

Lecture “Gentrification by Cappuccino: Ethnic Businesses and Cool Boutiques” by Dr. Jan Rath

Wednesday May 9th, 2012. Abou Khater Auditorium NDU – Main Campus

Reported by Victoria B. Huerta, LERC International Intern

The Lebanese Emigration Research Center at Notre Dame University, in cooperation with the Netherlands Institute in Beirut, had the pleasure of receiving Dr. Jan Rath, from the University of Amsterdam, as part of its ongoing lecture series. Dr. Rath is member of the Center for Urban Studies in the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Studies (IMES) from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology. This is Dr. Rath’s second visit to NDU. From the 24th until the 29th of April, 2008 he was LERC’s partner for IMISCOE’s *Intensive training: Migration and Development: methodology of research* in 2006.

Addressing mainly the case of the city of Amsterdam in the Netherlands, Dr. Rath started his lecture by explaining the concept of entrepreneurship in relation with ethnic businesses from second generation migrants, highlighting two cases: Yahoo! and Google, both established by immigrants and known to be very successful. Apart from these worldwide companies, there are also to be found small shops anywhere in Europe or the United States of America, which have come to existence due to the mobilizing of the immigrant networks and their willingness to invest in the local economies, targeting mainly a clientele of co-ethnics.



From left to right: Dr. Jan Rath from the University of Amsterdam and Dr. Eugene Sensenig-Dabbous from the Lebanese Emigration Research Center, April 2012

Dr. Rath continued the lecture by explaining how to set up a business while being an immigrant. This may be explained by “a mixed embeddedness where entrepreneurial success is contingent on interaction of both personal factors and social, political and economic conditions.” Therefore, to become an entrepreneur a person can capitalize their assets such as education, certain skills, languages and networks. Nevertheless, still this is too simplistic. To assume that it makes no difference on what you are selling as long as you have the right education and right networks, not considering the different markets or the different levels of investment, risks missing the whole set of factors that intervene in the matter.

In addition, Dr. Rath analyzed how urban policies create business opportunities, but at the same time how these same policies can destroy them. He recalled the policy changes in Amsterdam regarding integration, housing and urban economy. To exemplify this he introduced the audience to the Javastraat, a shopping street in Amsterdam where ethnic shops are encouraged.

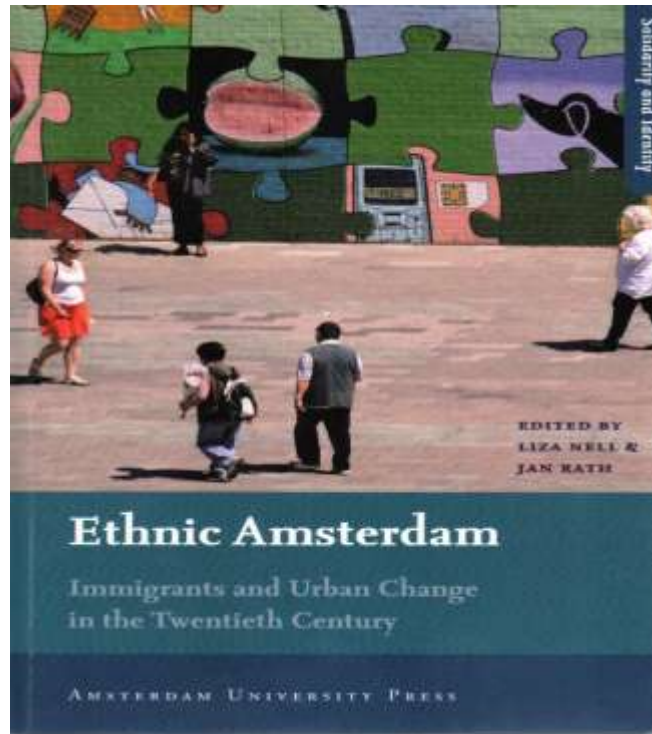
His presentation ended with some very interesting conclusions with which he pointed out the mismatch between those who supposedly propel the city developments and the lower-class immigrants.



Dr. Jan Rath during his lecture at Notre Dame University, April 2012

After his lecture, Dr. Rath and Director Taco van der Zwaag of the Netherlands Institute in Beirut visited LERC, where Chief Indexer Ms. Liliane Haddad introduced them to the electronic data base and the specialized resource library the Center possesses. Both guests were also shown the Lebanese Migration Nucleus Museum. As a way of thanking LERC for hosting him, Dr. Rath

made a gift of his new book *Ethnic Amsterdam* which will be available for consultation at the Center.



Ethnic Amsterdam: Immigrants and Urban Change in the Twentieth Century
by Liza Nell and Jan Rath

The Lebanese Emigration Research Center, through Director Ms. Guita Hourani, thanked Dr. Rath and Mr. van der Zwaag for this event and hoped for continued cooperation.