

Children's Farms: Extending Bridges between Ethnic Groups in the Netherlands



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Children's Farms: Extending Bridges between Ethnic Groups in the Netherlands

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Public spaces have been considered a vital element of cities throughout history. Children's farms in the Netherlands are open to the public and aim to be an attractive and accessible leisure destination for people of different ethnic backgrounds. They furthermore want to serve as meeting places where inter-ethnic social interactions take place. This study will contribute to knowledge about the functioning of contemporary children's farms in the context of a multi-ethnic society, as well as propose interventions which strengthen their role as a meeting place for a great diversity of ethnic groups. In a qualitative two-case study design, suited to the explorative nature of this study, two children's farms in Amersfoort and Utrecht have been compared in terms of visitor profile, features which make the location attractive for diverse visitors and factors which facilitate social interaction between them. To achieve this, several research methods have been employed, namely document analysis, semi-structured interviews and observations comprising behavioural mapping and a physical inventory. Post-positivism as a research paradigm supported the pragmatic nature of this study. Results indicate that children's farms are an attractive leisure destination for visitors of diverse ethnic backgrounds. Factors which attract visitors and prolong their stay are the location of the farm within a city, adaptability to diverse needs of visitors, safety, high maintenance levels and protection from negative microclimatic influences. Features which strengthen the meeting place function of children's farms are a human scale and attractive features which might set a triangulation process in motion such as animals or playground equipment.

Keywords: *Children's Farms, Ethnicity, Social Interaction, Triangulation, Leisure Destination*

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Foreword and Acknowledgements

"How can there be peace without people understanding each other, and how can this be if they don't know each other?"

Lester B. Pearson (1957)

This quote sums up best both my academic as well as my personal interest over the past few years. Coming from a mixed background with a Polish mother and a Dutch father, cultural differences have been a daily reality throughout my youth. I cultivated a strong interest in diversity and have been ever more curious to learn more about cultural and ethnic differences. At the age of 16 I received the chance to attend an international school in Wales where I met friends from different ethnic, religious, social and cultural backgrounds. After this exciting two-year experience I became involved in two organisations, one in the Netherlands and one in Bolivia. These provide youth camps in which participants work together towards a more inclusive society in which diversity is celebrated. It is through these experiences I learned both about both the complexity as well as the beauty such heterogeneity entails. I decided to study tourism and leisure as I believe it is within these domains that people from diverse backgrounds have an opportunity to meet, fight their prejudices and lay the foundations for an improved understanding and acceptance of one another.

In the Dutch society ethnic tensions are recently surging within both the national and the international media. One such instance is a controversial children festivity in December of Sinterklaas, in which a Santa Claus is aided by white helpers who coloured their skin black (Criado, 2013). In contrast to such discussions fought in the media on a political level, I decided to focus on every-day living together in multi-ethnic societies. In this study I focus on everyday leisure spaces where people from different ethnicities gather. I was intrigued by the question whether people from various ethnic origins would interact and meet within these public places, as this would possibly mean a first step towards a better understanding and appreciation of each other. Another motivation for me has been to ensure practical applicability of my work; I did not wish to produce a thesis of which the sole purpose would be to graduate. I have cooperated closely with the vSKBN (Vereniging Voor Samenwerkende Kinderboerderijen Nederland) which is an association representing almost 300 Dutch children's farms, as well as the municipalities of Utrecht and Amersfoort, with whom I will share the results of this investigation.

The completion of this thesis would have been impossible without the support of many. Firstly I would like to thank all the interviewees for their time, openness, friendliness and valuable conversations. All have impressed me with the great passion and joy they demonstrate when discussing the children's farms in the Netherlands. The staff of both farms in Amersfoort and Utrecht treated me extremely well, a special thanks to Peter Coenen, Wilma Lenstra, Jolanda Deventer, Everhard van Veen and Birgit van der Laan. I would like to express my gratitude to Carla van Dorp-Emmink, who offered me an internship at the municipality of Amersfoort during which I could carry out this research. I want to additionally thank all my colleagues at the CNME who added so much joy to the solitary work such a thesis demands. Vital has been also the support of my supervisor Henk de Haan, who invested much time and effort to aid me with this study. Timely constructive feedback as well as occasional pep talks encouraged me to continuously develop and improve this thesis. Furthermore, I feel very fortunate to have such wonderful family members and friends. I am especially grateful towards Jadwiga, Danuta and Zygmunt Krzystanek, Oliver Siegrist, Tomasz Piessens, Tessa Askamp, Manuela Stefanova Ilakova, Baiba Ornina and Miriam Prinsen who have actively helped me with this project and supported me through ups and downs. You motivated me to keep on going and made sure I would relax from time to time. Finally I would like to dedicate this writing to my beloved grandfather Levinus Piessens, who recently passed away and often murmured that I would remain a university student for the rest of my life; it's finished!

1. Introduction

Children's farms, a public green space in the Netherlands, are estimated to attract 27,9 million visitors a year¹; an extraordinary amount for the 502 documented farms (vSKBN, 2013). A children's farm, or petting zoo, is a Dutch² construction, a public farm with free access for visitors where various animals are held in small quantities. Generally horses, donkeys, cows, pigs, sheep, goats, poultry, pigs and small rodents are animals held on such farms. A small amount of children farms receives clients with a disability who work on the farm. Children farms which are not accessible to the public, but are located on public terrain are called 'animal pastures' (Franssen & Scherpenzeel, 2012; vSKBN, 2012a). As the definition of children farms is very broad, no exact numbers can be given. The trade-organization, Vereniging Samenwerkende Kinderboerderijen Nederland (vSKBN) estimates there are approximately 500 children's farms and animal pastures in the Netherlands (vSKBN, 2013). The farms have been constructed as an answer to increasing urbanization and a diminishing agricultural sector; it is widely believed these developments contribute to an increased distance between people and nature, the environment, animals and food production. Especially children lose touch with the farmer's life, animals and the natural environment. By locating a children's farm in the city, it becomes possible to get to know and experience 'farmer's life' as it is readily accessible to everyone (Stam & Riefel, 2011). Most children's farms are therefore located in the urbanized areas near or within the largest four cities of the Netherlands (vSKBN, 2012a). It is complicated to give a typology of children farms as they show an incredible variety. The vSKBN uses forms of ownership to differentiate between the different farms. The three most common ways in which children farms are owned are either by a municipality, a foundation/association or a health organization (vSKBN, 2012a). The largest part of their income is usually obtained through subsidies (Franssen & Scherpenzeel, 2012). Due to the financial crisis between 2012 and 2013 a shift is visible as more municipal farms have been privatized (vSKBN, 2013).

Children's farms have officially two main functions, recreation and education. The recreational function involves an attractive green space for play. In terms of education, these children farms offer an outdoor educational setting for both day visitors and schools. Visitors learn about animals, sometimes plants and several farms offer educational material about 'sustainability'. Recent investigations also mention the function of a 'meeting place' offered by children farms (Franssen & Scherpenzeel, 2012; vSKBN, 2012b). Visitors of diverse ages and ethnicities come to these places, which are assumed to contribute to social and cultural integration in local neighbourhoods where the farms are located (vSKBN, 2012b). There seems to be a difference between various social groups regarding the importance they attach to the children farm. In a study conducted by the ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment (VROM) regarding recreational green spaces in urban areas, 31% of non-Western citizens indicated they find a children's farm essential, compared to a national average of 20%. Of the higher educated respondents only 14% finds a children's farm a necessity (VROM, 2010).

¹ Not all children's farms in the Netherlands monitor the annual number of visitors they receive. The results of 139 farms have been recently aggregated; their figures are based on counters at the farms' entrances or on estimates. It results that on average a children's farm receives 55.539 visitors a year, which would, among the total of 502 documented farms, amount to 27,9 million visitors a year. In reality this number will be lower as within this average animal pastures are included, which on average attract lower amounts of visitors (vSKBN, 2013).

² The international equivalent of the Dutch children's farm is the 'petting zoo', which offers the public an opportunity to interact directly with (often domestic) animals (Anderson, Benne, Bloomsmith, & Maple, 2002).

The diverse visitor profile of Dutch children's farms reflects structural changes on a larger macro scale. Most European countries have become multicultural societies in the past decades (Merrifield, 1996). International migration is closely linked to the concept of globalization which transforms political, socio-cultural and economic structures. Migration patterns have altered over time; current labour migration is perceived to be fundamentally different from previous types of mass migration (Peters, 2014). Contemporary debates on ethnic minorities held commonly in European countries circle around the need for migrants due to aging and declining societies and the abuse of the asylum system (Muus, 2001) as well as fear related to the perceived surge of religious fundamentalism (Peters, 2014). The Netherlands have become such a multi-ethnic country; approximately 20% of the population is from foreign origin (Gijsberts, Huijnk, & Dagevos, 2012). According to the Dutch Bureau for Statistics, at the outset of 2013 approximately 12 percent of the Dutch population consisted of non-Western migrants. This group comprises two-thirds of people mainly from Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, Dutch Antilles and Aruban backgrounds (CBS, 2013). The size of the four main non-Western groups has increased by 250,000 persons between 2000 and 2011. Approximately 80% of this increase is due to the growth of the second generation. The main reason for this growth is, at present, natural (the balance between births and deaths) and not further immigration (Gijsberts et al., 2012). It is complicated to predict future demographic developments, yet it is likely that especially the Muslim population in the Netherlands will continue to rise in the coming years (Beer, 2007). In the Netherlands, more than half of these ethnic minorities live in the four largest cities (Wittebrood, Latten, & Nicolaas, 2005).

On a political level, since the 1990s tensions between these ethnic groups and native Dutch people have slowly increased, especially between native Dutch people and migrants from Turkey and Morocco (Coenders, Lubbers, Scheepers, & Verkuyten, 2008). This is largely due to a heated political debate on immigrants, their position in society and integration which was sparked by both international events such as 9/11 and by several domestic events, such as the rise of the right-wing politician Pim Fortuyn, the assassination of the film producer Theo van Gogh and controversies around Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a politician and Somali refugee (Vliegthart, 2007). On a governmental level, this has led to various shifts in policy-making concerning ethnic minorities (Guiraudon, Phalet, & Wal, 2005). Researchers and policymakers attempt to work with those increased tensions; one view is that encounters between different ethnicities on a daily basis might bring people closer together (Peters, Elands, & Buijs, 2010). A strategy used by policymakers to strengthen social cohesion and overcome segregation has been to increase the social mixture between migrants and Dutch natives (Smets & Uyl, 2008; Uitermark, 2003). Effects of such mixing strategies are contested. A study in Utrecht and Amsterdam depicted that old and new inhabitants lived alongside each other rather than 'together', as people tend to prefer to live next to people similar to them (van Beekhoven & van Kempen, 2003). Of the approximately 4000 neighbourhoods in the Netherlands most are ethnically mixed. Only 44 neighbourhoods consist of mainly migrants (more than 50% non-Western migrants); 156 neighbourhoods have a high non-Western migrant population (between 25 and 50%) (Peters, 2010).

Integration is an extremely complex and controversial topic (Vliegthart, 2007). The scope of this research does not allow me to delve into this topic in depth. I will just briefly highlight a common assumption which is that as various ethnic groups interact, migrants might be facilitated in their integration process and tensions in the Dutch society might be reduced (Peters, 2010). Interactions

with 'strangers' are generally considered to be valuable, as this might add to social capital, diminish prejudices and shape a more accurate image of 'the other' (Ingen & Eijck, 2009; Peters & Haan, 2011). Green leisure places might offer opportunities for different ethnicities to meet. An investigation among various Dutch parks, suggested that often an external stimulus provides a linkage between strangers which lead to social interaction, a process called 'triangulation'. In the case of urban parks such triangulations were triggered by balls, children and dogs (Peters et al., 2010). A type of public green space in the Netherlands where children and animals are abundantly present and which might offer many opportunities for ethnicities to meet through triangulations is the earlier mentioned 'children's farm'. Children's farms attempt to adapt themselves to the recent demographic changes, the transformation of the Netherlands to a multi-cultural society. These urban green spaces seek to be an attractive leisure destination for people with different ethnic backgrounds, while at the same time providing a meeting place for inter-ethnic social interaction. The farms are currently under pressure due to rising costs and increasing governmental savings (Franssen & Scherpenzeel, 2012). Their survival might be threatened; now is the time to investigate their meaning and value for different ethnic groups in society as well as to gain improved insights into their functioning. Are children's farms a meeting place between different ethnicities in the Netherlands? Do children's farms play a role in enhancing social interaction between non-Western Immigrants and native Dutch? Do they enable people to meet and contribute to a better understanding of one another?

In the following three chapters the problem delineation, scientific objectives and research questions as well as the relevance of this study will be identified. The fifth chapter, the conceptual framework, will provide an overview of the conceptual and empirical foundations of this thesis. The connections between leisure and ethnicity will be explored in an attempt to gain an enhanced understanding of multi-ethnic visitors and the divergences in their leisure participation. Next the children's farm as a setting will be investigated. Characteristics which make a leisure destination attractive, open and accessible to visitors of various ethnic backgrounds, as well as features which might provoke social interaction are discussed. Thirdly social interaction is delved into; various types of such interactions, namely passive, fleeting and enduring sociability will be deliberated. In the sixth chapter the methodological framework of this research is presented which provides an overview of the research design and the techniques used to obtain and analyse data. In the seventh chapter the two case studies explored within this study are extensively described. All photographs which give a visual impression of the children's farms are taken by the author in the summer of 2013; the maps of both case studies have been drawn by the author. Lastly, the results and conclusions of this research will be presented in chapter eight, nine and ten.

2. Problem Statement

The functions ascribed to children's farms vary largely (Franssen & Scherpenzeel, 2012). The municipality of Utrecht for instance claims that the four farms they own have a total of five functions. One is an exemplary function of clean, sustainable and safe management. A second meeting function entails that this location stimulates contact between neighbourhood residents. Important is also the nature experience and being active. Participation of people from the neighbourhood is encouraged through volunteering activities. Finally the farms perform an educational function, information concerning the animals is shared and schools can engage in classes (Wolf & Mazurkiewicz, 2009). Most farms seem to propagate at least two aims, namely education and recreation. In 2012, during a scan among 34 children's farms located in the regions 'Haaglanden, Bollenstreek and Haaglanden', it became clear that the functions of children's farms are ambiguous and their societal value and relevance is unclear (Franssen & Scherpenzeel, 2012).

Children's farms are propagated by both policymakers at governmental level and administrators of the farms as an attractive and accesible leisure destination for people with different ethnic backgrounds. In this way they might be important meeting places which contribute to social interaction between different ethnic and societal groups (Gemeente Enschede; vSKBN, 2012b; WOS, 2002). These claims do not seem to be based on scholarly research. Scientific investigations into the children's farms function as a meeting place do not seem to have been carried out, according to the best of the author's knowledge. In fact, scientific literature regarding children's farms is extremely scarce. Existing scientific works are usually dated, see for example (*Het recreatieve bezoek aan drie kinderboerderijen in Rotterdam : een verkennende studie*, 1973; *Kinderboerderijen : richtlijnen voor de functie, voorzieningen en bouw van een kinderboerderij*, 1977; Klinkers, 1993; Mertens, 1976; Mertens & Opleidingscentrum, 1978) or merely focussed on children's farms and threats they may pose to health (Erens, 2010; Evers, Horneman, & Doorduyn, 2006; Hassink, 2006; Heuvelink, Valkenburgh, & van Heerwaarden, 2005).

This study will evaluate whether children's farms attract visitors from different ethnic backgrounds, and whether they fulfill a function as a meeting place between these diverse visitors. In this manner the societal value of children's farms will be explored. Knowledge about this 'meeting place function' is especially relevant for policymakers and children's farm administrators who currently, due to increasing financial pressure have to find innovative and strategic ways to secure their existence in the future. Crucial is to know whether children's farms do indeed function as a meeting place and whether plus how this function could be improved in the future.

3. Scientific Objectives and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to contribute to an understanding of the functions and the societal relevance and value of children's farms in the Netherlands. It aims to add to existing knowledge concerning the functioning of contemporary children's farms within the context of a multi-ethnic society. Within the frames of this research, two functions of public children's farms will be evaluated, namely their role as a leisure destination and as a meeting place. This study will also aim to propose concrete interventions which might strengthen the children's farms as attractive and inclusive leisure destinations and as a meeting place for a diversity of ethnic groups.

In order to achieve this, the study aims to investigate whether children's farms, as a public space, function as a meeting place between visitors from the ethnic majority and non-Western ethnic minorities³. Public spaces need to be inclusive and allow a great diversity of people to visit the farm, in order to be able to function as an inter-ethnic meeting place (Mehta, 2013; Peters, 2011). I will thus firstly establish which visitors come to the farm by obtaining vital demographic information. I will also explore which characteristics of the children's farm make it an attractive leisure destination for visitors of various ethnic backgrounds. I will then investigate whether users of the children's farms from diverse backgrounds use the farms in different manners, possibly guided by diverse cultural norms, values and beliefs. Merely being together in a public space does not immediately lead to social interactions between visitors. Triggers which spark a process whereby strangers might interact have to be present (Carmona et al., 2010). Therefore the features within the setting which provoke contact between visitors will secondly be explored. Thirdly the process of social interaction will be carefully monitored. Mehta (2013) argues that three types of interactions take place within public space, enduring sociability with close ties, passive interaction by merely being in the presence of others but not seeking verbal contact, and fleeting interactions such as eye contact, nods and brief conversations. One main research question and four sub-questions guided the literature review, the execution and the analysis of this study.

Main Research Question: Is the children's farm, as a leisure destination, a meeting place between people from various ethnic backgrounds?

Sub-Question 1: What makes the children's farm an attractive leisure destination for people with different ethnic backgrounds?

Sub-Question 2: What types of social interaction do visitors from diverse ethnic backgrounds engage in at the children's farm?

³ I am aware of the problematic and essentialised nature of the terms 'ethnic majority' and 'ethnic minority'. Their usage will be extensively treated in chapter 5, within the conceptual framework. In chapter 6, while discussing the methodology I will highlight how these terms have been employed within this particular research.

4. Relevance of the Study

This study is relevant on three fronts; firstly it adds to the body of scientific literature, it might secondly guide policy development on both governmental and municipal level, and thirdly it could aid administrators of children's farms and the trade-organization vSKBN in the improvement of their product.

A. Contribution to Scientific Literature

Literature concerning children's farms is scarce and works which do exist are dated. Any scientific addition to this largely unexplored field might thus add to an improved understanding of this topic. An important contribution of this study is the explanation of the relationship between characteristics of a particular micro-setting and social interactions. Additionally the social value and importance of this public leisure space for visitors are explored. The setting is examined in terms of inclusivity towards visitors from different ethnic backgrounds. The presence of ethnically diverse users as well as variations in user patterns and varied motivations, needs and barriers faced during participation are studied. Inter-ethnic social interaction has been investigated so far within green settings such as public parks and natural areas (Buijs et al., 2009; Kloek et al., 2013; Peters, 2011), yet not within children's farms. All these reasons might make this study a valuable extension to scholarship aiming to understand the relations between leisure, ethnicity, social interaction and public space.

B. Guiding Future Policy

Thus far, the functionality, societal relevance and value of children's farms have not been researched extensively (Franssen & Scherpenzeel, 2012). The function as a meeting place, between old and young generations, as well as between different ethnicities seems to be assumed, but has not been investigated (vSKBN, 2012b). If children's farms do indeed fulfil this function, it might be an important and beneficial one within the Dutch society. Previous research furthermore suggests meeting people from different cultures in green spaces might contribute to social cohesion (Cattell, Dines, Gesler, & Curtis, 2007; Peters, 2010; Peters et al., 2010). Worryingly, there is a shortage of recreational green spaces especially within urban areas. Here the felt shortage of green leisure spaces can be up to 60% (VROM, 2010). Children's farms as green recreational spaces, located within or near urban areas, enjoy a particularly high popularity among immigrants, compared to other recreational spaces in the Netherlands such as woods (VROM, 2010). This might be due to a general landscape preference among immigrants for more agricultural landscapes and leisure spaces closer to their homes (Broek & Keuzenkamp, 2008; Buijs, Elands, & Langers, 2009; Jókövi, 2001). These farms might thus be one of the crucial sites where people from different ethnic backgrounds can meet and mingle.

However, as mentioned earlier, Dutch children's farms are experiencing an increasing pressure, due to factors such as rising costs and growing governmental savings (Franssen & Scherpenzeel, 2012). Several children's farms have even had to close their doors (Luske, 2012; VoorburgseCourant, 2011; VVD, 2012). Future governmental and municipal policies regarding the subsidizing and future of children's farms have to be guided by knowledge about their societal value and relevance. Important is to also differentiate the meaning of a children's farm for different groups within society. In a society submerged in an economic crisis, during choices of budget-cuts there is possibly a danger of a 'tyranny of the majority' where the landscape preference of the majority (in this case the native Dutch and a preference for wild landscapes) might get priority over that of the immigrant minority (a

preference for more urban landscapes (Maletz, 2002). In order to guide future governmental policy regarding these children's farms, it is thus vital to investigate their value for users of different ethnicities and as a meeting place between these ethnicities. It is crucial to carry out this research as soon as possible, before any drastic decisions are taken concerning their future existence.

C. Improving the Meeting Place Function

The trade organization vSKBN, representing the majority of children's farms in the Netherlands, is currently involved in two programs to which the outcome of this research might contribute. One is 'All children's farms sustainable' (AKD⁴), the other is the development of a trade-code for children's farms in which sustainability is also included. Scientific literature concerning 'sustainability' generally claims this concept consists of three dimensions; sustainability entails an economic, ecological and social pillar (Dresner, 2002; Mowforth & Munt, 2009). The campaign AKD currently focusses in its entirety on the environmental aspect of sustainability ("Alle kinderboerderijen duurzaam! Doe je mee? " 2013). The social dimension, encompassing themes such as social integration, cohesion and interaction is not yet included. The function of children's farms as a meeting place might contribute to 'social sustainability' and hence be included in both the AKD campaign and the trade-code. These two instruments will guide future developments of children's farms. Additionally, administrators on farms might be interested in what features of a children's farm attract visitors of diverse backgrounds and contribute to social interaction. This might provide insights on how the functions of an attractive leisure destination and a 'meeting place' could be strengthened in the future.

⁴ All Children's Farms Sustainable, translated from Dutch 'Alle Kinderboerderijen Duurzaam'

5. Conceptual Framework

Three components are crucial in the investigation whether children's farms as a leisure destination do function as a meeting place between people from various ethnic backgrounds, namely the visitor, the setting as an attractive leisure destination and whether these visitors meet within this setting. These components need to have theoretical support, and will be underpinned by several key concepts derived from an extensive literature review. Primarily, for inter-ethnic interaction to take place, visitors should originate from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Recent debates around the concept of ethnicity will be highlighted and positioned within the Dutch context. The terminology used in this thesis to describe people from different ethnicities will be mentioned and problematized. The three key components (visitors, the leisure destination and meeting place) are all strongly connected to the notion of 'leisure'. One of the motivations for visitors to visit the children's farms might be to spend leisure time. Leisure is however a contested concept and scholarship suggest different participation levels among people of diverse ethnic backgrounds in public leisure and recreational activities. Studies propose various reasons for such variances in participation, such as the economic constraints people from ethnic minorities might face, or varied preferences for certain leisure experiences (Freysinger and Harris, 2006). The ethnic background of visitors as well as other characteristics which might influence their active participation within a leisure setting will be elaborated in the first part of this conceptual framework.

In the second section, the leisure destination which people visit stands central. The conceptual challenges between public and private places will be highlighted, as well as the differences between the concepts 'space' and 'place'. When established what a public meeting place should entail, the qualities of a successful public leisure place will be shared which may make it an attractive setting for visitors of diverse ethnicities. Thirdly, the setting as a meeting place will be expounded upon. The children's farm will be characterized as a low-intensity meeting place with attributes which might ignite contact between visitors will be discussed. Three types of social interaction, paramount in public settings, will be highlighted, namely passive, fleeting and enduring sociability. Lastly, linkages between the visitors, the setting as a leisure destination and as a meeting place will be drawn. Three facets of public leisure settings will be depicted, namely the setting as an 'experiential space' for visitors, whereby visitors endow a setting with certain meanings, a 'normative space' guarded by rules and regulations and the setting as a 'social space' that visitors visit either alone or with others and where they are confronted with unknown others. The chapter ends with a diagram illustrating the connections between the main theoretical concepts as well as their relation to other phases within the research procedure.

5.1 Multi-Ethnic Visitors, Engaging in Leisurely Activities

All three main components of this theoretical framework, namely the visitor, the setting as a leisure destination and meeting place, are closely related to the concept of leisure. Hence 'Leisure' is the first concept I will touch upon in this section, as the foundations of this research are in the leisure theory of the past forty years. It is hence relevant to investigate the development of the concept of leisure over time, highlight different paradigmatic approaches and share my personal understanding of leisure as a highly contested social construction. I am therefore aware that the framing of this research through lenses coloured by leisure scholarship limits this research significantly. I will touch upon needs visitors might have with regard to the leisure destination they visit. I will secondly elaborate on the controversial topic of ethnicity. The history of this term and the controversies

surrounding it will be depicted. As this research is located within the Netherlands, the discussion and usage of terminology related to race and ethnicity within the Dutch context will be elaborated on. Lastly, linkages between ethnicity and leisure will be made. In an overview of how leisure and ethnicity shaped leisure research in the past decades, I will specifically highlight the shifted understandings in participation patterns in leisure. Theories such as the ethnicity and marginality thesis, discrimination and different perceptions of nature and animals offer suggestions as to why participation in leisure activities differs between visitors from various ethnic backgrounds. In a short summary I will depict the relevance of ethnicity and its impact on leisure participation within this study.

5.1.1 Leisure

Leisure matters; some claim tourism and leisure jointly account for the world's largest industry. It has an enormous economic significance as a source of employment and income. Numerous studies depict the importance of leisure-time for people's well-being, as it allows individuals to relax, to express certain desires and passions and even to learn new skills and abilities (Roberts, 2006). People can, to a certain extent, decide what to do with their leisure time (Peters, 2011). The social component of leisure activities should not be underestimated. Leisure activities can bind people together, but also divide and even sharpen social divisions. Leisure is hence political; groups within society continuously claim space, which either fit or do not fit the existing political and legal framework within society. Leisure time is, since the development of modern industries, ever-growing within Western societies. The amount of working-hours has declined, people earning more, and birth and death rates have fallen since the 19th century. Although time and income have overall increased, there has not been an equal distribution of leisure-time across the population (Roberts, 2006).

The term leisure has only been used at the end of the 19th century in Britain. Leisure varies enormously from group to group within a country; between countries the differences are even more extreme. The type of leisure that is possible within Western societies is the product of very specific economic, political and social contexts. Roberts (2006) argues that Western leisure is shaped by four main factors: the organization of work (where leisure is the time left over from both paid and unpaid work), the market economy (which allows 'consumers' to choose to a certain extent how they use their time and their money), liberal democracy (which allows individuals the liberty to organize their own leisure activities and form voluntary associations) and the decline of 'the community' (communities such as families, neighbourhoods and churches which previously prescribed rules and regulations shaping one's life (Roberts, 2006). 'Leisure' is a contested concept. Traditionally it has been defined as 'free time' 'activity' or 'state of mind' (Parr & Lashua, 2004; Roberts, 2006). Leisure as 'free time' means time spent without obligations and necessary tasks. Yet this definition is not useful for those not engaging in paid work. The notion of activity tries to classify leisure as activities different from obligations related to work, family or society at large. Leisure as a 'state of mind' and a subjective experience has gained prominence as academics critiqued free time and activity do not depict the complexity and extensive meaning of leisure (Peters, 2011). Leisure as an experience entails two dimensions - freedom of choice (despite constraints, people can make choices) and intrinsic motivation (the importance of leisure for personal development and even improvement). Leisure as an experience enables us to view it as an expression of one's self. This freedom is however limited by structural conditions such as social contexts (class, age, gender, ethnicity and (dis)ability) as well as historical, cultural and political forces (Peters, 2011). All conceptualizations of leisure are

not neutral; they reflect a specific socio-cultural construction (Parr & Lashua, 2004). Watkins indicates four paradigms which are commonly used to study leisure, namely behaviorism, cognitivism, individual constructivism and social constructivism. He offers a fifth paradigm, experientialism to allow studying the multiple meanings of leisure. All define and understand leisure and leisure meanings in a different manner (Watkins, 2010).

For the purpose of this study I decide to view leisure as a social construction, shaped by the earlier mentioned social, historical, cultural and political forces (Roberts, 2006). I believe leisure is shaped by a very specific context and is continuously negotiated by people. Many constraints are still imposed, through for example historical forces, cultural and religious ideologies and politics (Parr & Lashua, 2004). Although some researchers indicate that a blurring of previous differences in leisure activities according to factors such as age, gender and social class takes place (Roberts, 2006), others specify the continuous power of social contexts within which leisure is located (Parr & Lashua, 2004). It is hence problematic to frame this research topic through the lens of leisure. In the Dutch society children's farms are claimed to be a leisure setting, with several functions such as recreation and education (Franssen & Scherpenzeel, 2012). This is a normative way of looking at this setting and the motivations visitors might have to visit this location. I am aware of this reductionism; visitors of different ages, social classes or ethnicities might see the children's farm not necessarily as a leisure destination. Yet I still decide to embed this study in the leisure literature as it offers a theoretical context within which this setting is located. It frames the activities visitors engage in as 'leisure', and it allows me to build on extensive scholarship treating the relations to divergences in leisure participation between visitors from different ethnicities. I will briefly mention specific recreational needs visitors might have with regards to leisure destinations they visit.

Visitor Needs within Leisure Spaces

Certain primary needs exist which most people seek to fulfil in recreational spaces. These are comfort, relaxation, passive and active engagement, discovery and display. Visitors need to be comfortable; this determines whether people visit a public place and how long they stay there. Comfort includes various aspects. Environmental factors, such as the weather, need to be pleasant, physical comfort should be provided through seats, places to walk and stand. Visitors look for places with a warm and positive character and atmosphere. People seek relaxation in leisure spaces in their free time, of both body and mind. It is often sought in places with a contrast to the usual day-to-day environment. In an urban setting that means often places with natural characteristics such as vegetation, water or animals or with a clear separation from traffic (Mehta, 2013). Passive engagement, closely related to passive interaction, allows people to enjoy a setting without getting actively involved; a prime example is people watching. Yet at times individuals feel the need to be more actively engaged with a place and the people in it. Humans seem to need discovery for personal enjoyment and development. Recreational spaces offer plenty of opportunities to discover other people, activities, seasonal changes, historical changes or other unpredictable events. Finally, when people visit a leisure space, they fulfil a need to display themselves. Through appearance and clothing, behaviour identity and belonging can be demonstrated to others (Carmona, Tiesdell, Heath, & Oc, 2010; Carr, 1992). Besides these general needs visitors might have in recreational settings, individuals also pursue more personal needs. This relates to for instance one's character, personality, the goals and values one pursues, the resources available at a set time, past experiences, age and gender (Carmona et al., 2010). Also one's experiences, expectations and one's emotional state at a certain moment can affect what an individual searches for at a specific time in a specific place

(Mehta, 2013). A significant factor shaping one's needs within a leisure setting and which hence partially determines participation is a person's ethnic background. I will proceed in the next section with a description of ethnicity, a specific structure influencing the leisure needs, motivations and participation level of visitors within a recreational setting.

5.1.2 Ethnicity

Interest in the shaping of leisure practices and experiences through ethnicity is a quite recent, highly complex and sensitive field in leisure studies. This section is based on scholarship originating from the 'north', specifically American, British and Australian research. These (predominantly white) societies produce specific knowledge concerning ethnicity. Despite the delicate nature of this topic, I will focus on research around it, as ignoring this issue renders it invisible. I am nevertheless aware of the fact that by focussing explicitly on ethnicity, this concept may appear 'essential' (Freysinger & Harris, 2006). I hence firstly want to examine this notion and show my humble understanding of it as a social constructions, as the concept 'ethnicity' has been constructed, challenged and reconstructed over the past decades (Alcoff & Mendieta, 2008; Freysinger & Harris, 2006).

Before engaging in the scientific debates surrounding the concept of 'ethnicity', I deem it important to mention I deliberately choose to elaborate on this concept rather than on the notion of 'race'. Ethnicity is often seen as a more neutral and less political concept than race. Many groups now named 'ethnic groups' used to be 'races'⁵ (Freysinger & Harris, 2006). According to Best (2010), ethnic groups have the following characteristics: *"a common culture, a belief in a common origin, a sense of group identity and strong social ties and interaction within the group"* (Best, 2010, p.88). Ethnic groups also show similarities of nationality, religion, language, social and cultural heritage; besides this 'objective' shared cultural dimension ethnic groups often share a subjective, consciousness dimension. The latter is build up by a perception of being different and being seen by others as different (Freysinger & Harris, 2006). Floyd (1998) argues that ethnic identities are composed of internal and external ascriptions. Internal ascriptions are individually chosen and adopted identities. Outside agents and organisations construct external ascriptions of ethnic identity. These external ascriptions can assume two forms, either informal (everyday interpersonal interaction) or formal (e.g. governmental policies). Ethnicities are not static, fixed and essential; terms such as 'minority ethnic group' slowly shift to capture similar and diverse experiences of migrants, their children and grandchildren. It is increasingly being recognized that identities are to a large extent produced by group members individually as well as through the interactions and exchanges between one another; this makes identities highly dynamic and eclectic (Alcoff & Mendieta, 2008; Morris, 2003; Roberts, 2006). Observed differences which cannot immediately be ascribed to ethnic background, might be related to ethnic subculture (Hutchison, 2000). Similar to many racial groups, minority ethnic groups are rather unequal in power, wealth and status (Freysinger & Harris, 2006). Culture relates closely to the concept of ethnicity; it provides the 'content and meaning' of ethnicity. Ethnic culture is composed of components from the past and present such as art, music, clothing, beliefs about norms and values, religion, symbols and many more. Culture is thus a construction, always in fluctuation (Floyd, 1998). Ethnicity itself is also a social

⁵ In Europe, as in the US, the term 'race' is increasingly avoided and instead the terms 'ethnicity' or 'ethnic group' are used. Some see this 'avoidance' increase over time and link it to growing evidence of oppression of people of colour (Freysinger & Harris, 2006).

construction, shaping people's interactions and as will be exemplified in the next section, often participation in leisure activities (Freysinger & Harris, 2006).

Ethnicity is still a significant determinant of people's quality of life. Interpersonal and institutional discrimination continue to target people from ethnic minorities (M. F. Floyd, 1998). Samers (1998) demonstrates that concepts as 'ethnic minority' continuously shift meaning in relation to changing laws. The use of these terms can be highly stigmatizing; they might point to underlying colonial, victimizing and patronizing practices. These notions often exclude multiple identities which are shaped through for example age, gender, sexuality and class structures (Morris, 2003; Samers, 1998). A more holistic understanding of ethnic identity positions individuals somewhere on a continuum, as these categories are highly diverse (Hutchison, 2000). Yanov and van der Haar (2012) show how terminology concerning ethnicity in the political, academic and everyday Dutch context, has a highly stigmatizing effect. They demonstrate how the common Dutch categorization to distinguish native Dutch from foreign residents, the 'binary opposition' between *autochtoon* and *allochtoon*, acts as a dangerous marginalizing force; this will be further elaborated in the next section.

Ethnicity in the Dutch Context

The Dutch population has never been as diverse throughout its history as it is at the present moment (Ghorashi, 2013); this state has been called 'superdiversity' (Vertovec, 2007). The amount of foreign residents in the Netherlands will, according to statistical predictions, continue to grow. Figures of the CBS suggest that in 2005 3.1 million foreign residents lived in the Netherlands and in 2025 this group will rise to possibly 4.0 million residents, which will amount to almost a quarter of Dutch society (Duin, Jong, & Broekman, 2006). These developments led to widespread public concern and stirred political debate in the past years (Vliegenthart, 2007). Changes in the ethnic composition of the Netherlands are largely affected by demographic compositions such as family size and rate of natural population increases, rather than public policy developments (Gijsberts et al., 2012).

Parliamentary debates, academic researchers, city administrative practitioners, the Dutch Central Bureau for statistics (CBS), schools, universities and workplaces commonly use the classification 'autochtoon' (English: *autochthon*) and 'allochtoon' (English: *allochthon*) to distinguish between population groups. Conceptualizations and understandings of these terms changed over time. In 1959 the term 'allochtoon' has been used by the Dutch Southern half while referring to Dutch workers originating from the northern parts of the Netherlands. The terms entered policy documents in 1971 where it started referring to multiple groups crossing the borders, such as repatriates, migrants and foreign students. Until way into the 1990s the common term used was 'ethnic minorities'. The CBS only standardized the term in 1999 (Yanow & Haar, 2012). A central feature of the way the CBS distinguishes between population groups is the birthplace of citizens' parents. It defines an 'autochtoon' as a person of whom both parents have been born in the Netherlands. 'Allochtoon' refers to all those who do not meet this condition, including those of whom at least one parent has been borne outside the Netherlands. The concept of 'allochtoon' is then divided in several other categories. Firstly, there is a generational differentiation, between the 'first generation' (people born abroad themselves) and the 'second generation' (people born in the Netherlands).

Secondly, a differentiation is made between countries of origin. Of first-generation allochthons⁶ this is their birth country. Second-generation allochthons are classified according to the country of origin of their mother if she has been born outside the Netherlands, if not, it is the country of birth of the father. The country of origin determines whether one is a 'Western' or non-Western' allochtoon. A Western 'allochtoon' originates from Europe (apart from Turkey), North America, Japan, Oceania and Indonesia. A non-Western 'allochtoon' originates from Turkey, Africa, South America and Asia (apart from Japan and Indonesia) (CBS, 2012; Yanow & Haar, 2012). Especially the group of non-Western allochthons is often subject of research in the Netherlands, as their cultural background differs significantly to that of native Dutch people (Somers, Kroon, & Overbeek, 2005). The terms allochtoon and autochtoon are categorizations used to facilitate administration, research and policy making; they have however been heavily criticized. A central critique is that even though these terms appear as 'neutral categories', they are not neutral in their effects. Social constructionists find the 'allochtoon-autochtoon division' essentialist in nature and find it denies a more dynamic understanding of people's origin (Yanow & Haar, 2012).

Ethnic Minority and Majority

This research is primarily concerned with Dutch residents of different ethnic origins, namely Dutch 'autochthons' of which both parents have been born in the Netherlands, and 'allochthons', originating from the largest non-Western migrant groups in the Netherlands, namely Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, Dutch Antilles. I chose to focus on these ethnicities as it is generally thought that cultural differences between these groups and the autochthon Dutch are greater than between residents of European origin (Somers et al., 2005). I included both first-generation (a person born in a non-Western country) and second-generation allochthons (where a person's parents are born outside the Netherlands, but he/she is born in the Netherlands). On the 1st of January 2012 the Netherlands counted 3,5 million 'allochthons', of which 1,9 million of non-Western origin. This means 1 in 5 Dutch residents is an 'allochtoon' (CBS, 2012). As I am aware of the problematic nature of the terms autochtoon and allochtoon, therefore I decide to use different categories. Numerically the autochthons are the largest group, therefore I will classify this group as the ethnic majority. Individuals with different non-Western origins will be referred to as 'ethnic minorities'. The terms minority and majority are numerical comparisons within a defined geographic area which, in the case of this paper, is the Netherlands (Risbeth, 2001). All communities are dynamic and multifaceted, these two terms are thus essentialised and do not capture the complexity of each category, yet they are helpful to not 'deny' race and ethnicity, yet make it visible through research. Hereby I respond to the need phrased by Hutchison (2000), who argues that operationalizing and defining ethnicity in research is challenging, yet it is dangerous to simply copy categories constructed by government agencies or ethnic groups themselves, as these definitions might be racialized⁷. Now that the notion

⁶ The Dutch and English pronunciations of these words are similar; I therefore decided to use the Dutch 'allochtoon' and 'autochtoon' spelling for the singular. In line with previous research concerning this topic (Yanow & Haar, 2012) I decided to use the English plural forms 'allochthons' and 'autochthons'; this provides a clear signal of the plural form for non-Dutch speakers.

⁷ Increasing attention is paid to 'processes of racialization', which position individual people and groups in certain racial categories. These processes have real, material effects, in that they contribute to an unequal distribution in power and wealth. They are often supported by other forces such as religious affiliation and nationalism (Neo, 2012). People are not discriminated because they are different. It is discrimination itself that produces categories which order others as superior or inferior (Best, 2010; Freysinger & Harris, 2006).

of 'ethnicity' is explored and the usage within this study has been justified, I will proceed to show how recent academic research discusses the relations between leisure and ethnicity. I will specifically focus on theories accounting for variances in participation between visitors of different ethnic backgrounds within a leisure setting.

5.1.3 Leisure and Ethnicity

Leisure is a contested concept across cultures. Some indicate it has comparable meanings in all cultures; others argue the word has no clear connection between for example indigenous and Eurocentric understandings of leisure; some go as far as to state the word leisure does not even exist in some languages. It is generally accepted that ethnic background, but also gender do play a role in the meaning and value of leisure (Peters, 2011). There has been a recent increased interest in the leisure behaviour of different ethnic groups, see for example (Buijs et al., 2009; Peters, 2011; Peters & Haan, 2011; Stodolska & Livengood, 2006; Stodolska, Shinew, Floyd, & Walker, 2014). Ethnicity as a factor might offer a partial explanation for uses and meaning of public spaces for leisure activities (Jókövi, 2001; Peters, 2011; Stodolska & Yi, 2003). In the following section I will draw linkages between the concepts of leisure and ethnicity. I will firstly provide a chronological overview of how race and ethnicity have shaped leisure research in the last five decades. Secondly I will focus specifically on the Dutch context and demonstrate how ethnicity is embedded in Dutch leisure studies. This discussion might partially explain diverse leisure patterns across visitors from different ethnic backgrounds.

Differences in Participation

The academic leisure field has shifted over time and thereby influenced how ethnicity is conceptualized. Initial research in leisure and recreation barely focussed on ethnicity as a category. Leisure activities before the 1960s can be judged as unaware of, and even 'erasing' ethnic differences (Freysinger & Harris, 2006). A large social change put ethnicity on the map of leisure studies, especially within North America and Britain; it was the heightened awareness regarding racial inequality, especially in the United States in the 1960s (M. F. Floyd, 1998). Public protests and social unrest forced the leisure and recreation industry and scholarship to focus on the leisure needs of people of colour (Freysinger & Harris, 2006). The main research focus became the difference in participation during public leisure and recreational activities between different ethnic groups (M. F. Floyd, 1998). Leisure gained attention as a potential site of social (in)equality, in fact until today no other topic has attracted as much attention in leisure research as race and ethnicity (Freysinger & Harris, 2006). Initially ethnicity and race were essentialised, homogenous and universal. The impact on leisure came to be seen as measurable. Two theories, the 'marginality thesis' and the 'ethnicity thesis', both explaining different participation patterns in leisure, came to the foreground in the 1970s and 1980s (Freysinger & Harris, 2006).

Early scholarship on the leisure participation of coloured Americans assumed factors linked to economic class posed the largest barriers to participation in leisure (Best, 2010). This marginality thesis has been heavily critiqued. It is argued that this type of research on economic constraints has focussed on the population at large, with no attention to specific ethnic minorities or immigrants (Best, 2010; Stodolska, 1998). Stodolska (1998) illustrates that these minority groups might encounter 'dynamic characteristics', barriers specific to a minority status and challenges related to adaptation to a new environment (Best, 2010). The ethnicity thesis focuses predominantly on

cultural factors related to 'ethnicity', which are seen as the main determinant shaping leisure choices (Best, 2010). Washburne (1978) is often accredited for introducing the 'ethnicity perspective' into leisure studies. He also argued against a biological definition and instead focused on the extent to which people identify with their ethnic group (Freysinger & Harris, 2006). A main critique on the ethnicity thesis is that it is assumed people can choose to be ethnic, and that in reality it is ones socioeconomic status that contributes to inequality. Both the marginality and the ethnicity thesis are accused of being apolitical and lacking notions of power. Overall the theories are judged to have little value for understanding ethnicity and leisure (Freysinger & Harris, 2006).

Importantly, large demographic changes took place since the 1990s in the US, but also in a substantial part of Europe; there was a fast rate of growth and estimated increase of ethnic minorities (Vertovec, 2007). Authors suggest that this ethnic minority population increase will become visible in the composition of leisure and recreational activity participants. Practitioners within the leisure field have experienced these demographic changes closely; they had to adapt to more ethnically diverse customers (M. F. Floyd, 1998). Yet the scholarly field has not adapted to these transitions, and most research continues at least in the USA to focus on African Americans, other ethnic groups such as the Hispanics and Asians are frequently overlooked (Hutchison, 2000). The scholarly field went through significant changes in the 1980s and 1990s and attempted to go beyond the ethnicity and marginality thesis, towards more holistic approaches (Stodolska, 1998). Much interpretive research focused on meanings, motivations and constraints of leisure for different ethnic groups. Furthermore intersections between ethnicity, social class, gender and age were investigated (Freysinger & Harris, 2006).

It is not until the 1990s that discrimination has been investigated on a widespread basis, including its impact on people's leisure and recreational experiences (Freysinger & Harris, 2006), see for example (Jarvie & Reid, 1997). These studies demonstrated that experiences of discrimination constrain leisure on several levels, namely the opportunity of participating in activities, the enjoyment of these activities and participation levels themselves (Freysinger & Harris, 2006). Additionally the 'universality' of discrimination has been questioned. Examples are studies where it is shown that white ethnic minority groups, for example Polish migrants to Canada, experience different forms of racism, perhaps as they are less 'visible' as a minority during leisure activities (Stodolska & Jackson, 1998). Gender, age, years of residence and level of assimilation to another culture can also shape meaning of leisure and leisure constraints (Freysinger & Harris, 2006; Taylor, 2001). The notion of power and how this influences ethnicities and relations between ethnicities within leisure settings has gained more attention; particularly how leisure places have also the potential to be places of 'resistance', where societal, cultural, economic and other structures are challenged and even changed (Freysinger & Harris, 2006). However, institutionalised discrimination as a barrier for participation continues to exist (Best, 2010); ethnicity is still believed to have a significant impact on leisure participation (Shinew, Floyd, & Parry, 2004). In leisure, the norm in most North American and European societies is 'whiteness', others, the non-white, have a subordinate status and their 'being different' is continuously produced and reproduced. This might lead to a situation where a similar leisure experience, such as a visit to a Dutch children's farm, might be experienced very differently by people from different ethnicities. For some a visit might be pure pleasure, others might feel oppressed (Freysinger & Harris, 2006). Stodolska (1998) shows in her research however that Polish migrants, a white ethnic minority group in Canada, experience less discrimination in leisure settings

than in work and school environments, which is perhaps due to the fact that in leisure activities people choose the company they surround themselves with and good language skills are less significant in an informal leisure environment. Yet the 'anticipation' of discrimination might influence minority leisure decisions, such as location and leisure partners. This might be a contributing factor to 'ethnic enclosure', where ethnic minorities spend their leisure time in relatively closed groups with all members belonging to the same ethnicity (M. Floyd & Gramann, 1993). Yet studies exist demonstrating a different view. One example is a study among African-American and Caucasian park-users, which investigates their constraints and preferences regarding leisure in a Chicago public park. Results concur with previous research which indicates the two 'racial' groups have different leisure preferences, yet results seem to indicate that African Americans felt less constrained than Caucasians, which challenges previous research. A possible explanation is that African-American citizens have become more accustomed to negotiating constraints or that Caucasians have different expectations of park use, based on privilege, and hence experience constraints sooner (Shinew, Floyd, et al., 2004). Research into the complex and ambiguous linkages between leisure and ethnicities thus remains vital. A major contemporary challenge however is the absence of a viable theoretical framework, as the previous theories guiding research, the marginality thesis, the ethnicity thesis and a focus on discrimination show the mentioned fallacies (M. F. Floyd, 1998; Hutchison, 2000; Shinew, Floyd, et al., 2004).

Not included in the scope of this research, but nevertheless important to mention are the effects of religion on leisure behaviour, as for the two of the largest minorities, the Turkish and Moroccan Dutch, Islam is a crucial part of their identity (Buijs et al., 2009). Studies from the United States seem to indicate that there is an effect of Islam on leisure behaviour. People with an Islamic religious background tended to emphasize strong family-ties and a stronger family-orientation in their leisure time. Islamic migrants in the United States seemed to feel a need to teach children traditional moral values and held on to certain restrictions on mix-gender interactions; a well-managed environment tends to suit these leisure needs better than a 'wild' environment (Stodolska & Livengood, 2006). In the next section I want to delve into specific barriers for visitors from different ethnicities which might apply to children's farms. These farms are a nature-based leisure site with animals. Ethnic majorities and minorities might have diverse perceptions of and relations to both nature and animals.

Barriers to Nature-Based Leisure

"The perspective of Latin American and Asian immigrants on nature and wild lands is strikingly different from the view typical of European Americans. The very idea of outdoor recreation may be strange to the cultures from which many of these immigrants originate." (Johnson-Gaither, 2014 p. 433).

Divergent perspectives among visitors from different ethnic backgrounds are one of the factors which might explain varied participation levels within nature-based recreational activities among visitors from different ethnic backgrounds; the quotation above illustrates this by highlighting different perceptions of nature among non-Western and Western migrants to the United States of America. Minority ethnic communities might experience numerous barriers to participation within natural open spaces. Cultural dispositions, such as expectations and behavioural codes, can discourage minority communities to use natural open spaces. Traditional folklore and mythology of certain ethnic groups might perceive certain activities (e.g. walking) not as a leisure activity but as a necessity. Strict dress codes (of for example females from certain backgrounds) might furthermore

prevent participation in certain leisure activities. A lack of confidence and negative perceptions about the environment might also avert minority ethnic groups from using public spaces. Negative feelings associated with previous experiences in a public space might inhibit or problematize future usage (Morris, 2033). Studies demonstrated that people from African origin seem to have a lower preference for nature-based activities than Caucasians (Shinew, Floyd, et al., 2004). Yet, it is not clear whether this is because particular minority groups have not been socialized into wilderness activities as other ethnic groups, or whether it is a consequence simply of urban residence, lower participation rates in wilderness programmes as adolescents or many other possible influences. Many studies assumed groups will exemplify different behaviours from the majority, yet only a few studies did find actual systematic differences (Hutchison, 2000).

Essential components of children's farms are domestic animals (Klinkers, 1993). Perceptions and relations to animals also differ across ethnicities and cultures, and might stratify leisure participation across ethnic groups. Several academic disciplines have paid attention to human-animal relationships across ethnicities, such as anthropology, biology, geography, literature and cultural studies. Historically, a certain conceptual boundary between animals and humans was assumed; now conceptualizations of animals, humans, culture and nature are seen as culturally specific. Differences within the academic field exist concerning human-animal relations. Structuralists hold that oppositions between nature and culture, humans and animals are fixed in place and not subject to individual negotiation. Poststructuralists question this, and ask questions such as: what gets to count as nature, for whom, at what cost? Much historical and anthropological research continues to struggle with ideas of why and how people's views on animals differ (Mullin, 1999). In many non-Western societies, nature and culture are no simple oppositions, but complex interconnections exist. Human-animal relations are thus increasingly understood as dynamic. Animals are assigned different meanings, are classified in various ways and are differently used, for example as food or as scapegoats.

Relations between humans and animals are filled with contradictions, even within cultures. In industrialised countries, people can have very close relationships with their pets, yet consumers, apart from perhaps vegetarians, do not give much thought to the animals they eat, they eat 'meat', not animals (Mullin, 1999). The status we assign to animals is a social and cultural construction. A cultural, perhaps even ethnic group decides what status to assign to a certain animal. A status is gradual (a higher or lower status can be assigned), and relative, depending on the person ascribing a status to an animal (de Cock Buning, 2000). A research in the Netherlands for example indicates that farmers and consumers have very different perceptions of animals and animal welfare. Within specifically the consumers group the perceptions were even more divergent as those of interviewed farmers, due to differences in living area, cultural backgrounds and the amount plus nature of encounters consumers had with farming (Te Velde, Aarts, & Van Woerkum, 2002). Important in the status of an animal is a historical and cultural component; through stories and education we learn to see animals in a certain way (de Cock Buning, 2000). In the Koran for instance, the vital scripture guiding Islamic faith, inscriptions against the consumption of pork can be found and the pig is often seen as an abominable animal. Yet the Tsembaga tribe in New Guinea sees the pig as a sacred animal (Neo, 2012). People also individually decide throughout their lives what status they assign to an animal; this can be shaped through for example a personal relationship. De Cock Buning (2000) demonstrates that this personal relationship can shift over time; he indicates how the city culture in

the Netherlands stimulates youth through pet animals or facilities such as the 'petting zoos' to form personal connections and bonds with animals and hereby assign them a higher status. Yet a child, once it gets older and might study biology, will develop a different bond with test animals. Other important individual factors guiding our relationship with animals are knowledge about the animal and whether the animal belongs to a rare species or not (de Cock Buning, 2000). Neo (2012) demonstrates a relationship to animals between different ethnic groups can be used in a pattern of 'animal-linked racialization'. Racialization might be fuelled by cultural differences around attitudes towards and treatment of animals. In Malaysia, a country where numerous ethnicities live together, a Malay-Muslim hegemony produces coercive policies which marginalize an ethnic minority as they threaten the viability of the pig industry led by Chinese farmers. (Neo, 2012).

Leisure scholarship thus suggests several factors which might influence involvement within recreational activities of people from different ethnic backgrounds. In this section we came across the marginality thesis, which suggests economic factors are decisive in explaining diverse participation patterns. The ethnicity thesis suggests ethnic and cultural factors are the critical factors. Discrimination, religion and diverse ethnic perceptions and relations towards nature in general and animals in specific have furthermore been suggested as possible factors contributing to diverse participation patterns across ethnicities. In the following section these theories will be situated within the Dutch context.

Leisure and Ethnicity in the Dutch Context

The profile of visitors of recreational facilities in the Netherlands does generally not reflect the growing number of immigrants from non-Western countries (Buijs et al., 2009). In the Netherlands, several studies investigated the differences in leisure patterns between various ethnic groups in the Netherlands, e.g. (Buijs et al., 2009; Jókövi, 2000, 2001; Peters, 2011). These differences can partially be explained by age, amount of spare time, financial situation and personal interest (Jókövi, 2001). Nevertheless, several structural differences in leisure patterns between various ethnicities emerge from research. Migrants in the Netherlands appear to participate more in leisure activities nearby their home (compared to native Dutch), more time is spent with their family and leisure time is shared in larger groups (Jókövi, 2000). In an investigation of the daily life of immigrant citizens in the city, it appears that members of various ethnic groups engage generally in less varied leisure activities during their free time than native Dutch. This holds especially true for Dutch citizens of Turkish and Moroccan background (Broek & Keuzenkamp, 2008; Peters, 2011). Generally Dutch citizens from Moroccan, Turkish, Surinamese and Antillean background visit urban parks less often than native Dutch (Jókövi, 2001; Peters, 2011). Yet once these non-Western migrants go to the parks, they tend to use them more frequently than native Dutch for picnics and barbecues (Broek & Keuzenkamp, 2008). Also nature and recreational areas, museums and pop concerts as well as entertainment parks are visited more by native Dutch people than by members of these ethnic minority groups. There seems to be a difference between activity-level of leisure activities. Dutch Moroccans seem to prefer more sedentary activities in their leisure time (e.g. eating) while native Dutch tend to prefer more active activities as cycling and walking (Jókövi, 2001; Peters, 2011). Important to mention is that the leisure participation of second-generation migrants differs less from native Dutch than that of first-generation migrants (Jókövi, 2000). Additionally people spend most time with members of their own ethnic group. This holds for migrants of the four main migrant groups as well as the native Dutch. An investigation over time indicates however that Moroccan and

Surinamese migrants show a small increase in their contacts with native Dutch. Turkish migrants seem to mostly stay within their own ethnic group (Peters, 2010, 2011).

Various explanations exist for the differences in leisure between different ethnic groups. Some point to the lower socio-economic status of migrants compared to native Dutch (marginality thesis). Others point to migrant cultural (and religious) backgrounds which place more emphasis on the importance of the social character of leisure activities, especially the importance of the family (Jókövi, 2000). This is in line with the 'ethnicity thesis', which holds that cultural differences in ethnic leisure are related to variations in values, norms and socialization patterns. These might differ substantially from the majority population (Peters, 2011). In a study exploring the variances in leisure patterns between Turkish, Moroccan and Surinamese in the Netherlands, it seemed that socio-economic factors (income, age, educational level) seem to influence participation of people more than their cultural and ethnic background (Jókövi, 2001; Peters, 2011). Another reason for variations in leisure patterns might be differences between nature images and preferences shaped through different cultural backgrounds; this is a highly under-researched area (Kloek, Buijs, Boersma, & Schouten, 2013). History and culture shape people's perceptions of nature (Schouten, 2005). One study depicts the variation of meanings of nature in relation to landscape preferences between native Dutch people and immigrants from Turkey and Morocco (Buijs et al., 2009). They argue that differences in spending leisure time might be related to varied landscape preferences and diverse meanings attached to nature by these groups. They investigated the attachment of these ethnic groups to images of nature. Significant differences were found.

Firstly, the wilderness image focuses on ecocentric values and the independence of nature from human management. The majority of the native Dutch supported the wilderness images (51%), while only 25% of the immigrants supported this image. The second image, the functional image, consists of anthropocentric values and intensive management of nature. A total of 44% of the immigrants had the highest affinity with this functional image, compared to only 15% of the native Dutch. The third image, the inclusive image, based on ecocentric values and an intimate relationship between humans and nature, posed the middle ground between these two extremes. Immigrants generally preferred a high level of management of nature. Important was also a difference encountered between first- and second generation immigrants. Second-generation immigrants showed more support for the wilderness image than first-generation immigrants, but less than the native Dutch; and less support for the functional image than first-generation immigrants, but more than native Dutch. A possible explanation could be the acculturation of second-generation immigrants, as they incorporated values from native Dutch culture into their own culture (Buijs et al., 2009). These differences might offer a partial explanation to the popularity of the children's farms especially among non-Western immigrants compared to native Dutch (VROM, 2010). A previous study showed however that there is a general disinterest among especially young second-generation migrants to visit agricultural landscapes in their leisure time. This does concur with native Dutch youth, who generally also show a low interest in agricultural landscapes (Jókövi, 2001; Peters, 2011). All in all, in the Dutch context, diverse participation levels within a leisure destination across visitors might thus also partially be explained by people's ethnic backgrounds. Next, I want to briefly summarize how visitors and their characteristics might impact participation within a leisure destination.

5.1.4 Visitors Central Characteristics

In the first part of this conceptual framework the visitor of the children's farm stood central. We learned about several important features which characterize visitors. As the focus of this study is on visitors from different ethnic backgrounds, ethnicity is a foundational term in this study. The complexity of this concept has been highlighted. We saw that in Dutch society the difference between 'allochthons' and 'autochthons' is generally made and accepted by academic researchers as well as statisticians and administrative practitioners. I argued that these categorizations might appear neutral categories which facilitate administration, research and policy making, yet are not neutral in their effects, as they might be stigmatizing and deny a more dynamic understanding of ethnicity. I proposed another terminology within this study, namely 'ethnic majority' and 'non-Western ethnic minorities'. These terms are based on numerical comparisons of populations within a defined geographical area. The distinctions made on ethnic terms are still essentialised and do not capture the complexity of these categories; they do however facilitate the inclusion of 'ethnicity' within research. We also learned that visitors might have various needs and motivations to visit the farm, often closely tied to recreational aims. A visit to the children's farm is framed as a leisure activity within the Dutch context. Yet, leisure is a contested and socially constructed term, which holds diverse meanings for people from different backgrounds. Leisure thus might be a motivation for some visitors; however, diverse reasons to visit the children's farms might exist. There seem to be certain, almost universal needs visitors seek to satisfy in recreational settings. These are comfort, relaxation, passive and active engagement, discovery and display. Needs are also, to a large extent, shaped by personal characteristics such as one's character, age, gender and past experiences (Mehta, 2013).

Ethnic background seems another important factor in determining one's recreational motivations, needs, preferences, and even participation levels. I delved into academic scholarship seeking to explain ethnicity as a factor influencing participation in leisurely activities. Personal factors such as age, amount of spare time, one's financial situation and personal interest might partially explain divergent leisure patterns. Yet several structural influences surface through research into the relation between leisure and ethnicity which might inhibit similar participation in leisure activities across diverse ethnic groups. The marginality thesis highlights economic factors when explaining diverse participation patterns. The ethnicity thesis suggests ethnic and cultural factors are decisive factors influencing recreational involvement. I have proposed the prevalence of discrimination, religion and diverse ethnic perceptions and relations towards nature in general and animals in specific as further factors contributing to diverse participation patterns across ethnicities. Observations and interviews among visitors will be tailored towards investigating whether the children's farm is an attractive leisure setting for people of different ethnic background. Divergences in motivations, needs and usage of children's farms across visitors from the ethnic majority and non-Western ethnic minorities will be investigated. In the second part of this theoretical framework, the setting as a leisure destination which people visit stands central. The children's farm will be positioned as a public rather than private place. Qualities of a successful leisure place that might draw visitors from diverse ethnic backgrounds will be discussed.

5.2 The Setting, an Attractive Leisure Destination

In this section I want to specifically focus on the location people from different ethnicities visit in their leisure time, the public space as an attractive leisure destination. After a definition of public space and the difference between public, parochial and private spaces, I will look at the functions and qualities of attractive public leisure destinations. Specific attention will be paid to features which make a public space attractive for visitors, and hence impact their participation within this setting. I will finally depict how the concepts of public place, space qualities and design features relate to this research.

5.2.1 Public Spaces

This research will be situated in two Dutch cities, Amersfoort and Utrecht. A city is a relatively large, compact and permanent area of settlement. Within this area socially-heterogeneous people live. Cities are centres for social, economic, political and cultural life (Mumford, 1937; Peters, 2011). They are melting pots where multiple people meet across different ethnicities, cultures and religions (Peters, 2011). As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Children's farms in the Netherlands are defined as public spaces with free access for visitors; these farms are thus classified as public space (Franssen & Scherpenzeel, 2012; vSKBN, 2012a). Relevant here is to touch upon the difference between public space and public place. Space within the frames of this research is understood as a geographical territory, the three-dimensional environment. Place is the result of space that is overlaid with meaning by humans. (Harrison & Dourish, 1996). Continued contact and association with a space is critical for it to become a place. As one uses a place regularly, emotional attachment to that place is likely to grow. This leads to a *sense of place* essential to our experience of the world we live in, our identity and our belonging (Mehta, 2013). In the thesis I will focus on both the public space and the public place; this differentiation should be kept in mind.

As the other concepts introduced so far, the term 'public space' is contested within the academic literature. Definitions overlap, alter over time and depend on the role which such a place is assigned. (Carmona et al., 2010; Mitchell, 1995). One commonality can be found in the various definitions, namely that public spaces are accessible to the public; this contrasts with private spaces where the owner controls entrance. Private spaces are furthermore characterized by ties of intimacy among group members located in households and other personal networks. Parochial spaces are located between public and private spaces. In parochial spaces a sense of communality exists between people who are often neighbours or acquaintances. They are part of interpersonal networks which are located within communities (Peters, 2011). Some call parochial spaces 'semi-public spaces' (Hampton & Gupta, 2008). 'Spaces' are both physically and socially constructed. They are constantly altered through the dynamic relations between users of these spaces who attach historical, political, economic, symbolic and social meanings to them. People influence space through their multiple identities, hence space itself has numerous identities (Low, Taplin, & Scheld, 2006; Peters, 2011). Four characteristics aid in determining how 'public' a space is. This is firstly ownership; a space can be publicly or privately owned. Secondly a space should be accessible to the public. It should thirdly be used and shared by diverse groups and people (Carmona et al., 2010). A final factor, occasionally different from ownership, is whether the space is controlled publicly or privately (Mehta, 2013). As all these factors play a role in determining the 'publicness' of a space, a clear division between public and private cannot be made. (Carmona et al., 2010). In this thesis public space relates to all natural and built environments where the public has free access, this thus includes both public and private

spaces, where public access is unrestricted, at least during daylight hours (Banerjee, 2001). Useful here is the concept 'public life' rather than public space, as public life occurs in social spaces, publicly or privately owned, but which are accessible to the public (Mehta, 2013).

The notion of public life overlaps with the notion of public realm; with this, not the mere physical public setting is meant, but also the activity taking place within it. And as I alluded earlier, public space has both a physical dimension (space) and a social dimension (human activities taking place there) (Carmona et al., 2010). In this thesis the physical public realm means the spaces, owned either publicly or privately, which support and/or facilitate public life and social interaction. Hence the following definition suits the meaning of public space in this thesis: *"Space that is open to the public, which generates public use, and active or passive behaviour, and where people are subject to the general regulations that govern the use of space."* (Mehta, 2013, p. 20) This definition is chosen as children farms have different types of ownership (including private ownership), yet are still viewed as public space within the scope of this study. It is also a location subject to rules and regulations, such as restricted opening hours. This view of public space is in line with an objectivist view, where public place is seen as something out there, an objective entity. Different academic paradigms dispute this previous definition. Constructivists believe that public space is a socially constructed entity (Carmona et al., 2010). They critique that there is no such thing as a 'single' public space as there is no 'unitary' public. As the public is fragmented and composed of a multitude of, often marginalised, groups, there exist rather many overlapping public spaces (Carmona et al., 2010; Featherstone, 1998). Public spaces have various functions, as a political stage, a neutral ground for social interaction and platform to exchange information and aid in personal development. Several 'ideal' qualities support these functions. Difference should be accepted and a public space should be inclusive and pluralist. Secondly such a space should be publicly accessible. Finally it should be a neutral ground where different voices can be heard and none are oppressed (Carmona et al., 2010).

Scientific research into public spaces in cities can be divided into two camps (Peters, 2011). The first is a focus on the decline of public space due to increased privatization and regulation (Austin, 1997; Mitchell, 1995). The second camp investigates public spaces as meeting places where diverse groups of people can encounter each other as well as display and negotiate their identity (Cattell et al., 2007; Madanipour, 2010; Peters & Haan, 2011). Within the second camp, particularly relevant for this study, some academics agree that high quality public spaces are an important condition for a society to live in relative harmony as human variety is openly displayed (Dempsey, 2009; Dines & Cattell, 2006; Peters, 2011). In many neighbourhoods public space is vital for multiple functional, social and leisure activities (Mehta, 2013). In the next section I will describe attributes of high quality leisure destinations which make a place attractive for ethnically diverse visitors.

5.2.2 Design Attracting Multi-Ethnic Visitors

In the previous sections I discussed different concepts, specifically leisure, and its relation to ethnicity and public place as a meeting place. As I investigate what features of the children farm attract visitors of different ethnic backgrounds, it is crucial to include a section on how urban design might contribute to a successful leisure destination. The physical environment can be altered to attract more visitors; in Copenhagen for instance, by gradually reducing car traffic and increasing pedestrian zones, street life altered. More people walked and stayed longer within the pedestrian zones (Gehl, 1989). For decades the 'human dimension' has been neglected in urban planning, leading in many

cases to pedestrian unfriendly public places (Gehl, 2010). Mehta (2013) argues that, if designed with people in mind, everyday spaces in our landscape have the potential to provide a connection between people and place and between people. Urban design will be defined in this research as a process of making better (public) places for people than would otherwise be created. Important to note is that in this section I will focus on the micro design of a place, by which I mean the design of the physical space itself (Carmona et al., 2010). Mehta (2013) calls 'sociability' a prime function of public place. A place can only become sociable when it meets certain basic needs of people. In the following section I describe how the physical environment can meet the needs of visitors (mentioned in section 5.1.1) in order to become a successful leisure destination where social activities take place.

A Leisure Destination of High Quality

The role of design and planning is to provide good conditions which attract visitors (Mehta, 2013). Carmona et al. (2010) use the term 'people places' for design specifically intended for the use of people, especially for informal everyday use. Successful public places attract people; this often turns into a self-reinforcing mechanism. Successful public places can be destinations, but they can also be go-through places. Actually very few public spaces are specific destinations; usually their location is strategic within a wider area. Design can, within certain (e.g. climatic) boundaries, determine the amount of people using a public space, the length of activities and the type of activities which develop (Carmona et al., 2010). It is however crucial to keep in mind that human behaviour is influenced by a multitude of factors such as social, cultural, historical and personal influences; what happens in a particular environment thus depends on the people that are using it at a particular moment. Useful here is a distinction between a potential environment and an effective environment. The potential environment is created by designers and offers certain possibilities for human activity. Yet what activities people actually do undertake amounts to the effective environment (Carmona et al., 2010).

A simplified model (figure 1) depicts three types of possible activities in public places. Necessary activities are compulsory activities which take place regardless of the quality of the environment, for example going to work or school. Optional activities take place when time and place allow it, social activities rely on the company of others in a public space. Only in a good quality environment, thus with an optimal design, do optional and social activities take place (Carmona et al., 2010; Gehl, 2010). For optional active and passive activities to take place, it is essential that a public space provides protection, comfort and enjoyment (Gehl, 2010). Within a leisure destination such as children's farms, it is likely many optional activities take place; a part of these optional activities might be social in nature.

	Quality of the physical environment	
	Poor	Good
Necessary activities	●	●
Optional activities	●	●
'Resultant' activities (Social activities)	●	●

Figure 1: Space Quality and Activities (Carmona et al., 2010, p. 207)

Gehl (2010) argues successful places offer people firstly protection, from traffic and accidents, from crime and violence and from unpleasant environmental influences such as noise or bad weather. Secondly, they offer their users a certain comfort. It needs to be possible to walk, stand and sit comfortably. People feel comfortable when they can see what happens around them and find this scene interesting. When people interact, it is crucial people hear each other while talking. Entertainment as play or other activities are another interesting and comfortable addition to the environment. Thirdly, people enjoy public places when the scale of location is not too large - it needs to suit human dimensions, so that all senses can be used. In a great public place people can enjoy the microclimatic conditions in a positive way, feeling warm, enjoying the sun or protection from the rain. Finally people enjoy it to be in an aesthetically pleasing environment, with much vegetation, water and well designed (Gehl, 2010).

Attractive Space Characteristics

Several place characteristics contribute to an attractive leisure destination where visitors from different ethnic backgrounds feel comfortable. If these qualities are displayed, a location might bring together visitors from numerous ethnic backgrounds. Four such key factors are location, comfort, safety and security and finally aesthetic qualities, these will be elaborated upon now. Accessibility and visitor density are essential to attract diverse people. Comfort, safety and security aid to retain people longer in one location and increase the pleasure and joy of a visit.

A. Visitor Density

Sufficient density and activity are a precondition of animation and vitality. A certain density of people provides vitality and attracts others. Low density may cause avoidance and might hence be detrimental for social interaction and the attraction of visitors (Carmona et al., 2010). Cities' greatest attractions are people. In public space people tend to seek the presence of other people and generally prefer busier public places above more deserted ones. Hence it is important for places to attract a critical mass of people who want to use it. Important is that density is a relative concept; it is not the number of people that counts but the feeling that the place is populated and used (Gehl, 2010). This feeling that a place is populated and used is strengthened by territorialisation. People tend to permanently or temporary claim ownership of a space through certain physical and/or symbolic barriers indicating their relation to space and objects relative to other groups and individuals (Brown, Lawrence, & Robinson, 2005). This is called the 'territorialisation' of space. A mechanism for territoriality is personalisation; people can mark territory, 'personalize it', by

occupying certain seats or places. This indicates the presence of people and activity in that particular location, which makes the environment more attractive and more complex. In public places territorialisation through personalisation is facilitated when the territory offers flexibility. Territorial flexibility relates to opportunities for defining personal space. An example are movable chairs, allowing a level of control to users, who can use the chair according to their comfort needs, it enables freedom and supports social behaviour (Mehta, 2013). A critical density of people might thus attract visitors. The accessibility and inclusiveness of a setting is a second important factor facilitating visitors from diverse ethnic backgrounds to come to this leisure destination.

B. Accessibility

Key to enjoy a public place is to have access to such a place. Visual accessibility facilitates the decision of people to judge whether such a place is safe and appealing. Physical accessibility means that factors such as atmosphere, open gates and absence of an entrance fee allow people to freely enter (Carmona et al., 2010). Accessibility also entails how often and close-by busses pass and whether there are parking-spaces for bikes and cars (Dempsey, 2009). Inclusive design ensures that a place is of greatest value to the largest range of people who will use it. Good urban design should thus be user-centred; people should be central in the design process. This means an acknowledgement of the diversity in uses and needs and the availability of different options when one design does not meet all needs and uses. The usage of place should thus be flexible and pleasant for all users (Carmona et al., 2010). Important to mention here is the location of a setting and its accessibility within a city or neighbourhood. People have a need to belong to a community (Maslow, 1943); emotional attachment to others within a specific territory is required to achieve this. Associations with people, places and events contribute to a sense of familiarity and belonging to the community. Physical characteristics which aid this need are the ability to meet people of the neighbourhood face to face and places which provide continuity from the past to the present. Places should cater for mundane yet essential everyday functions. These places should also be accessible and offer possibilities for frequent use by neighbourhood members (Mehta, 2013). Dines and Cattell (2006) name proximity to one's home and familiarity one of the prerequisites for visitors of diverse ethnic backgrounds to visit public open spaces.

In practice design is not always very inclusive for different societal groups. Elderly people having difficulties walking, women with young children in pushchairs or pregnant women experience physical barriers preventing them from using public places (Carmona et al., 2010). Public places seem often to be especially negligent of the needs of disabled people (Imrie, 2000). But also, linked to the main theme of this thesis, people from ethnic groups might have different needs regarding public spaces and might feel restricted in their access to such places. Different ethnic groups tend to use space differently, something which is not always incorporated in the urban design process (Carmona et al., 2010). What is crucial to keep in mind is that ethnic minorities are not unified groups; they encompass extremely diverse individuals and sub-cultures which might within a group show distinct uses of space. Landscapes have a symbolic dimension for people from different ethnicities, which can be recognized as familiar or alien, welcoming or excluding. Much research has been done to investigate the visual preferences of various ethnic, gender, income and age groups. How nature is perceived is considered key in how landscape is perceived (Risbeth, 2001). Increasing diversity has often caused people to retreat into more insular communal relationships. This amounted to a lack of contact and trust between various ethnic groups, leading to tensions between them, which results in

a fragmented society, where various, homogenous communities retreat, living parallel lives. To move beyond this is challenging. Yet one option is the providing of public spaces where various ethnic groups feel comfortable. Minority groups are more likely to find a public place threatening due to uncivil behaviour or fear of discriminatory behaviour (Carmona et al., 2010; Risbeth, 2001).

Existing environments can be made more inclusive and accessible to multicultural societies (Carmona et al., 2010). By observing the rhythms of people and their lives, physical conditions can be improved, such as extended opening times. Risbeth (2001) mentions three aspects in which environments can be adapted to use for people from different ethnicities. Firstly, symbolic references within the landscape can be made to other cultures, through for example temples or art objects. Secondly experiences from a certain different cultural or ethnic context can be simulated, through for example planting many exotic plants. Finally facilities can be provided supporting different uses of the environment by ethnic groups. To do this successfully it is crucial to firstly observe and understand how an environment is used by different ethnic groups. It is this last aspect of facility provision that I will use in this thesis as I believe it is most in line with an inclusive landscape, accessible to all. Suitable leisure facilities might meet specific needs of cultural minorities, but do not impact on the welfare of others. It thus does not treat users differently nor does it create distinct places for various ethnic groups; it remains possible to meet each other at the same spot (Carmona et al., 2010; Risbeth, 2001). Access to a public place for a diverse group of visitors is hence key to draw people from diverse ethnic backgrounds to enjoy and share one location. Inclusive design meets the needs of an as wide range of users as possible. People feel a need to belong to a community; to foster attachment, accessibility for diverse residents is vital. The density of people and access to a location are thus influential in attracting a diverse group of visitors and bringing them in close proximity of one another, which might eventually facilitate contact. It is however not only important that people go there; their length of stay also matters. The longer people stay, the more likely they are to eventually interact with one another (Gehl, 2010). I will now discuss the comfort visitors' experience, the safety in a location and aesthetic qualities which all tend to increase the length of peoples' stay.

C. Comfort

According to Maslow (1943) the most basic and essential universal human need is physiological, people want to feel physically well and be comfortable. To move people to visit a setting for a large amount of time, microclimatic conditions need to be optimal, and options to walk, stand and sit should be comfortable. How this can be achieved will be elaborated below. Microclimatic influences of a space have an enormous influence on this. Environmental design decisions can modify the microclimate to make a space more comfortable and protect people from negative sensory experiences. Air temperature, humidity, wind chill and solar heat all can create unease among users of a certain place (Gehl, 2010). A well designed environment offers protection from negative weather conditions or enables enjoyment of positive weather conditions. Numerous design options can offer solace, through for example the positioning of buildings, vegetation, orientation of spaces in relation to sunlight and shade and water as a cooling feature. Also the level of noise can be regulated to a certain extent, for example through the positioning of main entrances (Carmona et al., 2010). Sunlight is a major attraction in public open spaces. But in warmer summer months, people search shade (Zacharias, Stathopoulos, & Wu, 2001).

Visitors also need a comfortable environment to walk, where there is enough space for all, there are good surfaces, and no obstacles blocking the road. A place needs to be comfortable to stand, this is facilitated through attractive edges, points to stand and perhaps lean on or against (Carmona et al., 2010; Gehl, 2010). Vital is the possibility to sit (Mehta, 2013). Seats are even one of most important characteristics for retaining people in public places and eventually supporting social behaviour (Linday, 1978). The longer the foreseen stay, the more carefully one will choose where to sit. People want to sit near other people, but not too close. Primary seating options, furniture with a back and arm, is often chosen by adults and especially the elderly to sit on. They provide the largest comfort and are usually well situated. 'Friendly' material (e.g. wood) adds to comfort as it prevents cold backs. Secondary seating options are places where people can more informally and spontaneously sit and rest, such as the floor, steps or stones. When all other seats are occupied, secondary seating options can offer a valuable contribution. Movable chairs offer flexibility to users and the option to make most of the site in terms of climate and view. So-called 'talks capes' can be offered by city furniture, where seats are placed opposite each other or long benches are offered where people can sit at an arm's length distance (Gehl, 2010). When people stand or sit, they tend to prefer the edges of a place. Edges provide a feeling of comfort and security from pedestrian traffic. Edges offer furthermore back protection, so no unpleasant surprises can come from behind; while a full view is possible of what is going on in the place. A high quality edge presents interesting views, and many stimulating facets to slow down for (Gehl, 2010). A successful microclimate, with effective edges, places to sit, walk and stand are, provide users with a comfort that draws them to a location and retains them there for a longer amount of time. The safety and security in a location have similar effects, to which I will turn now.

D. Safety and Security

Another vital human need is safety (Maslow, 1943). Public places can be unsafe, threats such as crime or fast-moving vehicles are ever-present in today's cities. It is thus essential to include thoughts about safety and security in the design of a publicly accessible space. Important is the difference between feeling safe and actually being safe. Women for example generally have a higher 'fear-of victimisation' than men. This fear of being at risk in a public space might in the worst case cause avoidance of the public space (Carmona et al., 2010). Perception of safety varies greatly according to factors such as for instance age, sex, culture and familiarity with the environment (Mehta, 2013). Disorderly behaviour and incivilities cause feelings of unsafety. Disorderly behaviour is behaviour that, depending on location, time and local traditions, is offensive and violates expected norms and harmony within a community. Incivilities are actions which provoke anxiety and erode community standards of accepted norms and values. Incivilities can be social (not greeting someone) or physical (graffiti or rubbish).

There are three different ways in which design can contribute to the prevention of crime. The dispositional approach lowers the motivation to commit criminal acts through punishment. The situational approach is more discrete and depends on managerial and/or environmental changes to reduce the opportunity for crime to occur, such as adapted opening hours, walls and gates, regulations, a welcoming atmosphere, activities taking place and attracting many people. Opportunities of disorderly behaviour can thirdly be reduced by simply installing more surveillance and control. Explicit control on behaviour and activity is more evident in a quasi-public space (Carmona et al., 2010). Maintenance of a place and the presence or absence of people, the kind of

people and their activities all influence the perception of safety of a place. The occupancy rate of a place seems to be the best strategy for safety; this is closely related to the density of people mentioned earlier (point A). (Mehta, 2013). Safe places attract people, retain them in a location and provide a comfortable atmosphere. A final quality of a successful leisure destination is its aesthetic value.

E. Aesthetic Quality

Public real pleasures result from both interactional and aesthetic pleasures (Mehta, 2013). An aesthetically pleasing place attracts people and might make them stay longer in a place. A place managed well, ordered, well-organised and taken care of will be often more pleasing to the eye (Dempsey, 2009). Elements with historical significance also tend to provoke positive associations among people (Carmona et al., 2010). Attractiveness of a place is founded on subjective perceptions as well as the amount of greenery and vegetation (Dempsey, 2009). Aesthetic, sensory pleasure on the street depends on various stimuli such as lights, sounds, smells, colours, shapes, patterns and textures. But also other people and activities, building features, the occurrence of events, change of signs and displays and a uniqueness of goods and services on offer might be stimulating for the user of public space (Mehta, 2013). Generally people prefer novelty, order, coherence and a certain complexity related to variety within a space (Mehta, 2013; Rapoport & Kantor, 1967).

5.2.3 Characteristics of Attractive Leisure Destinations

In the second part of this conceptual framework the setting as an attractive leisure destination has been a central theme. The differences between public, private and parochial space have been highlighted. Four characteristics have been named which determine the publicness of a space, namely ownership, control, accessibility and usage by diverse groups. These characteristics will be employed to determine how public the children's farms are. I also suggested these farms are a 'place', as people endow it with a variety of meanings. I want to explore the meanings people from diverse ethnic backgrounds attach to this location. Successful public places facilitate the occurrence of optional, recreational activities; vital to this research are optional social activities. Five characteristics have been highlighted which are essential for a successful public meeting place, where visitors from different ethnic backgrounds might engage with each other. Through a higher density of people, diverse guests might be attracted to visit children's farms. A second prerequisite is the accessibility of the location for visitors from different ethnic backgrounds. Users might display a wide range of needs, for which inclusive design can cater. Crucial to the occurrence of optional and social activities is also the length of peoples' stay. Comfort, safety and aesthetic qualities are three essential characteristics for a successful public setting in which visitors linger as long as possible. In this study it will be hence examined to what extent the urban design within children's farms meets these qualities and whether optional and social activities take place. In the third and final part of this chapter, these social activities will be further explored. A specific emphasis will be placed on social interaction and the public space as a meeting place.

5.3 The Setting, a Meeting Place

We saw in the previous section that children's farms might, due to several features, be an attractive leisure destination for people of different ethnic backgrounds. These micro-settings also function as meeting places, where social interaction between diverse visitors takes place. I will firstly describe what a meeting place should entail. I will then discuss three specific types of social interaction which

occur within public settings, namely passive, fleeting and enduring sociability. Triangulation will be depicted as a process which allows 'strangers' to interact with one another. Specific attention will lastly be paid to urban design features and how these can influence contact between visitors.

5.3.1 Public Space as a Meeting Place

Of the various roles of public space, the social role might be seen as the most important one. Public spaces can function as a meeting place for different social groups. They are an arena of public life, where people are on display and where they communicate. Such a place offers many benefits, as it contributes to a sense of community, allows users to experience diverse people and activities, social skills can be developed, information is shared, social awareness increased and people can enter in dialogue. All these possibilities contribute to personal growth (Mehta, 2013). In a study on a particular public place, 'The Street', Mehta describes a 'sociable street':

"A street that is open to the public, where people are present throughout the day and week, engaged – individually or in groups – in a variety of active or passive social behaviours that are predominantly stationary and sustained in nature." (Mehta, 2013, p. 24).

If public place is to function as a meeting place, it needs to be such a 'sociable' place. In sociable public places people can enjoy the company of others in a friendly and informal way (Mehta, 2013). It is a space shared with relatives, friends, work associates and strangers. Activities related to politics, religion and commerce take place. As people meet strangers, they might have impersonal encounters. The character of public space has large impacts; it conditions public life, shapes civic culture and everyday discourse (Walzer in Mehta, 2013, p. 23). Oldenburg suggests a public social realm, a third place, as a necessity to live a balanced life. He argues that a meaningful public place is an essential addition to work and private home spaces, as a public space has unique qualities supporting, facilitating and even promoting public life. This enables people's need for contact, interaction, play and recreation. Also needs on a larger scale are fulfilled, such as community, psychological and according to some even a political needs (Mehta, 2013, p. 22).

There are differing ways of understanding and defining public meeting places. A viable community needs areas which provide meeting areas for people to exchange values, communicate, be active and to cross social, ethnic, generational and value-based boundaries. Habermas (as cited in Aabo, Audunson & Varheim, 2010) discussed the importance of public space as a location for undistorted communication. Public space, separate from both state and market, is a secular and rational space; Habermas called it even a precondition for democracy. Investigations concerning public libraries make a division between low-intensive and high-intensive meeting places. High-intensive meeting places are places where people can express their major interests with those who share these interests. Low-intensive meeting places expose their visitors to the complexity of values and interests in the world; here people are exposed to others with very different interests and beliefs. Low-intensive areas might expose people to others they might not meet otherwise (Aabo, Audunson, & Varheim, 2010; Audunson, 2004).

The Children's Farm as a Meeting Place

In public spaces encounters between people are possible but can also be avoided (Peters, 2011; Ravenscroft & Markwell, 2000). The earlier mentioned parochial or semi-public spaces, located between public spaces (accessible to everyone) and private spaces (access may be legally restricted),

are only open and accessible to specific groups. These spaces are not completely a 'world of strangers' or domesticated and play an important role in public life (Hampton & Gupta, 2008; Peters, 2011). An important question to ask is thus whether in urban settings public spaces are places where diversity is expressed and acknowledged, or whether they are 'territorialized' by particular groups (Peters, 2011). The extent to which a public place is inclusive, is only revealed when some activity takes place within it (Mehta, 2013). The children's farm is officially a public space with full access for all citizens. People visit the farm with similar recreational and educative objectives. The trade organization argues that a wide variety of people visit the farm, representing a cross-section of society. Visitors come from different generations, ethnicities and social classes (vSKBN, 2012a, 2012b). Yet the place is not visited by all societal groups. Several studies researching the visitors profile among children's farms indicated that the largest groups visiting the children's farm are children up till the age of six and adults, often parents or teachers aged in their thirties. The majority of adults visiting the farm is female (Klinkers, 1993; Karen Thieme & Klaske Gonlag, 2004; Wolf & Mazurkiewicz, 2009). Most people also tend to visit from the nearby neighbourhood. Generally mixed age-groups visit, with most often a child-parent relationship (Klinkers, 1993). Studies investigating the cultural background of visitors have been conducted on individual children's farms; hence no generalizations can be made as this visitor's profile might be closely related to the surrounding neighbourhood. An example is the Gagelsteede in Utrecht, located in the very multicultural district Overvecht; the largest visitor groups are of native Dutch, Moroccan and Turkish origin (GemeenteUtrecht, 2012a).

A children's farm seems to support both public (visitors, non-residents, non-workers) and parochial realms (neighbourhood residents and workers). Hence I would classify the children's farm as a low-intensity public meeting place, crucial in bringing people together who might otherwise not meet. Public leisure spaces offer places where social interaction might take place between people who might otherwise not meet; this concept will be elaborated below. Public place has numerous functions, of which the social function might be viewed as the most important one. Finally it has been argued that the children's farm could be classified as a low-intensive meeting place, which exposes people to others they might otherwise not meet. In the following section I want to elaborate on types of social interactions which might take place within public meeting places. I will also expound on the process of triangulation which might incite contact.

5.3.2 Social Interaction and Triangulation

Public places are a unique setting for social interaction. Leisure activities performed during everyday life in public spaces, often involve social interaction. This interaction takes place between friends, relatives and acquaintances; through interaction relationships are strengthened (Peters & Haan, 2011). Interaction with 'strangers' seem to be especially important, as they may add to social capital, influence prejudice and contribute to a more realistic image of 'the other' (Ingen & Eijck, 2009; Peters & Haan, 2011). The current political focus in the Netherlands on the encouragement of more inter-ethnic contact is based on the idea that inter-ethnic interaction promotes tolerance and acceptance (Peters, 2011; Vliegthart, 2007). Social contact is a human necessity. Studies with both babies and adults show that the more solitary their lives, the poorer their health and even life expectancy (Molotch, 2012). Contact and social interaction can have various shapes, from intense interaction with known others, brief encounters, purely visual contact, to conversations and activities within the community (Peters, 2011; Peters & Haan, 2011). Interactions between people involve

words, expressions, facial gestures, status, voice intonation, past histories, anticipated conversations and actions, turn-taking practices and touch (Dines & Cattell, 2006). A school of thought, interactionism, holds that individual's personality, ideas and preferences are shaped through interaction with both others and oneself, creating a socially constructed reality.

Interaction is guided by specific cultural knowledge (implicit and explicit rules) of what to do and when. It is also socially constructed and influenced by structures such as gender, ethnicity, (dis)ability and social class. Through a process called 'socialization' people come to understand the expectations and norms of their groups and the roles they take on throughout their lifetime. 'Cultures', systems of knowledge and belief shape the world into which an individual is socialized. (Molotch, 2012). Patterns of social interactions thus vary significantly across cultures. Interactions between individuals from different backgrounds can be extremely challenging. Common barriers are language differences, the false assumption of having similar interactive patterns rooted in values, beliefs and attitudes, the misinterpretation of non-verbal signs and symbols, false preconceptions or stereotypes about others and anxiety or tensions due to the number of uncertainties when confronted with a person from a different cultural or ethnic background (Barna, 1994).

Interactions are a complex interplay between an 'individual' and 'his/her society'; these influence each other continuously. We get to know ourselves largely through the eyes of other people. Looking for approval through interaction with others is a fundamental human instinct. Interaction makes that everyone is unique as they were exposed to a unique personal set of social interactions. Individuals are also continuously changing through their interactions (Molotch, 2012). Numerous other individual characteristics shape social interactions. A person's status for instance is a social category which depends on others. A status requires expected behaviour as well as specific roles. A status is not static but shifts throughout one's lifetime and even depending on the group of people one is with (Molotch, 2012). Other individual factors influencing social interaction are one's character, personality, goals and values as well as past experiences (Carmona et al., 2010). The context ultimately determines what meanings are assigned to a certain interaction. Interaction is not necessarily democratic; interactional inequalities determine to a large extent the social interaction taking place (Molotch, 2012).

The benefits of social interaction in public places are many. They offer a platform to negotiate difference, the enjoyment of sharing commonalities, develop empathy towards unlike others, awareness of different viewpoints and behaviour, and through the content people might feel engaged, stimulated and entertained plus they might obtain valuable information (Mehta, 2013). Inter-ethnic interaction might increase trust among diverse individuals. A frequent theoretical assumption proposes that people who share ethnic characteristics, create an in-group, which fosters cooperation, trust and affection yet also a certain hostility towards those of other ethnic backgrounds, out-groups. Inter-ethnic interaction can in such circumstances overcome this hostility, which is often based on an absence of direct contact, and generate trust across diverse others (Stolle, Soroka, & Johnston, 2008). Social interaction in public places can take various forms. I base these types of interaction on the typology outlined by Vikas Mehta (2013), who investigated the sociability of public streets in 8 months. As this is a public space, covering relatively small territory, I believe several behaviours might be applicable to the children's farm as well. Mehta (2013) outlines three types of social interaction, what he calls 'sociability'; in each the intensity of contact increases.

- A. *Passive Sociability*: people are in the presence of other people but do not seek any direct verbal contact; they are thus alone in public. Passive sociability amounts to a series of non-verbal activities and behaviours, such as people watching, eating, drinking, working, relaxation and public solitude. Sometimes it is used as a place of display, of for example the body, skills or physical affection. Passive sociability takes place in an environment of strangers and more familiar strangers. Benefits might be that people feel part of a larger community, find sensory stimulation, relaxation, familiarization and negotiation of difference through meeting new and unfamiliar people, customs, behaviours and activities.
- B. *Fleeting sociability*: this relates specifically to short term, low intensity contacts between residents living nearby the children's farm, workers or visitors. Interaction is easy and happens in a relaxed way and amounts to short small talk or a brief conversation. Benefits are similar to passive sociability. In addition through repeated short term contact people might grow to trust each other and develop more enduring social relations.
- C. *Enduring sociability*: this type of sociability is more enduring, based on repeated and frequent contact between friends, family and acquaintances. People generally invest time and energy to find and create the circumstances enabling enduring sociability. The benefits are many, both to the individual and to the community. An individual might experience joy, vivacity, relief, interest, stimulation and excitement from close contact with others. In addition a deep psychological need for sustained human company is met. When people share a group, for example through living in the same neighbourhood or work, enduring contacts might reinforce a sense of community. When topics as politics are discussed, this might lead to civic participation, valuable for the community.

Important to keep in mind is that people use public place for different purposes and hence they might have different expectations from it. Tourists are likely to engage in passive and fleeting sociability; whereas residents and workers might engage in the full range of passive, fleeting and enduring social interactions (Mehta, 2013). Public interaction is unique, as people might interrelate with people they do not know. In this research it is specifically examined whether social interaction takes place between 'strangers' or 'familiar strangers', people from the ethnic majority and ethnic minorities. Hence particularly passive and fleeting sociability are of interest. During interaction in public place, people lack previous experience with others, might not know their intentions and tend to fall into '*civil inattention*', where the other is noticed but also ignored to a large extent (Molotch, 2012). Civil inattention can be overcome through processes of 'triangulation'. Social interaction is often triggered by an external stimulus which links people. This process is called triangulation, a term which has been suggested by William Whyte. He offers the following definition:

"That process by which some external stimulus provides a linkage between people and prompts strangers to talk to each other as if they were not." (Whyte, 1980, p. 94)

Triangulation occurs spontaneously when there is something of interest (Carmona et al., 2010). Through triangulation people might wave, smile, nod, tell the time or have a brief chitchat. Numerous events can trigger fleeting sociability among users of a public place. Especially children and pets encourage visual and verbal exchanges. But also performances, special activities and intriguing displays or information signs might encourage people to stop, share opinions, comments or observations. Finally unpleasant experiences such as bus delays, bad weather or a fight might push people to interact with others (Mehta, 2013). In the next part of this chapter we will see that the

design of a public space, for example the location of various elements, can contribute to this triangulation process (Carmona et al., 2010). In the following section I want to elaborate on some essential qualities an urban public place should possess in order to become a successful social meeting place. Particular urban design aspects which might facilitate meetings between people will be highlighted.

5.3.3 Design Facilitating Social Contact

Space and society are very closely related. Dear and Wolch (1989) in (Carmona et al., 2010) argue that there are three ways in which social relations can be influenced by the built environment. Firstly, a space can constitute social relations; the characteristics of a location can influence the way in which people settle in a certain environment. Secondly, a space can constrain social relations; here the physical environment can either facilitate or hinder human activities. Thirdly, social relations can be mediated by a space. A distance requires effort to be overcome, through for instance money and/or energy. Social practices will take place more over shorter distances, and their amount will drop with increasing distance (Carmona et al., 2010). This research is not concerned with particular characteristics of the natural environment which influence settlement in an area. I am interested in how the design of the children's farm facilitates certain human activities and specifically contributes to social interaction.

Essential is that public spaces are places where people of various ethnic groups feel comfortable; through this eventually interaction is promoted. Section 5.2 treated extensively essential features which attract and retain diverse guests within a recreational setting. Shared spaces can play a facilitating role in fostering communal relationships (Carmona et al., 2010; Risbeth, 2001). Positive interactions could be encouraged through activities and new, innovative uses of space which might transform interaction between people (Lownsbrough & Beunderman, 2007). I would like to discuss two features of a setting which facilitate social interaction. The scale of a setting influences the possible proximity between people; proximity between people within a public place determines to a certain extent the possibility and type of interactions. Secondly, triangulating objects are external stimuli which might draw people close and offer an incentive to interact (Carmona et al., 2010).

A. Scale and Proximity

Proximity in time and space does not directly lead to interaction. It does however create a potential opportunity for contact (Whyte, 1980). Hence design can create both opportunities for potential contact as for the avoidance of such contact. An environment should allow privacy to people when they desire it. The need for privacy, proximity to others and interaction varies greatly among individuals, depending on factors such as one's character, age, culture and ethnic background (Carmona et al., 2010). Humans are able to see others at a distance of 100 metre, but only at less than ten metres all senses can be used. Little happens between 100 and 25 metres. After this the richness in detail and communication intensifies as at 25 metres it starts becoming possible to decode facial expressions. Between the distance of 7 and 0 metres all senses can be used, hence much more detail can be experienced and strong feelings are exchanged (Gehl, 2010). Hall (1990) names different types of communication which take place at various distances.

- *Intimate distance*, 0-45 cm: close sensory contact, touching, strong emotions, love, close, warm, intense contact, emotionally charged
- *Personal distance*, 45-120 cm: close friends and family members, conversations take place here, yet all occupy private space
- *Social distance*, 1.2-3.7 metres: conversations about for instance work, vacation memories, maintaining privacy, no expectation of physical contact, eye contact possible
- *Public distance*, above 3.7 metre: more formal contact, no expectation of active interaction

Due to its limited space and small-scale, at a children's farm, strangers or people that only know each other vaguely, who would under usual circumstances choose to be at a public distance, might be at a social distance: this enables people to move from personal space to shared space, to engage in passive and active social behaviour, which is crucial to feel part of the larger community (Mehta, 2013). Density and scale are closely related, a small-scale setting will display a higher density with the same amount of people, and thus both attract visitors as well as facilitate contact between them (Carmona et al., 2010). Once in greater proximity, strangers often need an external stimulus to truly engage in sociable behaviour; triangulating objects might be such a stimulus.

B. Triangulating Objects

Facilities and other supportive physical characteristics which provide social vitality and give purpose to a place, enhance social interaction (Dines & Cattell, 2006). Triangulating objects are an important factor drawing visitors unknown to each other near, towards a social or even personal distance. Triangulation, the process of an external stimulus prompting social interaction among strangers, occurs spontaneously when there is something of shared interest. These can be objects for play, such as props for playful behaviour, art objects, or points of transition such as doors (Carmona et al., 2010). Furniture can also become a triangulating object. People are obliged to interact with strangers asking for a seat or even to share the same picnic table. Other objects inciting fleeting sociability might be objects people brought along, such as board games or musical instruments. Children and pets are great to initiate conversation among unfamiliar adults, so friendly environments inviting both children and animals might offer more opportunities for spontaneous interaction (Mehta, 2013). A small-scale environment and triangulating objects might cause greater proximity between visitors, and hereby influence the possibility of contact with 'unknown' others. A short summary of the third section of this chapter, which discussed the setting as a meeting place, will follow.

5.3.4 Children's Farms as Meeting Places

In this third section we delved into the activity of social interaction, which can take place between visitors from diverse ethnic backgrounds within a public meeting place. We have seen that social interaction is a human necessity and is shaped through numerous factors. Structures such as gender, ethnicity, (dis)ability, culture and knowledge systems influence interactive patterns on a macro-scale. A person's individual status, character, previous experiences as well as the relation to the other person one is interacting with, are examples of individual factors shaping social contact with others. The focus of this study is on interactions between people from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Specific attention has been paid towards benefits and challenges of inter-ethnic social interaction. Benefits are a reduction of prejudice, a more realistic image of the other and increased trust between diverse visitors. Yet certain barriers might be faced, such as language difficulties, a false assumption of similarities in meaning, misinterpretation of non-verbal signs and symbols, judgement based on limited stereotypes or anxiety towards the unknown other. Inter-ethnic interaction will be explored

extensively within this study, specifically the benefits and barriers visitors face when communicating with visitors from diverse ethnic backgrounds. I proceeded towards the three types of interaction taking commonly place in public places, namely passive sociability, fleeting sociability and enduring sociability. Passive and fleeting interactions are of particular interest within this investigation as these occur between people unknown to each other. The process of triangulation, whereby an external stimulus might engage strangers in fleeting interaction, is vital in this study. We lastly came across features of the setting which might trigger interaction among people. Proximity of people enables contact; visitors who would under usual circumstances choose to be at a public distance, might be at a social distance due to for example a small-scale environment. The setting can also offer triangulating objects which draw people near and provide a conversational topic. In the final part of this chapter the complex interactions between the three main parts of this framework, visitor, the setting as a leisure destination and as a meeting place, will be explored.

5.4 A Leisure Destination and Meeting Place

In the final section of this chapter I seek to draw linkages between leisure, visitors, the leisure destination and the meeting place. At the outset I will argue that these concepts are strongly interconnected and that such recreational social public sites are a vital part of any city. These are sites where visitors from different ethnic backgrounds might meet and develop relationships This fosters benefits such as an increased understanding of one another. I will highlight three aspects of public settings. As a successful leisure destination, the children's farms function as 'experiential space', as visitors endow this setting with both personal and social meanings and experiences. A second characteristic is the 'normative space', as this setting is subject to rules and regulations which exert influence over the visitors and impact the activities which take place on the farm. The children's farm as a meeting place, functions as a 'social space', which people visit either alone or with others and where they might encounter (un)familiar strangers.

Leisure and everyday life in public spaces have many similarities. Numerous activities such as visiting the park, playground or a children's farm are executed as leisure activities. Entertainment, relaxation, the opportunity of social contact and enjoyment are important functions of public space (Peters & Haan, 2011). Public spaces are a vital feature of cities as they are the places where social, face-to-face interaction takes place. These places have multiple benefits. They can foster social inclusion and community cohesion. Social capital can be obtained through either 'bonding' with friends, family and members of the same ethnic group, or by 'bridging' through weak ties with dissimilar groups. Public places can also encourage a healthy lifestyle as well as contribute to emotional and mental health (Cattell et al., 2007). Behaviour of people and their use of public space is to a large extent determined by certain 'unwritten rules'. These rules are almost unconsciously followed by most and influence social interaction between people. Social interaction is very valuable; it might positively aid to the formation of social relations between people, it can help people to have a better understanding of each other and reduce prejudices (Peters, 2011). Public leisure locations such as parks seem to offer an opportunity where various groups can meet each other and gain trust which can contribute to social integration (Jókövi, 2001; Peters, 2011; Peters & Haan, 2011). Public spaces are thus important in order to understand inter-ethnic social interaction. They are firstly a location where the multicultural society is represented, and secondly they might test the relationships between members of this society (Peters, 2011).

Some researchers argue that public spaces in the city are unlikely to contribute to a better understanding between ethnicities. In public spaces people are not dependent on each other and do not engage regularly. Most interaction takes place within rather than between ethnic groups (Gobster, 2002; Shinew, Floyd, et al., 2004). More valuable for enhanced inter-ethnic understanding might be places with regular association such as the workplace and schools. Yet other studies suggests that there are public spaces, such as markets, where people do value interaction with different ethnic and social groups. These places do thus have a role in enhanced inter-ethnic understanding (Dines & Cattell, 2006; Kloek et al., 2013). Another benefit is that leisure activities in public spaces involve social interaction, which might develop social skills. Especially migrants can benefit from leisure activities; at the outset they often feel discomfort in their new societies. (Stodolska & Yi, 2003). Helpful in drawing linkages between the concepts of ethnicity, leisure, public spaces and social interaction within meeting places is the model Peters (2011) puts forward. She argues public spaces are experiential, normative and social.

5.4.1 Experiential Space

Public space as an experiential space relates to the meanings people attach to a place. While participating in leisure activities in public spaces, people connect to that place and to other users. This might cause feelings of belonging and feeling at home. Through both positive or negative experiences people thus bond or might avoid certain places in the future (Peters, 2011). Part of Antonsich's model (figure 2) depicts that the meanings of a place are influenced by personal influences, such as one's family, friends experiences and memories as well as social influences such as historical, traditional, cultural and institutional forces related to that place (Antonsich, 2009).

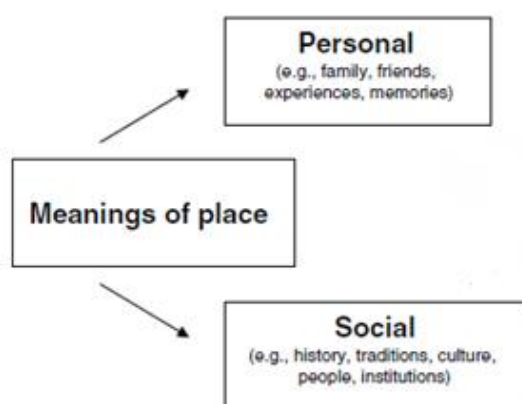


Figure 1: Meanings of Place (Antonsich, 2009)

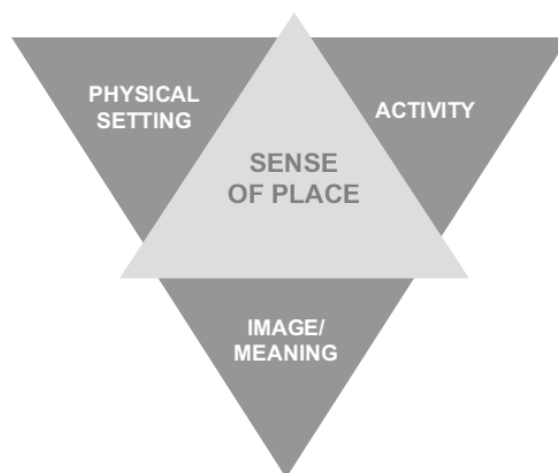


Figure 2: Sense of Place (Carmona et al., 2010, p. 122)

A 'sense of place' is, besides the variety of social and personal meanings, also composed of the setting and the activities taking place within this setting. The three foundations on which sense of place is build are visualized in figure 3. The physical setting and the features within such a setting are an initial component (Carmona et al., 2010). This includes whether a setting is a public, private or parochial place and what functions this location fulfils. Within this study the vital question is whether children's farms fulfil the role of an attractive leisure destination and of a social meeting place. We saw that features which make a location an attractive place where people stay a substantial amount of time are a high density of people, accessibility, comfort, safety an aesthetic qualities. When visitors stay longer at a location, social interaction with strangers becomes more likely. Features

which contribute to a meeting place are scale, proximity of people and triangulating objects. Further qualities visitors search for in a location to become meaningful and develop a sense of place are stability, adaptability and personalization. Meaningful settings offer a sense of continuity and stability, as they have a certain permanence, an ability to exist over time (Dines & Cattell, 2006; Mehta, 2013). As people regularly visit a place, they might develop emotional attachment to that place. Successful places are secondly adaptable, they are responsive to the changing needs of people and the environment. Here it can also be kept in mind that places should be open to the needs of diverse individuals, varying in ethnic background, age, race and class. Adaptability also involves the possibility of users to adapt the place and change it. Thirdly personalization is related to how the place is personalized by those managing and/or owning the place, examples are changes in display and signs informing about events. This adds a human touch to a place, suggesting the presence of people and activity. Continuity, adaptability and personalization provide users with comfort, a sense of community and security, visual stimulation and they make a place interesting. Through this the place obtains a very personal identity, an ordinary space is transformed into a meaningful place for meeting and social interaction (Mehta, 2013).

The activities on the farm this study is concerned with are optional recreational and social, which as we saw in the second part, take place in public places of high quality. In the third part of the theoretical framework we saw that there can be three types of sociability within public places, namely passive, fleeting and enduring social interactions (Mehta, 2013). Inter-ethnic interaction between people who are unfamiliar with each other is limited to passive and fleeting sociability, which is in line with the focus of this research. Of particular interest is also the process setting fleeting interactions between strangers in motion. Physical features within a location can trigger the triangulation process (Carmona et al., 2010).

The image and meaning of a location, the final component within the 'sense of place' are shaped by both personal and social influences (Antonsich, 2009). Place is thus a social construction. People experience something beyond the physical and sensory characteristics of a place and develop a personal attachment to a place. Through attaching meaning to a place, people change spaces into places (Carmona et al., 2010). Relations between people and places are reciprocal; they change over time and are dynamic and fluid (Peters, 2011). Places and experiences intertwine over time and complex relationships are shaped with these public spaces (Manzo, 2005; Peters, 2011). Manzo (2005) furthermore indicates that people's emotional relationships with places are extremely diverse and rich, developed from both positive and negative experiences. Socio-political underpinnings such as ethnicity, class and sexuality do underpin emotional relationships to places (Manzo, 2005). People construct places, yet places also shape people. Meaningful human-place relationships are characterized by strong emotional attachment to places. This attachment is often cultivated by both place experiences and the social context in which they occur (with significant others) (Peters, 2011). Experiential space is thus composed of images, activities and the physical setting which together amount to a 'sense of place' for visitors (Carmona et al., 2010). While participating in social leisure activities, people connect to a location and to other visitors (Peters, 2011). In the following passage it will be displayed that a public space is governed by rules and regulations which impact people's sense of place.

5.4.2 Normative Space

Public place as normative space refers to expectations regarding public space and perceptions on normality and acceptability. These norms are captured by both written and unwritten rules (Molotch, 2012). Differences between people are encountered in public space, important is the question how to deal with this; people can either celebrate diversity or feel fear and danger. Normative space is conceptualized in terms of expectations and evaluations of others. This makes it important to analyse the motivations of users of these places, as well as their evaluation of others. Categories are used to differentiate between ourselves and others. Categories are conceptual units defined on the basis of socially negotiated boundaries. These boundaries are either symbolic or social (Lamont & Molnar, 2002; Peters, 2011). Symbolic boundaries are conceptual distinctions made by social actors to categorize a variety of things such as objects, people, practices, time and space. Symbolic boundaries are conceptual tools whereby individuals and groups come up with, sometimes contesting, sometimes joined understandings of reality. These boundaries separate people into groups and generate for example feelings of group membership. Social boundaries are social differences which manifest in unequal access to resources and social opportunities. Symbolic boundaries can become social boundaries when they are widely agreed upon and in this way shape social interaction (Lamont & Molnar, 2002). In this way stereotypes can be produced and reproduced. Urban public spaces are used to negotiate boundaries. Both visible categories are used (e.g. clothes, skin colour) as well as invisible categories (e.g. one's political affiliation) (Peters, 2011).

To investigate public space as a normative space, it is firstly essential to find what rules and regulations are set out by the management within a public place. It will be explored whether the children's farms function as public place, accessible to a diversity of people. Secondly, it will be investigated whether users of the children's farms from diverse backgrounds find the farm an attractive leisure destination. Motivations, perceptions and behaviour on the farm might differ as it is guided by diverse cultural norms, values and beliefs. We have so far seen that public places are experiential and normative. A final fundamental aspect within this study is the social aspect of public settings.

5.4.3 Social Space

Public space as a social space holds that people visit these places either alone or with others and are usually confronted with 'unknown others' (Peters, 2011). Strangers interact with each other in public spaces through passive and fleeting interaction (Mehta, 2013). Unwritten behavioural rules determine interaction between people (Molotch, 2012). Some researchers even state people do not interact in public spaces without a clear reason. Interaction between people allows the exchanging of norms and values. Interactions encompass both verbal and non-verbal exchanges and take place in social situations where people are aware of each other and adjust their behaviour, expectations and responses to others; avoidance of others is thus also a form of social interaction (Dines & Cattell, 2006; Peters, 2011). Some basic skills are necessary for leisure activities to contribute to social interaction, a crucial one for example being a common language. During social interaction people are exposed to differences which can lead to conflict, but also to new perspectives and social relations (Peters, 2011). In general however people tend to interact more with people from their own subgroups rather than people from other subgroups (M. Floyd & Gramann, 1993). Sharing places, so-called contact zones, is not always easy. It is learned through practice and everyday negotiation. It might be particularly difficult for some groups in society, such as the elderly (Wise, 2010).

The form and features of public space can contribute to social interaction and social cohesion (Dines & Cattell, 2006). Public places of good quality can enhance feelings of safety, a sense of community and trust among residents. Where shared norms and values exist, ethnically and culturally diverse groups can live peacefully side by side. Historically rapid urbanisation and industrialisation ignited efforts on the side of architecture, planning and urban design to create good quality environments (Dempsey, 2009). Children's farms have been created against this background, in order to increase liveability in urban areas, allow children and adults to stay in touch with animals and agricultural green spaces and to function as educational, recreational and finally as meeting places (Franssen & Scherpenzeel, 2012; Klinkers, 1993). Research indicates that the built environment can contribute to social interaction and ultimately social cohesion, but it is inaccurate to say that it alone has a strong influence on this; the physical environment should not be separated from the social environment (Carmona et al., 2010; Dempsey, 2009; Mehta, 2013). This has been extensively treated in the third part of this theoretical framework. Constructed meeting-grounds facilitate interaction between people (Baum & Palmer, 2002). It is suggested that especially urban green spaces in socially excluded areas can increase interaction and cohesion between residents in that area. This is due to the fact that they are for free and thus accessible to all, they provide space for social interaction, relieve stress and offer chances for residents to participate in voluntary work (A.E. Kazmierczak & James, 2007). Especially in socially deprived areas or places with a 'stigma', feelings of safety, connectedness and a good reputation of good quality urban environments contributes to personal and communal health (Baum & Palmer, 2002).

The 'contact hypothesis' or 'contact theory' is useful to understand the character and effect of public interactions. The contact hypothesis theorizes that having contact with cultural others leads to fewer prejudices and less stereotyping. It has positive effects for attitudes towards other ethnic groups, leads to fewer prejudices, less stereotyping (Peters & Haan, 2011; Shinew, Glover, & Parry, 2004). This hypothesis underlies much public recreation; the belief is that ultimately increased contact enhances social cohesion and a sense of community. Research however shows that the relationship between inter-ethnic contact and ethnic tensions is mediated by various aspects such as interdependency within a group, whether a group is a majority or minority, and sociocultural beliefs concerning ethnicity. The contact hypothesis is fallible. Firstly, it is generally assumed that a non-white minority should adapt to a white norm. Secondly, a mere belief in contact as a solution to diminish ethnic tensions does not take power inequalities between different ethnicities into account (Freysinger & Harris, 2006). In the Dutch context however, researchers have shown that images of native Dutch and non-native Dutch tend to be more positive when the two groups are more in contact (Broek & Keuzenkamp, 2008; Peters & Haan, 2011). People from both the ethnic majority as well as ethnic minorities tend to spend most of their leisure time with others of a similar ethnic background. This means there is little exchange between native Dutch and non-Western migrants in leisure time. Within every ethnic group however exceptions exist; there are individuals which have much contact with native Dutch. They might be an important linkage between these two groups (Jókovi, 2001).

Public familiarity is another important facet of the social value of public spaces; this means the importance of meeting people to get to know one's place of residence (Peters & Haan, 2011). It can be achieved by using certain spaces and an involvement in one's neighbourhoods developments. Interaction between people from different social and ethnic backgrounds can take place in public places, this might break daily routines and alleviate tensions between residents in the

neighbourhood (Peters, 2011). Particularly public spaces located in neighbourhoods can be seen as safe transitional spaces. They are located between one's safe home and unknown places. In these so-called parochial spaces, neighbours show different patterns of interaction than in more anonymous public spaces. Examples are friendly recognition of each other and helpfulness between neighbours (Kusenbach, 2006). These spaces might still be restricted to some groups in society (Peters, 2011). Women might feel endangered alone at certain times of the day (Wagner & Peters, 2013). Some restrictions might specifically exist for, to name an example, Muslim women due to territorial power relations between men and women (Peleman, 2003; Wagner & Peters, 2013). Public spaces can thus become spaces of fear; but can similarly be seen as places of emancipation. Some groups might thus experience strong barriers while using public spaces (Peters, 2011). Women, ethnic minorities and elderly people are more likely to face exclusion as they possess less power and face unequal opportunities when accessing certain public places (Morris, 2003). Finally discrimination and negative interactions can contribute to reduced usage of public space (Best, 2010; Freysinger & Harris, 2006).

Public places are thus also crucial social places, where visitors from diverse ethnic backgrounds meet and engage in passive and fleeting interactions. This might, following the contact hypothesis, reduce prejudice and stereotyping. Enhanced 'public familiarity' might alleviate tensions between residents and increase trust. Several challenges to inter-ethnic interaction exist however, such as discrimination or language barriers. The social character of children's farms, the types of interaction taking place between visitors and benefits or barriers people might experience will be further explored in this study. Finally I want to present a diagram depicting the conceptual framework of this study.

5.4.4. Conceptual Framework

In this chapter I touched briefly upon the foundational concepts this research will build on, as well as sociological theories underlying these. In the diagram below I summarized the main concepts and drew relationships between them. I furthermore attempted to depict how the conceptual framework will relate to other phases in this study.

To assess whether children's farms, as a leisure destination, function as a meeting place between visitors from different ethnic backgrounds, several theoretical components have been identified as essential. Firstly, participation of visitors from diverse ethnic backgrounds within this setting is crucial. Participation is determined by visitor characteristics, as well as features of the leisure destination. Numerous visitor characteristics might influence participation within a leisure destination. Personal factors such as personality, needs, preferences, meanings people attach to a place, previous experiences as well as place of residence and motivations all impact their choice to visit a certain leisure destination (Carmona et al., 2010; Mehta, 2013). Ethnic and cultural backgrounds might also influence one's preferences to visit a children's farm, a green recreational site with animals. Studies within the Dutch context showed that ethnic minorities generally preferred a high level of management of nature, whereas native Dutch tended to prefer less managed, thus wilder landscapes (Buijs et al., 2009). Relations with animals and their status varies across different societies and thus possibly also impact participation levels of visitors to the children's farm (de Cock Buning, 2000). Structural forces such as social contexts (such as class, age, gender and ethnicity) as well as historical, cultural and political conditions thus also shape meanings of a leisure destination and impact people's participation in leisure activities (Peters, 2011). Causes might be disparities in power and discriminatory practices (Freysinger & Harris, 2006).

The children's farm as a leisure destination possesses certain features, which make the setting either attractive or unattractive for visitors from diverse ethnic backgrounds, and hence influences their participation in this setting. These features are both internal and external. With internal I mean characteristics of the setting on a micro level; external factors relate to the wider surroundings of the children's farms and their position within a city. The leisure destination is an experiential place, endowed with both personal and social meanings of visitors (Antonsich, 2009). Through positive or negative experiences people might either bond to a place or avoid it in the future (Peters, 2011). It is also a normative space, subject to written and unwritten rules which can be welcoming or unwelcoming to diverse guests (Molotch, 2012; Peters, 2011). A public or private space which is open to the public and used and shared by diverse groups of people is a precondition for a variety of visitors to come to the farm (Carmona et al., 2010).

A successful leisure destination is characterized by the many optional activities which take place within the location (Carmona et al., 2010; Gehl, 2010). Optional activities occur in a high quality environment; this quality is determined by the density of people within a location, its accessibility, comfort, safety and security as well as the aesthetic value of a location. A certain density of people provides vitality and works to attract others. It is a relative concept as not the amount of people counts, but the subjective feeling that a place is populated and used (Carmona et al., 2010). Key to enjoy a public space is to have access to it. The location of a setting within a city and its visual and physical accessibility, determine partially who visits a location. Inclusive design ensures that a place is of greatest value to the largest range of users (Carmona et al., 2010). An environment can be made more inclusive for multi-ethnic societies through for example facilities which support diverse uses of the environment by different ethnic groups (Risbeth, 2001). A universal human need is claimed to be physical comfort (Maslow, 1943). In a comfortable leisure destination, the microclimate should be adapted to protect people from negative sensory experiences, and people need comfortable places to sit, walk and stand (Carmona et al., 2010; Gehl, 2010). A location is furthermore attractive when it provides safety and security. Disorderly behaviour or incivilities can be confronted by staff members (Carmona et al., 2010). The earlier mentioned density of people also contributes to a sense of safety (Mehta, 2013). Finally an aesthetically pleasing environment attracts people and might prompt them to stay longer (Dempsey, 2009). We have thus seen that participation of diverse visitors within a leisure destination is determined both by visitor characteristics as well as features within this destination.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Setting

Leisure Destination (Internal and External)

Experiential and Normative Space
Public/private
Optional activities
Visitor density
Accessibility
Comfort
Safety and Security
Aesthetic quality
Stability and Adaptability
Location

Meeting Place (Internal)

Social Space
Low-intensive meeting place
Used by diverse visitors
Scale and proximity
Triangulating objects

Participation

Social Interaction

Visitors

Ethnicity
Personality
Preferences
Needs
Meanings
Motivations
Demographic Data

METHODOLOGY

Document Analysis

Semi- Structured
Interviews

Observations

Results Case Study 1

Results Case Study 2

CROSS-CASE RESULTS

A second important question within this study is whether ethnically diverse visitors engage in social interaction within this setting. Social interaction between visitors is influenced both by visitors themselves, as well as the meeting place with specific features facilitating social interaction. Mehta (2013) outlined three types of social contact prevalent in public spaces, namely enduring, passive and fleeting sociability. Enduring sociability is based on frequent contact with friends, family and acquaintances. Being in the presence of unknown others, without seeking verbal contact is named passive sociability. When low intensity contact between visitors, or between visitors and staff members is triggered, Mehta calls this fleeting sociability. The main focus of this thesis is on inter-ethnic passive and fleeting interactions. Interaction is largely impacted by visitor characteristics. Cultural knowledge, gender, ethnic background and other social structures guide social interactions (Molotch, 2012). Inter-ethnic interaction can be challenging, through for example language barriers, anxiety for the other, or diverse beliefs, values and attitudes (Barna, 1994). Individual people's personality, status, values and past experiences also influence social interactions people engage in (Carmona et al., 2010).

Social interactions can furthermore be triggered by the setting, a meeting place. Note that the characteristics of a meeting place are internal. These are features within this micro-setting rather than its relation to the macro-level surroundings. We have seen that an attractive and inclusive leisure destination might draw people from diverse ethnic backgrounds and facilitates a long duration of their stay. This might serve as the precondition for inter-ethnic social interaction. A space is sociable when it is open to the public, when people are present and engaged either individually or in groups in a variety of active and passive social behaviours (Mehta, 2013). It is also a space where people are confronted with 'unknown others' (Peters, 2011). A low-intensive meeting place is a location where people are exposed to others with very different interests and values (Aabo et al., 2010; Audunson, 2004). A location might even trigger contact between visitors. Firstly through its scale, a small-scale environment fosters proximity between people, moving from a public to a possibly social distance (Mehta, 2013). In this way opportunities for social contact are created. Triangulation, the process by which an external stimulus provides a linkage between people causing them to engage in interaction, can be triggered by the environment (Whyte, 1980). In this way civil inattention between people can be overcome (Molotch, 2012). Social meeting places are attributed with diverse benefits; the contact hypothesis suggest for example that connections with cultural others lead to fewer prejudices and less stereotyping; this hypothesis is however contested (Peters & Haan, 2011). Social interaction can also lead to public familiarity; it is important for residents to meet and be familiar with people of their neighbourhood (Peters & Haan, 2011). A meeting place is thus a location where diverse people meet and engage in social contact, and which might even have properties that ignite social interactions between strangers. Participation and social interaction are closely connected. When visitors of diverse ethnic backgrounds are attracted to a location and participate in optional activities, they might also engage in more social activities and even in inter-ethnic interactions. Social interactions might also be a motivation or need for certain visitors who are hence attracted to participate within a sociable leisure setting, whereas others wish to avoid this.

I explained the key concepts drawn within the conceptual framework, namely the visitors, the setting as a leisure destination and as a meeting place. The participation of diverse ethnic groups within the children's farm as a leisure destination is influenced both by features of this setting and characteristics of the visitors. Interethnic social interaction can be facilitated by the setting, yet is also highly influenced by visitors participating within this setting. These components guide the

further phases within this study. I chose three methodologies which allow me to apply these concepts to children's farms in order to discover whether these leisure destinations function as a meeting place between people from various ethnic backgrounds. Document analysis enables me to learn more about the specific visitors' profile of two case studies and their location within a city. Initial information about the participation of diverse ethnic groups within this setting might also be retrieved in this manner. Interviews facilitate the exploration of the needs, motivations and preferences of visitors as well as their perceptions and meanings of children's farms. Experiences concerning people's participation in this setting and social interactions they engage in can also be learned through interviews. Observations provide information about all important components, namely the setting itself, attractive features within a setting which might trigger interactions, the visitors which participate in this setting as well as social interactions between them. Chapter six and seven will treat the methods used and provide a description of both case studies. The results obtained through these methods will be presented in two separate chapters, eight and nine. In the conclusion I will compare the results of both case studies. In the subsequent chapter, I will elaborate on the methodology and research instruments I used to gather the collect data in order to be able to answer the proposed research questions.

6. Methodology and Methods

In this chapter the research design is central, which has been largely derived from studies addressing similar research questions and aims. I will firstly discuss methodological considerations such as the qualitative methods used and the research paradigm within which this research is situated. I will proceed to discuss the research design using two case studies, 'De Vosheuvel' in Amersfoort and 'De Gagelsteede' in Utrecht, and justify this in terms of validity and reliability. Thirdly, the research methods and the data collection will be illustrated. All methods used, document analysis, observations consisting of a physical inventory as well as behavioural mapping, and semi-structured interviews will be described and applied to this particular research. These methods elicit valuable information concerning behaviour taking place on the children's farms such as social interactions, the location of these interactions in relation to physical design features and the meaning these hold for visitors. I will finish with a discussion of the data analysis phase, a brief reflection on my position as a researcher who plays an active part in the construction of knowledge and the limitations of the chosen research methods.

6.1 Methodological Considerations

A choice for qualitative methods has been most appropriate in this research due to two reasons. Firstly, this study aims to provide an insight into the function of children's farms as a meeting place between people from different ethnicities. Qualitative research facilitates an understanding of what takes place within these public children's farms and what the meaning of these actions is (Peters, 2011). Secondly, this study has an explorative nature, as so little previous research has been done on children's farms and barely any study touches on children's farms as meeting places. Qualitative methods have much explorative power, as they are flexible. The research questions, data collection and analysis can be adjusted to the findings which emerge (Boeije, 2010). The research process has furthermore been iterative; it was fluid and flexible as it moved constantly between reading scientific literature, conducting fieldwork and altering the research questions (Peters, 2011). Important to note is that this research has not been conducted with a blank mind, but is founded on an extensive literature review, which shaped the data collection and analysis process.

The underlying research paradigm, post-positivism, has been formulated by Henderson (2011) as an attempt to overcome the binary divisions between positivism and interpretivism. She argues that for decades leisure research has been divided between 'two distinct ways of knowing', namely positivistic research (objective truths are possible, theory should be deductive, cause and effect are possible) and interpretivistic research (knowledge is subjective, theory should be inductive, research is a contextual process); this despite the fact that interpretivism, ironically, has tried to overcome the dualistic way of thinking which this division necessarily entails. Henderson argues that most leisure scholarship in the past two decades has used a mixture between these two approaches as it provides strong benefits (Henderson, 2011). Post-positivism lends itself well to leisure research, as it facilitates a certain pragmatism from which practical benefits might flow (Botterill, 2001; Henderson, 2011). Another strength is the representation of lived experiences of diverse people involved in leisure (Henderson, 2011; Stewart, Parry, & Glover, 2008). It allows lastly an investigation into the meanings and interpretations of people's reality within a natural setting or context (Henderson, 2011). Ontologically this paradigm sees the world as a complex and dynamic whole. In this world, knowledge is not neutral, but subjective and socially constructed (Henderson, 2011). Methodologically it defends the possibility of contextual causal explanation and might offer solutions

to challenges experienced. Yet a reflexive methodology allows accounting for the impact the emotions and personal experiences of the researcher have on the study and hence the subjective knowledge which is inevitably produced (Henderson, 2011). Next, I want to elaborate on the chosen research design.

6.2 Research Design

In this study I will try to develop explanations which are obtained through data generated within specific contexts, namely within two case studies (Botterill, 2001). An explorative two-case design has been chosen as the research strategy following a replication logic; a main assumption guiding the study is that under certain conditions, namely in a publicly accessible children's farm located in a multi-ethnic neighbourhood, visitors from different backgrounds might interact with each other and hence use this location as a meeting place (Yin, 2003). Case studies are a suitable choice when no control of behavioural events is required and when the focus is on contemporary events. Yin (2003, p.13) argues that *"a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context"*. Contextual conditions might be vital to the research topic advanced in this study. He continues his argument by stating that the particular importance of this contextualized inquiry is when *"the boundaries of the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident"*. I believe the research at hand meets these criteria. The physical context is crucial in this study. It might be, through triangulation processes, one of the factors contributing to interaction. Yet, as illustrated in the theoretical framework, specific historic, economic, social, cultural and political forces, as well as peoples characters, perceptions and needs, shape these inter-ethnic interactions. Advantages of a two-case above a single case design are that the evidence is considered more convincing; conclusions arising from two cases are simply more robust than from one case study. A second benefit is that the contexts of both cases are likely to vary. Conclusions that overlap, despite these diverse circumstances, contribute to a greater external generalizability of the results (Yin, 2003).

The empirical data for this thesis is derived from two public Dutch children's farms, namely 'De Vosheuvel' in Amersfoort and 'De Gagelsteede' in Utrecht; an extensive description of these case studies will follow in the fourth chapter. These two cases were selected on the basis of the following five criteria:

- *The children's farm should be used by different ethnic groups*
- *The children's farm should be open and publicly accessible, with no entrance fee*
- *The children's farms should differ in location within a city, in relation to the following aspects: residential areas, public parks, high roads/motorways/residential streets, industrial areas, public facilities*
- *The children's farms should vary in size, in order to gain insight into the possible relevance of scale*
- *The children's farms should show a variety in facilities, objects and attributes to observe what aspects might set a triangulation process in motion*

To ensure the quality of this research design, several measures have been taken. Construct validity and reliability are met through the use of multiple sources of evidence, namely interviews, document analysis, direct observations, behavioural mapping and a physical inventory. This triangulation of methods can be powerful as it permits the examination of a complex social issue from different angles. It might reveal the varied dimensions of this phenomenon and can add to a layered and thick description of social interactions on the children's farm. Drawbacks are that the three approaches all yield different types of data which are challenging to compare (Boeije, 2010). The physical features of both locations have furthermore been photographed and both the interview and observation guide can be found in the appendices. External validity is challenging to achieve in a qualitative study with context-specific cases, yet, as mentioned before, the use of two case studies potentially strengthens external validity if conclusions partially overlap (Yin, 2003).

6.3 Methods for Data Collection

Post-positivist researchers are aware of the social construction of knowledge and hence their own active part in the co-construction of this knowledge. I want to therefore share my awareness of the fact that the term data collection is precarious, as it suggests data exists neutrally 'out there' and can be merely collected and re-produced by the researcher. This, I believe, is a subjective process however by which the original data is transformed through the active part the researcher plays in shaping the results during interviews and observations (Boeije, 2010). All three methods used for data 'collection', namely document analysis, direct observations based on behavioural mapping plus a physical inventory and semi-structured interviews, will be developed further below.

6.3.1 Document Analysis

I firstly examined numerous secondary data documents related to the two case studies which facilitated an understanding of the specific context in which both case-studies are located (Bowen, 2009). This secondary data has been used and checked by the empirical results, which were obtained through the other methods (observations and semi-structured interviews) (Peters, 2011). This research took place on two levels, the micro-setting and the broader regional level. The process of researching documents concerning both 'micro-settings' included an extensive investigation of the websites of both children's farms, any (statistical) data which has been gathered concerning visitors, information on current activities, governmental documents related to both farms and any further writings related to both farms. Additionally sources have been analysed regarding the immediate surroundings of both petting zoos to learn more about the location of both farms and the relation to its environment. Research focussing on a regional level included a secondary data analysis exploring numerous electronic information sources. Demographic statistical data on the cities of Amersfoort and Utrecht has been gathered from municipal sources, on topics such as the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood.

6.3.2 Observations

In this study I attempt to explore inter-ethnic social interactions within their natural context. It has been vital to gain an understanding of who is visiting the farms, how they spend their time there, whether interactions take place and who interacts with whom. These aspects are best accounted through using observation as a valid method to research behaviour. Observations are moreover commonly used to explore actions of individuals in public places. Through observation it might be possible to understand what people may be unwilling or unable to share using other methods, such

as interviewing (Peters, 2011). An advantage of observation is that they are direct, as it notes for example differences between what people say they do (in interviews) and what actually happens on the ground (only to be seen during observations). People might find it additionally difficult to remember and reconstruct their behaviour and interactions. Visitors have been observed engaging in dynamic activities. In this study I sought for 'standing patterns of behaviour', repetitive activities which take place in the specific location observed (Zeisel, 2006). Observation generally takes place in everyday situations and is especially useful when little is known about the phenomenon; the study at hand meets these criteria (Boeije, 2010).

The observations conducted included a physical inventory and behavioural maps, which will shortly be discussed more extensively. Observations on the location allowed me to document and understand the context within which social interaction occurred. The children's farms are a social setting where people gather and interact, but this interaction is not necessarily conscious and institutionalized (Whitehead, 2006). Accessibility has been fully granted to me as a researcher after approval from the administrators on the farm (Spradley, 1980). To avoid the danger of omitting details and transfer my own personal feelings into the situation, I made use of a standardized observation guide and based observations on a theoretical framework for interpreting observations (Zeisel, 2006). I wrote both factual notes as well as my own interpretations, questions, comments and feelings; a clear distinction between these has been made (Boeije, 2010). Extensive field notes have been recorded; I kept track of when observations took place, in which circumstances, who was involved, what has been happening, in what context activity took place and in which location within the physical setting (Whitehead, 2006; Zeisel, 2006). The complete observation guide can be found in appendix A. Various levels of intrusiveness have been enacted. To gain insight into the frequency of meeting and social interaction, a central position at both children's farms has been occupied at one of the seats, and notes were taken using the observation guide. This role of a 'secret outsider' is helpful to minimize altered behaviour of visitors, yet important details might be missed. Occasionally I moved towards being a recognized outsider. This happened either when I felt a need to question my own assumptions concerning where people come from and how they feel about meeting people and interacting with others, or when visitors and/or volunteers recognized me as an 'outsider' and asked me what my tasks are. In these cases I briefly explained my study and asked brief questions about the observations I have made. A great limitation has been that in this way behaviour of visitors might have altered (Boeije, 2010).

All visitors of the farm, both children and adults, as well as staff members have been observed. Particular attention was paid to interactions between people from different ethnic backgrounds, especially between the ethnic majority and people from non-Western Ethnic backgrounds. In this study visitors from the ethnic majority are defined as people who, just as their parents, have been born in the Netherlands (Phalet & Haker, 2005). People with a non-Western ethnic background originate from Turkey, Morocco, Suriname, Dutch Antilles or Aruba. Both first-generation migrants (people born in a non-Western country) and second-generation migrants (parents born outside the Netherlands, but person born in Netherlands) have been observed. All ethnic backgrounds during observations are based on assumptions, merely based on people's skin colour, language which has been spoken as well as clothing such as headscarves which might have offered a clue on a person's ethnic background. This is a common way in which people assess others, yet is extremely biased (Peters, 2011). A main focus was on passive, enduring and fleeting interactions (Mehta, 2013). Hence the main focus was on who interact, what social interactions take place, at what distance people

stand and what triggered interactions, with whom, what the relationship between these people is and where interactions take place. In addition relationships between animals and humans have been investigated with a specific focus on differences between visitors from various ethnic backgrounds (appendix A). After two test observations on the 3rd and 4th of August 2013, systematic observations took place at both the Vosheuvel in Amersfoort and the Gagelsteede in Utrecht between the 5th of August and the 8th of September 2013. One researcher visited both sites alone, at various times of the day and during different days of the week. All observations lasted in total approximately 36 hours, divided equally between both case studies, of which 9 hours during weekends and the rest on various weekdays. On average an observation session lasted approximately 2 hours. The observations conducted included furthermore a physical inventory as well as behavioural maps, these will be expounded on below.

Physical Inventory

The first observations within this study concerned an investigation of the setting itself. This was necessary in order to establish the different features on the children's farm. Existing maps, drawings, photograph of the setting and walk-by observations have been used to map the lay-out and design of this location (Mehta, 2013). Essential attributes of both case studies have been depicted in maps created for the purpose of this research, such as buildings, attributes, vegetation, facilities, pedestrian areas, animal cages and pastures, entrances and fenced areas; the complete maps can be found in chapter 7 (figure 8 and 30). Various theoretical concepts such as triangulating objects, scale, accessibility, comfort and protection from weather influences have been operationalized this way. Additionally both settings have been extensively photographed by the author, of which some are included in said chapter. These maps formed the basis for behavioural mapping, elaborated on below.

Behavioural Mapping

Direct field observations generate an understanding of space and can be supplemented with recording the types of activities which take place within a certain setting; this might start-off the discovery of activity patterns (Canter, 1977). Observations were therefore carried out using behavioural mapping, as this permits a systematic documentation of human activity observations based within a specific location (Martin & Hanington, 2012). Through this method it is possible to explore what physical features of the farm initiate a triangulation process and facilitate social interaction. This might provide suggestions for future design features which might expand this triangulation process (Goličnik & Ward Thompson, 2010). I decided to use place-centred mapping, which is the observation of people at a site-specific location. As fleeting interactions between

strangers were of particular interest, these have been kept track of on a map drawn specifically for these purposes. This map included the basic place layout, architectural features, plus any other fixed (such as large tables) and loose (such as movable chairs) furniture which may have had an impact on behaviour or social interaction. Especially fleeting interactions have been kept track of, yet other features such as shaded areas or moved parasols were marked on days when this was deemed



Figure 3: Behavioural Map 5th of September 2013, Utrecht

important. The location of these interactions has been noted with a cross on the behavioural map. Relevant information concerning this interaction, such as who interacted and what might have been the triangulating object which stimulated interaction, has been noted down in the extensive observational field notes (Martin & Hanington, 2012).

In total 26 behavioural maps have been created, 18 of Vosheuvel in Amersfoort and 8 of the Gagelsteede in Utrecht. The reason for this discrepancy is that in Amersfoort several times a day a new map was started, as I believed this would facilitate keeping track of particular interactions. Yet during a reflection on the methods used after the first case study was carried out, this was deemed to not be necessary as interactions could be traced on a single map. Hence for the case in Utrecht, one map a day has been used. As discussed in the section concerning observations, these maps were completed on different times of the day and various days of both the week and the weekend. A limitation of both the observations and the behavioural maps is that the motivations and reasons of these social interactions are based on mere assumptions and remain largely unknown (Martin & Hanington, 2012). Therefore these methods have been supplemented with interviews to obtain a greater understanding of factors motivating fleeting social interactions; these will be discussed in the next section.

6.3.3 Interviews

As the meaning of visible behaviour in a setting cannot be interpreted by observation and behavioural mapping alone, it has been crucial to interview people from different ethnicities personally about what the children's farm means to them, what reasons they have for visiting, how they use and experience the children's farm, whether they interact with unknown others and how they feel about social interaction on the children's farm.

I have chosen to conduct face-to-face interviews. The advantages of this method are a certain control of the sequence of questions, the use probes and non-verbal communication while leaving room for spontaneity (Neuman, 2003). Due to synchronous communication in space and time, social cues can be incorporated such as voice, intonation and body language. Answers might be more accurately understood as when answers are unclear, the interviewee can be asked to explain and elaborate answers further. A disadvantage has been the high cost in both travel and time. A second disadvantage is the prevalent interviewer bias; my words or behaviour might and will influence the answers of the respondent (Opdenakker, 2006). An attempt has been made to keep questions and probes as open and 'neutral' as possible (Lewis, 2003). In order to allow comparison between the interviews, they have been conducted in a semi-structured manner. From the theoretical framework key-areas have been deduced which guided each interview. Questions were open-ended and probes were used to elicit elaborations when deemed necessary. As this research is explorative in nature, I allowed interviewees the space to share their experiences as holistically as possible and to introduce other areas of discussion. The interviews were, where possible, conducted at the two children's farms in Utrecht and Amersfoort during a visit to ensure a minimum disruption of routines of interviewees (Boeije, 2010). To all interviewees risks, confidentiality and the mere academic purpose of the interview have been explained. The interview started with broad, contextual questions. This aided in learning more about the interviewee and his/her viewpoint. This was followed by main questions extracted from the literature and initial test-interviews (Rubin, 2005). Each topic has been further explored in depth with a series of follow-up questions and the use of probes (Boeije, 2010;

Hermanowicz, 2002). Interviews ended on a positive note, interviewees were thanked and informed about how their contribution would aid the research. It was furthermore asked whether quotations can be used in the final study. Transcripts of recorded interviews have been send to interviewees to which they could react in order to add/change information. (Hermanowicz, 2002).

Two test interviews held at the outset of the data collection phase, illustrated that the recording of these interviews proved challenging for two reasons. Firstly, in both tests interviewees did not feel comfortable with the recording and phrased this. Secondly, the background noises on the farm such as children, animals and the wind, made recorded material challenging to understand and hence insufficient to rely on. One interview with visitors from the ethnic majority at the Vosheuvel has been recorded as it took place at their house and they agreed with recording. All other interviews with guests took place on the respective children's farm while the researcher took notes. These were supplemented immediately after the interview with all information recalled, both factual as well as researcher's subjective impressions and questions. The results are hence coloured by my personal memory, my writing speed and the fact that only the answers and not the questions were registered. The quality of recorded data is generally higher as the interviewer focuses less on taking notes and more on probing to elicit in depth answers, without having to select what to note down and what not. In the reporting phase literal quotes can only be used when recorded (Boeije, 2010). Yet the benefits of note taking in this particular case weighed stronger, as due to background noise even less information might have been recorded, and in my personal experience people felt more comfortable during the interviews. Some authors even recommend note taking above the recording of interviews. Reasons they suggest are that note-taking keeps researchers more alert, the respondent feels taken more seriously and he or she can make corrections on the spot (Eliot, 2010; Zinsser, 2006). An important note is hence that no quotes used in this report are literal. They are either an English translation from recorded interviews conducted in the Dutch language, or based on the memory of the researcher. In total I performed 29 interviews at both research locations, of which 24 visitors and 5 staff members. Interviewees have been approached through purposive sampling, which holds that the *"sample is intentionally selected according to the needs of the study"* (Boeije, 2010, p.35). The recruitment was guided by the theoretical framework discussing inter-ethnic interactions (Boeije, 2010). As I attempted to gain an insight into social interactions between visitors from different ethnicities, I decided to interview an equal amount of people from the ethnic majority and people from ethnic minorities.

Ethnic origin visitors	De Vosheuvel, Amersfoort	De Gagelsteede, Utrecht
Ethnic Majority	6	6
non-Western Ethnic Minority	5	7
Total	11	13

Table 1: Interviewed Visitors of Both Farms

I aimed to reach an as diverse group of visitors as possible; besides different ethnic backgrounds I engaged male and female participants of different ages. As the percentage of male visitors has been lower at both farms however, much more female than male respondents have been interviewed. Language has proven to be a challenge. Several visitors from non-Western ethnic minorities were unable to partake in an interview due to language limitations. This might obscure important viewpoints.

Interviewees have been approached while visiting the farm and were asked for their participation. An attempt has been made to minimize the level of obtrusiveness; only people seated while their child was playing have been asked whether they would like to participate in this research. Within these interviews several theoretical concepts were examined. Apart from vital demographic data on residency and ethnic background, visitors were asked to discuss the course of their visit, their motivations to visit the farm, relations they have to animals, whether they view the children's farm as a meeting place and with whom they have contact. Visitors were also probed whether they believe certain features of the farm trigger social contact between visitors and finally what meaning this location has for them. Passive, fleeting, and enduring inter-ethnic interactions as well triangulation have been discussed in this manner. The extensive interview guide with questions in Dutch can be found in appendix B. The shortest interview with visitors lasted 6 - the longest 43 minutes. A few interviews were short as respondents had to leave. As the interviews were not recorded, extensive notes were taken during the interview. Directly after the interview an attempt was made to reconstruct the written text as completely as possible.

In addition to these interviews with visitors, five interviews with key professionals have been held. In Amersfoort the administrator of the farm has been interviewed two times. The first interview, an informal, unstructured interview was to check whether this location met the criteria for the research, outlined at the outset of this chapter. The second interview was semi-structured and followed the interview guide for administrators (appendix B). General questions were asked about the organisational structure of the farm, what is known about the visitors' profile, motivations to visit the farms, what he sees on the farm related to social interactions and what facilities he believes to either facilitate or hinder interaction. The administrator of the farm in Utrecht has been approached in a similar manner, firstly during an open unstructured interview where an improved understanding of this location was sought and a check was made whether this location meets the research criteria; secondly during a recorded semi-structured interview, touching upon the same themes as with the manager in Amersfoort. An extensive unstructured interview has also been held with the coordinator of all five children's farm in Utrecht, whereby the research objectives were explained, and the suitable children's farm for this research have been discussed. This interview has been recorded and took place at the municipality of Utrecht. Finally an un-planned and unstructured interview was conducted with a social worker at the playground of the Gagelsteede. She requested the interview not to be recorded as she shared much confidential information. The discussion focussed on general questions such as her role as a social worker, the organisational structure of the social welfare organisation she works for, their cooperation with the children's farm, as well as more information about the visitors, their motivations to visit and the topic of social interaction. Particular attention has been paid to the incidence of inter-ethnic interactions and whether visitors from various ethnic backgrounds use the farm in different ways. Managers were also asked whether they note certain features at the farm to trigger social interaction, in this way the concept of triangulation was operationalized. All recorded interviews have been transcribed into textual form and the notes taken manually both during observations and interviews have been digitalized. The behavioural maps have been digitalized and merged into one map. These texts and maps formed the basis of analysis, which will be expounded upon in the final section of this chapter.

6.4 Data Analysis

Hennie Boeije discusses the 'spiral of analysis'; this has been used for the process of data analysis (2010). Analysis consisted of segmenting the data obtained through both interviews and observations and reassembling this which transformed the raw data into findings. The analysis has been conducted in a dialectical manner, searching for relationships and patterns between components of the data in connection to content derived from the literature. Analysis has been tailored towards social situations, moments of social interaction, and people participating in these social interactions. I started with an open coding phase, during which data has been separated into meaningful parts. This led to an extensive coding scheme with over 200 different codes. These codes originated directly from participant's terminology (e.g. dominant youth, nice weather, outing), were concepts derived from the theoretical framework (e.g. triangulations, inter-ethnic interaction, passive, fleeting, enduring sociability) or were based on my personal interpretation (e.g. children come alone, event, evasion). Following this phase a code tree has been constructed with the, in my view, most important codes. I then proceeded to the phase of axial coding, where relationships were sought between categories and codes. The code tree has been revised as hierarchical relationships between various codes emerged and a distinction has been made between main and sub-codes. An example would be that codes such as group composition (a main code) would receive sub-codes such as adults-alone, adult-child, child-alone. All pieces would receive the code: group composition. Fragments within one code were compared in an attempt to extract the core and create larger categories. During the final, selective coding phase, I looked for relations between these larger categories and re-assembled the loose pieces of data in order to contribute to theory development. Crucial has been to look for the so-called core-categories which appeared frequently in the data, could be formulated abstractly and much material was related to this category. The main categories were 'the visitor', 'the setting', 'social-interaction' and 'triangulation'. The earlier mentioned example of 'group-composition' became a sub-code of 'the visitor'. Analysis has continuously manoeuvred between the research questions, the literature used, as well as surprising outcomes. These findings are presented in a thematic description, which can be found in chapter 8 and 9 (Boeije, 2010).

The analysis of the behavioural map was done in a different manner. The results of various days have been aggregated to create a summary of the social interaction concentrations which might point to certain triangulating objects within the setting. These results have been linked to the results obtained from observations and noted down to strengthen each other (Martin & Hanington, 2012). I realize finally that I am unable to claim objectivity and generalizability in the analysis of the obtained data. As Rose (1997) indicates, such claims would conceal other interpretations and knowledge which might surround this topic. I acknowledge, as many critical geographers that the knowledge I both receive and produce will be always partial, as it is located in a complex context, surrounded by power relations and my own assumptions. During both the research and the writing process I might either intentionally or unintentionally include or exclude information. I therefore want to express a certain humbleness and awareness of my own position (Rose, 1997). In the final part of this chapter I want to discuss the methodological limitations of this study.

6.5 Limitations

As far as limitations of this research are concerned, first and foremost the limited amount of time during which data was obtained has to be mentioned; data was collected within one month, namely August 2013. As this was in the summer period, many regular visitors of both children's farms, especially from ethnic minorities, were on holidays according to other visitors and staff members. One week of observations within Amersfoort, collided with the Ramadan. Several visitors shared that high temperatures in combination with the Ramadan were a reason for them to avoid the farm, as they were not allowed to drink during the fasts. A second limitation is the precarious differentiation made between visitors from the 'ethnic minority' and 'ethnic majorities', which has been extensively treated in the fifth chapter. These terms are essentialised and do not reflect the true complexity of these artificial categories, which are merely based on numerical comparisons (Risbeth, 2001). Yet by making the distinction I do want to include visitors from different ethnic backgrounds in my research and explore diverse participation patterns within a recreational setting, as ignoring these differences might render them invisible (Freysinger & Harris, 2006).

Several methodological challenges faced, caused the data to be possibly of reduced quality. The two-case study design signifies that no generalizations about the results can be made (Yin, 2003). Observations faced several restrictions. One was the limitation in resources; I carried out all observations without the aid of other researchers or materials such as cameras. This increased the subjectivity of results. Additionally, even during my attempts to be a secret outsider, I was frequently a recognized outsider. This might have altered the behaviour of visitors (Boeije, 2010). Also large sections of the grounds on both farms, such as several animal pastures, have been omitted and no observations have been carried out there. The results of the case study are hence incomplete and not generalizable to other similar cases. Challenges faced during interviewing were that most interviews have not been recorded; transcripts were based on notes taken during the conversation. This made results more biased and prevented the use of literal quotes (Boeije, 2010). Approximately 80% of interviewees were female and interviews were held with individual adults, yet some were conducted with two visitors at a time, which caused different dynamics and results. The length of interviews varied greatly, some visitors had to leave soon and not all questions could be asked. Finally some visitors from ethnic minorities were asked to partake in an interview but this proved impossible due to language barriers. These methodological limitations might have produced data of inferior quality. In the following chapter I will firstly present a description of the case studies that have been selected. This will be followed by two chapters presenting the results of the two case studies.

7. Description of the Case-Studies

In the previous chapter the two-case research design of this study has been explained. Additionally, the conditions these two case studies had to meet have been discussed. Two children's farms, one in the city of Utrecht, the other in Amersfoort, suited the research. In this chapter the location of both children's farms within the Netherlands and their immediate surroundings will be explored. Additionally a photographic tour of the farm will provide visual impressions of both locations. All pictures of both settings have been taken by the author between June and August 2013. The maps of the children's farms have also been drawn by the author. De Vosheuvel in Amersfoort and de Gagelsteede in Utrecht are both located in a multi-ethnic neighbourhood, are publicly accessible yet vary in scale, facilities and location. Utrecht belongs to the four largest cities in the Netherlands. Its surface is 99,30 km² and in 2012 the city had approximately 316.300 residents (Hylkema, Bosveld, Selten, Boer, & Bruin, 2012). Amersfoort has a surface of 63,86 km², and had approximately 148.250 residents in 2012 (GemeenteAmersfoort, 2012). In table 2, I compare the ethnic composition of both cities as measured on the 1st of January 2012. Both Amersfoort and Utrecht have a smaller percentage of Native Dutch people and a higher percentage of non-Western migrants than the Netherlands as a whole. Utrecht has a significantly higher percentage of Moroccans compared to both Amersfoort and the Netherlands as a whole. Amersfoort and Utrecht have a similar percentage of Moroccans; this is higher than the Dutch average. Amersfoort has a slightly higher percentage of Antilleans and Arubans than Utrecht; Utrecht has however percentagewise more Surinamese residents. In general both cities show a similar ethnic composition and seem to have, in percentages, more Turkish and Moroccan residents compared to the Dutch figures (GemeenteAmersfoort, 2012; Hylkema et al., 2012).

Ethnic Origin	Utrecht	%	Amersfoort	%	Netherlands	%
Surinam	7674	2.43%	1675	1.13%	346797	2.07%
Antilles & Aruba	2577	0.81%	1724	1.16%	143992	0.86%
Turkey	13579	4.29%	6088	4.11%	392923	2.35%
Morocco	28139	8.90%	4653	3.14%	362954	2.17%
Other non-Western Migrants	16454	5.20%	7060	4.76%	690985	4.13%
Total non-Western migrants	68423	21.63%	21200	14.30%	1937651	11.58%
Western migrants	33147	10.48%	12646	8.53%	1556542	9.30%
Native Dutch	214707	67.89%	114373	77.15%	13236155	79.11%
Total	316277	100.00%	148248	100.00%	16730348	100.00%

Table 2: Ethnic Composition of Residents Utrecht and Amersfoort (Sources: Hylkema et al., 2012; GemeenteAmersfoort, 2012)

7.1 Amersfoort, De Vosheuvel

Amersfoort is located quite central within the Netherlands (figure 5). This city hosts two children's farms in total. One is located in the district 'Randenbroek', the other in the district Vathorst ("Locatie," 2013; "Welkom op de Brinkhorst," 2013). De Vosheuvel has been chosen in this mid-sized town in the Netherlands, as it suits the purpose of this research best; the farm is located in a more ethnically mixed neighbourhood than De Brinkhorst (GemeenteAmersfoort, 2013). De Vosheuvel is situated at the outskirts of Amersfoort in the district Randenbroek, near the city of Leusden (figure 6).



Figure 5: Amersfoort, the Netherlands

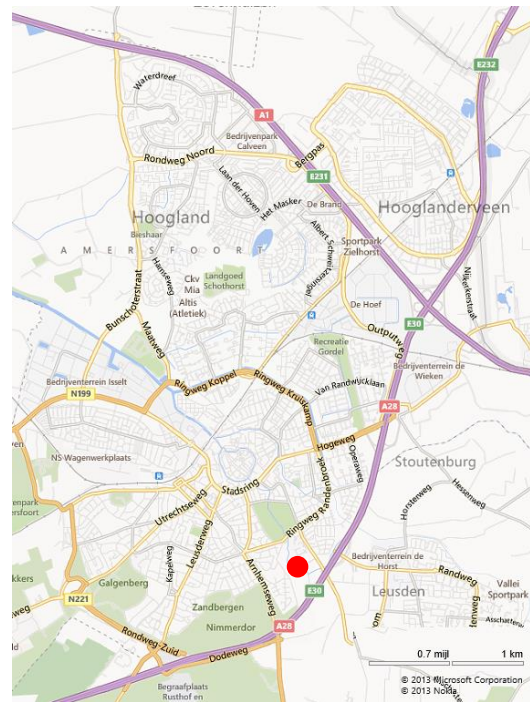


Figure 6: De Vosheuvel in Amersfoort

Source both figures: (MicrosoftCorporation, 2013)

Figure 7 depicts the position of De Vosheuvel with its surrounding area (Carmona et al., 2010). What catches the eye is the proximity of this children's farm to two roads, a motor way and a high street. The motorway is used by motorized vehicles only. The high street is also used by cyclists and pedestrians; yet for these road users it is challenging to cross this road towards the children's farm, as there are no facilities such as traffic lights or a crossing. De Vosheuvel is positioned next to a school for disabled children, 300 metres walking distance from a hospital and a sport park, 400 metres from a residential area, 600 metres from a large public park, 800 metres from an elderly home and approximately 1 kilometre from a shopping area. The closest bus stop is 300 metres away.



Figure 7: Surroundings of De Vosheuvel (Microsoft Corporation, 2013)

The district Randenbroek, and specifically the neighbourhood Weberstraat where De Vosheuvel is located, has one of the highest percentages of residents with a non-Western ethnic background. Table 3 depicts the ethnic composition of the district Randenbroek as compared to the general figures of Amersfoort as a whole. The percentage of native Dutch people is lower in Randenbroek than in Amersfoort. There is a considerably higher percentage of Moroccans and other non-Western migrants. Furthermore, there is a slightly higher percentage of Turkish, Moroccans, Surinamese and people with a Dutch Antilles or Aruban background (G.B.A. Amersfoort, 2013). This multi-ethnic composition might mean that people from different ethnic backgrounds meet each other in public places near their homes.

	Randenbroek %	Amersfoort %
Native Dutch	69,9	76,9
Other Western Migrants	8,6	8,6
Turkey	4,4	4,1
Morocco	6,8	3,1
Surinam	1,3	1,1
Dutch Antilles/ Aruba	1,5	1,2
Other non-Western countries	7,5	4,9

Table 3: Demographic Data Randenbroek Amersfoort, 2013 (G.B.A. Amersfoort, 2013)

The 'city farm' the Vosheuvel has a history of almost 40 years. In 1976 the farm was bought by the municipality of Amersfoort, to be opened for the public in 1977. Visitor numbers continued to rise, in 1978 the farm received 4000 visitors, in 1984 this mounted to 35.000 and over the last year, 2012 there were approximately 100.000 visitors ("Geschiedenis", 2012). In an interview the current administrator indicates however it would be more accurate to call these numbers 'visits' rather than 'visitors' as there is a substantial group of regular guests. The farm has been privatized in 1997 and

has been taken over by the then founded 'Stichting Stadsboerderij de Vosheuvel'. This foundation is managed by five board members who meet once every two months and execute this position on a voluntary basis. Two paid administrators, both working 36 hours a week, are involved in the daily running of the farm. In addition there are regularly interns who work for a temporary period of time. Lastly a team of approximately 45 active volunteers aids in various specific tasks, such as maintenance, caretaking and the selling of products. Financially the city farm is still largely supported by the municipality. Among other sources of funding are sales in the cafeteria, the organisation of activities, donations of individuals and companies, adoption of animals and saving money through working with many volunteers.

Opening hours are from Monday to Saturday from 10 o'clock to 16.45; on Sundays the farm opens her doors between 14.00 and 16.45. On an irregular basis activities are organised on the farm, from large events such as sheep shearing and a Christmas market which are organised once a year, to smaller activities organised several times a year such as riding a tilt-cart pulled by ponies and painting. Activities have a recreational and occasionally an educational character and require a participation fee, usually between 1 and 2 euros. For individual groups a private activity programme can also be facilitated. Throughout the school year schools come and partake in educational activities, for which teachers can lend a 'lesson-chest'. Children who wish to help feeding the animals need to apply and pay a fee; this allows them to aid feeding one afternoon a week for 14 weeks in total. Parents can celebrate the birthday of their child on the farm with a special programme. Lastly individual visitors can pay for a small quest, the 'boertjespad', in which children learn more about the farm during various educational assignments. After this short introduction of the Vosheuvel, its history, organisational structure and location, a small photographic tour around the farm will provide a visual impression of this location ("Stadsboerderij de Vosheuvel ", 2012).

7.1.1 A Stroll Through De Vosheuvel

The grounds of the Vosheuvel comprise approximately 1 hectare; on these lands a farmhouse, a central place with seats and tables, three animal pastures, a poultry house, rabbit-cages, a herb garden, a 'cuddle pasture', a playground and a pond for ducks and geese are situated. Animals held are cows, pony's, donkeys, goats, sheep, poultry and rodents ("Wat is er te zien? ," 2013). A map has been created specifically for the purpose of this research, which depicts the area that has been observed (figure 8). This does not cover all grounds of the farm; the duck pond and 2 animal pastures are missing. I will proceed with a brief photographic tour of the farm, which will follow the numbering and route drawn as a red dotted line on the map.



Figure 8: Map De Vosheuvel, 2013

You can arrive by bus, car, bike or foot. There are ample free parking spots for both cars and bikes (figure 9). When you peek over the gate, you see a substantial part of the grounds (figure 10), on your left you see the stable and an information sign with a map of the grounds, on your right the educational room.



Figure 9: Free Parking



Figure 10: Educational Room and Map

But first, you will need to push through two gates, where a little pink piglet will await you ready for donations, which are usually given by visitors on their way out (figure 11). The educational room is now on your right. From time to time activities are organized there, for visitors usually on Wednesdays, occasionally Saturdays; for school classes throughout the school term. On your left an old tractor looks out at the grounds (figure 12); a beloved object for children to climb on, play and have their picture taken. Next to the tractor, conveniently, a bench is located where (grand)parents enjoy a seat while their children 'drive' the tractor.



Figure 11: Entrance Gate



Figure 12: Tractor

On this bench they sit with their back to the gate of the garden. Some children slip through this gate alone, although a sign indicates they are only allowed to enter under the supervision of parents (figure 13). Signs like this, with rules and regulations, are spread throughout the farm. In the garden many discoveries await, among others an herb garden, a poultry cage and a bee hotel. When you go back through the gate you head straight onto a large cage with different types of chickens and other poultry (figure 14).



Figure 13: Garden



Figure 14: Poultry Cages

Walk a little further, with the poultry cage on your right, and you will be welcomed by a chalk information sign indicating ice-cream, hot and cold beverages, honey, peacock feathers and much more which can be bought in the little farm shop (figure 15). A large picnic table and several loose seats offer a place to sit, rest, eat and drink. Inside three tables and numerous seats offer a possible refuge from the not always gentle weather gods; burning sun or wet rain showers can be hidden away from while replenishing oneself with some calories (figure 16). A staff member is usually always present here, either behind the counter or in the office where administrative work is carried out.



Figure 15: Shop and Office



Figure 16: Inside Shop

Going outside again through the door you can walk straight to the stable (figure 17). This is the home of several large animals, such as the ponies, the donkey and the pigs. They stay here mostly in winter, in the summer only during the evenings. All animals can move freely between an interior and exterior part of their cage. Next to the exterior cage a bench is located. It is not used to sit on however...it is rather used by children to be able to see and, if they dare, pet the larger farm animals (figure 18).



Figure 17: The Stable



Figure 18: Viewing the Ponies

When you then move on, on your right your attention might be caught by many rabbit cages (figure 19). Some are only temporarily filled, with rabbits brought by people who want to find a new owner for their pet. Others belong to the farm, such as the rabbits which are located in the cuddle corner. This is a small cage (figure 19 on the left) where children up to 8 years might fit on the small wooden chairs, three in total. If they are lucky, several rabbits run around this corner and children can pet them and pick them up. There is a little hole the rabbits can go through when they received enough attention and can retreat in a private cage. Adults accompanying the children can have a seat and stay close to observe the adventures in the cuddle corner.



Figure 19: Rabbit Cages and Cuddle Corner

In the summer of 2013, when this research was carried out, another attraction would await you once you would pass this cuddle corner. A female cat was found on the grounds of the farm while eating some food intended for other animals. She was captured and on the 8th of July 2013 she gave birth to young kittens. During the day they stayed at this exterior cage (figure 20 and 21), at night they would go into the stable.



Figure 20 and 21: Kittens

While you are observing the kittens, you are likely to hear screams and shouts from the playground, as it is positioned adjacent to these cages. The playground equipment includes a slide, a seesaw and two spring riders (figure 22 and 23). Additionally cages with different animals are located at the edges of the playground such as rabbits and guinea pigs. An exterior part of the stable offers an outside location for the pig and attracts numerous curious visitors. Parents accompanying their children and in need of a rest, have a choice between either movable seats and a table, or large benches, often located in the shadow. The playground shows signs of maintenance due; the paint is coming off the slide, the grass is trampled on and partly transformed into a sandy field. Yet it is this location where visitors spend the largest amount of their time, children often prefer the slide to the animals.



Figure 22: Playground



Figure 23: Slide

If the wind blows in the wrong direction, at the farm the smell of the compost might fill the air. This is one of the favourite sports of the peacock, decorating this malodorous spot with his colourful presence (figure 24 and 25).



Figure 24 and 25: Compost, the Peacocks Favourite Place

Passing by the educational experience the compost is, you can enter a gate which opens to two fields, one with and one without animals (figure 26). Here children can help feeding the goats around 16 o'clock every day. Some goats are curious and ready for a cuddle, others are more distant and focus on feeding themselves with grass. The grounds continue from here, yet have not been included in the observations. If you walk straight through the goat pasture, you reach a duck pond, a nature garden and two other large animal pastures, where the donkeys, ponies and sheep spend their time during the day.



Figure 26: Animal Pasture

After this visualization of De Vosheuvel in Amersfoort, in the next part I will delve into the second case study investigated in this study, namely De Gagelsteede in Utrecht.

7.2 Utrecht, De Gagelsteede

A car drive from De Vosheuvel in Amersfoort to De Gagelsteede in Utrecht is relatively short, approximately 25 minutes. Utrecht is, as Amersfoort, positioned quite centrally in the Netherlands (figure 27 and 28). The municipality of Utrecht runs five children's farms in total. These are the Eilandsteede, Gagelsteede, Griftsteede, Koppelsteede and finally Castellum Hoge Woerd. Two of these are located in very multicultural districts; the Gagelsteede in 'Overvecht' and the Eilandsteede in 'Zuid-West' (N.M.C.Utrecht, 2013). The children's farm receiving most visitors from non-Western backgrounds is the Gagelsteede (Wolf & Mazurkiewicz, 2009).



Figure 27: Utrecht, the Netherlands

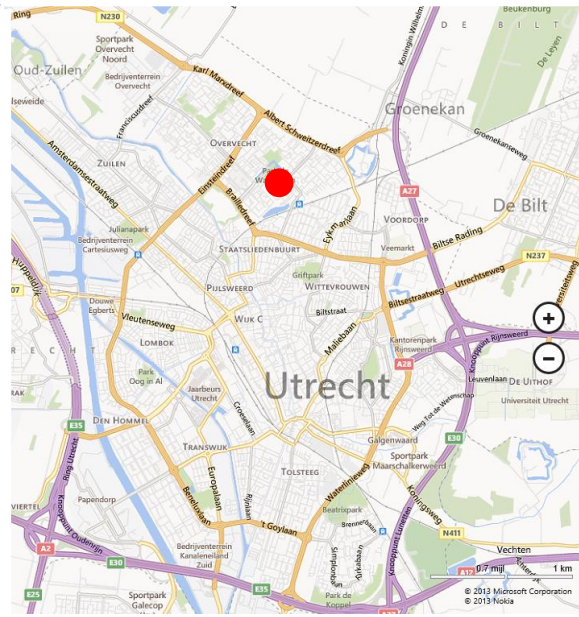


Figure 28: De Gagelsteede in Utrecht

Source both figures: (Microsoft Corporation, 2013)

In figure 29 the immediate surroundings of the Gagelsteede are visualized. This petting zoo is surrounded by several residential areas and located centrally within a large public park, 'De Gagel'. The grounds can be accessed using three entrances, two are positioned on a residential street, one is connected to the public park. The main entrance is situated on a so-called 'playstreet'. This former highroad has been adapted in 2011; by making the part for cars smaller and broadening the pedestrian walkway the safety of people walking and cycling has been increased (deStadUtrecht, 2010). Adjacent to the farm are four residential areas, the nearest flat being a mere 20 metre distance. The children's farm is accessible for cars and free parking spots are available; the nearest bus stop is on a 260 metre distance. A large motorway is located at a 700 metre distance from the farm. Several primary schools are located at less than 1 kilometre distance from the farm. Additionally an elderly home is only a 100 metre walking distance from the main entrance of the petting zoo. Lastly, at a 700 metre distance a supermarket is situated.



Figure 29: Surroundings of De Gagelsteede (MicrosoftCorporation, 2013)

In the district 'Overvecht' in which de Gagelsteede is located, residents from numerous ethnicities reside. Table 4 presents the most recent figures on the ethnic composition of this district and contrasts this to Utrecht as a whole. Overvecht has a much larger percentage of migrants (55.7 %) compared to Utrecht (32,2%); the amount of native Dutch on the other hand is significantly lower, 44,3% set against 67,7% (G.B.A.Utrecht, 2013). Overvecht seems to have percentagewise more than twice as many non-Western migrants than Utrecht (44,6 % versus 21,7%).

	Overvecht	%	Utrecht	%
Total Native Dutch	13.996	44,3	218.083	67,7
Total Amount Migrants	17.567	55,7	103.917	32,3
Total amount non-Western migrants	14.720	46,6	69.961	21,7
Turkish	2.908	9,2	13.718	4,3
Moroccans	7.345	23,3	28.564	8,9
Surinamese and Dutch Antilles	1.580	5	10.324	3,2
Other non-Western migrants	2.887	9,1	17.355	5,4
Other Western migrants	2.847	9	33.956	10,5
First generation migrants	9.357	29,6	52.041	16,2
Second generation migrants	8.210	26	51.876	16,1

Table 4: Demographic Data Utrecht Overvecht, 2013 (G.B.A.Utrecht, 2013)

According to the administrator of the farm De Gagelsteede, this children's farm exists for over 30 years. A survey suggests that 26.000 visitors found their way to the farm in 2008 (Wolf & Mazurkiewicz, 2009). The manager however predicts that the current number of visitors is 30.000 a year, yet this number is not accurate because the counter is imprecise. De Gagelsteede is currently one of five children's farms owned by the municipality of Utrecht. This will change from the 1st of January onwards, when the entire unit 'Nature and Environmental Communication' (NMC) will privatise and become an independent foundation (GemeenteUtrecht, 2012b). The farm will however continue to receive a subsidy from the municipality for the coming three years, as Everhard van Veen, both 'coordinator of the management of the NMC at the municipality of Utrecht' as well as 'general committee member of the vSKBN', indicates in an interview.

Seven employees receive a salary for their work on the farm. The daily management is carried out by one administrator, who works 36 hours a week. She manages the buildings and terrain and leads the executive team on the farm. Two animal caretakers, both working 32 hours a week, take care of the buildings, terrain and the animals. They also guide volunteers and interns plus activities for visitors. One educational employee develops all didactic material and works 29 hours a week. Three temporary workers, students, have the same responsibilities as the staff taking care of the buildings, terrain and animals; they replace these staff members during weekends and holidays. The number of volunteers fluctuates between 5 and 8, the administrator shares in an interview. These help in various tasks, from caring for the animals and grounds to administrative tasks. Additionally a volunteer with a mental disability helps out various days of the week, for several years already. New volunteers are sought through a volunteering agency. Companies who want to engage in a socially responsible outing with their personnel, occasionally also aid with a specific task. The children's farm is opened Tuesdays till Sundays from 10 till 17 o'clock. Activities are organized on a regular basis and always have an educational aim. Every Sunday afternoon from 14.00 o'clock onwards children and adults can partake in informative activities concerning nature and the environment. On Wednesday afternoons, from 14.00 o'clock onwards, teacher 'Leo' organizes informal activities surrounding different educational themes. Children can help feeding the animals every day between 15.50 and 16.00 o'clock. All these activities are free of charge (Stadswerken, 2013). Besides activities on a more individual basis are organised aimed at school classes or children's birthdays ("Gagelsteede," 2013).

Adjacent to the farm a playground is located, which is owned by the municipality. It used to be managed by the welfare organisation Cumulus Welzijn, yet has been interchanged on the 1st of August 2013 with Wijk & Co (Careyn, 2013). A team of social workers manages the playground on a daily basis. Contracts vary between 8 and 32 hours; in an interview a social worker shared that most work 24 hours a week. Their tasks are to watch children on the playground, aid in the resolution of conflicts and help adults and children with problems. Children are watched carefully, if the staff members suspect maltreatment such as sexual harassment or behavioural problems, contact is sought with parents, schools and even external youth welfare organisations. Other tasks are to provide children with extra equipment to play such as shovels, buckets, balls and small bikes and to open the paddling pool when temperatures rise above $\pm 22^{\circ}\text{C}$. When rain, wind or cold make a stay outside unpleasant, the personnel opens an interior playing space. Here children can be entertained with activities such as tinkering, board games and table tennis. The playground is accessible day and night. Supervised play is from the 1st of April to the 1st of October opened on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 15.00 till 18.00 o'clock, on Wednesdays from 12.00 till 18.00 o'clock and on Saturdays from 12.00 till 17.00 o'clock. From the 1st of October till the 1st of April supervised play

ends one hour earlier ("Gagelsteede," 2013). The children's farm cooperates closely with the playground. Once every two months the teams on the farm and the playground encounter each other in an official meeting, on a daily basis they cooperate closely while looking after visitors and the grounds. Once a year they both participate in the 'Day of the Park', where activities are organised around the public park De Gagel. Following this brief introduction to the Gagelsteede and the playground, the neighbourhood Overvecht in which both are located and a brief overview of their organisational structures, various pictures of both the children's farm and the playground might facilitate a better visualization of this second case study.

7.2.1 A Stroll Through De Gagelsteede

De Gagelsteede is located in a public park, the Gagel. It consist of a central stable with a 'cuddle-corner', a poultry house, 6 pastures for animals such as cows, goats and donkeys, and educational room and a small shop with sustainably produced foods. Various animals are held in small quantities, the most prominent ones are pigs, cows, various types of goats, sheep, donkeys, pony's, chickens, peacocks and various types of rodents. The grounds are extensive and for the researcher it has only been possible to observe approximately two-thirds of the grounds, visualized in a map (figure 30). In this map, drawn for the purpose of this research, 5 large animal pastures (with cows, sheep donkeys and ponies) are missing. Below some photographic impressions of De Gagelsteede and the playground are included. This graphic journey will follow the route, as indicated on the map, from number 1 to number 15.

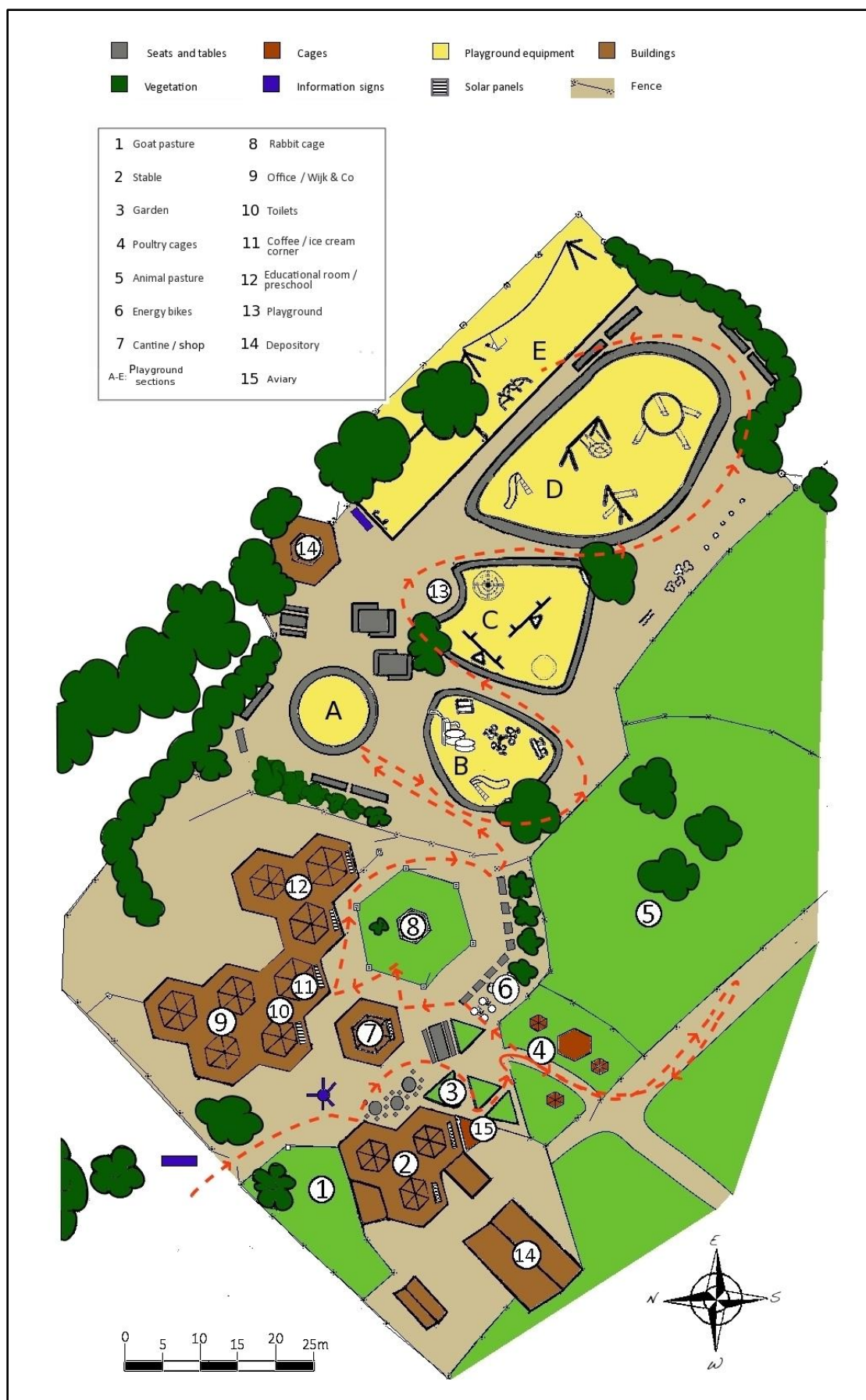


Figure 30: Map De Gagelsteede, 2013

The Gagelsteede is larger than the Vosheuvel; especially the playground offers much more playing equipment. This public farm has free parking spots for cars. There are furthermore bike racks and the farm is located near a bus stop (260 metres walking distance). Most visitors however arrive on foot, as it is situated in the middle of a residential area. You can use three entrances. The main entrance (figure 31 and 32) is clearly visible from the street and the parking place, as you enter you see the goats, buildings and main seating area. A large information sign shows the layout of the grounds and informs visitors about what can be done at this location. One side entrance is positioned next to a school and flat buildings and is mostly used by children who come alone, schools or neighbourhood residents. The final entrance is located within the public park 'De Gagel' and is used by visitors who also take a stroll through the park.



Figure 31 and 32: View from the Street

If you pass the main entrance, several information signs await you. You will firstly hit a panel with the different regulations guests are asked to follow on the Gagelsteede (figure 33). Some of the rules on the board:

- *"Children up to 6 years old have to be accompanied by someone 15 years or older"*
- *"Instructions of personnel should be followed"*
- *"We solve conflicts in a peaceful manner"*
- *"Animals can be caressed but not lifted/run after/screamed or shouted at"*
- *"We would like Dutch to be spoken here as much as possible so all understand each other"*

Guests are furthermore instructed to not feed the animals; children can help feeding each day at 15.30 hrs. Dogs, bikes, smoking and littering are all not allowed on the terrain, and in case of misbehaviour staff members can deny visitors the access to both the playground and the children's farm. Besides, a movable board reports recent news, such as activities coming up or young animals which have been recently born (figure 34). If you are unsure where you have to go, a sign with directions will guide you to the plethora of facilities, animals and other attractions (figure 35). Lastly all fences carry boards on which information can be found about the animals situated there.



Figure 33: Rules and Regulations



Figure 34: Activities and News



Figure 35: Directions

Adjacent to these various information signs, a cuddle pasture is accessible; here you can caress the goats (figure 36). A peacock wanders loose on the grounds; you might have the great luck to see him 'trying to impress his girl' (figure 37). Two orange cats run around the grounds freely and jump on visitor's laps when in need of a cuddle.



Figure 36: Cuddle Pasture



Figure 37: Peacock

If you pass this pasture, you can enter a large stable which houses various animals, such as pigs (figure 38), fishes (figure 39) and rats (figure 40). The stable is furthermore the home of goats and guinea pigs, and there are numerous educational games in which children can learn more about these domestic animals. An aviary has been attached to the stable in the summer of 2013.



Figure 38, 39 and 40: Inside the stable

Leaving the stable you reach a garden consisting of three triangles. Here diverse herbs, vegetables and fruits are grown. Small signs indicate which plant belongs to what species (figure 41 and 42).



Figure 41 and 42: Garden

Chickens are separated from the garden by a fence (figure 42 and 43) yet frequently escape as visitors, especially children, leave the gate open from time to time. If you continue through this cage, you pass another fence and can visit six animal pastures, with more goats, cows, donkeys, ponies and sheep (figure 44). These cages can either not be entered, or only at one's own risk. Each day, approximately around 15.30 children can help staff members to feed the animals. Due to the limited scope of this research, the animal pastures unfortunately have not been included during the observations.



Figure 43: Poultry Cages



Figure 44: Animal Pasture

Wandering back to the children's farm through the poultry cage and passed the garden, two energy bikes, often occupied, allow you to engage in a short learning experience about electricity (figure 45 and 46). These bikes enable users to yield energy and are connected to a wattmeter with images of different electric devices. While cycling small led lights turn on which are positioned next to the images of these devices; these give an insight into the amount of energy produced. If you cycle slowly, you might produce the energy necessary to charge a mobile phone or light a bulb. Faster cyclists yield the energy for a flat screen television to function. If you manage to reach full speed, the light on top of the pole ignites (OntwerpbureauFix, 2012). The two bikes are often used in small competitions to see who manages to cycle faster. In this manner the bikes additionally contribute to physical fitness.



Figure 45 and 46: Energy Bikes with Wattmeter

While cycling you sit with your back to a large rabbit cage (figure 47). This cage can be entered from two sides. In this spacious residence different kinds of rabbits enjoy the choice to either graze outside and dig holes on the sand (figure 48), or retreat in the hexagonal house with several entrance porches.



Figure 47: Rabbit Cage and Shop

The canteen where staff members sit and eat their lunches can be seen in figure 47, behind the rabbit cage. This building also hosts a small shop where products such as biological juices, honey and eggs from the farm can be bought. The rabbit cages are surrounded by 8 benches in total. These seats, located at the edges of the terrain, provide you with a view of both the children's farm and the playground. Six of these benches are located next to trees and are hence for a significant part of the day protected from the sun. In figure 49 we see two female sitting in the shade on the farm while watching their children on the playground.



Figure 48: Rabbits



Figure 49: Benches near the rabbit cage

These benches are also frequently used by parents picking their children up from the pre-school, which is situated on the opposite side of the rabbit cage (figure 50). Next to the pre-school there is an educational room, used by school classes visiting the Gagelsteede for didactic purposes. Two vending machines, with hot beverages and ice-cream, as well as toilets are located here as well.

Behind this building, not visible on the picture, is the interior playground which is opened by social workers from Wijk & Co when weather conditions, such as rain, wind or cold, make outdoor play unpleasant. Children can come and play inside, where loads of board games and tinkering activities take place. Adjacent is also the office for the children's farm staff, where administrative tasks are carried out.



Figure 50: Pre-school, Educational room, Coffee and Toilets

If you go through the gate which is depicted in figure, you reach the playground. This gate is always opened during the children's farms opening hours. The playground consists, roughly, five different sections, which are labelled A till E on the map (figure 30). Four parts, B till E, consist of a high concrete ridge on which you can sit, and are filled with sand. Each section has different playing equipment, which will be illustrated on below. Section A is the 'odd one out'. It is a perfect blue circle, and has as the other four playground parts, a higher concrete ridge which functions occasionally as secondary sitting space; yet it is not filled with sand. This location performs two functions. When temperatures rise above 22° C, the chances are high that social workers transform this location into a paddling pool. Children are asked to help clean the bottom of the pool, and it is slowly filled with water (figure 51). Adults accompanying the children conveniently sit on the benches near the pool, the picture demonstrates that on hot days like this the seats in the shadow are particularly popular and occupied by a large crowd. Please also note the bench located in the sun and occupied by one person only; it illustrates that the benches on the playground are particularly long. This allows you to sit on the same bench as other visitors, while remaining on a social or even public distance. Another interesting feature visible on this picture are the small bikes. This playing gear is provided by the staff when they are present and is put back in the storage room in the evenings. Children can choose small individual bikes, bikes which can be joined to form a 'train', buckets and shovels.



Figure 51: Paddling Pool, Surrounded by Long Benches (section A)

On most days in the Netherlands it is not so warm outside. Usually part A performs a different function; it becomes the stage for the game ‘knotsen’⁸ (figure 52). This is a game played by 4 players at a time, all have a stick with a round foam on the end. The aim is to ‘out’ one player by touching him with a ball, which can only be done using your stick. The player, who has to leave the game, is immediately replaced by another from the large queue waiting on the ridge, also visible in picture 52.



Figure 52: Playing Knotsen (A)



Figure 53: Picnic Tables

This game is generally played by children only, occasionally, if children fight among each other for example, a social worker might join for a while. Adults sitting on the benches and picnic tables surrounding part A of the playground, often watch this game with great curiosity. A note on the

⁸ This game is played four players at a time, all have a stick and with a ball have to try and touch one player to be out. A touched player is replaced by one waiting in the queue for this popular game.

picnic tables is that on sunny days they are located in the shade for a substantial part of the day and hence might get crowded. Both the long benches placed on the edges of the playground and these picnic tables offer visitors a good overview on the grounds and facilitate the supervision of children. If you move on to the next part of the playground, labelled B on the map, you will count five pieces of playground equipment. Over this warm summer of 2013, the water pump (figure 54) has been used by far the most. It consists of one pump a person has to press up and down to release water, and three sand containers placed at different heights, between which a small waterfall shapes as the water is pumped up. Children often played together at this piece. Sporadically an adult comes to aid with the pumping up of water. Next to the water pump are a small slide and scooters. The scooters are placed quite high, children younger than 6 are usually too small to reach the ground with their legs to turn around and hence need a push from a helpful adult (figure 55).



Figure 54: The Water Pump (B)



Figure 55: Small Slide and Scooters (B)

Other features of B are a wooden hut and two swings (figure 56). A significant part of this section on the playground is located in the shadow for a part of the day. Especially during days above 20 degrees, both section A and B of the playground were the most populated areas. In figure 57 it is visible that as the ridge of B is also located in the shadow, adults use this convenient spot to sit down and observe their children playing.



Figure 56: Swing (B)



Figure 57: Secondary Seating (B)

As you move on to part C, you will notice it consists of 4 different elements. Two seesaws, one large and one small, are regularly used by various groups of children and adults who play together (figure

58). A round platform, which can be twisted, can be used to sit or lie down on while someone else turns the platform (figure 59). A large turning rope tower is often occupied by children only. They climb on it while one or two push the rest to turn around.



Figure 58: Seesaw and Turning Table (C)



Figure 59: Turning Rope Tower (C)

As you reach part D, a surprising variety of swings awaits you. There is one metal frame with two swings. Then there is a large round swing (figure 60) on which several children can sit on at a time; up to six children have been observed on it! Often a person helps with the pushing of this large swing. And there is a metal frame in the shape of a circle, with four swings attached to it (figure 61). The fourth and final attraction in this section is a large slide (figure 62). This part is surrounded by four benches, which seem to be located in the sun throughout the day. Two benches are located on the edge of the playground, the other two have their back towards section E (see figure 63).



Figure 60: Round Swing (D)



Figure 61: Four Swings (D)



Figure 62: Large Slide (D)

Moving towards the final part (E on the map), you will see a cable way, a climbing rack and a small concrete soccer field. Children pull the seat of the cable way towards the little stairs (on the left in figure 63) and swing down towards the other end. The climbing rack is besides its main function (climbing) also frequently used as a lookout point.



Figure 63: Cable Way and Climbing Rack (D)

School classes, visiting the Gagelsteede in their breaks, have been regularly observed to make use of the soccer field (figure 64).

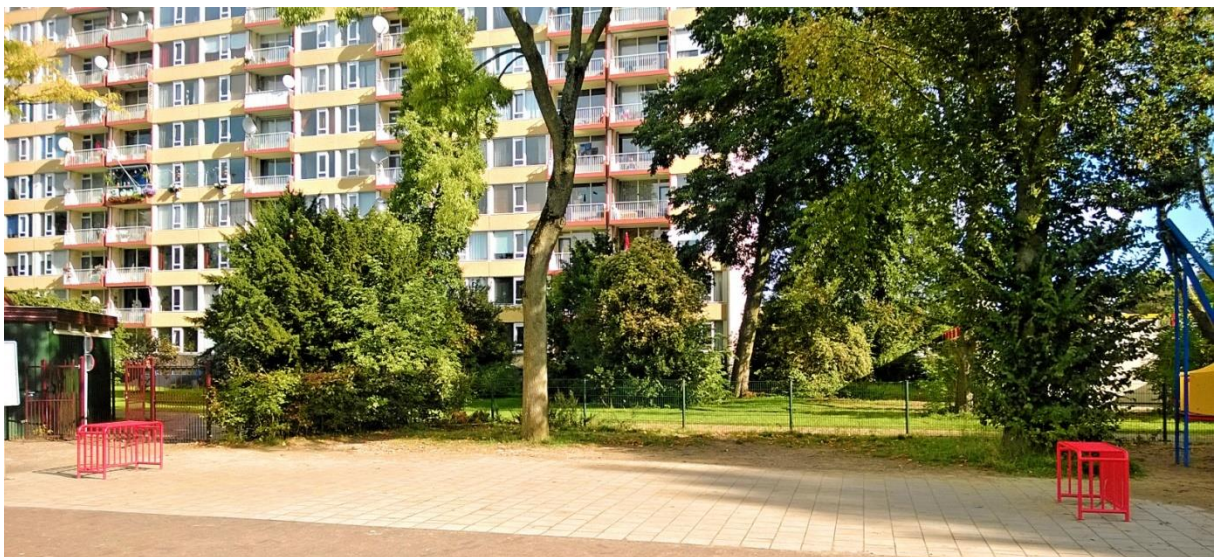


Figure 64: Soccer Field (D)

7.3 Comparisons between De Vosheuvel and Utrecht

De Vosheuvel and De Gagelsteede display, at a first glance, both similarities and differences on which I will elaborate below. The regions in which both farms are located, Amersfoort (Randenbroek) en Utrecht (Overvecht), will secondly be compared and contrasted. On a micro scale, de Vosheuvel and de Gagelsteede have several similarities. The children's farms have similar opening hours, both offer access free of charge, offer free parking spots for both cars and bikes and the farms are publicly accessible. The facilities on both farms are comparable, as both have a stable, gardens, an educational room, a shop, a playground, cuddle pastures with goats and rabbits that can be petted. Also the amounts and types of animals held are alike. On both farms, visitors can use either movable tables and chairs, or fixed benches and large picnic tables with seats. Staff members supervise the grounds of both farms, and rules and regulations are signified to visitors on various information signs. A final similarity on micro scale is that both farms receive school classes during the term and offer also organised children's birthday parties.

In the previous description of both case studies, numerous differences between these micro-settings can be noted. The location of both farms within their immediate surroundings differs significantly. De Vosheuvel is located on the outskirts of the city of Amersfoort, near a motorway and on a high street. This high street is challenging to cross for cyclists and pedestrians as there are no facilitating features such as traffic lights. One school is located next to the Vosheuvel, a busstop, sportpark and a hospital are 300 metres away. The nearest residential area is 400 metres away, the public park is 600 metres and an elderly home lays at 800 metres walking distance. De Gagelsteede on the other hand is situated within a public park and surrounded by residential areas, the nearest flat is located on a 20 metre distance from the farm ground. An elderly home is 100 metres walking distance from the farm. A play street with a broad pedestrian section and a small part for cars, slows cars down and increases the safety of people walking and cycling. The nearest busstop is positioned 260 metres from the Gagelsteede. A large motorway is on a 700 metres distance, several primary schools are less than 1 kilometre away. At a 700 metres distance a supermarket is located.

Another difference that catches the eye is the difference in scale. De Gagelsteede is larger than de Vosheuvel; especially the playground in Utrecht stands out which is almost 5 times the size of the playground in Amersfoort. In Utrecht, visitors have more space to move around, in Amersfoort visitors have less space to share. The playground in Utrecht is furthermore separated from the children's farm and stays open day and night, in contrast to both farms. At set times the grounds are watched by social workers which provide children with playing equipment and make sure conflicts are solved. In summer they open the paddling pool occasionally, in winter or on rainy days the indoor playground offers children a location to retreat. In de Vosheuvel the cafeteria functions as a refuge on cold or raining days. De Gagelsteede can be accessed from three directions, de Vosheuvel has only one entrance. Despite this difference in scale, the larger Gaglsteede attracts only 26.000-30.000 visitors a year, De Vosheuvel claims to reach 3 to 4 times as many visitors annually, namely 100.000. The two petting zoos differ in their organisational structure. De Gagelsteede is financed and run by the municipality Utrecht, has 7 paid employees and between 5 to 8 volunteers. De Vosheuvel is owned and managed by an independent foundation, receives subsidy from the local municipality in Amersfoort and has 2 staff members who receive a salary and approximately 45 volunteers are active.

A further important dissimilarity is that on De Vosheuvel many animals, such as the chickens, the dog, guinea fowls and the peacock move freely on the grounds. On de Gagelsteede the peacock and two cats move freely, all other animals are in cages or on fenced pastures. In Amersfoort there are barely any educational signs providing information about the animals. In Utrecht on every cage or fence information about the animals is given and in the stable visitors can engage in educational games. Activities in Utrecht take place on a regular basis (every Sunday and Wednesday afternoon), these are mostly educational yet also involve a recreational aspect and are free of charge. Some activities are targeted both at adults and children. In Amersfoort the irregular activities require a participation fee and perform mostly a recreational and less an educational function. On both farms children can participate in feeding the animals, on de Gagelsteede this is free of charge and children can join whenever they want, on de Vosheuvel children have to pay and can join for an arranged period of 14 weeks. In Utrecht, visitors can get coffee, tea and ice-creams from a vending machine. In the shop things as biological juices, honey and eggs can be bought. In Amersfoort everything is bought at the shop.

On a regional scale also several similarities and differences are apparent. Firstly Utrecht is a large town in the Netherlands, whereas Amersfoort is a smaller, mid-sized town. When we compare the ethnic composition of Overvecht and Randenbroek, we find some interesting parallels as well as disparities (table...). Overvecht and Randenbroek have a similar amount of Western migrants and migrants from other, non-Western countries (other than Turkey, Morocco, Surinam or the Dutch Antilles). Overvecht has however a much higher percentage of Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese and Dutch Antilles residents. The percentage of native Dutch is considerably lower in Utrecht Overvecht than in Randenbroek Amersfoort.

Ethnic Origin Residents 2013	Overvecht %	Randenbroek %
Native Dutch	44,3	69,9
Other Western Migrants	9	8,6
Turkey	9,2	4,4
Morocco	23,3	6,8
Surinam and Dutch Antilles	5	2,8
Other non-Western countries	9	7,5

Table 5: Ethnic Origin Residents Amersfoort and Utrecht 2013 (*G.B.A.Amersfoort, 2013; G.B.A.Utrecht, 2013*)

Both sub-neighbourhoods where the children's farms are located, Tigris- en Bostondreef in Utrecht and Weberstraat in Amersfoort, are described as 'Urban Inactive Areas'⁹. This description is given to urban areas where there is a very low labour participation and a low (but not extremely low) level of wealth ("Buurtwijzer, Stedelijk Inactieve Buurt," 2013). In the following two chapters I will discuss the results these two case studies generated.

⁹ Urban inactive Areas, freely translated from Dutch: Stedelijk inactieve buurt'

8. Results Case Study 1: De Vosheuvel

In this chapter the results from the case study at Amersfoort, de Vosheuvel, are presented. Firstly the visitors profile is sketched. Meet 'the' visitors, learn about their visits, their general conduct on the farm and their motivations to visit. Secondly crucial data about the setting as a leisure destination will be presented. The question whether the farm is a public or private place will be answered and the qualities that make this place unique will be described. In the final part of this chapter I will focus on this public setting as a social space and meeting place. Attractive animals and other non-human objects which enable strangers to talk to each other will be visualized. Some barriers, which might prevent visitors from interaction, will also be highlighted. Next, the interactions between visitors will be explored, with a specific focus on inter-ethnic relations. Finally the contact between staff members and visitors will be touched upon and in a brief summary the main findings will be connected to the conceptual framework.

8.1 The Visitors

In this section I will explore the visitors' profile of the Vosheuvel in terms of residency, ethnicity and group size. Secondly details about visiting frequency, length of stay and fluctuations in visitor numbers will be given. I then pursue with how visitors act on this children's farm and their motivations to visit, with a specific focus on similarities and differences between visitors from diverse ethnicities.

8.1.1 Meet 'the' Visitor

Visitors of De Vosheuvel are diverse; it is hence not possible to capture 'the' visitor. De Vosheuvel is popular among residents in Amersfoort, it attracts people from the immediate vicinity, the neighbourhood Randenbroek, as well as from other parts of the city. Even visitors of surrounding cities and villages find their way to this children's farm; interviews with people from Leusden and Nijkerk have been held. The administrator of the farm, estimates that about two-thirds of the visitors come from Amersfoort and one-third from Leusden. Important to mention is that, as the research took place predominantly over the summer period, some visitors who have been observed were in the neighbourhood only due to holiday reasons and live in other parts of the Netherlands or even other countries such as Germany. Some visitors are directly linked to institutions in the surrounding area of De Vosheuvel. Next to the Vosheuvel is a school for disabled children, the Koningin Emma school. During the school term, according to the manager, children visit the farm on a weekly basis. Approximately 800 metres walking distance from the Vossheuvel an elderly home is situated. Several elderly have been observed, coming with mobility scooters or a walker; they might live in this elderly home. There is lastly a hospital situated 300 metres away from the farm, one Surinamese interviewee combined a visit to the hospital with a visit to the farm.

No official figures exist concerning the amount of ethnic majority and minority visitors in Amersfoort. The qualitative methods used in this study do not allow an exact quantitative indication on numbers and percentages of each visitor type. An estimation is that approximately 90% of the visitors are white Dutch, the ethnic majority. Approximately 10% of visitors came from ethnic minorities. The largest part consisted of non-Western ethnic minorities, namely Moroccan, Turkish and Surinamese. One female has been interviewed from Aruba. Asiatic visitors have been observed, but their country of origin remained unknown. A very small group of western Ethnic minorities from, i.a. Germany, Poland and Canada also visited the farm. These percentages are not likely to be representative.

Although no exact figures regarding the ethnicity of visitors are known, three interviewees indicated that the ethnic composition of visitors changed during the holiday period, one was a staff member and two were visitors from the ethnic minority. Reasons reported were firstly that it is holiday period, and especially the Turkish and Moroccan visitors might be on holiday in their respective countries of origin. Secondly interviewees indicated that it has been difficult to visit during Ramadan for Islamic visitors. The temperatures this summer were relatively high for the Netherlands, between 22 and 32 degrees Celsius. During the Ramadan, adults are not allowed to drink which made visits during the day difficult. The female furthermore had to prepare an iftar, evening meal, every evening which is time consuming and prevented visits.

Most visitors were adults whose main role was to accompany children; hence they came with on average one or two children. Adults had different relations to these children, most were parents and grandparents, but also nursery-class teachers, adult brothers and sisters, neighbours and family friends have been observed to accompany children. Most children visiting the farm were up till 6 year old, but children from all ages have been witnessed. A smaller group visiting the children's farm consisted of adults without children. Most were the elderly, often with walking aids visiting the farm and making a short stroll. During the observations no children have been seen alone. The administrator indicated however that some groups with youth aged 12-16 visit monthly. Occasionally elderly brothers, sisters and/or cousins accompany their younger sibling. Twice a nursery class has been observed, with either two or three accompanying adults. The administrator of the farm discussed that during the school term different primary school classes visit the farm; several groups a week visit and are taught by their teacher about animals on the farm. The average group size was between two and four people, this is both true for the ethnic majority as well as the ethnic minorities. Non-Western ethnic minorities, especially female from Morocco or Turkey, seemed to visit the children's farm occasionally in larger groups (more than four persons), two female from Morocco and a staff member indicated this in an interview, and it has also been observed one Sunday. Ethnic minorities also seemed to visit the children's farm more often with their families (grandparents, parents, brothers, sisters, cousins etc.) while native Dutch people mostly come with their child, partner, occasionally with grandparents or friends. Having viewed who visits the farm, I will now provide information concerning the course of such a visit.

8.1.2 The Visit

The frequency of visiting varied greatly among interviewees, this seems unrelated to ethnic background. One Nigerian respondent specified it was her first time to visit the farm. A Dutch grandmother and a Surinamese mother said they come perhaps twice a year. A Dutch mother indicated she is a maximum of five times a year at the children's farm. Two Dutch mothers come once or twice a month, a Dutch grandmother comes at least once a month, one Aruban female indicated she comes on a weekly basis with at least 50 visits a year. What stands out is that the people visiting less frequently usually live in a distant neighbourhood, such as Zielhorst, Vathorst, or even other cities, such as Nijkerk. Although there were two frequent visitors who live quite far away, one Dutch female from Vathorst and one Aruban from Schothorst, most regular guests are from nearby neighbourhoods such as Rustenburg and Randenbroek. The administrator of the farm notes that there seems to be a group of regular visitors who show up at least one a week, he recognizes them, often they come already for several years. But most visit less frequently, and the administrator indicates he does not know them.

It has been a challenge during observations for one researcher to time the length of stay, while at the same time observing interactions between visitors; hence the few observations made are not representative. The shortest stay observed was on a rainy day, when a family stayed less than 10 minutes on the children's farm ground. From the interviews a great variety comes forth, some indicate to stay at least half an hour, others say they stay usually 2 to even 2,5 hours. There seems to be no relation here to the ethnic background of visitors. The length of stay thus varied greatly and might depend on a multitude of factors such as the age of children, frequency of visit, ones occupation during that day or interest in the animals on the farm. The administrator estimates that an average visit lasts 1,5 hours.

There are large fluctuations in visitor numbers throughout the day, week and year. The administrator argued that the busiest days of visiting the children's farm are Wednesday afternoons, the weekends and often also the Friday afternoon. This relates directly to times when parents are free to visit and when children have time off school. Again, the holiday period is not representative for the rest of the year, as during the observation period it has been busier throughout the week. It surprises the administrator however that even during the holidays, the weekends remain busier than weekdays. This concurs with observations. A difference has been observed between visitors during weekdays and weekends. During weekdays often one adult accompanied the child, frequently a parent, often also grandparents. During the weekend more often entire families visited (father, mother and children) or large groups, often Islamic/Moroccan female. Two Dutch and a Surinamese female indicated they only come weekends or occasionally Wednesday afternoons as the other days of the week they work and the children are at day-care. Sunday is informally termed 'Headscarf day' by volunteers and personnel at the Vosheuvel. This is when the amount of visitors from ethnic minorities is significantly higher than other days; this corresponds with observations. Three Moroccan female phrased that they tend to visit Sundays as that is the day with more time at hand and the children are free; it is also a relaxation day with no housework, and their visit to the farm allows them to have some time at home among themselves. Two Moroccan female indicated nevertheless that they also often come on Wednesdays.

The administrator reckons the farm receives approximately 100.000 visits a year according to a counter¹⁰ on the entrance porch, which means, divided over 52 weeks, on average 1923 visitors in one week. However, in the summer when the weather is fine there might be 300 visitors a day, in the winter there might be weeks with only 300 visitors a week, in the winter generally much less people come. The administrator explains *"the farm is a weather box we always say, the weather determines everything here, if it is bad weather no one comes, if it is good weather many people come, is it too hot, too cold, then nobody comes."* On a smaller scale there are daily fluctuations, mornings between 10 and 12 and afternoons from 14.30 till 17.00 are usually the busiest, between 12 till 14.30 it is lunchtime, small children need to go for a little sleep, a diaper change or have some food. This concurs with observations, most people left the farm before twelve and not until 14 o'clock would the density of visitors increase again. The playground is generally named as the place where visitors stayed longest, this matches with the observations. People with small children spend between half

¹⁰ 20% of the amount indicated by the counter is subtracted, to exclude people walking back and forth/ personnel members/ a stroller that might be counted double.

and two-thirds of their time in the farm on the playground. After this information on the general course of a visit and visiting patterns, we will pursue with the way visitors behave during a visit.

8.1.3 Behaviour on the Farm

What was noted during the observations is that most activities visitors undertake on the children's farm seem to fit leisure purposes. People watched and fed animals, educated children about the animals, they ate and drank, took photographs, walked, stood, sat, made phone calls and children occasionally engaged in individual play. Children also got involved in organized activities such as painting or tilt-cart riding. Adults and children walked around at a slow pace. Occasionally children ran short distances. Work-related activities were only carried out by staff members, either paid personnel or volunteers, who took care of the animals, engaged in maintenance activities of the building or the garden, sold goods at the shop, worked on administrative jobs in the office or interacted with visitors while providing information.

There seem to be certain unwritten behavioural codes. When a child started to cry or screamed loudly, it was calmed down. People asked each other if seats were free, if one could step aside in order to see the animals better, or even to watch ones child as the parent wanted to buy something or go to the toilet. More on this topic of social interaction between visitors will follow in the third part of this chapter. Two incidents of 'disorderly behaviour' have been observed. In one a girl from an ethnic minority (speaking a foreign language), accompanied by a male, started stamping in a mud pool. The father laughed as his girl kept stamping for about 3 minutes and got very muddy. Other parents tried to pull away their children who wanted to join the girl. One ethnic minority male commented he found this behaviour inappropriate and did not want his grandson to join. The second observation concerned an ethnic majority male who brought bread for the animals although signs indicate feeding is forbidden, and has been corrected by a staff member. The administrator discussed how he experiences various types of vandalism, such as bins that are put on fire, graffiti that is put on the animals and a group of youth that comes on a monthly basis and sometimes molests animals and visitors. He believes this vandalism is directly related to the location of the farm in an economically deprived neighbourhood.

When it comes to human-animal interaction, some differences between the ethnic majority and ethnic minorities have been observed. People watch or touch the animals, and sometimes even seem a bit hesitant; especially visitors from ethnic minorities tended to stay at a certain distance from the animals. A Dutch couple underwrites this in an interview: *"The approach is very different...we [ethnic majority] just put our fingers through the cage until we are bitten and they [ethnic minority] just stand a bit on a distance and look [...] one Turkish girl with headscarf, I saw her in the cuddle corner, she was the only one."* A Surinamese and a Moroccan female claim they have fear for animals and prefer to stay at a distance. The Surinamese woman points out she does however want her children to learn about animals. A Dutch female, who studied to be a veterinary assistant and loves animals, shares her fear of parrots as she has been bitten by one, and prefers to stay away from this animal. A volunteer at the farm shared in contrast that both children from ethnic minorities and ethnic minorities display this kind of behaviour: *"Children are not used to animals anymore, not all...some go immediately to the animals, but many have fear."* During observations fear has been observed in relation to the dog walking loose, two children, both of the ethnic minority cried and did not dare to pass the dog. Several adults, of both of the ethnic minority and ethnic majority passed the dog on a

distance. Numerous children, of different ethnicities, were afraid of the chickens, the large ponies and the goats. What has been noted during observations is that ethnic majority parents, grandparents but also nursery-teachers tend to be more 'educational' towards their children than visitors from ethnic minorities. They passed various cages with their children, went into the cuddle pasture, and provided explanations about the animals, such as its name, the sound it makes and shared certain characteristics. Ethnic minorities also engaged in educational explanations, but to a much lesser extent. A Moroccan mother shares in the interview, she notices that Dutch people know much about animals and are able to explain this to their children. She would like to know more about animals herself, as now her six year old daughter gives explanations about the animals. Dutch grandparents discuss they would like more information about animals, as especially one of the granddaughters is extremely curious and asks many questions. Sometimes a child tries to catch an animal, such as a chicken or a rabbit. In all cases observed there has been a parent correcting the child.

During the short observation-time such behaviour maltreatment of animals (beating, harassing) has not been witnessed. One volunteer however shared the following when discussing the visit of Islamic people on Sundays: *"Those foreigners are no good. They come here to only sit on the grass, they bring bags full of food, no respect for the animals.. the women chat among each other and the children, especially the boys, bully the animals"*. The administrator shared in a first informal chat the belief that there are ethnic differences in the way in which animals are treated: *"if there are problems it is with the Turkish, they interact differently with animals they think: you can eat them, so you can sit on them and beat them"*. He continues: *"Our kids [native Dutch] have to be taught that this cute animals can be eaten, those children [Islamic children] we have to teach that animals can be also very nice to look at and pet not just eat."* In a second interview he nuanced this statement and points out that children from both the ethnic majority and the non-Western migrants can behave either well or badly. He related this to 'sub-cultural' differences. *"You just notice very well if a child is a well raised child [...] or that a child is let loose a lot or that a child is from another ethnic background where they learn that an animal is to eat"*. These sub-cultural differences are also valid for adults.

In sum, generally visitors engaged in recreational behaviour such as walking at a slow pace, watching animals, sitting and eating ice-cream. More on such activities will follow in the third part of this chapter. Two incidents have been observed which were judged either by fellow visitors or staff members as inappropriate behaviour, and staff members shared other disorderly behaviour they encounter. Relationships to animals vary across visitors. Visitors from both ethnic minorities and the ethnic majority occasionally displayed fear when interacting with animals. Visitors from ethnic minorities generally stay at a larger distance of the animals. Another difference is that visitors from the ethnic majority engaged in more educational behaviour, where they shared explanations about the animals. Visitors from the ethnic minority seemed to do this to a lesser extent, yet generalizations cannot be made. Next the reasons people reported to visit the farm will be treated.

8.1.4 Motivations to Visit

The Vosheuvel was one of the 31 children's farms investigated by Klinkers in 1993. Here visitors were asked to share general demographic information such as age and gender of visitors. Further the wishes, behaviour and opinions of visitors were asked for, related to the children's farm (Klinkers,

1993). No other investigations into this children's farm have been undertaken to the author's knowledge, based on information shared by the administrator and the municipality of Amersfoort. In this study, one of the things surveyed were the motivations people had to visit the farm. These have been collected in the table below; respondents were allowed to tick more than one answer. Remarkable is that both children and adults were asked their opinion. Some divergences in their answers can be found. Children chose more often a reason to visit which related to animals, such as watching animals and taking care of the animals. Parents generally came for their child, to watch the animals and have a rest. Interestingly for this particular study, is that 10% of adults and 11% of the children named 'meeting other people' a reason to visit. These results are quite dated, yet they do point into an interesting direction, that indeed meeting other people and/or children is an important motivation to visit the children's farm (Klinkers, 1993).

Reasons to visit the children's farm	% of adults	% of children
Child likes it	70	0
Watch animals	40	75
Sit/ Have a rest	18	2
Meet children/other adults	10	11
Learn about animals	8	8
Take care of animals	6	48
Development of the child	4	0
Bring waste	3	2
Other reasons	4	5

Table 6: Reasons to Visit (Klinkers, 1993)

The administrator believes that motivations of people to visit the farm are diverse. The largest reason for people to come, he considers, is the possibility to see animals in a comfortable manner, to use all the senses when meeting an animal, here he believes the children's farm differs from a zoo. He thinks there are also educational motives; adults want their children to learn how to treat an animal or how to take responsibility for an animal, *"meeting nature and animals and experiencing these in the present urbanized environment"*. He believes visitors also come to have an ice-cream and let their children play in the playground. And he thinks *"there is nature here [...] farm-nature, let me call it that way, and I think people come for that as well."* Finally people might come to meet others.

Visitors shared eight reasons why they come to the farm, for the animals, to have an 'outing' outside and enjoy the weather, to be in a pleasant place, for organized activities, to meet others, for the playground, as the entrance is free and finally because it is close by for some visitors. The animals were indeed a first and vital reason to visit the farm, for nine of the interviewees, of which five from an ethnic majority and four of the ethnic minority. Dutch adults found it important that children got in touch with animals and combat their fear. Several Dutch and one Surinamese adult want their children to learn how to take care of animals. One Dutch grandmother and the members from ethnic minorities indicate their (grand) children simply enjoy animals. One Dutch grandmother said she has several grandchildren, yet she visits the farm only with this girl who is not afraid of animals. A Nigerian woman specified the peacock reminds her of Africa, she enjoys that memory. One Dutch mother shared the animals are central in all her visits to the farm. In spring they visit especially to see the young animals, her son has muscular-skeletal problems and touching animals is important for his

development; and they have a young puppy which they want to accustom to different animals. Seven interviewees, of which 5 from an ethnic minority and 2 from the ethnic majority, indicated that their main reason to visit is to be outside and have an outing. A Moroccan female indicates she comes to be outside and experience nature. Ten interviewees name 'nice weather' as a necessary condition to visit. A Surinamese mother says *'I come to get out of the house and away from the housework, a break to be outside'*. Six interviewees, half from ethnic minorities, half from the ethnic majority, discussed that they and their children simply find it a pleasant place to be and relax here. A Dutch grandmother and father appreciated there is always something new, such as a new cage or animals in a different spot. A Dutch and Moroccan mother said they miss in Vathorst [other farm in Amersfoort] the opportunity to take a walk on the grounds and in the large public park. Another important motivation five visitors mentioned, is that they come especially for activities such as sheep shearing and riding in the tilt-car. Three ethnic majority visitors and two female from Morocco and Aruba respectively visit the farm when such activities are on. A Moroccan and A Dutch mother, living in Vathorst, indicated that events are the most important reason to go to the children's farm relatively far away from them. One Dutch mother says her children are too young for the events, but when they grow up this might become a reason to visit. A Dutch grandmother explicitly stated she never comes for events and prefers to visit spontaneously.

Three female from ethnic minorities mentioned one of their motivations to visit is to meet other people. An Aruban mother discusses *"I live in a less multicultural neighbourhood where people are more distant, I like to come here where people are more open. I come to meet others and feel more connected to the Netherlands and to the people."* A Moroccan female similarly stated the importance of meeting others for her: *"I recently moved to Randenbroek and come to meet other people here both for me and my children"*. A Nigerian woman highlighted how she came with a friend to spend their time together with their children. Only two female, one Dutch and one from Morocco, explicitly indicated a motivation for the visit is the playground. The Dutch female pointed out that a playground is something she misses in the other farm in Amersfoort, in Vathorst. Yet all visitors specified this is the place where they spend the longest amount of time (up to 1-1,5 hour). A Dutch mother and a Dutch grandmother shared that they come as often as they do because the farm is accessible without payment. Seven interviewees, four from the ethnic majority and three from ethnic minorities, said that they truly appreciate the farm has no entrance fee, as this makes the farm accessible for them. Four interviewees, of which two from ethnic minorities and two from the ethnic majority, say they always leave some money as a donation on the way out and would be prepared to pay a small charge. Dutch grandparents found however that it should not cost more as it might scare people of, and a Moroccan female said she appreciates the farm is for free as she faces financial challenges. Finally, a Moroccan and a Dutch female reckon they visit often because they live very close by the farm.

A research conducted by Klinkers (1993) and the view of the manager thus largely concur with the motivations visitors shared in this study. Watching and interacting with animals seem to be the crucial reason to go to the farm. Generally visitors from the ethnic majority emphasized the educational importance of interaction with animals for their children. Several motivations closely tied to leisure have been mentioned. The study by Klinkers (1993) suggests that adults come as children like it, and sit while having a rest. The administrator named recreational motives such as eating ice-cream and playing on the playground. Visitors shared the importance of an outing while enjoying the

weather and being outside. The setting is considered relaxing and pleasant for them and their children. Some come specifically for activities. Surprising is that only visitors from ethnic minorities shared that meeting people is one of the reasons to visit the children's farm. Only two visitors named the playground as a motivation, yet almost all say this is the location where they spend most time. Visitors from the ethnic majority named the free entrance as a motive. A female from an ethnic minority appreciates this as she faces financial problems. Surprising is that several visitors from both the ethnic minority and ethnic majority argue they always leave some donations and would be prepared to pay an entrance fee. Two visitors from different ethnic backgrounds name proximity to their home as a final motivation. In this part I attempted to sketch the visitor profile and give an insight in their motivations to visit the farm. Next it is crucial to understand the leisure destination they visit; hence several qualities of the children's farm will be highlighted.

8.2 A Recreational Site

In the second section of this chapter the recreational site is central. Firstly the children's farm will be characterized as a public leisure place, open for all kinds of visitors. Several qualities will additionally be highlighted which make the farm a pleasant place, attracting a diverse range of visitors.

8.2.1 A Public Place

As indicated in the chapter 7, the children's farm used to be owned by the municipality, but has been privatized in 1997 and is now in the hands of a foundation dedicated to the running of this farm. It continues to receive a substantial annual subsidy from the municipality. Other sources of income are, according to the administrator, services and products sold by the farm, such as catering, birthday parties, accompanying youth with disabilities and the renting out of the educational room; donations from visitors, organisations and people adopting an animal and finally social entrepreneurship, where volunteers invest their time and costs are reduced; ownership of the farm can thus be qualified as semi-public. Visual and physical access is not optimal. Visually the farm is not accessible from the street, protected by a fence and trees. A sign on the main road nearby memorizes drivers on their way out of Amersfoort of the existence of the farm. Physically the farm is not accessible for all. The petting zoo is located close to a high road, which has to be crossed by visitors coming from either Amersfoort or Leusden. This makes it challenging for children to come alone. Access to the farm itself is also not an easy endeavour. Two fences have to be passed. This has once observed to be a challenge, when the researcher entered the farm at 10 o'clock and a group waited in front of the gate; they did not manage to open it. This might hence also pose a difficulty for people with a disability; no visitors with such impairments have been observed, yet according to the administrator many children from a school for special needs visit weekly during the school term. The entrance to the farm is hence regulated. There are strict opening hours¹¹, and at night an electric current is put on the fence around the children's farm. *'We are located in a neighbourhood of attention, this neighbourhood needs extra attention'*. People who might potentially behave in a disorderly manner, are observed closely by staff members. A Dutch male and female indicate they really appreciate the parking spots for both cars and bikes. *"A benefit is that they have parking spots these days [...] and for free. With the bike and with the car everything is improved [...] and it is safer while driving in and out [...] they made it wider"*. The farm can be reached by public transport, the closest bus stop is at a 300 metre distance. In addition there is no entrance fee, which as depicted earlier, is a powerful

¹¹ See chapter 7, where an extensive description of the case studies can be found

motive for people to visit the farm. Finally there are several signs with rules and regulations, such as 'Do not feed the animals'.

The location is generally used and shared by people of different age groups, with various abilities and of various ethnicities. We also saw that visitors come from different neighbourhoods and even other cities. Yet the farm is dominated by people with children, there are relatively few visitors aged 15-25. The majority of visitors are also native Dutch, ethnic minorities have been seen much less at the farm. In the summer few visitors with disabilities have been observed, but, according to the administrator, the children's farm receives weekly visits during the school term. He furthermore claims there is a group of regular visitors he recognizes, but most visitors are unknown to him. *"You have a group of regular visitors that you recognize because they come here often, I do not know most people, because they come from time to time, that can off course be more often than once a year but there are so many people here that I really do not recognize them all"*. The ownership of the farm is semi-public and the setting is strictly regulated and surveyed in terms of opening hours and visitor-behaviour. Visually and physically the farm is not accessible for all due to trees and a fence that is challenging to open. Yet the lack of an entrance fee, free parking spots and reachability by public transport enable in theory a great diversity of people to visit. Although a mixture of visitors in terms of age, ability and ethnicity is indeed present, the location seems to be dominated by visitors of the ethnic majority and people with children. The administrator of the farm recognizes a group of visitors who come regularly to the farm, yet most he does not know. We saw that visitors come from different neighbourhoods and even cities. It is hence difficult to place De Vosheuvel somewhere on the public-private spectrum. I would argue that free access, the presence of a diverse group of visitors (even though dominated by some) and the semi-public ownership make this location public rather than a private. In the next section several qualities of this public place will be highlighted.

8.2.2 Qualities of the Recreational Site

Through the interviews and the observations several qualities of this leisure setting are highlighted. This recreational site offers stability, protection, and safety, is highly adaptable and has certain aesthetic qualities and all in all provides users with enjoyment. Firstly, the children's farm seems relatively stable. It opened its doors for the public in 1977 and is still accessible. One Dutch respondent even indicated she used to visit the farm as a child herself, she now comes with her sons. *"I come here since I was very small [...] it is just very close by"*. The place secondly seems to be adaptable to changing needs. During the research period, the staff at the Vosheuvel distributed a questionnaire. In the interview the administrator emphasized he finds the contact with his visitors very important to know what is going on, how they feel about the farm and whether they would like to see any improvements. Initial results depicted that visitors find the playground too small; now the foundation will look for funds and options to expand the playground.

The farm offers furthermore protection to its visitors, especially from negative weather influences. A volunteer shared during an observation session, that when it rains, people either go towards the exit, or they hide in the stable or the cafeteria. This corresponds with observations; there has been only one day with rain, and indeed, two white Dutch female went with their children to the cafeteria and had a drink, another white Dutch family went straight towards the exit when it started raining, a different family with puppy went into the stable and looked at the animals there. One Dutch family came in with rain jackets and walked past several cages to finish in the shop. No visitors of ethnic

minorities have been observed on the day it rained. A Dutch female visitor argues visiting in the rain makes no sense as all the animals hide and there is nothing to see. On days hotter than 20 degrees, people sought shade. There are several shaded sports at the playground and on the large picnic table. This made people sit closer to each other than on cooler days. Trees on the playground offer cooling protection; the picnic table is shaded due to the shop building and several mobile parasols. During observations it seemed there is little shelter against wind at the farm. Two days it cooled down and a wind came in the late afternoon, which made people seem to move more towards the exit. Finally something visitors needed to be protected from, were the many wasps. People from all ethnicities were irritated by or afraid of the wasps and tended to pull their children away, or order to *'stay calm, then the wasp will not do anything'*. Staff members put plastic cups with lemonade inside the trees, to attract the wasps and relieve the visitors.

The maintenance and aesthetic quality of the children's farm provoked different reactions among visitors. Two visitors, one from an ethnic minority and one from the ethnic majority, were both quite critical about the maintenance of the farm, specifically the playground. *'I would like the place to be cleaned up a little and better maintained. The slide looks horrible with the paint coming off'*, a Dutch grandmother said. A Surinamese mother agreed *'the playground should be renovated, it is very small... the paint of the slide peels off the slide.. The playground is a bit dirty, the sand is dirty [...] I find that annoying, I do not dare to let my girl [1 year old] crawl around here.'* One Dutch mother however thought this 'lack' of maintenance suits the atmosphere. *"It is a little old-fashioned, the paint gets off the slide, the grass is trampled down, the farm is falling apart, but it belongs to the atmosphere, the historical character"*. Another Dutch woman also commented on the atmosphere, which she finds 'playful' as everyone is busy doing something. A Moroccan female finds the place 'beautiful'.

The farm provides enjoyment to visitors on many levels. All interviewees indicated they enjoy a visit. Many reasons for this enjoyment were discussed; adults were happy to see the children enjoy the place and learn something, to follow the different seasons at the farm, see young animals in spring, eat an ice-cream or drink coffee, meet other people, the atmosphere was enjoyed, the natural environment, both sun and shade, pleasant contact with the personnel, personal memories at the place and the relation with animals *"I always like it here [...] I think it is something very nice to do with small children"* a Dutch mother argued. *"Great that places like this still exist, you can stay an entire day and enjoy"*, a Dutch grandmother said. *"I love the farm"* an Aruban female shared. Finally a Surinamese mother found *"this is a very enjoyable place to be"*.

The safety of the place was not directly mentioned by interviewees, but during observations it has been noted that parents let their children run around, they often allowed a public distance between themselves and the children and let their children play on the playground, the cuddle corner or the tractor while they sat near on the playground. In the final part of this chapter concerning the social interaction at Amersfoort, it will be demonstrated that parents occasionally took care of strangers' children, which might have contributed to a feeling of safety. People that might potentially behave in a disorderly manner, were observed closely by staff members to ensure safety of animals and visitors. A volunteer shared that children engaging in devilments, parents who do not watch these children who are harming property, animals or visitors, are spoken to, as well as visitors who are feeding the animals. The administrator shared that about once a month a group of youth comes, he

terms “watch-out groups¹²”, they tend to come from the Randenbroek neighbourhood and once they enter they are watched by personnel; at least one person from the farm follows them carefully. This youth is ethnically diverse, with members both from the ethnic majority and (non-Western) ethnic minorities. This surveillance might enhance safety at the farm. Finally the farm has a ‘Zoonosis quality mark’ which ensures steps are taken to prevent zoonosis, illnesses that are transferable from animals to people, ensuring visitors’ health. Several qualities of the farm, stability, adaptability, protection, maintenance and aesthetic quality, enjoyment and safety have been summarized. All are prerequisites to enable a public place of good quality where people feel comfortable and stay long enough to engage in social interaction. These are also qualities which make this place attractive as a leisure setting, where people engage in leisurely experiences such as relaxation, discovery and connection with animals, an ‘outing’ and shared quality time with their (grand) children, which are motivations shared in the first part of this chapter. Next, this recreational public space will be presented as a meeting place, bursting with potential catalysers for social interaction.

8.3 A Social Place

In the third part of this chapter, De Vosheuvel will be presented as a meeting place. Firstly, several features of the farm which triggered contact between visitors who do not know each other will be presented. Social interactions will then further be elaborated upon. I will explore what social activities take place on the farm, a topic central to this research. Contact between visitors from various ethnicities as well as interactions between staff and visitors will receive specific attention.

8.3.1 Triggers for Social Interaction

Behavioural mapping has been used to depict at which locations interactions between visitors who do not seem to know each other, took place. If this happened frequently in a particular location, there might be a trigger which enables strangers to interact. As can be deduced from the cumulative results (figure 65), the locations of these informal interactions seem to follow a certain pattern; at some locations most interactions seem to take place. Important to keep in mind is that these results are not quantifications, interactions have been traced merely in order to see at what exact location within the children’s farm informal interactions start, and whether there is possibly a relation with physical objects in space. As only one researcher has been observing without the aid of cameras, results are not likely to depict the true scale of interactions during this time. The cumulative map might nevertheless serve as an indication of what animals, objects or features of a place might provoke interaction among strangers.

¹² Translated from ‘opletgroepjes’

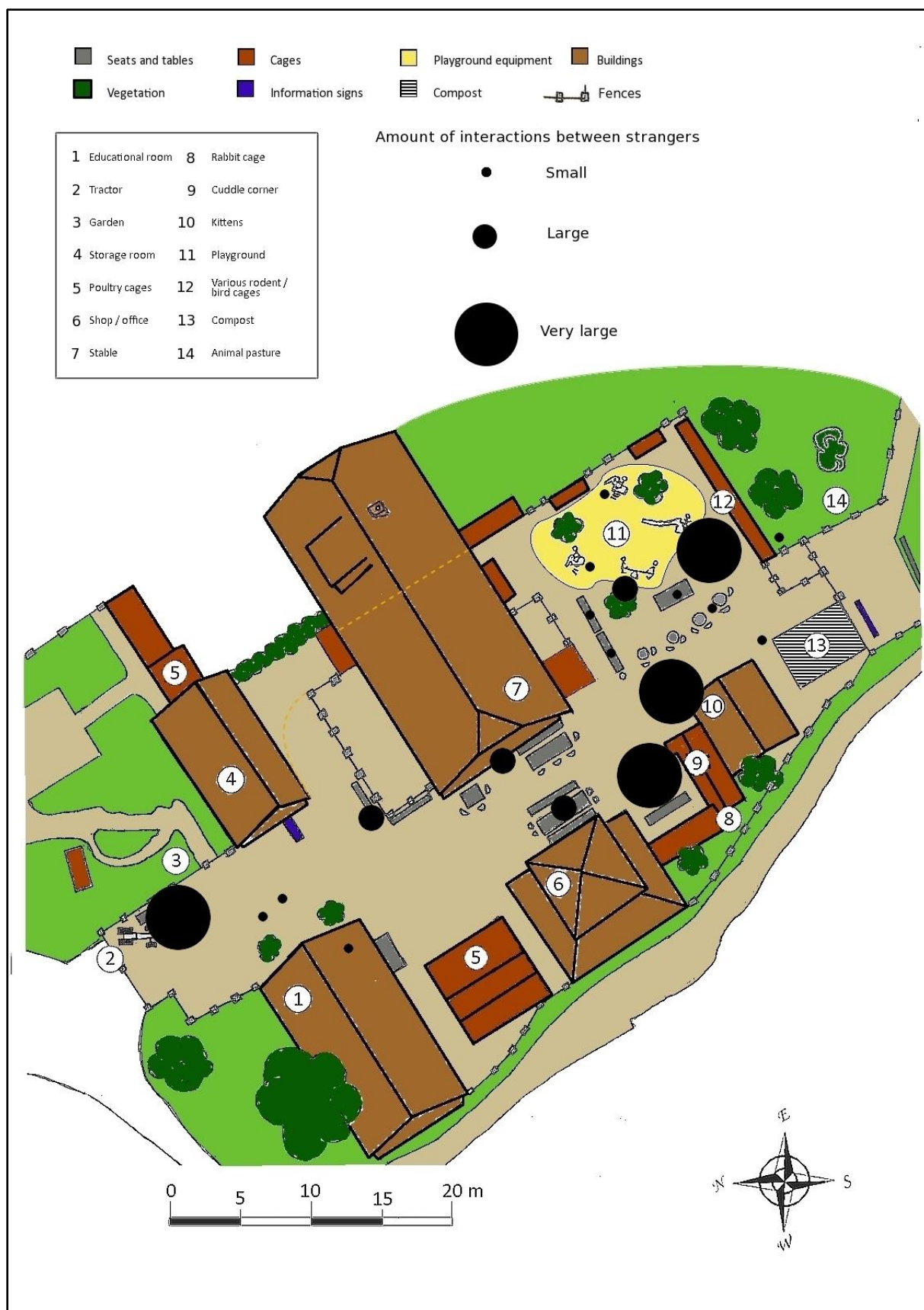


Figure 65: Informal Interactions between Visitors at De Vosheuvel

In figure 65 can be seen that during the observation period, four 'hotspots' have been detected where a very large amount of social interactions between visitors took place. The cuddle corner and the rabbits (nr. 9), the slide (nr.11), the tractor (nr. 3) and the kittens (nr.10) provoked most informal interactions between strangers. The seesaw (nr.11), the ponies and the stable (both nr.7) and the picnic table (in front of nr.6) activated a large amount of interactions between unknown visitors. Locations with a small number of exchanges between visitors were the benches on the playground (nr.11) and at the spring riders. Besides these animals, objects and sites, several other occasions have been witnessed to provoke interactions. Staff members who took care of animals often led to a series of informal contacts. Children and organized activities incited furthermore several interactions. Finally attributes of visitors themselves, such as a walker or a puppy, led to brief chit-chat or eye contact between people. All these instances will be elaborated upon.

Hotspots of Social Interactions Between Strangers

The Cuddle Corner: Several groups have been observed who, as they enter the children's farm, go straight to the cuddle corner with the rabbits. The rabbits in this corner have both an external and internal part to their cage. In the external part, children can enter and pet them, in the internal part the animals can retreat. From the observations it is clear that children were more likely to enter and stay in the cuddle corner if the rabbits were in the external part. Yet once the children entered and the rabbits retreat, children sometimes stayed and played together on the seats. Adults accompanying the children meanwhile stood on the side, or sat down on the benches next to the cuddle corner; they are too tall to enter the cuddle corner. And while their children are relatively safe and occupied, occasionally adults interacted with each other, about for instance the treatment of the animals, their children, the weather, the neighbourhood or their frequency of visiting. The cuddle corner got crowded quickly, adults accompanying a child that has been in the cuddle corner for several minutes often asked it to leave when other children waited to get in. Children seemed to be drawn to the cuddle corner once they saw other children inside it. Only two families from non-Western ethnic minorities have been observed in the cuddle corner, most visitors seemed from the ethnic majority. One whole morning the door to the cuddle corner was closed and no one entered the corner.

The Slide: The second interaction-hotspot is the slide, central on the playground. Some children were too young to go on the slide by themselves. Adults would aid children aged up to 4-5 years old; they would help children climb the stairs, made sure they go the right way up (some children would climb up the wrong way of the slide). Some children were shy to slide of at busy days, and then adults pushed them off gently. As children played together, adults regularly initiated conversations about their children, the weather and other chit-chat topics. Three instances were seen where children hurt each other either intentionally or unintentionally on the slide. Adults then apologized to the caretaker and child of the other group, calmed their child and occasionally continued with a chat. At times the interaction at the slide did not amount to more than eye contact and smiles, and adults remained occupied with the child they accompany or with other group members. The slide was used by visitors of various ethnicities. A Surinamese mother said: '*Especiallly at the slide I have conversations soon[.]but actually I only have chats with people on the playground*'. A Dutch grandmother and an Aruban mother agreed, they have most contact with others around the slide, when they sit down.

The Tractor: The tractor is an object that drew both children and adults from ethnic minorities and the ethnic majority. There is space for several children on the tractor, however, most children wanted to sit by themselves and drive the steering wheel. Different forms of social contact have been observed at the tractor. Usually one group stood at the tractor and the children sat and played on it. Another group stood on the side and waited for the tractor to be free. Adults smiled and nodded at each other, and eventually the group on the tractor would signal their children to get off, the adults from the two different groups smiled again and the group waiting climbed on the tractor. Sometimes children of different groups sat on the tractor simultaneously and adults accompanying them stood or would sit on the bench, took pictures of all children, had eye contact and occasionally engaged in conversations. While several children played at the tractor, twice a fight has been observed about which child could drive the steering wheel; parents tried to calm their children.

The Cage with Kittens: The female cat was left pregnant at the grounds of the farm; during the observations the kittens were three to five weeks old. The female cat and her kittens were behind a fence, during the day outside in a cage, at night in the stable with more space. The kittens were a large attractor of visitors, who stood up to several minutes in front of the cage. There was not much space to see them; in front approximately three people could stand closely. This led to various interactions; people asked others to step aside, wanted to know what animal lived in the cage, people discussed how tragic it is that the mother cat has just been dropped here creating more stray cats, or people said 'how cute' the kittens were. Once, children have been overheard to say 'baby cats' and were corrected to say 'kittens'. People from both non-Western ethnic minorities as well as visitors from the ethnic majority went to the kittens; one Moroccan group of female even asked whether the kittens were for sale.

Sites with a Large Number of Interactions between Visitors

The Seesaw: Children played together on the seesaw, this drew different adults accompanying them who occasionally started to interact. Two instances have been seen where a child fell off or bumped a head (caused by the other child) and start crying, the adults accompanying the child came to calm it, adults of the other child apologized and took their child away. Once an extraverted boy screamed who would come and play, two children joined him. Another time children from various ethnic backgrounds sat on the seesaw, six in total. One male (non-Western ethnic minority) joined them and indicated the rhythm, another male laughed and took pictures of all.

The Ponies and Donkey: The ponies and donkey provoked interactions on several occasions. One was when these animals were placed inside the fenced area outside the stable. There are benches located next to the fences, on which short children can stand and in that way are able to watch or stroke the ponies and/or the donkey. Adults accompanying their children on such occasions also stroked the ponies, had eye contact and occasional conversation with other visitors also attracted by these large animals. The second occasion was when these animals were brought inside by the staff members after a day in the pasture; this attracted attention, visitors from various ethnicities would go towards the animals and look at them, occasionally pet them, ask questions about them or merely listen to explanations concerning the animals. Only one family from an ethnic minority has been observed petting the ponies, other members of ethnic minorities have been observed to stay at a larger distance from them. Thirdly the donkey brayed from time to time, this attracted different

groups, of numerous ethnicities, occasionally eye contact was made or groups had a brief talk about the donkey.

The Stable: Inside the stable the pigs, the donkey and the pony could occasionally be seen, which sometimes provoked interactions among adults. The roof is quite low, and three times a person was seen to bump his/her head, twice a person from another group asked whether that person is ok. One interviewee indicated he does not appreciate the stable because of this low roof. On the rainy day the stable has been used by two groups as a refuge and chats concerning the weather started. Visitors from various ethnic backgrounds entered the stable. A volunteer specified that the stable is visited more in the winter when the donkey and the ponies are inside throughout the day.

The Picnic Table: On the picnic table 15 people can easily sit together comfortably. A maximum of 3 groups sitting simultaneously at the table has been observed. It was one of the few seats (in addition to the seats on the playground) located in the shade. Shade is provided either by the building or the mobile parasols. It is likely that it is due to the shade people sat next to each other on this location, even though many other benches in the sun were free. When people already sat there, others usually asked whether they could join. Not always, but occasionally this started a conversation, either between the children, the adults or between all visitors. Generally the table was used to eat or drink something while people either interact with their own family and friends, or watch other people. Less frequently contact between strangers took place. People of various ethnicities used the picnic table. Often adults sat at the picnic table alone, while their children, usually older than 6, walked around the entire farm. From the picnic table, located at the edge, a significant part of the grounds can be observed.

Places with a Small Number of Exchanges between Visitors

Seats on the Playground: There are three long benches on the playground, and four tables with movable seats. Two benches were situated in the shadow for several hours a day. Adults of numerous ethnicities sat and watched their children on the playground. Adults sat near the slide, the seesaw and the spring riders, and aided their children when necessary. Often when children played together, adults sitting alone had eye contact, laughed about the children or even had brief chats. Older children were usually allowed to walk by themselves along the whole farm, while the adults accompanying them still chose a central spot to sit. One Dutch interviewee indicated how she always chooses to sit on the playground while her children (now 9 and 11) do what they want at the playground. *"We are the longest at the playground.. there I would sit... they [her two sons] would go in all directions then you would be a bit the central point [...] there you can keep an eye on everything and for the boys it is also easy because if you say we sit at the slide and they go somewhere else then it is easy to be able to find "* As she finds it boring to sit by herself, she would attempt to initiate conversation with others. A Surinamese mother also notes many of her interactions start at the benches. The administrator shares that 'seats work very well', as it allows him to decide where he wants to place people and if people group together and sit down, they are more likely to buy something.

Spring riders: On these riders there is room for one child, but sometimes two children play together on them. This went wrong in two cases, where one child fell off and started crying, this led to a brief interaction between the accompanying adults. Additionally parents, sitting closely while their children played on the spring riders, occasionally communicated.

Locations without Interactions

A location where no contact between unknown visitors has been observed is the shop. The administrator did however indicate that occasionally people in the queue interact. He also shared that often, the dog lays down in the cafeteria which leads to interactive moments. No interactions have been observed at the garden. Firstly almost no people have been seen to enter the garden. Secondly, the garden has been largely out of sight for the researcher. Surprisingly few people have been seen observing the chickens in the cage next to the educational room, no interactions were observed there. It hence seems that certain objects attract people more than others; at the attractive objects, people stand closer and occasionally start interacting. There were various topics of discussion: either the object is discussed, the children, the weather or sometimes ones position (could you move up a little, I can't see). Finally, a reminder that the cuddle pasture with goats, the duck pond, the nature garden and 2 animal pastures were located outside the observation area of this research, hence no interactions have been observed there. Besides certain fixed objects which are part of the setting, other human or non-human influences might set off interaction between people who do not know each other.

Animals, Events, Children and People's Attributes as Triggers for Contact

Several animals freely roam around on the terrain of the Vosheuvel. Some instances have been observed where the freely roaming animals activate interactions between visitors from various ethnicities, these have been summarized below:

- The rooster: regularly crowed, and drew attention of both adults and children, adults have been observed to then explain something about the rooster and the sound he makes to the children, while having eye contact with each other.
- The peacock: During the research period the peacock lost his tail feathers; the administrator argued he catches less attention without his plumes. He would fly up on the roof while making a sound, this did attract the attention of visitors and stimulated interactions, as people explained for example what animal this is and why it has no feathers.
- Goats: Although the goat pasture was not included in the research, it has been observed that around feeding time (16 o'clock) children go to the goats to help in feeding, while adults take pictures, smile towards each other and occasionally started to chit-chat. Only children from the ethnic majority have been observed to aid in feeding.
- German Sheppard dog: the dog, walking loose around the grounds, provoked different reactions. Some children and even adults have been scared, which led to contact with other visitors or personnel who tried to calm them. Other adults and children however actively approached the dog and petted it, and occasionally started a brief chat with other visitors. The dog has only been observed on a few occasions on the children's farm terrain, during which merely interactions between the dog and visitors from the ethnic majority have been viewed.
- Chickens: the chickens and a rooster, walk around the grounds and occasionally hide under the picnic table. Some children were curious and moved towards them, others were scared and

remained on a distance. Adults, of diverse ethnic backgrounds, have been seen to laugh at how their children interact with the chickens and occasionally this led to contact with other visitors.

- Eggs of the guinea fowls: These birds lay their eggs in the pasture and visitors found them. On several occasions the egg led to communication between visitors and staff members. Visitors found an egg in the field, which is notably smaller than a chicken egg. This egg was then brought to a staff member while asking which animal laid such eggs.

Organized activities functioned on a few occasions as the trigger for interactions between strangers. In the period of research two activities were organized one Wednesday afternoon. Children could paint a clog, flowerpot, horseshoe or a colouring picture (prices varying between 1 and 3 euros). Secondly, the tilt-cart was out where children could sit on for approximately 5 minutes while being pulled by a pony which made a short round around the farm (at a cost of 2 euros). The painting took place in the educational room with 3 separate tables; initially the groups coming in sat on different tables. Yet as the room started to fill, several instances provoked interactions; adults asked others whether they could join their table, children looked at what other children painted and would ask questions about it, a volunteer came by and commented on the paintings of the children, which occasionally lead to an interaction with an adult accompanying the child. One Aruban female interacted with a volunteer and a Dutch family as well. At the *tilt-cart* visitors bought a ticket for their children and had to wait in a queue on their child's turn. At the peak the waiting time was approximately 10 minutes. Once their (grand) child(ren) were on the tilt-cart, (grand) parents had to wait for them to return. In this queue several encounters have been observed. An Islamic and an Aruban woman interacted, as well as a Turkish female with a Dutch male, two Dutch male and two Dutch female. Some parents kept waiting in the line while their child(ren) were in the cart; they either kept looking at the cart, started a conversation (about the children, the location or the weather), made a phone call or walked away from the queue to watch animals. Two parents moved away as they had one very young child (1 to 3 years) which is not allowed to go on the tilt-cart yet. There are no benches near the queue, people have to stand and wait. A Dutch grandmother shares in an interview that she often interacts with other visitors in the queue to the tilt-cart.

Thirdly, children present multiple situations which amounted to interaction between strangers. One couple had a small baby and several visitors commented on the baby or came closer to have a look. A girl stamping in the mud attracted much attention and interactions; other children wanted to join her, parents attempted to pull their child in another direction. Another girl started to cry very loud, she wanted ice-cream but her mum did not agree and tried to calm her. Many other children and adults looked in her direction. A staff member came with a rabbit and placed it close to the girl. Another Dutch girl started crying, the adults accompanying her were in the cafeteria. A Dutch male from another group asked her what was wrong, she said her pants were wet. The male said: *'give me a hand, we will go and look for your parents'*. The adults were in the shop buying ice cream, noted the male, and the female started apologizing to the male, thanked him, then calmed her child. A Surinamese female shared in an interview that *'with children you get into a conversation soon'*.

Finally it has been observed that attributes of people initiate interaction. A family brought a puppy and this attracted several children, adults and a disabled girl who wanted to pet the little dog. An elderly male brought his own walker and sat down on it, visitors and personnel smiled at him, one

volunteer even said *'handy such a walker, your own seat!'* He reacted: *'yes but unfortunately it is only a seat for one!'*.

In this section we saw several locations which seem to trigger social interactions between visitors who do not know each other. Behavioural mapping facilitated the discovery of 'hotspots' where a very large amount of social interactions took place. Particularly effective seemed to be animals or locations which capture the attention of children for a substantial amount of time and that draw their accompanying adults near. The cuddle corner, the slide, the tractor and the kittens were such 'hotspots'. Children's attention is captured for a substantial amount of time, while adults are near to either help them (slide, tractor) or merely wait for their children and give explanations concerning the animals (tractor, kittens). The same pattern can be seen around the locations with slightly less, but still a large amount of interactions namely at the seesaw and at the ponies and the donkey. The picnic table and the stable seemed to have a particular effect on adults and contact between them. The stable with a low roof led to contact between adults, while at the picnic table visitors asked to join and interacted in that manner. Two locations, the seats and the spring riders, seem to provoke a smaller amount of interactions. The seats are apart and allow people to remain at a substantial public distance. Contact is usually triggered by children or if visitors actively seek a conversation. The spring riders are commonly used by one child only. Only when children fell off while attempting to play among two, this led to communication between adults accompanying them. No interactions have been observed in the shop and the garden. In the shop no queue has been seen (which the manager indicated as a condition in which conversations start) while the garden was entered by a small amount of people. Freely roaming animals, such as the rooster, the peacock, goats, a dog and chickens captured the attention of both children and adults, and caused either fear or interest. Activities seemed to be attractive for visitors; both painting and a drive on the tilt-cart instigated proximity between visitors and provided a conversational topic. Especially the queue to the tilt-cart brought adults in great proximity and while their child drove off, had a chance to engage with others. Children in their spontaneity led many accompanying adults to a conversation. Finally I want to delve into barriers visitors experienced to engage with the setting and hence interact with others.

8.3.2 Barriers to Participation

Interviewees have shared several barriers to active participation and hence the opportunity for interaction. Various visitors faced barriers concerning the playground. Both a Surinamese woman and a Dutch woman indicated they find the playground quite small, their child gets shy when there are a lot of people and will not play there. The Surinamese mother furthermore shared there is little on the playground for very small children, aged 1-2. In addition she found the sand dirty and would not let her child crawl on the ground. A Dutch couple discussed the playground has nothing to offer for children older than 6 years. Initial results from a survey held over the summer show that many visitors share the opinion that the playground too small. A Dutch mother found the cuddle corner too small. *"The cuddle corner could be a bit larger according to me, a bit more spacious because that is very often with children then there are 2 or 3 sitting in it and then it gets full very quickly and I think...a lot of children like it"*. For her child, with physical problems, the cuddle corner is crucial to connect with animals. Furthermore, during observations, two groups were heard and seen to search for the cuddle corner and not immediately finding it. A female said she thinks it is gone, only to find it later. There was no information next to the 'old' cuddle corner that it would move.

Secondly some features of the farm seem to be unclear or unknown. The administrator noted that not all visitors know that behind the animal pasture there is a walking route, where visitors can continue to the duck pond, a nature garden and other pastures. People have been observed to struggle opening the entrance gate. This is a problem recognized by the administrator. Finally three interviewees, two of the ethnic majority and one of the ethnic minority, indicated they would like activities to take place more regularly, or even at set days, as now you have to actively keep track of the website, which does not work for this group, who all shared they would prefer to be informed through flyers.

Others, two from non-Western ethnic minorities and two from the ethnic majority, did not encounter this problem and are happy to find the activities actively on the internet. Finally, two visitors discussed they do not think the shop is visible. A Dutch male shared: *"I did not know that that was a shop, cause I stand in front of it and you do not see anything, it's a very dark... [..]it is a small door and immediately I think yes...it is probably one or other room for the caretakers"*. A Surinamese woman said during the interview, she did not know that there is a shop until she saw people walking with ice cream and coffee, and it is the fifth time she visits. Barriers seem to be a small playground and cuddle corner. Due to a high density of people, some children are shy and do not want to participate. The playground does not have something to offer for all age groups. Information provision regarding the setting (shop, walking route, front porch) and activities which take place seems to be finally inadequate as several visitors experienced this as a barrier to participate. I will now proceed with the social activities which take place on the farm, a topic central to this research. Contact between visitors from various ethnicities as well as interactions between staff and visitors will receive specific attention.

8.3.3 Social Activities

Social activities were often engaged in, people interacted visually, verbally or tactilely with their child, partner, friend, family member, stranger or personnel at the children farm, they watched other people, several of the recreational activities they engaged in turned into social activities, photography occasionally resulted in social interaction. The administrator observes much social interaction between visitors. *"I think this is an excellent place to meet but also to chat with each other"*. In all these activities there seem to be overall no large differences between the ethnic majority and non-Western ethnic minorities.

Very few visitors came alone; most came with family members, friends or other good acquaintances. Hence almost all visitors have been observed to engage in intimate contact with loved ones. It has been furthermore observed that at times when the density of people at the farm was low, if possible, visitors tended to avoid other unfamiliar people. On benches visitors sat far apart, adults were mostly occupied with their own children and people tried to go to the location with the least amount of visitors. Most contact happened between own group members (such as family, friends and children) and people of the own ethnic group. With strangers, if possible, a large distance was held. Yet these strangers are in a public location, surrounded by others; a basic level of social contact was inevitable. People ate and drank on the farm, while observing the setting and the people in it. An elderly Dutch male sat on his walker and observed visitors and staff members in their activities. On the playground people watch both their own children as well as the children of others play. Even though the amount of visitors was sometimes small and it was possible to avoid others, it has been observed on several

occasions that people do notice each other. One group was for example at the kittens, and another group only went there once this group had moved away.

Yet numerous times strangers have been observed to interact with one another. Several factors have been described which bring people closer to each other. The cuddle corner, the slide, the tractor and the kittens were locations which brought visitors in greater proximity and allowed visual, verbal and occasionally even tactile contact between strangers. Organized activities, children or attributes of people also provide a reason for visitors to interact. Children in general have been observed to initiate contact with others much faster than adults. The personal character of visitors seems to matter when it comes to interactions. A Dutch woman with a disability has been observed to interact with two different groups. An ethnic majority grandfather, with his grandson playing in the cuddle corner for approximately 20 minutes, initiated three conversations with different groups during that time. An Aruban mother shared: *"I meet many people here, In my neighbourhood [Schothorst] people are very on their own...I love people..I enjoy chit-chat I step up to people and am very touchy that is my culture. [...] I feel that quite fast, if people prefer to not have a chat, than I do not continue the chat"*. She believes it depends on ones personality whether you meet people, you have to be open for meeting others. A Dutch mother calls herself a 'talker', *'I do not have any problems with that [...] otherwise you just sit there alone on such a bench [...] thus I like a bit of talking*. A Dutch male during an observation and a Moroccan female in an interview both even shared that one of their main motivations to visit the farm is to meet and interact with others.

All but one interviewee said they have contact with other visitors and that they enjoy this as they learn something, it lets the time pass in a pleasant manner, it contributes to a nice atmosphere, it calms, brings happiness and one Aruban female even indicated it helps her to feel more connected with the Netherlands. One Dutch female said she comes only for the animals and her children, and feels no need to interact with other visitors. A Surinamese woman noticed she is less likely to enter in contact with strangers if she visits the farm with her husband, they then mostly walk around the farm and interact among each other and with their children. When she is alone however she likes to sit down on the playground, her son plays and she interacts much more with other visitors. A Dutch mother and both a Moroccan and a Dutch grandmother have a similar experience, they interact with others mostly when they sit down and their children play either at the playground or go to different animals. Three visitors, two Moroccan female and one Dutch grandmother, said they find it great for their children to meet others to play with at the farm and think it is good for their development. Moroccan mother: *'My daughter is a bit shy, but through the animals for example cuddling the rabbits, she combats her shyness and plays with other children'*. Conversation topics concerned the children, the neighbourhood people are from, the weather, animals, the place itself and sometimes more personal stories.

An unexpected form of sociability which has been observed several times was that adults, who seemed strangers to each other, occasionally took care of each other's children. Three such occasions took place at the slide. At its peak there was a line of nine children willing to go off the slide, with no space for parents to stand close by. Two female from the ethnic majority stood on opposite sides of the slide and helped all the children, and one told other parents *"we will watch the children for a while..sit down there is no space for all of us"*. On another occasion the son of a Moroccan mother climbed the wrong way up the slide. Dutch parents took him off twice, smiled in

the direction of the mother and exchanged a few words. A Dutch grandmother has been interviewed while observing her grandchild at the playground. She shared: *"at a certain moment you start watching the kids of others as well to make sure all are safe"*. At a picnic table an ethnic minority group joined a female and her daughter from an ethnic minority. The Dutch male asked whether he could join the table, she answered *'ok and could you watch my girl, I just want to buy something'*, the male agreed. Finally one instance a girl has been observed crying, she had wet her pants. An ethnic majority male took her hand and searched her parents with her while trying to calm her down. Two instances have been observed where people met acquaintances at the children's farm. Two Dutch families, standing at a camping near the farm, met on the playground and entered in a short chat. On another occasion two Dutch male met who seemed to know each other well, but their relationship remained unclear. Once a group of four Dutch female came, all with one small child of a similar age; one shared they know each other from a pregnancy sport club. Two visitors shared they occasionally meet acquaintances; a Dutch grandmother said she sometimes meets neighbours here. A Dutch couple encounters parents of children attending the same school or sport club as their children. Only a Dutch grandmother shared in the interview she sometimes actively arranges to meet an acquaintance, all other interviewees arrive at the farm with their children, partners, direct family members or close friends.

It is thus clear numerous instances of social interaction have been observed at De Vosheuvel. This ranged from interactions with close ties, such as family and friends, less close connections with acquaintances, to interactions with unknown visitors. Contact with such 'strangers' was generally highly appreciated and initiated by numerous triggers, such as children, animals or objects within the location. Influential seems to be the personal character of visitors. Some visitors shared their motivation to visit the farm is meeting others, for both their (grand) children as well as for them. Unexpected has been that adults seemed to take care of other children on numerous occasions. The topic of social interactions between people from different ethnic backgrounds will now be further explored.

8.3.4 Inter-Ethnic Interaction

The amount of visitors from ethnic minorities has been, as indicated in the first part of this chapter, relatively low, approximately one-tenth of the visitors has a non-Western ethnic background. Inter-ethnic interaction has been observed however. Some inter-ethnic interaction has been observed between people with close ties, for example in families where parents seemed to have a different nationality. One Nigerian interviewee shared she visits the farm with her close Dutch friend, her child and the child of the friend. Contact with unfamiliar others has also been viewed regularly. The most frequently observed form of interaction has been people-watching, often while eating an ice-cream or drinking coffee or tea.

Sometimes visitors from various ethnic backgrounds entered in brief conversations. Most such interactions seemed to take place on the playground, at the slide, the seesaw and at a little mud pool on the playground. At seats near the slide, an ethnic minority female interacted with two Dutch groups, as her son climbed the wrong way up the slide. A Dutch female and a male from an ethnic minority aided their children sliding down and exchange a few words. Both a Surinamese and a Moroccan mother shared in an interview they interact with other people from different ethnicities around the slide especially. A Moroccan boy and a Dutch girl were playing on the seesaw, the female

accompanying them had frequent eye contact and exchanged smiles and nods. A small mud pool formed one day on the playground, a girl from an ethnic minority stamped in it. Several ethnic majority children wanted to join her but were pulled away by adults accompanying them. The tractor was another location where two inter-ethnic interactions have been observed. Two Dutch children sat on the tractor, a male from an ethnic minority came with his children and asked whether they could join, that was no problem said one Dutch boy, but 'in the back'. The adults accompanying the Dutch children smiled at the male from an ethnic minority. At another time an ethnic minority female and a Dutch female have been noted to exchange a few words while their children were playing on the tractor. Several animals enabled contact between various ethnicities, namely the kittens, the ponies and the donkey. An ethnic minority and ethnic majority family had eye contact and exchanged smiles when they joined each other to look at the kittens. An ethnic minority group stood in physical proximity next to the kittens and had much eye contact. At the ponies an ethnic majority female and daughter and an ethnic minority female and daughter met to stroke them, the female exchange some words about the animals. The donkey once brayed and attracted a Moroccan and a Dutch group, who exchanged eye contact.

Other features on the farm initiating inter-ethnic interaction were the picnic table, the queue to the tilt-cart driving and the field. At the picnic table a Dutch family joined female and child from an ethnic minority; the female asked the Dutch male to look after her girl for a short while. In the queue for the tilt-cart riding, people from several ethnic minorities and the ethnic majority engaged in sociability, namely a Moroccan and Aruban female and two Turkish female with a two Dutch female. While children were occupied, adults had to wait for them to return and frequently interacted with each other. Finally a group of Moroccan female sat in the field with food brought with them, many visitors from the ethnic majority passed by and made eye contact, and the female smiled and greeted passers-by. A possible challenge to inter-ethnic interaction was also observed. Twice a large group of ethnic minority women has been observed, who did not speak Dutch to each other. This might have been a barrier to interact verbally with other, Dutch-speaking visitors. A Moroccan female shared in an interview that when she is surrounded by Dutch people as on this farm, she makes sure to speak Dutch in order to be able to connect with other visitors.

Opinions on how ethnically diverse the visitors profile of De Vosheuvel is fluctuate. Staff members believe a significant amount of visitors comes from different ethnic backgrounds. A volunteer shared during an observation *'I see all kinds of people here it is very different from the neighbourhood where I live. This is a neighbourhood with low incomes in which many people from different ethnicities live. The farm attracts many African and Islamic people, most come from Morocco the children's farm is accessible to all as it is for free.'* A Dutch grandmother shared *'I get in touch with other cultures here...I think it is a nice mirror of society, you see all kinds of people I think it is good my grandchildren experience this.'* A Surinamese female discussed she has contact with people from many different cultures. A Dutch mother also shared *'there are many people I meet here that I do not meet in the rest of my normal life, I live in a white neighbourhood and have a function where mostly Dutch people work, here I meet all kinds of people, old, young, different cultures, people with disabilities I think it is good for my son to get in touch with that'*. Yet two Dutch female argue they see very few people from different cultures at the farm. One Dutch mother argues *'I do not see many people from other cultures here..not at the activities either. But it is not something I actively pay attention to..but it seems to be something Dutch people do more than foreigners'*. Another Dutch

mother indicates *“yes, today we saw Turkish Moroccan people indeed that is I think for the first time...you do not see it often.”* Staff members and most visitors thus believe visitors to be ethnically diverse, whereas two visitors reckon they barely see people from ethnic minorities on the farm.

Inter-ethnic interactions at the farm thus do take place. What catches attention is that most interactions between strangers from different ethnicities took place at the playground, such as the slide and the seesaw. A tractor was another important location where people from diverse ethnic backgrounds met. The picnic table was a further trigger for inter-ethnic conversations. Finally the queue for the tilt-cart ignited much social contact between visitors from various ethnicities. To a lesser extent provoking contact, but nevertheless important, were animals behind fences, such as the kittens, the ponies and the donkey which also elicited several verbal or non-verbal exchanges. Although most staff members and visitors characterize the visitors' profile of De Vosheuvel as multi-ethnic, two visitors from the ethnic majority argue they see mostly visitors from the ethnic majority on the farm. Observations suggest approximately one tenth of all visitors is from an ethnic minority. Visitors appreciate the diversity of visitors; some indicate they find it important their (grand) children experience this 'reflection of society'. A barrier to inter-ethnic interaction that has been observed was language. A final vital point which will be discussed below is interaction between visitors and staff members, as this also amounts to a substantial part of the social interactions taking place at De Vosheuvel, and sometimes even ignites contact between visitors.

8.3.5 Interaction between Staff and Visitors

A substantial amount of the social interactions taking place at the children's farm was between staff members and visitors. Often staff members provided visitors with information about diverse topics, either about the animals, opening hours, maintenance, directions or activities. Some staff members were selling things, such as articles at the shop or tickets for activities, which amounted to multiple exchanges. Occasionally personnel has been observed to engage in chit-chat with visitors, especially during break times. Topics were often the weather, children or recent changes on the children's farm. Once a child was crying, and a volunteer placed a rabbit next to her, which calmed the girl down. Staff members with animals attracted both children and adults. The kittens and the rabbits have been seen to be taken out of their cage by a volunteer. Different groups would surround the animal and volunteer and ask questions, occasionally even interact among each other. When staff members brought the donkey and the ponies from the pasture into the stable, this also attracted visitors who often asked questions about these animals. When animals received food and children were allowed to help, staff members explained things about feeding and the animals. Volunteers cleaning cages or working on maintenance were also frequently asked questions. Personnel members also carefully monitored the behaviour of visitors and, as mentioned in section 1, when visitors behaved in a manner staff members find disorderly, they were spoken to and asked to alter their behaviour, such as not molesting animals, property or feeding the animals. Twice the guinea fowl eggs found by visitors led to an interaction with staff members. Even an intimate friendship has been observed between a visitor and the administrator. A female from the ethnic majority greeted staff sitting on the picnic table. The administrator asked her about her job and they entered in a conversation. The administrator then shared he noticed this woman suddenly visiting the farm very often, and would make sure to have short positive chats with her *‘I notice she appreciates that in these times filled with challenges’*.

The administrator argued personnel have almost automatically contact with visitors, even just while asking visitors to take a step to the side. Volunteers have different personalities and some value contact more than others. Some simply prefer to have contact with animals or plants rather than with human beings, and are placed in positions suiting their needs such as gardening or animal care. A Dutch grandmother shared she does notice some volunteers are *'really here only for the animals, they are focused on the animals and do not greet or make a small chat'*. Others volunteer because they feel isolated and specifically seek social contact. People in the shop receive a short training on how to interact with clients. The administrator finds contact with his visitors very important: *"I think you should have contact with your public because you want to know what is going on and you want to have the openness to people"*. Staff members are diverse, especially the volunteers have different ethnic backgrounds. All have contact with people from both the ethnic majority and ethnic minorities. The administrator indicated he interacts with people of different ethnic backgrounds for various reasons, such as a friendly chit-chat or asking people to correct their child. He sometimes faces difficulties communicating with people from different ethnic backgrounds. *"Some people are really still allochthonous female who just cannot speak Dutch...what surprises me but it is still true...so it is not always easy to have a chat with [...] then you have sometimes the problem they do not understand you, but then there is often a helpful lady that translates [...] you can almost always find a solution"*. Some staff members shared they have had negative experiences with visitors from different ethnic backgrounds. As described in the section about disorderly behaviour, one volunteer indicated she thinks *'foreigners are no good'* as she believes the female sit and chat while the children run around and maltreat animals. The administrator of the farm also described he has faced problems with people from Turkish background, who treated animals in a rough manner. *"Because those people often tend to sit and let the children loose so then we approach them and say hey, watch your little children [...] they are all the time climbing on top of the goat"*.

The contact with staff members varies among interviewees. Four, one Surinamese and three Dutch visitors claimed they never have contact with personnel, only when buying a product. Two Dutch female argued they do not find this necessary. A Dutch grandmother, a Dutch mother and an Aruban mother said they always have contact with staff members. Contact with personnel is generally appreciated. An Aruban female shared: *'the volunteers are very kind, just now I had a very long chat during an activity [...] painting, with a volunteer'*. She even states the friendly personnel is one of the reasons visitors might interact with each other. A Dutch grandmother indicates she just enjoys the contact with staff members. A Dutch couple has had various experiences with staff members. One female staff member helped much with their puppy, she called both the pig and the German Sheppard to encounter the puppy so it would lose fear for these animals. Another female was cleaning the pigeons and started interacting with the sons of the female. With both, the couple had a pleasant conversation. Yet at the shop they met with a less friendly staff member, *'her expression, her attitude, her voice...she cannot deal with children...she was unfriendly'*. One Dutch grandmother noticed that *'some volunteers are [...] focused on the animals and do not greet or make a small chat...they are not focussed on visitors'*.

Staff and visitors thus frequently engaged in social interactions, and sometimes even developed friendships. While they interact with visitors, personnel members can also prompt contact between visitors. Examples were observed while feeding animals, explaining something about them or while taking animals out of their cage. Not all staff members have a personality facilitating social

interaction, and some positions require this skill more than others. Most staff members are from the ethnic majority, although some come from ethnic minorities. All interact with ethnically diverse visitors and generally this interaction is enjoyed. The administrator mentions language difficulties he occasionally experiences when communicating with visitors from different ethnic backgrounds. Two staff members shared negative experiences with visitors from ethnic minorities, such as maltreatment of animals. Some interviewees indicated they have no contact with staff members and do not feel the need for this. One female shared that once she had a negative exchange with a staff member who was 'unfriendly'. Most argued however they do interact socially with staff members and appreciate this. A brief summary will be given in which the results from this chapter will be linked to theoretical concepts.

8.4 De Vosheuvel in Sum

Having outlined and discussed extensively the visitors of the Vosheuvel, the qualities of this leisure destination and the multitude of social interactions which take place within this meeting place, let me link these findings to the relevant theoretical concepts. I will firstly demonstrate in what ways De Vosheuvel is an attractive leisure destination for people of different ethnic backgrounds. I will then illustrate that this children's farm could be viewed as a meeting place where many social interactions take place between the diverse visitors.

8.4.1 An Attractive Leisure Destination

Leisure does seem to play a central role in this setting. Several motivations visitors of diverse ethnic backgrounds named to visit this setting are directly linked to leisure needs, such as an outing, watching and interacting with animals, enjoying a pleasant place and engaging with organized events at the farm such as tilt-car riding. Most activities visitors engaged in within this setting also seem to be of a recreational nature, so-called 'optional activities' which only take place in a high-quality environment. The setting does display several characteristics which amount to a successful leisure site, where visitors are willing to linger for a large amount of time. We saw that this public place offers stability over time, yet is adaptable to changing needs of visitors. Protection and safety are offered, which contribute to retaining people for a substantial amount of time at the farm. The maintenance of the farm elicited different reactions; various people suggested the farm seems neglected. Yet all interviewees shared they enjoy their visit to De Vosheuvel for numerous reasons, one being the meeting of other people.

Visitors of diverse ethnic backgrounds were attracted to this destination, participated in optional recreational activities yet displayed divergent participation patterns. Before elaborating on this, an important limitation has to be mentioned; this research has been conducted over the summer period. Several staff members and visitors shared that there were fewer visitors of ethnic minorities as they might be on holidays. The first week of observations on the Vosheuvel furthermore coincided with the Ramadan, which according to some visitors from ethnic minorities prevented their visits to the farm. That said, visitors from various ethnicities displayed slightly diverse visitor patterns. Firstly, there seemed to be much less visitors from ethnic minorities than from the ethnic majority; approximately 10% of the visitors had a minority ethnic background. Visitors of different ethnic backgrounds furthermore lived in different neighbourhoods of Amersfoort and even in different cities. The average group size varied between two and four people. Yet non-Western ethnic minorities seemed to visit the children's farm occasionally in larger groups and also came more often

with their families (grandparents, parents, brothers, sisters etc.). Visitors from the ethnic majority however, tended to come mostly with their own household and only occasionally with other family members or friends. The most popular visiting days at the Vosheuvel are Wednesday afternoons, the Friday afternoon and the weekends. Visitors from ethnic minorities seem to come especially on Sundays, occasionally also on Wednesdays. Some differences were noted in the human-animal interaction among visitors from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Visitors from ethnic minorities tended to overall hold a larger distance from the animals. A volunteer argued however, that visitors from both ethnic minorities and the ethnic majority occasionally display fear around the animals. Ethnic majority (grand) parents did seem more 'educative' towards their (grand) children; they join them around the farm while explaining something about the animals. Visitors from ethnic minorities were observed to more often let their children run around the farm while adults would sit down. One female from an ethnic minority shared her lack of knowledge, as her child knows more about the animals than she does. Some staff members discussed in interviews that children from ethnic minorities that are 'let loose', occasionally molest the animals, but the administrator nuances this and argues these differences are not attached to ethnic background, rather to how a child has been raised. The motivations and meaning of the farm harmonizes overall largely between visitors from the ethnic majority and ethnic minority, as similar reasons to visit the farm were named. Some divergences have been detected however. Visitors from all ethnic backgrounds designated animals as a motive of their visit. Visitors from the ethnic majority tend to emphasize the educational effects such as learning to take care of animals and combatting fear. Visitors from ethnic minorities mentioned specifically the enjoyment of animals. Visitors from ethnic minorities see their visit more as an 'outing' than visitors from the ethnic majority. What is surprising is that only visitors from ethnic minorities shared one of their reasons to visit the farm is to meet other people. Next, I want to elaborate further on this notion of visitors from diverse ethnic backgrounds meeting at the children's farm.

8.4.2 A Meeting Place

Triangulating objects seemed to be crucial attributes facilitating people to meet. Behavioural mapping assisted the detection of 'hotspots' within the setting where most social interactions between strangers took place. Particularly effective seemed to be animals and objects which capture the attention of children for a substantial amount of time and also attract their accompanying adults. Children, organized events such as tilt-cart riding or attributes of visitors also set a triangulating process in motion between people who did not know each other. These triggers seemed to be effective as they enabled people to move from a public distance to a social or even occasionally a private distance and offer a conversational topic.

Social activities are a specific type of 'optional activities'; we saw an abundance of enduring, passive and fleeting sociability. Most visitors enter the farm with individuals with whom they have close ties and thus engage in enduring interactions, generally with visitors of their own ethnic group. When the visiting density is low, people tend to fall in civil inattention of each other and remain largely at a public distance. Interaction in such cases was often limited to passive sociability, such as the mere watching of other people. A triangulation process, initiated by several triggers, led to several fleeting interactions between strangers. The specific focus of this study was put on inter-ethnic interactions. We viewed that most such interactions were passive. People-watching was the most popular form of such passive interaction, often engaged in while sitting down and eating an ice-cream or drinking

coffee. Enduring inter-ethnic interaction has rarely been observed, only within families of which parents seemed to have diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Inter-ethnic fleeting interactions are central to this research as they allow a connection between visitors who do not know each. Meetings between visitors from various ethnic backgrounds, fleeting interactions, took mostly place at the playground and the tractor and to a much smaller extent at other locations such as the picnic table, the events at the farm and on the pasture. Some contact was provoked by the animals, yet what catches attention is that only contact has been observed around animals behind fences, such as the kittens, the pony and the donkey. No inter-ethnic exchanges have been observed at the cuddle corner, which was identified as one of the 'triangulating hotspots'. Both visitors from the ethnic majority and ethnic minorities spend most of their time at the playground and often in close proximity, which could be one of the explanations of this result. Another is that visitors from ethnic minorities have been observed to keep a larger distance towards animals. Language as a barrier for fleeting interactions among visitors from various ethnicities has been observed, where an ethnic minority group spoke a native language which most other visitors could not understand. This might have restricted opportunities for interactions with other visitors, speaking predominantly the Dutch language. The administrator of the farm shared he also comes across this difficulty, but often one group member from the ethnic minority can act as a translator if necessary. Surprising was the fact that although most staff members and visitors characterize the visitor profile as multi-ethnic, some Dutch visitors argue they see predominantly visitors from the ethnic majority, and barely any visitors from the ethnic minorities. Individuals who do recognize the multi-ethnic nature of visitors coming to the farm, appreciate this diversity and find it important their (grand)children engage in this way with society at large. In the next chapter the results from De Gagelsteede in Utrecht will be presented in a similar manner.

9. Results Case Study 2: De Gagelsteede

The second case study in this research is located in Utrecht, petting zoo the Gagelsteede. As in the previous chapter we will firstly explore who visits the farm and learn about their stay. Then this leisure setting will be put to closer scrutiny. The setting will be classified as a public space and the qualities which make this location exceptional and attractive will be extensively treated. Thirdly, De Gagelsteede will be presented as a meeting place. Triggers within the setting eliciting contact between visitors will be highlighted. The social interactions themselves will be delved further into as closer connections between the visitors and the setting will be made. A particular focus is placed on informal contact between visitors unknown to each other. Inter-ethnic exchanges as well as interactions between staff and visitors will finally be stressed. In a brief conclusion the connections between the results and theoretical concepts will be drawn.

9.1 The Visitors

In this section the visitors' profile of De Gagelsteede will be described considering factors such as residency, ethnicity and group size. Secondly details about people's visits will be shared, such as visiting frequency, length of stay and fluctuations in their number. I will then pursue with the activities visitors engage in, their behaviour on the farm and motivations to visit. Similarities and differences between visitors from diverse ethnicities will continuously be touched upon.

9.1.1 Introducing the Visitor

An investigation among four different children's farms in Utrecht showed that 73% of the Gagelsteede visitors originate from the neighbourhood Overvecht, where the farm is located. Only 6% of the visitors reside outside the city of Utrecht (Wolf & Mazurkiewicz, 2009). From all interviewees, all but one live in Utrecht Overvecht, 9 interviewees even live on less than a 10 minute walk away. The one interviewee not living in Overvecht came with her grandchild which lives in Zuilen, a different neighbourhood in Utrecht. The administrator of the farm does note a trend however that an increasing amount of visitors comes from surrounding towns such as Maarssenbroek, Huizen and Bunschoten. These visitors tend to visit more frequently during the vacation and arrive either by car or with a bicycle. During the school term children from primary schools located in Overvecht often visit. During one week of observations, which collided with the first week of the new school term in September, twice a school class has been observed at het playground. Three primary schools are positioned on a walking distance from the Gagelsteede. De Schakel, a Christian primary school, is 210 metres away, the Mattheusschool, a Catholic primary school 650 metres and finally the public school Openbare Basisschool Overvecht needs a walk of 950 metres to the farm. Additionally, the pre-school located at the terrain of the children's farm attracts adults who bring and pick up 'their' child on a daily basis. During the observations several elderly individuals with walking aids such as walkers and mobility scooters came to the children's farm. They possibly live in the elderly home Rosendael, which is only a 100 metre walking distance from the main entrance of the children's farm. One interviewee, an elderly male on a mobility scooter, endorses that many visitors from this care home do visit the farm. Lastly, at a 700 metre distance a supermarket is situated. Two interviewees shared they occasionally combine their visits to the farm with a stop at this supermarket.

In terms of ethnic origin, the largest group visiting the Gagelsteede is Native Dutch (54%), followed by Moroccans (27%), Turkish (6%) and others (13%) (GemeenteUtrecht, 2012a). The administrator

claimed in an interview however that the total amount of visitors from ethnic minorities is 70%. The origin of visitors has been difficult if not impossible to discover during observations. Yet, less than 50% seemed to be from the Ethnic majority, Dutch. Approximately 30% of non-Western ethnic minorities seemed from Turkey or Morocco. A total of 3 interviews with Moroccan visitors have been held, no interview with Turkish visitors took place. Visitors from Surinam and other South American countries have been observed, judged by the languages spoken. Numerous guests from African origin were seen and heard, from countries such as Somalia, Ethiopia and Egypt. Asiatic visitors have been mentioned by the administrator as increasingly visiting the farm, this has also been observed and one interview was held with a Chinese woman. Two groups of Slavic minorities were the only western ethnic minorities observed. Observations are unlikely to be representative for visitors throughout the year, as visitors patterns alter during the holidays. An interviewed social worker shared that it is calmer during the holidays, the Ramadan and the fact people from different ethnic backgrounds visit their home countries amount to a smaller number of visitors and an altered ethnic composition. An Egyptian girl reported *“we came much less during Ramadan, my family and me. The children can drink but we cannot, and then it gets very hot and difficult, it was a very difficult Ramadan this year, we women also have to prepare the meal for the evening that takes a lot of time. And yes, then we also missed places with shadow here.”*

A research held among adults only established that the largest part of visitors, 75%, is composed of female, 25% is male; this concurs with observations during the summer. Of these adults visiting 22% is aged 16-29; 46% is 30-39 years old; 17% is aged 40-54; only 7% is 55-64 and finally 7% is 65 and older (Wolf & Mazurkiewicz, 2009). As in Amersfoort, the role of most adults who visit the farm was to accompany children. Parents, grandparents, teachers, brothers and sisters older than 16, other family members neighbours, family friends, nursery-class and primary school teachers accompanied on average one to two children, according to observations and interviews. Regulations at both the farm and the playground indicate that children up to 5 years have to be accompanied by an adult. Both the coordinator of the children's farms in Utrecht at municipal level and the administrator shared that something notable about this disadvantaged neighbourhood is that children frequently come alone; this corresponds with observations. The administrator reckons children between 0 and 7 years old come with adults, whereas children aged between 7 and 12 years tend to come either alone to the farm, with friends from their neighbourhood or school, or with family members such as brothers, sisters and cousins. Yet she notices that during the holidays less children come unaccompanied as parents join on a more frequent basis. Apart from children, various adults have been observed to visit the farm by themselves; these were especially elderly, often making use of walking aids such as a mobility scooter or a walker. The average group size was between 2 and 4 people, both for the ethnic majority as for ethnic minorities. However, several non-Western ethnic minorities seemed to visit the children's farm in larger groups. These were often ethnic minority female who visited the farm with 4-7 women and their children. The administrator of the farm shares this observation. Three large Dutch groups have been observed as well; one celebrated the birthday of a girl and several families (male, female and children) of the ethnic majority came together at the children's farm and twice 3 to 4 Dutch mothers have been observed to visit the farm with their children. Ethnic minority visitors seemed to come more often with close family or friends, people from the ethnic majority came mostly with members of their own household, thus children and partner, occasionally with a friend, neighbour or family members such as grandparents. Visitors

commonly seemed to visit with others from their own ethnic group. After this brief description of who visits the farm, the course of their visit will be expounded upon.

9.1.2 Basic Data Concerning the Visits

In the summer, guests visited De Gagelsteede twice a week on average according to the administrator. *“Some every day, and some twice a month...thus twice a week really is an average and yes very season-bound, in the winter it is again very different. There are people that come summer and winter there are people that do not come the whole winter [...] two times a week is only concerning April to September”*. Interviewees displayed great divergences in visiting frequencies. Three visitors argued they come every day if the weather is nice. One Chinese mother shared the child she babysits is at the preschool, so she comes at least 4 times a week. Yet as she lives close by and her children like to come, on sunny days she comes every day. A Surinamese girl and a Dutch male on a mobility scooter also claimed they visit every day. One Moroccan mother comes 3 to 4 times a week. Three visitors, 2 of the ethnic majority and one from an ethnic minority, visit the place 2 to 3 times a week. A Dutch male comes once every ten days, depending on the weather. A Dutch grandmother said she comes only during the summer holidays, and then once a week. An Egyptian girl accompanies her cousins twice a month. A Moroccan father comes once a month, when it is nice weather. Finally one Dutch grandmother shared this was her first visits to the farm.

It has been impossible to deduce the duration of visits from observations for the single researcher. The administrator estimates the average length at 2 hours, of which people generally spend 30 minutes at the children’s farm and 1,5 hour at the playground. This seems to harmonize with the interviews. Interviewees do display a great variety in the length of their visit however, all but one interviewee stay between 1 and 4 hours at the farm. One person from an ethnic minority indicated her stay can be up to 6 hours. Individual visitors specify the length of their stay depends largely on the weather, holidays, day of the week or with whom people visit the children farm.

A Moroccan mother for example said that during the school term she comes usually 1 to 2 hours on weekdays; on Wednesdays afternoon she stays up to 4 hours. During the summer her visit can last however between 5 and 6 hours a day. A Moroccan mother and an Egyptian girl both said that when they come as the only adult accompanying children, they stay approximately an hour. Yet when they come with a larger group, often composed of family members, they stay longer, at least 2 to 3 hours. One Dutch interviewee shared he only visits the children’s farm, a Surinamese girl only the playground; all other interviewees come for a combination of the playground and the farm. Visitors usually go to the farm first, and spend between 10 and 30 minutes there. The rest of their visit concentrated on the playground. Three interviewees, two from the ethnic minority and one from an ethnic majority, shared that during a visit they go back and forth between the farm and the playground. They follow their children; one Chinese mother indicated her children are of different ages, one prefers the playground, the other the farm, so they switch back and forth.

Visitor numbers vary greatly during a day, week and year. On all days people from the ethnic majority and people from ethnic minorities have been observed. There has been a difference however between visitors during weekends and weekdays. During weekdays more adults came alone, especially the elderly. A child was more frequently accompanied by one adult only, presumably a parent or grandparent. During the weekend native Dutch people, but also ethnic minorities came with the household (father, mother and children). The administrator finds that especially native

Dutch people come more during the weekends and the holidays, and less during the week. She furthermore argues that the holiday period is not representative. *“It is relatively calm [...] only the last 2 weeks of the holidays [19 – 31 of august] it will be busier”*. This is when most observations were conducted. During the school term the busiest days are Wednesday and Sunday, Saturdays are less busy. Interviewees underwrote this, most named these days as preferred visiting days. Two visitors, both from ethnic minorities, said they prefer to come during weekdays as it is calmer then. Six visitors, both from the ethnic majority and ethnic minority, say they do not have a preferred day of visit; it depends largely on the weather, the work schedules of both parents or the schedules of the children. One Dutch grandmother comes on Thursday as this is the care-day for her grandson.

A survey from 2009 showed that the Gagelsteede had 26.000 visitors that year (Wolf & Mazurkiewicz, 2009), the administrator predicted in an interview the current number of visitors is 30.000 a year. Yet these visitor numbers are not exact: *“We have a counter [...] but we are still testing, because it also reacts to snow, then I suddenly had 10.000 visitors in one day or one week [...] it’s really of no use for me then.. so the visitor counts are not very precise”*. The average number of people visiting a day would be 84. The administrator argues this fluctuates, in the winter much less people visit, *“the busiest period is April, May and June, than we really run and occasionally have 200 to 300 visitors at once; on a rainy Saturday [...] there is nobody here.”* Daily fluctuations are also visible. Observations showed that during the holidays, the busiest times were between 10 and 12 and between 14 till approximately 16.30. Between 12 and 14 o’clock many people leave the grounds. Two interviewees however, from ethnic minorities, shared that their preferred visiting time is between 12 and 13 o’clock as it is calmer then. A week of observations at the start of the school term showed that mornings were usually much calmer than afternoons. In the mornings elderly came, or adults (usually mothers) with very young children, in the afternoon children started coming alone as well. The holidays are thus not a period which is representative for the rest of the year as has surfaced from both observations and interviews as there is a lower density of visitors. The administrator sees less ethnic minority guests in the vacations. She thinks this might be due to either the Ramadan or travelling. *“Those parents¹³ find it then too warm to be outside; you are not allowed to drink anything, than you also see many children as the mothers are often preparing such an iftar”*. Both the administrator and the social worker furthermore believe many people from ethnic minorities are visiting their countries of origin during the holidays. Additionally, during these vacation times, more autochthonous households found their way to the farm, people visited on different days than usual during the school period and finally people tended to stay at the farm for a longer period of time. After exploring the general course of a visit and visiting patterns, the way visitors act during a visit and the activities they engage in will be discussed.

9.1.3 Usage of and Behaviour on the Farm

Visitors engaged almost solely in recreational activities at the children’s farm. Visitors watched and fed animals, made phone calls, read books and magazines, took photographs, walked and stood or sat down. Children often engaged in individual play. Many guests have been observed to eat and drink; food was either brought along, or beverages and ice cream were bought at the farm. Work-related activities seemed to be only carried out by staff members from both the farm and the playground. Occasionally children helped them with certain tasks. Personnel took care of the

¹³ Islamic parents participating in the Ramadan

animals, led activities for visitors, engaged in cleaning and maintenance jobs, sold products to visitors at the small shop, distributed a questionnaire, worked in the office on administrative tasks or answered questions of visitors. Additionally external staff has been observed who cleaned the grounds regularly. When it comes to how the farm is visited and used by guests, several divergences surfaced. The administrator outlines throughout the year Dutch visitors, both male and female, generally come especially during the weekend and on public holidays. Occasionally the administrator notices 'daddy-days' at the farm, where there are suddenly significantly more ethnic majority fathers than usual. Female from non-Western ethnic minorities come both in the holiday period and the school term much more often throughout the week, non-Western ethnic minority fathers come generally only during weekends. As discussed earlier in the description of the Gagelsteede visitors, female from the ethnic minorities visited the farm on a more regular basis in large groups. They came with family members, many children and often various generations, according to the administrator. Large groups of 3 to 7 female have been observed. Notable are large baskets and bags filled with food brought along; once even entire rice cookers have been seen. Two Moroccan interviewees confirmed they occasionally visit the farm with a larger group, composed of family, neighbours and acquaintances along with several children. The length of their stay then varies between 2 to 6 hours. One mother shared that the adults sit down and chat, while the children are free to go where they want on the grounds. This is confirmed by the administrator and concurs with observations. A social worker shared she notes two large groups, of Turkish and Moroccan women, who come mainly for recreational purposes. *"They are on their own, do not mingle with other mothers... it is really quite a bit group."* Both visitors from ethnic minorities and the ethnic majority tend to visit the farm with people from their own ethnic groups.

There appear to be other differences in how people from the ethnic majority and ethnic minority visit the farm. The administrator indicated that Dutch visitors tend to actively accompany their children throughout the farm, and often explain something about the animals; parents from non-Western minorities rather sat somewhere at a table or seat *"we are picnicking here, we provide tasty food and drinks and you go play [...] autochthonous parents are way more educational [...] you barely see allochthon parents do that"*. A Dutch mother was surprised to see female from other ethnicities picnicking at the farm. She misses grass on which she can put a little blanket and stay a long time. If there were sections with grass, she would consider bringing food. Other than that she does not see large ethnic differences in using the farm. She does note large variances in how children are raised. *"Children of less well educated parents for example...those children can be very wild and the parents do not really stop them in that kind of behaviour. There you can see differences; other parents stop their children much faster."* Both the social worker and the administrator however do notice large differences between the children of ethnic minorities and the ethnic majority. The administrator finds children from non-Western background much more independent at an early age, as they have large families where brothers and sisters become responsible for their siblings at a young age. The social worker argued *"Dutch children are really the minority here [...] sometimes it remains difficult with Dutch children, they are shy and less independent."*

Occasionally children entered in a fight with others or crossed the rules of the farm and were corrected by staff members. Especially children alone playing a game called 'knotsen', have been observed to enter in a fight several times. Twice it happened that children were 'out' but did not want to leave and a social worker from Wijk & Co came to resolve the situation. During one

observation a child said: *“that Moroccan is out and he does not want to go out”* upon which the social worker answered *“not Moroccan, call him by his name first, then we can ask him why he thinks he is not out”*. A social worker commented *“if children play together there are no differences. But when they get into a fight it is suddenly ‘that Turkish’ ‘that Moroccan says’... That is when we intervene, we do not want to hear those kinds of things. Children are called by their name.”* A Chinese female recognized this situation. She discussed her child is often bullied by especially Moroccan boys. Finally a rule at the farm is that children are not allowed to go with the small bikes from the playground on the terrain of the children’s farm; staff members have corrected children several times during observations.

If adults accompany children, they generally comment on inappropriate behaviour. Once a child started throwing sand at another boy for example, the female accompanying the boy came and told him off. Yet occasions have been noted where this did not happen. Two young boys, from a non-Western minority, held the gate and let out the chickens for a total of three times. Each time a staff member came and urged them to stop, while putting the chickens back in the cage. The second and third time the children were brought to their mother who sat with other female at the playground. Apart from this incident, no adults have been observed engaging directly in disorderly behaviour. Observations did however show the results of disruptive behaviour, specifically littering and vandalism. During the observations on the playground one wall was covered with graffiti. A Surinamese girl shared in an interview the graffiti upsets her. In the early mornings, much litter has been seen at the grounds of the playground, especially plastic and glass bottles, food packaging, cans and sunflower seeds. Six days a week around noon the playground is cleaned. Four visitors were disappointed by this mess left in the evenings, after closing hours of the children’s farm. Two Dutch visitors and the cleaning staff argued that the mess is left by youth from various ethnicities, who hang out at the playground at night. Sometimes the litter even poses a danger for visitors, as one Chinese female says: *“Every day there is a huge mess from the previous day, I don’t like that, it is dirty here for children, if they are barefoot it is dangerous there are rests of glass, food..”*. The administrator pointed out that a group of youth comes occasionally to the farm, who in the worst case engage in vandalism or animal molesting. A social worker shared that *“the most complex situations taking place here are parents that fight [...] we hope they can solve it as adults by talking.. we only go to them [...] when it really gets out of hand...then we go two of us [...] and take them apart.”* Some visitors have even resorted to violence; *“the police can be here very fast, lately he was here within 4 minutes. A colleague was replacing [another social worker] that day and said something to a boy, that boy goes home to his father, and that father comes with family from Morocco , a male. He probably felt strong and has beaten my colleague hard in the face”*.

All in all, visitors engaged in recreational activities on the farm. Ethnic minorities tend to visit De Gagelsteede in larger groups and bring their own food more often than people from the ethnic majority. Native Dutch parents seemed to accompany their children more frequently on the children’s farm and explain something about different animals and features of the farm, whereas visitors from ethnic minorities sat down with food and let their children discover the farm on their own. Some children engaged in behaviour that is clearly deemed inappropriate, swearing, throwing sand, driving bicycles on the farm grounds or molesting animals, they have been corrected either by staff members, their (grand)parents or other visiting adults. A Dutch mother sees large differences between children in the way they are raised and sees this as a determinant for their behaviour. Staff

members believe ethnicity also has an influence and argue that children from ethnic minorities are less shy and more independent than ethnic majority children. Adults have not directly been observed to engage in behaviour deemed inappropriate, yet staff and visitors complained about graffiti and litter left by youth groups or adults. A social worker at a playground even mentions outright violence on behalf of a father towards a staff member at the playground; the police had to be called. These measures are only taken when necessary. In the next part I want to investigate the relationship between individuals visiting the farm and animals.

9.1.4 Human-Animal Relations

Animals at de Gagelsteede are less accessible than at the Vosheuvel, only a few animals can be touched, such as the rabbits, goats and the chickens. Of these the rabbits and the chickens have been observed. Generally the treatment of the animals is calm, there is a specific regulation that animals are not allowed to be lifted, this is mostly respected, when very small children try it, adults most of the time correct them.

The administrator, as mentioned previously, does notice that parents from the ethnic majority accompany their children more frequently to the animals than visitors from ethnic minorities. Yet if adults from ethnic minorities are at the animals, she notices no difference between people from various ethnicities and their treatment of animals. This largely corresponds with observations. *“People often say, allochthons treat animals much harder, rougher but I do not see that at all. And here in front we have pigs sometimes than people come and say ‘those Moroccans surely find that bad’ no...also not. I asked it once to a man with such a gown and beard, he said ‘[...] pigs are just unclean because they are haram we are not allowed to eat them [...] but in the Qur’an we also received the responsibility to take good care of them and that also counts for pigs ’”*. Adults and children from several ethnicities have been observed to stay at a larger distance from animals, perhaps have fear, but this is a minority. Most children actively go to the animals. Only one Surinamese girl shared she does not go to the animals, as you are not allowed to lift them anymore, this used to be possible. What was noticed however is that female from non-Western background generally let their children enter in the cuddle corner, while they remained at the entrance; female from the ethnic majority occasionally stood at the gate, but now and then also entered with their children.

People from the ethnic majority were also more inclined to touch and stroke the animals, people from ethnic minorities tend to do this less. A Dutch mother and a Dutch grandmother discuss they particularly value the fact their (grand) children can touch animals, get close and learn to take responsibility. All but one interviewee shared that they do pass by the animals on their visit. Eight visitors, five from ethnic minorities and three from the ethnic majority, said that they give explanations about the animals to their (grand) children. This does not harmonize with observations, where an opposite trend surfaced; visitors from ethnic minorities seemed to accompany their children less to the animals while talking about them. One Moroccan female discusses she does not give explanations, as she thinks her son is too young for that. The information signs attached to the cages are appreciated by a Chinese mother and a Dutch grandmother as they allow them to teach their (grand) children something. Feeding the animals is an activity beloved by the children of four interviewees, of which two from ethnic minorities and two from the ethnic majority. A Somalian mother especially appreciates the goats, as this reminds her of her home country. At De Gagelsteede

visitors from ethnic minorities thus seem to accompany their children less often to the animals as visitors from the ethnic majority; they also seem to touch and pet the animals less. All but one interviewee shared they do go to the animals however. Explanations about animals are provided by visitors of the ethnic majority as well as visitors from ethnic minorities; visitors from the ethnic majority seem to display this educational attitude to a larger extent. I will follow with the reasons visitors deploy to visit this children's farm.

9.1.5 Motivations to Visit

In 2008 an investigation among guests at the farm depicted the reasons visitors come (table 7). This study was held among adult visitors on all four children's farms in Utrecht. Seventy percent indicated that their main reason to visit was to be outside; especially outdoor play for their child is appreciated. Nice weather, animals and closeness were suggested as further important motivations to visit. On average (of all four farms) only 1% of people indicated a reason to visit one of the children's farms was to meet others, at the Gagelsteede this was even 0% (Wolf & Mazurkiewicz, 2009). Contrary to the study carried out in Amersfoort (Klinkers, 1993), visitors in this study were only allowed to tick one answer.

Reasons to visit	% of visitors
Outdoor play for child	51
To be outside and wander	19
To let child get in touch with animals	15
Nice weather	16
Because the farm is close by	10
For the atmosphere	5
Because we have no garden/playground near	3
Friends /family brought us here	0
To meet others	0
Other reasons	20

Table 7: Reasons to visit De Gagelsteede (Wolf & Mazurkiewicz, 2009)

The administrator discussed that from the annual survey held internally at the farm it surfaced that most people visit for the farm-playground combination. A social worker confirmed this *"people choose this location and this playground because there is a children's farm attached...that really is an attraction."* Other motivations given by the administrator were the contact with animals, to spend time outside and because visitors find the place cosy. She questioned whether meeting others is a motivation for visitors, as she believes guests at the farm are more self-contained, perhaps only elderly are in need of contact.

Visitors shared six reasons to come to the Gagelsteede; people indeed appreciated the combination of a children's farm with a large playground, the fact they and their children could be outside, the proximity to their home, the fact they could meet other people and the location plus organised activities were enjoyed. Most interviewees, nine in total of which five from ethnic minorities, indicated they visit the place because it combines both a children's farm with many animals and an extensive playground; this harmonizes with the view of the farm administrator. A Dutch male

phrased this as follows “*We come for the whole thus the animals as well as the playground [...] without the playground I think we would come a lot less*”. Six visitors shared how they believe there are loads of facilities at the location. A Dutch mother said “*there is a lot to do, to see, the animals but also the playground and all the props Cumulus¹⁴ puts outside*”. A Moroccan female argued this combination is “*great for children and great for their development, especially learning to deal with animals*”. Four visitors discussed that one of the main reasons to visit the farm is for them and their children to be outside, this concurs with the research of Wolf and Mazurkiewicz (2009). Several visitors asserted they do not have a garden, so this is where their children could be outside. A Dutch grandmother declared: “*Children can be nicely outside here, play and enter their beds nicely tired, that is so important for children, for their development.*” For all but one interviewee the children’s farm is located on walking distance. Six interviewees, three from an ethnic minority and three from the ethnic majority, discussed the proximity of the children’s farm and the playground to their home is an important motive to visit. A Somali mother and a Dutch grandmother outlined the farm is close and on the route to a supermarket. A Chinese mother reported she has a child she takes care of, located at the pre-school, which brings her often to the farm.

Three visitors, two from the ethnic majority and one from an ethnic minority, claimed that ‘meeting others’ drives their visit. A Dutch elderly male, on a mobility scooter, comes to be among people, he also enjoys meeting the employees. What the Dutch grandmother valued especially is that her grandchildren meet other children to play with, she herself meets with acquaintances or strangers. An Egyptian girl enjoys the fact her cousins meet other children to play here. Finally, various visitors simply enjoy the location. A Dutch father finds the children’s farm located ‘*beautifully in the park*’. An Egyptian girl just finds it a very pleasant place to be. A Dutch mother likes it as a result of the many children and the liveliness they bring. Good maintenance, a calm atmosphere, friendly personnel and the fact there is much happening make this place valuable for an elderly Dutch male. For a Moroccan female an outing to the farm feels like a rest. As her children like this place, a Chinese woman enjoys her stay. Two female from ethnic minorities appreciate there is also much to do in the winter or during bad weather, as the interior play hall opens. A surprising result from the interviews is that only two interviewees, a Chinese woman and a Dutch grandmother, said that a motivation to visit are the activities taking place on a weekly basis. The Chinese female keeps active track of the activities through flyers and staff members, she believes the activities to be ‘*very nice and diverse*’. A Moroccan and a Dutch mother find their children simply too young to come for activities, but think they might come once their children are older. A Somali mother finds it not possible to partake as her children are of different ages and have different interests. A Dutch father enjoys going spontaneously to the farm. He never plans participation in activities, but when they are on he joins. Thursdays, the only day a Dutch grandmother comes, there are no activities. Finally an Egyptian girl simply did not know there are activities, and believes this might be because she does not visit in the afternoons or weekends as it is busy then.

In this section we met briefly with the guests of the farm and their motivations to visit. The results from a survey (Wolf & Mazurkiewicz, 2009), partially overlap with answers interviewees shared. Aims phrased were spending time outside, being in touch with animals, proximity to one’s home and the enjoyment of a pleasant setting, on these motivations the survey and interviewees harmonize. Vital

¹⁴ Cumulus has been replaced by Wijk& Co at the outset of August 2013

seems to be the combination between a playground and a farm, which is shared by the manager and almost all interviewees, yet neglected in the survey. Divergences arise concerning reasons such as meeting others and partaking in organized activities. These were not mentioned in the survey, perhaps as people were only allowed to select one central motive for visiting the farm. Yet three visitors of various ethnic backgrounds name meeting other people and even staff members as a rationale for their visit. Two interviewees, one from an ethnic minority and one from the ethnic majority, phrase partaking in activities as a vital consideration to visit De Gagelsteede. In the following section the farm itself will be put to closer scrutiny as we will delve into its various qualities.

9.2 A Recreational Site

In this part De Gagelsteede as a physical setting will be explored extensively. After investigating whether this site is a public or private leisure place, several qualities which support the recreational function of this location will be expounded upon. The Gagelsteede offers stability over time, while being adaptable to changing visitor needs. Protection, aesthetic pleasures and the experienced safety make this an enjoyable and meaningful place for people.

9.2.1 A Public versus a Private Place

The farm used to be recently owned by the municipality; this changed recently as the 'Nature and Environmental Communication department', to which the children's farm belongs, became an independent foundation from the 1st of January 2014. This is shared by two interviewees and announced publicly (GemeenteUtrecht, 2012b). De Gagelsteede continues to receive a subsidy from the municipality for several years. The playground is owned by the municipality, but administered by a private welfare organisation, Wijk & Co. The cooperation between the farm and the welfare organisation will continue when the farm is privatized. The location is accessible and can be reached by public transport; the closest bus stop is 260 metres walking distance from the entrance. There are additionally free parking spots for both cars and bikes available for visitors. The farm is partially visible from the street. The street next to the main entrance is rather broad for a residential street. A coordinator of children's farms in Utrecht shares *"the Gagelsteede is located next to a road, that has been arranged as a 'play-street'¹⁵ [...] that is just not a motorway, so it is quite easily accessible for children alone"*. Visitors can use three entrances, one main entrance from the street and the parking place, one side entrance positioned next to a school and flat buildings, and one from a park. The main entrance is clearly visible from the street, some goats and buildings can be seen. The other entrances are smaller and less visible for passers-by. All entrances are available during opening hours. One disabled elderly male shared he does not find all the parts of the farm physically accessible for people on mobility scooters or with walking difficulties. *"it would be nice if some places were better accessible, to get to the large animals you have to pass two gates [...] those gates are real obstacles [...] a solution would be to have gates you can open with an electric button."* Access to the Gagelsteede is public, all people are allowed to enter and do not have to pay an entrance fee. Three interviewees, one from the ethnic majority and two from ethnic minorities, stated that an entrance fee would impact their visits greatly, they would either not visit at all or much less. The children's farm closes the fences in the evening, the playground remains open. The area is subject to many rules and regulations, designated on information signs and communicated by the staff. People not

¹⁵ Speelstraat

following the rules are spoken to if seen by the personnel. If misbehaviour takes place for a continued time, a person can be banned from the grounds.

A characteristic of public places is that they are shared and used by an eclectic group of visitors. A great variety of people has been observed at the grounds, both male and female of different ages, physical abilities, ethnicities and social positions. Two groups seemed to dominate however, adults with young children aged up to 7 years old, and children alone between 8 and 12 years old. Additionally two-thirds of the adults visiting are female. Few visitors have been seen aged 15 to 25 years old, only rarely when accompanying children. In terms of ethnicity, approximately half of the visitors come from the ethnic majority and half from ethnic minorities. Very few visitors have been seen with disabilities, yet several elderly came with walking difficulties.

Most visitors come regularly, on average twice a week and live in the direct neighbourhood in the district Overvecht (Wolf & Mazurkiewicz, 2009). A lot of visitors are known at the children farm, they are recognized and greeted by the administrator, chats take place and occasionally even drinks are shared together. One elderly visitor coming every day confirmed this. A social worker claimed she knows the names of almost all children as she works already 13 years at the playground. She even stated almost no children are anonymous; there is always someone that knows them. Seven interviewees shared they meet acquaintances such as neighbours or parents of other children at the farm. An Egyptian girl furthermore stated that *“there are a lot of people I don’t know, but what I notice, it is always the same people I do not know”*. A visitor from the ethnic majority also discussed that often the same people come *“only in the holidays now I see sometimes unknown faces”*. Both a Moroccan mother and a Dutch grandmother shared they got to know many people at the farm, both visitors and staff members; they greet each other and have chats. Nevertheless a Chinese woman, a regular visitor that comes at least 4 times a week to the farm, is surprised to still see people at the farm she doesn’t know and she sees for the first time. Additionally a social worker and the administrator of the farm share their astonishment concerning the fact they encounter visitors who live already for several years in the neighbourhood, visit the park but do not know about the existence of the farm and the playground. The administrator revealed that *“many residents of Utrecht have no idea that this exists [...] ‘oh I live here already 10 years and I have never been here’ [...] I hear that very often [...] it means we should give it more publicity.”* Information about the existence of this public place does hence not seem accessible to all people who might be willing to visit the farm.

De Gagelsteede is owned semi-publicly, is accessible to all yet dominated by some groups and is used by an eclectic group of visitors. Many know each other at least from sight and visit with a certain regularity. The setting is highly regulated in terms of opening hours and behaviour of visitors. Staff members engage in a thorough surveillance of the farm and can deny access. Visually and physically the farm is accessible to all, the fences are wide open during opening hours. One male with a disability argues he faces access-barriers with his mobility scooter. As De Vosheuvel, this location manoeuvres on a continuum between a public and a private space. I would argue that despite the factors just mentioned which suggest a more private place, open and free access for all and the usage of the place by a diverse group of visitors make this a public place. I will proceed with the description of certain qualities this children’s farm possesses, which attract visitors and make them stay for a substantial period of time

9.2.2 Qualities of the Leisure Setting

The children's farm and the large playground seem to have various qualities, these are deduced from both the interviews and the observations. These characteristics contribute to a successful leisure setting where people spend a substantial amount of their time engaging in recreational activities. The farm exists several decades and maintains stability, yet the location continues to adjust to wishes of visitors and is hence also adaptable. Protection is offered in multiple ways from negative weather influences. Visitors praise the aesthetic qualities and the thorough maintenance of the farm. Several guests discuss their excitement at the possibility to discover something every time they visit. All these reasons contribute to the enjoyment visitors feel when visiting the farm. Finally, many argue that they and their (grand) children feel safe on the farm.

Firstly, this public farm seems to perform a certain stability over time. The manager argues the farm exists for over 30 years. A Dutch grandmother said *"I come here already 36 years, I came here already with my sons, I already live here this long ..In that time much changed[...] since 7 years the playground exists. In former time there used to be less, a pond, a sandbox, swings"*. Apart from her, three female from ethnic minorities shared they already visit the farm for many years. Some discuss they appreciate the bonds they develop with staff members over time. Secondly, the farm is adaptable, as the needs of visitors are carefully monitored through an annual questionnaire. If necessary, changes are made. The administrator indicated that in 1996 a large renovation took place where the playground was renewed and enlarged. Recently they added an aviary, partially on request of the public. Several published researches indicate continuous checking of visitor needs (K. Thieme & K. Gonlag, 2004; Wolf & Mazurkiewicz, 2009). Respondents are asked what improvements they would like to see (for example longer opening hours, more animals) and often ways have been sought to realize some of these improvements.

The petting zoo and playground furthermore offer, although not always adequate, protection to its visitors. Interviewees reported the weather is an important factor determining whether or not they visit the farm. Two visitors from ethnic minorities however argued they also come when it is cold or rainy outside, as then an interior space opens where children can play games and participate in creative activities. A social worker confirmed the opening of this indoor playroom and claimed visitors from both the ethnic majority and ethnic minorities make use of it. Yet this indoor space is opened only when the social workers on the playground are present. One Sunday rain was forecasted for the entire day. In the morning the seats were all wet, very few people were present. When it started drizzling, people moved to the exit. The indoor playground was not opened this day. The administrator shared that on rainy days there are often still some children who come alone and play outside, on the playground. On those days she barely observes any parents. On days warmer than 22 degrees, people were observed to group together in the shaded spots, of which a shortage became apparent. Many primary seating spots were left unoccupied, as they were located in the plain sun. Secondary seating places, such as the ridges surrounding sandy areas at the playground, were suddenly preferred to sit down. People tended to sit closer as shaded areas were scarce; this occasionally led to social interaction. Two visitors, one from the ethnic majority and one from an ethnic minority, actively complained about lack of protection from the warm sun. One Dutch grandmother was observed while she found a spot on the children farm, her grandson was cycling. When a staff member from the farm asked her to move to the playground as cycling is not allowed, she sighed: *"oh no and I want to sit in the shade. there are so few shady spots on the playground"*. An

Egyptian girl criticizes that the lack of shadow is not good for children, they have to play in the plain sun. Observations took place during two tropical days, between 27 and 29 degrees. Relatively few people were present. There were indeed relatively few seats and no places for children to play located in the shade. Most children were either in the paddling pool or playing with water at the water pump, which provided cooling.

The aesthetic qualities and the level of maintenance at the location are highly appreciated. Five interviewees explicitly said they find the location very attractive, four were Dutch, one from an ethnic minority. Some said the location is beautiful, within the surrounding park, others found the place neatly maintained. A Dutch mother states *"I think they do a lot to make the place appealing"*. The administrator shared she receives a lot of compliments on the appearance of the location, many people indicate they find the grounds beautiful. In the first part we came across the fact that the graffiti and litter at the grounds was upsetting for five visitors. A short term solution for this problem is that currently cleaning staff enters the grounds six times a week and cleans around 12 o'clock, when there are not many visitors. One observation day three male entered the playground around this time and carried large bags. They started cleaning cans, sunflower seeds and plastic packaging lying around the playground. In a brief conversation one shared: *"people leave so much garbage here.. especially the youth at night...they have no respect anymore for public places"*. A Social worker and one visitor shared a more long term solution is thought of, the playground might soon be closed by a fence in the evenings, so that it is not accessible to littering public. Four Dutch interviewees actively enjoy discoveries they make on the farm. Two visitors discussed they lately specifically came for the veal that was born at the outset of August 2013. An elderly Dutch male appreciates the new aviary opened during the summer and argued *"there is always something happening"*. Finally, two Dutch grandmothers shared they always go to the animals with their grandchildren and are curious if there are some new animals for example or new educational games in the stable. No people from ethnic minorities indicated that the 'discovery' of new animals or activities is something they actively pursue.

A visit to the farm and the annexed playground is enjoyable and meaningful for visitors. All interviewed visitors mentioned they enjoy their visit to the farm, for different reasons. Five interviewees simply found there is a lot to do at the farm and the playground. There are many animals, a large park where people can walk around, a lot of playground equipment and even lose objects to play with and regularly organised (often educational) activities. This, visitors argued, makes it an interesting place, easy to stay for a long time while the children remain entertained. Visitors also appreciated the fact they can get near animals, their children enjoy this and learn. A Somalian mother particularly enjoys the goats, as this reminds her of home. Several visitors explicitly stated they find this an ideal place for children. A Dutch female thinks that children learn a lot through especially the educational activities, *"also about the effects of their behaviour I think that is very good for later when they grow up."* A Moroccan female found that her child has a lot of space to play when it is calm, and really enjoys this. A Moroccan father even claimed his son is calmer at the Gagelsteede than at home and loves to merely watch what is going on. The father stated *"it's great for children and their development"*. Three visitors, two from the ethnic majority and one from an ethnic minority, reported they truly enjoy the presence of the staff at both the playground and the farm; it caused a Dutch mother to feel safe. She finds the staff furthermore always positive, this makes her happy. A Dutch disabled male, who after a stroke lost his occupation and has no children,

truly appreciates the staff members. Some relationships with the staff members develop strongly. A Surinamese girl reported she knows the staff very well, since early childhood, and they know her and advise her. Meeting other adults and children is enjoyed explicitly by two visitors. A Dutch grandmother argued that she loves children and liveliness. For her grandchildren she is very happy they meet other children. *“In a place like this you get to know each other a little”* this she finds valuable as you learn to live together and share the same space. A Dutch male feels isolated and specifically comes to be among others. Five people, one Moroccan father and four Dutch visitors, find such a place very important and see it as a privilege to make use of it. *“It is a real luxury that the Netherlands have something like this, [...] we should however be happy we still have something like this in these times of crisis, it is very worthy”* a Moroccan male stated. A Dutch grandmother adds *“these places are so valuable, you just have everything here, nature, animals, the care for animals, supervision [...] there just should be a place for everyone, this really is a place open for everyone, for each culture.”* A Dutch male finds it very good a place as this exists; he thinks especially for people with not much money, this can be a very pleasant place to be, as there are few other such places where they can go with their children. Two Dutch visitors expressed their fear this place might eventually close down due to the privatization in January 2014.

Safety and Security

Finally, the Gagelsteede is perceived to be a safe place by visitors. *“I have the feeling, both at the playground and at the children’s farm that they keep a good eye on what is happening [...] that contributes to a safe place for me”* a Dutch mother shared. A Moroccan male and a Dutch grandmother agree that the staff members contribute greatly to a feeling of safety through their supervision. A Dutch grandmother adds that *“a child can play here very safely [...] the children are played with...they are watched by the people that work here but also by other parents”*. A Social worker confirms that children feel safe at the farm, and often even develop a relationship of trust with the staff members. The coordinator of children’s farms in Utrecht finds it especially important in poorer neighbourhoods, where many children are on the streets alone, that children *“come in an environment where they are welcomed and where they are relatively safe”*. Staff members on the grounds work intensely towards the achievement of a sense of safety. *“I want this to be a safe place, where children feel at home”* the farm manager shared. For some children the place might even be safer than their own home, the social worker argued, as they might experience domestic violence or sexual harassment. Here they are observed, and if the social workers observe deviating or altered behaviour at children, they might contact other youth care institutions. Two guests, a Moroccan and a Dutch mother, pointed out two features which make them feel less safe at the grounds. The Dutch mother was in the eighth month of her pregnancy and it was difficult for her to get up and her son had run off to the street twice in the past weeks. Luckily he had been caught by other adults, yet she would prefer the gates to the ground to be closed so that children cannot run off. A Moroccan mother also feared these open gates, and specifically a recently constructed ditch just outside the entrance at the playground, as she worries her child might run into that.

The perception of a safe location might be linked to regulations on the farm and the surveillance carried out by staff members on De Gagelsteede. Several notice boards stand on the grounds with rules. Smoking, dogs and bikes are for example not allowed on the grounds and people should behave as guests who follow possible orders of staff members and can even be denied access of the grounds in case of misbehaviour. Visitors are requested to keep the terrain clean and to not feed the

animals out of own initiative. Petting the animals is allowed, lifting and sitting on animals not. People are asked to speak Dutch to one another as much as possible “so that all understand each other”. Staff members act upon crossing these rules. Littering the playground happens mostly in the evenings, when no staff members are around. Cleaning staff come 6 days a week to leave the grounds clean and possibly reduce the incentives to litter. A police occasionally patrols the area at night. The administrator of the farm and a visitor discussed that an option thought about if this situation continues is to close the fences to the playground as well at night, just as is now done with the farm. Visitors are observed closely, and individuals who might cause harm to the grounds, the animals or other visitors are warned. When discussing loitering youth, the administrator shared: *“we try the positive approach... we speak to them positively, let them know that they are visible, in that way the threshold to do something is higher.. in large groups.. vandalism.. this approach does not work anymore.. then in the extreme case, we threaten with the police and finally might call the police. Usually it is sufficient to say ‘you are now going away by yourself or I call the police’, if you then walk away and do not give them attention [...] they sneak away.”* The children’s farm and the social workers at the playground cooperate closely together. If children continuously behave inappropriately, despite warnings, their parents are contacted. One Moroccan girl argued in an interview she finds it very good her mother is called when her sister behaves badly as this improves the behaviour of children. If neither this step works, children lose their right to enter both the playground and the children farm. A social worker reported that this threat works well; children truly have something to lose and are therefore inclined to behave well. I have named several qualities of this leisure setting, namely stability, adaptability, protection, safety and aesthetic qualities. These qualities allow visitors to enjoy the location and have a meaningful visit, as well as engage in discoveries of animals or other features of the setting. In this successful recreational site, people feel comfortable, stay for a substantial amount of time and in this way to possibly engage with other people. I will expound further on contact between visitors in the next section.

9.3 A Social Place

In the third part of this chapter the social interactions people engage with in De Gagelsteede are described. Some locations in the setting might trigger contact between strangers; these will be firstly expounded upon. Social interaction has been observed among visitors, of which a significant amount between visitors of diverse ethnic backgrounds. An unanticipated fact seems to be that parents take care of each other’s children, even those of strangers. Lastly, contact between visitors and staff members will be highlighted followed by a short summary of this chapter.

9.3.1 Incentives sparking Social Interactions

By aggregating the results of behavioural mapping, some locations surfaced where more interactions between people who do not know each other seem to take place than in others; observations allowed in many cases to discover the trigger which had set this interactive process in motion. Results are not likely to paint a realistic picture of the amount and location of interactions during the observation period, as the grounds of the Gagelsteede are extensive and only one researcher has been observing without the aid of any electronic devices. Yet figure 66 might serve as an initial suggestion of which locations, animals or characteristics might be an incentive for strangers to interact. These locations are discussed below, where possible the corresponding number or letter from this map is named.

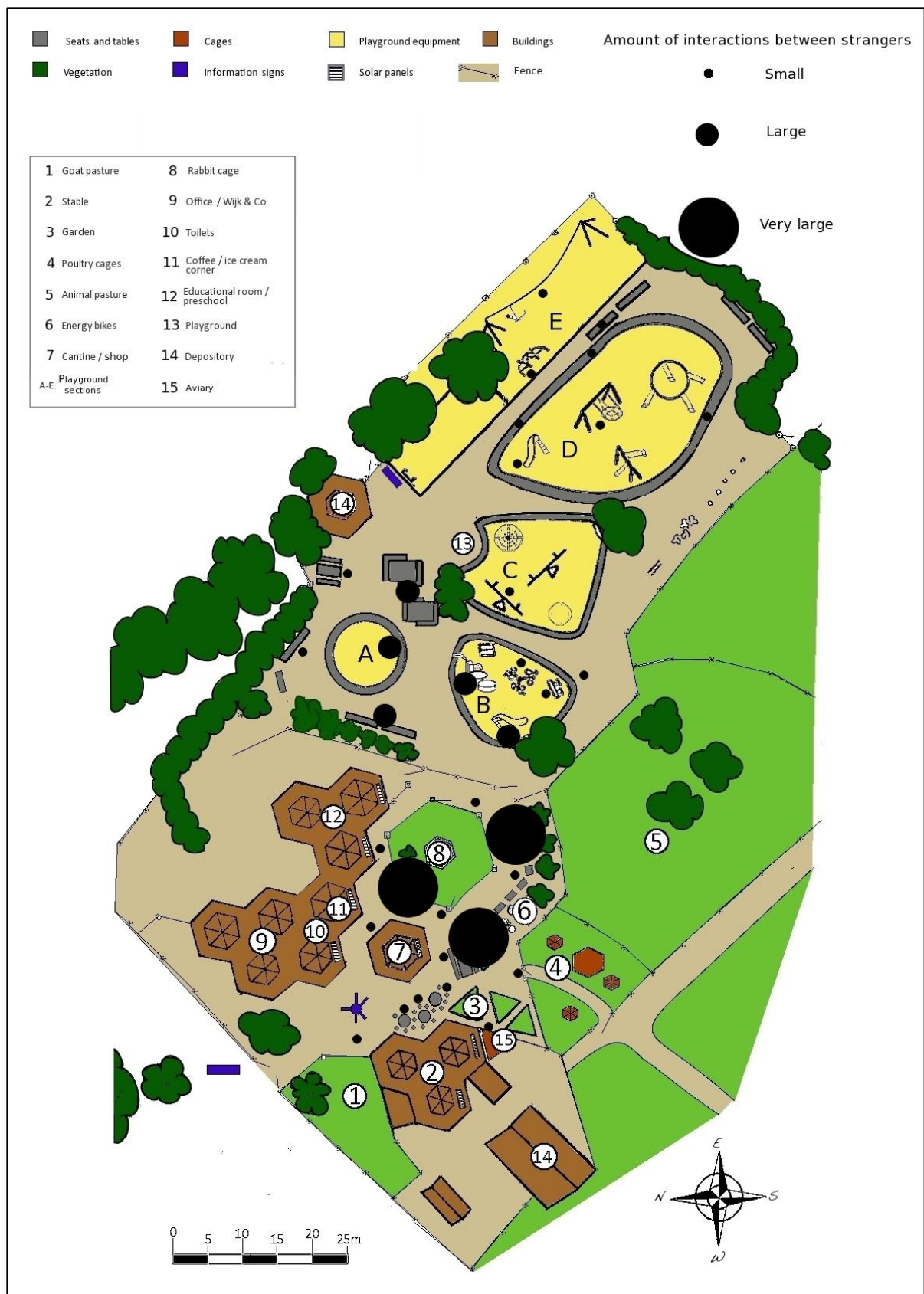


Figure 66: Informal Interactions between Visitors at De Gagelsteede

In the two weeks of observations at De Gagelsteede, three 'hotspots' have been revealed where a very large amount of social interactions took place. The electronic bikes (nr. 6), the benches on the farm near these bikes and the rabbits (between nr. 6 and 8) and the rabbit cage (nr.8) seemed to foment most informal interactions between adults unknown to each other. A smaller yet still substantial amount of social contact between strangers was fostered by the paddling pool (A), the water pump (B), The small slide (B) and some benches and picnic tables on the playground. Numerous locations activated a small amount of interactions. On the farm ground this were the movable chairs and tables (between nr. 2 and 3), the large picnic table (between nr. 3 and 7), the gate to the chickens (nr. 4) and several locations around the rabbit cage (nr. 8), among others the pre-school (nr. 12). Sites on the playground with a small amount of exchanges between visitors were several benches (see map), the scooters and the small swing in (B) and the large seesaw plus the turning tower in (C). At section (D) of the playground, several secondary seating sports in the side of this playground section elicited a small amount of interactions, as well as the 'large' slide and the swing. Lastly in section (E) the cableway and the climbing rack performed a similar function. Besides these locations, children, organised activities, attributes of people and freely roaming animals provoked interactions. Mere proximity to one another has lastly also been perceived to ignite chit-chat between strangers. All these instances will be refined in the following paragraphs.

Hotspots for Social Interactions

The Energy Bikes (nr. 6): These bikes seem to be a true attractor of people. Mostly two members of a group (either children, children and adults, or adults only) sat on the bikes and did a race against each other and attempted to get as much lights ignited as possible. Sometimes members of two groups sat down and got into a competition with each other. These situations attracted the attention of bystanders, who either passed by or sat on one of the benches adjacent to the bikes. These passers-by look, clapped and smiled at the people competing, occasionally even engaged in chit-chat with the people cycling or with other spectators. Sometimes just one person sat down and asked others passing to join in a small competition. Each bike has two seats, children younger than 6 often sat down in the back. The front seat seemed too high for children under 5 to 6 years old. People from both the ethnic majority and from ethnic minorities have been observed to sit on or watch the energy bikes. Only Dutch adults have been observed to give an extensive explanation to their children concerning the production of electricity and themes such as sustainability.

Benches at the Children's Farm (all benches positioned between 6 and 8): These benches have been observed to be used much by elderly, mothers with strollers and by large groups of ethnic minority women. Guests of diverse ethnicities hence made use of this sitting opportunity. People would sit down on the benches and watch the scene with people in front of them, occasionally while eating or drinking. Occasionally they smiled at passers-by, nod or even talk about the weather and things alike. These benches are located on a busy walking route; people moving from the entrance to the playground or people from the playground going to the large animals generally passed by these seats. What has been noted is that these benches are located conveniently on the edge, and have from all seats on the grounds the widest overview; almost the entire children's farm (apart from the entrance and the cuddle pasture) can be overseen and a significant section of the playground is in viewing range. Two of these benches are located in the shade, and were almost always occupied at days warmer than 22 degrees. People seated on the benches sometimes interacted with others on

the energy bikes. Now and then (grand)parents sat down on these seats while their children would run off to the rabbits or the playground.

The Rabbits (nr.8): The rabbits have a large area to be outside, but they can enter their cage, situated in the middle of the area. Children entered the cuddle corner regardless whether the rabbits were in the visible external part or not. When the rabbits were not there children either ran around the cage or looked through the openings of their cage. Parents sometimes accompanied their child inside the rabbit field, at other occasions stood on the side. When several children entered the rabbit corner jointly, they would often play together. Adults accompanying them then made eye contact, smiled at each other or would even exchange some small talk. A mother from an ethnic minority said this is how she occasionally meets with strangers. Yet the residence of the rabbits is quite broad, so even if both adults and children enter, they do not necessarily end up in close proximity or interact. People from numerous ethnicities have been viewed to enter the rabbit spot. The gate to the rabbits also caused interaction between strangers. People of all ethnicities have been observed to enter the grounds, yet people of the ethnic majority seem to enter more frequently than people from ethnic minorities. Personnel coming to feed or clean the rabbits finally initiated some exchanges as well, as children from several groups were drawn towards the rabbits and while the children were occupied, adults had something to talk about.

A Large Amount of Interactions

The Water Pump (B): This object was child-magnet, children would often play together. As this piece of equipment had a cooling effect, it was one of the objects at the playground used most on sunny days above 20 degrees. It consists of one water pump and three buckets with sand, which get wet through the water and turn into convenient building material for all sorts of creations. As one Dutch father shared in an interview *“especially that water pump in that sandbox is very nice...children play together.. it is almost not fun to play there alone”*. A Dutch grandmother agreed with this, her grandson plays with other children especially at this location. The ridge is high at this part of the playground, so it performs the function of a secondary seating space. On hot days many adults sat here as it was one of the few locations in the shade. People sitting close by would occasionally enter in a conversation. Children have also been observed to have a fight, once a child was for instance throwing sand at another. In these cases adults came to calm the children and interacted with each other. Adults, both of the ethnic majority and ethnic minorities, have been viewed several times while managing the water pump, and interacting with other children or adults.

Paddling Pool/ ‘Knotsen’ Game (A): This location has two functions; it is a paddling pool when it is warm, and the scene for the knotsen-game on colder days. On warm days above approximately 22 to 25 degrees, the paddling pool was filled with water by the staff. Several children entering the pool were very young and held hands of adults; the latter greeted each other when passing. Some children have been observed throwing water at adults sitting on the benches behind the pool, this led to contact between both adults and among adults and children. On colder days, the location was used by 4 children at a time playing the game ‘knotsen’ and many more children waiting in the queue ready to play. It has been mostly used by children only, who interacted on a very intense level. Children from all ethnicities, ages and both boys and girls have been viewed to queue up and await their turn. One person at a time was out and immediately replaced by someone else. Adults sat on the side and observed the scene; occasionally they interacted and seemed to be discussing the game,

as they kept pointing in the direction of the game. If there were fights, or some groups wanted to keep playing the game and did not allow others to participate, a social worker came to calm the situation and find a solution. One Social worker described the value of this game *“this is very good for new children, they can watch and learn in the queue the names of the children playing, in that way they are faster admitted into the group”*.

Picnic Tables and Benches on the Playground: The secret to the many interactions at the picnic tables on the playground seemed to be their location in the shade and the fact people sat closely together on a round table. Additionally these tables are located on a central location from which the entire playground can be viewed, where (grand)parents sat down to watch the scene and their (grand)children. On sunny days (with a temperature higher than 20 degrees), the tables got quite full with adults from different ethnic backgrounds. Initial interaction took place when people asked if they could have a seat at the table. Several times a child ignited exchanges between strangers at these tables, one brought for instance a flower, another child was crying, two children got stuck at the little bikes. Once a female went to the toilet and asked another adult to watch her child for a short while. The other benches at the playground are located on the edge, with their back to the children’s farm. From these seats the whole playground can be observed. These benches are relatively long and allow people to sit, yet avoid each other. A Dutch male commented on the design of the benches as he believes these facilitate interaction *“there are these long benches, then you quickly sit on a bench together and it is easier to initiate a conversation”*. Occasionally chit-chat between strangers has been viewed, usually concerning the knotsen game or the pool, or when children came to show something they had made from the sand at the water pump. Once a woman from the ethnic majority asked whether she could join another female from an ethnic minority, and from there a conversation set off. An Egyptian girl mentioned she mostly meets people at these benches *“there you sit close to one another, and you watch the children, then it is nice to chat”*. A Dutch grandmother supported this and argued many interactions start here; as she asks to join others, occasionally a chat develops.

The slides (B and D): At the small slide (B) more interactions have been observed than at the large slide (D). At the large slide only children elder than approximately seven years went off, adult interaction only happened if they passed by with a smaller child while smiling and making eye contact with each other and with the kids sliding. It is at the smaller slide, for younger children, many contacts between strangers have been observed. Once two mothers met and aided their children in getting up the slide and gliding off. Two other times there were female aiding their children on the slide and entering in a brief conversation. A Dutch mother stated in an interview she interacts with others at the small slide occasionally.

A Small amount of Social Contacts

Small bikes Wijk & Co: When the social workers were present at the playground, they took the small bikes out of the storage room. These were used by children aged between 3 and 6 years old. The bikes can be attached to one another and the child in the front steers all the others. This did not always run smoothly, the bikes got stuck, children fell off or children cycled towards the farm which is not allowed. All these instances led to adult contact, either while helping to release the bikes, calming crying children or telling children to return to the playground. A Dutch male believes the

equipment at the grounds, such as the little bikes and shovels, enables children to play together and the parents to talk to each other.

Scooters (B): The scooters are suitable for small children younger than 6, but have to be pushed by adults to go round. This led to several interactions. Informal interactions have been observed while adults pushed their children. A male and a female for instance entered in a chat, another female joined and started chatting with them as well, all seemed to have a different ethnic background. Another time a male pushed three children of different groups, while the adults accompanying these children sat at the ridge of the playground and smiled at him. Lastly a girl falls off a scooter and was seen by a female on the seesaw who screamed "*how pitiful, whose child is that?*".

Numerous locations have been observed where a very small number of social interactions between visitors took place. *On the children's farm this was on the following sites:*

- Aviary (nr. 15): children have been observed watching the birds, adults accompanying them exchanged smiles and a few words.
- The gate to the chickens (nr. 4): elicited contact among strangers, one group held a gate open for another, eye contact was made and a few words were spoken. A Dutch elderly male shared in an interview he has regular interactions at these gates.
- Movable chairs (between nr. 2 and 3): informal social contact has been observed as people seated and passers-by greeted each other.
- Picnic table (between nr. 3 and 7): interactions have been observed at the large picnic table at the children's farm, where an ethnic minority female sat down and smiled at a female from the ethnic majority passing-by, and said 'hello'. The administrator thinks this would be a good spot for social contact but "*it is not used that way*". She declared groups tend to sit at the far end of the table so they can avoid each other.
- Pre-school (nr. 12): Once the school started, a group of adults was waiting in the early afternoon to pick up children at the pre-school; chit-chat has been observed between two adults.

Very small amount of interactions at playground:

- Small swing (B): interaction has been observed between mothers while pushing their children.
- Large seesaw (C): several people joined at a time. This led to two groups joining and playing together, adults mingled with children.
- Turning tower (C): Much interaction has been observed, but not between adults. Usually several children climbed on this tower while a child or adult pushed the tower around.
- Large round swing (D): several children fit at the same time. Here a male pushed the swing with one child. Two other boys ran to the swing and asked if they could join the male's child, a passer-by smiled. A Dutch mother shared in an interview that it is at this swing she meets strangers mostly "*the kids go on it together, you swing them, you have a short chat.. afterwards you say bye*". A Moroccan and a Chinese mother and a Dutch grandmother also indicated that this large swing is the location where they have contact with other visitors on a regular basis.
- The cableway(E) and climbing rack: adults briefly interacted as their children went of the cable way or mounted the climbing rack

Locations with no interactions: The locations where no interaction took place were generally placed outside the observable range of the researcher. During observations a central location was chosen either at the children's farm or at the playground, which meant the far outer edges remained largely out of sight. Hence at the children's farm no interactions were observed at the goat pasture, inside the stable and at the large animal pasture. The far edges of the playground included the different swings in part D of the playground, as well as the soccer field (E). It thus does not mean no interactions took place here, rather that observations of these areas faced severe limitations. Another important note is that observations suggest the occupancy rates of the playground to be unequal. During the observation period, most children and adults have been observed sitting around sections A and B of the playground and much less around C,D and E. This might be due to the relatively high temperatures (between 18 and 29 degrees) as children mostly played with water at the paddling pool or with the water pump.

Other Factors Triggering Social Relations

Animals, organised activities, children, people's attributes and mere proximity proved to occasionally set the process of triangulation among strangers in motion; these will be elaborated upon below. A Dutch visitor shared animals occasionally trigger interactions *"It is just like people with dogs, they also easily get into contact [...] animals here [...] then you have something to talk about with a stranger."* Contrary to the Vosheuvel where many animals roam freely around the grounds, at the Gagelsteede most are placed in separate cages. The only two freely roaming animals were two cats and a peacock. An interaction between two groups has been observed with the cat. Children started petting it and the female accompanying exchanged some words about 'how cute' this was. Another time the peacock escaped from the children's farm and ran until the poolside. Some children started screaming and a group of 12 children followed the peacock while running or cycling behind him. A social worker followed them and told the children to return to the pool and leave the animal at rest. Some adults watched the scene from the benches, they pointed at the animal and some seemed to exchange some words about this incident. As discussed earlier, interactions have been observed at the rabbits and at the chickens. The larger animals, such as the goats, the sheep, the pigs and the cows have been largely outside the observing range of the researcher. This is not to say no observations took place there. What has been seen however is that the large animals have relatively much space in their cages and most of these cages cannot be entered. People who went to the large animals, walked in separate groups at a large distance from each other. A closer proximity between the public was only observed at the small calf, the muddy pigs or during feeding time; yet the distance to the observer often did not allow to see whether social exchanges took place. A Dutch elderly male argued he meets people at the animals *"sometimes they [other visitors] ask me something if I know it I answer them... for example yesterday they asked me where are the pigs, I told them well you might have to go to the butcher every year they get new pigs here"*. Interactions have also been observed between visitors as the sheep were fed. This attracted several children from different ethnic backgrounds who entered the field. Adults joined but remained at the fence and made pictures, smiled and nodded at each other. Once the rabbits were fed, children joined the staff member feeding and adults watched the sight and occasionally conversed.

Activities at the Gagelsteede are organised on a regular basis, as discussed in the chapter 7 describing the case studies. The administrator argued that the activities need to have an educational goal which is attached to themes set out by the municipality. This year they did a lot concerning

sustainability; the activities are only for children but if parents are present they are asked to become involved. One Sunday, with drizzling rain, an activity with the theme 'sustainability' was organised both for adults and children. Visitors were asked to find a sustainable solution either to a self-invented statement (adults) or received a statement for which they should find a solution (children) and sustainable prizes could be won. A small table was situated adjacent to the pre-school and a staff member handed out sheets to visitors. This triggered various conversations among adult visitors of different ethnic backgrounds, where they discussed the task or made some jokes, in one case loud laughter was overheard. Several other groups interacted with the staff member mostly, among them some groups with children. One Chinese female shared she meets other visitors during activities, when her children are occupied she joins other adults on a bench and often a chat unfolds.

Children create numerous situations which provoke contact among strangers. As a Moroccan mother put it *"though children you just easily get in contact with others"*. A Chinese mother, a Dutch grandmother and a Dutch father agreed with this. The Dutch father argued *"if the children play with each other, then you also quickly have contact with parents.. grandfathers.. grandmothers.. but especially if children get into a fight...then you really get into contact"*. A Moroccan mother recognized this, she mainly gets into contact with other parents when her children fight. A boy of approximately two years old has been observed to run into a tree. He fell backward but did not cry. His mother from an ethnic minority started laughing together with an ethnic majority female in her neighbourhood. Another boy from the ethnic majority has been observed to run towards the playground and pass various groups while introducing himself *"hi, I am Thomas"*. Adults sitting on the benches at the playground smiled at the parents of this boy. A young child dressed in diapers ran off from the playground and joined a family walking around. They took the child by the hand and brought it towards the playground where an woman ran towards the child and apologized to the family, they laugh and said *"it doesn't matter"*. Finally during an interview with a woman from Somalia, her girl of 1,5 years old was jumping on her lap the whole time. A Dutch grandmother observed the girl and smiled to the mother, and asked about the age of this child. Two visitors, one from the ethnic majority and one from an ethnic minority, shared they met others through their children much more when the children were younger as they truly had to accompany the child continuously. Now that their children are older and more independent, they can sit at a bench far away and meet others much less.

Several attributes of people have been observed to lead to interaction. The earlier mentioned mother from Somalia brought out a little music toy to occupy her child during an interview. This attracted the attention of a girl passing by with a male adult. The girl stopped and said: *"how beautiful"*, the male smiled to the Somali mother and confirmed *"yes"*. The mother smiled at both. Once an ethnic majority family came to celebrated the birthday of a girl on the grounds of the Gagelsteede. They had brought a large cake for the invited guests. As a male started cutting the cake, this led to several brief chats with children especially, who came to ask whether they could have a piece. An adult female, belonging to one child posing this question, called him back and apologized to the Dutch male. The Dutch male answers: *"well we invited a lot of people...they come here especially for us so I will give them first, when something is left the children at the playground can have some, but I do not have enough for everyone!"*. Lastly ice-cream bought on the grounds of De Gagelsteede has been observed to lead to social interaction. Children of one group were eating ice-cream, and

children of another group started begging their (grand)parents for one. Adults belonging to the children had eye-contact and smiled to each other.

Finally mere proximity between people has been noted to occasionally provide the circumstances for interaction among strangers. Several instances have been noted where people pass each other on a close distance and made eye contact, smiled and greeted each other. This happened especially at the gate between the playground and the farm, on the playground next to the benches and picnic tables and between the benches and the rabbit cage at the farm. The shortage of seats in the shade caused visitors to sit nearer one another and to even have a topic to talk about. At the ridge of section B in the playground, 3 groups sat in the shade, all seemed Dutch. Their children played together at the water pump while they discussed the neighbourhood and the playground. On the benches at the playground, two groups sat on separate benches. As the position of the sun changed and the shaded spot altered, one group moved closer to the others, one female said "*what a sun hey*". People asking information from other visitors located near them also lead to interactions; once for instance a female was seated with a stroller at a bench and another female passing by asked the directions to get to the cows. A male from an ethnic minority has been observed to ask a Dutch female at the playground where he can get a small bike for his daughter, the female pointed to the storage room. While children, animals and objects facilitated contact between strangers, several obstacles have also been noted which hindered this.

We came across numerous instances which trigger social interactions between visitors. Through behavioural mapping several locations with a very large amount of social interactions have been exposed. Essential seems to be that an animal, site or spontaneous child attract attention or provide comfort and somehow draw adults in close proximity of one another. The electronic bikes, the benches on the children's farm and the rabbit cage, seemed to be particularly effective at triggering contact between visitors. Surprising is that they are all three located on the children's farm and in great proximity of one another, this might have strengthened the incidence of social interactions. Locations where a smaller yet still substantial amount of interactions took place were the water pump, the paddling pool, picnic tables on the playground and the small slide. At the playground equipment the attention of children is captured for a large amount of time, in which adults enjoy chances to communicate. On the benches and picnic tables adults sit and watch their occupied children, and as they are in great proximity, sometimes conversations set off. Locations with a small amount of interactions seem to be located further from the 'centres' where most interactions take place. These centres were on the farm between the rabbits and the electric bikes, and on the playground around section A and B. This is where visitors tend to concentrate, end up in closer proximity and hence seem to have a larger chance to meet. Children, animals, organized activities and people's attributes provided more spontaneous opportunities for visitors to end up in close proximity and have a topic of conversation. Yet social interaction can also be hindered, this will be elaborated in the next part.

Barriers to Participation

Barriers preventing active participation which visitors experience are the large scale of the grounds, the shortage of shady spots, the high amount of sand areas instead of grass, the height of electric bikes and the amount of gates. When participation is hindered, this reduces the chances for social interaction. The first and foremost barrier observed is that the grounds of the children's farm are

very extensive. This makes it relatively easy for visitors to stay at a large distance and avoid other guests at the location. Benches on the playground are relatively long, which means people could sit on the same seat, yet would still be located at a distance which hampered interaction. Some visitors seemed to prefer this low density however. Two children have been observed to become shy from the presence of elderly children, they started crying and adults would take them to the exit. A Dutch mother and A Dutch grandmother indicated their (grand)children are afraid of elderly children, or are even told by these kids that they are not allowed to play somewhere. The Dutch mother discussed this is usually solved by the social workers at the playground; the Dutch grandmother contested this, and argued she sometimes goes to these children and asks whether they can accept her grandson, yet she gets shouted at. Two visitors from ethnic minorities share they only come around noon, when it is much calmer, as their children are not shy then of others and have much space to play. Participation in activities at the playground seems to be challenging for some visitors. An Egyptian girl and a Dutch grandmother have never participated in an activity as these are held on days on which they do not visit the farm. The Egyptian girl furthermore discusses she does not want to come on very busy days, which is probably when the activities are held. A Somali mother finds it a challenge that her children are of different ages and hence have diverse interest which hampers joining activities.

Some barriers in design features have surfaced through this study. One has been the relative shortage of shady spots. On the one hand this caused people to sit closer and interact. On the other hand, several visitors from ethnic minorities shared this was a reason for them to stay away from the farm during the Ramadan, and one Egyptian girl said it shortens her stay as she does not like the fact her cousins have to play in the full sun; barely any playing equipment is located in a shaded zone, only in section B. Secondly, two visitors, one from the ethnic majority and one from an ethnic minority, shared they find there are too many areas with sand, which should be replaced by grass. The sand is often thrown by children and is unappealing for adults. Both argue they would stay longer on the grounds if there was a grass area they could sit on. The electric bikes are thirdly quite high, not reachable for children younger than 6 years old, which hindered participation of several groups. Fourthly, several people have been overheard to ask either staff members or other visitors how to get to the large animals, as people have to pass two gates, while going through the poultry cage, and is thus possibly not clearly visible. This barrier does therefore lead to interactions, yet possibly prevents guests to visit all parts of the farm. For a disabled male in a mobility scooter these two fences pose a real obstacle, as he cannot get off his scooter to open them. He would appreciate if these gates could be electronic, so he and other people with mobility problems could go see the large animals without the need of help from others.

In this section it has been argued that the Gagelsteede is a public place. Several qualities have been described which make this place a pleasant recreational place to be and linger for a substantial amount of time. Some of these qualities are features which facilitate strangers to interact. Finally barriers to active participation and eventually social interaction have been treated. Such barriers are the scale of the location, which allows people to avoid each other; some individuals from ethnic minorities seem to appreciate this however. Elderly children dominating the place are experienced as a barrier by people with young children; this is occasionally solved by staff members. Activities are organised on specific days when not all can be present and are not always interesting for children of various ages, which inhibits the participation of some visitors. Various barriers caused by design

features of this location are experienced, which reduce peoples comfort. Such obstacles are a shortage of shady spots, many sandy areas, too high electric bikes for young children to sit on and gates which are challenging to open for some and cause confusion for others. These barriers sometimes did offer incentives for interaction. A shortage of shady spots brought people closer together, sand throwing by children caused fights which attracted adults and challenging gates provided an reason to ask questions or aid each other visitors. Next, I would like to discuss sociability both between visitors and among visitors and staff members. Inter-ethnic interactions will also be developed extensively.

9.3.2 Sociability on the Farm

Visitors engage in a multitude of social activities. Parents explain something to their child about the animals. Visitors have visual, verbal or tactile contact with their own (grand)child, partner, family member, friend, acquaintance, (familiar) strangers, people of their own ethnic group or with staff members at the farm. A popular social activity is also merely to watch others, while children play adults enjoy a seemingly relaxed time at the farm. Individual recreational activities have been observed to turn occasionally into social activities, such as people playing alone on the energy bikes or the small bikes attracting others who join. The focus of this study has been on interaction among visitors on the farm, which will be looked at in more depth.

We have seen in the first section of this chapter that people come in different constellations to the farm. Some visit alone; these are usually people older than 60, or children. Roughly about two-thirds to three-fourths of the visitors do not come alone however; they visit either with family members, friends or acquaintances to whom they have close ties and intimate social interactions. They usually stand in close proximity of one another. As a Moroccan mother puts it *"I mostly chat with friends and family"*. Several instances have been observed where people had clearly agreed to meet on the farm grounds and joined each other there. An example was a Dutch family which organized a birthday for one daughter; several other families came with presents and joined the festivity.

One barrier to interaction has been a low visitor-density as it offers people a chance to avoid one another. A small number of visitors seemed inclined to spread over a wide area and engage predominantly with their own (grand) children or other group members. Most visitors had contact with members of their own ethnic communities. A Somalian woman shared *"I usually have contact with people from my own culture"*. With strangers usually a larger distance is held; in these circumstances still numerous examples of interaction have been observed. Guests either eat or drink and observe the scene in front of them, which is compiled of the setting, staff members, other visitors and animals. Especially elderly people with walking aids (walkers or mobility scooters) have been observed to enter the grounds, go sit on a seat and watch the people surrounding them. One Moroccan male argued the power of such indirect interaction should not be underestimated. *"You get into contact with other people this way, even if it is just eye contact you know, just sitting here peacefully and smile to each other"*. Occasionally, even at times when visitor-density was low, contact with others was triggered and transformed beyond mere visual into verbal and even tactile exchanges, these interactions will be developed further.

Brief Interactions between Strangers

Origins within De Gagelsteede triggering social interactions between visitors have been described extensively in the second part of this chapter. Sometimes it was just the fact people passed each other on a short distance, and through eye contact people would greet each other. At other times children with their spontaneity laid a connection between adults who started conversing. We have also seen that animals and several play objects can bring people closer and provide a topic for a brief chat. People's character and personality can either facilitate or hamper such interactions. One Dutch female explicitly said she does not want to have contact with other visitors; this might hinder sociability. Another Dutch mother shared *"I am not the type of person that easily starts a conversation, I do not sit on a bench, look at the person left and say: what a nice weather today '...no I am not like that"*. Further in the conversation she does mention she enjoys to chit chat with people, yet she needs objects *"such as the large swing"* (D) to interact with others. A Moroccan father shares that certain locations do not always trigger contact *"on the benches you know...people sit closer [...] then a conversation starts naturally...but not for all people you know, some people are distant."* A Dutch grandmother describes her character in almost opposite terms: *"I am a social person, I talk very fast with others, I think it also depends on your own attitude. With me, with my children and now actually also with my grandchildren the social contact just comes naturally... for me it is very easy to get to know people and have a chat."* We have also seen that for three interviewees, one being the Dutch grandmother just quoted, meeting others is even a motivation to visit the farm. A Dutch elderly male values to be among people, the Dutch grandmother and an Egyptian girl appreciate that their (grand)children meet others to play with.

As much interactions between visitors who do not seem to know each other have been observed, it was surprising to hear from the administrator she does not think people interact much with strangers. *"We call this a meeting place, but I am unsure about that. I question whether people are really open for that [...]. People like to talk to us, but not so much with each other.. people maybe have a short chat"*. She generally only noticed elderly in need of social contact with others.

Out of all interviewees, only one Dutch grandmother discussed she does not interact with other visitors. She did however mention that she used to interact with others when her grandson was younger. Now that he plays independently, she prefers to sit by herself on a bench. All other interviewees claimed they do interact with other visitors, which are strangers or occasionally acquaintances. These interactions are enjoyable for all visitors; a Dutch male declared *"I really like having chats with people"*. For him it means a way out of his house and even loneliness. An Egyptian girl argued that she always learns something from others. A Dutch mother shared that she is happy to meet people from the neighbourhood this way. As her sons' school is located in a different area, he does not have friends near home, hence here at the farm he can meet others and play together.

Many visitors acknowledge they meet people they recognize on the farm. These others are often regular visitors. A Somali mother shared for example *"I come here already 7 to 8 years, I see many familiar faces.. then I always say hello.. or bye.. but that's it"*. Nine visitors, from different ethnic backgrounds, share they meet acquaintances at the farm. Some visitors of the farm even seem to develop closer connections with others. A Chinese female said *"I often meet people I know here and over time we started chatting"*. Some people shared they met other unknown members of their own ethnic group. Several groups of especially Turkish and Moroccan female have been observed at the playground. These often speak their own language, which might pose a barrier to interactions with people from other ethnicities. Six people shared they spontaneously meet neighbours or people they

live in a flat with on De Gagelsteede. Three people said they meet parents from the school their children go to.

As in Amersfoort, also in Utrecht several instances have been observed where adults cared for children of strangers. One girl was noticed while she fell during play on the seesaw. A male picked her up, noticed a female approaching and they entered in a short conversation while the girl was calmed. Another time, on a picnic table on the playground, people from various ethnic backgrounds were seated. One female got up and asked another female, to look after her child while she pointed to the toilet. The other woman laughed. After the female came back, the two did not further interact and did not seem to know each other. A Dutch mother said *"I appreciate this kinds of contact, you know, our children have to play together here, it is nice to feel we are all looking after our children [...] earlier this week for example another child a bit bigger.. 5 years.. took the bike of my son. I did not want to get up fast because of my pregnant belly, but another mother, not even the mother of that child, helped my son and gave him the bike back. It is nice to know we are helping each other here, we are all educators here."* In the same interview she shared that the week before her son ran off to the street, another father saw it, grabbed the boy and brought him back to her. Exchanges with stranger can thus reach as far as that visitors actively care for children they do not know. We came across numerous interactions at the Gagelsteede, between visitors with close family or friendship ties, acquaintances or even strangers. Contact with unknown others, the main focus of this study, was triggered by children, animals or attributes of the setting and highly valued by most visitors. Some specifically visit with a motivation to meet others. Such personal motivations and personality influence the course interactions take highly. On some occasions exchanges with strangers reached very far; adults took care of each other's children. In the following section I want to zoom in on inter-ethnic interaction.

Inter-Ethnic Interactions

During the observation period, about half of the visitors seemed from ethnic minorities, the other half from the ethnic majority, which harmonizes with official figures (Wolf & Mazurkiewicz, 2009). Several visitors came in mixed groups, with people from different ethnicities with whom they had a close relationship. In some families for example both parents seemed to have a different ethnic origin. A Dutch grandmother shared she developed a close relationships with a Moroccan female who lives in her flat, and they often visit the playground together or even take each other's (grand)children to the farm. All visitors however have contact with people from other ethnicities to some extent, as they share this space with people from different ethnic backgrounds. All interviewees mentioned the location is used by people from diverse ethnicities. One Dutch male outlined the importance of this: *"You do not have to talk, it is also already very beautiful to share the space in a peaceful manner"*.

On some occasions visitors went further than mere sharing of the setting and conversed with people from different ethnic backgrounds. Children were involved in such interactions most often among each other. Regularly an adult has been observed engaging with children from other ethnicities. Adults from different ethnic backgrounds seemed to engage less frequently with each other, still numerous such instances have been observed. Most such exchanges seemed to take place at the playground, especially at the water pump (B), the paddling pool (both when filled with water and when knotsen is played) (A), at the small bikes, the slide (B), the scooters (B), the benches and the

picnic tables on the playground. Yet several locations at the children's farm also ignited contact among strangers from different ethnic backgrounds, such as the rabbits, the energy bikes, the gate to the chickens, the aviary and the benches on the children's farm. The manner in which such interactions generally took place has been described in the second section of this chapter where different triangulation objects were expanded upon. People's belongings, such as ice-cream or a birthday cake led to various connections between visitors from various ethnic backgrounds. Children offered various opportunities for inter-ethnic contact. One instance observed for example was a Dutch girl asking her mother *"what does that female have on her head?"* referring to the headscarf of a female passing them. The Dutch mother smiled, explained what a headscarf is and that this belongs to the culture. She asked her daughter *"do you find it beautiful?"* The girl answered yes! The female from an ethnic minority smiled at the girl and said *"thank you"*. A Dutch male shared a story of how he had a for him valuable meeting with people from another ethnic background through his daughter. *"A couple of weeks ago an autistic boy bit my daughter...yes, that was an allochthon boy, [...] that father than shared his experiences he had with his son, he had whole stories, he has quite a lot to put up with that boy, but they are also proud"*.

Generally interaction with people from various ethnic origins is appreciated by visitors. A Dutch mother argued *"this is one of the few places where I get in contact with people from other cultures, I mean, I see many different cultures in the supermarket, but then all are occupied with their own things, here you know, we have a little chat, I appreciate that"*. A Dutch male stated he has most contact with other ethnicities at the animals, where he often answers questions. He reported *"when they [people from ethnic minorities] come to the animals, we interact sometimes. They for example leave the fences open, then I say hey, I think you forgot to close the fence, then they say sorry. Or you know, they leave the fence open and a chicken escapes, then they are surprised if I drive up there with my mobility scooter and pick the chicken up and drive it back to where it belongs."* A Moroccan male thinks inter-ethnic contact is very important, he even argues it might aid emancipation. *"There are many different cultures here, I think it is very good to have contact with other cultures, you learn from each other. You know, women here, I talk about Moroccan woman, really started to emancipate here...I mean I came in the 1970s, then women really did not leave their houses!"*. A Chinese mother agrees with the statement that she learns from inter-ethnic interactions, sometimes she has discussions about food for instance. One interviewee from the ethnic majority indicated she does not appreciate contact with people from other ethnicities. *"There are many allochthons, they always only sit together.. yes I think everyone should just do what they like, but I would like to see it differently.. but well the population is now like this...there used to be much less allochthons, it has changed the neighbourhood a lot."* She additionally shared her grandson has had several negative experiences with older children aged 10 to 12 years, from ethnic minorities, especially with a Turkish and Moroccan nationality. She mentioned for instance that these older children often dominate the large slide and skip the queue; her grandson withdraws then. If she goes and says something, usually she only gets a *"big mouth back"*. Yet at other times he plays peacefully with children from other ethnic backgrounds. Inter-ethnic contact is hence not always experienced positively.

People working at the farm see a large difference between people from the neighbourhood visiting the farm, and people from other parts of Utrecht or cities that are less used to people from different ethnic backgrounds. The administrator outlined the relation between people from other parts of Utrecht from the ethnic majority and residents from the neighbourhood from ethnic minorities as

flows: *"it does not mingle...it is we and them...all the time we and them"*. She continues *"if you come here with an attitude of well I think allochthons are no good yes than that is the only thing you see. Whereas for example autochthonous children can also be very annoying, and the autochthonous parents as well..."*. At the same time she thinks it is logical people stick mostly to those of their own culture *"communication is much easier and more fun"*. She is happy to see that within this neighbourhood differences in her opinion are not really made anymore between residents from different ethnic backgrounds. She finds that beautiful and it stems her hopeful. The administrator, the social worker and two interviewees discussed that children mingle much more than adults. A Dutch mother argues *"It is very good for children I think to get used to the multicultural neighbourhood"* as she believes they might behave more respectful to one another.

Inter-ethnic interactions can thus frequently be observed at De Gagelsteede. Notable is that most interactions between visitors from diverse ethnic backgrounds seem to take place at the playground. At the farm such interactions place at the rabbit cage, the energy bikes, the gate to the chickens, the aviary and on benches. Children as well as occasionally attributes such as ice-cream seemed to be a powerful generator of interactions between parents from various ethnicities. Several visitors share these they value these meetings and find them meaningful. Reasons named are that visitors and their children learn something and connect with others. One male from an ethnic minority even argues it aids emancipation. Only one Dutch visitor shares her hesitation of meeting visitors from other ethnic backgrounds and would prefer to avoid this. She also stated earlier that she does not seek contact in general, neither with other visitors from the ethnic majority or personnel. Language does occasionally pose a barrier in communication between diverse visitors. People living in the neighbourhood are more open to inter-ethnic contact than ethnic majority visitors living in other parts of Utrecht according to the manager. She argued that among such 'outsiders' seemingly much prejudice exists when confronting ethnic minorities. This blinds the visitors from the ethnic majority that children from all ethnicities can misbehave. Most parents however highly appreciate that their children learn about the multicultural society. A substantial amount of the interactions taking place at the farm is between visitors and personnel. Staff members often also facilitate and manage the contact between guests; it is hence important to include a final part where contact between visitors and personnel members is zoomed in upon.

Visitor-Personnel Interactions

The staff on the playground is ethnically very diverse, with Moroccan, Dutch and Antillean social workers. The staff members of the children's farm are mostly Dutch and one Surinamese male assists in gardening. Occasionally volunteers from ethnic minorities aid at the farm. The administrator pointed out she does not think inter-ethnic contact is facilitated by the ethnic background of staff members. Yet one Surinamese male shared he feels his background from an ethnic minority sometimes helps in resolving misbehaviour among youth from ethnic minorities. *"sometimes you have annoying boys I notice that they behave differently if one of them says something about their behaviour [...] I also come from another culture, I am from Suriname and I notice there is a difference then, they show more respect, they listen"*. Staff members, both at the children's farm and at the playground, have much contact with visitors from all ethnicities. Language barriers can be resolved, as a social worker shared *"This is a very mixed neighbourhood, culture does not matter in communication.. most speak good Dutch or English.. [...]for the language barrier we usually ask another visitor or an elder child to translate.. but if it is a really official chat about for example the*

behaviour of a child, than we take a translator". At the children's farm this contact is diverse. Visitors were generally greeted, if people look around in a questioning way they were asked whether they can be helped. When visitors asked questions, about the facilities, directions or the animals, they received an explanation. Some visitors came to buy eggs from the farm, this also lead to interaction with an employee. The administrator indicated visitors from all ethnicities are very curious about the animals, especially during certain periods such as the lambing season, when other animals are born or now as the pigs have just been brought to the butcher. During organised activities, staff members provided children and adults with materials and explained the activity. The administrator argued that sometimes people just want to have a chat, about the weather, the location, the animals or *"people just want to tell their story"*. She notices especially elderly people seem to have this need. She is not always happy with this, there is one male¹⁶ who comes here every day and holds her of her work, this she finds difficult. When she is very busy she does not feel like chit-chat, yet it is a part of her job and it is sometimes a difficult balance. Rules and regulations finally are a pretext to ask people to adapt disorderly behaviour mentioned in the first section of this chapter, such as littering or using the small bicycles at the farm where it is prohibited.

Social workers provide visitors with the opportunity of supervised play. They hence monitor the grounds carefully and make sure all interact peacefully with one another. When children hurt themselves or had a conflict, the social workers tried to resolve the situation. Occasionally the social worker asked children or parents for help, for example to clean and fill the paddling pool with water. Visitors could approach the social workers with questions concerning complex issues such as sexuality and upbringing. A social worker shared *"children can also come to us, girls for example, with all kinds of questions about sex, boyfriends, things that are not talked about at home[...] children feel safe here, we have a relationship of trust. Also children with real problems come here, at home or at school, then they ask us for advice, or sometimes they just want to tell their story. From every child we know something. Children appreciate that a lot [...] they feel valued."* She argued staff members have distinct qualities; she herself works already 13 years at the farm and knows the children and their parents very well, which creates trust and provides continuity. Another female gave swimming lessons to woman from ethnic minorities and knows many mothers that come here from there, this also facilitates close ties.

Yet the involvement of both the staff members at the farm and at the playground reaches further than that. As the farm is located in a poor neighbourhood with a relative high percentage of incidents such as domestic violence, addiction and unemployment, the wellbeing of children is carefully monitored. On a frequent basis, at least once every two months, employees of the farm and the playground get together and discuss individual cases they worry about. If they deem it necessary, external youth welfare organisations, schools and parents are informed about these concerns. This is not always easy for the social works; one female shared she often develops close relationships with children. Yet *"you have to be able to let things go"* she argued, to be able to carry out this job. In the communication with children and specifically in the resolving of conflicts the 'peaceful neighbourhood method'¹⁷ is used by staff members of the playground and the farm. This is an initiative which started in the neighbourhood Overvecht at public schools, and since approximately 5 years has been introduced at locations in the neighbourhood where children come, such as the

¹⁶ This male has been interviewed as well and confirmed he visits every day

¹⁷ De Vreedzame Wijk Methode

children's farm and playground, so that children experience a consistency in method. In this 'peaceful neighbourhood method' children learn to solve conflicts in a peaceful manner and to approach each other and other neighbourhood residents in a positive manner. Conflicts are resolved by children themselves, if necessary another child acts as a mediator (Horjus & Dijken, 2009). A staff member officially only steps in when children cannot find a solution, yet a social worker indicated that when it gets busy, she often just steps in and tries to find a solution. She also declared that she makes sure children do not swear at each other using nationalities or illnesses, and insists on children calling one other by their names. This has been observed as well various times, especially during conflicts at the knots game.

A staff member at the playground reported she only recently realized how much her presence is valued by visitors. This summer there has been a change in welfare organisation taking care of the playground, the threat existed that current staff members would be replaced by others. Parents signed a petition to keep 'their' social workers, and more than 600 signatures were collected. The intensity of contact with staff members varies among visitors. An Egyptian girl, only visiting during the afternoons, does not see personnel and hence has no contact. A Dutch grandmother states she does not have contact with staff members and does not feel the need for this. A Moroccan female shares she has no contact with the personnel, but appreciates their presence as it feels safe they keep an eye on the visitors. A Somali and Moroccan mother indicate they do not have contact with staff members, but their children do and often help feeding the animals. A Dutch mother has very sporadic contact *"only in cases like 'I think a chicken escaped' or 'can I have a little bike'"*. A Moroccan male has short chats and always greets staff members. A Chinese mother has frequent contact especially when her son gets bullied the staff helps her to resolve this situation. Three visitors, two from the ethnic majority and one from an ethnic minority even shared they have very close ties with staff members. They have chats or even receive advice concerning personal development or offer advice about the upbringing of children. Visitors highly value this contact, especially the feeling that their children are watched and safe. One male from an ethnic minority notes a difference between personnel from the children's farm and the social workers. *"I also have contact with people that work here, but they are a bit distant. Well at the animals they are very friendly, the personnel at the petting zoo, they help a lot. But at the playground this is less the case, I would like it to be better, they could show more interest, be kind, say hi, you know I come here years already, and a couple never say hello or so. [...] I see that with these social workers you know, they should be the ones giving the example, I believe, you should stick to that kindness, I miss that now [...] if I talk to them or so, they help me...but that spontaneity is missing."* Three visitors counter this however, two from an ethnic minority and one from the ethnic majority. They indicate they developed close bonds with all staff members, both at the farm and the playground. A Chinese female feels she is always helped when her child is bullied by other children, and finds this very helpful. A Suriname girl knows the staff since she was a child, *"what I really like is that they listen and connect me to others, they connected me now for example to a job coach and this coach helps me looking for a job."* A Dutch grandmother states *"I appreciate that they pay good attention to the grandchildren, they give sometimes advice how you can deal with them, very nice."* A Dutch male only has contact with staff members from the children's farm and finds them *"friendly, they always greet me, give me explanations about the animals [...] you know, I ask for example about how they clean the animals, then they answer me [...] you know the people that work here are very attentive and interested [...] they talk to me, sometimes they offer me a cup of coffee"*.

Interactions between staff members and visitors are all in all paramount and both the visitors and staff members have diverse ethnic backgrounds; a substantial number of social exchanges is thus inter-ethnic. Language is generally not a barrier as either other visitors or even an official translator facilitate conversations. Such interactions have numerous origins; personnel sell goods, provide explanations or engage in surveillance activities and correct visitors in accordance with regulations. The intensity of contact varies among visitors, some develop close relationships of trust, and others merely greet staff members. One man calls the personnel at the playground 'distant', yet all other visitors find all staff members friendly and helpful. Interesting is the official method in which conflicts are resolved both at the playground and at the children's farm where children learn to resolve their own conflicts and are taught to interact in a positive way with others from different ethnic backgrounds. Staff thus actively facilitates the interactions between visitors. The well-being of children is lastly closely monitored and if necessary, other social welfare organisations are contacted. I will turn to a summary where all results from De Gagelsteede will be linked to the conceptual framework.

9.4 De Gagelsteede in Sum

In the three foundational parts of this chapter we came across the visitors of De Gagelsteede in Utrecht, the special qualities this recreational setting offers and the opulent diversity of social interactions taking place on both the farm and playground. The relevant findings will be connected in this summary to significant concepts derived from previous scholarship. De Gagelsteede will be firstly positioned as an attractive leisure destination, attracting visitors from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The qualities of the setting will be briefly highlighted, as well as similarities and differences between visitors from varied ethnic backgrounds using the farm. I will then demonstrate how the children's farm acts as a meeting place. The setting offers triangulating features which create fleeting interactions among strangers. Interactions between diverse visitors will lastly be examined.

9.4.1 A Leisure Destination

A foundational concept within this study is leisure. The main motivations visitors named to visit the farm seemed to be directly tied to recreational necessities, such as spending a relaxed time outside and wander, being in touch with animals and the enjoyment of a pleasant setting. A divergence was shown between a survey held (Wolf & Mazurkiewicz, 2009) which suggested no visitors come to meet others, yet several interviewees mentioned meeting as an incentive to visit. This discrepancy might be due to the fact visitors were only allowed to tick one answer in the survey, in the interviews several answers were possible. Vital for interviewees was furthermore the combination between a farm and a large playground, which make it an interesting leisure setting with much to do and discover.

De Gagelsteede is an experiential place. Activities visitors engage in are closely tied to recreational aims. These 'optional activities' such as wandering around, play and partaking in organized events at the farm only take place in a high quality environment. We came across several features which make this such a successful leisure setting, namely stability, adaptability, protection and aesthetic qualities. Safety of the location is furthermore ensured by staff members who use both a situational and a dispositional approach to reduce incidents of unaccepted behaviour such as littering, molesting other visitors or animals. The grounds are cleaned, there are strict opening hours and visitors are closely

followed which all shape the situational approach to combat negative behaviour. Occasionally the situational approach becomes dispositional as people misbehaving are actively punished or even denied access to the grounds. In this safe and comfortable environment, visitors can enjoy this location, and engage in the discovery of animals or other features of the setting. It urges visitors stay for a considerable amount of time and engage with others though either passive or fleeting sociability.

Several similarities and differences in the way people from different ethnic backgrounds visit the farm have surfaced. Before I elaborate on this, an important note is that De Gagelsteede was observed for a period of two weeks, of which one week in the holiday period and one the first week of the new school term. Both visitors and staff members indicated that the holiday period is not representative for the entire year as fewer visitors from ethnic minorities and more from the ethnic majority are present. Still the observed percentage of visitors from ethnic minorities (both western and non-Western) was approximately 50%. Most visitors live in the direct neighbourhood of the farm and on less than a 10 minute walking distance. Visitors from different ethnic backgrounds seem to use the farm in diverse ways. Visitors from the ethnic majority tend to visit more during the holidays and the weekends and come with the entire household. Guests from ethnic minorities visit more frequently during the week. The average group size of both ethnic minorities and the ethnic majority is two to four people. Yet ethnic minorities seemed to overall visit De Gagelsteede in larger groups, often composed of mostly adult female with children, and brought their own food more often than people from the ethnic majority. Notable at the farm was that a large group of visitors are children who visit the farm alone; most of them have an ethnic minority background. Native Dutch parents accompanied their children more often to the children's farm and animals while providing explanations, whereas visitors from ethnic minorities sat down and let their children discover the farm on their own. All but one interviewee contested this however and mentioned they visit the animals with their children and provide explanations. Adults from ethnic minorities touched and petted animals less and were inclined to remain at a larger distance, this was not the case for children. One visitor argued differences in behaviour of children and especially misbehaviour are closely tied to how children are raised and not so much to ethnic background. Staff members argued however that one's background is a factor determining how children act and generally find children from ethnic minorities less shy and more independent than ethnic majority children. The motivations to visit the farm are similar between visitors from the ethnic majority and ethnic minorities. What caught attention is that only two visitors from ethnic minorities shared they prefer to visit the farm when the density of people is lower. De Gagelsteede thus seems to be an attractive leisure destination, inviting visitors from diverse ethnic backgrounds to participate. This children's farms also functions as a meeting place between these unknown others, this will be discussed in more detail.

9.4.2 A Meeting Place

De Gagelsteede is a social space where diverse visitors meet. Features of the farm stimulate triangulation processes, whereby visitors engage in fleeting interactions. Particular attention will be paid to inter-ethnic interactions and contact between visitors and staff members. Fleeting sociability, can be both triggered and hindered by certain features of the farm. Features sparking contact between strangers, a triangulation process, have to attract attention, maintain children occupied for a while or provide comfort and somehow draw adults in close proximity of one another; crucial is that adults move from a public distance to a social or even occasionally intimate distance. The

electronic bikes, the benches on the children's farm and the rabbit cage, were true hotspots where social interaction took place. Startling is that these sites are located adjacent to each other on the children's farm, which might have strengthened their triangulating effect. On the playground most social interactions were also concentrated on two of the five sections, namely A and B where the paddling pool, the water pump and the small slide are positioned. These 'centres' cause people to concentrate, be in greater proximity and thus facilitated the chances for fleeting interactions. At sites positioned further from these centres a much smaller amount of social interactions seemed to take place. Lastly, children, animals, organized activities and people's attributes offered more spontaneous occasions for visitors to be at a social distance and have a topic to talk about. Barriers to active participation within a site and hence possibly social interaction have also been treated. The scale of the location permitted people to avoid each other and fall into civil inattention. Some individuals from especially ethnic minorities seemed to appreciate this lower density of visitors. For adults with young children, elderly children dominating the place formed a challenge which was sometimes resolved by staff members at the playground. Activities organized on fixed days and accessible for children of a particular age group inhibited some parents to partake. Various design features diminished the comfort of De Gagelsteede and prevented active participation. These obstacles were a shortage of shady spots, many sandy areas, too high electric bikes for young children to sit on and gates which were challenging or confusing to several users. Yet some of these features did offer incentives for interaction. A few shady spots brought people closer together, sand throwing caused fights which attracted adults and challenging gates provided an incentive to ask questions or aid each other.

Before elaborating on inter-ethnic interactions, I firstly want to characterize the social function of this children's farm. De Gagelsteede enables interactions between visitors and is hence a social space. Visitors engaged in enduring, passive and fleeting interactions. Most adults visited with their children or other close ties, and engaged predominantly with people from their own ethnic group in enduring social interactions, often also with members of a similar ethnic background. Passive interaction is almost automatically engaged in, as most visitors sat down for a substantial amount of time and watched the people they shared this location with. Fleeting interactions were occasionally triggered through children, animals or attributes of the setting and greatly valued by most visitors. Some even visit with a motivation to meet others. Personal motivations and personality impact the course of fleeting interactions, which range from brief eye-contact, smiles and nods, to conversations and adults who even took care of unknown children. Many people are regular visitors and know each other, which makes them 'familiar strangers'.

The ethnic diversity on this children's farm, much higher than at De Vosheuvel, contributed to relatively more incidences of inter-ethnic social interactions. Only few visitors have been observed to come in groups composed of individuals with various ethnic backgrounds, several interviewees however mention they engage in enduring social interaction with visitors from diverse ethnicities. Most visitors sat down for a large amount of their visit and watched others, hence engaged in inter-ethnic passive sociability. Fleeting inter-ethnic interactions have frequently been observed at De Gagelsteede. Most such exchanges seem to take place at various facilities on the playground; on the farm most interactions took place at the rabbit cage, the energy bikes, the gate to the chickens, the aviary and on benches. Children were a frequent initiator of interactions between parents from various ethnicities, as well as people's attributes such as ice-cream. Many visitors found such

meetings valuable and meaningful; visitors shared it contributes to peaceful coexistence, heightened respect for each other, exposure of children to the multi-ethnic neighbourhood and even emancipation of ethnic minorities. People's beliefs and character did influence the course fleeting interactions take. One Dutch visitor shared she prefers to not have contact with others from ethnic minorities. The manager on the farm noticed that especially ethnic majority visitors from other parts of Utrecht are guided by prejudices against others from ethnic minorities and do not mingle much. Language is furthermore experienced as a barrier for interactions between visitors.

A substantial amount of fleeting interactions at the children's farm prevails between visitors and personnel. Staff members frequently facilitate and manage contact between guests. Staff members, as the visitors, have different ethnic backgrounds; a large amount of social exchanges is thus inter-ethnic. Contrary to interactions between visitors, language is in staff-visitor conversations not experienced as a barrier, as there seems to be always a translator who facilitates conversations. Visitors reported a different intensity of their relationship towards staff members, some develop close confidential relationships, and others merely greet staff members or even have no contact at all. One man called the personnel at the playground 'distant', all other visitors found personnel friendly and helpful. Staff members aim to develop personal relationships with especially children and monitor the well-being of children carefully. They contact other social welfare institutions if deemed necessary. Social workers at the playground and staff from the children's farm finally base the way they interact with visitors on the 'peaceful neighbourhood method' in which children are taught to resolve conflicts and have positive contact with diverse others. In this manner staff members thus actively manage interactions between visitors. In the final chapter the results from both De Vosheuvel in Amersfoort and De Gagelsteede in Utrecht will be presented and compared and contrasted. Recommendations will be shared which might strengthen inter-ethnic interactions on children's farms.

10. Conclusion

In line with the research purpose, namely an improved understanding of the societal relevance and value of Dutch children's farms, the function as a meeting place between visitors from various ethnic backgrounds has been examined. In this final chapter I will firstly present a short summary of the different phases within the research process. I will then provide an overview of the main research findings by comparing the results from both case studies and relating them to contemporary research. Thirdly, recommendations will be suggested for administrators and policy makers on governmental and municipal level which allow the strengthening of this meeting place function of children's farms. Lastly, suggestions for future research will be discussed.

This thesis set out to gain an improved insight into the relationships between inter-ethnic social interaction, the use of children's farms by people from various ethnic backgrounds and the features of a leisure destination which might facilitate or prevent such social interactions to take place. Initially, scientific debates surrounding the main concepts relevant for this study, such as leisure, ethnicity, qualities of the destination, social interaction and triangulation have been explored, as well as the complex interrelations between these terms. Three cornerstones surfaced, namely the visitors of the farm, the physical setting as a leisure destination and as a meeting place between visitors. In order to answer the main question, to what extent the children's farms, as a leisure destination, function as a meeting place between people from various backgrounds, these three pillars were widely explored. What was researched was whether children's farms are an attractive leisure destination for visitors of diverse backgrounds; and if so, whether they meet on the grounds.

Post-positivism as a research paradigm supported the pragmatic nature of this study and the representations of lived experiences (Henderson, 2011). As the research has been explorative in nature, qualitative methods were deemed most appropriate. A two-case study design allowed the investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context. It additionally provided more convincing evidence for the research results than a single-case study (Yin, 2003). On the basis of several criteria, such as usage by different ethnic groups, public access, differing locations within a city, varying scales and features, two children's farms were chosen, De Vosheuvel in Amersfoort and De Gagelsteede in Utrecht. Visitors, the setting and social interactions were best explored using three different methods, namely a document analysis providing rich secondary data on the visitors profile as well as information on the setting such as organisational structure, rules and regulations and history. Observations included an extensive physical inventory of the settings and the viewing of visitors and their behaviour on the farm. Behavioural mapping was furthermore used to locate fleeting interactions between visitors. Interviews allowed eliciting the meaning of visible behaviour for visitors. Motivations, opinions on the setting and to what extent social interaction between visitors from diverse ethnic backgrounds took place were best explored using semi-structured interviews.

The foundations of this research lay within leisure scholarship, which has focussed much on participation and social interaction patterns of visitors from diverse ethnic backgrounds in recreational settings over the past decades (Peters, 2011; Stodolska et al., 2014). Concerning the visitors, essential basic demographic data was obtained such as ethnic background and place of residence, information about people's visit, the way individuals used the farm and finally motivations providing an incentive to visit. The discovery of features within the setting which might attract ethnically diverse visitors required an extensive description of both children's farms with the

depiction of essential characteristics. The setting has furthermore been evaluated as a public location, accessible to a wide range of individuals. When exploring the value of this setting as a meeting place, characteristics of the setting which triggered social interactions were depicted. Interactions between visitors have also been put to scrutiny; it was established that visitors from different backgrounds do indeed engage in sociability. As interactions between visitors as well as between visitors and staff members might be inter-ethnic in nature, all exchanges within the setting and their evaluation by visitors have been monitored. Having briefly summarized the different research stages and their relation, I want to proceed with the findings which have surfaced.

10.1 Research Findings

In this section the answers to the research findings will be presented and related to contemporary scientific debates. I will firstly touch upon the factors that make the children's farm an attractive leisure destination for people with different ethnic backgrounds. Divergent needs, preferences, motivations and behaviour of visitors on the farm will also be explained. I will then share the numerous social interactions visitors from these diverse ethnic origins engage in within this meeting place.

10.1.1 Features of the Children's Farms which attract Diverse Visitors

Numerous features seem to support the attraction of diverse visitors to the children's farm. Of foremost importance seems to be that the leisure destination is of a high quality. Several aspects contribute to a successful recreational setting, such as its location, accessibility, density, comfort, safety, the opportunity for discovery, the stability, adaptability, aesthetic and maintenance qualities, and facilities such as the playground and animals. All these add to the fact that people feel attracted to the destination and participate, stay for a substantial amount of time and are eventually more likely to engage with each other.

A first note is that a much smaller percentage of non-Western ethnic minorities visited the children's farm in Amersfoort compared to the one in Utrecht. This might be partially explained by the dissimilar ethnic composition of the neighbourhoods in Amersfoort and Utrecht in which the farms are situated. In Overvecht (Utrecht) 44,3% of visitors originates from a native background and a total of 46,5 % from non-Western minorities (G.B.A.Utrecht, 2013), in Amersfoort 69,9% of residents is native Dutch, compared to 21,5% of non-Western migrants (G.B.A.Amersfoort, 2013). Another significant factor might however be the location and accessibility of the children's farm. A difference noted between both case studies is that the farm in Amersfoort is challenging to access as it is located on a high street and at least a 400 metre distance from the nearest residential area plus 600 metres from a large public park. The location in Utrecht is situated within a public park, surrounded by 4 residential areas, the nearest being at a 20 metre distance. Additionally the farm is positioned on a calmer play street. This might also explain the fact that in Utrecht many children, specifically from ethnic minorities, have been observed to visit the farm unaccompanied by adults, in Amersfoort no children have been observed to come without adults. Location and accessibility are thus major factors attracting visitors (Carmona et al., 2010). Leisure research furthermore suggests that within the Netherlands, migrants appear to engage more in activities nearby their home, see for example (Jókövi, 2000). Most interviewees in Utrecht, of both ethnic minorities and the ethnic majority, highlighted they live on less than a 10 minute walk from the farm. In Amersfoort, visitors of diverse ethnic backgrounds however came from the other parts of the city as well as other towns. Dines and

Cattell (2006) name proximity to one's home one of the preconditions for social exchanges in public space. Scholarship suggests that a sufficient density of people within a destination creates vitality and hereby attracts visitors (Carmona et al., 2010). Visitors generally shared to appreciate sharing the space with others. Density was found to have a precarious balance however; several ethnic minority visitors both in Utrecht and in Amersfoort shared that when the density of people is too high, their children get shy and do not want to play anymore.

Visitors from both ethnic minorities and the ethnic majority shared to appreciate comfort, safety, discoveries, stability, adaptability and aesthetic qualities. A condition which seems to be vital for people to consider visiting is the weather. De Gagelsteede in Utrecht shows that a location can offer a protected and attractive space which people are still inclined to visit despite bad weather circumstances; the farm offers an indoor playroom. In Amersfoort some locations do offer a protected space, such as the stable and the cafeteria, but these do not seem attractive enough to draw people on rainy days. In Utrecht however a frequently mentioned problem for visitors was the lack of shady spots. This prevented some visitors from visiting the farm. Especially female partaking in the Ramadan shared that the combination of sunny weather and a shortage of shaded areas caused them to stay away from the farm on days warmer than approximately 20 degrees. Physical comfort and protection is one of the primary needs within public places (Carmona et al., 2010; Gehl, 2010). Safety of the location also surfaced as an important characteristic of the farm in Utrecht, and was said to be enhanced by staff members who maintained close contact with visitors and even facilitated interaction between them through the resolution of conflicts or in cases of discriminatory practices. In Amersfoort safety has not directly been named by interviewees and relations with staff members seemed not as intimate.

The animals are a crucial feature of the setting, the majority of visitors named them as the most important reason to visit the children's farm. The animals are hence vital in attracting visitors to this location. Many also name the combination between a playground and the animals as an important motivation for visiting. Both farms are furthermore relatively 'stable', they have a history of several decades. Many visitors used to come as a child, and now come with their children. Others visit the farm on a regular basis for several years now. People from all ethnic backgrounds highly appreciate this continuity over time and seem to develop a strong connection with the children's farm; endowed with meaning this space becomes a significant place in their lives. Both De Vosheuvel and De Gagelsteede adapt to changing visitor needs and preferences, through for example annual surveys among their guests. People indicate they appreciate their wishes are taken seriously and that changes are made which make the place more appealing. Lastly, the aesthetic qualities and maintenance of both children's farms differs. The Gagelsteede in Utrecht was frequently called an aesthetically pleasing place. Its central position within a large public park is also highly valued by guests. Opinions on the visual appearance of De Vosheuvel in Amersfoort were more diverse, some visitors were critical about low maintenance levels, whereas others find this to add to the historical atmosphere. All in all, a high level of maintenance seems to generally be appreciated. Stability and adaptability are factors shaping people's meanings and hence sense of place (Mehta, 2013). Attractive facilities on the location, as well as aesthetic quality and maintenance levels add to the appeal of a setting (Carmona et al., 2010; Gehl, 2010). I discussed briefly features of both children's farms which attracted visitors from diverse ethnic backgrounds. I will now discuss divergent needs, preferences and participation patterns observed viewed among guests.

10.1.2 Divergent Uses of the Farm

All visitors tend to use the farm to engage in optional and recreational activities, which are largely similar. Yet some slight differences can be noted in the use of the farm by people from different ethnic backgrounds. Although all visitors, both in Utrecht and in Amersfoort, tend to visit the farm in groups of approximately 2 to 4 people, occasionally visitors from ethnic minorities seemed to visit the farm in larger groups composed often of women only. Visitors from ethnic minorities seemed to visit more often with household members such as children or a partner. People from ethnic minorities came more frequently with entire families. Another dissimilarity is that visitors from ethnic minorities were inclined to sit down and bring much food along, while their children would run around freely on the farm and the playground. This is in line with other scientific literature (Jókövi, 2001; Peters, 2011). One staff member of Amersfoort claims these children, running around freely, often molest animals, yet this has not been supported by other interviews or observations. Many argued such misbehaviour is linked to other factors such as upbringing rather than ethnic background. Other differences between how people from various ethnic backgrounds engaged with animals surfaced. Although visitors from all ethnicities occasionally seemed to display fear from animals, individuals from ethnic minorities did not touch animals as frequently as individuals from the ethnic majority, and were disposed to stay more at a distance. Various members of ethnic minorities reported a strong relation with certain animals, as these reminded them of their home countries. Studies show that relationships with animals are mediated through factors such as ethnicity, culture and religion (de Cock Buning, 2000; Neo, 2012).

Adults of the ethnic majority were furthermore more likely to accompany their children throughout the farm and provide them with explanations. While comparing participation levels within organized events in Utrecht and Amersfoort, it surfaces that in Amersfoort much more visitors from ethnic minorities seem to partake in the activities than in Utrecht. As this information is based on a single event only, no generalizations can be made. Yet what seemed effective in Amersfoort was that activities were more recreational and entertainment oriented, while in Utrecht activities had a clear educational goal. These two factors might point into a direction that the motivation for visitors of ethnic minorities is more recreational in nature, while people from the ethnic majority emphasize the educational value of the children's farm. Academics point out the limited research on how needs and motivations affect the leisure participation of diverse ethnic group members, see for example (Walker, 2014). This might be a possible area for future research.

In Amersfoort visitors from ethnic minorities seemed to visit more frequently on Sundays and occasionally Wednesdays, while visitors from ethnic minorities visited both during the week and in weekends. In Amersfoort this pattern is reversed, as visitors from ethnic minorities tend to come more during the week and native Dutch during the weekends. This difference might be partially explained by the challenging accessibility of De Vosheuvel in Amersfoort and its distance from residential areas, as suggested earlier, as ethnic minorities tend to spend leisure time nearer to their homes (Jókövi, 2000). All in all the children's farm is considered an attractive leisure destination for people of different ethnic origins. Next I will depict that the children's farms also function as a meeting place where diverse inter-ethnic social interactions take place.

10.1.3 A Meeting Place

Several characteristics of the farm actively facilitated social interactions between ethnically diverse visitors, namely scale, triangulating objects, the presence of children, animals and seats; these will be further developed. I will then show what types of social interaction took place between visitors from different ethnic backgrounds. The scale of the children's farm seems to influence inter-ethnic interactions. Results suggest that within the much larger scale of De Gagelsteede, due to the lower density of people it is possible to avoid each other and fall into civil inattention. Whyte (1980) already suggested that proximity of people in time and scale can create the opportunity for social contact. At the Gagelsteede however, several attractive, triangulating features are located in great proximity. Most interactions took place here, as people ended up on a social or even intimate rather than a public distance (Mehta, 2013). In Amersfoort the locations with social interactions are more spread, possibly as the scale of this location is smaller and at most locations a high density of people allows proximity to others.

The animals are a vital part of the children's farms, yet seem to be less important for facilitating inter-ethnic interaction than attractions at the playground or other play equipment such as the tractor in Amersfoort or the electronic bikes in Utrecht. This might be due to the fact that most time, by both visitors from the ethnic majority and visitors from ethnic minorities, was spent on the playground. Additionally, visitors from the ethnic majority tend to search more closeness to animals where visitors from ethnic minorities tend to remain at a larger distance and pet the animals less. Remarkable is that the animals, where fleeting interactions between visitors from various ethnicities took place, were mostly located behind a fence. Studies do suggest that the way animals are perceived and treated by people, is partially determined by one's culture (de Cock Buning, 2000). Children were often a trigger for social contact between visitors. This is in line with other research within leisure studies (Peters et al., 2010). Features within a setting which spark social interaction among adults seem to attract children and keep them occupied for a while. Adults would meanwhile also remain in close proximity of this animal/object, either because they had interest for the object or wanted to be near their child, because for instance they foresaw a certain danger. The tilt-cart event in Amersfoort had a similar effect. Adults had to wait in a queue while their children went off with the cart, this sparked a large amount of interactions.

Comfortable seats, situated on the edge and near attractions, enabled adults to sit in close proximity and engage in social exchanges with others. Such seats were in Amersfoort located on the playground and in Utrecht on both the farm and the playground. Surprising is that both in Utrecht and in Amersfoort, movable seats provoked fewer interactions than fixed benches and seats around picnic tables. Mehta (2013) suggested such movable seats allow personalization of the environment and support social behaviour. Yet in this study seats positioned on the edge, on a location where many people pass by and with a good view (Carmona et. Al, 2010) seemed to enable most interactions. Several features of the farm have been disclosed as enhancing the likelihood of inter-ethnic interactions to take place. Having examined the characteristics of the children's farm which trigger social interaction, I want to elaborate on the social interactions which took place between visitors from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

10.1.4 Inter-Ethnic Interaction

Social interactions did take place between visitors from different ethnic backgrounds at the children's farms. Generally visitors tend to visit the farm with people of their own ethnic group. This concurs with research within other outdoor leisure settings (Broek & Keuzenkamp, 2008; Peters, 2010, 2011; Stodolska et al., 2014). Enduring interactions were thus mostly fostered within people's ethnic group. Only in Utrecht did visitors mention they developed close ties with staff members of the playground, occasionally these interactions were inter-ethnic. No evidence, however, has been found of acquaintances met at the farm with whom relations developed over time to become enduring. Both in Amersfoort and in Utrecht visitors engaged in passive inter-ethnic interaction, by merely being present in a public place shared with diverse people. In Utrecht passive inter-ethnic interaction is more prominent as approximately 50 percent of visitors are from ethnic minority background; in Amersfoort only 10 percent of visitors came from ethnic minorities. Some visitors from the ethnic minority in Amersfoort even claimed they did not find the visitor profile of the Vosheuvel multi-ethnic; this is in great contrast with Utrecht where all interviewees discussed the abundance of visitors from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Many fleeting interactions have also been observed and shared in interviews. Both in Utrecht and in Amersfoort people's personality seemed to influence the course social interactions take. Some visitors actively looked for social contacts and are open to speak with others, some focussed mostly on their own group members. Other scientific studies indeed mention individual factors such as people's character to influence social interactions (Carmona et al., 2010). Prejudices in front of ethnic minorities as well as a language barrier were occasional obstacles for inter-ethnic interaction, harmonizing with research insights (Barna, 1994; Freysinger & Harris, 2006; Stodolska et al., 2014). Yet studies suggest that through interactions, prejudices against others might be altered, the so-called 'contact hypothesis' (Peters & Haan, 2011; Shinew, Glover, et al., 2004). Visitors to De Vosheuvel and De Gagelsteede reported indeed various benefits of both passive and fleeting inter-ethnic interactions. They valued peaceful coexistence, exposure of their children to visitors from diverse ethnic backgrounds and learning from each other. One visitor even named far-reaching effects such as emancipation. Mehta (2013) recognizes the value of passive inter-ethnic interaction such as the negotiation of difference and feeling part of a larger community.

Children's farms seem thus to be an attractive leisure destination for visitors of diverse ethnic backgrounds who stay for a substantial amount of time on the grounds. They also function as meeting places between the eclectic group of individuals coming to the farm, composed of both visitors and staff members. Certain features of the farms actively provoke social interactions; but also the mere sharing of the location leads to inter-ethnic exchanges which are generally experienced as positive and valuable. Lastly I want to discuss practical recommendations for administrators and policy makers on governmental and municipal level, and suggest directions for future research.

10.2 Policy Recommendations and Future Research

Based on the results of this research, some recommendations can be shared with administrators and policy makers. Suggestions will be given, both to strengthen the role of children's farms as a leisure destination which attracts visitors from varied ethnic backgrounds, as well as to facilitate social interactions between these diverse visitors.

Features Contributing to an attractive Leisure Destination

- ✓ *Location:* Farms should be easily accessible and preferable located in great proximity of residential areas. This might prompt more visitors from ethnic minorities to come, who tend to spend leisure time near their homes.
- ✓ *Diverse needs:* Children's farms should, while offering organized activities, keep in mind diverse needs of visitors with different ethnic backgrounds. Activities are best planned with certain regularity and on different weekdays so that diverse people can partake once in a while. Both educational as well as recreational needs within activities should be catered for. Also the design of farms should keep in mind diverse needs. Visitors from ethnic minorities who come in large groups might need a comfortable sitting area with a table to eat tranquilly. More visitors from ethnic minorities might be attracted when these divergent needs are met.
- ✓ *Maintenance and safety:* A high maintenance level and safety were mentioned by many visitors as essential prerequisites to come and enjoy the environment. Staff members can impact both of these factors.
- ✓ *Protection:* An attractive destination should offer protection from negative weather conditions. When it rains, indoor play areas and stables can be made of sufficient interest for people to still visit. On warm summer days, shadow could be provided by movable parasols or trees.

Factors Enhancing a Meeting Place

- ✓ *Scale:* The scale of a children's farm is highly influential, a human scale is desirable, as a higher density and closer proximity of visitors facilitates social interactions. Even farms of a larger scale can offer a location with many attractive triangulating objects positioned closely together through which a higher visitor-density is generated.
- ✓ *Attractors:* Most inter-ethnic interactions took place on the playground. To enhance the function of a meeting place, the playground could be expanded and seats should be positioned in great proximity so that adults are near each other. Other features which keep children occupied for a while and draw adults near might also be effective.
- ✓ *Animals:* Freely roaming animals triggered social interactions between people of the ethnic majority, inter-ethnic interactions seemed to take place more around animals behind fences. Some visitors in Amersfoort reported a lack of knowledge about animals and would appreciate more information on cages so they could teach their child as well as learn something themselves.

Four significant areas of future research can be proposed, flowing from this study. The use of quantitative methods could be applied to more children's farms to allow greater generalizability of research findings. Further investigations on how needs and motivations of visitors from diverse ethnic backgrounds relate to their participation in leisure activities could be carried out. A focus on social sustainability with regards to children's farms and the contribution of these farms to social cohesion in neighbourhoods are other vital directions for research. Firstly, as an explorative study, this research might be a valuable contribution to leisure scholarship. Insights were gained on the relations between ethnicity, social interactions, and features of a public leisure destination which might facilitate social interaction. To facilitate a greater generalizability of results, a quantitative study including more respondents and case studies would be recommended. The study at hand was

conducted in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods. Valuable would be to investigate children's farms in less ethnically diverse districts and see to what extent inter-ethnic interactions take place there. This study furthermore only touched upon needs and motivations of different ethnic group members and how these affect their leisure participation. Recreational aims seemed to be preferred by visitors from ethnic minorities, while educational motives were more often mentioned by visitors from the ethnic majority. As thus far, the effects of needs and motivations on leisure participation among different ethnic groups have not been researched extensively, this could be an interesting direction for future investigations (Walker, 2014).

Children's farms have been established as a possible meeting place for people from diverse ethnic backgrounds and hence have a significant societal value. A suggestion for practitioners is that the campaign of 'All Children's Farms Sustainable', could be expanded. Currently the focus is largely on ecological and economic sustainability ("Alle kinderboerderijen duurzaam! Doe je mee? " 2013), yet I believe this focus could be expanded to embrace the social pillar of sustainability which is considered vital (Dresner, 2002; Mowforth & Munt, 2009). In this manner the social relevance of children's farms might be more clearly established. In 2012 several figures came to the foreground concerning the district Overvecht in Utrecht, where one of the case studies has been carried out. From all districts in Utrecht, people felt the most unsafe here. There is a lower social cohesion than the rest of Utrecht and most people in this district expect the neighbourhood to deteriorate further in the future (Scheelbeek, 2013). Social interaction might aid to increase feelings of safety and improve social cohesion (Peters, 2011). Future research could assess to what extent meetings on the farm contribute to an increase in feelings of safety and improved social cohesion by conducting a more long term study. In this way a more peaceful neighbourhood could be established by an improved understanding of each other.

Finally I would like to point out that this research, focused on a micro-scale setting, suggested that in a leisure destination, attractive for visitors from diverse ethnic backgrounds, the mere presence of diverse others is already highly appreciated and adds to trust, joy, an improved understanding of each other and respect. Rather than focussing on a meeting place and features which trigger interaction, I would urge both practitioners and researchers to focus primarily on features which make a location attractive for an as diverse range of visitors, where they want to spend a significant amount of time. Once a great variety of people come to a setting, interactions, be it through merely sharing the same space or by having brief interactions, will take place. These interactions are not only often greatly appreciated by visitors, but also hold strong benefits for communal relations and might even contribute to social cohesion within neighbourhoods.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Observation Guide

<i>Elements used during observations</i>	
1. When	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - date - time - weather
2. Who	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Actor/ Group: size and composition - gender - Appearance - Ethnical background
3. What	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does social interaction take place? - How: visual, tactile, aural - Causes for interaction (triangulation) - Emotions/feelings expressed - What language is used? - Activities: optional or necessary
4. With whom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who are significant others present? - Who are/are not included?
5. Relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How are people connected/ separated? - E.g. seeing/hearing/touching
6. Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Situation in which activity takes place - Cultural influences (how people might react/interpret social interactions)
7. Where	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Setting where it takes place - What options for use are provided? - Objects present? How are they used? - Barriers blocking relationships between people? - Space occupied by actors? - How are actors situated in space?

Appendix B: Interview Guides

QUESTIONS FOR ADULT VISITORS

(Between brackets: probes)

Voor het aanspreken: *zou ik u een paar dingen mogen vragen over de kinderboerderij?*

Als mensen instemmen, doorloop ik kort de volgende punten:

- a. Korte introductie van mezelf*
- b. Korte introductie onderzoek: beleving van de kinderboerderij onder verschillende bezoekers*
- c. Indicatie tijdsduur 15 tot 30 minuten*
- d. Uitleg vertrouwelijkheid en het academische doel van het interview*

Afwikkelen:

- a. Bedank mensen voor hun tijd uitleg hoe dit gesprek aan het onderzoek bijdraagt*
- b. Interviewee wordt gevraagd of ze geïnteresseerd zijn in het eindresultaat, kunnen hun e-mailadres achterlaten. Mail wordt eenmalig gebruikt, voor het verstrekken van het eindrapport.*
- c. Kort sociaal praatje indien daar nog behoefte aan is.*

1. Algemene vragen

Noteer: man/vrouw

Waar woont u? (stad, wijk)

Welke talen spreekt u/ spreekt u met de kinderen?

Waar bent u geboren? (land) Waar zijn uw ouders geboren? (land)

Wat doet u zoal op een doordeweekse dag? (kinderen, werk in huis of buiten de deur)

2. Algemene informatie over bezoek

Hoe vaak bezoekt u de kinderboerderij?

Op welke dagen bezoekt u de kinderboerderij?

Hoe lang bezoekt u de kinderboerderij gemiddeld?

In welk gezelschap/met wie bezoekt u de kinderboerderij? (bv met kind(eren), familie, vrienden, alleen). Hoe groot is de groep mensen met wie u de kinderboerderij bezoekt gemiddeld?

Hoe oud zijn uw kinderen? geslacht?

3. Reden voor bezoek kinderboerderij

Wat zijn uw redenen om de kinderboerderij te bezoeken? (buiten zijn, bezigheid voor kind, ontmoeten anderen, leren over dieren, weer, sfeer, locatie etc.)

Ligt de boerderij voor u op een 'looproute' naar bijvoorbeeld de school of de supermarkt?

Verschillen die redenen per keer dat u de kinderboerderij bezoekt?

Wat doet u zoal terwijl u de kinderboerderij bezoekt?/ Welke activiteiten onderneemt u? (bv. Ook speeltuin?)

Welk contact heeft u met de dieren? En uw kinderen?

Ziet u verschillen tussen bezoekers en wat ze leuk vinden/doen op een kinderboerderij, (bv mensen van verschillende culturen)?

Wat is uw relatie met de kinderboerderij? (bv bezoeker, vrijwilligerswerk)

4. Kinderboerderij als ontmoetingsplek

In hoeverre ziet u de kinderboerderij als een plek om mensen te ontmoeten?

Wat vindt u in het algemeen van een kinderboerderij als ontmoetingsplek?

Wat voor contact heeft u met beheerders/ diervverzorgers?

Welk contact heeft u met andere bezoekers?

Wat vindt u van het contact dat u heeft met anderen? (genoeg, te weinig, te veel, waardering van contact)

Waar komen mensen vandaan de u hier ontmoet?

Heeft u weleens contact met mensen uit andere culturen?

- Welk contact heeft u daarmee?
- Hoe verloopt dat contact?
- Wat vind u van dit contact? (genoeg, te weinig, te veel, waardering van contact)

5. Infrastructuur/voorzieningen op de kinderboerderij

Zijn er aspecten aan een kinderboerderij die contact met onbekenden mogelijk maken? Zo ja- welke? (bv sfeer, dieren, koffieplek)

Ervaart u bepaalde 'drempels' hier op de kinderboerderij die contact met anderen bemoeilijken?

Wat zou de kinderboerderij kunnen verbeteren om contact tussen mensen die elkaar niet kennen mogelijk te maken? (bv aan infrastructuur, activiteiten)

Mocht er in de toekomst entreegeld gevraagd worden, hoe zou u daar mee omgaan?

QUESTIONS FOR ADMINISTRATORS OF THE CHILDREN'S FARMS

(Between brackets: probes)

Voor het aanspreken:

- Korte introductie van mezelf*
- Korte introductie onderzoek: beleving van de kinderboerderij onder verschillende bezoekers*
- Uitleg redenen voor het selecteren van interviewee*
- Uitleg van het belang van de brijdragen van interviewee*
- Indicatie tijdsduur :45 tot 60 minuten*
- Uitleg vertrouwelijkheid en het academische doel van het interview*
- Vraag om toestemming om het interview op te nemen*

Afwikkelen:

- Bedank mensen voor hun tijd uitleg hoe dit gesprek aan het onderzoek bijdraagt*
- Transcript wordt opgestuurd binnen 3 dagen na het interview, interviewees kunnen daar nog op reageren tot 2 weken na ontvangst.*
- Interviewee wordt gevraagd of ze geïnteresseerd zijn in het eindresultaat, kunnen hun e-mailadres geven. Mail wordt eenmalig gebruikt, voor het verstrekken van het eindrapport.*
- Kort sociaal praatje indien daar nog behoefte/tijd voor is*

1. Algemene vragen

Sinds wanneer werkt u hier op de kinderboerderij?

Wat zijn uw taken?

Waar woont u (stad, wijk)?

In welk land bent u geboren? En uw ouders?

2. Over de kinderboerderij

Beheer: Hoe wordt de boerderij beheerd? Wie is de eigenaar? Hoe wordt de boerderij gefinancierd?

Werknemers:

- Hoeveel
- Taken
- Etnische afkomst

Vrijwilligers:

- Hoeveel
- Taken
- Etnische afkomst

Welk contact is er tussen werknemers, vrijwilligers en bezoekers?

Hoe verloopt het contact tussen werknemers, vrijwilligers en bezoekers?

3. Algemene informatie over bezoek kinderboerderij

Hoe veel bezoekers ontvangen jullie gemiddeld per dag/week/maand/jaar?

Hoe is het aantal bezoekers verdeeld over de week? De drukste dagen? Rustigere dagen?

Is er een verschil tussen bezoekersaantallen en gedrag in de zomervakantie?

Heeft u informatie over het bezoekersprofiel

- hoe vaak bezoeken mensen
- met welke redenen bezoeken mensen
- welke nationaliteiten
- welke samenstelling van de groep (kind, volwassenen, grootte groep)
- geslacht
- verdeling volwassenen/kinderen
- leeftijden, verdeling leeftijden
- frequentie bezoeken
- gemiddelde verblijfsduur

Hoe verloopt een gemiddeld bezoek aan de kinderboerderij?

Zijn er belangrijke voorzieningen in de buurt die ook mensen aantrekken (bv scholen, supermarkt etc.)?

4. Redenen voor bezoek kinderboerderij

Wat zijn redenen voor bezoek van deze kinderboerderij denkt u?

Wat kunnen mensen hier op de kinderboerderij doen? / Welke activiteiten ondernemen mensen? (bv dieren bezoeken, eten, speeltuin)

Zijn er verschillen tussen niet-westerse allochtonen (mensen van Turkse, Marokkaanse, Surinaamse, Antilliaanse achtergrond) en autochtone Nederlandse bezoekers (redenen bezoek, dagen van bezoek, duur bezoek, groepsgrootte, frequentie van het bezoek, bezoek tijdens activiteiten (eventueel kosten), wat precies op de kinderboerderij gedaan wordt

5. Kinderboerderij als ontmoetingsplek

Wat is een ontmoetingsplaats voor u?

In hoeverre is de kinderboerderij een ontmoetingsplaats?

Wat voor contact vind er plaats tussen werknemers/ vrijwilligers en bezoekers?

Wat voor contact vind er plaats tussen bezoekers?

Heeft u voorbeelden van incidenten/activiteiten waar mensen van verschillende culturen met elkaar in contact komen? Hoe verloopt dat contact?

6. Infrastructuur/voorzieningen op de kinderboerderij

Zijn er aspecten aan deze kinderboerderij die contact met onbekenden mogelijk maken? Zo ja- welke? (bv sfeer, dieren, koffieplek, zitbankjes, speeltuin)

Zijn er aspecten die contact 'uitlokken'?

Zijn er misschien bepaalde 'drempels' hier op de kinderboerderij die contact tussen bezoekers zouden kunnen bemoeilijken?

Wat zou de kinderboerderij kunnen verbeteren om contact tussen mensen die elkaar niet kennen mogelijk te maken? (bv aan infrastructuur, activiteiten)

Mocht er in de toekomst entreegeld gevraagd worden, hoe zou u daar mee omgaan?