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POPULATION CHANGE IN RESIDENTIAL ENVIRONMENTS IN THE METROPOLITAN AREAS OF AMSTERDAM, ROTTERDAM AND THE HAGUE

by

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Introduction

The big cities comprising the Dutch conurbation known as Randstad Holland have been undergoing a transformation since the 1960s. In the process, their appearance has been altered dramatically. One fundamental change concerns the residential function of these cities. Societal developments in conjunction with housing policy have transfigured residential environments, not only in the big cities but also in their surrounding areas (Jobse & Musterd 1992). Two key elements in this process are household composition and income trends.

Since the 1960s, households have changed in size and number; there are now more of them and their differentiation is new. These two characteristics are indicative of two major societal developments in the past three decades. In 1960, there were 3.1 million households in the Netherlands; by 1992, this amount had doubled. Of course, the number of households had been rising for much longer. But the 1960s mark a clear break in the trend. Until 1960, the number of households rose gradually, largely reflecting population growth. The average household was getting smaller. Nonetheless, this decline had a minimal effect on the number of households. Instead, it was demographics that determined household development; social

processes were secondary. Along with the emergence of new types of households, and partly because of this, there was a spatial sorting out of population categories. The core cities turned into residential areas with an over-representation of small households and low-income groups. In contrast, the inhabitants of suburban areas were mostly median and higher-income families with children.

Government intervention in the housing market was evident in housing distribution, rent control, and the predominance of the social sector in new construction. These policies made it hard for people with an above-median income to gain access to the metropolitan housing markets. Inaccessibility was one of the reasons for the ensuing selective migration. This, in turn, led to a shift in the socio-economic composition of the urban population, especially after 1965. One manifestation of this shift was the relative downgrading of the inner cities (Musterd & Ostendorf 1991).

The government conducted a nationwide Housing Need Survey in 1981, 1985 and 1989. In this article, we use the outcomes to sketch the developments that took place between 1981 and 1989. We focus on the composition and socio-economic characteristics of households in the metropolitan areas of the three big cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague). Our analysis pertains to changes at the level of city district (see Fig. 1).

Household composition

The predominance of the family household

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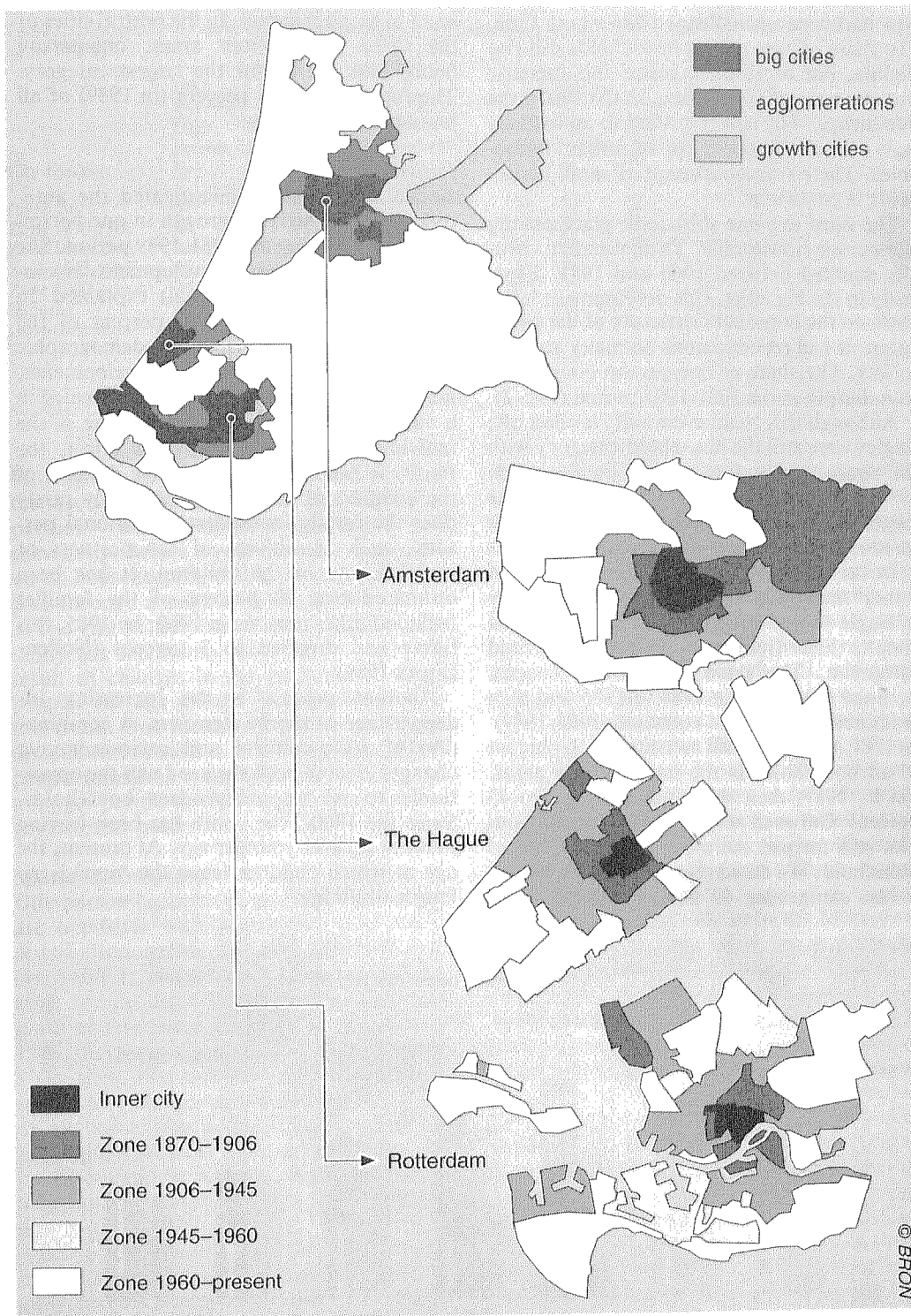


Fig. 1. Location of the districts in the three big cities.

type had been unchallenged for a long time. The share of one-person households did rise slightly, but in absolute terms this increase was almost negligible. Then, in the 1960s, the tide turned. The new trend led to an increasingly diverse composition of urban households. There was an upsurge of small households in particular.

The most extreme shift took place among one-person households. Their number virtually doubled between 1960 and 1981. Especially in the big cities, this development left a mark on the household structure of the population. It had repercussions on many areas of society. The share of one-person households rose sharply in the 1981-1985 period (Fig. 2).

Although this trend eventually leveled off, singles were still the household category with the strongest absolute growth in the 1985-1989 period. Even so, their relative increase lagged behind that of non-family households (predominantly cohabiting couples).

In the 1981-1985 period, the category of 'other' household types (consisting primarily of single-parent families) expanded. Married couples differ from the rest of the household categories. The share of married couples declined slightly from 1981 to 1985 and then remained more or less constant (1985-1989). In 1981, this group still constituted 56 percent of all households in the metropolitan areas. Yet by 1989, their share had dropped to 45 percent. But even at that level, married couples still formed the most common type of household. We noted that one-person households, comprising 40 percent of the total,

seem to be catching up. In the central cities of the three metropolitan areas, one-person households are by far the largest category. They account for 48 percent (in 1989) of all households.

Individuation

Nollen-Dijcks (1989) investigated the antecedents of the striking growth in one-person households during the 1981-1989 period. She concluded that societal developments (socio-cultural, economic, political) explained 56 percent of the increase; 36 percent of the growth could be ascribed to demographic change. Among the societal developments, individuation played a key role, as revealed in a variety of processes. One of these is the individuation of the family. In effect, the family is becoming the exclusive domain of the couple and their offspring. Only rarely does the family incorporate additional persons, such as siblings of the partners or grandparents of the children. It has been estimated that 10 percent of the families included other persons in 1960; by 1985, this figure had dropped to 3 percent (Nollen-Dijcks 1989).

Another process is the increasing independence of family members. A combination of socio-cultural and socio-economic changes created both the need and the opportunity to set up independent households. Since the 1960s, the youth has been leaving home at an ever younger age. At present, the age at which children leave the 'nest' is no longer declining.

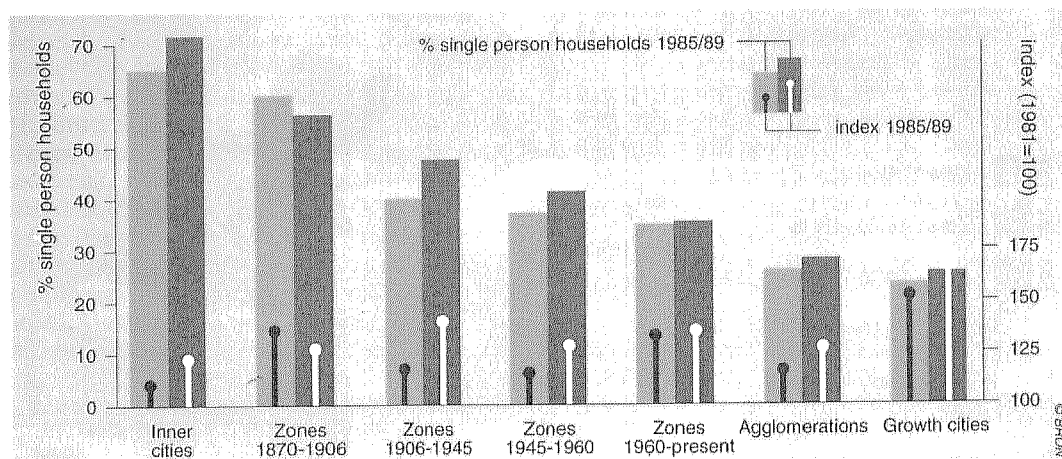


Fig. 2. One-person households in the three big cities as percentage of the total number of households in 1985 and 1989 and the indexed development of this type of households (1981 = 100).

Table 1. *Households by composition and location in the three big cities, in 1981 and 1989 (row totals per year add up to 100%).*

| City District | 1981 | | | | Total n | 1989 | | | | Total n |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| | One- person % | Non- family % | Single- family % | Other household % | | One- person % | Non- family % | Single- family % | Other household % | |
| Inner city | 61 | 10 | 29 | 6 | 52 | 71 | 8 | 15 | 5 | 78 |
| Zone 1870-1906 | 44 | 13 | 36 | 8 | 140 | 56 | 8 | 25 | 10 | 158 |
| Zone 1906-1945 | 33 | 8 | 51 | 8 | 329 | 48 | 7 | 36 | 10 | 326 |
| Zone 1945-1960 | 32 | 5 | 57 | 6 | 95 | 41 | 7 | 43 | 8 | 97 |
| Zone 1960-present | 26 | 6 | 60 | 9 | 140 | 35 | 7 | 46 | 11 | 198 |
| Suburbs | 21 | 5 | 66 | 7 | 233 | 28 | 7 | 59 | 6 | 294 |
| Growth centers | 15 | 6 | 74 | 5 | 158 | 26 | 8 | 60 | 7 | 254 |
| Total | 30 | 7 | 56 | 7 | 1147 | 40 | 7 | 45 | 8 | 1405 |

Sources: Central Bureau of Statistics, Housing Need Survey 1981 and 1989, data processed by Urban Networks.

Moving out of the parental home is now less the result of a decision to live together with a partner – whether or not in marriage – than previously. Before a young person decided to set up housekeeping with a partner, s/he first goes through a stage of living alone.

The rise in number of households is certainly not exclusively nor even primarily the result of changes in the behavior of young people. All age groups have contributed to this trend. One factor is the acute rise in the divorce rate. Another is the fact that elderly people remain in independent living units for a longer period of time, partly as a result of government policy.

Spatial distribution

One-person households and married couples are opposites with respect to their spatial distribution across the metropolitan areas (see Table 1). Singles are concentrated in the most central districts of the city. They have more or less taken over the inner cities. In 1981, they were already in the majority there. Since then, this position has been strengthened; in 1989, they accounted for 72 percent of all households in this area. One-person households are also the most prevalent type in 19th century neighborhoods, although their number stabilized after 1985. This pattern is still in flux.

It is often assumed that one-person households have their own characteristic location pattern. This is supposedly the result of their specific housing preferences, along with their relatively weak position on the tight urban housing markets. In regard to housing preferences, Van Engelsdorp Gastelaars (1990) em-

phasizes the differences in activity patterns among small households and families.

Singles have a greater need for external contacts. They give high priority to socializing outside the home. The most suitable residential environments for this group are amenity rich and offer abundant social contacts. Such environments are found in inner cities, 19th century neighborhoods, and parts of the early 20th century zone.

The pattern of needs sketched above does not apply equally to all one-person households. This category has diversified over the past few years. It has come to include other groups besides young people with an urban lifestyle; for instance, older singles, divorced persons and suburban youth. These groups generally have a different image of an 'amenity-rich' residential environment. Moreover, they often anticipate becoming a different type of household in the future.

Of course, older people seek amenities and social contacts, but they are also concerned about security. Divorced persons are mostly somewhat older and aspire to a higher level of amenity than young one-person households do. A category of one-person households that is increasing in size is that of suburban youth. In many suburban municipalities and growth centers, the children born after the widespread move to the suburbs in the 1960s and 1970s are now grown up. For many of these young adults, the image of a sociable and desirable residential environment is not the city center; rather, it is the place where they were raised (Beaujon & Wöltgens 1984).

The rise in number of one-person households and the greater diversity of this group

has led to a much wider spatial distribution than previously. People were not forced to move to new, peripheral residential areas. That is, their decision was not due to a shortage of housing in central parts of the city. Only a minority of the one-person households would prefer to live in a prewar neighborhood or the inner city; the highest scores for satisfaction are found in the newest residential areas (Jobse 1991). Construction of more small units in the newly built urban neighborhoods and in some growth centers and suburban municipalities thus seems to match the preference – expressed at least by some of the one-person households – for a less centrally located neighborhood.

The abrupt rise in the number of one-person households in the growth centers is striking. Until recently, this type of residential environment was conceived as a place for families. Of course, the share of one-person households in the growth centers is still well below that of the three big cities, but this type is increasing most rapidly. In 1981, the percentage of one-person households in the growth centers was on average 15 percent. In 1985 and 1989, their share rose to 23 and 26 percent, respectively.

The spatial distribution of married couples is more or less the opposite of that exhibited by one-person households. In 1981, households of married couples were already sporadic in the inner cities and the 19th century neighborhoods. By 1989, their presence had dropped to a very low level: 15 and 25 percent, respectively. But this trend was even found in the urban districts that traditionally housed families. Between 1981 and 1989, there was a sharp decline in the share of married couples in the total number of households. Their presence varied from 12 percent in the suburbs to 39 percent in the urban neighborhoods built between 1906 and 1945. Of course, this relative decline might coincide with an increase in absolute numbers in areas where the growth rate is higher.

The changes in non-family households were less radical than those of the household types described above. Between 1981 and 1985, the number of non-family households lagged behind the overall development of households. This shortfall was compensated over the next four years. With regard to the spatial distribution of non-family households, there was an over-representation in the prewar parts of the city. In 1985, this was

already less pronounced; by 1989, there were hardly any signs of over-representation. On the contrary, they were spread evenly across the parts of the city in question.

Other household types rapidly increased in number between 1981 and 1985. After that, they trailed behind the rise in total number of households. The fairly dispersed settlement pattern of 1981 evolved in the direction of a slight over-representation in the districts in the big municipalities, with the exception of the inner cities.

Income development

The Netherlands occupies an unusual position among Western countries where income distribution and its trends are concerned. The government's Social and Cultural Report (SCP 1992) gives an overview of income inequality in several countries (Fig. 3). The 'even' dispersal in The Netherlands is striking.

This distribution is a result of a nearly constant process of income leveling from the Second World War onwards. For years, the lowest incomes grew relatively more than the highest ones. Moreover, redistribution of means took place in many other ways. For instance, the social security acts (pensions, benefits) were redistributive measures; and housing policy redistributed means by constructing social rental units and by granting housing allowances and housing subsidies. In short, the rise of the welfare state went hand in hand with leveling.

Yet, from about 1987 onwards, things were changing in The Netherlands. Data derived from the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS

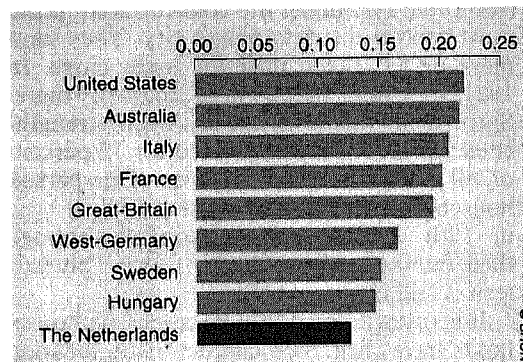


Fig. 3. *Income inequality, family income around 1986, Theil coefficients**.

Sources: ISSP/SCP 1987, in SCP 1990; The Luxembourg Income Survey, in SCP 1992.

* A value of 0 indicates absolute inequality of income.

1991) demonstrate a growing divergence over the past few years between the highest incomes and the lowest ones.

It is no mere coincidence that the Dutch welfare state model came under pressure at the same time. This is suggested by a recent scenario developed by the Central Planning Bureau (CPB 1992), an advisory body of the national government. This study presents three scenarios of the country's economic future in an international perspective. For each scenario, there is a corresponding welfare state model. One of the three scenarios is rejected: the one based on the welfare state model currently in operation.

The late 1980s mark not only a break in the trend, but also a new concern with the income differential between households. It is widely feared that population categories will become polarized, that a dual society will arise, and that an underclass will emerge (see e.g., Engbertsen 1990).

These fears are sparked by signals picked up from abroad, particularly from cities in the United States and Great Britain. Authors like Sassen-Koob (1986), Marcuse (1989) and Short (1989) have written extensively on polarization in American and British cities. Polarization proves to manifest itself primarily in the large metropolitan areas. Thomas (1991) calls these "the cities left behind." This epithet refers to the ongoing suburbanization of affluent households and the immobility of the unemployed and lowest-income people in the core cities of the metropolitan area. These people bear the brunt of urban decline, because the employment opportunities tend to move to the suburbs as well. Admittedly, this is a worst-case scenario. Numerous cities with high-skill employment manifest a concurrent development of gentrification in the inner cities.

The question is whether similar developments also occur in metropolitan areas in The Netherlands.

Income development in Dutch metropolitan areas

The income leveling that has taken place in The Netherlands is also expressed spatially. Until the mid-1980s, the metropolitan areas of the three big cities showed a relative decline in average income per wage-earner. In 1960, the average income of the metropolitan areas was still above the national figure (by

Table 2. *Percentage of deviation of income by wage-earner (total income) for the central city compared to the metropolitan area.*

| | 1974 (%) | 1984 (%) |
|-----------|----------|----------|
| Amsterdam | -10.0 | -13.4 |
| Rotterdam | -6.1 | -12.4 |
| The Hague | -6.3 | -9.4 |

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, income statistics, data processed by Musterd & Ostendorf 1991.

about 10-12%). But in 1984, the average income in the metropolitan areas of Amsterdam and Rotterdam dropped to the same level as in the rest of The Netherlands (Musterd & Ostendorf 1991). The question, however, is whether this can be called leveling. The income gap between the metropolitan areas and the national average had narrowed. But within the metropolitan areas, there was an unmistakable trend to de-leveling, precisely in the period of nationwide leveling (Table 2). Until the mid-1980s, incomes showed a relative decline in the core cities of the metropolitan areas.

Incomes in these cities have been showing a relative decline for a long time. Thus, one might expect that the national increase in income differential, which occurred in the late 1980s, would lead to an ever sharper contrast between the core cities and their suburban areas. But this does not prove to be the case. Around the middle of the decade, the trend changed direction!

Small-area data from the Housing Need Survey demonstrates that until 1985, the big cities were in decline (Table 3). Subsequently, their position stabilized. The inner cities already were able to improve their position dramatically in the first half of the 1980s. Most growth occurred in the category with the highest incomes. This shift was found in each of the big cities. A small amount of polarization seems to have occurred in these areas in the second half of the 1980s. The lowest and highest income quartiles had become larger. Incomes in the 19th century neighborhoods (often urban renewal areas) decreased until 1985. The decline continued after 1985, though in a less extreme form. The median-income quartile then became more prevalent. Until 1985, the 20th century neighborhoods also demonstrated a slight drop in the share of households with an above-median income. Overall, the growth centers declined in socio-economic terms

throughout the entire period under study. At the same time, the suburban municipalities improved their position in the first half of the 1980s and subsequently consolidated it.

In summary, income growth is manifested in two types of areas: the inner cities and the suburban municipalities. The only type of environment that gives clear evidence of decline is that of the growth centers. These conclusions are supported by outcomes of other research based on various data sets (SCP 1990; Musterd & Ostendorf 1991).

Economic restructuring and socio-cultural change

Until the mid-1980s, various developments had negative effects on the central cities. These were largely provoked by the suburbanization that occurred during that period. Van Engelsdorp Gastelaars and Heinemeijer (1985, p. 99) characterize that time as one of "the arrival of those with aspirations and the departure of the successful." The latter group, with their higher incomes, left in search of owner-occupancy dwellings. These were almost exclusively found out of the central cities. Consequently, there was a high volume of migration to the suburbs, even to places lying outside the metropolitan area.

However, the massive suburbanization trend came to a halt in the course of the 1980s. Several factors stimulated income growth in the inner cities and some adjacent residential environments. These include a rise in urban-oriented small households and a decline in suburban-oriented family households. This shift coincided with a drop in housing construction outside the cities and more owner-occupancy house building with-

in them. Furthermore, economic restructuring had two effects that promoted city living. First, there was more demand for young, highly skilled employees; this group already had an urban orientation. Second, the decentralization of economic activity created opportunities for residential development in the central cities.

In the United States, the departure of economic activity from the inner cities accompanied decay. That was not the case in the Dutch context, at least not in the inner cities, where much of the old economic activity was located. In The Netherlands, historic inner cities had developed slowly and always had a significant residential function. Because of their historic and cultural value, these inner cities were almost continuously in great demand as residential areas. All properties that came vacant were quickly converted into apartment buildings.

In the meantime, the most attractive suburban residential environments continued to flourish. Numerous family households, or those that anticipated starting a family, have remained oriented toward the suburban municipalities. Due to the positive relation between choice for owner-occupancy and the size of the income, we may expect to see a rise in socio-economic status in those suburbs where home ownership is prevalent (see Deurloo *et al.* 1990). This explains the income growth in the suburbs of the big cities.

The growth centers form a heterogeneous category, which makes it difficult to generalize. A few of them, in any case, have a hard time competing in socio-economic terms. They have a high percentage of social rental units and a peripheral location with reference

Table 3. *Households by household income and residential location in the metropolitan areas of the three big cities, 1981, 1985, 1989/90, in quartiles.*

| Quartile | 1981 | | | 1985 | | | 1989 | | |
|-----------------|------|---------|-----|------|---------|-----|------|---------|-----|
| | 1st | 2nd/3rd | 4th | 1st | 2nd/3rd | 4th | 1st | 2nd/3rd | 4th |
| Inner city | 42 | 45 | 13 | 32 | 53 | 16 | 36 | 42 | 22 |
| 1870-1905 | 32 | 51 | 17 | 39 | 48 | 14 | 37 | 51 | 12 |
| 1906-1944 | 29 | 52 | 19 | 31 | 53 | 17 | 31 | 50 | 18 |
| 1945-1959 | 27 | 53 | 20 | 27 | 55 | 18 | 27 | 56 | 17 |
| 1960-present | 21 | 52 | 27 | 23 | 50 | 27 | 23 | 51 | 27 |
| Big three | 28 | 51 | 20 | 30 | 51 | 19 | 30 | 51 | 20 |
| Suburbs | 20 | 48 | 32 | 18 | 48 | 34 | 16 | 50 | 34 |
| Growth centers | 13 | 48 | 40 | 15 | 48 | 36 | 17 | 49 | 34 |
| Total | 25 | 50 | 25 | 25 | 50 | 25 | 25 | 50 | 25 |
| Standard dev. , | 8.7 | | 8.8 | 7.8 | | 8.4 | 7.9 | | 7.9 |

Sources: Central Bureau of Statistics, Housing Need Survey 1981, 1985/86, 1989/90, data processed by Urban Networks.

to the core city. The municipal governments had tried to prevent vacancies through an extremely liberal policy of housing allocation. This has had a major impact on the income level of those municipalities.

Conclusions

It is evident that changes in household composition have direct effects on the housing market. Both the quantitative and qualitative housing demand reflect these changes, which are essentially social. In addition, the functioning of residential areas is also influenced by developments in household composition.

One-person households are spread over diverse residential areas and thus over several housing market sectors. This seems to indicate the emancipation of one-person households; they have gained access to the housing market. They are no longer relegated to those segments of the housing stock that stronger contenders reject.

In general, family households exhibit the usual pattern; namely, a shift to more recent and more peripheral residential areas. The central cities in the metropolitan areas again demonstrate some, though modest, popula-

tion growth. However, the period of population loss due to outmigration of family households is over. Urban revitalization has not fundamentally changed the migration pattern of the families. They are still attracted to the suburbs (Atzema 1991). Yet part of this propensity to move remains latent. This is due to supply factors as well as the present economic recession.

It appears that within the metropolitan areas, the income differentials did not increase in the 1980s. As the prospects for development in the inner cities and the suburbs are good, development in these areas will probably continue in the coming years. In the event that the adaptation of the welfare state will lead to less extensive redistribution, eventually emphatically different environments might develop. The location of the 19th century neighborhoods gives them an advantage. They can function as overspill areas for the inner city. Thus, the 20th century residential areas and the peripheral growth centers will be more likely to demonstrate a relative decline in socio-economic level.

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