



Landscape justice and vulnerable groups

The case of cultural minorities in the Netherlands

Europe has a rich diversity of landscapes because of differences in biophysical conditions, land use practices and cultures. Immigration brings new people from other cultures to the continent, with different preferences regarding the landscape they live in. Because of these and other differences cultural minorities may lack access to landscape use and planning. We explore this problem and discuss what the case of cultural minorities in the Netherlands can tell us about inclusion of vulnerable groups in landscape use and planning.

Not all people participate at the same level and in the same way in using, planning and managing natural and cultural landscapes. If specific groups are deprived of landscape goods and services that they would appreciate and benefit from, we may call these groups vulnerable. Cultural minorities with migrant backgrounds are well-known examples of such potentially vulnerable groups. From democratic and public health perspectives, the inclusion of migrants and other vulnerable groups is an issue of landscape or environmental justice. From an instrumental perspective, accommodating this socio-cultural diversity is relevant to ensuring continued public support for landscape protection. While this theme is relevant for the whole of Europe, in accordance with the European Landscape Convention, we focus on the Netherlands, with particular attention for the case of minorities with different cultural backgrounds, such as Islam. Nowadays, a substantial part of the Dutch population (14%) has a recent non-western background, being first- or second-generation migrants (CBS, 2022a; see box on next page). Their share will probably grow over the coming decades (NIDI, 2022). One-third of them have their origin, first or second generation, in Turkey or Morocco.

Compared to Dutch-origin residents, how often do these non-western migrants visit landscapes, which landscapes do they prefer, and how do they use them? If differences result in deficits, how can we better include these groups in landscape use and planning? First, we present some differences in the use of landscapes and discuss possible causes by highlighting differences between Western and Islamic contexts in nature perceptions and landscape preferences. Second, we discuss the importance of including cultural minorities and other vulnerable groups from the societal perspective of environmental justice. Third, we touch on ways to achieve a better inclusion of vulnerable groups, by presenting the example of the so-called “mosaic governance” approach.

Differences in landscape use

Cultural minorities visit landscapes in different ways. According to a 2013 public survey, 15% of the respondents from non-western origin often visited nature areas, and 11% often visited cultural (rural) landscapes. For western-origin (including Dutch-origin) respondents, these percentages were higher and reversed: 27% and 35%, respectively (De Boer *et al.*, 2014). Also practices of outdoor recreation are different for cultural minorities. Kloek *et al.* (2015)

vulnerable groups
Islam
cultural minorities
environmental justice
nature interaction

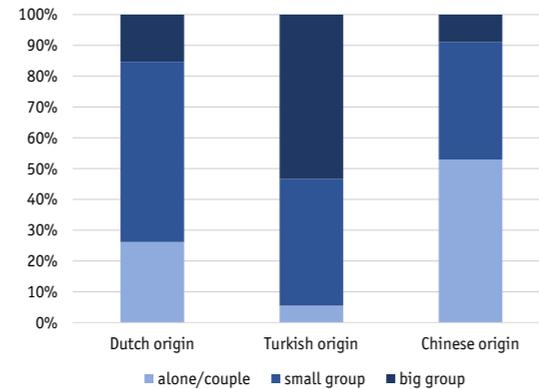
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Photo **Mark van Veen**.
Fen ragwort (*Jacobaea paludosa*) in IJssel floodplains
Duursche Waarden, Salland,
Overijssel, The Netherlands.

Figure 1 Group sizes of nature visiting young adults from different cultural origins. (Based on Kloek *et al.*, 2015.)



found that Dutch-origin young adults visit the landscape preferably in small groups, with relatively more cycling, ball gaming, running and photographing, among others. Young adults with a Turkish background recreate preferably in big family groups, with relatively more walking and sitting, barbecuing, and playing ball games. Chinese-origin young adults tend to recreate alone or in couples and participate relatively less in different activities (figure 1). Kloek *et al.* (2015) characterised Dutch-origin young adults as “nature lovers” and “individual quiet seekers” and their Turkish-origin peers as “social animals” and “group-based quiet seekers”. Chinese-origin young adults scored the same as their Dutch-origin peers. In

sum, differences in ethnicity and culture matter to understanding recreational preferences. However, other aspects, such as age, gender, education, religion and location of residence may also play important roles in shaping identities, apart from ethnic identity. For example, a Turkish-origin person may identify as being a youngster or an Amsterdam resident as well (Kloek *et al.*, 2017a). Moreover, differences between groups are relative and also exist within groups. That is why Kloek *et al.* stress that under-participation does not capture the complex practices of migrants in outdoor recreation, although there are relevant differences (Kloek *et al.*, 2015).

Possible causes of these differences

Lack of interactions with landscapes may have different causes. Soga & Gaston (2017) present a model to understand how loss of opportunities and orientations may cause “extinction of experience” with nature and what the effects are. We adapted this model to understand lack of interaction with nature, as we see under non-western migrants, its causes, and consequences (figure 2).

Residential status, urban or rural, proximity or distance to nature, available transport and time may influence the opportunities to visit landscape. An impoverished nature in the surroundings of cities may also cause a kind of distance. Most non-western origin residents live in cities (60% in 2007), but there is a trend of leaving the city for suburban communities (NIDI, 2021). Moreover, unemployment rates among these minorities are still higher than among Dutch-origin residents (CBS, 2022), while decreasing over time. Living in the city and high unemployment may restrict their opportunities to travel to specific

landscapes outside the city. As figure 2 shows, these factors may contribute to fewer interactions with nature.

Another cause is the orientation to nature. How do people look at nature and what is their landscape preference? Cultural backgrounds, feeding into personal identities, play a role in this, albeit in complex and layered ways, as persons have multiple identities which may vary in time and place. In the next section, we will elaborate this for the case of cultural minorities with Islamic backgrounds.

The types and frequency of interactions with nature influence cognitive and affective responses to nature. These responses are reflected in images of nature and landscape preferences held by persons. Images of nature can be described as cognitive frameworks that direct and structure the perception and appreciation of nature (Buijs *et al.*, 2009); they include, among others, beliefs about what sort of landscapes are most typically nature. Landscape preferences are usually conceived as mostly affective responses of liking or disliking specific landscapes (Buijs *et al.*, 2009). Images and preferences are related. For example, someone who regards wilderness as the most typical form of nature, will likely prefer wild landscapes over managed ones. However, the strength of the relationship between the two varies substantially in existing studies (Buijs *et al.*, 2009). Also, the way images and preferences are experienced can vary, from very articulate and deeply cherished to diffuse and of low priority. As visualised in figure 2, cognitive and affective responses feed back into orientation, and possibly into opportunity, as they may influence, for example, the choice of residential or recreational places.

In this way, feedback loops can either strengthen or

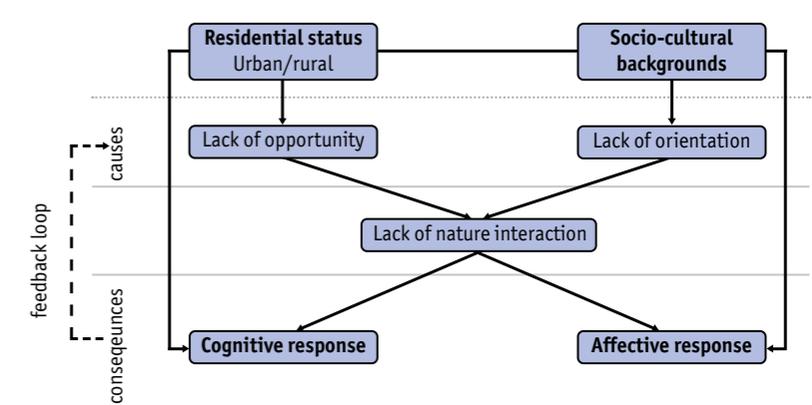


Figure 2 Difference in nature interaction. (Adapted from Soga & Gaston, 2017.)

weaken interactions with nature. Loss of meaningful interactions with nature may have serious negative consequences for health and well-being, interest in and emotional connection with nature, willingness to protect nature, and nature-friendly and pro-environmental behaviour.

Western and Islamic contexts of nature images and landscape preferences

About one-third of non-western cultural minorities in the Netherlands originate from Turkey and Morocco. According to Buijs *et al.* (2009) many of them have preserved elements of their traditional culture and consider Islam an essential part of their identity that, to varying degrees, distinguishes them from Dutch-origin cultural traditions.

Traditional Islamic views of nature are theocratic. Nature reflects the greatness of Allah and is organised according to a divine plan. Nature is subordinate to humans in this plan, but it is not just a resource to be used. Non-human beings manifest the glory of Allah, and it is our duty to manage nature well and protect

Classification of migrants

In this paper, we speak of non-western migrants, first and second generation. Our data are based on this classification. In 2022 Statistics Netherlands (CBS) changed the population classification (CBS, 2022b). Migrants are born outside the Netherlands (previously first

generation), children of migrants born inside the Netherlands are children of migrants (previously second generation). Non-western is no longer used. Migrants born outside of Europe are characterised by their specific countries or regions.

it from abuse and degradation. Cultivating nature is a virtue, as nature is created to be employed and enjoyed by humans (Van Koppen, 2003; Schouten, 2005; Buijs *et al.*, 2009). Not surprisingly, because both tap at least partly into the same inspirational persons and writings, traditional Christianity and Islam are quite similar in these views on nature, and both know the concept of human stewardship of nature. A crucial difference, however, is that Western views of nature have been strongly influenced by the cultural shifts of Enlightenment and Romanticism. Particularly Romanticism has made a strong mark on Western nature views. In these views, which most influentially emerged in the USA, pristine wilderness and “untouched” landscapes are conceived and appreciated as nature in its most proper state, while cultivating nature is seen as a threat (e.g. Van Koppen, 2002). Besides these differences between Islamic and western cultural and religious traditions, migrants from Turkey and Morocco often have a rural background, which implies that they, much like rural people in other cultures, grew up in the thick of practices of cultivating and controlling nature (Buijs *et al.*, 2009).

Different images and preferences

Buijs *et al.* (2009) used the concepts of nature images and landscape preferences to compare relationships with nature and landscape of Dutch-origin residents and Turkish- and Moroccan-origin residents. They

identified three major types of images of nature: the wilderness image, focusing on “ecocentric values and the independence of nature”, the functional image, focusing on “anthropocentric values and intensive management”, and the inclusive image, characterised by “ecocentric values and an intimate relationship between humans and nature” (Buijs *et al.*, 2009, p. 1). In a quantitative survey, they found significant differences between adherence to those three images of nature (table 1). A majority of Dutch-origin residents adhered to the wilderness image, while residents originating from Turkey and Morocco (first- and second-generation migrants) showed a relative preference for the functional image. Second-generation migrants, however, showed remarkably more adherence to the wilderness image than the first generation, but still less than Dutch-origin residents. Regarding the functional image the reverse is the case. This suggests that at least substantial parts of second-generation migrants acculturate to prevailing Dutch nature images, something also observed in other studies (Buijs *et al.*, 2009; Kloek *et al.*, 2017a; Van Koppen, 2003). Buijs *et al.* (2009) also observed significant differences in preferences for Dutch landscape types. Compared to Turkish- and Moroccan-origin residents, Dutch-origin residents showed higher preferences for 9 out of 10 landscape types presented. The differences were more pronounced for “natural” landscape types (such as shallow marsh, dunes, mixed forest, and heathland) and less pronounced for managed landscape types (such as peat pasture and small-scale bocage landscape). Interestingly, the open polder landscape was the one landscape that received higher preferences from Turkish- and Moroccan-origin residents than from Dutch-origin residents. In preferences for

Table 1 Images of nature of Dutch-origin residents and Turkish- and Moroccan-origin residents. (Data: Buijs *et al.*, 2009.)

Image of nature	Turkish- and Moroccan-origin residents	Dutch-origin residents
Wilderness	25%	51%
Inclusive	31%	34%
Functional	44%	16%

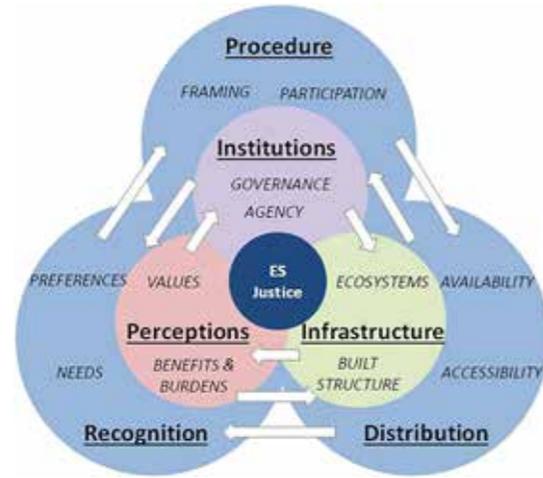
landscapes, no significant generational shifts were found to suggest acculturation, as was the case for images of nature. It should be added that other demographic factors, such as education and gender, were also found to influence images of nature and landscape preferences. Nonetheless, Dutch versus migrant origin was a prominent variable in explaining differences (Buijs *et al.*, 2009). To conclude, the case of Turkish- and Moroccan-origin residents demonstrates relative differences in interactions with natural and cultural landscapes and in nature images and landscape preferences. Such differences may affect, partly negatively, their interaction with nature and landscape.

Environmental justice: the societal challenge of inclusive landscapes

In the previous sections, we have illustrated how differences in cultural background may result in differences in perceptions of and access to nature. Where such differences bear on cultural minorities, it may result in exclusion and inequality. This is a central theme in environmental justice research and action. We treat landscape justice as a kind of environmental justice. Research in this field typically distinguishes three dimensions: distributive, procedural and recognition justice (Langemeyer & Conolly 2020; Coolsaet 2020). *Distributive justice* focuses on equity in the distribution of environmental benefits and burdens. In this article, it concerns the availability of attractive and accessible landscapes for all. This does not only imply ease of access to green spaces in the neighbourhood and low-threshold transport facilities to nature areas further away, but also opportunities

to experience nature that can trigger more intensive nature interactions. Moreover, as we discussed, what makes a landscape attractive may also diverge for different cultural groups. There are many ways of improving access for vulnerable groups. One example is the construction of a pedestrian and cyclist bridge to connect Overvecht (a low-income neighbourhood in the city of Utrecht with a high proportion of cultural minorities) with a nature area at the other side of a motorway. One of the aims of this project was to make nature better accessible for residents of this neighbourhood (Staatsbosbeheer, 2022). Another example demonstrating the importance of reaching out to specific groups is the “Bloei & Groei” initiative, which facilitates and stimulates allotment gardening for women of cultural minorities in Amsterdam (Bloeiengroei, 2022). *Procedural justice* focuses on the equal inclusion of people in the processes of decision-making that affect their life and well-being. In our case, it is about involving cultural minorities in decisions concerning the designation, design and management of landscapes. Inclusiveness is important in formal policy procedures and the many volunteer initiatives that influence the designation and management of Dutch landscapes. In both domains, additional efforts are needed to include cultural minorities that are underrepresented for a mix of reasons. *Recognition* is increasingly seen as a crucial category of environmental justice. It concerns the respectful acknowledgement of people’s views and values and their rightful position within society. Including diverse cultural groups of people in the designation, design, and management of landscapes is also a matter of recognition. This implies, for example,

Figure 3 Three dimensions of environmental justice and related factors. Source: Langemeyer & Conolly, 2020.



the Netherlands and in Europe more broadly, involves a variegated set of factors. Figure 3, taken from an article on environmental justice and ecosystem services by Langemeyer and Conolly (2020), brings these factors together in a picture. Perceptions (such as the values attached to nature), institutions (such as rules for participation), and infrastructure (e.g. accessible green provisions) all exert an influence. Moreover, they mutually influence each other. For example, perceptions of benefits and burdens, appreciations of different types of nature and provisions in nature are also influential in facilitating more equal access to nature.

that their nature images and landscape preferences should not a priori be dismissed as low status and not fit. Recognition also plays a crucial role for cultural minorities in feeling welcome in nature protection organisations. This is related, among others, to how nature conservation organisations portray conservation practice and recreation in their media. As Kloek *et al.* (2017b) show, in nature magazines and websites, images of people in nature are predominantly white, which may give people of colour a feeling of being excluded. Being aware of these representational biases and paying respect to different nature images and preferences is important to eliminating such recognitional barriers. Nature management organisations such as Natuurmonumenten and Staatsbosbeheer are increasingly aware of the different barriers to including cultural minorities, and are taking steps to include these and other vulnerable groups in projects for improving access, decision-making (e.g. in youth councils) and publicity.

In sum, realising an inclusive access to landscapes, in

Investigating and realising the inclusion of vulnerable groups

The case of cultural minorities, presented in this article, shows that it is difficult, but not impossible to include vulnerable groups in landscape decisions and practices. In doing so, other vulnerabilities, related to income, education, gender, and other social characteristics, also need attention. What does this mean for research and practice with regard to landscape planning and use? Our analysis underlines the importance of finding respectful and inviting ways of including vulnerable groups in shaping the landscapes they live in. To achieve this, careful investigation of the views and vulnerabilities of residents is needed, as well as an active involvement of vulnerable groups in design and management.

The so-called VIVA-PLAN approach provides an interesting illustration of how this can be done (Raymond *et al.*, 2021). A key concept in this approach is “mosaic governance”, described by Buijs *et al.* (2016, p. 3) as ‘governance that is sensitive to the diversity



Figure 4 The VIVA-PLAN approach. Source: VIVA-PLAN, 2019.

and dynamics of active citizenship and which aligns with local informal networks and across scales’. Active citizenship, in this context, refers to citizens organising themselves in protecting and taking care of common goods, including local green spaces. Key aspects of mosaic governance are reaching out to local networks and allowing for diversity in green spaces and their management in resonance with diverse cultural values (Buijs *et al.*, 2016; Buijs *et al.*, 2019). As visualised in figure 4, the VIVA-PLAN approach deploys four interrelated streams of research and co-creation in spatial planning: (1) participatory mapping of social values and preferences for green spaces, and mapping of ecological values, (2) focus group discussions, interviews and institutional mapping to identify and strengthen social networks of importance to vulnerable (marginalised) residents, (3) co-creation events (called “hackatons”) that engage youth, NGOs and public and private sector in spatial design, and

(4) drawing insights from 1-3 to inform a sustainable spatial planning. In planning, special attention is given to the revitalisation of green spaces and meeting places that help to improve social inclusion, biodiversity and well-being. These spots are characterised as “in-between spaces” to underline that they can be culturally diverse, green and grey, planned and unplanned (Brosius & Schilbach, 2016). The approach has been applied in vulnerable residential areas in Denmark and Sweden. One of the projects, for example, focused on the Ronna neighbourhood in Södertälje, Sweden, a vulnerable area characterised by high unemployment, low education and income levels, and criminality. The “hackatons” in Ronna included a workshop with six local youth residents of 17 to 18 years old, and a workshop with 13 local stakeholders. Suggestions resulting from the project included the creation of meeting places for young people and gardens for activating the elderly (Raymond *et al.*, 2021).

Conclusion

Inclusion of vulnerable groups in the use and planning of landscapes is important for reasons of well-being and democracy. Lack of interaction with landscapes has multiple causes, including a lack of opportunities to access nature. As the case of residents with an Islamic background shows, nature images and landscape preferences also play a decisive role. Aiming at a more inclusive landscape in the Netherlands and in Europe at large is a matter of environmental justice, with distributive, procedural and recognition aspects. Due to the interconnectedness between these different aspects, it is a challenge to overcome barriers and revert negative feedback loops into positive ones (Langemeyer & Conolly, 2020).

Nonetheless, there are positive and inspiring examples of initiatives, such as Bloei & Groei, and more inclusive spatial planning methods, like VIVA-PLAN.

Summary

Inclusion of vulnerable groups in the use and planning of landscapes is important for reasons of well-being and democracy and in line with the European Landscape Convention. Lack of interaction with landscapes has multiple causes, including a lack of opportunities to access nature.

Non-western migrants are a relevant and growing part of the Dutch population. Many of them like to visit specific landscapes. As the case of Turkish- and Moroccan-origin residents compared to Dutch-origin people demonstrates, there are relative differences in interactions with natural and cultural landscapes and in nature images and landscape preferences. Such differences may affect, partly negatively, the

Characteristic features of such examples are that they (1) are sensitive and respectful to differences, (2) actively open up procedures and invite participation, (3) reach out and build bridges to vulnerable groups, and (4) allow for a diversity of green places, in resonance with different cultural views. These characteristics are well in line with recent international discussions on biodiversity and ecosystem services that also stress the importance of taking people's perspectives into account and the need for pluralism in valuing nature (e.g. Diaz *et al.*, 2018; Jacobs *et al.*, 2020 Pascual *et al.*, 2021; Turnhout *et al.*, 2013).

This paper is based on Buijs' lecture during the symposium The Future of the European Landscape and has been edited for this special issue by Dekker and Van Koppen.

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