

# Leisure in Urban Public Spaces: Who Defines Social Integration?

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# Outline

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- Context
- Objective
- Theoretical perspective
- Some results
- Discussion & conclusion

# Context

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

*Statistics Netherlands, 2008*

# Objective

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- To better understand the relationships between leisure in public spaces and issues of social (dis)integration

# Theoretical perspective: relating public space, diversity 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

- 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.

# Theoretical perspective

- 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).

# And what about social (dis)integration?

- It is defined as a neutral concept referring to established patterns of human relations in any given society across different ethnic groups.
- It aims at a further understanding of processes of participation and negotiation through which a future society is formed

# And what about social (dis)integration?

- Individuals themselves define their position
- Feeling at home; feelings of belonging
  - Connected to public spaces
- Freedom to express your identities in public space

# Case study

- Qualitative research in a Dutch neighborhood in Utrecht, Lombok
  - Molenpark
  - Bankaplein
  - Kanaalstraat
  - Muntplein
- Qualitative research in Nijmegen, a Dutch city
- Observations (N=30 days)
- Interviews (N=60)
- Expert interviews (N=12)

# 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

- Being in the Netherlands, they also say to me “shit foreigner. [...] It is ä political thing. But here in Lombok, everybody sees the other as normal, just Moroccan-Dutch, you know. When I am abroad I also miss my sandwich cheese and the coffee at the filling station. For me two weeks abroad is enough. You know, my place is here. (Moroccan-Dutch male)

# Lombok

- Yes, that view, the trees at the waterfront, I think it is extremely beautiful. And those small bridges, I think that is typically Lombok. That is my image when I am coming home. When I see those little bridges, I am home. (native Dutch female)

# Lombok

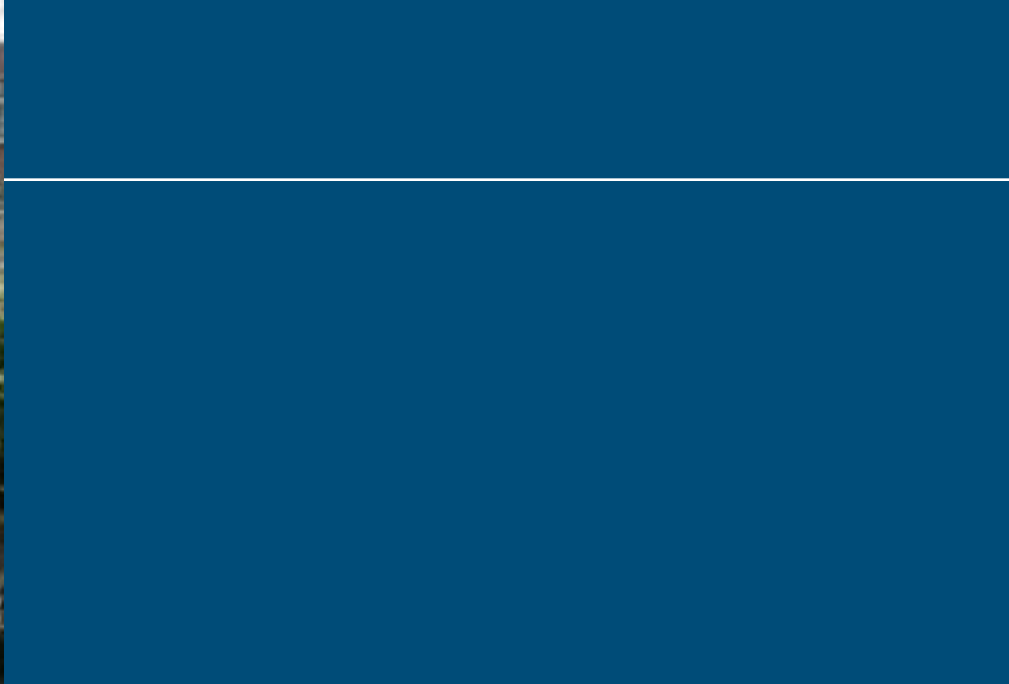
- This neighborhood is normal, very regular, nothing special. When I do my groceries I meet my neighbors. Yes, the people are friendly, no strange things. I feel perfectly at home here. (Dutch female, 55 year)
- Talking about cultural diversity:
  - Well I have to say that I think that I see it as an enrichment, not as something that I think is annoying. I feel at home here. (Dutch female, 41 year)





# Kanaalstraat

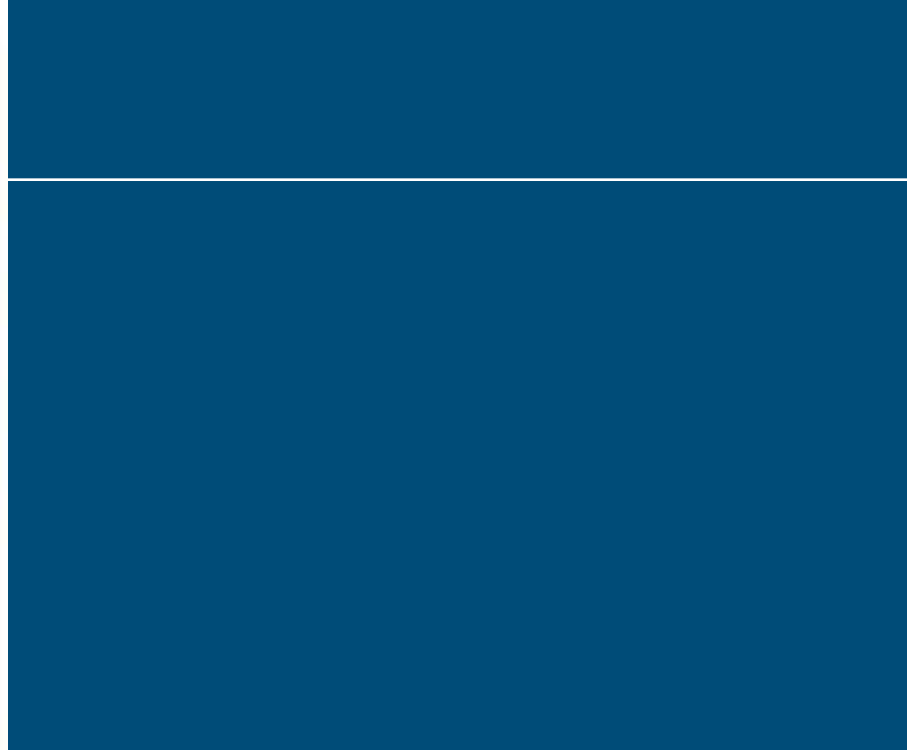
- Loving is maybe a big word, but I like going there. It is just nice to be there. Even if it is sometimes very busy, it is just ok. It gives me a little bit of a feeling of being at home, because I am coming from the Middle East. It is recognizable for me; it is somewhat messy and chaotic. (Israeli Dutch woman)
- Lately, I just noticed, when I see the Kanaalstraat, than I am home. (native Dutch man)





# Bankaplein

- Ja, die eh ja, komen af en toe als ze bij mijn moeder op bezoek zijn dan komen ze met kleinkinderen komen ze hier bij ons. Het zou zonde, het zou zonde zijn of, dat dit weggaat of zo, begrijp je. 't Is ons stekkie, begrijp je, je voelt je er gewoon thuis en veilig voor de kinderen ook ja. (Moroccan-Dutch male)



ENVIRONMENTAL  
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# Results

- Positive memories created in public spaces strengthen the feelings of being at home in a certain neighborhood.
- Social integration is perceived as a political issue
- Though, discussing this, language appeared to be the main issue
- Besides, some native Dutch talked about assimilation

# Results

- Urban public spaces are of importance because in these spaces both native as well as migrants are negotiating their identities and the understandings of a changing world.
- “To live there own lives”: Not necessarily through interactions but by being informed about the cultural others that are co-present in urban public spaces.

# Conclusions

- The quality of public space is of central importance: liveliness, facilities, safe and comfortable -> Broken windows theory
- Some spaces with less public integration, like the park, are less attractive
- Other spaces of less public integration are not exclusive because of lack of openness, but because they are culturally marked by specific groups



# Conclusions

- Contact zones: everyday places where people like to be and where people 'consume' diversity and by doing so become aware of cultural others.
  - “the connective tissue that binds daily life together . . . . and serve as primary intersections between the individual and the city” (Chase, Crawford & Kaliski 1999).

# Discussion

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- Categorizing people?
- Relation with policy

# Thank you!

## Time for questions and discussion

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