns and traditions have taken over this role. Consequently, the "cultural other" is made responsible for sexual deviance and sexual health problems. One of the ways in which this came to the fore was that in my interview with the course designer, she spontaneously started the interview with talk of culture and cultural difference, without me introducing this theme. In fact, as it turned out, the course was originally designed to deal with problems in particular "ethnic communities": those of Antilleans and Moroccans. Later on in the development process, this target group became more inclusive, but still, this larger group is ethnically marked as well:

> *Target groups: "(...) Parents from diverse backgrounds: at least Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, Antillean and Dutch parents. First and foremost parents that have a low educational level and/ or for whom the Dutch language is not their first language."*
> (Rutgers Nisso Groep/ NIGZ, 2007: 3)

Diversity, in this quote, is defined in ethnic terms and in the next sentence, two more specific criteria are defined: a low educational level and speaking the Dutch language. The idea is thus, that parents with a higher education that speak Dutch as their first language (remember that Robert is part of this category) have no apparent problems with their children when it comes to their sexual development. Those problems are primarily located in groups with lower educational levels (later on, this definition is conflated with economic status of parents) and a different ethnic background. This idea also comes to the fore in a relatively recent report by the Dutch Scientific Council for Government Policy about migrants' identifications with the Netherlands, where it says that:

> *"Dutch parents of the middle class have trained themselves since the sexual revolution in talking about sexuality without blushing (...) for lower educated parents, this is a much more difficult task."* (WRR, 2007: 157)

The text that is to advise the Dutch government then goes on to say that other "cultural" groups still have problems when it comes to the sex education of their children. This somewhat self-congratulatory analysis of sexual problems one-sidedly positions sexual problems with cultural others and with those of a lower class (see also Schalet, 2011: 201). Quite explicitly, this text and the "Growing up with love" course position middle class Dutch parents as the sexual norm. In the explanations for the professionals in the course guide, a selection of subjects to be dealt with in the course are marked as of special interest for cultural others and those with a lower economic status (SES) (Rutgers Nisso Groep, 2007: 11). And in the texts (ibidem: 99 and further), descriptions are given of the "cultural parenting" styles of the target groups. For example, when the texts speak of "The Moroccan sexual upbringing", they point to a host of general "important aspects" in "The Moroccan upbringing" that influence sex education:

> *"societal success, obedience, showing respect, being polite (social conformism), being religious and knowing what is and what is not good (moral conformism), caring and being hospitable, being caring and loving for other human beings."*
> (Rutgers Nisso Groep/ NIGZ, 2007: 100)

Note how the text underscores the importance for Moroccans of conformism, while the text also emphasises that a Dutch upbringing is not authoritarian, but authoritative and thus not focused on conforming, but, rather on self-government. The text locates sexual problems in "authoritarian cultures", where (the idea is that) individuals have not yet sufficiently learned to govern their selves. When it comes to sex education, the texts stress that in a "Moroccan upbringing", "mothers have the most important role", but this raises problems because:

> *"Because they (Moroccan mothers, MvdB) often have been poorly educated in sex-related issues themselves, they often do not know what they should say to their children, in which way and at what time. Most mothers only start with sex education at the beginning of puberty. (...)."* (ibidem)

This explanation of "The Moroccan sexual upbringing" legitimises the course "Growing up with love", because it appears that mothers themselves are reserved in speaking about sex with their children and the course is based on the idea that *talking* with your children about sex is the way to prevent sexual health problems. Not-talking is a problem or even *the* problem. The absence of discourse and dialogue is in this example located in "Moroccan culture". Likewise, in the sketch of "The Antillean sexual upbringing", it says how a highly important value in this culture is that of "not asking questions". The text analyses how, again, this "not talking" leads to "no or little sex education" and this leads to a collection of social and sexual problems. The most important problem when it comes to sex education and culture, is, thus, the *absence* of discourse and dialogue.


*The translation from "abnormal sex" to the "absence of discourse" to the intervention of "sex talk"*

Summarising, the "abnormal" is here defined as distinctly cultural and translated to a more particular definition of the problem: the absence of discourse. From my analysis, it can be concluded that in the parent course that focuses on sex, sex talk is defined as the "normal", and also the cure to many abnormalities that are considered cultural. Culture as an explanation is omnipresent in the classrooms interactions about sexuality, as they are in the texts. The mothers and the professionals use it frequently to interpret their own and others' behaviours. The following story is interesting precisely because of its *spontaneous denial* of the role of culture.

*Recently, Gulsen (a Turkish mother of two teenage girls) tells us, she had friends over at her house and at one point, her friend said something like: "if a girl does not give sexual signs, a boy won't do anything". Gulsen says that the comment especially infuriated her because it was a woman who said it. Yvonne, the teacher, stresses that there is nothing particularly Turkish about what Gulsen told us. The Dutch, Yvonne, explains, say similar things.*

What is interesting here, is not so much the gendered talk in itself, but, more so, how Yvonne *spontaneously denies* a cultural explanation of it, when she stresses that this is not particularly Turkish, even though Gulsen mentioned no such thing. A cultural explanation appears as so very natural and self-evident that it seems necessary to spontaneously deny the role of culture in this particular story. Yvonne means to say in this instance, she later explains, that these gender notions (that she finds not only false, but also backward) are prevalent everywhere. Interestingly, she immediately interprets that Gulsen meant to say something about Turkish culture with her story of backward gender notions. The image of liberation and progressiveness on the one hand (the Dutch side) and cultural backwardness on the other (Traditional cultures) side is thus once again affirmed precisely by denying the opposition.

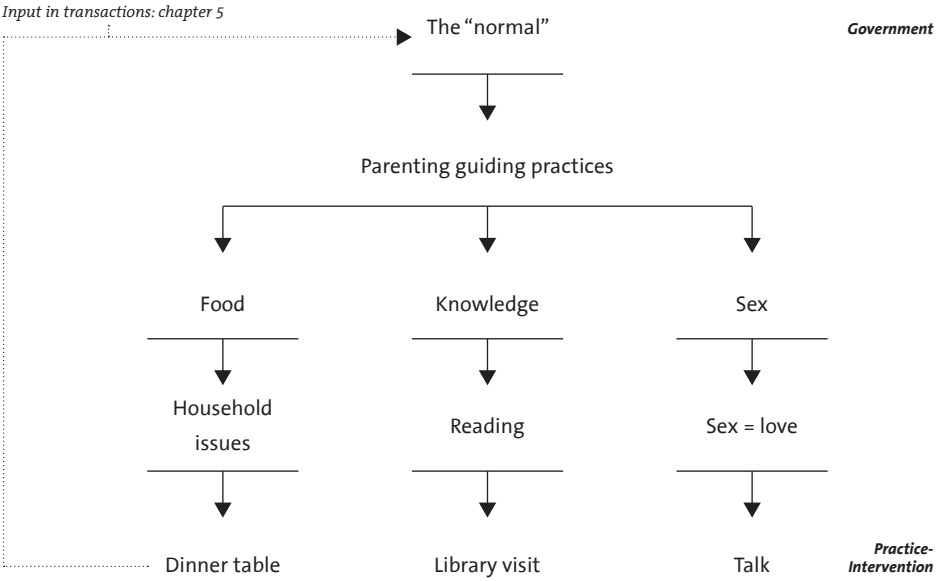
In the parenting guidance practices focused on sex education, the "normal" is primarily defined in cultural terms, because the abnormal is primarily cultural. Culture thus works to define alterity; it defines the other (Schinkel, 2007). The basic logic here is that first, sexual problems are cultural and that in "Dutch culture", sexual problems are (more or less) absent. Second, cultures are defined as coherent sets of norms and values and incompatible. Third, cultures are positioned in a hierarchical order, with "Dutch culture" on top. And fourth, culture is seen as a sufficient explanatory variable for a wide range of social problems such as teenage pregnancies, sexual violence, sexually transmitted diseases et cetera (compare Van den Berg & Schinkel, 2009).

The way in which culture works in the course texts and practices can be called culturist. Willem Schinkel developed the term culturism to point to a functional equivalent of racism, in which the focus is on the "second nature" of humans (culture) instead of on the "first nature" (2007a). Culturism works in a similar way as racism, but it focuses on cultural differences instead of biological or phenotypical ones. In the words of Gloria Wekker, today, "culture is doing the work of race" (Wekker, 2004: 491). In short, culturism can be defined as a discourse of alterity in which cultural incompatibility is negatively valued and attributed one-sidedly to the "other" culture (after Schinkel, 2007: 316).

**Producing "normal sex" through talk**

The techniques used in the "Growing up with love" course show how talk is the most important strategy to produce "normal sex". Next, openness, dialogue and discourse are conceptualised as definite Dutch cultural traits. The other side of this conceptualisation is that of the "cultural other" as not talkative, not willing to engage in dialogue and consequently sexually deviant (compare also Schalet, 2011). Rogier van Reekum and I (Van Reekum & Van den Berg, forthcoming) have analysed how this synchronisation of the Dutch and a taste for dialogue led to a particular brand of Dutchness. The Dutch are, then, presented as a people that engage in dialogue and open debate, a people that are consensus seeking and pragmatist. In the logic that is behind this, social (and in the cases presented above: sexual) problems are presented as to be solved by talking about them, by positioning them as issues for dialogue and debate, by making them '*bespreekbaar*' (to open up for explicit deliberation and reflection). The most important government strategy to produce the desired "normal" sexualities for the population of the future is, thus, talk.

**Translations in parenting guidance practices**



## *Conclusion: the population, the family and messy practices*

As became clear in chapters 2 and 3, Rotterdam considers its population to be a major problem. Its ethnicity, its youth, its class and above all its behaviour and employability are issues that the Rotterdam administration wishes to change. Precisely because of this focus on the population as a problem and the family as a solution, perspectives that have been developed in governmentality studies were useful in the analysis here. In this chapter, I have shown how the family and the mother in particular have become instruments of government for Rotterdam. I have focused on particular issues that came up regularly in parenting guidance practices: food, knowledge and sex. Of course, these are not the only issues that are discussed by professionals and parents in the context of parenting guidance programmes. Issues such as bed-wetting, bullying, (personal) hygiene, puberty and sleeping were also often on the agenda. But the three issues that are highlighted in this chapter were especially salient in the practices that I encountered in my ethnographic research both quantitatively and qualitatively. That is to say: these issues came up regularly and when they did, they were given special importance and potency. Moreover, these issues tell us something about the *kind of techniques* that contemporary urban governmentality in Rotterdam employs. Food, knowledge and sex are not coincidental subjects. All three are considered by the course developers, professionals and Rotterdam administrators to be important gateways to population problems that the administration is especially concerned about: health, education and sexual deviance. And on top of that, especially the subjects of food and sex are about life itself and provide many entry points for intervention. The most private and personal in families is made visible and, consequently, governable by focusing so much on food, knowledge and sex. In this sense, the analysis in this chapter shows a contemporary way in which biopower works. The most private desires of mothers and children are turned into objects to be governed.

It is important to highlight once more that the way in which governmentality works in general, as do the parenting guidance programmes in particular, is through the positioning of norms. Effective government does not need repercussions and punishment, but installs positive norms and uses strategies instead of laws (Foucault, 1976; [1994]2000, N. Rose, 1989; N. Rose et al., 2006). By focusing on the particular norms and definitions of "the normal" that were produced in the parenting guidance on food, knowledge and sex, a particular picture of the norm surfaced in this chapter. First, the norm is classed. As became clear through my analysis of the practices of the Bureau Frontlijn, middle class eating practices were validated, while working class ones were pathologised. Through translations in the production of parenting guidance and the actual negotiations within the practices, it became clear that Frontlijn translated the basic human need for food (as this was how they legitimised their interventions) to distinct middle class norms about eating and correct social eating behaviour. Second, the norm is culturist. In particular through my

analysis of the sex education course, the culturist logic on which it is based surfaced. This culturist logic defined the norm quite explicitly as Dutch and defined the abnormal as definitively cultural. Especially the focus on talk and discourse are important features here, as the Dutch are defined as especially willing to talk about sex, to build dialogue and discourse and thereby prevent sexual deviance.

But to say that these norms were positioned in a coordinated way would be to overstate government. The analysis in this chapter showed how messy and ambivalent the production and communication of norms is. There is a coherency to the norms and to their production, but by focusing on translations of general policy goals into concrete topics for intervention, internal logics to policy making and policy implementation became evident as well. In this chapter, this was especially salient in my analysis of practices of parenting guidance with the general goal of enhancing the educational levels of the Rotterdam population. Here, professionals' reflexivity translated general goals into concrete interventions, but precisely this reflexivity led to ritualistic and bureaucratic practices. Moreover, the norms that are developed to be communicated in parenting guidance are one element in a complicated set of negotiations and events that constitute the actual practices. Sometimes professionals undermine the norms they are supposed to communicate, sometimes parents disagree and sometimes the message is not received by the targeted group at all. What is in fact considered "normal" in practices is the end result of transactions between mothers and teachers. Policy designers and teachers may want to talk with mothers about sex in order to produce "normal sex", but the actual production of sex talk depends on the collaboration of mothers. The chains of translations that I have analysed in this chapter and represented graphically appear rather clear-cut and linear. But 1) I discerned these from messy practices and 2) they are input to translations made in transactions with mothers. And mothers participating in parenting guidance may want to debate what "normal sex" is all over again. And when they do, a far more complicated chain of translations is made. This chapter isolated the chains of translations up until the design of an intervention. It highlighted translations of policy made by policy designers and executors. As I analyse in the following chapter, this is input in transactions that determine what is, in fact, produced in parenting guidance practices.

*CHAPTER V*

# TRANSACTIONS I: MEDIATING POLICY

## *Transactions*

### In the room, in between

The governmentality perspective of chapter 4 helped to understand the way in which norms and particular definitions of the "normal" are instruments of government. The focus on translations showed how policy goals change when they are made into policy practices. This way, what is, in fact, considered "normal" in social policy could be revealed. Chapter 4 showed us how the official *content* of parenting guidance came about. What I left out is how the practices that I described there ended up. In a chain of translations, a focus on food could become a topic on a to-do-list for a professional: buying a dinner table for a family. But does that mean that the dinner table is bought? Does the family agree that this should be a priority? What kind of dinner table is to be purchased and at who's cost and convenience? These kinds of dynamics are the object of this chapter. That does not mean that chapter 4 was not focused on practices. It was, but with a specific focus on the final translations of policy in practices of professionals. But negotiations, conflict and cooperation between mothers and professionals were largely omitted.

This chapter *is* about such complex transactions. It is about what happens *between* actors and objects in a specific situation (I have outlined my interpretation of the concept transactions in the introduction). I analyse these concrete situations here. In other words: what happens in a particular parenting class, on a particular morning is the result of the combined and related actions of the actors there. Teachers adjust their goals and means to a group of mothers that is itself internally differentiated. The mothers, on the other hand, respond to each other, to the set-up of furniture in the room, to the concrete props used by the teacher and so on. So I am interested in what happens when mothers and professionals meet and work together in a classroom setting, with policy ambitions between them. This chapter sheds light on the dynamics of policy execution. I understand parenting classes as a joint activity, not primarily something designed by policy makers and executed by professionals, but as much an outcome of the transactions of the mothers and professional (compare: Ewick and Silbey, 2003). Mothers and teachers co-produce parenting guidance practices and it is the *process* of this coproduction that is the object of this chapter.

One of the main problems in studying transactions is the problem of boundary specification (Emirbayer, 1997: 303). In my research, I investigate transactions between professionals and mothers in each other's presence (cf. Goffman, 1959). Most of the time, these transactions take place within the physical boundary of the class room. What happens with the transactions when mothers get home, when professionals have lunch and chat with colleagues or how it translates to the relationship of mothers with their children is left out of the scope of my research. What is included is what takes place when teachers and mothers meet and transact in the particular locations where I did my fieldwork in Rotterdam.

**Being part of transactions as a researcher**

Because I was in the room where the transactions took place, or otherwise in the presence of the teachers and mothers, you will find narratives of situations in this chapter (as in the rest of this thesis) where I was actively engaged or my presence was in some way important to the transaction. In the classes, I usually sat at the table with the teacher and mothers and engaged in conversations. In most transactions, I tried to refrain from too much comment, or stayed in the background. But my presence was noted, explained, and it influenced transactions nonetheless. I have given a full description of my research methods in chapter 3. Here, it is important to note that I took the position of observer in my interpretation of participant observation, but I participated in some transactions nonetheless. I stayed in my role of a university researcher and was open to the other participants about my goals and ways of working. In my view, this was the only way to be in the transactions. It was not possible, nor desirable to take the role of teacher or parent. I did so because (at least at the time) I was not a parent or teacher, but also because that way of doing research would not have enabled me to study the transactions between the teachers and the mothers. However, as I have explained in chapter 3, being completely "outside" the transactions is impossible too: sometimes I was part of them and if this was the case, I include my role in the analysis in this chapter. I included reflections on my position or my inclusion in transactions in this chapter where I deemed them relevant.

**Policy practice and time**

This chapter is thus about transactions in the execution of urban policies. In other words, it is about policy implementation and execution. In this sense, this chapter can be seen in the context of discussions about policy implementations, for example in the work of Lipsky on "streetlevel bureaucrats" (1980; see also Engbersen, [1990] 2006; Rogers-Dillon, 2004; Van der Veen, 1990). This study builds on these perspectives in its focus on implementation and policy practices. It departs from Lipsky's assertion that actual practices determine much of policy's outcomes. Lipsky focused on ways in which individuals working in public service bureaucracies operate and use discretion. This chapter looks at the *coproduction* of policy practices. It looks at policy practice as *the product of the work of both the executors and objects of policy*.

In chapter 3, I wrote of Rotterdam policy ambitions in the field of parent guidance and of how one of the central categories there is "active". Very particular definitions of activity and passivity legitimise intervention in personal lives of Rotterdammers. "Activation" (*activering*) is, in fact, a frequently used term to describe what it is that social workers do. I argued in chapter 3 that parent guidance is activation, but for mothers *in their role as mothers*. Women are *activated* into the unpaid labour of *mothering the next generation*. Strategies of social work agencies, policy

advisors, politicians and social workers and pedagogues focus on activation. They are aimed at accelerating the pace of urban inhabitants; at bridging the gap between those who are active and those who are "lagging behind". In a way, they try to speed up people and influence their consumption of time. For example by incorporating more activities in a week or asking them to take part in a series of classes and thus arrange their life around this schedule. Moreover, this activation looks at the future. It is geared at the next generation and at a future Rotterdam inhabited by "active citizens". Time is thus an important category for these contemporary social urban policies on different levels. It focuses on activity and future, on the use of time and "lagging behind". If mothers' use of time is an important policy goal of parenting guidance, it is interesting to look at the way in which time plays a role in the transactions. That is why I use time as an important analytical category in this chapter to shed light on the dynamics in transactions in policy practices. As I will explain below, looking at time as a category in social analysis provides a prism that enables me to look at negotiations, power struggles and coproductions in transactions and at the way in which policy interventions for the future play out now, in the present moment.

## *Mediating policy – beyond resistance*

I want to focus on what is "in between" mothers and teachers, without presupposing a certain power balance in advance. I aim to shed light on ways in which the ones participating in the transaction influence what is produced. Professional teachers and student-interns enter a transaction with a certain intervention in mind (an intervention that is the end-result of chains of translations) and my findings in this chapter show that this intervention is subject to change and alterations in the transaction as well. To trace these changes, I propose the term mediations. Mediations produce unexpected results: unexpected transactions. Through mediations, mothers are able to change what is done in the room, consciously and unconsciously, in conflict and in cooperation. In the following, I explain how I came to use this term and the advantages of it vis-à-vis perspectives of resistance.

### Strained transactions – resistance?

Transactions are often characterised by negotiation, strain and conflict. I was first inclined to view these kinds of transactions as sites of resistance. I took my cue for this perspective from anthropologists and sociologists that argue that we should investigate practices of resistance because they signal sites of struggle and can help us to diagnose dynamics of power (Abu- Lughod, 1990, Ortner, 1995; Ewick & Silbey, 2003; Gilliom, 2001; Scott, 1985). Looking at resistance in the transactions that I studied, and using resistance as an analytical category at the time seemed to enable me to investigate power structures and look at conflict and negotiation. This way, actors

could be afforded agency. Also, in response to earlier publications of research, reviewers – scholarly colleagues – often urged me to develop a perspective on forms of resistance. And in some cases, a focus on resistance did help me in my analysis (I used it for example in Van den Berg, 2007; Van Reekum & Van den Berg, 2011; Van den Berg & Duyvendak, 2012).

But in the course of my research, I grew increasingly uneasy with looking at conflict or strain in transactions as forms of resistance for several reasons. First, it reduces what happens in the transactions to a reaction of one (group of) actor(s) to the hegemony of the professional or the policy makers. And this is exactly what I am trying to avoid doing by employing a transactional perspective. To recount, this transactional perspective is meant to take all elements of the transaction in a relational perspective: as always co-constituting each other. Moreover, by focusing on resistance as reactions to hegemony, I am at risk of defining one group as subaltern (the group of mothers in this case) that re-act and have therefore no politics and motives of their own (Ortner, 1995). Clearly, this does not reflect what I encountered in the practices, as mothers often have their own agenda. Shelly Ortner (1995) noted how many studies that focus on resistance are surprisingly apolitical: all politics other than that between the subaltern and the hegemonic is left out of scope. Second, if I were to interpret these parts of transactions as resistance, I am at risk of romanticising them and misattributing to the mothers forms of consciousness that they do not necessarily have or experience (Abu Lughod, 1990; Ortner, 1995). And third, in many transactions in which I participated, it was not at all clear that power indeed was with the actor organising the course. Oftentimes, the power balance appeared to be the other way around.

Conceptualisations of resistance are multiple, but many focus on the *effects* of actions and/or the *intentions* of the participants (compare Ortner, 1995). Both these defining elements are problematic. The first defines actions as forms of resistance if something changes in the situation as a result of the actions. Studies that define resistance in such a way focus on the transformative character of processes, not on the intentions of the ones included (see for an overview Ortner, 1995). The problem here is that it is entirely in the hands of the researcher to define actions as acts of resistance. In such a view, participant's agency is only secondary and acts that were – at least for actors – not directly meant to change or challenge power distributions but did anyway, are included.

The second and contrasting definition *is* focused on the intention to resist hegemonic power. For this definition, scholars make statements about the extent in which subjects know the power distribution and are conscious of their position in this field. For instance, James Scott, in his influential work "Weapons of the weak" (1985), focuses on "everyday resistance" to point at the small everyday acts of farmers in Malaysia instead of greater revolutions. In his conceptualisation, the farmer's "consciousness" of the power dynamics is the defining element. In

Scott's words, "everyday resistance" is about "relatively powerless groups" "defending interests" with small acts "against (...) orders" (1985: xvi). Patricia Ewick and Susan Silbey employ a different and transactional perspective in their study of resistance to legal authority (2003). But for them, too, resistance is about consciousness. They define resistance as: "a conscious attempt to shift the dynamics or openly challenge the givenness of situational power relations" (1331). In their study, they use narratives of resistance as a "diagnosis of power" (1331), signalling the sources and limitations of power and "revealing the taken for granted" (1329).

One example of resistance in the conceptualisation of both Scott and Ewick and Silbey is "foot-dragging": complying with what the one in power wants, but "at a pace (...) that exacts its own price" (Ewick & Silbey, 2003: 1359). In the transactions that I researched, slowing down and delaying the plan of the teacher was frequent. But is that enough to define this as "foot-dragging" and resistance? Does this mean that the women slowing down the transaction were "conscious" of a power distribution and trying to change it? I argue that this is not necessarily the case and that I should refrain from interpreting such behaviour in a theoretical framework of "resistance" for two reasons. First, reasons entirely *beyond* the scope of the transaction or the power balance in it led to behaviour that could easily be defined and presented to the reader as resistance. For example, slowing down the process could be due to a painful headache of one of the mothers or the inability to respond to questions of the teacher in fluent Dutch. In such a case, behaviour has very little to do with specific forms of situated "consciousness". Second, elements *within* the transaction can lead to such behaviour that have little to do with hegemony or power structures. For example, sometimes teachers are unclear and fuzzy about what they want the mothers to participate in or there is miscommunication about goals, plans and needs. Such unclear communications can be responsible for a slow response. At any rate, in the particular context of this research, I do not have the kind of data, nor the desire to insist on *knowing* subject's consciousness, nor at interpreting particular transactions in a sociological frame that is (in this case too) far from participants' own experience and narrative. Alternatively, I focus in this research on what is done within the transactions that I studied.

**"Ways of operating": mediations**

I was inspired by Michel de Certeau's perspectives on "ways of operating" (1984) to interpret the data of my ethnographic research. De Certeau focuses on what is done in practices (consciously or unconsciously) and distinguishes tactics and strategies. Using De Certeau's insights for my analysis freed me of the constraints that come with focusing on resistance but nonetheless enabled me to identify negotiations and struggles in transactions. Most important in his explanation of these two terms, are the dimensions time and space. Strategies entail planning, and the disposal

of space. A school has its class rooms at its disposal, a social work organisation plans parenting classes, and a city employs this organisation to execute social policies. The organisation of a parenting class is – in De Certeau's terms – a strategy, as is the planning of a debate exercise as part of a particular meeting. Tactics, on the contrary, depend on time. They belong to those that have to deal and "make do" with strategies. "Strategies are able to produce, tabulate and impose (...) spaces, (...) whereas tactics can only use, manipulate and divert these spaces."(30) For De Certeau, subjects use structures and regulations for their own purposes. For example, a city street is a spatial organisation that its dwellers use in their own way. These dwellers attribute their own meaning to this street and change it accordingly. They seek a "degree of plurality and creativity" (30). The amount in which they can change it, however, is limited. We all use tactics as part of everyday life; all of us take up structures and transform it in the way we respond and use it (compare also Frijhoff, 1999). The way in which we use the given, produces unexpected results (De Certeau, 1984: 30). And in this sense, tactics are creative production. The tactic belongs to those that "make do"; it belongs to those that consume. The place in which subjects "make do" is not theirs, but of the other, of the city, the business or, in this research, the social work agency or school. Tactics depend on time because they are "always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized 'on the wing'" (xix).

Applied to the object under study here, Bureau Frontlijn and social work agencies organising the parent guidance programmes provide the context and space of parenting guidance practices. They decide on the type of intervention (as I discussed in chapter 4), arrange tables and chairs in the room, provide the props used in the practices and so on. Mothers in transactions act within this context but change the outcome too. Mothers are – in a way – consumers of policy. They "make do" within the space and with the strategies provided by (in the context of this thesis) Frontlijn or social work and in doing so *coproduce policy*. To see what it is that they are doing, how they contribute to the transactions in the practices, a focus on time is useful, because that is one important dimension for them to *change* or *influence* the transaction. And – as I explained a little bit above – because time was such an important category of the policies to begin with. I take from De Certeau this focus on time and space: The space is organ as part of educational strategies of social work and Bureau Frontlijn. Whatever room to manoeuvre the mothers in the practices have, they are dependent on these strategies and on time and moments to provide opportunities to alter the transaction. The advantage of De Certeau's perspective is, thus, that change and contingency in transactions can be analysed without necessarily conceptualising these as forms of resistance.

But I use a different terminology. Because I want to focus on transactions, on what is "in between" mothers and teachers, and because I do not want to presuppose a certain power balance, I will not use the terms tactics and strategies. These terms are too close to resistance-perspectives

and especially the term "tactics" connotes too much disruption and conflict. In its stead, I propose the term mediations. Mediations, in my definition, are forms of "making do" that alter the transaction by using time. What mediations produce is open. As I will show with my ethnographic material in this chapter is that mediations can turn interventions (that are the result of chains of translations) upside down entirely. Through mediations, mothers change what is done in the room, consciously *and* unconsciously, in conflict *and* in cooperation. I take from De Certeau 1) his focus on "making do" and consumer's creativity and 2) the element of time, because it allows for a particular perspective to bring alterations in transactions into focus. Of course teachers, like mothers, "make do" in the situation in which they find themselves. But I discussed the way in which they alter policy interventions in the previous chapter with my focus on translations. I look at mediations here when they are instigated by the mothers, as they are the primary group of "consumers" of parenting guidance policies. They are, after all, the ones targeted by the policy interventions. The design of the policies presupposes their consumption or participation in the practices. It should be noted, though, that the consumption of parenting guidance is as productive as the planning. Following De Certeau in his focus on "making do" enables me to look at both sides of this production; to look at transactions as coproductions. And the term mediation points to precisely this: how transactions are altered in between mothers and teachers.

## *Five Mediations*

Mediations thus depend on time, on opportunities to be seized. From 8.30, or whatever time the parent course, class or other practice starts, the mothers participate in an activity that is planned and created by the social work agency, Bureau Frontlijn and ultimately the city. They consume what is produced in such a planned strategy and by consuming it, change it and coproduce the practice. Building further on the perspectives of De Certeau, I identify five types of mediations in the transactions that I encountered ethnographically: 1) joking, 2) particularising, 3) withdrawing, 4) mirroring and 5) decentring. All mediations change the transaction and all are localised with the mothers and use time to create opportunities to alter transactions.

### Joking

Simone and Jolanda (introduced above) organised a course focusing on parental guidance for parents of children in puberty and adolescence: "Dealing with adolescents" (Omgaan met pubers). The course was organised in the parent room of an elementary school in Kralingen, in the North of Rotterdam. Many of the mothers present had several children of which the youngest were still attending the school in which the course was taught and the eldest were indeed in puberty and in secondary schooling. One of the main topics in this special practice was communication.

In six meetings, communication skills of different sorts were practiced and discussed. In the meeting preceding the one I am to describe now, Simone and Jolanda had explained the good practice of asking nicely instead of telling adolescents what to do. We had practiced this in various assignments.

> *In this meeting too, Simone and Jolanda want us to do assignments in which we are to replicate and reproduce interactive situations. They begin this morning by handing out sheets of paper on which the particular assignment for this morning is explained and Simone says: "You are going to do this assignment". Once they have distributed the papers, Nienke, one of the mothers, suddenly declares with the most earnest look: "Well, I don't think I want to participate. I don't feel like it". Simone is taken aback by this statement and pauses before she responds: "What do you mean; you don't want to do this assignment?" Nienke: "No, I don't want to do this assignment in groups." And Nadia, another mother, says: "No, me neither." Simone replies by stating: "Well, this is part of the course, that we do these assignments together..." At which point Nienke shouts out: "Kidding!" She explains: "weren't we supposed to ask things nicely, to deliberate? You* just tell us *that we are going to do this assignment, after you've taught us last week to ask nicely by stating a wish!"*
>
> *Nienke fooled me. I was startled by her refusal just as Simone was. Now that it is clear that Nienke was joking, Simone and Jolanda take a deep breath of relief. The other mothers, too, are laughing hard. Simone rephrases her request: "OK, I would appreciate it if you would please participate in this assignment."*

Nienke's mediation of joking here depends on opportunity, on timing. She reflects on the teacher's message of last week by "seizing the moment" in which Simone does not practice what she preaches. Joking is an especially potent mediation: it can turn a transaction upside-down. In this case, it quite profoundly changed the transaction and the way Simone had planned the meeting. In addition, the joke threatened the order of the class as it questioned the relationship between the teacher and the mothers. The joke showed the relative powerlessness of Simone: if the mothers refuse to participate, what is she to do?

Something similar but different happened in another parenting class in a community centre in the South of the city. This particular morning, the teacher Miriam has lost all control over the substance and transactions in the class. She doesn't mind, she explains to me. And later on, she also points out to the women that this is "their group" and "their space" and that therefore, she does not want to be too controlling or directive. But she does have a programme set out for this

morning and during the class tries several times to get the women to comply. She has no success doing that. Just after she again has re-introduced the theme of the morning and has asked the women to reflect on it, Radia has a joke to tell us.

> *Radia draws all attention to her, announcing that she has a joke to tell. The women are laughing even before she starts telling the joke. She says: "this joke is about, what's it called? Oh yes: Emancipation. So a Dutch, Belgian and Moroccan woman go to a conference about emancipation together. The first time, the Dutch woman says that she no longer feels like doing her husband's laundry. The women at the conference concur. They say: that's right! You shouldn't do it anymore. He can do his laundry himself!" So when she comes home, she doesn't do his laundry. Not the first day, not the second day. And on the third day her husband does his own laundry. The next conference, the women go again and this time, the Belgian woman says: I'm tired of ironing my husband's clothes. He can do it himself, right? So the first day she doesn't iron his cloths. And the second day neither. On the third day, her husband is ironing his own clothes. The next conference meeting, the Moroccan woman does the same. She says: I don't want to cook couscous for my husband any more, he can do it himself! So the first day: no couscous, the second day: no couscous. The third day: black eye!"*

In this particular transaction, again, an opportunity is seized. In this instance, Radia takes over the central and distributing role in the transaction from Miriam. She takes over the power to initiate a transaction. She does so by using a moment in which Miriam wanted her and the other mothers to reflect on the theme of the day. Telling jokes is an especially powerful way of marking social boundaries (Kuipers, 2006). In this case, both the teacher and I were very uncomfortable with the joke and the mother's laughter. Miriam and I do not laugh while all mothers present break out into laughter and screaming. Radia uses cultural prejudices as a repertoire for jokes in which a Moroccan woman is the victim of domestic violence. Radia is of Moroccan descent herself and quite reflexive of this categorisation and what it means in public discourse. Her joke is an ironic performance that creates anxiety for those present that are frequently categorised as "Dutch": Miriam and me. When Radia made the joke, I felt it almost as a direct accusation and felt it to be especially painful and poignant.

By affirming prejudices (note that when Radia uses the term "couscous", as a marker of "Moroccan culture", all women break out in even more enthusiastic laughter) with her joke, Radia lets Miriam and me know that she knows how many "Dutch" think of Moroccans. Also, by using the term "emancipation", she shows her knowledge of public discourse on Moroccan women. The

joke is an inversion of transactional initiative: Radia takes over from Miriam. But it is also a way of reaffirming the boundary between the mothers present and Miriam and myself as "Dutch". The joke excludes us because we do not find it funny and are instead invited to reflect on precisely the social boundaries that Radia is ironically affirming.

**Particularising**

Almost in all parenting classes that I visited, a selection of scientific knowledge was translated and presented to the mothers in some form. Many courses provided the teachers with teaching material in which knowledge of this kind was included. I included examples of these elements of the teaching material in chapter 4. Remember, for instance, the standardised charts of "normal" sexual development of children in the "Growing up with love" course. Mothers are asked to discuss standardised knowledge about "normal" behaviour, statistics and means. These confrontations with scientific knowledge in uses the "technology of the mean" (Noordegraaf-Eelens, 2008). In this technology, mothers are invited to look at their own child through the "glasses of the mean" (ibidem: 125). The idea is to compare, and to intervene when the deviation of the mean is too large.

Many mothers are indeed interested in these means, charts and legitimate knowledges. They compare their child's development or ask the teacher to do so. But this part of the parenting course also probes *a particularising mediation*. Responding to these kinds of knowledge presentations, mothers often tell stories of their own children. They compare different children in different phases of their lives and oftentimes conclude that "My child is different", or "what you are saying is true of my first and second child, but my third is completely different". Introducing the particular in a transaction is a mediation that changes the status of scientific knowledge in the transaction. Instead of comparing their child to the mean, they compare the mean and norm to their child. This reverses the logic. The part of the class in which the teacher informs mothers about scientific knowledge thus offers an opportunity to tell stories and narrate about personal experiences. Again, the mothers in such a case seize the opportunity and moment to offer an element of their experience and life world. In such interventions in transactions, mothers define their child as the norm and the mean. The strategies of the teacher are then considered illegitimate if the images used in the strategy deviate too much from their experience with their own children. Mothers often explicitly base their comments on their experiences with "reality" and point out how the teacher is basing herself on "book knowledge". Some mothers ask the teachers if they have children of their own. If not, an especially powerful mediation can be for the mothers to refer to this fact whenever the teacher relies on scientific "book knowledge".

A second way to particularise besides introducing individual children, is introducing *particular situations*. That is in response to the hypothetical situations that the courses offer. In

the "Dealing with adolescents" course that I introduced before, for example, Simone and Jolanda asked us several times to watch part of a video in which actors performed different "parental strategies". One example is a series of three scenes in which an adolescent asks for money. In the first scene, the mother gives the money and explains to the viewers: "what can I do?" In the second scene, the mother refuses and explains to her child: "No! You have to listen to us!" In the third scene, the adolescent's question probes a dialogue between the mother and adolescent.

> *Simone asks the group of mothers about pros and cons for each scene that we watch on the TV. (...) She then explains the advantages of the parenting strategy in the third scene. Starting a dialogue to find out why your child wants this money is useful, she explains. Most mothers agree: this is the best way of responding out of the three ways that are presented to us. But the mothers do express their discomfort with these categories of behaviour. One mother explains: "Sometimes you use strategy 1, some other time strategy 2 and some other time strategy 3. As a mother, you are not always the same person, you don't always respond in the same way. Situations are different and probe different reactions." Simone agrees and says that for example the "authoritarian" method of the second scene is more likely when you are in a hurry.*

In this transaction, mothers and teacher agree on the legitimacy of the third parental strategy that is shown on the TV excerpt and discussed. But the mothers mediate the categorisation of strategies. This presentation of reality does not fit their experience and they use the opportunity given by the teacher *to debate the very idea of categorisations* instead of *the substanc*e of the categorisation here. By introducing the particular, the strategy of the transmission of legitimate scientific knowledge is thus challenged.

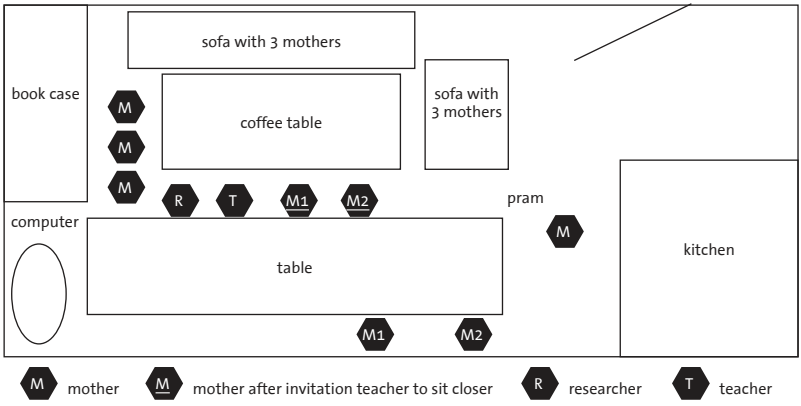
**Withdrawing**

On many occasions during my field work, women included in the beginning of the transactions would withdraw at some point. Withdrawing was so very frequent and common, that teachers shrugged when asked about it. Teachers never expected a group of women to stay complete during a meeting – let alone to continue showing up during a series of meetings. One teacher in Feyenoord put it like this:

> *"As soon as there's a discount on olive oil in the supermarket, women leave early or don't show up at all. That's just the way it is."*

It was indeed not at all uncommon that a group of mothers would be halved at the end of the meeting. In the two hours between the beginning and the end of a class, many had left with a headache, a child that needed to go to a doctor's appointment, a friend that was leaving, out of shyness or a general discomfort with the meeting.

> *It is 9 am. I enter the parent room of the school. Every seat in the room is filled. At least fifteen to twenty women are present at this moment. Most of them have their coats still on. I sit down at the table in the middle of the room. The woman sitting next to me has her baby of four weeks old with her in a pram. She also has a son of four years; he is the one attending this school. (...) She asks me how long "this" is going to take, referring to the class. When I respond that I think we are going to be finished around eleven, she says: "Oh no, eleven is too late. I won't be able to stay then. I have to pick up my son from the photographer at a quarter to ten. I only came here to wait for him, really."*
> *The discussion this morning is designed to be about bullying. (This meeting is what is called a "theme meeting", see chapter 3 for an explanation of the various types of parenting guidance.) Marieke, the teacher, has several assignments and discussions prepared but she doesn't quite get to executing these plans because of the chaos in the room. She asks the women that are not in the circle with her, but instead are sitting at another table (see drawing), repeatedly to "please join us". When the women do not respond and some time has passed, she presses them with more urgency: "I really am bothered by you sitting there, not facing us, will you please come and sit here?" They respond to the request by moving their chairs. But the mobile phone of one of the women rings quite loudly twice and she answers. Sometime later both women leave.*



*Marieke is successful, however, in drawing the women into a discussion about bullying. One mother tells a heart-breaking story of her son. He is being bullied because of his weight. Just a moment later, she quite carelessly leaves without saying goodbye. At 10.15 hrs., two thirds of the women that were here when the class started have left. When Marieke wants to start another activity with the women that remain, they say that they, too, haven't the time anymore. Marieke stops and says: "well, maybe some other time, then".*

In this excerpt of my field notes, Marieke's relative powerlessness is apparent. She has planned the course together with the parent consultant and she is planning the spatial lay out of the room when she urges the two women to join the group that sits in a circle. But because parenting guidance practices like this are not obligatory, she has no control over *when* the mothers arrive or leave. Her control over time is very limited: she can decide the time at which the meeting starts and when a specific assignment is planned, but whether the women participate, or whether they will stay until the anticipated end of the meeting is not in her control. As the above situation shows, withdrawing is not always in response to the planned meeting. On the contrary: most often, reasons entirely beyond the transaction are to blame. Transactions with persons outside of the transaction of the class (for example the arrangement to pick up your son at 9.45 hrs.), or simultaneous transactions (a friend leaving, a phone call intervening) are far more likely to cause withdrawal.

Withdrawal can, moreover, also quite easily follow involvement. In the transaction described above, a woman can be heavily involved in the transaction by telling the moving story of her son being bullied but still exit the transaction just after. For as long as *she has time* by her own definition, she participates in the transaction. But as soon as another situation outside of the transaction presses her to leave, she withdraws. In this case, I do not know the reason for her withdrawal. As a rule, I stayed in the room during the class, because these were my primary object of research. Consequently, I have not charted women's reasons for leaving. The point is, though, that withdrawal was common and beyond the control of the teacher. It was a mediation used regularly and one that quite profoundly changed the transactions in the class because it changed the transactions' participants. In the above example, Marieke was even fully unable to execute her plans, because of the amount of women leaving and the lack of involvement of the women that stayed. Also, withdrawal usually is accompanied with the moving of chairs, coffee cups being tidied up, whispering and doors banging. Withdrawal not only disturbs transactions because elements/ persons are taken out of it, but also because those staying are distracted.

**Mirroring**

The mediation joking oftentimes also involves mirroring. I witnessed and was the object of many instances where a mother would turn the tables and scrutinize my, or the teacher's behaviour. This was the case in particular when a culturist logic was used in talking about parenting, for instance when certain parental problems were considered "Moroccan" or "Islamic". Such culturist discourses open up *repertoires for mirroring mediations*. In the sex education courses that I highlighted in chapter 4, I argued that openness and sex talk was rewarded and deemed important by both the course designers and the professionals teaching. Precisely because this was the case, and because this openness was considered typically Dutch, migrant mothers that participated sometimes seized the opportunity to surprise with dirty jokes, funny narratives of their own sex lives or even culturist views of the Dutch. What follows is an example of such an instance in my field notes:

> *Ikram steals the show with her comment that Dutch men have cold blood. She says: "you know that we (she means Moroccans, MvdB) have warm blood, don't you?" while she looks at me challenging. She tells us how she heard that Dutch couples only have sex twice a week. "We are in the mood much more often, not every day maybe, but our women…we are in the mood a lot." Yvonne, the teacher is not amused. She says how she has heard this story before and asserts immediately that it is false in her view. But the mothers agree that Dutch women try to do too much: work, children, all at once. It is easier to have a good sex life when you are at home and your husband works, they say.*

Instead of being part of the group whose sexuality and sexual moral is problematised, Ikram here turns the tables: she problematises the lack of libido of the Dutch, using a culturist logic that is similar to the dominant culturist logic that "Others" her. This transaction learns us how this taken for granted culturist logic works (compare for a similar analysis of power dynamics Ewick & Silbey, 2003). Ikram's intervention reveals this particular order of things by humorously turning the logic around and thus turning the mirror on us: the "Dutch" teacher and me. She can play with the norm of talking about sex in this instance because she can use what is asked of her (openness) to point out what she considers the boundaries of Dutch sexual liberation. In this particular transaction, she included me as a person representative of the "Dutch" and thus lacking in sex-drive, just as she is often taken to represent "Moroccans" or "Muslims".

A similar case is the following excerpt of a "theme meeting" about loverboys (*loverboy* is the term frequently used in the Netherlands for young men luring young women and girls into

(forced) prostitution). After a strained discussion about forced prostitution and young girls, the teacher, Marieke, looks at the paper cards before her. These are part of the teaching material for this particular course. Written on the cards are questions about the issue of this morning. These questions are meant to guide the discussion. Also, in the course material, statistics on frequency of human trafficking and demographics of loverboys are included.

> *Marieke decides to discuss one more question on a card this morning, because we still have some time left. She says: "I think this is a good one to discuss." The question is whether or not loverboys are "allochthonous". At first, the women respond by saying no. This leads to Marieke referring to the statistics in her course material and explaining to us that many loverboys are, indeed "allochthonous". She looks at the two Moroccan women (the only two Moroccans present) at her right and claims that oftentimes loverboys are Moroccan. She says: "we all know that there have been quite some problems with Moroccan youngsters, right? Before, we had these same kinds of problems with Antillean or Surinamese youth. Those young guys often grow up in bad neighbourhoods and oftentimes, they have gone through a lot themselves." The Moroccan women do not respond. They sit quietly and listen. Marieke lists the statistics that say that 37% of loverboys are Moroccan and in total 89% are "allochthonous".*
> *Sitting across from Marieke and me is a woman, Aysun, who has been dominant in previous discussions this morning and at this time, too, draws attention to herself by telling us how she saw a television show that featured a story about a man who coordinated a criminal network from the Netherlands. She deduces from this TV show that it is quite possible that "Dutch" men use "allochthonous" boys to find girls for prostitution: "those boys are being used by Dutch criminals!" Marieke then responds by finishing today's meeting and concluding that "loverboys" is a difficult topic to talk about.*

Like in the example of the joking of Ikram, Aysun here reverses the gaze and mirrors the logic. Instead of "allochthonous" being scrutinised and blamed for a phenomenon as serious as forced prostitution, she blames the "Dutch", categorising in a similar logic.

Usually, the response of the teacher to such mirroring was absent or was to introduce the next element in the class, like Marieke did. Teachers seldom took the opportunity to look at themselves with the same scrutiny with which they debated the participant's behaviour. That is not to say that teachers were not reflexive of their role or of their own lives and role as wife or mother at home. They were, and would often include such reflections in the transactions. They

would for instance stress how difficult raising children is in their own experience, or how they were frustrated at home with a husband who refused to clean the house. But the mediation of mirroring seizes opportunity and *seizes initiative*: the leading role in the transaction is in such a moment appropriated by a mother and the teacher is then invited to reflect on herself. These opportunities were thus seldom seized by teachers, as is also the case in this excerpt:

> *The teachers Simone and Jolanda initiate an evaluation of the series of meetings in the second part of the morning. They ask the mothers to reflect on what they've learned and to evaluate the use of the course for their daily lives. The mothers respond (...) and are curious. They ask Simone and Jolanda: "and what did you learn from us then?" to this question, Simone and Jolanda do not respond.*

**Decentring**

The final mediation that I would like to highlight in this paragraph is that of decentring. The policy intervention that is parenting guidance depends on the centring of attention. It depends on a topic or set of topics and on all participants in the transaction to focus their attention on this particular issue. The planning of assignments, the structured debates, the props and videos: all are used to focus attention to a particular problematic. However, women attending the courses often used the opportunity to speak to the professional about something else entirely. It should be noted that the courses are not the only places and times that the mothers can speak to the professionals. Most professionals also have visiting hours in a local community centre. Parents can make an appointment with a pedagogue to discuss their particular questions. But still, when mothers are in included in a transaction with a pedagogue, they use the opportunity to ask questions beyond the scope of the topic of the day.

> *Marieke takes out her calendar to make an appointment with a mother that complains about her child having sleeping problems at the age of four in a class about "values and norms". They make a separate appointment. This delay is used by another mother to mention her problems with her son of eight years old.*

Such mediations would *delay* the plans of the teacher and *slow down* the transaction. And it decentred attention by expanding the scope of topics. Usually, teachers would respond to decentring by asking the women to make a separate appointment to discuss the issue they are raising, like Marieke did in the above example. But sometimes, it also caused irritation for the teacher and prompted annoyed comments.

*In the introductory round, the woman sitting next to me, Karima immediately expresses her worries. "My son is ten years old and already he doesn't want to go to school. He is only ten and already he doesn't want to learn. My husband and I don't understand. He is angry and won't go anymore." At first, the teachers, Brigitte and Simone, do not respond. Instead, another mother, Melek, intervenes and says: "There is probably something going on, then. Is he being bullied?" Karima doesn't understand immediately, but when she does, she replies that indeed that might be the problem. She talks rather panicky and utters all her family problems at once. Simone intervenes and says that we can talk about "all this" later, or Karima can make an appointment, but for now, she would like to continue with the programme. Brigitte takes over the leading role from Simone at this point and discusses the woman's case with her and with Melek, physically turning her back on Karima. She says that "there is already social work involved in this case" (*er zit al maatschappelijk werk in*), so there is "assistance on it" (*er is hulpverlening*). She turns towards Karima and says that she can make an appointment with local social workers if she would like. And, she says, the rest of the course will prove to help her. "So come to the other meetings as well!"*

In this transaction, the teachers cut off the possibility of discussing Karima's urgent worries. When Melek intervenes, thus making the transaction much more complex, Brigitte and Simone are slightly annoyed. At this point, Brigitte even speaks *about* Karima as a case. She avoids the opportunity to talk *to* her or *with* her directly, but instead chooses to deliberate with Simone and Melek first, to then cut off this decentring episode and return to the programme as planned and make up for the delay. Simone and Brigitte express urgency when it comes to their plans. As a consequence, the result of the transaction is that the class is continued and Karima's worries remain not dealt with. The following meetings in this particular course were not attended by Karima. Whether or not this transaction is the cause of her withdrawal, I do not know.

## *Lethargy and sluggishness*

### Doing nothing

It the above paragraphs, *action* in transactions is scrutinised. By writing about these transactions I have given the false impression of parenting guidance as active and maybe even exiting events. There is conflict, participants joke and laugh, assignments are made. Nonetheless, much of what I witnessed in my fieldwork was very low-energy, slow and, quite frankly, boring. Oftentimes, we were "doing nothing". Boredom and lethargy tend to be left out of sociological analyses (Bengtsson, 2012). But this paragraph is about parts of transactions that were not so very eventful

but nevertheless do tell us something important.

Waiting was something that I – like the teachers –often had to do in my field work. One of the things that took the most getting used to in going along with the professionals and following their work, was the very slow pace and the lethargy that I felt and encountered in others. I was slowed down and oftentimes was "doing nothing" in the field. I felt this to be frustrating and in this paragraph, I will go into some of the reasons for this listlessness and what my feelings of frustration told me about the practices that I studied. As I explained in chapter 3 on methodological considerations, I remained, in the field, in the role of observer. I never aimed at full immersion, or "going native". I did, however, participate in house visits, meetings, classes and course programmes for months. I spent quite some time in the presence of (aspiring) professionals in the field of social work and therefore my body was at least in part socialised in and for these contexts. My "sociology from the body" (Wacquant, 2004), using embodiment as a research tool, told me something about time and power in the transactions that I studied.

Ehn & Löfgren (2010) write in their book on "doing nothing" about a "contemporary (...) obsession with productivity" a "cult of speed" (ibidem: 8). Like many others, I too often fear waste of time and am uncomfortable with idleness. My mother was a head nurse when I was a child and in our family, we often joke about how fast she would walk and how we as children would have to run to keep up with her. She would talk of the need to walk fast in her work, and how when people would apply for a job in the nursing home in which she worked, she would walk with them for a while through the building as a test to see if they could keep up the pace. Also, my sisters and I were often corrected by both my parents when we would loll in our chairs or on the couch. An active posture was very much valued in our home. Whether or not my aversion to strolling, lolling or sagging in chairs is related to my mother's occupation or my upbringing, I do not know for sure. But I do know that I found sluggishness the most striking feature of my fieldwork and felt frustration within my own body when I experienced lethargy and boredom myself.

In fact, it was one of the first things about which I made extensive field notes. I started my fieldwork with the Bureau Frontlijn and here, students complained about boredom. Lolling was the norm. When one of the managers supervising the students in their internships was in a meeting with one of her students, she talked about a family that was participating in their programme, receiving help. During the entire conversation, she either hanged in her chair, or sat using her hand to hold up her head that was tilted to one side as a consequence.

> *She sighs often and at one point even refers to their work as "nonsense" (*onzin*) to then immediately correct herself: "Oh well, nonsense. Of course this is very important" at which point she frowns and looks back at the papers in front of her.*

In instances like this, I had to control myself not to make some sort of comment or joke about the complete lethargy that spoke from her posture and way of talking. I was not the only one feeling frustration, though.

> *When I walk out of the metro station, I see Anna (a student working for Frontlijn) walking towards the Bureau Frontlijn office. I catch up with her and we chat while walking. I am in a hurry because the morning's briefing meeting (there were briefings every morning in the office before the students would start their work "guiding" the mothers, this was the first I was attending), is about to start, but Anna walks at a very slow pace and I don't want to rush her. When we arrive at the office a couple minutes late, I feel anxious because I am afraid that the meeting has already started. I am worried that our being late will annoy the managers of the Bureau. It turns out that there was no need to rush because even though we are a couple minutes late, we are the first to arrive. Most of the students and managers arrive fifteen or even thirty minutes late to the briefing, with or without an excuse. On this particular day, more than half of the students have called in sick. Most "house visits" don't have to be cancelled, because there weren't so many planned to begin with. I go along with Anna this morning. Anna is going to IJsselmonde, to a family that she feels doesn't need help anymore. "But they are sweet", she says. We have to find out where they live exactly, because Anna doesn't remember from the last time she visited. We get lost and walk around IJsselmonde for a long time before we find the house. Nobody answers the door. Later in the day, Anna opens up her email inbox and sees that the woman had emailed her to say that she wasn't able to meet us at her house because she had to go to school.*
>
> *Anna really wanted me to come along. She doesn't like being an intern with Frontlijn and wants to tell me her story. She feels that there is not enough to do for her and her colleague students. She feels that ten months is way too long a period for this internship. She would love to learn more than what is possible here. She says: "I don't think it's very surprising that so many students call in sick." "We just sit there, in the office all day, in that dark hole." And, ironic: "Fun!"*

Anna is complaining about her sense of boredom in this conversation. Just like me, she is a novice to this kind of work and this organisation in particular. Apart from the critique on Bureau Frontlijn that she formulates, a day with Anna showed me what a day of sluggish waiting for a client that doesn't show up and having nothing much to do besides the waiting made myself and her feel.

Because we were new, we were still surprised about the pace and the sense of uselessness. To the ones working with Bureau Frontlijn for a longer period, this was far less prevalent. For example, when I asked one of the managers, Annemarie, about the high absence rates among the students she commented:

> *"I don't know why the students are sick so often. Sometimes, I would like to put a large pot filled with vitamins at the office for everyone to take. But you know, we work hard and the people that we visit have a seriously low resistance to disease."*

Annemarie feels that the absentees are at home sick because of Bureau Frontlijn's clients. Anna's and my experience of lethargy and feeling useless is not shared by Annemarie, who has been here for a much longer time. Instead, she feels everybody at the Bureau works hard. This suggests that Annemarie has been socialised into and grown accustomed to exactly the rhythm and expectation of her work that Anna and I find frustrating.

**Transactional sluggishness**

But I did not find lethargy and sluggishness only at Bureau Frontlijn. In the other organisations, many practices were very low-energy too. So why is this and what does my experience of frustration tell me about the practices that I studied? Many reasons can be attributed to particular participants in the transactions. For instance, in Bureau Frontlijn, many of the students were still very young (around twenty-one) and had a lot on their mind that was not work-related. Having to find their way not only in a rather unstructured internship for the first time, but in life in general (dealing with boyfriends, what to think of TV shows, conflict with parents, these were typical topics in the students' conversations), I think contributed to the sluggishness that I witnessed. But I will limit myself here to factors that were produced *within* the transactions that I studied. I think that lethargy and sluggishness can be part of what is in between actors. Like boredom, it can be a "collective sociality" (Bengtsson, 2012).The most relevant factors in this context are threefold: 1) dependence, 2) complexity and 3) contagion.

First, parent guidance practices are a positive service, a positive form of policy. As most forms of government, they do not rely on punishment but instead on the setting of examples and norms. The trouble is that mothers have to be present voluntarily in body and spirit in order for that to effectuate. No mother in the practices that I studied was obliged to participate. There were no repercussions for the mothers if they didn't, no way for the professionals to make sure that the women would show up, be on time, participate or continue to show up for more than one meeting. In this type of social work, the professionals are very dependent on clients. To change the

daily behaviours of mothers (and this was, in fact, the ambition of many professionals, especially in Bureau Frontlijn) is a very challenging task and working towards such a goal, professionals perform in a constant balancing act between intervention and non-intervention (cf. Schuyt, 1997) that is entirely dependent on clients' behaviour. This limits the possibility of planning and gives the teachers a narrow time-horizon. Especially with longer term programmes, this was a problem. For example, many of the methods and course materials used by the professionals were designed for three, five or six meetings. But there were no guarantees that a particular group of mothers would show up for more than one meeting. As a result, every meeting felt like starting over. Or mothers and teachers decided together to not start with the planned programme because of the lack of participants.

> *One morning with the Mother and Child programme, only Cassandra and Lee have shown up at 8.30. All attention of the three student-teachers and the mothers goes to Cassandra's little girl. At 9.30, the students feel that it is better to end this meeting. It is the end of May and the programme is planned to continue until July, but Carrie, one of the students, says that she expects a low turn-up until summer recess anyway. Cassandra and Lee have some more coffee with the students until 10.30. Nobody really knows what to do, so there are several awkward silences and much lolling about.*

Because of the many absentees, none of the plans of the student-teachers effectuate. Instead, in a rather awkward two hours, we drink coffee and "do nothing". Even more so, the students are already anticipating a series of meetings like this one for the following month, where they expect low attendance too.

Many parenting guidance practices planned on the quarterly schedule of the social work agency where I did much of my field work would not materialise at all. I showed up many times at a given date, time and place, only to find that the course had been cancelled or rescheduled. For example, a course that was to run for five meetings was cancelled altogether because the first date was accidentally planned on the same day that Muslim women celebrated Eid Al-Adha (the annual feast of sacrifice). Instead of rescheduling the series of meetings, the teacher here decided that it was "no use" and that the entire course should be cancelled. Much lethargy thus had to do with the large dependence on the attendance and active participation of mothers.

The second factor that contributed to sluggishness is the *complexity* of problems. Some contexts on which either Bureau Frontlijn or the social work organisation wanted influence were so very complex that all possible action seemed futile. Resolve seemed beyond the reach of the professional in these cases, leading to a certain emotional disinvestment. For example, when one

mother confessed of experiencing problems in raising her three-year-old daughter, the pedagogue that taught the class responded by not responding. The mother told us about how she never punishes her three year old, because she wouldn't understand anyway. Recently, her daughter tore the pages out of a book at which she responded angrily only to see her daughter start over as soon as she could grab the book again. Later, the teacher comments in conversation with me:

> *"This (the course) is all focused on prevention and you know that's fine. But with this mother, I would have to work more intensively because she really needs other stuff, more guidance. Because what I'm getting from her stories is that she really can't handle her daughter. Her daughter rules the house. In such cases, this programme isn't enough, really."*

Because this particular course was discontinued after the first session (there were meant to be three), I do not know whether or not this teacher had the opportunity to work with this mother in the way she preferred. What I do know is that the goal of parenting guidance is negotiated by the teacher in a way that leads to non-intervention in this particular transaction. In her view, these courses are not meant to deal with such parental problems. Her anticipation of the complexity of the problems of this particular mother led her to redefine what the course is for: the prevention of parental problems. Not dealing with existing problems in raising children. And this translation in practice leads to passivity.

Similar non-responsiveness was omnipresent in Bureau Frontlijn practices. The following is an excerpt of field notes that I took describing a "house visit" with two employees of Frontlijn. We visited Melissa, a mother of a young boy living in an IJsselmonde flat.

> *Melissa complains about the municipal service that helps her with her debt[1]. She complains about how much the people that work there want her to change the way she lives. "And I can never reach them on their phone number!" "You know that I call every day and she never returns my calls. That woman doesn't even know that I moved, probably." Anouk and Marije (the student and supervisor) sit in Melissa's living room and do nothing. They respond to her story by telling her that she's right, but they do not propose any course of action for Melissa's problems to be solved in this instance. After a long while of Melissa ranting about this service and other services on which she is dependent, she declares: "Anyway, I don't like telling people my story over and over again." We are so very passive in listening that we provide a lot of room for Melissa to tell her story and complain. Melissa has been a client of the*

*programme for a long time. And still, to me it seems that Anouk and Marije are only just starting to realize the extent of her problems. Anouk makes an inventory on her notebook of things that need to be done while Melissa talks. None of the items are dealt with immediately. Instead, these will be topic list on a next appointment, still to be scheduled. I sense the same passivity that I notice with Anouk and Marije within myself. The conversation with Melissa takes two hours without any action on our part. It feels like there is so much to be done, that all small action is futile.*

Interestingly, Bureau Frontlijn's raison d'etre is their claim on "doing everything". Their critique on urban social services focuses on policy fragmentation and Frontlijn proposes working "integrally" as the silver bullet to the problems of "multi-problem families". The idea is thus that the students and supervisors from the "Practice Guidance Programme" visit families and intervene in different spheres of life at the same time, ranging from cleaning out dirty kitchens to arranging employment and giving pedagogical advice (see chapter 3 for a more detailed explanation of this programme). My data suggest that precisely such a wide range of interest and possible interventions results in passivity. To want to intervene in everything is to end up doing very little because of the sheer complexity, and fuzziness of such a task.

The third reason is that some of the lethargy in transactions originated in the behaviour of the teachers or the mothers. Sluggishness – as we all know from everyday experience – is highly *contagious*. When a teacher would anticipate on a specific kind of energy in a group, she would set the pace accordingly.

*In an elementary school, a group of five mothers are gathered for a course. Four of the mothers are of Turkish descent and do not understand the Dutch language very well. One of the mothers has brought a freshly baked cake to share. During the two hours in this afternoon, most of the time, we are waiting for translations from Dutch to Turkish and the other way around. Anne says how she does not mind this, but soon, she yawns and ten minutes before she arranged the class to be over, she proposes to end it. The group, however, wishes to continue. After the class, Anne says to me how she really did not like teaching this class. She confesses that she finds it very difficult to 'move' these women in the direction that she would like and therefore had decided beforehand that she was not going to address all the elements in the course material.*

Anne started with a preconceived notion of the group as being unresponsive and passive, and decided to skip many subjects on the agenda. Consequently, the conversation lacked urgency and

was cut short ahead of time. Moreover, Anne, the mothers and I had to wait during the class for translations. *Between* Anne, myself and the mothers, there are very limited expectations of the level of activity. Moreover, Anne speaks of her frustration in trying to "move" the women. She aims to speed them up, to accelerate their pace, to influence their use of time. The situation and the behaviour of the mothers in the situation prevent Anne from achieving this goal. Likewise, when a teacher *does* have an ambitious agenda for a meeting and the mothers present are only looking for a cup of coffee and some entertainment, the consequence is a low-energy meeting. For instance, one morning:

> *There are two large leather couches in the room, the kind in which it is difficult to sit up straight and much easier to hang or lie down. The women that are sitting on these couches are indeed practically lying down and chatting. I sit down at the table because I assume that that is where the class is going to be taught. But this doesn't seem to be the case; the women take place around the coffee table.*

In this excerpt, the physical posture of the mothers as influenced by the furniture is decisive of the energy in the transaction. Because of these objects in the room, and the way this influences the level of activity of the mothers, the teacher has an especially hard time realising her ambitions. The physical artefacts induce passivity in the participants, making "moving" or "activating" extra difficult.

**Frustration**

Sluggishness undermines the goals of the policy efforts that I studied. As "activation" is one of the primary policy goals, inactivity, passivity and lethargy are a big threat. One of its consequences is non-intervention; nothing is being done. And sluggishness can also lead to even more counterproductive consequences, for instance when professionals let themselves be irritated by the situation and the perceived unwillingness of mothers to be "moved". In such an instance, they expect event and consequence. And if none take place, frustration is the result (compare Bengtsson, 2012). One example of the way in which this can work is described in the following excerpt of my field notes of a morning with the Mother and Child Programme. The goal of this morning was to teach the mothers about healthy foods and thus to intervene in daily eating routines.

> *The students ask the mothers to do an assignment. The students hand out a small pile of flyers and promotional folders from supermarkets and ask the mothers to use their scissors to cut out pictures of different kinds of foods and glue the pictures to a form*

*in which a figure is printed that is the general guideline for healthy food (*de schijf van vijf*).The mothers cut and paste the pictures to the form, and after this is done, it is time for the morning's coffee break, and the children come into the room again to join us (mothers and children were separated during the first part of the morning). The students play loud children's music with a heavy beat and present everybody with a fatty cake.*

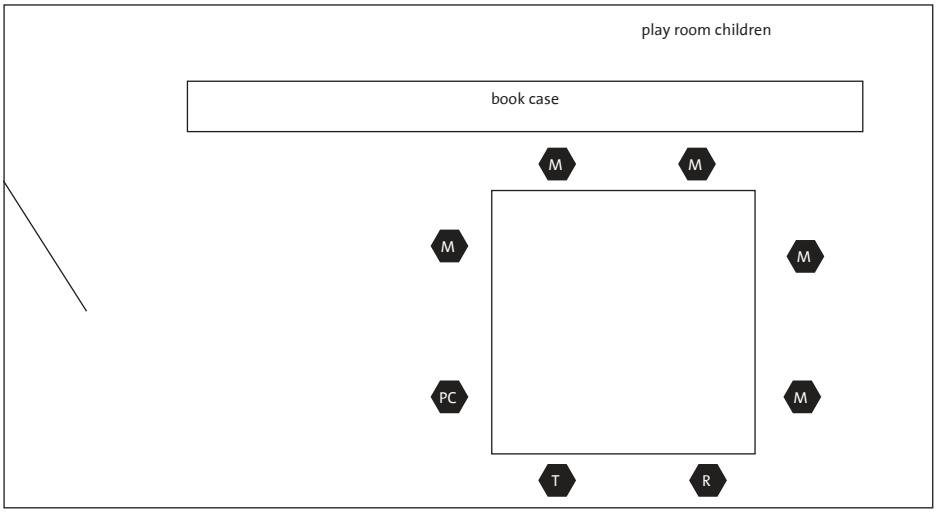
What is interesting here is the discrepancy between what has just been taught and positioned as the norm in the informative part of the morning and what is *done* by the students in the coffee break. The framing of the situation changes and immediately, so does the message. This discrepancy is connected to the student's frustration with their work. Again, time is essential here. Within the time that is marked for the classes, the interns feel more or less comfortable in their role of teachers and act accordingly by asking the mothers to participate in an assignment that is meant to teach them about healthy eating. The definition of the situation before the coffee break is educational. But at the time that the coffee break starts, this relationship is departed and this leads to quite severe insecurities for the students. The relationship changes when time/space – or the situation – does. The interns expressed to me in an interview that they often felt useless, sluggish and insecure. They expressed their frustration and even aggression (this was the word they used themselves) about their sense of powerlessness and uselessness (especially in these "in between" situations), complaining about the mothers "never doing anything in return": never doing anything for them. One of the students commented: "They see us making an effort to make these mornings cosy (*gezellig*), don't they? So why can't they return anything?" In the above described situation, the cakes and the loud music were means for the students to gain a sense of control over the situation and comfort in that situation, once the form of the relationship is no longer self-evident in this temporary non-educational setting. The students experience a high level of dependence on the mother's consent and participation. The frustration that is the result of this dependent relationship leads them to undermine the message that they intend to communicate. In a specific situation of uneasiness, they put on loud music and present high calorie food to the mothers and children, undermining their message about healthy eating.

## *Chaos and the will to be equal*

Looking even more closely at time and space and the way they are interdependent (Massey, 1994; Harvey, 1989; May & Thrift, 2001), it becomes clear that the spatial planning of parenting classes, the time boundaries of the transactions, and the space/time dynamics that I recorded in my field notes are what gives insight into the dynamics of power. Typically, parenting guidance practices

are provided in what is called the "parent room" of elementary schools. Many elementary schools in Rotterdam have such a special room for parents as part of their efforts to establish what is called "parent involvement" in the proceedings of the school (see chapter 3 for the more detailed account of the organisation of the classes). The parent room is usually furnished with sets of tables and chairs and a small kitchen. Oftentimes, there is also a playpen or a play area for small children (below the age of 4). There is coffee in the parent room, and almost always cake or cookies. This lay-out and furnishing of the room is the result of the work of the "parent consultant" (I have explained the role of these consultants in chapter 3). In the parent room, mothers are invited to sit in chairs at the tables. These are most often arranged in a circle (or similar form), so that all participants can see each other's face. When the table and chairs are not yet laid out as such, the teacher of the course would arrange them so before the start of the meeting with the parent consultant. Blackboards or whiteboards were not always part of the inventory of the parent room. But the teacher almost always made sure that some substitute was: a large piece of paper, a power point presentation or a hand-out.

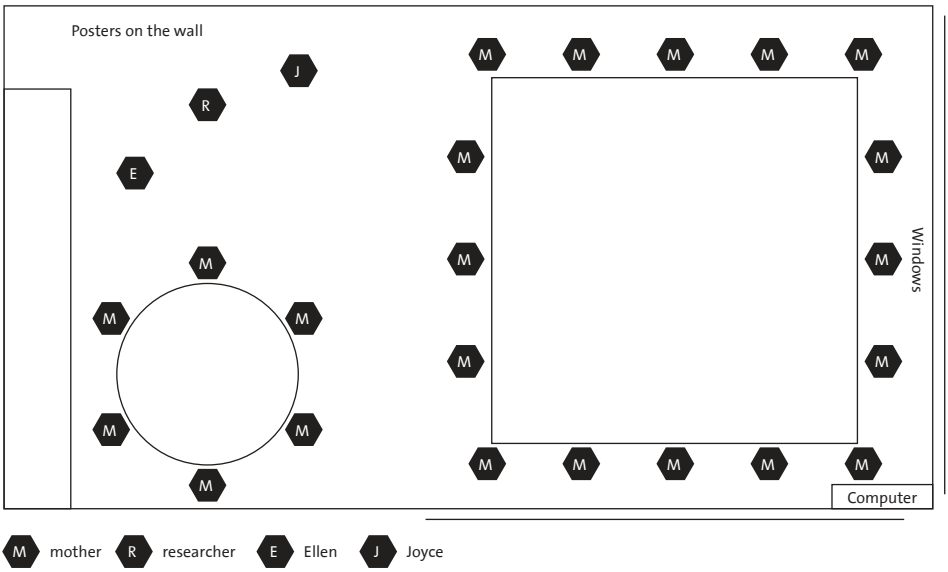
Below is a drawing that I made for my field notes of a particular set up of one morning. I made such drawings as a supplement to my written notes and as a reminder of the participants and the spatial dimension of the transactions. This particular drawing is to an extent representative of the spatial organisation of parent classes that I encountered most frequently.




*Plan of a parent room as used for a parent course*

In this drawing, we see a large table at which eight participants take place. The space is limited in anticipation of a group this size (in some schools, there is more space, facilitating larger groups). There is a boundary in the middle of the room: a bookcase approximately one meter in height separates mothers spatially from their small children. This way, the mothers can see their toddlers when they participate in the class, but are disinclined to pick up their children continuously during the class. In this spatial lay out, a part of the strategy is thus apparent: mothers are spatially separated from their children in order for them to have the time to concentrate on the course programme that the teacher has prepared for them and the conversations in which they are to participate. In other words: children are consciously taken out of the transactions as part of the strategies that parent guidance practices are. This separation of mothers and small children is a substantial spatial reduction of chaos in the transaction. It allows the participants to centre their attention on the discussions, assignments and so on that are part of the parent course. The drawing below is an example of a spatial lay out of a room in which much more chaos was allowed and the teacher consequently had a much more difficult task. The teacher here planned a parenting debate meeting in the debate series of the alderman Geluk, discussed in the introduction of chapter 4. In the drawing below, we see a large circle of tables at which a group of mothers take place facing each other. So far, there is not much difference with the lay out of the room above. The difference is that there is a second group of five mothers, sitting at a coffee table. This second group sits with their backs on not only the first group of mothers, but also the parent consultant Ellen and the teacher of the class Joyce. Joyce feels compelled to stand up and navigate the room while talking, because sitting at the large table would disable her to include the second group of mothers. It is necessary for her to raise her voice and ask for everybody's attention multiple times during this morning. Moreover, there is some antagonism between the first and the second group of women. Both groups do not listen to members of the other group while they speak. Instead, they gossip about each other's dress size.

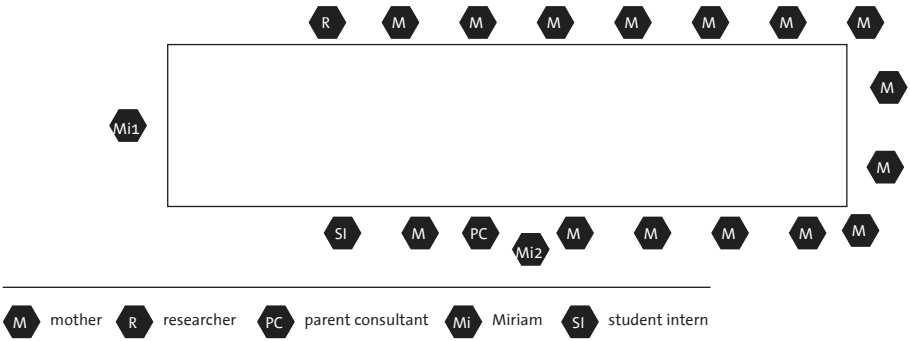
Multiple conversations happen simultaneously during this particular morning. Some of this chaos is due to pre-existing relationships of participants in the transaction. The two groups are not formed in this particular transaction, but positioned themselves vis-à-vis each other before, or so it is made clear to me by some comments of mothers present. But at least some of the chaos is made possible by the divided set up of furniture in the room, enabling groups of mothers to separate themselves and leading Joyce to stand up and appropriate much more of a teacher role than she would have liked, she explained to me, because she planned for the women to participate with her in a debate:




*"I had prepared something entirely different!" Joyce laughs: "Something like a game set-up to debate (...) but that didn't quite work out, did it?" "This clearly isn't working. I mean I had fun, but these women came here to chat and have a good time, not to debate like the alderman would like to see. I am meant to bring the wishes of the alderman together with the wishes of these women, but I'm afraid that is not going to work!"*

Joyce explicitly declares this morning a failure when she considers the planned strategy: to debate the issues prepared like the alderman would like to see.

Some of Joyce's trouble this morning is due to the fact that she had to stand up and walk around the room. In my research, I encountered much uneasiness of professionals with hierarchical relations and consequently also with hierarchical spatial lay outs of the classrooms. The drawing below is an especially salient example of such uneasiness. Miriam starts this meeting at the head of the large table at which I, an intern, a parent consultant and fourteen mothers take place, to introduce the theme of the morning and her plans for the particular activities.




But as the morning progresses, she chooses to move her chair to the side of the table between the parent consultant and a mother (see in the drawing Miriam 1 and Miriam 2). In general, teachers most frequently chose to take place between mothers, facing them at the table.

The professionals that organised the parent guidance practices preferred a spatial lay out that symbolises equality to a spatial lay out that symbolizes hierarchy. The example of the chaotic debate settings show how the organisation of space allowed for disruptions and *simultaneity*. Several conversations and transactions can take place at the same time, disrupting the class. It is a spatial expression of social relations (cf. Massey, 1994): the two groups of women were formed before and this spatial division necessitates Joyce to take a hierarchical outsider's position. The most frequent spatial lay out of parent classes is however the circle of equals and this too is a symbolic spatial expression of social relations in which the organisers of the course and the mothers express their *will to be equal*. This fits the ambitions of many parenting guidance practices: to organise debate and discussion. Teachers usually made sure that the space facilitated this goal. Such a spatial setup minimised their sense of discomfort with hierarchical relations. But professionals, of course, did not participate in the transactions as equal to the mothers. They participated in their role as teachers or experts in the field of pedagogical advice and were expected to do so by the mothers. They negotiated hierarchy and equality, or: authority and equality every day. The will to be equal was almost always translated into the spatial expression of the roundtable. The problem of negotiating authority and equality is further developed in chapter 6.

But there was yet another interesting space/time interconnection that tells us something about parenting guidance practices. Teachers and parent consultants used strategies in De Certeau's sense and would be able to plan the spatial dimension of the transaction. But they would be able to do so only within a particular timeframe. Often, the classroom would be appropriated

by the mothers before and immediately after the planned course. The following excerpt of my field notes is especially telling in this respect.

> *When I arrive at 8.25 at the school's playground, the teacher and intern, Simone and Jolanda, are still outside waiting. It freezes outside; it is a particularly cold morning in March. There is also a group of mothers on the playground smoking cigarettes; some of these mothers are part of the group that Simone, Jolanda and I have acquainted ourselves with during the last five weeks. But Simone and Jolanda stand at least seven or eight meters aside from them. I ask them why they are still standing outside. Simone answers: "Well, there were still some mothers drinking coffee in the room, so we decided to wait outside a bit longer."*

The space of the parent room is organised and divided by Simone and Jolanda as part of their strategy, but only from 8.30 in the morning until approximately 11.30. 8.30 is therefore a symbolic moment in which the social relations of the mothers and the professionals change. Before 8.30, Simone and Jolanda are uncomfortable with the mothers to the extent that they would rather be cold outside than to come in and chat informally with the mothers in a room that is not yet theirs. This has to do with their youth (they are both in their early twenties, the mothers are in their late thirties and forties) and the strong in-group dynamic of this particular group of mothers. But from 8.30 onwards, the dynamic changes. The social relations are turned upside down; Jolanda and Simone establish themselves as teachers, even though they prefer the equality of the circle set-up. This is a particular "envelope" (Massey, 1994: 5) of space-time, in which the time-boundary establishes a different meaning for space. Not all professionals felt as inhibited as Simone and Jolanda, and many were comfortable in the rooms before or after the actual class. But then still, the social relations changed at the symbolic moment in which the teacher would raise her voice to let all participants know that she wanted to start, that from then on, the transaction would be planned and distributed in a particular order and – importantly - called "parenting guidance". And more often than not, this introduction would include some sort of direction for the spatial division. The teacher would ask the participants to sit, to face her, to move tables around or fetch some more chairs.

### *Policy execution - complex transactions*

Parenting guidance practices are a policy *strategy of time*. Working towards "activity" and "active citizenship" are vital parts of parenting guidance programmes. As a strategy, parent guidance thus aims to influence *the use of time* of mothers in Rotterdam. They aim to "move" mothers into

"activity", so that they can produce the next "active" generation of citizens. The course is designed in a certain timed and spaced order. Participants are requested to sit or stand up, face each other or divide into smaller groups and to take "ten minutes" for a certain class element. In practice, however, these interventions are *mediated*. In this chapter, I have distinguished five mediations located with the mothers: joking, particularising, withdrawing, mirroring and decentring. All these mediations depend on time: on opportunities to be seized to alter transactions, to change what happens in practices. That is not to say that the mothers set out to change the transaction by their interruption, joke or withdrawing. Mediations are not necessarily conscious. However, the change *is* the result of their influence on the transaction.

And ironically, precisely the overarching goal of the policy interventions, "activation", is compromised. Professionals aim to "activate" and "move" the mothers into "active citizenship", but many mediations *delay* transactions. Joking, mirroring, particularising, decentring and withdrawing all change the planned distribution of time as designed by the teacher. Consequently, mediations often *make teachers wait*. The power dynamic is especially apparent in this feature of the transactions. As Ehn & Löfgren (2010) noted, waiting tells us something about power balances: making someone wait is a performance of power and it can even be quite an aggressive act. In the transactions described in this chapter, mediations indeed often showed the boundaries of the power of the teachers. At times, there was a *temporary reversion of initiative and transactional power*. This reversion is limited by time: opportunity must be seized, the planned time sequence of the teacher usually takes over when she reclaims initiative and the power to distribute time and space. Using these opportunities to seize initiative and temporarily reverse power dynamics are powerful tools in transactions. Contrary to what one might expect, many times, teachers are not the ones in charge and mothers are taking initiative, positioning their interpretation of their lives and their relationship with their children as a norm. To see these mediations of mothers as forms of resistance would be to take for granted a certain power distribution and certain forms of consciousness that spring from this distribution. In my observations, the power dynamic was much more complicated. It was regularly turned upside down and initiative to change transactions shifted back and forth between teachers and mothers.

Interestingly, parenting guidance practices set out to speed up mothers, but precisely the dimension of time is what teachers have least control over. Mothers *delay* the practices continuously by intervening and *mediating policy*. This is even more the case because so many transactions I encountered were characterised by a level of lethargy and sluggishness. For many reasons, the activities that are to speed up mothers and "move" them into "activity" are, in fact, slow, boring and low-energy. Teachers often feel frustration because of this sluggishness and assign responsibility for it to the mothers who are "difficult to move".

However, the experienced difficulties that come with professional intervention in personal lives and the frustration that professionals feel in the situations in which they work, does not necessarily lead to less faith in policy intervention. I was in fact struck in the field with the enormous trust social workers, pedagogues and teachers had in intervention. While experiencing the limitations of their work every day, and the sluggishness and frustration that are the result of these experiences, professionals in the field remained confident in the possible impact of their work. They often had high hopes and expectations. Likewise, policy makers design policies for intervention in the daily lives of urban inhabitants. And using the repertoire of Dutch paternalism, they have great faith in in the possibility of the "elevation" of the next generation.

I have not researched the effectiveness or even the success or failure of the policy practices that I participated in. I was not interested in whether or not these policies "work": if they produce what they were meant to produce by design. But I *was* interested in the actual practices, to see what happens when policy ambitions "hit the ground" of, alternatively "enter the room". To understand parenting guidance as part of urban re-generation as I do in this thesis, an understanding of actual practices has proven crucial. Without this insight in transactions in practices at the street level (cf. Lipsky 1980), government is easily overstated and the immense faith in policy that many of the participants in the chains of translations have is taken at face value by researchers. Intervention in the daily lives of urban inhabitants or citizens anywhere is very complex and policy implementation and policy practices have a dynamic of their own independent of policy goals, professional desires and political ambitions. As I have shown in this chapter, *policy is mediated* in transactions with the ones targeted by it. As a consequence, the dynamics of practices sometimes lacks dynamism.

Moreover, studies of public policy that lack a sense of transactional dynamics tend to ascribe the workings of policy to an actor or group of actors or, alternatively, to the policy measures themselves. In such cases, research shows that a particular measure "works", that particular professionals have a particular influence, or that some groups of clients are especially difficult to work with. Those involved in the policy process often do the same: certain groups of parents are "notoriously hard to reach", difficult to "move" or problems are "tough" and measures "effective", or not. Another example of such thinking is how in the situations described above, some (aspiring) professionals were frustrated, even angry, with individual mothers not doing what was asked of them. But policy practices (as everything social) are the result of transactions in which a myriad of elements contribute. Especially in classroom settings, professionals and mothers have to work together in sometimes more and sometimes less antagonistic transactions. In this chapter, I have shown the complexity of transactions in policy by focusing on time and, consequently on mediations in order to trace power dynamics. I have scrutinised what happens *between* mothers

and professionals in classrooms in particular timeslots.

The questions that remain are then: what is it exactly, that is the result of these mediations? What is produced at the end of the chains of translations and series of negotiations that I described in this chapter and the previous one? What is it that mothers and teachers make together within their transactions? Does it matter that mothers and professionals often do not agree on what it means to be a good mother or what a good parent should behave like? Or is there something else at stake? In the next chapter, I answer these questions.

*CHAPTER VI*

# TRANSACTIONS II:
# RITUALS OF REFLEXIVITY AND THE POST-INDUSTRIAL ECONOMY

*My mother took care never to tell me to do anything. She would only reason with me sweetly, like one intelligent, mature person with another.*
Sylvia Plath[1]

## *Beyond conflict and government: ritual-like transactions*

If mothers and professionals work together in a classroom setting with policy ambitions between them, what are they performing together? What is done in the courses? What is it that is produced in their transactions? And how does this relate to the desired urban future for Rotterdam? In this chapter, I argue that whatever conflict I witnessed and described in chapter 5, whatever mediations there were, whoever participated or objected, there was also much cooperation. This is what this final chapter deals with: what was done "in between" the actors.

Policy goals are translated into concrete interventions and some of the original emphasis and ambition is lost. And then, concrete policy interventions meet (a group of) mothers and are mediated in this transaction: some plans backfire, some plans are lost in transactions, some plans never quite translate into consequence because of sluggishness and lethargy. It is tempting to say, then, that parenting guidance practices are futile. That the interventions don't *do* much at all, that they have no or very little effect. Alas for the re-generation ambitions. Or maybe the interventions have different effects, perverse even. But such conclusions would be far too easily drawn. To point to the futility of the policies is to look only at what the policy designers and practitioners set out to do. And this would obscure so much of what the practices do, in fact, do. I argue in this chapter that in the parenting guidance practices that I researched, *mothers and professionals coproduce reflexive and communicative subject-positions in ritual-like transactions*.

### The common theme of reflection and communication

When I participated in the practices, I soon identified a common theme to them. We now know from the previous chapters that the practices differed greatly: Frontlijn worked with interns that complained of lethargy, aiming to bring order. Social work organised short courses and "themed meetings" focused on concrete issues. Some practices aim for a basic sense of order and cleanliness in family life, others for frank sex education. Teachers speak from varying dispositions and so do mothers. Practices and their effects can be turned upside down because of these variations.

But the practices also had something powerful in common: they were all centred on reflection and communication. In the previous chapters, I already wrote of communications and reflections of mothers and professionals in parenting guidance practices. There were debates, discussions, exercises, mediations, negotiations and conflict. In fact, parenting guidance practices are often explicitly set up to facilitate discussion and debate, as was the case, for example, in the "Growing

up with love" course about sex educating children. But my claim in this chapter goes further: I argue that reflection and communication were *done* in parenting guidance practices. No matter the substance of the issue at hand, transactions almost all took a particular *form*: that of egalitarian talk, negotiation, debate, evaluation or observation. And because of this, communicative and reflexive subject-positions were produced within the transaction. We practiced *being* and *doing* communicative and reflexive. The ritual-like transactions thus provided something of a reflexive and communicative mode of being and doing.

Given the ambitions of the city of Rotterdam and the organisations Frontlijn and social work, I expected much more emphasis in the practices on the transferral of pedagogical knowledge. I expected parenting tips to be exchanged, teachers explaining correct ways of correcting children, mothers asking for advice. But the practices were not so much about such types of knowledge-transferral. In fact, the authoritarian or at least hierarchical relationship from which such a practice would be possible was quite explicitly rejected by most professionals and mothers alike. The practices were about concrete issues and teachers did offer advice, but they did so in a particular egalitarian form and it is this form, I argue, that produces something interesting. Professionals teaching the classes and "guiding" the mothers were often uneasy in their role as figure of authority. They much rather stressed their equality to the mothers and engaged in discussion and egalitarian conversation. And on the other end of the transactions, mothers gladly positioned themselves as the ultimate experts, emphasising their unique position and stressing that "you have to be a mother to know". So parenting guidance practices dealt with issues such as food and eating, school choice, sex and child abuse, bed-wetting and bullying. These contents were part of policy plans for parenting guidance, but what the practice of parenting guidance produced was more dependent on form than on these contents. Whether we talked about bullying or sex, we *talked* about it as equals, we *debated* the issues and *negotiated* statements. Even non-negotiable issues were negotiated and put up for debate. In the end, all contents were subjected – quite radically – to the form of debate, negotiation, egalitarian talk, evaluation and observation. And this had something to do with the uneasiness with hierarchy and what I will term *egalitarian authority* later on in this chapter.

Beyond the transferral of professional knowledge about certain issues, the point was that we *practiced* communication and reflection in a most egalitarian fashion. I first started noticing this when every meeting I participated in (first with Frontlijn, later with social work) started and ended with evaluations. Teachers would ask mothers what they thought of the previous meeting, what they would like to discuss in the following one, what aspects they would like to discuss more extensively and so on. Evaluation was, thus, one of the forms of communication and reflection that we practiced.

**Ritual-like transactions**

This form of the transactions produced something itself, regardless of the substantive message. The production of subject- positions took shape in particular "ritual-like" (cf. C. Bell, 1997: 138) transactions. I prefer the term "ritual-like" to ritual because the transactions that I researched were not rituals in the classic anthropological sense: they were not necessarily *symbolic* moments (see Verkaaik, 2009 and C. Bell, 1997 for overviews). Moreover, the participants did not see the transactions as rituals, nor did course designers anticipate the ritual-like character of the assignments, debates and discussions. But many transactions that I witnessed were *ritual-like* nonetheless. That is to say that particular *forms* of transactions were used *repetitively*. I distinguish 1) egalitarian talk, 2) negotiation, 3) debate, 4) observation and 5) evaluation. No matter the content or substance of the practices, we dealt with them in distinguished and repetitive forms and the point is that these forms produced something that goes beyond the content of the course or guidance meeting. This was the common theme in the practices that I have studied.

My use of the analytic framework of ritual-like transactions starts from the insights of Erving Goffman (1959; 1967). I, too, focus on ritual-like aspects of social encounters. Goffman *did* use the term ritual – other than I –and with it he drew attention to the way in which ritual can create conformity to the *procedures* and *form* of the situation itself[2]. In general, the focus on form is much cited as a central aspect of ritual (C. Bell, 1997; Verkaaik, 2009). Ritual draws individuals into the situation, or – alternatively – the transaction, in part through this form. Moreover, for Goffman, ritual focuses attention on a particular object, underlining its value. Certain aspects of the situation are highlighted, certain values put front and centre and as a consequence, participants learn to behave and learn to *be* in particular ways (compare Verkaaik, 2009; 2010). In my research, this analytical focus on procedure and form is interesting. Because whether the content of what we talked about in the courses was sex, food, knowledge, bullying, marriage or authority, the point is that we talked about it in particular, distinguished and repetitive forms. *How* we talked (in an egalitarian fashion) dominated what we talked about (for example sex education) (compare Van Reekum & Van den Berg, forthcoming). By regulating the form, what we talked about was also limited. And through the form that was thus produced, certain ways of being were highlighted and made possible.

In addition to being so focused on form, the transactions were also repetitive. Some theorists look at ritual as a pedagogical instrument: as a way of becoming a certain type of subject through repetitive acts (Verkaaik, 2009). Especially in the work of Talal Asad (1993), this focus on pedagogy can be found (but this is a point also made by Goffman, for instance when he asserts that it is through ritual that an individual is taught to be a certain way (1967: 44). Asad draws on an analysis of monastic rites from the medieval Christian period to show how ritual was then

understood as practice meant to form certain dispositions. Ritual, in this sense, is not so much about symbolism, as it is about repetitive practice – scripts – through which certain subjectivities emerge. Or, to use the words of Saba Mahmood: ritual uses routine to cultivate desire (Mahmood, 2001). Ritual, in the work of Mahmood and Asad, contributes to the actualisation of a particular type of agency or subjectivity (compare Verkaaik, 2009; 2010). In this sense, ritual is a means of socialisation: of forming a habitus. Asad (1993) and Mahmood (2001) focus their attention on *conscious* habitus-formation through ritual: of *practicing* certain acts in order to form certain dispositions. The women in Mahmood's research, for example, induce the desire to pray in the early morning precisely by practicing early-morning prayer repetitively.

From these theoretical perspectives on ritual, I take the focus on ritual-like practice and what practices produce. I look at the *production of subject-positions within transactions*. I will explain what I mean by subject-positions below. But first, I think it is important to note that my approach differs from Mahmood's and Asad's in the respect that I focus solely on what happens within the transaction, instead of looking for more durable, or long-term effects beyond the transaction. I did not follow much mothers nor teachers for a longer period of time due to my research design and the nature of the practices that I studied (most of them were short-term courses, I gave a full explanation of these aspects in chapter 3). And most parenting guidance practices were not long-term and disciplined enough to be considered in the same way as the repetitive rituals of for example the women in Mahmood's research. A repetitive practice of early-morning prayer may be considered a means of inducing the desire to wake up early and pray. But participation in the ritual-like transactions that I studied most often consisted of much more incidental and partial participation, as I have described in chapter 3. Most importantly, though, I have looked at ritual-like transactions in relative isolation because I consider each transaction to be co-constituted by the participants. And as a consequence, each transaction requires participants to be and act differently. I will explain this theoretical perspective in more extent now.

**Producing subject-positions**

My focus in this chapter is on the production of subject-positions within transactions. I define subject-positions as "ways of doing, being (...) and thinking" (Starfield, 2002: 125) that become available in transactions. The ritual-like transactions open up possibilities for specific ways to be, talk and act. These possibilities exist within the transaction: they are produced in between the ones participating (in this case: mothers, teachers and myself). These participants are co-constituted in the transaction and are shaped according to the subject-positions. And their practice coproduces these positions. So in the case of the productions in parenting guidance practices, the available subject-positions are reflexive and communicative in specific ways: to be heard in a parenting

guidance practice, a participant is most likely to use a reflexive stance and to use for example egalitarian talk and evaluation as communicative strategies.

The participants are not only *subjected* to subject-positions. They *co-produce* these positions as well. My use of the term subject-positions and my focus on their production in transactions borrows from the work of Louis Althusser ([1971] 2008) and Michel Foucault (see for contemporary social scientific work based on Foucault's writing on this subject Cruikshank, 1999; Edley, 2001; Youdell, 2006). For Foucault, persons are subjectivated in discourse. And for Althusser, persons are interpellated or hailed by Ideological State Apparatuses to become subjects ([1971] 2008; see also Van Reekum & Van den Berg, forthcoming for a contemporary application of Althusser's framework, see also Korteweg, 2003; Adams & Padamsee, 2001). In both their approaches, the central point is that subjects are formed by discourse (Foucault) or ideology (Althusser). Power relations produce positions from which to be, act, talk and think. They create possibilities to be and do in certain ways. It limits these positions at the same time as it leaves room to manoeuvre. In the words of Youdell (2006: 517): "productive power constitutes and constrains but does not determine the subjects with whom it is concerned." The focus on subject-positions is one that has been further developed and used in the field of sociologies of education (among other fields) (see for example Walkerdine & Lucey, 1989; Youdell, 2006; Starfield, 2002). There, like in my research, transactions in educational or pedagogical settings are the focus of attention as is the question what is produced through these transactions. Starfield (2002), for example, uses the term subject-positions to point to the way in which sociology students develop a position of authority in their writing and her definition of subject-positions (cited above) fits my approach very well.

In my approach, the production of subject-positions does not necessarily lead to *durable* habitus-formation (as with Bourdieu, 1996 or Asad, 1993) or subjectivation beyond the transaction itself. In future transactions, the participants of the parent guidance practices are subjected to and co-producers of what is available to them in these particular future transactions. These future situations will require them to behave and be differently. If transactions are always a coproduction, co-constituting the elements within the transaction, then the participants of the parenting guidance practices change according to the transaction. In other words: the transactions in parenting guidance produce reflexive and communicative ways of being that not necessarily translate to other transactions. For instance, a mother-child transaction in the home context probably produces quite different subject-positions. An adolescent child might, for instance, behave rather aggressively, prompting the mother to take a more authoritarian, strict or angry position than in the context of the parent guidance practice.

I am thus concerned with the local practice of transactional coproduction instead of the transformational power of policy. My perspective focuses on what mothers and teachers do, in

fact, produce together in classroom settings and guidance meetings instead of the policy effects in terms of how mothers undergo durable change as an effect of policy.

## *Five ritual-like forms*

### Egalitarian talk

In general, what we did in the courses and what we practiced in assignments was a particular form of communication: egalitarian talk. Talk was advised often as a parental strategy. But more importantly, we talked. And we did so in an egalitarian fashion. We practiced *being* communicative by talking. As I described in the previous chapters, the courses were designed to talk about certain subjects and to sit in a circle and debate. At times, it seemed that egalitarian talk was not only the primary parental strategy taught in courses, but also the only one. Communicative mothering, it seemed, was to solve problems through mere talking. *Egalitarian talk as a form* of parent-child interaction was consequently often rehearsed in the courses as was egalitarian talk as a form of dealing with parental problems in the context of a parenting guidance practice. We – the participants of the parenting guidance practice – engaged in the repetitive performative transaction of talking. In many instances, this took a distinguished form. There were many assignments in which we practiced egalitarian talk and these were by their form set apart from other talk. From my field notes:

> *We do an assignment together. Half of the group of women (among whom myself) are asked by the teachers to go outside of the classroom. The other half stay inside. The group that is outside is asked to – once we come back into the room – act as though we are not interested in what the members of the group that stayed inside will tell us when we come back. The women inside the classroom are asked to tell us something about themselves. When I come back, Fatiha tells me a story about her life and I act as though I am not interested. Fatiha is irritated by my behaviour. When the teachers declare that we can stop doing the assignment, I am relieved that I can stop acting and Fatiha makes a joke to smooth over the initial irritation. When the teachers ask Fatiha and some others what they thought of this assignment, they tell us how bad it felt to not be heard.*

In this assignment, we practiced bad communication in order to learn communicative skills. We took the role of the other – in this case the adolescent child – in order to practice empathy and understanding of the importance of attention and communicative skills for parent-child interactions. This is done in the form of an assignment in which "the mother" (impersonated by

half of the group of women) is placed vis-à-vis "the child" (the other group of participants) in a one-on-one situation. In this fabricated situation, we talked in a replicated real life situation, rehearsing talk *for* such situations.

Importantly, the parenting guidance practices centred attention on talking about the issue, no matter what the issue was. Both mothers and teachers engaged in talking as a repetitive form. Even when egalitarian talk was quite obviously limited as a form of dealing with the issue at hand. Here it is instructive to remember Robert from chapter 4. He came to a themed meeting about sex education because of his anxiety about his seven year old daughter's early sexual behaviour. Robert quite explicitly asked the teacher for a solution to his problem and he indicated having talked to and with his daughter about sex numerous times.

> *When Anne (the teacher) asks Robert what he would like to teach his daughter, he says: "Well, a year ago, I think my answer would have been that I think that she should do whatever it is she wants as long as she is clear about her own boundaries. But now... I'm not so sure anymore. Because it seems to me she wants quite a lot. Now, maybe I think that as a parent, I should put some boundaries in place for her."*

Anne, in response, asks Robert questions about the situation and talks with him about possible solutions. She proposes to *talk* to his daughter about what it is that happened at school. She also proposes to *talk* to the parents of the boys in her class. Anne thus proposes more egalitarian communication while Robert is very explicitly trying to depart his communicative strategies, looking for clearer boundaries. The other parents offer him the help he is looking for in this instance:

> *"Can't you just forbid that kind of behaviour?" A mother in the class says. Robert replies: "So you just forbid things and put up boundaries yourself?" The other parents look at him puzzled: "Sure we do".*

Robert looked for a solution to his parental problem beyond talking and found an alternative in the strategy of forbidding that is suggested by the other parents in the class. Apparently, Robert was so very used to talking to his child in a highly egalitarian relationship, that forbidding behaviour and putting up boundaries were innovative solutions to him. But the point is: in the transaction between Robert, Anne and the participating mothers, egalitarian talk is 1) practiced (rehearsed) and 2) highlighted as the primary and most important parental response to difficulty, even when talk is recognised as a limited means of dealing with the problem at hand. In this

ritual-like talk, the relative egalitarian relationship between parents and children is brought into focus and underlined as an important value.

**Negotiation**

Forms of communication that underscore hierarchy and authority, such as forbidding certain behaviours, commanding children and punishing transgressions, can be considered common in parent-child relationships. In the course materials and in the views of many of the teachers I encountered, these are called "authoritarian parenting practices" and considered a central and important problem, responsible for a range of problems with "youths", especially when applied in parent-adolescent relationships. Later in this chapter, I will investigate this in more depth, but here, it is important as an introduction to one particular form of communication that was practiced in a ritual-like manner in the courses: negotiation.

The courses I participated in were very much focused on teaching mothers scripts for negotiation as an alternative to "authoritarian practices" and helping them to incorporate these through assignments and repetitive practice. Explicitly and especially, the course for parents of adolescents ("Dealing with adolescents") aims at departing "authoritarian" command as a parental strategy. We practiced this in a parent room in Rotterdam:

> *Simone (the teacher) tells us that if you want your adolescents to do something, stating a wish is the most effective form of communication. Commanding your children to do something breeds conflict, Simone says. She shares with us five guidelines for effectively stating a wish. She has printed them on a plastic card that she puts up on the blackboard. The five guidelines are: "Makes sure your wish is clear", "Use the singular form", "Aim for concrete behaviour", "Be aware of your tone" and "Direct your wish at your adolescent child". Simone gives an example: "So for instance, you could say: 'I would really like you to…". You should be clear to your child about what behaviour you find desirable and not just talk about what kinds of behaviour you dislike. Stating a wish is a nice way of communicating this." (…) After a while, Simone also confronts the participants in the class: "stating wishes is necessary, because, you know, children learn in school to talk back and negotiate. They don't get orders in school anymore either. That's why it has changed so much."*

This focus on negotiation and egalitarian relationships was not always agreed upon in the transactions in the classes. Mothers sometimes underscored their authority, highlighting the need for them to be clear about "who's boss" or, alternatively, "who's the mother". They negotiated

the prescript to negotiate and thus did participate in the transaction using *the form negotiation*. Negotiation was produced nonetheless. For instance, in the next excerpt of my field notes, Ellen particularises negotiation:

> *Ellen feels that negotiation and deliberation may work in dealing with small problems with your children, but where "real problems" are concerned, it doesn't work. She refers to her son and how he refuses to go to school. "You know, he has to. I cannot deliberate or negotiate this with him. He has to go to school. He is obliged by law and I am responsible. You know, but I didn't go to school either. So I am asking something of him that I didn't do myself. I understand where he's coming from, but I want him to go to school too." The other women agree: with "real problems", negotiation is difficult if not impossible.*

Through particularising negotiation, Ellen underscores the importance of negotiation and deliberation. She uses the form of negotiation. She does this first by deliberating with the participants of this class what she should do in this situation with her son. But second, she acknowledges the limits of her power in her relationship with her son and shows her empathy for his position. In response, Simone once more emphasises talk as a means of solving Ellen's parental problems in – again – a negotiating transaction between the teacher and the mother.
Negotiation was so very dominant as a form, that even something quite non-negotiable was negotiated. In the Netherlands, using physical violence towards children is prohibited by law. And professionals in the field of pedagogical advice thought of punishing children in general as an ineffective parenting tool. They much preferred praise and example as parental strategies (and this was also reflected in course outlines and official documentation of the organisations). So when one mother discussed a particular incident with a professional and student from Frontlijn, I was surprised by the negotiation that the professional engaged in. It is important to note that the mother in this example was monitored by the Dutch child protection services. And that this is an excerpt of field notes reflecting a "guidance house visit" of Frontlijn: a professional, an intern and I visited a mother in her home.

> *Jody (the mother) says: "you know I don't hit my child, he's far too cute for that, you know? I didn't make him to do that to him! Look at him! (She points at a picture). But that one time, he almost jumped in front of a truck. And then I grabbed him and because I panicked, I smacked him too (een klap geven). Well I guess a neighbour saw that and she called the services instead of coming to me, you know?*

*Justine (the professional from Frontlijn) responds: "Yeah, I understand why you would smack him then: you're panicking."*
*Jody: "and there are probably times where I would smack his behind, you know, I guess. But child abuse? No way."*
*Justine: "Yeah, I sometimes got smacked by my parents."*

Instead of being clear about her professional norms and Dutch law, Justine engages in a negotiation that was initiated by Jody. Even smacking children is something to negotiate in this instance. Justine does not talk from a position of authority, rejecting or denouncing Jody's statements and behaviour. Instead, the issue of hitting children is presented in this transaction as an object for negotiation. Justine first attests her understanding of Jody's narrative. Jody, first having claimed to only have hit her child once, can then respond with a more general statement about smacking him, but that in her opinion, this does not constitute abuse. And then Justine accepts this negotiation with the affirmation using her own experience. In the rest of this "house visit", Jody's problems and run-ins with the child protection services were discussed, but in this instance, the form of negotiation is dominant and the equality of the two women is affirmed.

**Debate**

The most clearly distinguished form of communication we performed was debate.

*The theme of this morning's meeting with parents and professionals in Feyenoord is bullying. The idea is that mothers will debate with each other using statements about bullying. The morning is introduced by Lydia (the professional pedagogue): there are large posters on the walls with statements about bullying. All participants (the mothers, two interns and I) walk around the room to read the statements. We are given Post-its on which to write our name. The idea is that we can put these on the posters with the statements that we would like to talk about. Some preliminary discussion starts this way and pretty soon, several statements are evidently most popular. They are about the need for parents to supervise their children's use of the internet, about responsibility for bullying, about kids that bully and those standing by, the responsibility of parents, and whether or not designer brand clothes should be banned from schools. Especially this last theme was very popular. Lydia monitored the debate that followed. She read one of the statements and then asked one of the women to say something about it. We were also asked to stand on one of two sides of the room signifying whether we were or weren't in favour of or in agreement with the*

*statement. Lydia passed around a carpet-beater to signify whose turn it was to speak. During the debate, Lydia highlighted several times that we were to debate the issue of bullying in a democratic manner.*

In this example, we participated in a ritual-like transaction in a distinct *debate form*. The term democracy was used throughout the assignment and the form of debate highlighted the democratic ideal too. We distributed ourselves spatially according to our opinions, in a mimic of for instance the UK House of Commons, being allowed to speak only when the chair (Lydia) gave us the carpet beater. The democratic message became most convincing in the *form* of the transaction: a structured performance of equality and exchange of arguments.

In a theme meeting on "norms and values", too (see again Van Reekum & Van den Berg, forthcoming for a detailed discussion of this course), these aspects of equality and democracy were highlighted in a structured debate about parenting values. The discussion was structured by the use of seven plastic cards, each with a word on it that refers to a specific value: 'cooperation', 'honesty', 'politeness', 'obedience', 'patience', 'neatness (order and hygiene)', and 'respect for everything and everyone around us'.

*Anne (the teacher) asks us to divide ourselves into smaller groups of five participants, and discuss these values in order to be able to put them into a hierarchical order. Anne explains how everyone finds certain values important, but that those are not always the same as the values that others prioritise. Some people, she says, find honesty more important than politeness. And others find them all to be equally important. 'Which, of course, is OK too.'*

Anne here stresses her equality to the mothers and her unwillingness to act as a figure of authority that will tell us which values we should find most important. To her, that is not the point of this assignment. More important is the fact that we debate the values and this is why Anne stresses that disagreement in our groups should be welcomed, as a basis for debate. And there were many other instances in which the form of debate was successful and mothers participated in voting games and debate assignments. Even when we discussed subjects of a rather delicate nature, we used voting cards to express our opinions.

For instance, in one of the courses for sex education (as described in length in chapter 4), we used voting cards to say whether or not we thought that statements were true. The statements were about topics such as birth control and hymens.


*Voting cards used in parenting classes and themed meetings. One green, one red.*

> *Yvonne wants to discuss some more issues that have to do with birth control. "Let's do this in a game: true or false?" She distributes red and green cards and presents us with a list of statements about sex and birth control methods. When one of the statements is to teach the women that the pill protects you from pregnancy, but not from sexually transmitted diseases, Khadija intervenes and explains that she has used many different types of birth control pills, but when you take a painkiller like ibuprofen, she says, they might not work so well and you may end up getting pregnant anyway. Yvonne says how nice it is that she can learn from the mothers each time.*

Interestingly, even a fact (the effects of birth control methods) is a topic for debate here. Khadija's statement is in a way non-debatable: Yvonne and other participants in this transaction know it is not true. Yet, Yvonne accepts her statement as a contribution to the "debate-game" and underscores their equal relationship by stating how much she learns from the mothers. In this instance, form is more important than content. Yvonne and Khadija are engaged in a transaction of egalitarian communication in the democratic form of debate. Khadija's opinion and Yvonne's statements of scientific facts appear in this transaction as equal. The transferral of professional or scientific knowledge that I expected to take place in parenting guidance practices is here in fact undermined by the dominance of a democratic form: Khadija's false statement is not corrected.

**Evaluation**

One of the first patterns that I distinguished while doing my field work was that in almost all encounters, mothers and professionals engaged in evaluations. They evaluated the previous encounter, they evaluated the plan for the next meeting, they evaluated their own behaviour, that of the mothers, of the room in which the course took place and the effects the previous meetings had had on the mothers' lives at home.

*In a morning class by the student-teachers of the "Practice Guidance" Programme of Bureau Frontlijn, one of the items to be discussed is "Learning to say 'No'". The participating mothers interpret that the student-teachers want to talk about saying no to children, about how to put up boundaries. But that is not the intention of Samira, the student-teacher in charge. Her idea was to talk with the mothers about "saying no" in general, as a way to become more assertive in life as an autonomous person. (...) Right after the assignments and discussions, a good half hour of the scheduled time is allotted to evaluating the meeting we just had. Barbara, one of the mothers, says how she likes the fact that she can now "stop to think" (*stilstaan bij*) when it comes to communication.*

Like in the examples above, the teacher does not aim to teach mothers concrete parenting skills, like putting up boundaries, as the mothers expected her to. Rather, she wanted to encourage the mothers to become more assertive and autonomous for themselves. In this aim, evaluations are an important form. As a very specific form of reflection, evaluation necessitates a certain lack of involvement in the moment itself. It necessitates distance. Barbara, one of the mothers, has appropriated the vocabulary of the teachers and says it best: she now "stops to think" about communication. The necessary distance that is thus produced is further extended in this transaction by reflection on parenting and life in general, instead of focusing on parenting practices in a more narrow or concrete sense.

Assignments of evaluation were repetitive: most meetings started and ended with evaluations, involving both mothers and teachers in a repetitive moment of reflection and focused attention on the process of the course itself. And they were a particular *form* of transactions. Evaluating the parenting guidance practices in parenting guidance practices can be seen as a means of practicing reflection: of creating a temporary distance to the practice itself. The form of evaluation was thus so very dominant that even the transactions in which the form was dominant became subject to it.

Many professionals teaching the practices were after a similar reflexivity: they wanted the mothers to be able to evaluate their lives, reflect on their behaviour and thus create opportunities for change. For them, or so they explained to me in interviews, the idea is that better parenting comes from the creation of a (temporary) evaluative distance: parenting will improve because of this distance to the usually intimate relationship between mothers and children. That is not to say that the teachers set up the evaluations for the practice of evaluation and reflection. Rather, evaluations were the effect of other logics: the organisational logics of Frontlijn and the social work agencies prescribed evaluations, for instance. And at times student-teachers' and teachers' insecurities about teaching and their consequent need for affirmation in such transactions, was, at least in part, a cause. Also, the focus on evaluation and reflection is a translation of the

educational programmes of the universities for applied sciences (*HBO opleidingen*) in which the student-teachers are enrolled and which most professionals in the field of pedagogical advice had completed. In their own on-going education, the interns and professionals are very frequently asked to fill out "reflection reports" and evaluations, sometimes to their own dissatisfaction. On several occasions, the aspiring-professionals in Bureau Frontlijn complained about the amount of time they had to put into "reflection reports" for the supervisors from their universities. Nonetheless, they translated teaching methods from their education to the classes that they provided for the mothers.

**Observation**

A quite similar translation (like the translations in chapter 4) is the way in which interns and professionals translated what they learned in their studies about *observing* children and families into teaching material to use in transactions with mothers. For example:

> *The student-teachers of Bureau Frontlijn talk with the mothers about developmental stages of children and how you can observe and chart your child according to the standardised "observation-lists". "We always work with them", one student says. The interns had planned for the mothers to observe their own children with such "observation-lists". They ask Lee: "Are there things that you worry about, Lee? Where do you think your children might be behind in their development?"*

Lee did not raise a concern about the development of her children in this transaction herself. Rather, the student-teachers do, using the instrument of the standardised "observation-lists", creating a new perspective on Lee's children's development, trying to make Lee participate in a reflexive assignment.

Besides evaluation, observation is an important form of reflection in parent guidance practices. Standardised instruments, itineraries, schedules and videos are used to produce, again, a certain distance to the everyday reality and routine of raising children. They produce a certain temporary *distance* and *disengagement*.

> *The mothers use a standardised form to chart their daily routines. They have to fill out the form with daily activities charted on a timeline. The student-teachers use the forms to initiate a discussion about structure. Debby (the student-teacher) asks: "is this a consistent structure of your day? Why do you do it this way?" The mothers respond shrugging: "Isn't that commonsensical? It just takes shape a certain way."*

Like in the evaluative assignments, the task is to make the everyday concrete, involved, immediate experience of life and raising children into something more abstract, distanced, to be debated, contemplated, discussed and planned. In many of the courses that were provided in elementary schools by social work, video material was used to produce a similar distance through rituals of observation.

> *We watch a DVD with three short examples of parent-child interactions in which the child asks the parent for money. In the first example, the (Dutch native) mother is very permissive and gives in: the child takes the money, the mother says: "What can I do?" In the second clip, the (Moroccan) mother says no immediately, without listening to the child. In the third clip, the (Turkish) parents don't immediately give in, but listen to the child and then say: Maybe.*
> *Simone (the teacher) asks us what we think of the different clips, of the possibilities of dealing with such a situation. The mothers agree that the first clip is a bad idea: far too permissive. They prefer the third clip, which is entitled "Democratic parenting", even though the mothers explain that in real life, you react in different ways to different situations at different times. Concluding, Ellen, one of the mothers says: "you know that second example, that kind of parenting is why we're dealing with criminal youth!"*

I will elaborate on the categorisation of "parenting styles" and "democratic parenting" below. But here, my point is that the reflection on parenting and daily life is accomplished through the observation of video-material. The form of observation is rehearsed in a ritual-like manner by using the *distance* provided by the video.

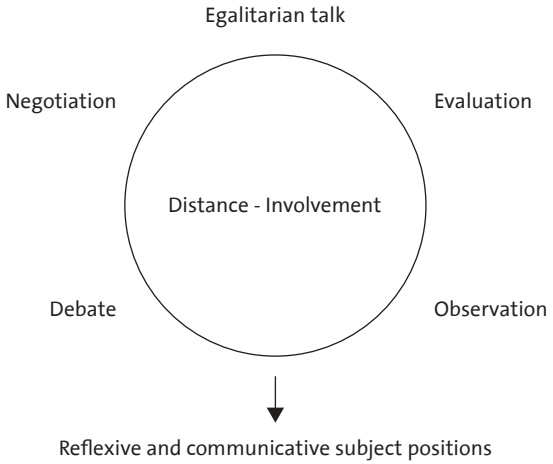
**What the ritual-like forms produced: reflexive and communicative subject-positions**

In the five ritual-like forms, we practiced *being* reflexive and communicative. By engaging in talk, negotiation, debate, evaluation and observation, we opened up the possibility of being reflexive and communicative within the transaction: we produced reflexive and communicative subject-positions. Whether we talked about breakfasts or bedtime stories, the point was that we talked and whether we looked at schedules of daily eating routines or videos, the point was that we observed parenting from a distance and learned how to reflect upon our daily life. All issues were subjected to the form of the ritual-like transaction: even the non-negotiable was negotiated, even well-established facts were debated. I do not mean to argue that the substance or content of the practices was unimportant. Indeed it was important and I have analysed the translations and mediations of content in chapters 4 and 5. The point is, rather, that no matter the issue at hand, it

was dealt with in a particular form in which we practiced being reflexive and communicative: by engaging in egalitarian talk, for example, or evaluation.

In the ritual-like transactions, a particular balance between distance and involvement surfaced as an important aspect of parent-child relationships as well as other relationships in which parents participated in their role as parent, such as their relationship with their children's school. Especially in the ritual-like transactions evaluation and observation, a particular distance and disengagement were addressed as important values. But on the other hand, a particular involvement in children's lives and school careers was emphasised as well. The idea of involvement, then, puts parents in something of a double bind: they are either too involved or not involved enough (compare Nakagawa, 2000; Van den Berg & Van Reekum, 2011). The issue that is put forward in the ritual-like transactions is not so much involvement or distance per se (after all, the mothers do already participate in parenting guidance). Rather, the issue is the right kind of balance between distance and involvement. Or, in other words, the question of what kind of involvement is preferable. This balance involves emotional labour (Hochschild, [1983] 2012): the ability to have the right kind of emotions in particular situations. Anger, for example, was frowned upon as a parental emotion in the transactions. Mothers and teachers agreed that this was not a productive emotion to have when it comes to raising children. In the following paragraphs, I will analyse this importance of emotional labour in the light of the twenty-first century economy. Because now I will return to the larger theme of this dissertation: the re-generation of Rotterdam.

**Ritual-like transactions**



### *Reflexivity, communication and the post-industrial economy: an elective affinity*

I studied parenting guidance practices in relative isolation. But of course these transactions are not isolated at all. They are located in a place and time where industrial production is moved elsewhere and new jobs and careers are available in an interactive service economy. In this paragraph, I connect what I found in the parenting guidance practices to the larger issue of this dissertation: Rotterdam as a re-generating city.

The reflexive and communicative subject-positions that were coproduced through the repetitive practice of talk, negotiation, debate, evaluation and observation resemble the type of employee that the new service economy desires. I argue, therefore, that there is a remarkable affinity between the *subject-positions* that were produced in the transactions in the courses that I researched and the *vocational ethic* for a desired post-industrial future economy of Rotterdam. The concept that is most suitable to use in this argument is "elective affinity", or "Wahlverwandtschaft". The term Wahlverwandtschaft was introduced in sociology by Max Weber in his study on the protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism (Weber, [1920] 2002). In this famous study, Weber showed an "elective affinity" (the English term for Wahlverwandtschaft) between Calvinist beliefs and capitalism's success. For example, the Calvinist belief in predestination led many to look for signs of being elected. And these doubts were resolved by seeing success through hard work as a sign of being chosen. This stress on hard work, thrift and responsibility fitted very well with a capitalist vocational ethic, needing hardworking individuals (Engbersen, 2009; Kalberg, 2002; Weber, [1920] 2002). The Protestant ethic and the values of capitalism strengthened each other. The relationship between the two phenomena is one of *affinity*, not causation. That is to say that there is, what Weber called a "meaningful connection" (Weber cited in Kalberg, 2002: xxviii) between values and materiality, but the direction is less clear.

Fast forward into the future (or at least a later stage in history), at the moment in time when Fordism was at its peak, there was a clear connection between a mode of production and a certain "way of life" or "ethic" too, albeit not one of affinity per se, but one of planning. I dealt with this in chapter 2 to some extent, but it is useful to recount here that Fordism depended on employees that were consumers too. It depended on men with a five day work week and enough leisure time and income to be able to buy a Ford car themselves; to go on vacation and to invest in a home. This way, the quantities of production could go up. Fordism also depended on a gendered division of labour in which men worked in factories and offices and women stayed home, did grocery shopping and raised children. The home came to be seen as a tranquil retreat from the market (Abramovitz, [1988] 1996) and women's domesticity fitted wonderfully with the need for increased mass consumption (Ehrenreich & English, [1978] 2005). Fordism was thus characterised by a more or less stable working class and the nuclear family (McDowell, 1991). Feminist scholars

like Mimi Abramovitz ([1988] 1996), Barbara Ehrenreich and Deidre English ([1978] 2005) and Linda McDowell (2003; 2009) have analysed this constellation and relation between markets and gender roles at home. In my work in this dissertation, I build on and position myself in this work and line of analysis by focusing, too, on the connection between market and private life.

The Fordist division of labour and women's consequent domesticity was what second wave feminists like Adrienne Rich ([1976] 1988)[3] struggled against. Adrienne Rich wrote about the condition of motherhood in during the 1950s and 60s, when Fordism was at its peak: "we learn, often through painful self-discipline and self- cauterisation, those qualities which are supposed to be 'innate' in us: patience, self-sacrifice, the willingness to repeat endlessly the small, routine chores of socialising a human being" (37). This quote characterises the role or ethic that was prescribed for women in the 1950s and 1960s. And this ethic accompanied the Fordist mode of production: women were required to be domestic, patient, caring, mystical, romantic mothers. They were supposed to self-sacrifice, again in the words of Rich: to let their "autonomous self" die with the birth of their children, working only towards the right individuality for the child. As I showed in chapter 2, this led to a new interpretation of the role of mothers: mothers were increasingly asked to *educate* their sons and daughters into their roles in Fordist society. And this meant gender specific parenting (preparing boys and girls for different roles) and values such as hard work, the importance of consumption, authority and obedience.

The cultural shift departing this model and introducing anti-authoritarian values to parenting and social relations in general of the late 1960s and 1970s, coincided with the introduction of a new mode of production: post-Fordist and flexible (Harvey, 1989). While mothers remained responsible for the moral education of children, *what* precisely this moral education should entail changed and has been changing since. The point here is that modes of production and capitalism showed "meaningful connections" to cultural practices: ways of being and doing in both the age of the industrial revolution (as argued by Weber) and at the peak of Fordism in the 1950s and 1960s.

I argue that what I witnessed in the parenting guidance practices in Rotterdam in 2009 and 2010 was the coproduction of *reflexive and communicative subject-positions* that showed a similar affinity with a *post-industrial capitalist vocational ethic*. In a way reminiscent of the "meaningful connection" between capitalism and Protestantism, or of the relationship between Fordist production and domestic, self-sacrificing motherhood, the stress on equality, autonomy, democracy, reflection, communication and emotion management in the parent courses fits what the post-industrial service economy needs: autonomous, reflexive and communicative employees. A similar neo-Weberian argument was made by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) about what they call a new *spirit* that accompanies post-Fordist or post-Taylorist capitalism. In the following, I will elaborate on and explain this argument by first introducing descriptions of the post-industrial

vocational ethic, to then compare this with the reflexive and communicative subject-positions that were produced in the transactions.

**The post-industrial vocational ethic**

In the new service sector, young working-class people are far more likely to "learn to serve" (McDowell, 2000; 2003) than to "learn to labour" (Willis, 1977). In Willis' famous ethnography of teenage working class boys, "Learning to labour", he showed how the boys' counter-school culture prepared them for the shop-floor culture of manufacturing plants. Today, however much alive some components of this culture and its masculinities, young people are far less likely to transition from youth to adulthood through industrial jobs (Nayak, 2006). In most parts of the Western world, the service sector has become much larger than the industrial sector. And learning to serve – or learning to bank, learning to practice medicine or learning to teach – entails a different set of skills and dispositions than learning to labour in industry.

Much has been written about this "sea change" (Harvey, 1989) in modes of production and job markets. The enormous surge of the service sector has had far-reaching effects so far and many scholars have taken note (see for example, Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Harvey, 1989; McDowell, 2009; Sassen, 1991). The optimistic story in the literature is about the new knowledge economy and ever increasing education levels of populations, globally connected through the internet, "foot loose" and free (see for instance D. Bell, 1974; Hage & Powers, 1992; Castells, 2001). The pessimistic story is one of the increase of precarious service sector work, insecurity and risk; exploitation and inequality (see for instance Sassen, 1991; Nayak, 2006; McDowell, 2009; Sennet, 1998). The first story is, roughly, one of "brain work" and the global, the second of "body work" and the local. How the two stories relate in the urban context is the object of fierce debates in urban studies (see for instance Van der Waal & Burgers, 2009; Sassen, 1991) but not the object of my concern here. That is, rather, that despite the enormous differences in type of employment for high-skilled service sector workers (such as bankers, scientists, managers) on the one hand and type of employment for low-skilled service sector workers (such as waiters, cleaners, hair dressers), there are similarities, too. Working in the service sector, whether in jobs that are for low-skilled workers or those that are suitable for high-skilled workers, roughly entails 1) being able to manage emotions, 2) being communicative and 3) reflexive.

The courses that I studied were, to paraphrase Willis once more, about "learning to mother" (and this is also the title of this section of this thesis). And in the following, I further explain the above three characteristics of service sector work and compare these with aspects of parenting that were highlighted in the ritual-like transactions talk, negotiation, debate, evaluation and observation: reflexivity, communication and emotion management.

**Emotion management in parenting – emotional labour**

Since the first publication of Hochschild's "The managed heart" in 1983, it has been widely acknowledged that both high and low-skilled work in the service economy entails emotional labour (Grandey et al., 2012; Nixon, 2009). Like Hochschild's famous flight attendants, hair dressers, waiters and nurses, too, work at the *emotional style* of the service they are offering (cf. Hochschild, 2012 [1983]: 5). The management of their feelings to "create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" (Hochschild, [1983] 2012: 7), is part of their labour. The bar tender sells his smile, the nurse her empathy, the hairdresser her chatting. Being able to manage your emotions is more important in post-industrial service work than it was in the Fordist factories or on the docks of the Rotterdam harbour. In fact, it has become one of employees' most important skills because so many are working in what has been called interactive service work (McDowell, 2009). As a consequence, "personal qualities" or "character" are increasingly often selection criteria for jobs and, in Boltanski & Chiapello's words, this leads to the "exploitation of human abilities" such as the ability to relate (2005: 242).

Interestingly, Hochschild already argued that the socialisation in (in her interpretation middle class) families prepares workers for this emotional demand by constantly foregrounding feelings and emotions as important and sanctioning certain emotional responses. And indeed, this important aspect of service sector work corresponds with the way in which emotion management was accentuated in the ritual-like transactions in the parenting guidance practices that I studied, especially when it came to the delicate balance between involvement and distance. Both mothers and teachers agreed that anger was an unproductive or even destructive emotion in parent-child relationships and that a certain emotional distance was necessary to provide the best parental response to particular problems. On the other hand, other emotional involvements of parents in childrearing, such as empathy, were promoted. A certain hierarchy in emotions thus emerges as does a certain particular balance of involvement and disengagement. The important lesson in the practices I studied was, thus, that emotions must be managed in order to be effective as a parent. And this corresponds with the importance of the management of emotions for service sector jobs and careers.

**Communicative subject-positions – communicative work**

Related to this emotional labour is the ability to communicate. Interactive service work means co-presence of the one providing and the one consuming the service. In the words of David Harvey, in service work, the turnover time is immediate (1990). Much of this work – whether it is nursing in a hospital, presenting a new marketing campaign to a client, selling mortgages in a bank or fries at the counter of a fast-food restaurant – thus entails face-to-face contact. As a consequence,

communicative skills are immensely important. In the words of Linda McDowell (2009: 33), "the ability to convince" is a crucial element in service exchanges. The rough behaviour of the working class boys in Willis' "Learning to Labour" would not be appreciated in most jobs today because of this communicative aspect. *Persuasion* has become ever more important, both as a technique of management because authoritarian close supervision is no longer considered effective or efficient, and as a technique of worker-client interaction.

Even in jobs outside of these interactive services, much work consists of deliberation and sharing information and is in that sense interactive and communicative too. Much work that was routine in Fordist or Taylorist organisations, is now automated or outsourced to other parts of the world. The work that is left is far more communicative (Hage & Powers, 1992; Boltanksi & Chiapello, 2005) and presupposes the ability of workers to act and interact in written language and some to have some measure of "discursive ability" (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005: 241). Moreover, the widespread use of communication technologies requires quite complex communication skills, for which continuous training is necessary. The capacity to communicate has, as a consequence, become ever more important in the selection of employees, for which psychological tools to assess "personalities" are frequently used (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005).

Given this immense importance of communication in the new economy, the emphasis put upon communicative mothering in the parent courses I studied becomes understandable. The technique of *egalitarian talk* as parental action and negotiation as an alternative to command that were produced in between mothers and professionals in parent classes show much resemblance to the communicative subject that the post-industrial economy needs: (seemingly) egalitarian and focused on persuasion and convincing rather than on command and conflict.

**Reflexive subject-positions – reflexive autonomous work**

Both the emotional and communicative aspects of post-industrial work presuppose the ability of individuals to 1) understand themselves as an autonomous individual self and, 2) to *reflect* on that individual self and its behaviour. It presupposes the ability to observe oneself from a distance, to analyse and evaluate one's behaviour and to then change it according to the demands made by the job market, business, restaurant owner, concrete customer exchange or the local social services "street level bureaucrat".

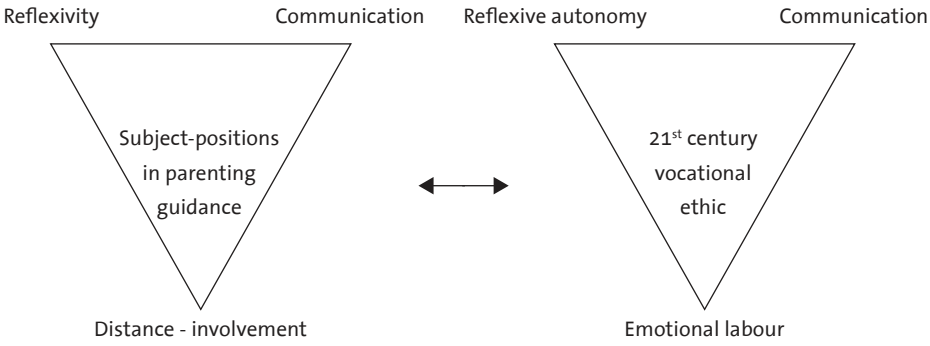
It is no surprise, then, that much has been written about what has been termed reflexive modernisation (Beck et al., 1994) and the restructuring economy (see for instance Adkins, 2002; McDowell, 2009). The thesis of reflexive modernisation identifies a radicalisation of modernisation itself. Often, (but this is only one interpretation, see for a brief overview Van den Berg & Ter Hoeven, forthcoming 2013) reflexive modernisation is interpreted as a process in which autonomous

individuals choose their identity throughout the bricolage-project that is their life. According to Giddens (1991), the self is more and more understood as a reflexive project, an open product, a constituted identity. 'We are, not what we are, but what we make of ourselves' (ibidem: 75).

Although the limits of the framework of reflexive modernisation have been illustrated by many scholars (see for instance Adkins, 2002; Duyvendak, 2004 and Elchardus, 2009 for critiques), reflexivity is an important asset of workers in the twenty-first century. Today's labour market is both more flexible and more interactive. Individuals (have to) change jobs more often than they did before and individuals more often work in direct interaction with clients, patients and other recipients of services. The ability to reflect on demands made by employers, customers or the job market in general is a crucial skill in today's labour market because of these characteristics of flexibility and interactivity. Labour market success or failure is increasingly perceived as both an individual accomplishment and the result of the ability to perform whatever identity and type of behaviour is required in different social settings (Adkins, 2002). And although this fluidity of identities and flexibility of careers should not be overstated – after all, social categories such as race, gender and class still are immensely important – service sector employment does require individuals to understand themselves as more or less autonomous individuals and to be reflexive of this position and the fitting performance. Successful workers in the post-industrial economy build "portfolio" careers, selling constructions of themselves (or in Goffman's terms: "presentations of self", 1959) and their biographies (McDowell, 2009: 68). To give only two examples here: a good hairdresser not only has the technical skills to cut hair, she also knows what clients like to chat and who prefers a more anonymous transaction. She can interpret a social situation and present herself accordingly. Likewise, a successful businessman understands what suit to wear to what meeting as much as he understands the content of the meeting.

Practicing reflexivity in the ritual-like transactions in parent courses that I studied fits very well with these labour-market demands. The importance of "stopping to think" (*stil staan bij*) and personal autonomy was one of the most striking features of what mothers and teachers produced together through ritual-like transactions like filling out observation-lists to monitor their own behaviour and the continuous meta-evaluation of the parent classes themselves. In both the future labour market and in the parent classes, individual autonomy and reflexivity were highlighted.

**The elective affinity: Characteristics of the post-industrial vocational ethic and subject-positions in parenting guidance**




## *Egalitarian authority and anti-authoritarianism*

**Anti-authoritarianism and "authoritative parenting"**

The policy makers, managers of social work organisations, school directors and politicians initiating the organisation of parent courses did not necessarily have the desired future Rotterdam economy in mind. Nor were they primarily trying to establish a new service economy and educating the next generation to work in service jobs. Rather, they were trying to manage youth "nuisance" in the street, to improve school achievements through parent involvement, to help mothers in their daily struggles or to combat poverty. The mothers that participated had reasons of their own to do so too. They liked chatting about what it is that they do every day, met with friends or made new ones and sometimes had concrete, everyday problems for which they wanted professional advice. While future employment of their children may have been a concern, though, no mother mentioned it to me as the primary reason to participate in a meeting. The new service economy was not a dominant framework for organising and executing parent courses or parent guidance programmes, nor was it for participating in one.

A framework that was dominant for the organisers, course designers and teachers was the opposition of two parenting models: "authoritative" (sometimes also called "democratic") and "authoritarian". In the analysis of the ritual-like transactions above, these terms already manifested themselves. The terms and opposition comes from modern pedagogical sciences. In the Netherlands, the interpretation of these terms in the work of Dutch social scientist Micha

de Winter was highly influential in the pedagogical field: with policy makers and practitioners. Micha de Winter argued that in order to defend democracy, parent guidance courses, schooling and other pedagogical social policies should promote authoritative parenting. In 2004 (he later repeated the argument several times, see for example 2005), he made a plea for what he termed a "democratic-pedagogical offensive". Building his argument on Dewey's work, he argued that parenting guidance and other pedagogical policies in the Netherlands needed to focus on socialising children and youths for a role in a democratic society. This entailed teaching negotiation, equality, responsibility and debate as skills and as alternatives to violence, authoritarianism and discrimination. This offensive was to form "democratic personalities" (2005: 9) and De Winter argued that an authoritative parenting strategy is most fit to do this. Authoritative parenting, according to De Winter, is more based on authority than power:

> *"Parents (...) explain their actions to their children, they promote the development of a feeling of responsibility, give good moral examples and act according to an open, democratic leadership style. This way, the family is the first learning situation for a democratic moral. Authoritative childrearing thus represents the common good and this justifies, I think, that parents should at least be properly educated about this through parent guidance, (...)." (2005: 11).*

The model of "authoritative parenting" was quite actively promoted in the courses that I studied, if only because it featured quite dominantly in the course methods and materials that the teachers used. Most teachers were convinced of the necessity and usefulness of this model for everyday parenting practices. But not only teachers advocated the parental strategies that fit the authoritative model. Interestingly, the ritual-like transactions in the courses created conformity to this form. Mothers coproduced communicative and reflexive subject-positions, underlining the importance of equality, distance and emotion management. And this fitted the model of "democratic" and "authoritative parenting" perfectly.

In the table below, I summarise and synthesise the oppositional discursive system of "authoritarian" versus "authoritative" parenting. The table is based on what I found in the literature on the models or "ideal types" of parenting methods. The model of "authoritative" parenting is preferred by Micha de Winter and the teachers I interviewed.

**The constructions of authoritative versus authoritarian parenting.**

**PARENTING MODELS**

| **Authoritarian** | | **Authoritative** |
|---|---|---|
| | Values in upbringing | |
| Tradition | | Modernity |
| Hierarchy | | Equality |
| Authoritarian regime | | Democracy |
| Community | | Individuality |
| | Goal upbringing | |
| Obedience child | | Development autonomous self |
| | Focus | |
| Goal | | Form |
| | Legitimacy | |
| Power | | Authority |
| Force | | Persuasion |
| Tradition | | Science |
| | Form | |
| Formal | | Informal |
| Rigidity | | Flexibility rules |
| Negative parenting | | Positive parenting |
| Hierarchy | | Equality |
| Command | | Negotiation |
| Punishment | | Communication |
| Parents control children | | Parents control themselves |
| Patriarchy | | Gender equality |
| | Strategies attributed to | |
| Allochthonous | | Autochthonous Dutch |
| Non-West | | West |
| Working classes | | Middle classes |

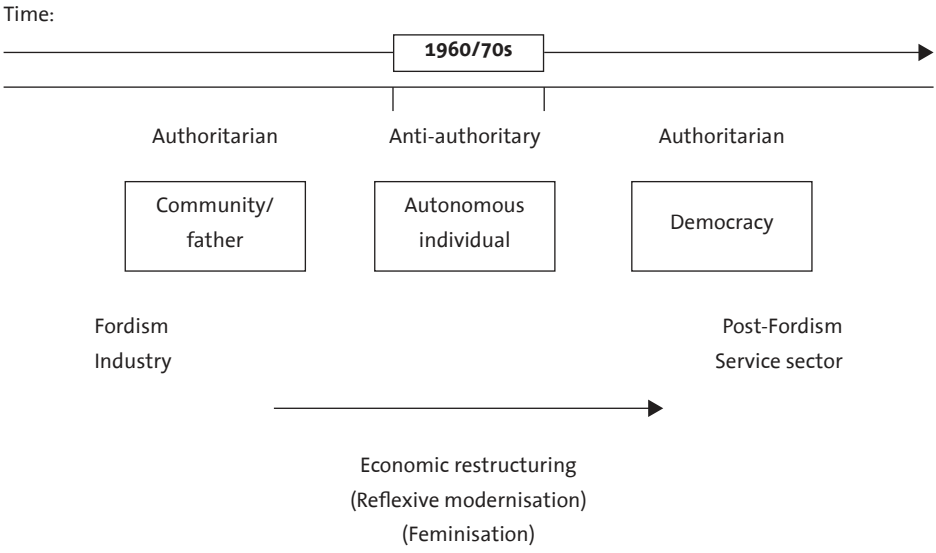
The "authoritarian" model is considered a "traditional" way of bringing up children, geared towards hierarchical relationships in the home, in the community and in society at large. The obedience of the child to those in positions of power (the parents, grandparents, community leaders) is the goal of such types of parenting and the system is based on the legitimacy of those in power. Parenting strategies consist of a certain rigid obedience to rules and punishments if the rules are broken. Parents order, or command, children to do things and parents are thus focused on controlling the behaviour of children, using "deductive correction": children are disciplined according to a set of rules. On the other side of this opposition, "authoritative" parenting is a "modern" type of childrearing, geared towards equality and democracy. The individuality of the child is a central value here and for this purpose, parents apply themselves to the development of a healthy self of the child. Rules are not as strict and rigid as they are in an "authoritarian" upbringing; parents use persuasion and communication as techniques and build their ideas about parenting on scientific insights. The relationships in families are rather informal and open and parents use "inductive correction": the rules are made on the basis of the behaviour and development of the children. Parents control themselves rather than the children and they make sure that their emotional response is effective.

Importantly, in the literature, the two parental strategies are attributed to particular categories of people. Depending on the particular goal of the texts, the authoritarian strategies are attributed to either "allochthonous", "Non-western" or "working class" parents. And these are thus placed vis-à-vis "autochthonous Dutch", "Western" and "middle class" parents. In this move, the meanings of "Dutchness", "modern", "democratic" and "middle class" thus become intertwined (see for a more elaborate analysis of this logic: Van Reekum & Van den Berg, forthcoming). And using "authoritative" parental strategies thus becomes a move towards modernity, democracy and Dutch Western society, possibly leading to class upgrading as well. At any rate, "authoritarian" parental strategies are presented as a thing of the past, as "traditional" and definitely not "modern".

Those that "stay behind" in this authoritarian past are, thus, "working class" or "allochthonous". To further elaborate on this point of "staying behind", I put the constructions of "authoritarian" and "authoritative" parenting on a timeline in the figure below. Here, the point is not to accept or reject this logic or narrative. The point is that history is told in this particular way and this particular narrative helps to produce the opposition "authoritarian" "authoritative". The logic in the course texts that I analysed and in the pedagogical literature that emphasises the opposition between "authoritarian" and "authoritative" parenting (please see De Winter, 2004; 2005 for overviews) is that before the 1960s and 70s, authoritarian parenting was the norm, in the Netherlands and elsewhere. "Authoritarian" parenting thus belongs to "tradition" and to strong knit "communities". In response to "authoritarian parenting", the 1960s and 1970s were

characterised by a vehement anti-authoritarianism (Van den Berg & Duyvendak, 2012) in which there were experiments with forms of parenting, with radical equality and far-reaching freedom of children. The limits of this radicalisation were soon reached and out of the critique on the extreme permissiveness of the 1970s, there emerged a new and modern model: "authoritative parenting", or so say. In this representation of history, the period before the 1960s was characterised by a focus on community and the authority of the father. In the short period of experiments and "anti-authoritarianism", the autonomy of the child was put front and centre and in the period after the 1970s, the two became more balanced into a focus on a democratic order. In the figure below, I added the restructuring of the economy as it is often represented. There, too, many have written of a "sea change" in modes of production (Harvey, 1990) and a fundamental shift towards "post-Fordism" (Harvey, 1990), towards the "knowledge economy" (D. Bell, 1974), towards the "rise of the service sector" (McDowell, 2009) and so on.

**Constructions of the development of parental strategies vis-à-vis economic restructuring**



By putting these two histories together in one figure, I further elaborate my point of the elective affinity between the twenty-first century vocational ethic and the production of reflexive and communicative subject-positions in parenting guidance practices. Pedagogues writing of authoritative parenting and its advantages rarely speak of the job market and opportunities there, but the values that are central to this parental model fit perfectly what the "new economy" of services and interactions needs and this figure shows that the two developments (towards authoritative parenting and towards post-Fordism) are presented as simultaneous. The economic shift of the 1970s was thus, it seems, accompanied by a shift in values in upbringing.

In line with the call for "authoritative parenting", the focus on talk, equality and communicative skills in the parenting guidance practices was to discourage the act of punishment. In general, restricting children is advised against and called "negative parenting". Instead, parents are coached to learn how to parent "positively" (this is an emic term: "positive childrearing", *positief opvoeden*), to praise good behaviour instead of punishing children for bad behaviour. Positive praise of desired behaviour should take precedence over other, more "negative" and "authoritarian" strategies, so say the course materials used in the practices that I studied. For example, the course material of the course "Opvoeden zo!", designed for parents with children between the ages of four and twelve, says:

> *"If parents try to influence their children's behaviour in a negative way, this can have several consequences. A: It will have less effect. Praising and rewarding desired and acceptable behaviour is far more effective than criticising and punishing undesired and unacceptable behaviour. B: And the self-image of children is negatively influenced. (...) leading to fear of failure and bravado (bravoure gedrag)."(emphasis in original, MB; NIZW, 2006: 20)*

I will return to this problematisation of "bravado" below, in my paragraph on feminisation.

**Egalitarian authority**

The aversion against "authoritarianism" and the idea that hierarchy belongs to the past, to "lagging behind" people, "allochthonous", or "working class", creates a problem in the daily practices of professionals and mothers alike. Because sometimes authority is both necessary and expected. As the mothers rightfully pointed out: sometimes they have to decide without deliberating their decision with their children. And sometimes professionals teaching parent classes could use some form of hierarchy. In the ritual-like transactions in the parenting guidance practices, equality was repetitively put forward as an important value: professionals and mothers alike subscribed to

the ideal of them being equal and of relative equality within the family. But in the practices, the teachers were the ones initiating certain debates on certain issues, not the mothers. The teachers provided the course material or the advice on how to deal with bullied children, landlords or yet another debt collector. In those instances, they were not exactly equal to the mothers. Professionals in the field of pedagogical advice performed a paradoxical kind of authority: on the one hand affirming equality to their clients, on the other hand positioning themselves as experts. After all, they participate in the practices in their role as professional. The successful negotiation of these aspects of their role granted them authority. In situations in which some level of authority was necessary, the preference for equality led to tensions and insecurities for professionals and to the question: how to perform authoritatively while maintaining a position of equality to the mothers? In other words: how to perform *egalitarian authority*?

This preference for egalitarianism and these insecurities came to the fore in the way in which teachers talked of their ambition to "stand beside" the mothers, to see the mothers as "experts of their own children" and to create "consciousness". They were much more reluctant to use the language of "teaching". Even in Frontlijn, where the use of this language was more common than in social work (for example also the use of the word "guidance"), the interns were much more comfortable in an egalitarian relationship. The interns of Frontlijn sometimes even went so far as complaining about the involvement of the mothers because they saw this involvement as "doing something in return": a form of reciprocity (this was one of the themes in chapter 5).

Parenting guidance professionals were wary of taking a role of power and instead wanted to use persuasion, negotiation and reasoning. One of the teachers, for example, said to me:

> *'I feel so much like a teacher, you know, when I teach. I don't feel comfortable in that role at all. I would much rather just join the discussion, you know?'*

This statement surprised me at the time, because she had just finished teaching an actual course, in which some teacher-role was expected of her. But it is rather consistent with the importance of equality and egalitarianism that I found throughout parenting guidance. Another example pertains to the childrearing debates in Rotterdam that I wrote of in chapters 3 and 4. Interestingly, alderman Geluk originally set out to organise debates about ten "rules" for raising children. But the professionals in the field of pedagogical advice resisted this terminology. And this resistance resulted in consequence: they were officially termed *vanzelfsprekendheden*: "self-evident values", because the professionals felt that this term did more justice to their egalitarian approach. One manager of a parenting guidance organisation says, for example:

> *(The organisation of the debates) was sometimes quite problematic. I like the idea of prompting debate. Fair enough. But at first, it was very directive (met het opgeheven vingertje), like the alderman wanted to judge many parents. Now we decided to speak of "self-evident values" instead of "rules", even though the alderman still calls them "rules".*

This is a particularly telling example of egalitarian authority. The professionals feel more comfortable with the terminology of "self-evident values", feeling that this is more congruent with their egalitarian approach. And it might indeed be that this term reflects a more equal relationship than does the term "rules". However, the alderman and professionals still were the ones that initiated debates with parents in Rotterdam about ten values and in this sense, they still operated from a position of authority, only in an egalitarian fashion.

### *Feminisation: "Redundant masculinities" and the pink collar economy*

To return to the broader problematic of this dissertation, there is one more theme that I would like to address in this chapter. And that is the question of how this elective affinity between communicative and reflexive subject-positions and the twenty-first century vocational ethic relates to gender. To introduce this theme, I return to a piece of data that I presented above. I will present it here again, but now to point to something different. This is an excerpt from (parenting) course materials:

> *"If parents try to influence their children's behaviour in a negative way, this can have several consequences. A: It will have less effect. Praising and rewarding desired and acceptable behaviour is* far *more effective than criticising and punishing undesired and unacceptable behaviour. B: And the self-image of children is negatively influenced. (...) leading to fear of failure and bravado (*bravoure gedrag*)."*
> (emphasis in original, MB; NIZW, 2006: 20)

Bravado (*bravoure gedrag*) is not gender neutral. It is very much attributed to boys and masculine behaviour. And indeed, Rotterdam worries most about boys and young men, as I have addressed and analysed in chapter 2. The transgressions that are worrisome to the Rotterdam administration, schools and professionals in the field of pedagogical advice are indeed coded as masculine transgressions. We saw in chapter 4, for example, how when it comes to sexual deviances, young men were held chief responsible. And in the excerpt of course materials that I cite here, these masculine transgressions are quite explicitly linked to "negative" parenting practices that are

part of "authoritarian" parenting. The statement in the quotation pertains to effectiveness of parenting practices, but it goes further than that: "negative parenting" causes certain problematic behaviours. The authoritarian and masculine are connected. And indeed, "authoritarian" parenting is often associated with patriarchy and unequal gender relations.

The move towards "authoritative parenting" is also a move towards the feminine. And interestingly, many scholars have signalled not only a development towards post-Fordism, but also a feminisation of the economy and labour market during the past decades (see for example Adkins, 2002; McDowell, 2009). In the words of Lisa Adkins (2002: 6), there is a "transposition of a feminine habitus into the economic sphere of action". For the young men in Paul Willis' study of the relationship between counter school culture and manual labour, manual labour could still signify not only masculinity but also superiority. Mental activity for them was too feminine and therefore inferior (1977: 145). But labour is no longer masculine. Not even bodily labour, as most manufacturing has moved elsewhere or is automatised and interactive service employment has replaced it. Linda McDowell (2009) has therefore argued that the labour market advantages that were historically associated with masculinity have disappeared, at least for men at the bottom end of the job market. In its stead, attributes such as empathy, care and communicative skills are increasingly desired by employers. The elements of the twenty first century ethic that I analysed above were communicative abilities, emotional labour and reflexivity. And these attributes are traditionally considered relatively feminine. Whether or not the increased importance of these attributes should in fact be termed "feminisation" is the object of scientific debate (see for example Adkins, 2002). But we can be sure of this: gender performances are used as workers' strategies in today's labour market. The ability to give performances of certain aesthetics and emotions is increasingly part of successful labour market participation. The reflexivity needed to *use* certain gendered performances can indeed by understood as a most important labour market asset (Adkins, 2002; McDowell, 2009). The change towards a service sector economy is thus gendered. And the twenty-first century vocational ethic is feminine in particular ways, especially when compared to the Fordist ethic of the twentieth century.

In some places, notably those where industry moved away, this leads to "displaced" (Nayak, 2006) or "redundant" (McDowell, 2003) masculinities. The macho and rough behaviour that fitted quite well with manual labour and manufacturing is no longer appreciated in the labour market, nor in many other spheres, such as the Rotterdam streets where young boys are prohibited from meeting publicly (in the prohibition of assembly that I analysed in chapter 2). Young men today may well be the new "culturally oppressed" (McDowell, 2009: 194) because certain masculinities are deemed illegitimate. The city marketing strategy of "la City" which I analysed in chapter 2 can also be seen in this light: for a city moving away from an industrial past, a more feminine

mythology is to accompany the desired service sector future: blue collars are to be replaced by pink collars. These observations do not lead me to say, though, that gendered divisions of labour and power are necessarily on the verge of radical change. But I will go into this in the concluding chapter of this dissertation.

## *Conclusion*

In this chapter, I asked what the transactions that I researched in parenting guidance practices produced. And in addition, I asked how this production relates to imagined urban futures and the post-industrial economy. This chapter connects what I discussed in chapters 1 and 2 to what I argued in chapters 4 and 5. It brings together scholarly discussions that are very often presented separately: the regeneration of cities and future economies on the one hand and social policy, mothering practices and pedagogical professionals on the other. I have endeavoured to connect theoretical strands and traditions of research in innovative ways to provide an interesting perspective on just what it is that the parenting guidance practices, do, in fact, *do*.

Parenting and mothering *styles* in particular (as was one of the main targets of Adrienne Rich's analysis, 1976) have been debated and promoted in different eras and areas. Because if we think of the child as an innocent blank canvas, then childrearing is to make the promises of the future become reality. And influencing these mothering styles is an especially potent form of social engineering. But the language of engineering presupposes too much of a one-way movement. If we are to look at parenting guidance practices through the lens of engineering and paternalism only, we see too little of the cooperation that such practices entail. Paternalism provides a repertoire that is used in parenting guidance practices. But to answer the question of what the practices *do*, I looked at cooperations or coproductions in ritual-like transactions. I looked at what was done in between mothers, professionals and interns in community centres, parent rooms and mothers' homes. In this chapter I argued that what was done had a ritual-like quality. I have termed the transactions that I researched ritual-like to point to the *repetitive form* in which I encountered much parenting guidance practices. I distinguished five ritual-like transactions: talk, negotiation, debate, evaluation and observation. And I argued that no matter the content at the centre of attention in parenting guidance practices, it was subjected to these forms. The non-negotiable was negotiated, facts debated. Through these ritual-like transactions, the value of relational equality was affirmed as was a particular balance between distance and involvement.

Ritual-like transactions produced reflexive and communicative subject-positions: "ways of doing, being (...) and thinking" (Starfield, 2002: 125). And to return to the larger theme of this dissertation: these reflexive and communicative subject-positions resemble what is desired of employees in the twenty-first century urban labour market. Contemporary employers require

their workers to be communicative and reflexive, because so much of today's work in cities in the West is in the interactive service sector. Therefore, I consider there to be an elective affinity (cf. Weber, [1920] 2002) between what was produced in the parenting guidance practices and a twenty-first century vocational ethic.

That is not to say, though, that this was a frame in which the other participants in the practices looked at what they were doing. The participating mothers did not participate in the practices primarily because of concerns about the future labour market. And professionals were not so much concerned about service sector employment either. Rather, they were interested in parenting styles and for their professional practice, they used a frame based on an opposition between "authoritarian" and "authoritative" parenting. But by looking at what was produced in the *transactions* instead of looking at *intentions*, the relationship between "authoritative" parenting and the service sector became apparent. Parenting guidance practices do not take place in isolation. What is done in these practices is connected to larger phenomena and developments. The parenting guidance practices were not only to bring about "democratic" and "autonomous" individuals (as was the explicit aim of parenting guidance practices and pedagogical professionals). The practices are located at a time and place in which industrial production is moved elsewhere and jobs are to be found in the interactive service sector. The production of reflexive and communicative subject-positions and its relationship with the larger question of the re-generating city is a matter of elective affinity.

*CONCLUSION*

# GENERATIONS AS URBAN POLICY INSTRUMENTS

*Rotterdam heeft haast. De stad vecht zich dood om op iets te lijken wat er nog niet is.*
Wilfried de Jong[1]

What happens in parenting guidance practices between mothers and professionals and how does this relate to a deindustrialising city? That is the central question of this dissertation. In this conclusion, I answer this question and highlight the main themes: 1) the logics of urban re-generation in a deindustrialising city 2) policy practice as a coproduction and 3) the elective affinity between the production of reflexive and communicative subject-positions in parenting guidance and the twenty-first century vocational ethic. These three themes are related to many scholarly debates. In this conclusion, I would like to draw special attention to three debates and the way in which this dissertation is positioned in them: 1) on contemporary forms of paternalism, 2) on the feminisation of labour markets and 3) on questions of class in times of deindustrialisation and the remains of Fordism.

## *The sweet and sour of prospects*

After decades of industrial expansion and decades of post-World War II reconstruction, Rotterdam now is insecure about its future. It seeks ways to depart its industrial past and become something other than a harbour city. But what should it become then? The writer Wilfried de Jong captured this in the phrase above that translates as: "Rotterdam is in a hurry. The city fights itself to death mimicking something yet inexistent". Rotterdam indeed "mimics something inexistent". Despite the hotly debated plans for urban renewal, marketing campaigns and "urban visions", there is much insecurity about what Rotterdam should and can become. Rotterdam aims to develop a post-industrial economy, but what exactly is this? Linda McDowell (1991: 400) noted how the adjective "post" "reflects uncertainty about the new order – the extent and direction of change is still unclear and incomplete." Rotterdam is not alone is this insecurity. Other harbour cities and former industrial economies are struggling to move beyond this past too. Marseille, Glasgow, Genoa and Antwerp are developing spatial, economic, cultural and social strategies to become something new too. Rotterdam serves as a case study of the larger phenomenon of deindustrialising cities.

In this dissertation I have grasped part of this "fight" and its consequences for families in terms of urban re-generation. This concept refers to practices that are based on the idea that *generations* can be *policy instruments*. Re-generation is to renew the city by either investing in the children (the next generation) of the current population or replacing the current population of children by better suited children. Urban re-generation efforts are to create a new and economically successful urban milieu. In it, families and generations are policy tools and mothers form a particular target group. The concept urban re-generation supplements regeneration as it is

often studied in the field of urban studies.

When we think of what the future the post-industrial city might be like, much is indeed insecure. The interactive service economy, though, is likely to remain crucial, creating jobs in which communicative and reflexive skills are imperative. This growth is also much desired by the Rotterdam administration. Rotterdam imagines a future population that is prepared for this type of employment. Rotterdam's administration has indicated time and again that the demographics of the city's current population are among its main concerns. It aims to change the current population into one more "balanced": including higher-educated parents with children. This imagined population is to fit the economy of the future. Part of imagining this future population is investing in today's childrearing practices. Parenting guidance policies are a form of urban re-generation. They are one way in which Rotterdam tries to depart from the industrial city of the past.

*Mothering the post-industrial city* may potentially mean many things. In this dissertation, I have proposed to see parenting guidance policy practices in relation to imagining successful urban futures; to see mothering and policies aimed at transforming mothering practices in the light of a deindustrialising city. In doing so, I combine strands of research that are usually dealt with separately. I have researched a particular social policy practice in depth and related this to developments in the urban environment and the rise of the interactive service economy. Parenting guidance practices are designed to be an environment in which mothers can learn to mother the responsible, successful and democratic citizens of the future. In this dissertation, I have shown that what is, actually, produced in parenting guidance practices is a set of subject-positions that resemble the post-industrial vocational ethic: reflexive and communicative. Reflexive and communicative mothering, it seems, is what mothering a post-industrial city entails.

When doing my fieldwork in 2009 and 2010, I came across many imagined futures for Rotterdam and many policy measures to accomplish it. One of the most poignant examples of such an imagined future was when in Afrikaanderwijk (a poor borough in the South of Rotterdam) I noticed an enormous banner that said: "The Afrikaanderwijk in 2020. A neighbourhood to be proud of." (*De Afrikaanderwijk in 2020. Een wijk om trots op te zijn.*) The banner was to present the plans of the local government and social housing associations to regenerate this part of the city to its inhabitants. It is a perfect example of the sweet and sour of prospects. There is a tragic in this banner. It promises investments, housing improvements and better playgrounds. But it also communicates that in 2009 (the year I saw the banner there), Afrikaanderwijk was not a neighbourhood to be proud of. It would be so only after more than ten years of investments, and the "dispersion" (*verspreiding*: an emic Rotterdam administration term) of those that live in Afrikaanderwijk now. In other words: the promise is that Afrikaanderwijk will be a neighbourhood to be proud of when a portion of the current inhabitants leaves. In other instances, the Rotterdam

administration, its social housing associations, businesses and other actors in the field of local government, communicate similar messages: Rotterdam today is *not yet* the vibrant and successful city it wants to be. The Rotterdam population is *not yet* the higher-educated group of autonomous individuals that work in the creative and service sectors. And policy plans set out to change this so that we can taste the sweet in the future. On the basis of my research in parenting guidance practices, I have shown in this thesis that one of the routes Rotterdam uses towards this successful future is interventions in the private lives of those considered not yet autonomous citizens.

### *Policy as coproduction*

So what exactly happens in parenting guidance practices? This was the basic question I asked when starting this research. I was interested in what happens to policy ambitions once they are translated to actual practices. Much research into contemporary social and urban policy making ends with analyses of the design of policy and policy texts (and I am guilty as charged when it comes to earlier work). And indeed, analyses of the logics of policy making are quite relevant in their own right. But I have shown in this dissertation that policy can undergo dramatic translations and metamorphoses. Policy in action often is something dramatically different from policy design. What happens in a parent room in Feyenoord, or a flat in IJsselmonde quite probably is something entirely different from what the ones designing policy had in mind.

The most important reason for this is that policy is always a coproduction. This is so because 1) those involved in the design and execution of policy *translate* goals and instruments and 2) because those that are targeted by policy coproduce it in *transactions* with policy executors. I have illustrated the first point in chapter 4 with a series of "chains of translations". The concept of "chains of translations" is an analytic tool to show how definitions of policy goals made in one location end up in practices. As it happens, much policy strives for a certain measure of normalcy. "The normal" was an important category in policy making and policy execution in the practices that I studied. And so I traced chains of translations of "the normal". From this analysis, a particular classed and culturist norm surfaced: "normal" parenting was defined as particular middle class food practices and sex education practices that were considered particularly "Dutch". On the basis of this analysis, it would be tempting to overstate government: to point to the coherency in the norms and the exclusion and symbolic violence that they entail. But my analysis shows how complex policy execution is. The production and communication of norms and definitions of "the normal" in policy is no coordinated effort but rather a messy practice. I have illustrated this with a collection of examples of how professionals undermine the norms that they are meant to communicate and examples of dramatic transformations of policy goals through translations.

The second reason why policy is always a coproduction is that policy is the end result of

transactions between those that execute it and those that are targeted by it. In the case of this dissertation: parenting guidance practices are transactions between professionals in the field of pedagogical advice and participating mothers in Rotterdam. In a way, the end of a chain of translations is only the beginning. In my research, it formed the input of practices that I studied. For example, the end result of a chain of translations of policies that were meant to stimulate good sex education was the idea that parenting guidance courses should be a platform for talk about sex, and the idea that mothers should talk to and with their children about sex. But whether or not mothers do, indeed, take part in these discussions in the context of a parenting guidance course is, of course, up to them. Likewise, to influence mothering practices through a year-round series of guidance meetings (such as those of Bureau Frontlijn), these meetings have to take place and a mother needs to be willing to discuss her everyday practices. Professionals are thus, at times, relatively powerless and policy is *mediated* in transactions with mothers.

### *Reflection, communication and a twenty-first century vocational ethic*

In the practices in which I participated, there was much laughter, conflict and fierce discussion. The logic of the ones executing the policies was examined and challenged by jokes, particularisations and mirroring mediations. But that does not mean that the practices were unproductive, or sites of conflict only. There was much cooperation too. Even – and especially – in moments of massive disagreement, mothers and professionals produced something together. In my analysis, I focused on this coproduction in transactions between mothers and professionals. I used an analytical framework that was based on theories of ritual to show the ritual-like characteristics of what we did in parenting guidance practices. In between mothers and professionals, a production of *reflexive and communicative subject-positions* took place. I define subject-positions as "ways of doing, being (...) and thinking" (Starfield, 2002: 125) that become available in transactions. The production of reflexive and communicative subject-positions is the common theme of the parenting guidance practices as I researched them. Through *repetitive* transactions of the particular *forms* egalitarian talk, negotiation, debate, evaluation and observation, we opened up the possibility of being communicative and reflexive in the transaction. No matter the substance of the discussion or negotiation, the point was that we engaged in a *negotiation* or *talked* in an egalitarian fashion. Negotiating meanings or mirroring logics mediated policy in the sense that it changed what the policy executors set out to do. But these mediations *contributed* to the common theme of reflection and communication. For example: by negotiating the particular meaning of the idea of marriage, a mother could mediate the logic of a particular meeting that a professional teacher had designed. On first sight, it may be tempting to read this as a form of resistance or at least serious disagreement. But the interesting point is that through participating in a negotiation,

the mother and professional coproduce the possibility of being reflexive and communicative: they coproduce reflexive and communicative subject-positions. Phrased differently yet: they practice *being* and *doing* communicative and reflexive.

I do not consider these subject-positions to be necessarily durable. That is to say that I considered them only in the context of the transaction that I studied. I am concerned with the *local practice of coproduction*: the transactions in which those involved create something new. I am not concerned with the transformational power of policy. I have not researched it, but more importantly: my focus on transactions is based on the idea that each transaction requires participants to be and act differently, changing the subjectivities of those involved. The participants in parenting guidance practices may coproduce reflexive and communicative subject-positions, but that is not to say that they will practice reflexivity and communication at home because of it. This is true for teachers, mothers *and* me. The chaos of everyday family life, the power balances within the household, the balance between parenting and paid labour, structural conditions such as poverty and the behaviours of the children are possible important ingredients of future transactions for the ones participating in parenting guidance. And these ingredients will require them/us to be and act in certain ways within these future transactions. But within the transactions that I studied – for the time and place being – the participants coproduced reflexive and communicative subject-positions and used them.

So what does this production of subject-positions in debate exercises and discussions have to do with the re-generating city and its post-industrial future? How does this reflexivity and communication relate to the issue of Rotterdam departing from its industrial past and imagining new urban futures? In this dissertation I have argued that these questions are related, but not causally. I have used the Weberian notion of "elective affinity" to point to the "meaningful connection" between the production of reflexive and communicative subject-positions and a twenty-first century vocational ethic. The concept "elective affinity" is especially suitable in an era in which so many social relations are highly complex (Engbersen, 2001). The logic in parenting guidance resembles the logic in interactive service work in important respects, but that is not to say that this resemblance is in any way the result of a direct relationship between the two logics. The concept of *affinity* makes a certain *relatedness* visible without pointing to a direct relation. Without being causally related, the presence of the two does do something (rather like a chemical reaction).

In this dissertation, I have zoomed in on practices in Pendrecht, Feyenoord, Kralingen and other places and analysed in much detail transactions taking place in the context of parenting guidance there. If we zoom out again, we can see that these practices do not take place in isolation. They are related to larger social processes. In this dissertation, I have analysed them in the context of a re-generating city. The practices are located in the beginning of the twenty-first century in a place

"fighting" to become something "yet inexistent". Industrial production is moved elsewhere and available jobs and careers require a different set of skills, dispositions and sensibilities than did the jobs in the harbour and related industries. To be more precise: available jobs are far more likely to be in the interactive service sector than in industry and manufacturing. Employers in the interactive services are likely to look for employees that display reflexive and communicative dispositions and are able and willing to do certain kinds of emotional labour. This description of ideal employees bears much resemblance to what I found was the main product of parenting guidance practices.

The ones involved in the practices (mostly) did not have interactive services or twenty-first century employment in mind. The teachers of parenting courses were not primarily interested in the service sector employment of the next generation Rotterdammers. And even though the mothers were at times concerned about the labour market prospects of their children, this was hardly the reason they participated in the classes. Rather, they were interested in a morning chat with a cup of coffee, some tips about opening up a conversation with their adolescent child or ways to protect their children from the harm done by bullying or other dangers. Professionals were after bringing a basic sense of order to family life in certain neighbourhoods (as with Frontlijn) or supporting mothers in their autonomy and daily decision-making. New interactive service employment was not a dominant framework for those participating in parenting guidance practices. Instead, the dominant framework for policy makers and executors was, rather, one of autonomy and "authoritative parenting". But there is a meaningful connection nonetheless: the "ways of being and doing" in parenting guidance practices and interactive service employment do resemble each other. Or: there are interlocking logics to work in the twenty-first century and what parenting guidance policies produced.

### *Egalitarian paternalism*

The policy interventions that I researched are positioned in a Dutch history of paternalism and urban planning. Paternalism provides a repertoire for them. Mothers, professionals, managers and policy makers alike thought of government interventions into mothering practices as obvious. For them, its importance needed very little explanation, it was considered self-evident and matter-of-fact. The redesign of the city and the spatial distribution of inhabitants, too, are based in repertoires of paternalism and engineering. In paternalism, state or (semi-)private actors give support in exchange for influence in the private sphere (cf. Mead, 1998). And indeed, Bureau Frontlijn and Social Work provide support to mothers and families on a range of topics and problems: financial, bureaucratic, social. In this relationship of support, Frontlijn and Social Work aim to intervene in – very private – mothering practices. Moreover, parenting guidance practices in Rotterdam are meant to "upgrade" certain groups of inhabitants and therefore fit the term

"civilising offensives"[2]. But today's paternalist strategies differ from nineteenth and twentieth century paternalism in important respects as well. The 1960s and 1970s anti-paternalism critique has left its mark and 1950s paternalism is no longer possible. On the basis of my research into (what could be called) paternalist practices, I distinguish at least two changes in paternalism. Or rather: two new characteristics of contemporary paternalist policies.

First, today's paternalism is selectively targeted at lower-educated poor urban populations that are considered "not-yet-autonomous". In the 1980s and 90s, paternalism became a negative reference point for policy, after 1960s and 70s critiques had attacked its lack of respect for the autonomy of individual citizens. Government became increasingly focused on the facilitation of citizens and less involved in directing private lives. But in the new millennium, paternalism has become en vogue again. New forms of paternalism find public support because they are very selectively targeted: at *other people*. As I have argued in chapter 1 (and in my article with Jan Willem Duyvendak, Van den Berg & Duyvendak, 2012), the 'paradox of paternalism' (the idea that the government should intervene, yet people should remain autonomous subjects), is in part solved by implementing paternalist policies for very specific groups of citizens who are considered "not yet" autonomous (cf. Schinkel & Van Houdt, 2010). Professionals set out to help them to become autonomous individuals. And in practice, these new paternalisms are most prevalent in the city. My research supplements scholarly discussions of the criminalisation and penalisation of the poor (see for example, Wacquant, 2001; 2008; 2009; De Koster et al., 2008). Like in the United States (Wacquant, 2008; Low & Smith, 2006) and elsewhere (MacLeod, 2002; Swanson, 2007; Watt, 2006), urban safety policies and repressive strategies have proliferated in the Netherlands too (Schuilenburg, 2012; Van Swaaningen, 2005; Van Houdt & Schinkel, forthcoming). But in the Netherlands, paternalist strategies supplement these punitive measures. To paraphrase Bourdieu (1999): the right hand of the state is supplemented by its left hand.

Second, today's paternalism is distinctly *egalitarian* in its form. The term paternalism is often associated with top-down use of power and hierarchical relations. And in the research for this dissertation, I encountered many professionals, managers and policy makers that set out to change the mothering practices in Rotterdam's poor neighbourhoods. Almost without exception were they after a durable change in these practices and, as a consequence, changing the futures and – using an emic term – "opportunities" (*kansen*) of today's Rotterdam youth. But at the same time, most professionals and executors of policy did not advise mothers as much as I expected them too. Nor did they denounce the mothers' practices or set out to intervene in any hierarchical or top-down manner. Given Rotterdam's ambitions for change, one would expect a much more directive tone and set of strategies. But instead, street-level policy makers and executors set out to talk with mothers in an egalitarian fashion and debate issues in game-like settings. Even if

they meant to be more directive (as in some instances in the case of Bureau Frontlijn), they often ended up in an egalitarian transaction nonetheless. This was not just because professionals were uneasy in a role of authority and power. They were, indeed, at times rather embarrassed and uncomfortable in this role. But more importantly, their egalitarian ways fit ideologies of democracy and autonomy. If paternalism is to help citizens become autonomous, being more directive and using top-down interventions would have been ideologically inconsistent. The goal of contemporary paternalist interventions is the production of autonomous citizens, to help the "not-yet-autonomous" become free, responsible and autonomous individuals. As a consequence of this goal, the interventions were of a paradoxical egalitarian form: on the one hand aiming to change private lives, on the other hand distinctly egalitarian. Egalitarian paternalism seems to be a contradiction in terms. After all: how can the aim to influence citizen's private lives be based on egalitarianism? Is such an aim not inherently hierarchical? Parenting guidance practices are government interventions into private lives. In this sense, they infringed on citizens' autonomy. But the interventions underscored autonomy and equality as important values and were aimed at precisely the production of autonomy. This translated to *egalitarian forms* of intervention such as talk, debate and negotiation. Egalitarian paternalism is both paradoxical and subtle: its form is egalitarian, its goal paternalist. But this paternalism is to produce more autonomy and equality in the end. Egalitarian paternalism is a second way of solving the paradox of paternalism. It consists of interventions in private lives, but in an egalitarian fashion, underscoring citizens' autonomy in order to produce it for the "not-yet-autonomous".

### *Feminising the urban? Gender as urban strategy*

Higher-educated "pink collar" women are explicitly targeted by entrepreneurial "city marketing" and "urban planning" strategies. To understand these efforts, I have used the term *genderfication*. In the case of "La City '08", this meant a departure from a history of masculine imagery of muscled manual labourers, high-rise buildings and industrial waterfronts, to a "pink collar economy", professional women and consumption based economy through feminine imagery in mythmaking.

Scholars have suggested that in today's labour market, gender performances can be strategic instruments for individual employees (McDowell, 1997; Adkins, 2002). A certain ability to reflexively play with gender performances – to have some mobility when it comes to gender – seems to be important in contemporary economies. My research shows how gender is not only a strategy for individual employees in twenty-first century labour markets. It can be a strategy for cities to support the emergence of a post-industrial economy too. Employees rely on gendered performances for labour market success in highly competitive contexts. And so do cities. In interurban competition, gender matters. This dissertation offers a contribution to discussions about the "feminisation" of

labour markets and possible new configurations of (gendered) power by showing how gender matters in entrepreneurial urban strategies and "on the ground" urban policy practices.

On first sight, Rotterdam aims at "feminisation": a feminine gender performance. The "La City '08" festival is the most obvious example of such a strategic gendered move, but the genderfication apparent in the plans for the "child friendly city" is, indeed, also based on a certain gendered logic that opens up possibilities for women. The logic prefers dual earning middle class families as urban inhabitants. And while not intentional, the parenting guidance practices that I studied showed a feminisation of sorts too. In these practices, reflexivity, communication and emotion management was practiced and reflexive and communicative subject-positions were produced. Many would define reflection and communication as feminine performances (see for example McDowell, 1997; 2009; see for an overview of "feminisation" approaches Adkins, 2002). Because these showed resemblance to what I have termed a twenty-first century vocational ethic, it relates to a possible (desired) "feminisation" of Rotterdam's labour market too. Based on these three cases, I could defend that Rotterdam is, in fact, feminising and leaving behind its masculine heritage. And by doing so, is departing from an industrial past. But that conclusion would be too one-sided. Rotterdam indeed aims to genderfy and re-generate. It aims to become more feminine and more middle class, leaving behind its industrial heritage by producing space for those more affluent, and for those less macho. But when looking more closely, a rather more complicated picture surfaces. As I have argued in chapter 2, the mythmaking of "La City" was not merely "feminisation", but, rather, part of quite *masculine entrepreneurialism*. "La City" used the masculine repertoire of "doing and daring" and "tradition-braking" to cross-dress: to correct the hyper-masculine mythology by creating a hyper-feminine counterpoint. Rotterdam, then, is a muscleman in pink stilettos. In this case, Rotterdam used gender as a quite flexible strategy to highlight not only the "feminine side" of Rotterdam, but, importantly, its desire for a consumption-based economy and middle class inhabitants.

The efforts for a "child friendly city" are forms of genderfication and may be interpreted as part of a feminising city as well. Here too, gender is part of an urban strategy. However, it is not as clear-cut as the term "feminisation" suggests. The "child friendly city" plans are to produce space for a specific gendered order. The modernist planning of the post-World War II period is now largely considered a problem or even hindrance for development and growth. This modernist planning was patriarchal in its separation of the sexes through the separation of private and public life based on the clear gender roles of Fordism. The "child friendly city" plans aim to change precisely this patriarchal and gendered order: it aims to mix public and private uses of the city. Day care facilities and attracting dual-earning families are at the core of the plans. What Rotterdam aims for is not just more families and children, but in fact women, children and men that subscribe to

certain specific norms about raising children and dividing labour. But in the attachment to the *nuclear family*, part of the patriarchal ideal of Fordism is transported into the new genderfied prospect city. In the "child friendly city" case, gender is a strategic instrument, but not one used for gender equality or feminisation per se.

It may be tempting to see the production of reflexive and communicative subject positions in parenting guidance practices as a feminisation of sorts too. After all, the twenty-first century vocational ethic with which I argued an elective affinity exists is often considered more "feminine" than the vocational ethic in Fordist times. Some authors even speak of a "feminisation" of labour markets, as I mentioned already above. One could argue that the "style" of parenting propagated in the courses is not only "authoritative", but also more "feminine" than is the "authoritarian" model. But I think that however much feminisation can be identified in the cases I studied, there is much continuity with the past when it comes to gender configurations, too. Importantly, *mothers* are the ones addresses primarily by the policy practices that I studied. Sometimes explicitly and intently, like in the case of Bureau Frontlijn. Sometimes more implicit when mothers are addressed as primarily responsible as a result of the scheduling of courses (during the day, when mothers are not expected to work in paid labour) and other contextual factors. Paternalist policies have historically often been executed by women and targeted at women. It seems that contemporary parenting guidance is organised in much the same way and on the basis of (at least in part) a gendered division of labour that is reminiscent of Fordist times.

The rhetorics of a "sea change" (Harvey, 1989) or revolution from Fordism to post-Fordism notwithstanding, there is indeed much continuity when it comes to gender and gender roles. In the cases I researched, mothers are held responsible for the private sphere and are not expected to work outside the home. Fathers are much more rarely addressed as responsible parents. The nuclear family is the norm for new urban planning and city marketing may attempt to depart muscles, but uses them nonetheless. Much of the gender configurations of Fordism remain. The rhetorics of change are sometimes put to work strategically in government, like in the case of "La City" or "the child friendly city". In these cases, a break with post-World War II industrial Rotterdam is forced to make room for a new services-based economy. In these cases, discontinuity is rhetorically emphasised. My analysis of policy, myth making and genderfication practices shows that this discontinuity should not be exaggerated and that when it is, it should be critically questioned. In the case of Rotterdam, discontinuity-talk (about gender, age, "opportunities" or otherwise) is to make room for a new economy that is to end the economic hardship that resulted from deindustrialisation. And with this new economy, new class conflicts emerge.

So where does all of this leave fathers? If interactive service employment values feminine dispositions and the state looks at mothers for childrearing, what role do fathers have? Could it

be that women have easier access to labour market positions in care work, housekeeping, and childcare and this leaves fathers jobless while the state bypasses them as authority figure in the family? Have we moved so very beyond "father and Ford" (McDowell, 1991) that urban fathers are left behind? As I have suggested in chapter 6, there may be certain "redundant masculinities" (McDowell, 2003) in the post-industrial city. Especially "working class" male "youth" is considered a problem in contemporary Rotterdam (and other urban areas) and this might have to do with the changing labour market in which there is no longer any room for certain masculinities. Interestingly and tragically perhaps, social policy aimed at enhancing parenting practices are quite exclusionary focused on mothers. There are some efforts to create parenting guidance practices for fathers (see for example Van der Zwaard & Kreuk, 2012), but the vast majority is targeted at mothers. Notwithstanding the gender-neutral term parenting guidance practices, I only seldom encountered fathers in my field work. Despite the emancipatory goals of Dutch and Rotterdam governments, mothers are expected to be at home during the day and willing to participate in parenting guidance (Van den Berg & Duyvendak, 2012). In other national contexts, fathers are sometimes much more explicitly targeted by the state. In the United Kingdom, for example, "fathers' involvement" was much higher on the agenda of both social services and politics, to the point where social services were required to "dad-proof" policies (Featherstone, 2010: 213). I have argued in the first chapter that one of the repertoires used today in policy-making is a strong domestic motherhood ideology. Together with emancipatory goals of professionals and feminist repertoires in contemporary policy making (Van den Berg & Duyvendak, 2012), this mix of motherhood ideals and feminist goals can explain at least in part why so much parenting guidance is focused on mothers and fathers are only secondarily targeted.

### *The "afterlife" of Industrial Rotterdam*

Rotterdammers like to claim that in the Netherlands, money is "made in Rotterdam" and "spent in Amsterdam". But quite some time has passed since this was true. Amsterdam's economy has had much less trouble adjusting to post-industrialism than has Rotterdam. In general, urban economies that were in large part dependent on industry in the recent past have a much harder time adjusting than cities that already had strong service sectors before the 1960s and 1970s (Van der Waal, 2009). Rotterdam is transitioning towards a post-industrial economy, but much slower than, again, Amsterdam (Van der Waal, 2009; Burgers & Musterd, 2002). As a consequence, the service sector is not compensating the loss of jobs in the harbour-related industries. Jobs for lower-educated Rotterdammers thus effectively disappear. And new employment opportunities are far more likely to be created for those higher-educated. Rotterdam may desire a post-industrial economy and a growth of service sector jobs for the lower-educated, but as of yet, it is not as

successful as it would like to be, and the current economic crisis is now exacerbating this problem.

Rotterdam has taken up its role as an entrepreneur and has designed many strategies to combat economic hardship, some of which form the core of my empirical material. In this last part of the conclusion, I would like to draw attention to what could be called new class conflicts and what role mothering practices play in them. I have written of Rotterdam as a "blue collar" city and of "working classes". But today, class may not be defined as much by type of work as before. Those previously termed "working classes" are now in fact not always working. If Rotterdam does not succeed in establishing a successful service sector with employment for lower-educated citizens, many will remain unemployed. If Rotterdam does succeed and jobs in interactive services make up for the loss of jobs in industry, these jobs are likely to be rather precarious, for instance in the hotel and catering business. What it means to "work", therefore, is changing. The term "working class" and even more so "blue collar" stems from a Fordist era, as do much sociological considerations of class (Watt, 2006). Now, new configurations of class are emerging and as a consequence, so do new class conflicts.

Andrea Muehlebach (2011) showed what "remaining Fordist affects" can produce. She argues that instead of highlighting the break between Fordism and post-Fordism (or post-modernity, post-industrialism et cetera), insights into the meaning of work and the state may arise if we look at *what remains* of Fordism. Paid labour afforded citizens a sense of belonging in Fordism. Now that much industrial labour has left Western Europe, many yearn for this lost sense of belonging. This yearning is a source for state-interventions that ask citizens to do unpaid labour: care work, volunteering, mothering. In Rotterdam and other places, citizens unable to find employment in the current labour market are asked or obliged to do such unpaid "volunteering" labour. Often termed "activation", policies that require those dependent on state support to work as "volunteer" proliferate (Kampen, 2010). Legitimate and illegitimate forms of "activity" thus surface and once citizens are no longer in paid employment, their lives and "activities" are assessed by local governments in such a vein. What remains of the industrial age in Rotterdam is a focus on "hard work" as an important characteristic of Rotterdammers. The narrative of the "blue collar worker" with "rolled up sleeves" has an "afterlife" (Muehlebach, 2011: 62), so to speak. It is not only used to legitimate entrepreneurial government strategies (as I have argued in this dissertation), but may well serve to create new distinctions between "undeserving" and "deserving poor" (compare M. Katz, 1989; Engbersen, [1990]2006), "potent" and "impotent" citizens (compare Piven & Cloward, 1976), "working class" and "marginalised". These new distinctions have shown to legitimate new (egalitarian paternalist) state interventions (as recent research projects suggest, see for example Tonkens & De Wilde, 2012; Kampen et al., 2012). Is it possible to belong to "hardworking" Rotterdam without having paid employment? If living in certain areas is becoming more and more expensive

due to state-led gentrification and being unemployed thus effectively means displacement? How is paid employment substituted with other forms of "activity" that enable this belonging? What forms of "activity" make citizens "deserving"? My dissertation does not provide a full answer to these important and timely questions. But I expect that one of the forms of legitimate "activity" is mothering the next generation of urbanites: of *mothering post-industrial Rotterdam*.

Mothering post-industrial Rotterdam means mothering subjects for the future (still to be fully established) service economy. But I would like to suggest one more possible meaning. Building on the insights of Walkerdine and Lucey's inspiring study of mothering practices and ideals in 1989, I suggest that mothering post-industrial Rotterdam entails the creation of a "fiction of harmony" (101). Parenting guidance practices in Rotterdam focus on discussing "authoritative" or "democratic" parenting. The policy practices explicitly aim to leave behind "authoritarian" parenting practices that are associated with "working classes" and "allochthonous" by discussing, negotiating and debating parenting with mothers. In this "democratic" or "authoritative" upbringing, mothers and children are to see themselves as responsible individuals, autonomous and free. Walkerdine and Lucey wrote of "Democracy in the kitchen", of working class and middle class mothering practices and how they are respectively pathologised and idealised and explicitly linked to the ideal of "democracy" and the fear of "authoritarianism". They argued that an upbringing based on democratic values of freedom and autonomy is to make conflict disappear within both the home and society. Middle class mothering, in their view, is to create a household without fights and overt power display. This style of mothering is to prepare children not only for middle class life but also for democratic ideals and to create a lack of class-consciousness. "[D]emocracy is ensured by the removal from consciousness of any sense of oppression, powerlessness, division or exploitation" (ibid.). The Rotterdam parenting guidance practices that I researched teach "authoritative" parenting in a time and place of economic hardship and unemployment. The problems in Rotterdam families that are the result of this economic hardship were, however, seldom addressed. Issues of future employment of children, educational choices, revanchist spatial strategies meant to "disperse" young people and poor inhabitants were not among the subjects discussed in the practices in which I participated. Parenting guidance is not geared towards preparing mothers to deal with these pressing issues. New class conflicts emerge in the twenty-first century service-based economy. New configurations of inequality come with new modes of production. But these were not topics of debate, discussion or advice. Instead how to parent "authoritatively", using no overt power but democratic means for everyday family life in order to mother a next generation of autonomous individuals was. Parenting guidance asks mother to present their children with a fiction of harmony in a city where "opportunity poor" indeed have very little "opportunities" and unemployment for life is a real threat.

## Notes

*Mottos*

1. Rachel Cusk, 2006: 170.
2. Thea Beckman, 1990: 211. This translates as: Nowhere in the world did people work so hard, were such risks taken, did people dare to be so practical and profit minded and develop such great plans.

*Introduction*

1. Rotterdam Municipality Promotional Film (2011).
2. Rotterdam here refers to the Rotterdam administration. However, this goal of departure from the industrial past is shared by other actors, like for instance Rotterdam businesses, united in the Economic Development Board Rotterdam, EBDR, 2008.
3. Retrieved from the journalist blog Vers Beton: http://versbeton.nl/2011/09/rotterdam-wast-stralend-wit/, Accessed 9 January 2013.
4. This is my English translation of the term "stedenbouw" as used in Dutch.
5. In Dutch, these policies are typically called "oudercursussen" "opvoedingscursussen" "ouder begeleiding" en "ondersteuning". The most suitable translation into English is therefore "parenting guidance" as it can serve as a collective noun and unites the different Dutch terms.
6. *Achterstandsgroepen*. This is a term used in policy, for instance in one of my cases: Bureau Frontlijn, I have given a more elaborate description of this case and this term in chapters 3 and 4
7. This was in response to the report by Team Deetman and Mans (2011) in the television interview program Buitenhof, VPRO/NTR, October 30th 2011.
8. I owe the term genderfication to Rogier van Reekum's suggestion, personal communication.
9. When I use the term transactions, I do not take this to mean an economic transaction, as in the everyday use the term.
10. For this exploration of the concept "transactions", I primarily use the article of Mustapha Emirbayer (1997). His treatment of the concept is based on the work of Abbott (1995) and the concept "transaction" in the meaning as it is used here originates with Dewey and Bentley (1949).
11. I use the term "working class" througout this thesis. In the Netherlands, it is customary to use the term "lower class" (*lagere klasse*) or, alternatively, the term "lower-educated" (*lager opgeleiden*) as proxy for class. The term "working class" is sometimes tranlated as *arbeidersklasse*, but this not frequently used in Dutch. I, however, prefer the term "working class" because in international scholarly debates, this is most common and it is a fitting term in the context of a city that used be called the "work city".
12. Van der Zwaard said this in her response to Willem Schinkel's *Rotterdam lecture* in Het Steiger, Rotterdam, May 23rd 2013.
13. I write, too, of Rotterdam as idea, representation or myth in primarily chapters 1 and 2.
14. The most important policy texts on which my analysis is based are: Rotterdam Municipality 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c. Rotterdam Municipality 2006 and 2007 were issued or presented earlier, but still in use in the years in which I did my research.
15. This is also the title of my article with Willem Schinkel: Schinkel & Van den Berg, 2011.

*Chapter 1*

1. This chapter is based on and contains revised extracts from the following articles:
   - "Paternalizing mothers. Feminist repertoires in contemporary Dutch civilizing offensives". I wrote this with Jan Willem Duyvendak and it has appeared in *Critical Social Policy, 32*(4), 554 – 574 (Van den Berg & Duyvendak, 2012).
   - "Femininity as a City Marketing Strategy: Gender Bending Rotterdam". This has appeared in *Urban Studies, 49*(1), 153-168 (Van den Berg, 2012).
2. The presentation of these characteristics as innately feminine was one of the main targets of second wave feminism. See besides Rich the works of Badinter (1980), Friedan (1974) and for critical perspectives on these feminisms, for example hooks, [1984] 2000.
3. The following paragraph and chapter 2 show the results of a content analysis of strategic research materials. I analysed materials used for city marketing purposes, I made a content analysis of strategically chosen policy documents, and I also analysed supplementary material like texts about Rotterdam and Rotterdam policy in newspapers and other public sources. This includes texts in books to promote Rotterdam, texts of the Rotterdam marketing bureau and popular sayings, songs and poems that I analyse here for their important role in the construction of the Rotterdam mythology. That means that I do not analyse the way in habitants of Rotterdam, its policy-makers or others think or talk of Rotterdam. I chose the sayings, quotes and song for the analysis of the Rotterdam mythology and repertoire of exceptionality because they reoccur often in different sources on Rotterdam and can therefore be seen as signs of parts of the mythology. This selection is based on a broad collection of material on the city and an analysis of the frequency with which the signs reoccurs. The quotes from the promotional books are chosen because the specific goal of these books is Rotterdam myth-making and presenting an attractive Rotterdam to an international audience. Because of this goal and anticipated audience, these books are exceptionally well-suited material for the analysis I aim for.
4. Information retrieved from Rotterdam Municipality website: http://www.rotterdam.nl/aantal_rotterdammers_in_2012_nauwelijks_toe__of_afgenomen, Accessed January 9th 2013. And retrieved from www.stadsregio.nl, accessed January 9th 2013.
5. Translation MvdB. All translations from Dutch to English in this thesis are my own, unless otherwise specified.
6. This was in response to the report by Team Deetman and Mans (2011) in the television interview program Buitenhof, VPRO/NTR, October 30th 2011.
7. De Berini's (1992-1994). *Groeten uit Rotterdam*/Greetings from Rotterdam. A song by the local Group De Berini's.
8. Poster Nijverheidstentoonstelling. Retrieved from *www.hetgeheugenvannederland.nl*, Accessed June 12th 2013.
9. Rotterdam here refers to the Rotterdam administration and related services such as Rotterdam marketing. However, this sense of emergency and goal of departure from the industrial past is shared by for instance Rotterdam businesses, united in the Economic Development Board Rotterdam, EBDR, 2008.

*Chapter 2*

1. This chapter is based on and contains revised extracts from the following articles:
   - "Femininity as a City Marketing Strategy: Gender Bending Rotterdam". This has appeared in *Urban Studies, 49*(1), 153-168 (Van den Berg, 2012).
   - "City children and genderfied neighbourhoods: the new generation as urban regeneration strategy." This has appeared in: *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37(2), 523-536 (Van den Berg, 2013).
   -"City of exception: the Dutch revanchist city and the urban homo sacer." I wrote this with Willem Schinkel and it has appeared in *Antipode, 43*(5), 1911-1938. (Schinkel & Van den Berg, 2011).
2. Please see endnote 3, chapter 1 for an elaboration on the choice for these materials.
3. Photo of promotional activity La City '08. Retrieved from www.lacity2008.nl, Accessed July 10th 2010.
4. La City Campaign text: "*The City as Woman*". Retrieved www.rotterdam.info , Accessed July 10th 2008.
5. La City flyer, June 2008.
6. La City logo. Retrieved from www.lacity2008.nl, Accessed July 10th 2008.
7. For instance in the measurement of the "Social Index": Rotterdam Municipality 2008c.
8. The "social minimum" is a national policy measure to ensure all citizens a basic income level, which is annually adjusted. Basic income support (*Bijstand, Wet werk en bijstand:* WWB) is based on this calculation.
9. The definition of "the family" is broad in the policies. The Dutch national government uses a similar broad definition, thus including gay couples with children, or single parents.
10. Zadie Smith, 2012: 99.
11. The RMO in the appropriately called report *Tussen flaneren en schofferen*, in English: "Between flâneur and rude".
12. The following paragraph is based on and contains extracts the article
13. Document Rotterdam Municipality "Strevelsweg-methodiek", registration number 3.003, retrieved from www.rotterdam.nl, Accessed September 5th 2007.
14. See www.strevelsweg.nl for the website on which the street is now promoted as "cleaned up" with the slogan: "Strong together, ever better" (*Samen sterk, steeds beter*), Accessed September 5th, 2007.
15. Document Rotterdam Municipality "Inzet interventieteam" Registration number 1.015, retrieved from www.Rotterdam.nl, Accessed August 30th, 2008.

*Chapter 3*

1. This chapter contains some revised extracts from the article "Paternalizing mothers. Feminist repertoires in contemporary Dutch civilizing offensives" that I wrote with Jan Willem Duyvendak and that has appeared in *Critical Social Policy, 32*(4): 554 – 574. (Van den Berg & Duyvendak, 2012).
2. Picture retrieved from http://www.vitaalpendrecht.nl , Accessed June 22nd 2013.
3. This is a behavioral rule that I encountered on a street sign in the West of Rotterdam. This sign was part of the "Mensen maken de stad" programme, see for research on this programme: Uitermark & Duyvendak, 2006.
4. Photo of a street sign in Rotterdam with 4 "agreements" for communal behaviour, part of the "Mensen maken de stad" program, see for further elaboration: Uitermark & Duyvendak, 2006. This photo was retrieved from http://fluitstraat.weblog.nl/ Accessed September 17th, 2012.
5. Respectively: Rotterdam Municipality, 2010c; Rotterdam Municipality, 2006; Rotterdam Municipality, 2007.
6. This poster was produced by the Rotterdam Municipality for *Opvoeden doen we samen*. Retrieved from http://www.vitaalpendrecht.nl/nmagenda/publish/news_133.html , Accessed February 9th 2012.
7. The term "allochthonous" is used in Dutch statistics to refer to people that migrated to the Netherlands themselves or people of whom one or both parents migrated to the Netherlands. See Schinkel 2007 for a critical evaluation of this term.
8. *Mission Statement Bureau Frontlijn 2012*, Retrieved from www.rotterdam.nl/bureau_frontlijn, Accessed August 23rd 2012.
9. Ibidem.
10. Ibidem.
11. *Information Bureau Frontlijn 2012*, Retrieved from http://www.rotterdam.nl/frontlijn, Accessed 27th August 2012
12. The school and people in this picture are not in my research. I have not made pictures of the people I encountered in my ethnographic research, because of privacy issues. What can be seen in this picture is however very similar of what I encountered in my research in parent rooms and is downloaded from http://oud.bs-willibrord.nl/ouderkamer.htm, Accessed 3 September 2012
13. Jaarverslag Twinkeltje 2010.
14. Nieuwsbrief nummer 4. Stichting Welzijn Feyenoord.
15. Photo retrieved from www.kei-centrum.nl, Accessed October 12th 2011.
16. This was the name of a nationally subsidised expert centre for sex education. It is now (2013) called Rutgers WPF www.rutgerswpf.nl

*Chapter 4*

1. Image retrieved from www.bibliotheek.rotterdam.nl , Accessed October 12th 2011.
2. I translate the Dutch word "vrijen" with making out and making love, because it has a broader meaning in Dutch than having sexual intercourse, though it is also used for this narrow meaning.
3. The participants in the courses were not the first or the only ones to experience this tension. In the twentieth century more generally, children's innocence on the one hand and their sexuality on the other hand have been the object of many contentious debates. Romantic, 19th century notions of children's innocence, purity and sexlessness were criticised and deemed false in new Freudian theories (Sauerteig & Davidson, 2009), while at the same time continued to be center-stage in stories of subconscious sexualities (children are sexual, but not in a conscious way) (Kincaid, 1998). As a result, children's sexuality was included into "the normal" – though under the radar - in the twentieth century, only to be combated by 1980s and 1990s re-introductions of the innocent child now in the context of concern over child abuse (Sauerteig & Davidson, 2009).

4. This drawing is from the educational folder of the Rutgers Nisso Stichting 2010: *De seksuele onwikkeling van kinderen (0 tot 18 jaar) en wat ouders kunnen doen*. Utrecht: Rutgers Nisso Stichting. The folder accompanied teaching materials in the practices.

*Chapter 5*
1. This public service is called *schuldhulpverlening*.

Chapter 6
1. Plath, S. ([1963] 2009: 116.
2. Goffman uses the term "ritual" to point to the way in which the self becomes sacral in everyday symbolic encounters (for instance in 1967). My use of the term ritual differs from Goffman's approach in precisely this aspect. Instead of looking for the symbolic or sacral, I am interested in the repetitive form of ritual-like transactions.
3. Rich's account is distinctly American, but influential in the international debate. For the Netherlands, feminists like Joke Smit (1967) made a similar argument.

*Conclusion*
1. De Jong (2012) said this in a speech on the occasion of the departure of the national newspaper NRC Handelsblad from Rotterdam. The NRC offices moved to Amsterdam in 2012.
2. In chapter 1, defined a civilising offensive as a more or less planned effort to teach certain kinds of civility to a group of subjects that are deemed to be in lack of that civility. Civilising offensives can be state efforts, but are often also private undertakings to "uplift" and "normalise" certain target groups.

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## *Summary*


**Mothers, children and the city of the future**

Children and mothers play an important role in policy efforts to regenerate the city. This dissertation deals with this prominence of children and mothers in urban policies in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. It departs from the observation that *mothers*, in particular, matter in urban policy making and the struggle of former industrial cities to reinvent themselves. I was curious about why mothers and children featured so very prominently in urban policies in Rotterdam and also how this resulted in policy practices and what was *done* in these practices. For this purpose, I did participatory, ethnographic research in a range or parenting guidance practices. I was interested in what goes on in the room. What happens when policy ambitions for the city enter a classroom, school kitchen, family home or community centre where "parenting guidance" is taking place? What do professionals such as teachers, pedagogues and social workers produce together with participating mothers? And how does this relate to imagined urban futures and the new post-industrial economy?

In imagining urban futures beyond the industrial past, policy makers devise campaigns, images and buildings and they fascilitate businesses. I analyse city marketing and urban planning efforts in addition to my research in parenting guidance practices. But parenting guidance practices form the core of my dissertation as they are ways for cities to *imagine future populations*. When it comes to imagining a future economy beyond industry, concerns about the future labour force rise. These concerns about the city crystallise in parenting guidance practices. Imagining future populations and designing policies to change the characteristics of the population are part of the struggle to depart from the urban industrial past. In Rotterdam, demographic characteristics such as education levels, age and class background are quite explicitly considered the core of the city's problems. These characteristics were of much less import in industrial times, when the harbour provided manual jobs. But cities struggling to stimulate new economies are concerned about such demographics, especially because personalities and social skills and characteristics are pivotal in service sector jobs.

**Re-generation and genderfication**

In this dissertation I have grasped part the struggle to depart from the industrial past and its consequences for families in terms of urban re-generation. This concept refers to practices that are based on the idea that *generations* can be *policy instruments*. Re-generation is to renew the city by either investing in the children (the next generation) of the current population or replacing the current population of children by better suited children. Urban re-generation efforts are to create a

new and economically successful urban milieu. In it, families and generations are policy tools and mothers form a particular target group. Related is the phenomenon that I termed genderfication. Genderfication is a variation on the concept of gentrification. In general terms, gentrification is a process in which space is produced for more affluent users (cf. Hackworth, 2002: 815). Following this definition of gentrification, I define *genderfication* as the production of space for not only more affluent users, but also for specific gender notions. My research shows that Rotterdam has tried to feminise the city in recent marketing enterprises and urban planning efforts.

**Reflexive and communicative parenting guidance**

When I participated in the parenting guidance practices that are at the core of this dissertation, I soon identified a common theme to them. However different the practices were, they also had something powerful in common: they were all focused on reflection and communication. As a policy instrument, parenting guidance and parent courses are already a reflexive and communicative intervention: they are meant to prompt discussion, debate, thought and negotiation. But my claim in this dissertation goes further: reflection and communication were *practiced* and *done* in parenting guidance practices. This dissertation is about the work of *doing* reflection and communication.

In the practices in which I participated, there was much laughter, conflict and fierce discussion. The logic of the ones executing the policies was examined and challenged by jokes, particularisations and mirroring mediations. But that does not mean that the practices were unproductive, or sites of conflict only. There was much cooperation too. Even – and especially – in moments of massive disagreement, mothers and professionals produced something together. In my analysis, I focused on this coproduction in transactions between mothers and professionals. I used an analytical framework that was based on theories of ritual to show the ritual-like characteristics of what we did in parenting guidance practices. In between mothers and professionals, a production of *reflexive and communicative subject-positions* took place. I define subject-positions as "ways of doing, being (...) and thinking" (Starfield, 2002: 125) that become available in transactions. The production of reflexive and communicative subject-positions is the common theme of the parenting guidance practices as I researched them. Through *repetitive* transactions of the particular *forms* 1) egalitarian talk, 2) negotiation, 3) debate, 4) evaluation and 5) observation, we opened up the possibility of being communicative and reflexive in the transaction. Whether we debated food, school choice or child abuse, the substance of the practices was subject to particular *forms*. We *practiced* communication and reflection: the point was that we engaged in a *negotiation* or *talked* in an egalitarian fashion. Negotiating meanings or mirroring logics mediated policy in the sense that it changed what the policy executors set out to do. But these

mediations *contributed* to the common theme of reflection and communication. For example: by negotiating the particular meaning of the idea of marriage, a mother could mediate the logic of a particular meeting that a professional teacher had designed. On first sight, it may be tempting to read this as a form of resistance or at least serious disagreement. But the interesting point is that through participating in a negotiation, the mother and professional coproduce the possibility of being reflexive and communicative: they coproduce reflexive and communicative subject-positions. Phrased differently yet: they practice *being* and *doing* communicative and reflexive.

**An elective affinity with a post-industrial vocational ethic**

Parenting guidance as a practice is located in a place and time where industrial production is moved elsewhere and new jobs and careers are available in an interactive service economy. The production of reflexive and communicative subject-positions show a remarkable resemblance to descriptions of what is expected of employees in an interactive service economy. I think of this relationship between the production of reflexive and communicative subject-positions and the twenty-first century vocational ethic as a *Wahlverwandtschaft*: an elective affinity. Reflexive and communicative mothering, it seems, is what mothering a post-industrial city entails.

## *NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING*

**Moeders, kinderen en de stad van de toekomst**

Kinderen en moeders spelen een belangrijke rol in beleid dat er op gericht is de stad te vernieuwen en te verbeteren. Dit proefschrift gaat over deze prominente plaats van kinderen en moeders in stedelijk beleid in Rotterdam. Rotterdam (net als veel andere voormalig industriële steden in Europa) wil zichzelf opnieuw uitvinden en voorbij het industriële verleden raken door een post-industriële economie te stimuleren, nieuwe wijken te bouwen en te investeren in de bevolking.

Dit proefschrift vertrekt vanuit de observatie dat *moeders* in het bijzonder een belangrijke rol krijgen toebedeeld in deze strijd van steden om te regenereren. Ik wilde weten waarom dat zo is, hoe dat resulteert in concrete beleidspraktijken en wat er in die praktijken dan precies *gedaan* wordt. Daarom deed ik participerend etnografisch onderzoek in verschillende praktijken van opvoedingsondersteuning en oudercursussen. Ik was geïnteresseerd in wat er gebeurt in het klaslokaal, de huiskamer of het buurthuis. Wat gebeurt er als beleidsambities van en voor de stad een lokaal, schoolkeuken of appartement bereiken waar "opvoedingsondersteuning" plaats vindt? Wat doen professionals zoals docenten, pedagogen en welzijnswerkers samen met deelnemende moeders? En hoe verhoudt zich dat tot de verbeelde en geplande toekomst van de stad en de post-industriële economie?

Beleidsmakers ontwerpen marketing campagnes, beelden en gebouwen. Allemaal gericht op het verbeelden van een toekomstige stad, een stad voorbij industrie en voorbereid op een nog onzekere toekomst. Naast mijn analyses van praktijken van opvoedingsondersteuning heb ik ook onderzoek gedaan naar voorbeelden van city-marketing en stedenbouw. Dat zijn belangrijke strategieën om een stad te vernieuwen. Maar beleidsmakers, zo blijkt uit deze studie, ontwerpen ook beleid voor de *mensen* die die toekomstige stad zullen gaan bevolken. Want wanneer een nieuwe, toekomstige stad verbeeld wordt, komen ook zorgen over de toekomstige arbeidsbevolking boven. Die zorgen over de stad kristalliseren in opvoedingsondersteuning. Het *verbeelden van de toekomstige bevolking* en het ontwerpen van beleid om de kenmerken van de bevolking te veranderen zijn onderdeel van de strijd om het industriële stedelijke verleden te verlaten. In Rotterdam worden kenmerken als opleidingsniveaus, leeftijd en inkomensniveaus voortdurend en heel expliciet genoemd als de kern van de stedelijke problematiek. Deze kenmerken waren van minder groot belang in een tijd van werk in de haven en gerelateerde industrie. Maar in een diensteneconomie zijn persoonlijkheid en sociale vaardigheden van cruciaal belang en mede daarom zijn bevolkingskernmerken een punt van zorg in beleid.

**Re-generatie en genderfication**

In deze dissertatie gebruik ik de term stedelijke re-*generatie* (urban re-generation) om deze ontwikkelingen te begrijpen. Dit concept verwijst naar praktijken die gebaseerd zijn op de idee dat *generaties beleidsinstrumenten* kunnen zijn. Re-generatie bestaat uit investeringen in de kinderen (de volgende generatie) van de huidige bevolking of het verplaatsen van de huidige kinderbevolking om ze te verruilen voor kinderen die beter passen bij de ingebeelde toekomst: kinderen met meer kansen op hoger onderwijs en goed inkomen. Stedelijke re-generatie moet een nieuw en economisch succesvol stedelijk milieu creëren, waarin gezinnen en generaties beleidsinstrumenten zijn en moeders een specifieke doelgroep. Gerelateerd aan re-generatie is het fenomeen dat ik *genderfication* heb genoemd. Genderfication is een variatie op het begrip gentrification. Gentrification is een begrip uit het Engels dat inmiddels in Nederland ook veel wordt gebruikt. In algemene zin wordt er vaak mee bedoeld dat ruimte geproduceerd wordt voor meer vermogende gebruikers (cf. Hackworth, 2002: 815). Ik definieer genderfication als de productie van ruimte voor gebruikers die bepaalde gendernoties onderschrijven. Mijn onderzoek laat zien dat Rotterdam geprobeerd heeft de stad meer feminien te maken door middel van marketing, maar ook stedenbouw en deze beweging beschouw ik in deze dissertatie als vormen van genderfication.

**Reflexieve en communicatieve opvoedingsondersteuning**

Terug naar de opvoedingsondersteuning. Toen ik deelnam aan oudercursussen, begeleidingsgesprekken en opvoeddebatten, zag ik snel een duidelijk gemeenschappelijk thema. De praktijken waren allemaal heel verschillend, maar ze leken toch ook op elkaar: ze waren allemaal sterk gericht op communicatie en reflectie. Opvoedingsondersteuning en oudercursussen zijn natuurlijk altijd en noodzakelijk een reflexieve en communicatieve interventie: het is de bedoeling dat er discussie ontstaat, debat, denken en onderhandeling. Maar mijn claim in deze dissertatie gaat verder: reflectie en communicatie werden *geoefend* en *gedaan*. Dit proefschrift gaat daarom over het doen van reflexiviteit en communicatie.

Er werd in de praktijken veel gelachen en stevig gediscussieerd. Het conflict werd ook vaak niet geschuwd door de deelnemende moeders en docenten. De logica's van degenen die het beleid ontwierpen en van hen die het beleid uitvoeren werd voortdurend op de proef gesteld door grappen, particuliere verhalen en andere *mediaties*. Maar interessant genoeg betekende dat niet dat de praktijken onproductief waren, of alleen maar uit conflict bestonden. Er was ook heel veel samenwerking. Zelfs – of misschien juist! – op momenten van groot meningsverschil, kwamen moeders en professionals tot coproducties van reflexiviteit en communicatie. In mijn analyse focus ik op deze coproducties in transacties tussen moeders en professionals. Ik

gebruik een theoretisch raamwerk dat is gebaseerd op werk over rituelen om te laten zien hoezeer opvoedingsondersteuning in opzichten op rituelen leken. Daarmee wil gezegd zijn dat de herhalende vorm van de transacties heel belangrijk was. Door de *herhaling* van de *vorm* van 1) egalitair praten, 2) onderhandeling, 3) debat, 4) evaluatie en 5) observatie werd ruimte gemaakt voor reflexief en communicatief zijn. In andere woorden: reflexieve en communicatieve subject-posities werden gecreëerd in de transacties tussen moeders en docenten. Ik definieer subject-posities als manieren van doen, zijn en denken (cf. Starfield 2002: 125) die beschikbaar worden in transacties. Of we nu praatten over eten, schoolkeuze, kindermishandeling of pesten, de inhoud van de praktijken was altijd in heel bepaalde vormen gegoten. We oefenden bijvoorbeeld communicatie en reflexiviteit op heel egalitaire manieren. Meer nog dan *waarover* het gesprek ging, was belangrijk *dat* we in gesprek gingen in een egalitaire vorm, onderhandelden of debatteerden. Als we de ambitieuze doelstellingen van opvoedingsondersteuning in ogenschouw nemen, zou een meer directieve toon van professionals te verwachten zijn. Maar professionals gaven relatief weinig concreet advies op concrete onderwerpen en veroordeelden zelden de moeders en hun gedrag in de transacties. In plaats daarvan ontstonden egalitaire gesprekken en onderhandelingen. Zelfs dingen waarover weinig onderhandeling mogelijk is, werden onderworpen aan die vorm.

Wanneer moeders in debat gingen over bepaalde doelstellingen van een cursus betekende dit enerzijds dat die doelstellingen verschoven. In die zin veranderde of *medieerde* de reactie van de moeders dan het beleid. Anderzijds pasten deze mediaties juist precies in het gemeenschappelijke thema van reflexiviteit en communicatie. Een voorbeeld: door een specifiek idee van het huwelijk ter discussie te stellen, kon een moeder tegen de opvattingen van de docent in gaan. Op het eerste gezicht is het aantrekkelijk om dit te interpreteren als een vorm van verzet of in ieder geval verschil van mening. Maar interessant is nu juist dat de moeder en de docent de mogelijkheid van reflexiviteit en communicatie scheppen door in discussie te gaan. Door te oefenen wat het is om communicatief en reflexief te zijn dragen zij dan samen bij aan een coproductie van reflexieve en communicatieve subject-posities.

**Een chemisch huwelijk met een post-industriële economie**

De opvoedingsondersteuning die ik heb onderzocht bestaat in een tijd en plaats waar industriële productie steeds meer verdwijnt en nieuwe banen beschikbaar worden in een interactieve diensteneconomie. De productie van reflexieve en communicatieve subject-posities daar zijn opvallend gelijk aan wat wordt verwacht van werknemers in die diensteneconomie. Ik zie daarom de relaties tussen de productie van reflexieve en communicatieve subject-posities in opvoedingsondersteuning en de beroepsethiek van de eenentwintigste eeuw als een

*Wahlverwandtschaft*: een chemisch huwelijk. Er is een betekenisvolle relatie tussen de twee domeinen, al is die niet causaal te noemen. Het moederen van de post-industriële stad betekent dan ook vooral reflexief en communicatief moederen.

**De tragiek van toekomstmuziek**

Rotterdam is onzeker over de toekomst nu de jaren van industriële expansie en wederopbouw voorbij zijn. De stad zoekt manieren om afstand te nemen van het industriële verleden en om iets anders te worden dan een havenstad. Maar wat moet Rotterdam dan worden? Daar is nog veel onzekerheid over. Wel is het waarschijnlijk dat de economie steeds meer op diensten zal gaan buigen. Banen zullen steeds meer in de interactieve diensteneconomie beschikbaar worden, zoals in de zorg en de horeca. Daar zijn communicatieve en reflexieve vaardigheden cruciaal. Rotterdam wil ook graag dat juist deze economische sectoren groeien en hoopt dus dat de toekomstige bevolking daarbij aansluiting kan vinden.

Maar nu communiceert de stad steeds dat die bevolking er *nog niet* is. De Rotterdamse vergezichten zijn maken soms pijnlijk duidelijk dat de huidige Rotterdamse bevolking aangepast moet worden, als het aan het bestuur ligt. Een voorbeeld van zo'n vergezicht was bijvoorbeeld dat ik in 2009 in de Afrikaanderwijk een groot spandoek tegenkwam van de wooncorporatie en gemeente waarop stond: "De Afrikaanderwijk in 2020. Een wijk om trots op te zijn". Het spandoek kondigde regeneratie aan. Het is een perfect voorbeeld van de tragiek van toekomstmuziek. Het spandoek belooft investeringen, verbeteringen aan woningen en betere speeltuinen. Maar het communiceert ook dat in 2009, Afrikaanderwijk nog niet een buurt was om trots op te zijn. En dat zou het alleen worden na jaren van investeringen en de "verspreiding" van hen die nu in Afrikaanderwijk wonen. Met andere woorden: de belofte is dat Afrikaanderwijk een wijk wordt om trots op te zijn als een deel van de huidige bewoners vertrekt. Rotterdam communiceert soortgelijke boodschappen voortdurend: de stad is *nog niet* een levendige en succesvolle stad. De Rotterdamse bevolking is *nog niet* de hoger opgeleide groep autonome individuen die werken in de creatieve en dienstensector. Een van de routes naar die gewenste toekomst zijn interventies in de privé-sfeer van burgers die we als *nog niet* autonoom beschouwen.