

# Leisure in public spaces: Does it contribute to social cohesion in Dutch neighborhoods?

Karin Peters

Wageningen University, The Netherlands

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# Outline

- Context
- Research objective
- Theoretical perspective
- Methods and case studies
- Results
- Discussion & conclusion

# Context

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- Relevance of leisure
- The political perception of public spaces as places of encounters through which social integration can be stimulated.

# Dutch population (2008)

	Persons	% of total population
<b>Migrants total</b>	3 216 255	19
- Western	1 450 101	
- Non-western	1 766 154	11
- Turkey	372 852	
- Morocco	335 208	
- Surinam	335 679	
- Dutch Antilles and Aruba	131 387	
<b>Inhabitants total</b>	16 404 282	100
<b>Amsterdam</b>	35% inhabitants non-western countries	

*Statistics Netherlands, 2008*

# Research objective

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- To gain insight in the multiple relations between the use of urban public spaces for leisure and creating social cohesion in a multicultural neighbourhood in the Netherlands

# Theoretical perspective: relating public space and leisure

- Ethnic diversity visible in urban public domain
- What is the public domain? (Jacobs, Lofland, Zukin)
  - Public spaces are not only physical patterns
  - Space interrelates with social-cultural values and perceptions
  - Manifestation of diversity
  - Contested spaces or sites of harmony

# Theoretical perspective: Leisure (1)

- Ethnicity is an explaining factor for understanding leisure behaviour (Jokovi 2003, Juniu 2000, Stodolska and Yi 2003, Yucesoy 2006).
- When people spend their leisure time, they construct their identities by using spaces, by expressing themselves, and in interaction with others.
- Urban public space is one of the spaces where identity is created.

# Leisure (2)

- The link between leisure and one's identity has been well demonstrated in leisure and tourism studies (see for example Aitchison, Ateljevic).
- During leisure activities identities can be negotiated and constructed more consciously than during work. When these leisure activities happen in public space it even offers more opportunities for people to show their identities, e.g. by wearing specific clothes or displaying other distinctive appearances (Soenen 2006:79).



# Leisure in public spaces

- Leisure in public spaces is of importance because the meaning of multiculturalism and the negotiation of multiple cultural identities occurs in public spaces (Wood and Gilbert, 2005).

# Meeting Places?



- Reasons for having contact: mothers and dog owners
- Events stimulate contact

# The meaning of public space

- Place attachment and place identity -> intimately linked, dynamic and susceptible to disruption (Chow and Healy, 2008).
- Place attachment defined as a persons' relationship to a place, incl. cognition, emotion and behaviours.

# Case study

- Qualitative research in a Dutch neighborhood in Utrecht, Lombok
  - Molenpark
  - Bankaplein
  - Kanaalstraat
  - Muntplein
- Observations (N=10 days)
- Interviews (N=30)
- Expert interviews (N=6)

# Methodological starting points

## ■ Interpretative research

- representing social reality as much as possible as the lived experience of the actors we observed and talked with.

## ■ Data analysis: based on open coding:

- Concepts were not analytically imposed, but retrieved, identified and discovered from the interview data

# Lombok

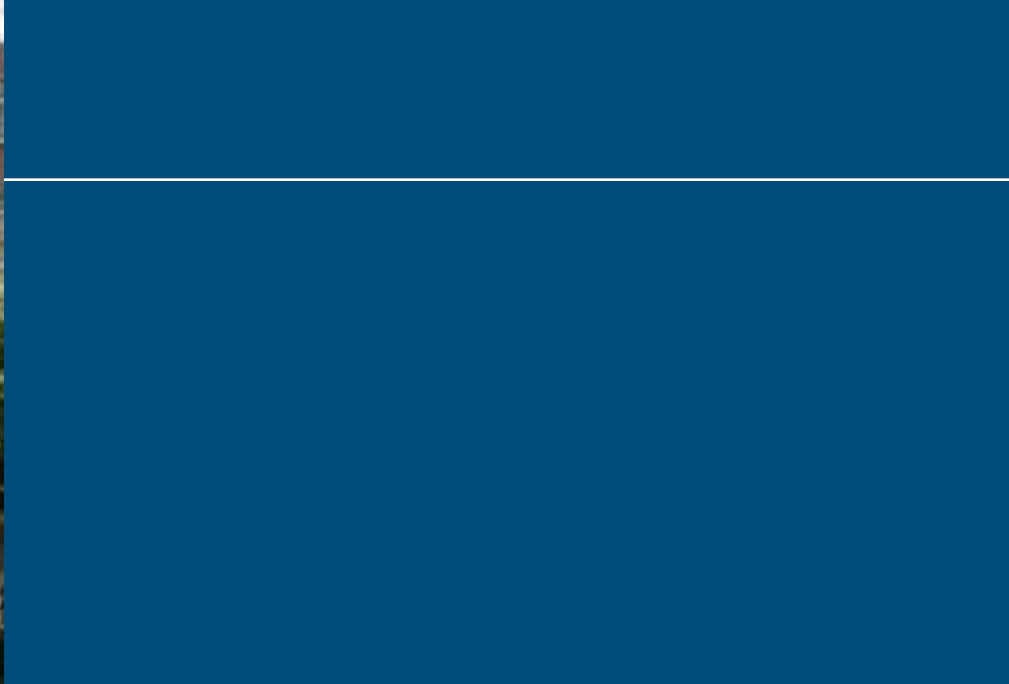
- Lombok is a beautiful, nice, and multicultural neighborhood; just a very looked after place, with many nationalities and many different shops. (Iran-Dutch male)
- A multicultural neighborhood, which has grown to a situation in which people live together (native Dutch male)
- Lombok is very old, there are many shops, very multicultural, both native and non-natives that live together. That creates the image of Lombok. (Moroccan-Dutch male)



# Results: Kanaalstraat

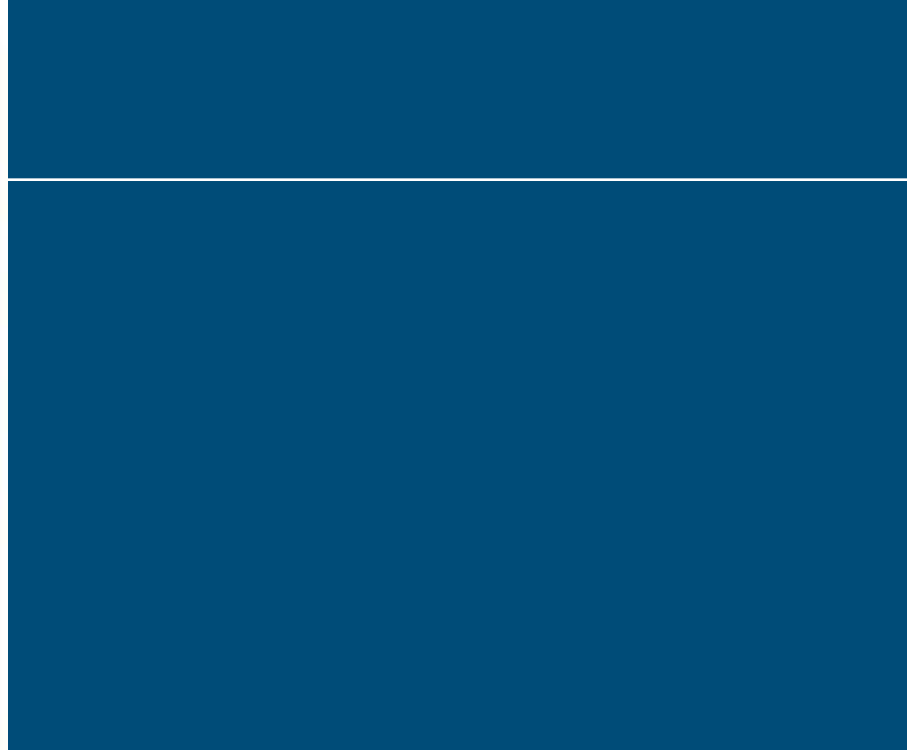
- “Shops, bikes, people, double parking. People of all colors, all languages; you hear a lot of different languages in the Kanaalstraat . . . . It seems that there are more than 64 nationalities. Busy and sociable. Many opportunities for shopping. Faces, many faces. But also chaos and double parking.”





# Results: Bankaplein

- “Bankaplein is sociable; my grandchildren always ask me, granny are we going to the Bankaplein? And then I am going because it is nice for children to play there. I see a lot of acquaintances that I talk with. It is just fun, also when you see the people that are working there. They also come to you to have a small talk. So, it is a well-organized place.”



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# Results: Muntplein

- “Well, really everybody is visiting Muntplein. But people who hang around are mainly Dutch people. That is something you notice, people of various ethnic backgrounds are passing by, people who live here. And sometimes it is indeed the case, and then you will see a group of Moroccan boys or so. But no, not very much that typical youngster behavior of hanging around, say with that negative image, you do not see that often. I think that is very relaxed.”

# Results

- Cherish diversity, being proud to live in Lombok
- Small conversations are valued positively:
  - interactions with shop owners in the Kanaalstraat
  - chatting with other parents at Bankaplein

# Conclusions

- People in the neighborhood are very positive towards multiculturalism, and feel no desire to spatially segregate themselves.
- Spaces of segregation and integration are not constructed in everyday life on the basis of conscious ethnic inclusion or exclusion.
- Different types of spaces:
  - Inclusive open spaces (Kanaalstraat)
  - Spaces that are more selective in attracting a diversity of people

# Conclusion

- Seeing and meeting people is important in getting acquainted with people and space. It gives people information about their neighbourhood.
- Multiculturalism is considered like a kind of many-colored landscape that people see as a pleasant décor for living in, looking at and enjoyment in public space: social wallpaper (Butler)

# Conclusions

- Atmosphere where people live more next to each other than with each other.
- Public space: People go for enjoyment, show their identity and enjoy the confrontation with other identities; after that they withdraw in the familiarity of personal life
- Social control



# Thus:

- The focus on the everyday and the mundane for understanding the meaning of public spaces is vital because by considering the 'oddness of the ordinary' (Sibley, 1995: xv), by considering how social differences are experienced and managed on an everyday basis, we can gather insights into social collisions on a larger scale (Smith, 2001).

# Thank you!

## Time for questions and discussion

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