EUR Research Information Portal

Sharing feelings about neighborhood transformation on Facebook: online affective placemaking in Amsterdam-Noord

Link to publication on the EUR Research Information Portal

Erasmus University Rotterdam
Making Minds Matter

Sharing feelings about neighborhood transformation on Facebook: online affective placemaking in Amsterdam-Noord

Pieter Breek , Jasper Eshuis & Joke Hermes

Published online: 04 Sep 2020.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 7

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Check for updates

Sharing feelings about neighborhood transformation on Facebook: online affective placemaking in Amsterdam-Noord

Pieter Breek[a], Jasper Eshuis[b] and Joke Hermes[c]

[a]Inholland University of Applied Sciences, Diemen, Netherlands; [b]Department of Public Administration and Sociology, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam, Netherlands; [c]Media, Culture and Citizenship, University of Applied Sciences, Diemen, Netherlands

ABSTRACT

Social media have become important platforms for residents to engage with their neighborhood. This paper investigates two Facebook communities that focus in distinctly different ways on Amsterdam-Noord, a gentrifying neighborhood in Amsterdam. Dialogue on both Facebook communities is found to be thoroughly affective, but the kinds of emotions and the way such emotions are generated and shared differ. Through this analysis, this paper seeks to understand how "affective publics" emerge through a specific form of collaborative storytelling, characterized by tone, form as well as rhythm of online interaction. We show how the channeling of affective expression and attunement helps to build two dissimilar collaborative discourses of the neighborhood transformation. We propose the term online affective placemaking to study and articulate such processes. The term points to mediated feelings and urgency to engage, which bonds participants and impacts the social and political landscape within the neighborhood.

Introduction

The upsurge of social media, such as Facebook, has instigated new dynamics in discursive placemaking (Benson and Jackson 2013; Busse 2019; Breek et al. 2018). Especially through neighborhood-related Facebook pages and groups, this social media platform has become a place for residents and other local stakeholders to express and discuss ideas on the neighborhood. This paper studies how Facebook informs online social and communicative practices and connects participants. It unravels how this discursive engagement with the neighborhood they inhabit impacts the local social and political landscape. Facebook is discussed as a platform for online discursive processes of placemaking. This provides a better grasp of online dimensions of the social construction of place (e.g. Cresswell 2014; Gieryn 2000) and bottom-up placemaking (Authors 2018) and contributes to a growing body of literature discussing the impact of digital communication technologies in urban contexts (e.g. de Lange and de Waal 2013, 2019; Caroll 2012).

We juxtapose two Facebook communities associated with one neighborhood in Amsterdam, officially called Amsterdam-Noord, but just "Noord" in colloquial language.

Noord has recently undergone substantial transformations due to the influx of more affluent residents, and related processes subsumed under gentrification (Booi and Smits 2017; Hackworth 2002; Smith 1996). As abundantly shown in the literature, gentrification is a disruptive dynamic that instigates a whirlwind of dissimilar and opposing emotions and experiences (Freeman 2011). With Facebook as a new forum for communication, such emotions and experiences are expressed and discussed online. In Noord two distinct neighborhood-related Facebook communities developed. We explore the dissimilar features as well as the interrelatedness of these two communities through a multimethod study. This study consisted of content analysis of a targeted sample of Facebook posts on both Facebook communities and interviews with key actors in those communities (eight), other Facebook communities focused on Noord (five) and active participants in the two Facebook communities (ten) and civil servants (thirteen).

As affect is central to those two discursive communities, we use Papacharissi's work on "*affective publics*" to further analyze them (Papacharissi 2015, 2016; Papacharissi and de Fatima Oliveira 2012). She defines affective publics as "networked public formations that are mobilized and connected (or disconnected) through expressions of sentiment" (Papacharissi 2015, 125). Papacharissi claims that affectively charged communication plays a vital role when people use social media to deal with contentious topics, such as gentrification. Affect sets a mood, people become interested (see also Hoch 2006) and are motivated to continue to contribute to the online interaction.

The objective of this article is to understand and theorize how neighborhood-oriented affective publics are shaped on and with Facebook and to understand how these affective publics impact the neighborhood. We found that participants use Facebook to affectively express and discuss what the neighborhood is and what it should be. Such affective communication connects like-minded residents and helps them to position themselves and others in the changing realities of the neighborhood. Thus, opposing discourses over the neighborhood transformation emerged within the two Facebook communities, shaping processes at the heart of placemaking, including mobilization of citizens and the formation of place identity. It also strengthens the formation of "us" and "them" groups. Although the coexistence of dissimilar and opposing place discourses is widely acknowledged (e.g. Massey 2005), the availability of social media platforms like Facebook changed the playing field for how publics in neighborhoods form themselves, as well as possible clashes between them.

Theoretical discussion

The idea that Facebook communities turn groups of residents into so-called "affective publics" is part of a wider academic debate about the formation of publics in discourse (e.g. Warner 2002; Livingstone 2005; Marres 2005; Papacharissi 2015). Within this body of literature, Warner emphasizes that a public is a self-organized connection between people that is independent of the state or external networks, brought about in discourse. Publics emerge through involvement (speaking, writing, thinking) and do not exist outside the discourse they address.

The publics formed by social media platforms such as Facebook can be seen as a form of networked publics, shaped to a great extent by the technological possibilities for interaction and the formation of network (boyd 2011). Building onto boyd's (2011)

conceptualization of networked publics, Papacharissi Papacharissi (2015, 2016) coined the term "affective publics". With this term Papacharissi articulated what she calls pre-discursive and unarticulated "intensities" within social media communication. Analyzing moments of mediated social outrage on Twitter, such as #BlackLivesMatter, Papacharissi found that social media play an important role in channeling sentiment that coincides with these protests. Affective publics form around "open signifiers", like hashtags, or, as in this study, Facebook communities (2015, 2). "They assemble around media and platforms that invite affective attunement, support affective investment, and propagate affectively" (2016, 308). Affective publics are developed and sustained by affect, generated through, while simultaneously driving the online interactivity addressing a contentious issue.

Papacharissi's conceptualization illuminates how publics in the online realm come together and, eventually, disperse. Affective interaction must continually be renewed as publics cease to exist "when attention is no longer predicated" (Warner 2002, 61). This attention is driven by emotions rather than by rational ideas and interests. Participants in affective publics share "mediated feelings of connectedness", rather than just opinions (2016, 308). The Facebook "like"–button and the largely "spontaneous and organic responses" social media communication is known for, symbolizes this type of engagement.

In media studies, "affordance" is used to conceptualize how media facilitates certain forms of action (Hutchby 2001). Affordances of technologies, such as social media, are never neutral, but enable and constrain particular behaviors more than others (Bucher and Helmond 2017; Ostertag and Ortiz 2017). Taking Facebook, this platform accelerates and intensifies interaction, but it also co-shapes the very nature and substance of interactions. Specific affordances, such as posting, commenting, and liking on Facebook steer how users can communicate (Ostertag and Ortiz 2014), while the Facebook algorithm determines the distribution of their contributions in the online network (Kitchin 2014).

Papacharissi also points to the connective and expressive affordances of social media. These affordances instigate a "rhythm and pace of storytelling" which in affective publics become "instant, emotive, and phatic" (Papacharissi 2016, 317). According to Papacharissi (2015) this affectively charged rhythm and pace of storytelling, channeled through social media, supports the collaborative building of discourse about complex, contentious issues. Such discourse is not formed in purely structured and substantiated ways. Papacharissi emphasizes the impulsive and emotional exchanges witnessed in social media conversations. They allow participants to affectively connect and "feel their way" into the debate (Papacharissi 2015). In other words, collaboratively built discourses emerge in the online discursive streams in which people affectively invest, express, and attune.

This article focuses on Facebook as a platform that allows for the affective expression and debate of what is happening in neighborhoods and what a neighborhood should ideally be like. This lens links online affective publics with placemaking, which is why we conceptualize this as online affective placemaking. Through this concept, we grasp the discursive and affective dimensions of placemaking (Benson and Jackson 2013; Busse 2019; Uprichard and Byrne 2006) by residents within social media (Korn and Back 2012). We will explore how they consolidate or transform their ideas about the neighborhood transformation through everyday Facebook interactions. In line with

Waite (2018, 279) we expect discursive making and remaking of place by residents to "encompass an active engagement demonstrated in talk concerning place" but also "a process that occurs beneath rational articulations demonstrated in verbally expressed interpretations of material place as sensed, emotive and experiential". Within the realm of Facebook this translates in colloquial and non-strategic posting, liking, and commenting on messages addressing neighborhood-related issues and events, through which residents test with unknown others how to make sense of their changing surroundings. In other words, the term online affective placemaking helps us to understand how these Facebook interactions connect participants and support emerging and inherent open-ended collaborative discourses about the neighborhood transformation.

Methods

Research design

This research compares two Facebook pages relating to Noord out of twelve active groups and pages identified with the Facebook "scraper" tool Netvizz. Through purposive sampling (Flyvbjerg 2006) we selected ilovenoord (a page) and AmsterdamNoord (a public group) because they were initiated to provide a platform for the exchange of personal neighborhood observations and because both had many active followers. An important selection criterium was that they appeal to different groups of residents. This allows us to compare how affect, cultural context, and the affordances of Facebook may play out in two different cases (Papacharissi 2015, 122).

Data collection and analysis

To analyze Facebook dialogue, we selected the fifty most engaged posts per year between 2010 and 2016 for both groups, thus a total of 700 posts as well as the ensuing comments, likes, and shares (Ilovenoord 2010–2016 and AmsterdamNoord 2012–2016). Posts with a high volume of engagement (comments, likes, and shares) were chosen, as they signal a high level of "conversationality" and the co-creation of stories (Papacharissi 2016, 313). Initial coding focused on discursive form, tone of voice, and rhythm of exchange, providing insight into the affective-digital texture of both communities. Analyzing the affective expressivity helps to understand the distinctive ambiance of the two Facebook communities and the rhythm and pace of online collaborative storytelling it supports. The second round of coding focused on emerging collaborative discourses, through content analysis of the expression and debate of neighborhood issues and events.

In addition to content analysis of Facebook dialogues, semi-structured interviews were conducted between 2014 and 2019 with 13 local civil servants (one policymaker, two communication specialist, and ten participative placemaking professionals), eight key actors involved in developing and maintaining ilovenoord or AmsterdamNoord, five key actors of other Amsterdam-Noord related Facebook communities, and with ten participants. Interviews were transcribed and thematically coded. In this paper we use interviews to contextualize the two Facebook groups, to understand the backgrounds of

participants and to reflect with interviewees on the impact of these Facebook communities on the social and political landscape.

Results

Noord, Ilovenoord, and AmsterdamNoord

Noord is a neighborhood with a distinctive character within Amsterdam. For one, the river IJ separates Noord from the rest of Amsterdam. Noord is also distinctive due to the dominance of low-rise housing in a village layout and abundant greenery. Noord occupies almost a quarter of the city's total area but only around 11% of the total population. A third unique feature is formed by the large and nowadays mostly abandoned shipyards and shipping related industry on the banks of the IJ river. In the mid-20th century, the booming heavy industry attracted workers from everywhere. Noord turned into a multi-cultural neighborhood with 38% residents from non-western backgrounds in 2016 (OIS Amsterdam 2016). When the majority of the companies closed in the 1980s, many residents were laid off. With no alternative employment available, Noord deteriorated into one of the most unattractive neighborhoods of Amsterdam in the minds of many outsiders. Symbolic separation from the rest of Amsterdam widened considerably (Booi 2006; Milikowski 2018).

While a specific starting date is debatable, gentrification in Amsterdam Noord has accelerated since 2010. The municipality and housing corporations created space for more affluent residents, combining new construction with the sale of social housing (Savini et al. 2016). The share of owner-occupied homes increased from 17% in 2005 to 29% in 2016 (Booi and Smits 2017). Public and private investments pushed the development of the creative (e.g. MTV Networks Benelux) and leisure sector (e.g. National Film Museum Eye) in the neighborhood.

Particularly the white working-class residents, colloquially referred to as "Northerners", emphasized the downsides of these developments. First, housing became more expensive, as the well-located pre-war housing and newly constructed dwellings attracted socio-economically stronger newcomers (Booi and Smits 2017). Secondly, a mismatch grew in the labor market. Working-class Northerners' unemployment rates rose while overall job opportunities in Noord increased (Tjebbes, El Kouaa, and van Zelm 2013).

The controversial transformation of Noord coincided with Facebook establishing itself as the most-used social media platform in the Netherlands between 2007 and 2017. Facebook communities were set up by residents to engage in neighborhood-related conversations. The focus in this paper is on two distinct Facebook communities: "ilovenoord" which attracted many high-educated newcomers, and "AmsterdamNoord" in which the white working-class Northers made up the majority.

Before we go into the details of each page, it is relevant to establish how those online conversations relate to social and political landscape in the neighborhood. Warner (2002, 52) underlines that we should not confuse the two Facebook publics with specific groups of residents. A public exists in and through discourse, they are not demarcated groups. This is also the case in Noord. Whereas it is tempting to understand the two Facebook communities as representing two distinct groups of residents, cross-use of the two Facebook groups shows that the two affective publics were dynamic constellations.

Contributions to both communities were made by shifting groups of individuals. Participants cease being active after a short or longer period, while others join and take over. There is also a substantial and increasing participation overlap between the platforms. In 2014 8% of the ilovenoord participants interacted (commented and liked) on AmsterdamNoord, which increased to 12% in 2016. For AmsterdamNoord this was even a larger share. In 2014, 15% and in 2016 17% of Amsterdam Noords' participants were active on ilovenoord.

Despite such complexities, interviewees commonly constructed both Ilovenoord and AmsterdamNoord as clearly distinct, sometimes even opposing conduits, where specific neighborhood sentiment resonated. Residents who invested in the telling and retelling of a manifest aspect of the transformation of Amsterdam-Noord: the opening of new leisure localities and events, connected to ilovenoord. They shared a feeling of urgency to be involved in this neighborhood-transformation. Many were young and high-educated newcomers and (Noord becoming hip and happening, better matched the personal life stories they wanted to construct (Authors 2018). AmsterdamNoord, on the other hand, was seen as an online discursive space for white, working-class, and long-time residents to reminisce about the past and increasingly express their anger with incoming yuppies threatening their way of life.

The interviewees also point out how the sheer magnitude and intensity of online interaction within both Facebook communities reached other local stakeholders, such as local government. Interviews with various municipality representatives acknowledged how ilovenoord was the first Facebook group in Noord to catch the attention of both administrators and officials of Noord. They openly embraced the positive message over a new emerging Noord propagated by ilovenoord, even gave some financial support for hosting a website.

These same interviewees also reflected on how AmsterdamNoord helped to give voice to the white working-class residents. The opinions and sentiments over neighborhood-related issues and events they articulated online found their way to the local authorities and media, instigating various governmental responses. At the same time, another large group of residents, those with a migrant background, were hardly visible in the online landscape and partly as a result they were much less represented in local participatory placemaking initiatives. The voice articulated on Facebook translated in social-political presence and a form of civil participation, that residents without such a collective voice missed out on.

Ilovenoord "Everything that makes you happy"

ilovenoord started in 2010 as an online blog by a "new Northerner" to exchange personal and optimistic Noord stories, as evident in the blog's subtitle: "*everything that makes you happy*". This positive approach to his everyday neighborhood experiences was received enthusiastically by a rapidly growing group of online followers. In August 2010, the ilovenoord Facebook page was created.

Between 2010 and 2016, ilovenoord grew from 1000 page likes in 2010 to more than 10.000 page likes in 2016. Engagement with ilovenoord postings peaked to 28.436 comments and likes by 5239 distinct users in 2014. In 2016, this reduced somewhat to 17.983 comments and 4959 likes. Still, these are high volumes of engagement and participation for a local Facebook community.

To deal with the social media output, the initiator recruited voluntary support to run ilovenoord. A team, fluctuating between five and twelve local volunteers, started writing and editing incoming contributions. The editors were mainly relative newcomers to the neighborhood and comparatively highly educated. They were comfortable with the connective and expressive affordances of Facebook and they drove the discursive interaction on the page.

Topics of discussion ilovenoord

A variety of neighborhood-related topics were addressed on ilovenoord. We categorized the top 50 most engaged posts per year in five topics between 2010 and 2016. Some shifts can be observed.
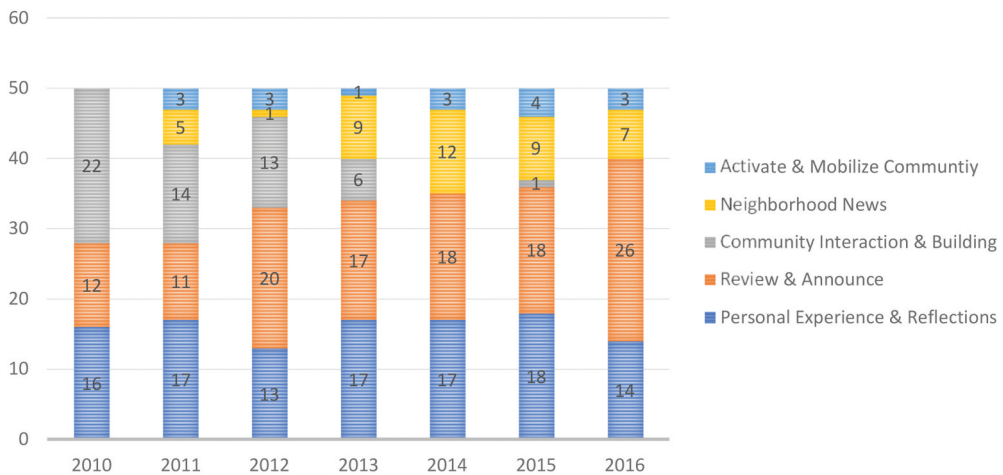
Figure 1. Ilovenoord topics most engaged posts.

The steadiest flow of postings pertained to everyday personal experiences and reflections on the neighborhood, ranging from praised iconic shipyard photos, to astonished reactions over a wandering raccoon, or the quirkiness of an eccentrically decorated scoot mobile.

A second category of posts aimed to activate the ilovenoord community to engage with specific issues related to the neighborhood transformation. For example, the increased crowdedness of the ferry to Noord led to irritation. ilovenoord stimulated its readers to come up with solutions for the chaotic and frustrating experience of (dis) embarking. This led to community members using gaffer tape to mark waiting surfaces, which the local transport administration later embraced structurally, by painting these surfaces red and green.

Engagement with a third category of posts, related to community interaction and building, decreased over the years as figure one shows. Community branding was coded in this category as a form of community building and in the first years ilovenoord was heavily focused on branding. The ilovenoord logo was used on all kinds of products,

including t-shirts, bags, and buttons, as a way to create a more positive neighborhood image. Over time, the focus on branding and merchandise decreased, while the focus on being an information platform for the neighborhood increased, with more posts in the category of neighborhood news items, announcements, and above all reviews of leisure opportunities in the neighborhood.

Independent of the topic of the post, a positive outlook on Noord remained the dominant trait of this discursive community, exactly as the group was "branded" by its editors. Such a tone of voice was also employed by commenters who appeared to flock to ilovenoord to interact about their neighborhood in a euphoric and optimistic way. All the cheery interaction on ilovenoord results in a distinctive rhythm of storytelling, to which we turn in the next section.

Rhythm, form and tone of storytelling: energetic, positive, personal

Three stylistic choices in the online expressivity and connectivity of the editors shaped the rhythm, form, and tone of storytelling of this Facebook community. First, posts were consistently written in a *personal* form and tone. Most posts show a, usually self-taken, photograph, supported by only a couple of sentences, containing colloquial vocabulary suggestive of everyday experience and personal in style. Secondly, the editors used predominantly *positive* expressions in relation to the neighborhood. Posts that show this are for example: "wow, how beautiful Noord is with the snow fall (2010–12-17, 2 likes) or "Isn't it a beauty! And what a great cycle path, for skaters too! (2014–09-05, 197 likes, 22 comments, 3 shares). The third stylistic feature of ilovenoord communication – especially in the early years – was *inviting dialogue*. The Facebook group addresses its users personally to respond with their own perspectives and neighborhood knowledge, such as where they believe one can find the best coffee in the neighborhood.

The ilovenoord editors made good use of the connective and expressive affordances of Facebook (easy uploading of pictures, emoticons, and likes) to encourage users to become active and remain engaged. Comments on a post starting with a question from an editor are a good example: "Should we or shouldn't we just do another 10.000 ilovenoord stickers?" (2011–02-08, 7 likes, 22 comments, 0 shares).

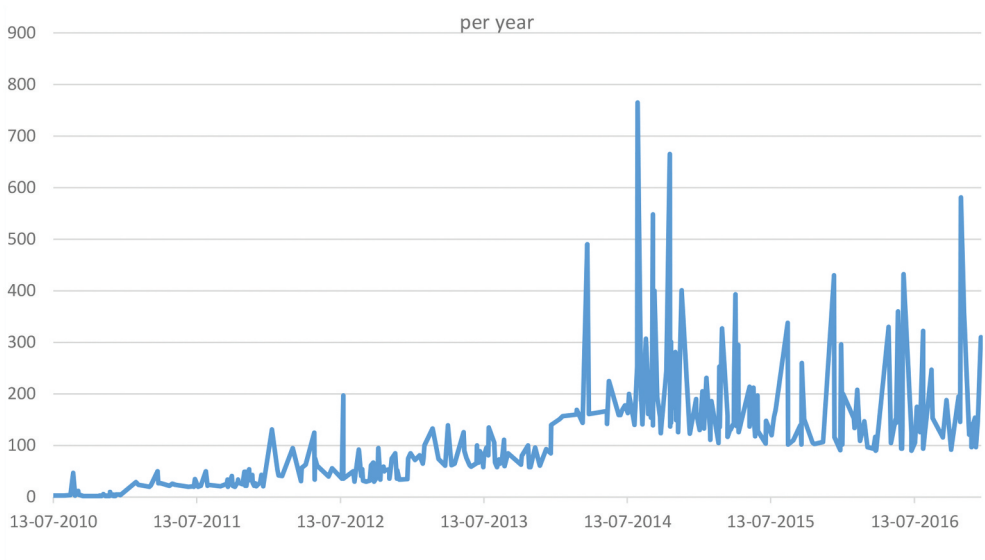| Comment	
Yes!	18:07
LET'S!!!!	14:22
You said it!	14:24
Of courrrrrrssse. Maybe do a combo, with the Xmas cards or such?	14:39
YYyyeeeaaahhh	15:36
Let's!	16:13
ilovenoord: 10.000 is an enormous lot or?	16:33
with 86.520 Northerners nah it's not	16:55
ilovenoord: yeah good point	17:02
ilovenoord: With 600 likers, I'll order, duh!	17:45
I like it 600 times	22:40
Me too!	00:18
ilovenoord: 600 likes . . . .10.000 here we come!!! I see I have an order to confirm!	08:52
–	– -

Figure 2. Engagement (likes, comments, and shares) with top 50 most engaged posts per year.

However banal, this type of communication offers users a sense of co-ownership. We note how participants expressed their personal feelings towards the post in a condensed colloquial way. Secondly, there was attunement of positive sentiment between participants. Excitement, delight, expectancy, and joy in the example, were sentiments witnessed in the majority of the ilovenoord discursive interactions. The quick succession of positive responses drove the collaborative storytelling dynamic in this Facebook community. Commenting, liking, and sharing come with substantive and eruptive conversational intensity, and continues over more than half a decade, as can be seen in the following graph (Figure 2).

In 2011, only three posts reached more than 50 likes, comments, and shares. In 2014, engagement easily peaked over 500 of such responses. This significant affective investment and attunement maintained the sense of a friendly, welcoming ambiance and connected a growing group of participants in an ongoing upbeat conversation about the neighborhood. One theme is particularly prominent and collaboratively developed: the shared enthusiasm for the emergence of a new identity for the neighborhood. In the following section we explore this particular collaborative discourse in more depth.

Collaborative discourse: embracing change

As can be seen in Figure 1, ilovenoord used Facebook frequently to publicize (new) opportunities for social interaction in the neighborhood. Ilovenoord announced and reviewed upcoming events, tipped nice places to have coffee, and reviewed places to eat. Sometimes a short message was posted, for example when a new climbing hall opened: "What a catch for Noord #ilovenoord!!! Epic!" (2013–02-09, 60 likes, 12 comments, 3 shares) sometimes there was a more elaborate review: "Oh yeah! Here he is again: The cafe sidewalk terrace top 5!" (2013–06-06, 43 likes, 11 comments, 8 shares). The affective

public around the page loved these posts as evidenced by the number of likes, comments, and shares these posts are given, as well as the encouraging and affectionate wording used. For example, in 2012, a group of architects decided to turn a former shipyard into a leisure spot and creative workspace, consisting of houseboats resting on land saturated with oil from long-gone ships. ilovenoord posted the opening: The new heaven on earth-the Ceuvel Volharding (2014–05-27, 165 likes, 12 comments, 48 shares)

Comment	
Looking good!	08:46
[5 names removed] This is where we need to go to on short notice dear Northerners	08:57
Super cool. Just donated. A treasure for Noord :)	09:03
So near to you *[2 names removed]*	09:30
[2 names removed] :)	09:41
Sounds awesome; going there!	10:11
Nice nice! I'll come and hang out :-)	11:25
Looks super! Another treasure for Noord!	13:50
Super spot!	19:13

The dialogue prompted by the ilovenoord posts regarding the transforming leisure landscape bound the affective public in a telling and retelling of new optimistic stories about the changing neighborhood which had long been known as grim and working class. It did so in its content (fun things to do), tone of voice (happy and full of exclamation marks) and in pace (in a rapid succession of comments and likes). This Facebook community did not just report on new and exciting things happening, it amplified them through its massive online resonance. Posters and commenters extended happy invitations to events they intended to be part of.

The flow of positive sentiment expressed in comments, likes, and shares, accumulated into a collaborative discourse about the neighborhood. This was a novel discourse about the formerly maligned neighborhood, that explicitly embraced the changes in the neighborhood. Within ilovenoord a perspective on Noord resonated, that saw Noord shifting from a drab, poor, and uninspiring neighborhood into a vibrant and exciting place to live, inhabit or visit.

Embracing this upbeat understanding of the gentrification of Amsterdam-Noord came to a crescendo when national and international media started describing Noord's transformation by framing it as a hip place-to-be. The participants in ilovenoords' timeline were wildly happy and -initially in 2011- surprised about the (inter)national attention for their Amsterdam-Noord. For example two of the immediate comments in reaction to: "*Just received an email from the NYT, do we have a couple of hot Noord tips for the travel section of the New York Times … #thingsshouldnotgetmoreidioticthanthis*" (2011–08-05, 43 likes, 7 comments, 0 shares)

Comments	
FAT! Are all Northerners invited for a free weekend New York then? Should be arrangeable	11:02
OOoooooooooooooh this is beyond great!!!!!!	11:04
. . . .	

The instant and organic affective response to both posts shows a sense of gratification when outsiders review the transformation of Amsterdam-Noord positively. The new perspective on the identity of Noord was embraced by the community as is evident in an engagement peak in 2014. Four of the 50 most engaged post in that year were positive reviews of Noord in the media. The post "Noord in list of hippest hoods in the world again … . at number three!" (2014–08-08, 401 likes, 329 comments, and 32 shares) was even the most engaged post in the entire data collection of ilovenoord.

A distinct affective rhythm and tone of storytelling connected the affective public around ilovenoord and supported the development of a new collaborative discourse about the neighborhood. This, however, was not the only collaborative discourse being developed online about Noord. In another Facebook group, AmsterdamNoord, the sentiment was strikingly different.

Amsterdam Noord: "nostalgic pictures"

On 12 August 2012, two years after ilovenoord, AmsterdamNoord was established as a Facebook public group. Its tone-of-voice, its rhythm, and the use of language are a world removed from ilovenoord's style. Where ilovenoord connected participants through conversations that brimmed with excitement about fun things to do and places to go to, AmsterdamNoord prompted strong affective reminiscing and proudness with the neighborhoods' past.

Contrary to ilovenoord, no editors were involved in AmsterdamNoord, although two administrators enthusiastically participated and sometimes moderated. Initially, the community grew slowly from 29 in 2012 to 115 users liking and commenting in 2013. In 2014, this rapidly changed, and the community grew to 3395 users liking and commenting in 2016 and AmsterdamNoord became a substantive platform for neighborhood conversations.

Topics of discussion AmsterdamNoord

As can be seen in Figure 3, the fifty most engaged posts throughout the period 2012–2016 were in the category personal experiences and reflections, often stimulated through the exchange of historic photos of the neighborhood. In the first years, 2012–2013, these exchanges feature mundane and personal neighborhood-related conversations, best described as digital small talk among acquaintances. New participants introduced themselves timidly and were welcomed warmly. In a typical vernacular vocabulary, quick, short, and friendly responses were given. This process of making Facebook friends was strengthened in 2013 by many online and offline community-building initiatives. For example, digital Christmas cards were exchanged, and a neighborhood walking tour was organized by people engaged with the page.

From 2014 onwards, concurrently with the spectacular growth of participants, AmsterdamNoord became a place for discussing the urban transformation of the neighborhood. Discussions in our sample start to include a substantial amount of activation and mobilization of the community. For example, when in 2014 the local VanderPek day market re-opens, after intense renovation of the street, debate unfolds about the layout
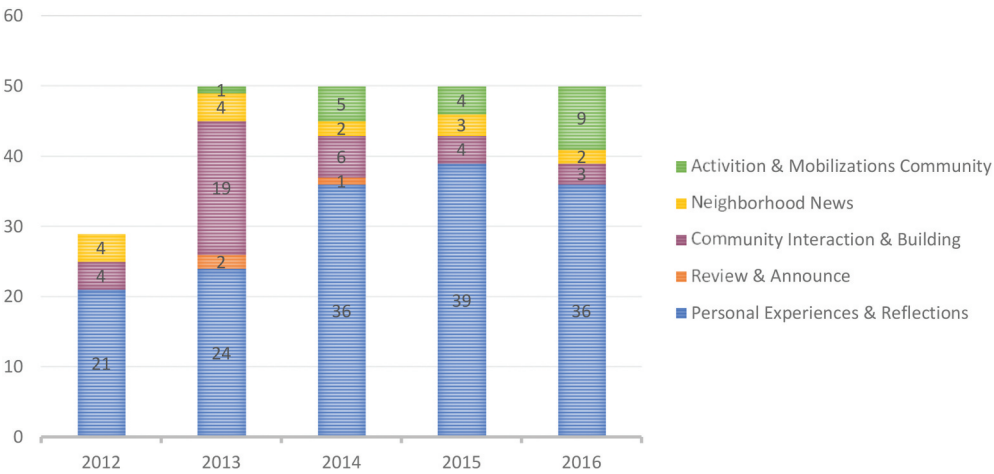
Figure 3. AmsterdamNoord(PG) topics most engaged discussions.

and diversity of the market. The sentiment about the changes was largely critical. In addition to the online commentary, discussants were invited to do more than just articulate their indignation and actively influence local politics. Strikingly, this category of discussions, but also some of the personal experiences and reflections, were sometimes shot through with general negative emotions and critical comments about the current neighborhood transformation. In the next two sections, this transformation into a more mixed forum is analyzed in more detail.

Rhythm, form and tone of storytelling: sharing and reminiscing memories

Characteristic for AmsterdamNoord is that almost right from the start, participants exchanged historic photographs of the neighborhood. The practice began with old school class photographs, and invitations to respond. This was soon followed by a steady flow of posts with historic photographs that capture various aspects of daily life in the neighborhood. In 2013 these photographs comprise 46% and in 2016 81% of the analyzed sample and instigated the personal and emotional neighborhood conversations so typical for this affective public.

The affective response to these photos can be categorized in two layers. First of all, sharing old photos took the participants back in time. Such remembering triggered affective moments of recognition and memories of their youth, that resonated in many responses and provided a strong sense of togetherness and solidarity between participants. For example (2013–10-27):

Comments	
The old Mussenstraat school	11:11
Right *[1 name removed]* in which year?	11:46
1982 tot 1990	15:23
ouch, long before our time *[1 name removed]*	15:29
But yeah tv I was there had an awfully good time in that school	17:37
[2 names removed] see those good times should not be forgotten was the basis for the rest of your life (Y)	20:56

A second layer of affective reactions referenced the participants' place of knowledge. Texts accompanying the nostalgic photos provided such knowledge or elicited the knowledge of others to fill the gaps. Respondents recognized a specific setting or person in the photograph. For example, Periods and street names were debated, as were names of people in the photo: "*Hello, are there people who came to the Dijk 270, former youth haven*?" (2013–12-21, 1 like, 9 comments, 1 share)

Comments	
wasn't that on meeuwelaan corner of leeuwardenweg	20:08
no, this was on the corner near the little chickenbridge there is an ice-cream parlor there today	21:12
oh dyke 270 is also an ice-cream parlor, I thought a coffee place ;-)	23:09
Yes I used to go there all the time at the end of the 80s with a huge group from floradorp *[4 names removed]* who later joined the party animals *[a popular music act]* with his pony tail	02:35

Overall, by reminiscing and sharing personal memories as well as place knowledge, participants positioned themselves as part of the neighborhood community and its history. They knew these specific places and people on the photos. This rooted them in Noord and helped to elicit proud sense of belonging in their neighborhood.

The affective interaction with Noord's past pulled in many new members, who found their way to this conversation. In April 2014, AmsterdamNoord welcomed its 1500th member and by November this number had doubled. The growth of the community was met with enthusiasm. Participants expressed they were proud of their growing Facebook community.

Simultaneously, with the arrival of all these new participants, engagement with the posts intensified, as visible in Figure 4.

While engagement grew only slowly in 2012 and the beginning of 2013, it accelerated at the end of 2013. This is when this affective public really took off, also evident when the total interaction and participation is considered. In 2014, 1548 discussions were started
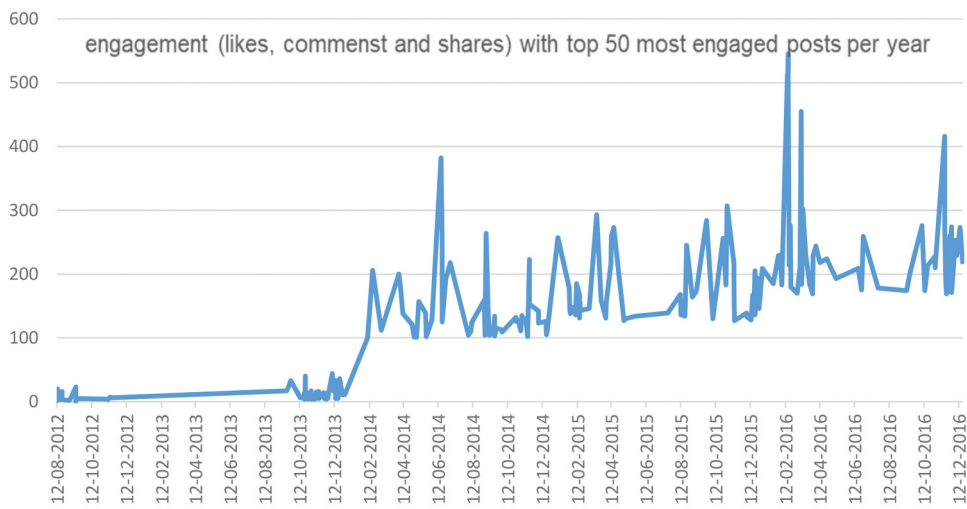

Figure 4. Engagement (likes comments and shares) with top 50 most engaged posts per year.

with 2859 users engaging 42.856 times, with 3395 users liking and commenting 53,465 times in 2016, AmsterdamNoord developed into a significant presence in the neighborhood-related social media ecology.

The conversations that formed this affective public clearly differed from those on ilovenoord. Affective interaction with historic photographs attracted mostly indigenous residents who tended to be white working-class Northerners. AmsterdamNoords' dialogue resonated with their experience and memories of the neighborhood. Interestingly, this also evoked feelings of displacement in the present, as evidenced by the many comments expressing how beautiful Noord had been in the past. As we will see in the next paragraph such nostalgic sentiment toward what they saw as *their* neighborhood, got mixed with feelings of indignation and betrayal, caused by changes in Noord.

Collaborative discourse: losing "our" Amsterdam Noord to transformation

In the sample of most-engaged conversations of 2014–2016, we saw historic photographs and everyday titbits that are occasionally peppered with more critical remarks addressing the transformation of Amsterdam-Noord.

In 2014, six, in 2015 four and in 2016 eleven out of the fifty most engaged posts encompassed critical discussions in the comments. For example, in 2016 there was a recurring discussion over the decline of a sizeable, though dated shopping center. Participants shared their indignation. Why were other areas in Amsterdam-Noord invested in and not this one? Are hipsters and yuppies favored over old Northerners? Why was paid parking introduced? Hadn't they been hit hard enough already? Participants felt abandoned by the municipality: "no one wants to help us". Similar reactions of feeling wronged were visible in discussions about street restructuring and a new day market.

Participants expressed feelings troubled by how Noord had changed, others emphasized feelings of betrayal. Several comments were more polemical, as was witnessed in the negative reaction to an online petition to ban smoking on the ferries (03–07-2014 38 like, 180 comments, 0 share). The discussion erupted in negative and emotional statements. They expressed a sense of invaded privacy, or sell-out of Noord. "Must have been the import (north) Amsterdammers making a fuss. Missing their 'healthy' farm air" also on a post showing a number of photos of testing the new metro connection to Noord (11–04-2015 159 like, 17 comments, 40 share): "Terrible !!! Our little island [*Noord is no island*] is disappearing . . . . . even more scum is coming here! !! In the past they wanted nothing to do with us and now suddenly there is a gold mine here pffff I fear the worst.!! Do not think that I am against modernization but does it need to be so rigorous … miss the old familiar Noord where you knew almost everyone and the beautiful green would jump out at you when you arrived here !! No … I don't like this!! What was wrong with the bus ?????"

Although such polemic comments were not the mainstay of the analyzed sample, they are exemplary of a broader sense of belonging in the neighborhood, combined with fear their neighborhood was taken from them. The affective public around AmsterdamNoord keenly emphasizes geographical and mental distance from the rest of Amsterdam. In their eyes, Noord has never been well respected by the rest of Amsterdam. This point of view was reiterated in discussions addressing the changing neighborhood. The sudden interest in the neighborhood was felt to be insincere and a hostile take-over, as vehemently voiced in the comment above.

In AmsterdamNoord a collaborative discourse was emerging, which is colored by melancholy and emotional expressions of loss and indignation over gentrification in Noord among (working class) Northerners. At the end of 2016, this discourse was explicitly named in one of the most engaged discussions of that year: "In my opinion, we should have kept North a village. North is no longer North" (2016–12-06, 86 likes, 147 comments, 0 shares). The position evokes emotional interaction as can be seen in the following comments.

Comments	
You are right [1 name removed]	21:56
Fortunately, we still have small villages(neighborhoods) in the Noord. I understand what you mean, and I totally agree with you.	21:56
certainly not anymore do not know my own neighborhood anymore yes, everything changed we also	21:59
I drive through Noord daily and what I see is only decline no progress. When I see all those old photos and compare them with now then I think how we could have let this go to hell. Such a shame …	22:04
….	….

Although not all AmsterdamNoord participants thought that everything used to be better, most commenters (77%) agree with this statement and affectively expressed this in their comments.

The last comment in the example (22:04) "I drive through Noord daily and what I see is only decline no progress. When I see all those old photos and compare them with now then I think how we could have let this go to hell. Such a shame …, " illustrates the most prominent theme in the AmsterdamNoord collaborative storytelling dynamic driving this discourse. Explicit discussions about the transformation of the neighborhood, affective investment, and attunement related to historic photographs all underscore the downsides of gentrification from the perspective of the participants in AmsterdamNoord. Participants expressed that they missed the neighborhood of bygone times as they feel more and more alienated. Through nostalgically investing in old photos, the participants link their personal, moral, and emotional expressions to a shared understanding: Amsterdam-Noord is changing for the worse rather than the better.

Discussion and conclusion

Facebook has become an important platform for discussing and engaging with neighborhoods and their transformation. We investigated how two Facebook communities became conduits for intense affective interaction that shaped two opposing collaborative discourses about the neighborhood transformation. Our analysis showed that through sharing a rhythm, form, and affective tone of storytelling, affective publics shape a collaborative discourse about the neighborhood, in which opinions and emotions regarding changes in the neighborhood become aligned. The term online affective placemaking captures this process.

Studying neighborhood-related affective publics brings out the impulsive, personal, and emotional exchanges that crucially shape so many social media conversations. Papacharissi sees affectively contributing to a stream of posts as "a form of engagement that exist within and beyond the structured sphere of opinion expression" (Papacharissi 2015, 115). Affect not only energizes the interaction, it's through "sentiment, preformed and mediated" that the participants shape and form their stance on complex and contentious issues (2015, 117). It would thus be a misunderstanding to view the online affective communications studied in this paper as just soft, inconsequential babble or small talk; instead, it is elementary to the processes of appropriation and signification that shape place (cf. Cresswell 2014; Gieryn 2000)

Online affective placemaking by affective publics is not merely discursive. When people collaboratively build place discourses, this helps them to formulate and structure their interests and goals regarding that place (e.g. Saar and Palang 2009). Below we outline four ways in which the two affective publics engaged in online affective placemaking had socio-political impact in the neighborhood. Without integrating such online affective placemaking in the placemaking and gentrification literature, such impacts might go unnoticed and remain under-theorized.

First of all, the personal and affective online conversation cranked up by voluntary editors (ilovenoord) or administrators and active participants (AmsterdamNoord) created a shared sense of belonging as a particular way of imagining Noord. Not only was affect generated and aligned, this affect also attracted many new participants. The slogans "Noord is No longer Noord" (AmsterdamNoord) and "Everything that makes you happy" (ilovenoord) were both powerful vehicles for mobilizing substantive affective publics to (re)create the neighborhood identity to match their ideal. AmsterdamNoord tried to safeguard cherished characteristics such as (imagined) neighborhood camaraderie and relative isolation from the rest of Amsterdam, while ilovenoord embraced further cultural and economic integration of Noord within the rest of Amsterdam.

Such mobilization of affect was shaped by the specific rhythm, form, and tone of storytelling. On ilovenoord this was the hyper-active call and response and a sense of things happening fast. On AmsterdamNoord it was sustained by the slow nostalgia of old pictures, of sharing memories and of wishing one another "sleep well". Although many individual users participated in these online conservations in a fleeting manner, they were involved in meaning-making processes. Even for Facebook members not actively taking part, this positive feeling towards the changing neighborhood and reminiscing a nostalgic past was present in their Facebook timeline. The "merest attention" makes them part of this public (Warner 2002, 52) and engaged in online affective placemaking.

Secondly, online affective placemaking via Facebook played a central role in enhancing the "collective visibility" (Deener 2010) of both the newcomers and the white working class in the neighborhood. This is important because the collective visibility of a certain group of local actors can have a major influence on how a neighborhood is perceived internally (by local actors) and externally (outside the neighborhood). *"A group that achieves collective visibility becomes intertwined with the identity of a neighborhood, often overshadowing the presence of other groups" (Deener, 2010:47).* An example of overshadowing was already presented in the sudden interest of national and international media stating Noord as hip and happening, while the white working class residents were omitted, or figured as mere decor. Still, as we have shown, they were no bystanders.

The white working class residents effectively used Facebook groups such as AmsterdamNoord to voice their ideas on the neighborhood and as such overshadowing residents with a migrant background who were less noticeable online.

Thirdly, the online affective placemaking manifested itself as a form of cultural appropriation. For one, ilovenoord not only shared the newcomers' routes and routines, they also show-cased them. Facebook made the newcomers lifeworld visible within the neighborhood, not only to themselves but also to other social groups. As De Certeau (1997) argues, place is constantly re-produced by everyday users of space such as residents. Everyday users do not only appropriate urban space by their performative practices (routes and routines) but also through discursive practices (Fischer-Nebmaier 2015). Thus the mundane texts posted by the residents were instrumental in claiming and appropriating the place.

That same neighborhood is revealed as in danger of disappearing for others who understand the newcomers' lifestyle preferences as advertised in their happy Facebook posts and comments as a form of colonization. AmsterdamNoord, in what is difficult not to read as an implicit counter-public, claims Noords' past with photos and narratives about everyday life in the past. This too needs to be regarded as a way to create an urban imaginary in the present (Fischer-Nebmaier 2015). Like all good storytelling, it is a matter of concentrating on specific objects and events while leaving out others, including groups of people who upset the tale that is spun.

Fourthly, partaking in the Facebook conversations helped participants to recognize themselves and others as a distinct group of residents and created a frame for distinguishing what and who did and did not belong in the neighborhood. Affect has been analyzed as a main driver for this process of social differentiation, as *"affect is a collectivizing force (*Slaby and Röttger-Rössler 2018:). The encompassing online conversations in the Facebook communities became a discursive setting, that regulated the way the participants interact. They influenced the content of the conversation, the sharing of ideas and opinions, and the discursive rhythm, form, and tone of voice. "Public discourse says not only: '*let a public exist,' but let it have this character, speak this way, see the world this way*" (Warner 2002, 82).

The two affective publics produced images of a like-minded group of participants in discourse, which in turn constructed boundaries and separated insiders from outsiders. The "others" are "affect aliens" who do not belong to the affective community and need to be excluded (Ahmed 2014, 42). Conflict and opposition, while byproducts of the formation of affective publics engaged in online affective placemaking, may intensify as a result of seemingly innocent posting and liking on a social media platform.

For Warner (2002), the existence of multiple publics also entails inequality. The discourses of dominant publics have the aura of being the principal discourse within a public sphere. Warner points to how new publics may emerge that give voice to people who feel (and quite possibly are) suppressed or marginalized, creating a shared thinking-frame, a mutual base for action, and a common voice. These counterpublics emerge in reaction to dominant publics. Counterpublics give room for formulating alternative views of social reality and identities, that contest the normative content in the public sphere (Milioni 2009).

This paper has analyzed processes of discursive placemaking on Facebook. We introduced the term online affective placemaking to understand how exchanging feelings of connection, belonging and urgency help shape wide-ranging involvement in the

neighborhood transformation. These personal and emotional online conversations formed affective publics that profoundly impacted the neighborhood. When residents engage with place on Facebook pages, this contributes to socio-political processes, including mobilization of citizens, boundary drawing, and exclusion and the formation of place identity. Online affective placemaking, at that point, extends from a discursive, narrative practice towards a social and material one.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributors

Pieter Breek is a PhD candidate at the University of Tilburg. He is also lecturer at Leisure and Events Management/Inholland University of applied science. His research focuses on social media and placemaking.

Jasper Eshuis is Associate Professor of Public Administration at Erasmus University Rotterdam. He currently conducts research on branding and marketing in the public sector, especially place branding. He also researches the governance processes in urban developments, with a special interest in stakeholder participation and self-governance through citizen initiatives.

Joke Hermes is a professor of Media, Culture and Citizenship at Inholland University of Applied Sciences and a lecturer in Media Studies at the University of Amsterdam. Her recent publications include work on cultural citizenship online and qualitative audience research. She is founding co-editor of the European Journal of Cultural Studies.

References

Ahmed, S. 2014. "Not in the Mood." *New Formations* 82 (82): 13–28. doi:10.3898/NeWF.82.01.2014.
Author (Reference Withheld to Allow for Anonymous Reviewing)
Baym, N. K., and D. Boyd. 2012. "Socially Mediated Publicness: An Introduction." *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 56 (3): 320–329. doi:10.1080/08838151.2012.705200.
boyd, D. 2011. "Social Network Sites as Networked Publics: Affordances, Dynamics, and Implications." In *Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, edited by Z. Papacharissi,39–58. Routledge.
Benson, M., and E. Jackson. 2013. "Place-making and Place Maintenance: Performativity, Place and Belonging among the Middle Classes." *Sociology* 47 (4): 793–809. doi:10.1177/0038038512454350.
Booi, H. 2006. Wonen in Amsterdam-Noord 2005, Dienst Wonen, Gemeente Amsterdam
Booi, H., and A. Smits. 2017. Veranderend Noord, Onderzoek, Informatie En Statistiek, Gemeente Amsterdam.
Breek, P., J. Hermes, J. Eshuis, & H. Mommaas. (2018). The Rrole of Ssocial Mmedia in Collective Processes of Place Making: A Study of Two Neighborhood Blogs in Amsterdam. *City & Community*, 17(3): 906–924. doi:10.1111/cico.2018.17.issue-3
Bucher, T., and A. Helmond. 2017. *The Affordances of Social Media Platforms*, 223–253. New York: SAGE Handbook of Social Media.
Busse, B. 2019. "Patterns of Discursive Urban Place-making in Brooklyn, New York." *Corpus Linguistics, Context and Culture* 15: 13.
Carroll, J. M. 2012. *The Neighborhood in the Internet: Design Research Projects in Community Informatics*. New York: Routledge.
Cresswell, T. 2014. *Place: An Introduction*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

de Certeau, M. 1997. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley, Los Angeles en Londen: University of California Press.

De Lange, M., & De Waal, M. (2019). *The Hackable City*. Digital media and collaborative city-making in the new society, 87.

de Lange, M., and M. de Waal. 2013. "Owning the City: New Media and Citizen Engagement in Urban Design." *First Monday* 18 (no): 11. doi:10.5210/fm.v18i11.4954.

Deener, A. (2010). "The 'black section'of the neighborhood: Collective visibility and collective invisibility as sources of place identity." *Ethnography*, 11(1): 45–67. doi:10.1177/1466138109346988.

Fischer-Nebmaier, W. 2015. *Space, Narration, and the Everyday*. In *Narrating the City: History, Space, and the Everyday*, edited by W. Fischer-Nebmaier, M. Berg, and A. Christou, 1–55. New York and Oxford: Berghahn.

Flyvbjerg, B. 2006. "Five Misunderstandings about Case Studies." *Qualitative Inquiry* 12 (2): 219–245. doi:10.1177/1077800405284363.

Freeman, L. 2011. *There Goes the Hood: Views of Gentrification from the Ground Up*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Gieryn, T. F. 2000. "A Space for Place in Sociology." *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (1): 463–496. doi:10.1146/annurev.soc.26.1.463.

Hackworth, J. 2002. "Postrecession Gentrification in New York City." *Urban Affairs Review* 37 (6): 815–843. doi:10.1177/107874037006003.

Hoch, C. 2006. "Emotions and Planning." *Planning Theory & Practice* 7 (4): 367–382. doi:10.1080/14649350600984436.

Hutchby, I. 2001. "Technologies, Texts and Affordances." *Sociology* 35 (2): 441–456. doi:10.1177/S0038038501000219.

Kitchin, R. 2014. *The Data Revolution: Big Data, Open Data, Data Infrastructures and Their Consequences*. London: Sage.

Korn, M., and J. Back (2012). "Talking It Further: From Feelings and Memories to Civic Discussions in and about Places." In *Proceedings of the 7th Nordic Conference on Human-Computer Interaction: Making Sense Through Design*, 189–198. New York: ACM.

Livingstone, S. M., Ed. 2005. *Audiences and Publics: When Cultural Engagement Matters for the Public Sphere*. Vol. 2. Bristol, UK: Intellect Books.

Marres, N. S. 2005. *No Issue, No Public: Democratic Deficits after the Displacement of Politics*. Doctoral Dissertation, Universiteit van Amsterdam, Amsterdam.

Massey, D. 2005. *For Space*. London: Sage.

Milikowski, F. 2018. *Van wie is de stad: de strijd om Amsterdam*. Amsterdam: Atlas Contact.

Milioni, D. L. 2009. "Probing the Online Counterpublic Sphere: The Case of Indymedia Athens. Media." *Culture & Society* 31 (3): 409–431.

OIS Amsterdam. 2016. Amsterdam in cijfers 2016.

Ostertag, S. F., and D. G. Ortiz. 2014. "The Cultural Affordances of Personal Communication Technologies: Emergent Cultural Structures and the Changing Character of Mobilization." *Center for Cultural Sociology at Yale University, Working Paper*, 7.

Ostertag, S. F., and D. G. Ortiz. 2017. "Can Social Media Use Produce Enduring Social Ties? Affordances and the Case of Katrina Bloggers." *Qualitative Sociology* 40 (1): 59–82. doi:10.1007/s11133-016-9346-3.

Papacharissi, Z. 2015. *Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology, and Politics*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Papacharissi, Z. 2016. "Affective Publics and Structures of Storytelling: Sentiment, Events and Mediality." *Information Communication & Society* 19 (3): 307–324.

Papacharissi, Z., and M. de Fatima Oliveira. 2012. "Affective News and Networked Publics: The Rhythms of News Storytelling On# Egypt." *Journal of Communication* 62 (2): 266–282. doi:10.1111/j.1460-2466.2012.01630.x.

Saar, M., & Palang, H. (2009). "The dimensions of place meanings." *Living Reviews in Landscape Research*, 3(3), 5–24. doi:10.12942/lrlr-2009-3.

Savini, F., W. R. Boterman, W. P. Van Gent, and S. Majoor. 2016. "Amsterdam in the 21st Century: Geography, Housing, Spatial Development and Politics." *Cities* 52: 103–113. doi:10.1016/j.cities.2015.11.017.

Slaby, J., and B. Röttger-Rössler. 2018. "Introduction: Affect in Relation." In *Affect in relation: Families, places, technologies*, edited by J. Slaby & B. Röttger-Rössler, 1–26. New York: Routledge.

Smith, N. 1996. *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. London: Routledge.

Tjebbes, J., I. El Kouaa, and van Zelm. 2013. *Beantwoording Motie Onderzoek Werkgelegenheid En Werkloosheid*. Amsterdam. Gemeente Amsterdam, Stadsdeel Noord.

Uprichard, E., and D. Byrne. 2006. "Representing Complex Places: A Narrative Approach." *Environment & Planning A* 38: 665–676. doi:10.1068/a37333.

Waite, C. 2018. "Young People's Place-Making in a Regional Australian Town." *Sociologia Ruralis* 58 (2): 276–292. doi:10.1111/soru.12170.

Warner, M. 2002. "Publics and Counterpublics." *Public Culture* 14 (1): 49–90. doi:10.1215/08992363-14-1-49.