

Capturing the Imaginary

Students and Other Tribes in Amsterdam

Núria Arbonés Aran



Capturing the Imaginary: Students and Other Tribes in Amsterdam

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor

aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam

op gezag van de Rector Magnificus

prof. dr. D.C. van den Boom

ten overstaan van een door het College voor Promoties ingestelde

commissie, in het openbaar te verdedigen in de Agnietenkapel

op dinsdag 8 december 2015, te 10:00 uur

door Núria Arbonés Aran

geboren te Barcelona, Spanje

Promotiecommissie:

Promotor(es): Prof. dr. J.T Leerssen Universiteit van Amsterdam

Copromotor(es): Dr. W. van Winden Hogeschool van Amsterdam

Overige leden: Prof. dr. L.A. Bialasiewicz Universiteit van Amsterdam

Prof. dr. M.D. Rosello Universiteit van Amsterdam

Prof. dr. J.B.F. Nijman Universiteit van Amsterdam

Dr. J.W.M. de Wit Hogeschool van Amsterdam

Prof. dr. G.J. Hospers Universiteit Twente

Faculteit: Faculteit der Geesteswetenschappen

Ter bevordering van de professionalisering van docenten verbonden aan de Hogeschool van Amsterdam heeft het College van Bestuur een speciale HvA-brede promotieregeling ingesteld, die de kwaliteit van promotietrajecten van HvA docenten bewaakt en faciliteert. Met deze regeling worden (kandidaat-)promovendi in staat gesteld om het promotietraject te volbrengen in maximaal vijf jaar onder begeleiding van een HvA lector/(co-)promotor, en op de kostenplaats van het kenniscentrum. Uitgangspunt voor een promotietraject is dat het een bijdrage levert aan de onderzoeksprogrammering van het kenniscentrum. Het promotietraject van Núria Arbonés Aran is gefinancierd door het domein Economie en Management van de Hogeschool van Amsterdam, en gefaciliteerd door het kenniscentrum CAREM (Centre for Research on Applied Economics and Management).

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	vii
1. Background and Aims: Cities and Imaginaries	1
1.1. City aspirations: The competition for the Talented Student and some of its side effects	2
1.2. Some relevant changes in education and the city	4
1.3. Doing research in a place like Amsterdam	9
a. Cities and their Imaginary	9
b. Text as research material for self-representation	12
c. Student seen from the eyes of the Pragmatic Language Style: from Student to Client	14
d. My stance in this story	15
2. Theories and Methods: Capturing the Imaginary	17
2.1. 'We say that times are changing; yet we tend not to change our research practices'	17
2.2. L'air du temps: Postmodernity, fluid cities and the urban tribe	18
a. Postmodernism: Shift, continuation and the revival of community feelings	18
b. Conceptualizing Society as 'Networked' and 'Reticulated'	19
c. 'Provincial Globalism'	20
d. Conceptions of language as a construction and a material with which to 'domesticate' the world	20
e. A shift from Modern <i>Control</i> to Postmodern <i>Amor Fati</i>	22
f. Depicting it: 'As amorphous as an imperial organization'	22
g. A recurrent use of symbolism and metaphor	23
h. A recurrent emergence of stardom and myths	24
i. The visibility of tribalism in acts of consumption	25
j. Re-enchantment	26
k. Primacy of the <i>Homo Consumens</i> , commodification and fetishism	27
l. The Restless Consumer: frozen desire and floating brands	28
m. Commodifying anti-consumerism	29
n. A different understanding of the ontology of 'Place' and its role in human life	31

o.	A different understanding of the relationship between place and identity formation	31
p.	A different sort of metropolis with large masses of immigrants and new actors in political life	33
2.3.	In challenge to existing methodology	34
a.	Why do most existing reports on students in Amsterdam fail to offer insight into the diversity of students' Imaginaries?	34
b.	Reports as managerial tools: Requisites and set-up	35
c.	Qualitative and quantitative approaches are not the problem: the problem is the a priori attribution of fixed values to specific variables	37
d.	In short: This thesis attempts to fill a gap in the reports for policymakers	41
2.4.	Imagology and Tribal Marketing	42
a.	Fusing empirical research and discourse analysis	42
b.	Tribal Marketing: Brands, niches, lifestyle	43
c.	Imagology: Identities, self-images, articulations	46
d.	The combination	49
e.	On the meaning of the Imaginary	51
2.5.	Modus operandi in this study: Enquiring and interpreting	54
a.	Data-gathering: Capturing the ephemeral	55
b.	Negotiating specific problematics	57
3.	Capturing the Imaginary: Creative Amsterdam in Current Fiction	61
3.1.	Introduction: Amsterdam as generator of fictional narratives	61
a.	Sociohistorical and cultural-literary background	62
b.	Narrowing down the matter	68
3.2.	Thematic focus	69
a.	The influence of place on people's lives	70
b.	The actualization of the concept of a creative city in contemporary life	70
c.	The tribal way of expressing shared links, as seen in one tribal marketing case study of white US students in the 1960s	71
d.	The role that literature (and the interpretation of dreams) plays in capturing real-world imaginaries	71

e.	The conceptualization of urban drifting as a creative process	72
3.3.	Corpus and characteristics	73
a.	Short description of the story and the main characters	77
3.4.	The analyses and interpretation	80
a.	The construction of one's own life in a coming of age story: the realization of a dream	81
b.	The homecoming	94
3.5.	Conclusions	106
4.	Capturing the Imaginary: the <i>Corps</i> as Tribe	112
4.1.	Introduction: organized exclusivity of the student <i>corps</i> tribe	112
4.2.	Narrowing down the matter: the importance of the tradition	114
4.3.	Data gathering	118
4.4.	Analysis	122
a.	Contrasts between student associations	123
b.	Quality, exclusivity and awards	126
c.	Other peculiarities	127
d.	'You don't get it, do you?'	128
e.	Bravado	128
f.	A sense of ownership in the city	129
g.	Symbolic clashes over territory: rivalry between student associations	131
h.	Victimization: ' <i>Corps</i> being oppressed'	131
i.	An extended <i>habitat</i> : hockey, rowing and such	132
j.	Living in a society house	133
k.	Friendship	135
l.	Unwritten rules	136
m.	Internal rivalries	137
n.	More internal conflicts: 'signs of degeneration'	138
o.	Main characters: the rich, the old boys' network and the 'well-off butcher'	140
p.	Traces of <i>corps</i> life in professional environments	142

4.5. Conclusions	144
5. Capturing the Imaginary: Ajax Supporters and Amsterdam	148
5.1. Introduction: When Ajax is Amsterdam and vice versa	148
5.2. Literature review: On football, fans and Ajax	149
5.3. Methodology and Approach	155
5.4. What it means to be a supporter: Analysis	157
a. Criteria of belonging	157
b. Distinctions within fandom	170
5.5. Conclusions	181
6. Capturing the Imaginary: What About Hip Hop?	186
6.1. Introduction: and why about Hip hop?	186
6.2. From Brooklyn to Amsterdam	190
6.3. Methods and approach	196
6.4. Hip hop and Amsterdam	200
a. Ghetto feeling in Amsterdam	203
b. The dilemma: in-between-two-worlds	213
c. Avant-garde hip hop: Intimacy and personal experiences	223
6.5. Wrapping up and conclusions	234
7. Capturing the Imaginary. International Students in the City: 'Going Erasmus' in Amsterdam	240
7.1. 'Going Erasmus': An introduction	240
7.2. Erasmus in the European landscape. Narrowing the focus to Erasmus students coming from universities in Spain	246
a. Europeanism in Spain	247
7.3. Set up for an analysis of core material	250
a. Characteristics of the material	252
b. Distilled topics	254
7.4. Analysis and interpretation	255
a. Homo Erasmus	255

b.	Erasmus stay: Entering another reality	261
c.	The Halo Effect. The Dutch are ...	266
d.	Nostalgia and longing. The Post Erasmus Syndrome	271
e.	Landmarks of Amsterdam	273
7.5.	Wrapping up and conclusions	276
8.	Capturing the Imaginary: ‘What Is Someone Like You Doing in a Place Like This?’ A Tribal Topography of Amsterdam	281
8.1.	Place and ‘look’ references in today’s Amsterdam	281
8.2.	Cities and Urbanites	282
a.	Narrowing-down: Amsterdam	284
8.3.	Method	287
8.4.	Analysis and discussion	290
a.	Demarcations of areas and places in Amsterdam and a small ‘sample’ of student daily life	291
b.	The case of ‘Oud Zuid’	300
c.	Aestheticization. Cross global references	314
8.5.	Conclusions	319
9.	Capturing the Imaginary: Images, Youth and self-representation in Amsterdam	327
9.1.	Imagine a typical day in the Red Light District	329
a.	Excursion	329
b.	The Red Light District as ectopia and microcosm	334
9.2.	Images, characters and the tribes. Liminal spaces: rites of passage	337
a.	Creative in Amsterdam. Sharing images of projection	337
b.	<i>Corps</i> students. Sharing images of traditionalism	338
c.	Ajax fandom. Sharing images of a man’s world	339
d.	Avant-garde Hip hop. Sharing images of cooperation	340
e.	A space for transients and arrivals. Sharing the immigrant condition	341
f.	Erasmus students. Sharing the <i>moratorium</i> and the European ideal of democracy, openness and freedom	342

9.3. Why 'imagining' is also real	343
a. Set of answers	343
b. Reflections on sentient data	349
9.4. Choices and lifestyles: How Amsterdam accommodates what people want to become	352
a. The call for talented people and the postmodern politics of difference. Spatial distribution, participation and separation	352
b. Fetishizing differences	354
c. Youth, generation 'clash', melancholy and the shrugging of shoulders	355
d. The 'attending to the world' references	357
e. Acquired views provide a better understanding of the 'Floating Significance' of categories such as social class or race	358
f. The heritage of tradition: students as revolutionaries and critical masses	359
g. The post-political city and the accommodating city	360
h. A place for new opportunities. Becoming a better version of oneself	361
9.5. Re-directing Amsterdam's city-image aspirations: Competition and inclusion	362
Bibliography	375
Nederlandse Samenvatting	415
English Summary	418

Acknowledgements

While working on this thesis there were many moments when I felt a strong sense of gratitude to so many people and experiences over a long period of time. Maybe this was also because writing a thesis has been a long-cherished dream for me. I guess the seed was planted years ago when I started studying at the University of Amsterdam (UvA). Back then I was already a mature student with a degree from the University of Barcelona. It was Professor Manuel L. Abellan who stimulated me to write a proposal for a study of the cultural heritage and censorship in Spain and to apply for a PhD research vacancy (an AIO) at the Faculty of Humanities. I followed his advice and applied, and although I did not get the AIO position, it was a close call, and I got heavily involved in the writing process and the new ideas I was beginning to pick up. In fact, dealing with a topic such as censorship seen from the context of a cultural history of politics made me aware of the crucial relevance of perspective and perspectivism.

Regrettably I can no longer share these pages with Manuel, as he passed away almost three years ago, but I will never forget his involvement and passion while discussing those cultural symbols of politics, from football to the use and abuse of the romantic poems of Espronceda, and the long conversations we had first as a student and later on as colleagues at the UvA. Those important moments and the warm meetings with his wife Connie were precious food for both my human and intellectual needs. Being a student and later lecturing and carrying out research as lector Catalan at the UvA was a truly meaningful period and an impressive learning experience.

During the years of working on this thesis I have often thought with gratitude of Frans Oosterholt, one of the smartest and most multifaceted people I have ever met. I am increasingly aware that studying and being with him during my first period in Amsterdam was an enormous privilege. It was because of his knowledge, criticism, care and sensitivity that I started to understand that I could 'read' Amsterdam in many different ways. This, together with the discussions we had at the UvA following on from the lectures of Professor John Neubaueur, led me to the discovery that studying had to be a whole way of life. To John I would also like to express my gratitude for his help, supervision and attention later on during my time as a lector at UvA. His lectures on adolescence and the coming of age period laid the foundation for the present study on young imaginaries.

It was not the intention of this thesis to explore the past, but it is obvious that the process of PhD research pushes PhD candidates to tap into different levels of knowledge, skills, life experiences and memories. The process of writing this thesis was remarkable in that it brought so many things together, reconciling different worlds. My new job at the Faculty of Economics and Management at

the Hogeschool van Amsterdam (DEM, HvA) started in 2002 as a necessary but practical change in my search for a permanent job, but in the end it has become much more than that. After a couple of years I realized that marketing was not a case of simple sales or promotion, but a rich and absorbing discipline which I got very caught up in. I am grateful to the many colleagues and lecturers from DEM who introduced me into this world. I am also very thankful for the dynamism and optimism that I experienced in my first years at the Institute of Management and Economics (IME), the welcoming gestures of the students and all the opportunities I was given to partake in further training and education on marketing and consumer research. All these things certainly helped to pave the way and prepare me for a more multi-disciplinary view on contemporary urban life.

Initially my move from a research university such as the UvA to an applied sciences university such as the HvA seemed to mark a definitive farewell to research. Yet remarkably, it is precisely at the HvA that I was able to reconsider the idea of doing a PhD as a paid part of my work. I am thankful to everyone who made my PhD research and *lectorates* at the HvA possible. I enormously enjoyed the moment at which research re-entered my life and I was admitted as a proud member of Hans de Wit's Internationalisation Research Group.

Much gratitude goes to the research centrum CAREM. I am so pleased and grateful to have had the help of our centre coordinator Lucy Kerstens. No matters how busy she is, she is always ready to help, cooperate and provide intelligent advice. My thanks also to Martha Meerman for her enthusiasm and her pioneering work organizing a PhD lab in the still- evolving but extremely motivating and stimulating environment of PhD candidates. I am thankful to all those PhD colleagues that I have met during these years. We do not see each other often, but when we do we feel the connection and the understanding. I am also very grateful to Willem Baumfalk, the present Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Management (DEM) and David de Vries, Director of Urban Management. It is thanks to their efforts that PhD research is seen as something substantially relevant in ordinary life, and they have welcomed our City Marketing in Europe programme and myself to Urban Management, creating an arrangement between different faculties and a multi-disciplinary environment in which I feel very much at home.

I am especially thankful to my wonderful supervisors. Willem van Winden welcomed me from the very beginning to discuss my research topic, helped me to fine-tune my PhD application proposal and agreed to be my thesis supervisor. His open-mindedness, discernment and sensitivity made all the difference. I am grateful for his interest and support for integrating the research in our educational programme, and for his ability to pinpoint and formulate the essence of the questions. I really enjoy being in his research group and have learned a lot from him. It was he who opened the way to this fascinating world of urban economy and knowledge. It was his especial ability to identify

connections and links between disciplines that brought us to the idea that in order to find an answer to my research questions, we would need to combine methodologies from marketing and consumer research with methodologies from narratives and discourse analyses. That was an essential insight and I will always be enormously thankful to him for that.

Once it became clear what kind of co-supervision I would need, I knew exactly who I would like to ask as my *promotor*. I had always admired Joep Leerssen for his knowledge and approach to concepts such as national characters and stereotypes. It is no exaggeration when I say that his agreement to become my *promotor* was one of the happiest moments of my life. I remember leaving his room at PCHH and thinking how beautiful the Spuistraat was -and how thankful I was to have this opportunity of becoming a PhD candidate precisely under his supervision and at this more mature moment of my life. And in a way, perhaps this really was the right timing: it has been wonderful to experience the respect and cordiality between my supervisors, and the welcoming atmosphere in our gatherings at PCHH. I have learned that Joep is not only a wise professor but also an extraordinary supervisor with a great experience, committed and generous.

During all these years the development and work in IVCF and the minor City Marketing in Europe have been an extremely valuable and intensive complementary task. They have given me the opportunity to meet and appreciate the work of and cooperation with so many different people, not only my students from different disciplines and places but also representatives of businesses, companies and institutions in our partner cities, experts on image, city marketing and the identity and reputation of places... I'm very thankful to all of them. All the activities we do in the minor, the walks on the streets we do together, attending conferences, paying visits, travelling and comparing cities such as Amsterdam, Barcelona and Paris, are a continuous source of inspiration. Needless to say, I am also deeply thankful for the support of my colleagues in our international team, to Dartanjan, Laurent, Mónica, Erik, Maarten, Linda for the cooperation with our partners Damien, Olivier, James, Enric, Ana and Xavier, to Monique and to our new colleagues at Jan Bommerhuis, such as Jolanda and Renske, for their understanding and professionalism.

I am also very thankful to the students taking the minor and in particular to those of them who have become interested in the 'Study of Images' and joined our preparatory research group on the field at Urban Management CAREM. As my students know, I am really looking forward to having much more time to organise the new research on Image and Reputation focusing on Amsterdam Zuidoost, working together with Lodewijk, Jay, Lawrence and with all the new students who will come.

My gratitude goes also to my son Ben for his support in reading and commenting on my work and to Luc for helping me to revise the last documents on the Mendeley data base: their help, goodwill and

interest really touched my soul. Much gratitude also to Tom Johnston for his superb coaching on English Academic Writing and to Peter Murray, Maite François and the team at UvA Talen for the great editing and translating work and for their professionalism and cordiality. I don't know what I would have done without them.

I am also very thankful to my loved ones at home. To my children Ben and Paula for their loving laughter, understanding, music and support, and to Tom for his love, argumentations, help and the beautiful moments we have shared together in these intensive years. He and Michel solemnly agreed to be the guides of my future thesis defence, even before my PhD proposal had been accepted. I am not sure they know how precious that gesture was to me. My thankful thoughts also go to Anna for reading and commenting my first drafts and to Mike, PhD colleague and friend who is always available to talk and discuss doubts and options at the crucial moments. I am also thankful to all of my dear friends, and particularly Beatriu, Jacqueline and Mirella who have always been interested in the content of my work and to Paul, a true Englishman who from the very beginning relieved my doubts and encouraged me to write my dissertation in English. He has always been there for me, relaxed and ready to help me out.

I also thank my sisters, brothers-in-law and nieces and nephews in Barcelona. I thank them for their love and interest in my work and my person. We have been apart physically for many years, but we know how close we are to each other. And last but certainly not least, I am deeply grateful to my parents, for the love for learning and the freedom they have always given to me. It is through them that I understood that getting older can mean getting wiser in the deepest sense of the word. They are the most wonderful and beloved example I have.

To Josep and Teresa

To Manuel

To Frans

To Ben and Paula

To Tom

'La primavera ha venido,
Nadie sabe cómo ha sido.'

Antonio Machado

('Spring has come, | no one knows how')

'Facts are facts, but perception is reality.'

Albert Einstein

1. Background and Aims: Cities and Imaginaries

This thesis addresses the multiple and fluid identities and adopted 'ways of life' of cohorts of young adult inhabitants ('tribes') of the city of Amsterdam. The aim is to capture the multifaceted and fleeting nature of such tribal, postmodern identities and to demonstrate how they emerge from communication exchanges (through traditional and new media), as much as from direct experience, and how they correspond to the images and the perceived urban character of Amsterdam.

The thesis will pursue this aim by fusing two methodologies: that of imagology (the discourse-analytical and historical study of the representation of cultural characters and stereotypes) and that of tribal marketing (the study of consumption and its linking value as part of social life). This combined methodology allows us to advance beyond a traditional understanding of – including the established way of marketing – the city's character, allure and cosmopolitan appeal, particularly with respect to visiting students from abroad.

The aim of this combination of methodologies from different disciplines is to demonstrate that, when it comes to the study of our world, which is by definition hybrid, 'facts' should not be separated per se from 'perceptions'. It also aims at demonstrating that there is no such thing as objective management of cities or of education, and that the mainstream way of marketing and managing might currently be impeding a more contemporary-informed and realistic understanding of Amsterdam's images and ways of life of (young) urbanites.

Therefore, this thesis attempts to provide an alternative vision to those city and educational managers who - contrary to what prejudice says about them - do take the time to read further than management summaries. It attempts to sketch an alternative and more interdisciplinary 'horizon' to aspire to when it comes to defining Amsterdam images and its educational ambitions. It also attempts to provide a reflection on the nature of research on city imaginaries and on the urgent need to keep adjusting research methodologies to this nature.

The actual analysis of the discursive and social data is tackled in chapters 3-8, and general conclusions are extrapolated and presented in chapter 9. Chapter 2 will set out the theoretical and

methodological approach. This chapter will present the research background and aims in greater detail.

1.1. City aspirations: The competition for the Talented Student and some of its side effects

Cities with international ambitions such as Amsterdam aspire to achieve a population with 50 percent higher education graduates, under the assumption that the prosperity, vitality and competitiveness of a contemporary city partly depends on the number of highly skilled city dwellers and visitors. In this context, it is no surprise that students are seen as one of the key population groups that can ensure a vital and prosperous Amsterdam.¹ Students are not only young (which is an attribute closely associated with vitality) but also on their way to becoming the ‘highly educated’ population that such cities wish to attract and maintain.

As a result, the city of Amsterdam and its universities have invested considerable effort in attracting potential students. The publicity often praises the target group for its qualities: prospective students are directly addressed as original, talented, critical and entrepreneurial. In turn, Amsterdam is introduced as a city that has the specific features needed by those talented, highly skilled forces. As Mayor Eberhard van der Laan stated, Amsterdam has the critical mass to ‘combatively engage in the global competition among cities’² in order to attract talent, ‘especially students and expats’,³ to a city that is understood as a ‘hub’, as a ‘node’, and that will offer young people the right networks and professional future they are looking for.

While such praise of target groups and the assertive tone of mayors such as Van der Laan might be appropriate to the ‘struggle’ to attract interest in a competitive world, this depiction of students as special talents or heroes is becoming a mere commonplace, with such simplistic language being used increasingly repetitively. In reality, the praise of students and the city is so oversimplified, and flattering only at the level of an advertorial, that it should become suspicious. In fact, it seems logical that sooner or later this overstated image will backfire. For example, young graduates recently

¹ See e.g., ‘Leren Excelleren Instellingsplan 2007-2010’ (Amsterdam: UvA, Bureau Communicatie, 2007).; Mark Rutte, *Beleidsreactie ‘De Helft van Nederland Hoogopgeleid’* (Den Haag: Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2006).

² Introduction to the Amsterdam Economic Board by its chairman Mayor Van der Laan ‘Amsterdam Economic Board’, 2013 <<http://www.iamsterdam.com/nl-NL/Business/Amsterdam-Economic-Board>>.

³ ‘In this respect, the MRA is well placed in the city of Amsterdam, which is a magnet for expats and students. Besides attracting talent, the MRA faces a significant challenge in making much better use of the potential talent that is already there.’ in Amsterdam Economic Board, *Kennis & Innovatieagenda* (Amsterdam, 2011), p. 7. Original text in Dutch. Unless otherwise noted, quotations from texts in languages other than English and without an available translation in English, have been translated for this thesis by UvA Talen. Original texts, which as this one, exceed 40 words, can be found in the appendix ‘Translations’, available on request.

participated in presentations and debates in Amsterdam with titles such as ‘Young, excellent but without a job’, expressing their discontent at the way they had been ‘misled’ by those projecting images of a wonderful future, and ironically paraphrasing the title of a song they had learnt during their adolescence ‘Ik ben jong, de wereld ligt aan mijn voeten’ – ‘I am young, the world is my oyster’.⁴

As this sort of language and celebration of students by the city spreads, even well-intentioned educational experts are not immune, designing their innovative plans based on an idealized and monolithic image of what a student is supposed to be – ambitious, motivated, in search of challenges – while students themselves may see their education in a more prosaic, everyday way. It is highly possible that the majority of students interpret innovation in education as entailing the improvement of facilities and logistics so that they can better combine the schedules of courses at the university with other activities, rather than as creating new intellectual challenges.⁵ In fact, a common complaint of lecturers concerns the lack of intellectual ambition in their students, who they see as only studying for a degree. This stands in high contrast with the image of talented and ambitious students that has been used over recent years by the marketing and communication departments of their institutions. For these lecturers, the mainstream student today is characterized as one who only makes the effort necessary to pass, which in the Netherlands is currently known as the ‘zesjescultuur’ (six-culture; the mark required to pass).

With these discrepancies in mind, one can become a little alarmed. Firstly, the fact that students are at the same time praised for their talent and ‘accused’ of a lack of ambition points to different interests and interpretations of what being a student might mean. These kinds of contradictions, which are today more generally visible than ever before, are the consequence of the progressive multi-dependence of traditional institutions, such as universities, on commercial dynamics. In fact, educational institutions, city management and all kinds of city stakeholders – including students – are by no means excluded from the dynamics of today’s post-industrial urban societies.

Secondly, at the same time – and despite the interest that the city and its universities claim they have in students – the fact is that we do not actually know what the students themselves think. What do we know, for example, about their potential aspirations to become the highly skilled population that Amsterdam needs? What do we know about the meaning they give to education or about the

⁴ ‘Spui Lezing: “Jong, Excellent En Zonder Werk” 11 June 2013’, *Spui 25* (Amsterdam, 2013) <<http://www.spui25.nl/programma/item/11.06.13--groene-amsterdammer.html>>. See also: Birte Schohaus and Marijke de Vries, *De Wereld Aan Je Voeten En Andere Illusies Uit Het Leven van Twintigers* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2013). Thijs Kleinpaste, *Nederland Als Vervlogen Droom* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2013).

⁵ ‘Workshop “De Ideale Studiedag van Een Student in 2025”’. Presentation and Discussion Led by Michiel Stapper, Chair ASVA Student Union’, *HvA Onderwijsconferentie 2013* (Amsterdam, 2013) <<http://www.hva.nl/onderwijsconferentie/masterclassesworkshops/>>.

meaning they give to a city such as Amsterdam? Do they feel at home in Amsterdam?, and if they do, Why and how do they express such feelings?

These two issues are further elaborated below. First of all, in section 1.2., I will sketch some general features in the evolution of the Dutch higher education system and the city of Amsterdam over the last two or three decades. The aim of this sketch is to contextualize the important changes in the organization and management of the educational landscape and the city's development, and their influence on the way we understand or deal with students in Amsterdam today.

In section 1.3., I will elaborate on a very general contour of this thesis and the way the general outlines of my research developed; on the possibilities opened by the current urban landscape regarding new forms of multidisciplinary research (paragraph 1.3.a.); on the 'textual discourse' I have selected as research material suitable for the study of self-representations (paragraph 1.3.b.), and on additional clarifications (paragraphs 1.3.c. and d.).

1.2. Some relevant changes in education and the city

Perhaps one of most salient features of current educational discourse is the coexistence of high ambitions and cost-effectiveness strategies that have dominated higher education over the last 20 to 25 years. In the Netherlands, the idea of a better – that is, more efficient – public higher education system were introduced in particular by Jo Ritzen in 1990.⁶ Ritzen was the mastermind of the introduction of a free public transportation card for students in 1990 that enabled him at the same time to reduce the basic monthly grant provided to all students. Further to his plans, Ritzen introduced the notion of 'performance grants',⁷ which led to important changes in the conditions related to receiving a study grant. Until that moment, basic grants for students simply required them to be officially registered at a Dutch university. However, Ritzen's 'performance grants' linked the basic grant to the accumulation of a sufficient number of credit points each year.⁸ After this first

⁶ His ideas, initially proposed in an article in the *NRC* newspaper, entitled 'Op onderwijs kan best nog flink bezuinigd worden', is said to be the reason why he was asked to fill a post in the Ministry of Education, a post that he would hold during the cabinets of Prime Minister Lubbers III and Kok I (1989-1998) in 'Jo Ritzen', *Wikipedia* <http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jo_Ritzen>.

⁷ In Dutch, respectively '*prestatie beurs*' and '*OV (Openbaar Vervoer) chipkaart*'.

⁸ Jo Ritzen, *Hoger Onderwijs En Onderzoek Plan 1992 (HOOP)* (Den Haag, 1991).

The announcement of the reforms occasioned numerous responses some of them in the form of parodies: *Studentenprotest 1991, Minister Ritzen Zwakt Plannen Af* (The Netherlands: Studentenbeweging/YouTube, 2008) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-hXx-rOQtU>>.

intervention, student grants were gradually reduced and replaced by loans.⁹ In the very near future (2015–2016), the basic grant system will be completely replaced by a loan system.¹⁰

The gradual decrease in basic grants for students occurred in parallel with the liberalization of job contracts and shop opening hours in the inner-city of Amsterdam. Very soon students became the ideal, flexible weekend and evening workforce. Today almost 70 percent of students have a part-time job to supplement their income.¹¹ Moreover, once they graduate they can still count on what Georges Ritzer has characterized as a ‘Macdonalds’ job¹² for a couple of years. Thus, with only some exceptions, most recent graduates who do not find a job in their new profession or discipline keep working in their part-time jobs, spending increasing hours there, thus ‘having no time to think about possible protests’,¹³ which characterized student life in the 1980s.

While the reforms affected basic grants and the way students funded their education, universities also entered a new period. New funding models linked government funding not only to the number of students registered but also to the number of Master’s degrees completed within a specific period of time. On the positive side, the reforms were seen as a way to increase quality by rewarding good performance. At their worst, as some argued, universities started to become restless, being constantly involved in a process of reform that, according to Chris Lorenz, occasioned ‘a permanent character of savings policies and of reorganizations in order to save’.¹⁴ The fear of losing students became an additional source of concern in higher education institutions because it could imply a cut in government funding. In his inaugural address at the University of Maastricht, Ritzen recently reiterated that competition among universities and programmes is still one of the merits of the system: ‘This means rewarding successful degree courses and closing down unsuccessful ones’.¹⁵

⁹ The HOBEEK funding model introduced in 1993. ‘The funds involved in teaching are allocated on the basis of two quantifications (funding bases), viz., the number of registered students and the number of Master’s degrees issued. Each registered student is funded for a period of time which can, at the most, equal the normative duration of the course. In the past few years the basic grant has been decreased considerably, which has resulted in higher loans’. In Jos B.J. Koelman, ‘The Funding of Universities in the Netherlands: Developments and Trends’, *Higher Education*, 35 (1998), 127–41.

¹⁰ While writing a draft of this chapter in the summer of 2013, the current Minister of Education, Jet Bussemaker announced that the introduction of the loan grant for Bachelor’s students will be postponed until the start of the academic year 2015-2016.

¹¹ Daisy van der Burg, Dorian Kreetz and Anna van der Schors, ‘Nibud Studentenonderzoek 2011-2012. Een Onderzoek Naar Het Financieel Gedrag van Studenten in Het Hoger Onderwijs’, *NIBUD Nationaal Instituut voor Budgetvoorlichting* (Utrecht, 2012), pp. 1–72.

¹² George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization of Society* (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC: Sage publications Inc., 2012).

¹³ Sywert van Lienden, ‘Veel Werklozen, Weinig Protest. 6 Redenen Waarom de Crisis Niet Tot Onrust Leidt. Mijn Idee Erover in NRC’, *Twitter* (Amsterdam, 2013) <<https://twitter.com/Sywert/status/334662291062657028>>.

¹⁴ Chris Lorenz, ‘Higher Education Policies in the European Union, the “Knowledge Economy” and Neo-Liberalism’, *SpacesTemps.net/Tavaux*, 2010, p. 6 <<http://www.espacestemp.net/articles/higher-education-policies-in-the-european-union-the-quotknowledge-economyrsquo-and-neo-liberalism>>.

¹⁵ Jo Ritzen, ‘Can the University Save Europe? Taken for a Ride or Taking the Bull by the Horns’ (Maastricht: Maastricht University, 2012), pp. 1–24.

The presentation of educational programmes in market-related forms of discourse (at the Hogeschool van Amsterdam, optional programmes such as Minors are literally introduced to new and potential students in the form of a fair or market) has undoubtedly influenced the language that educational institutions use to address students. Rather than providing information, the language focuses on appealing to students as a priori talented youth, even at the lowest levels of professional education; for example, 'Are you the talent we are looking for?' or 'ROC a podium for talent'.¹⁶ The influence of what is called 'idols language' is also apparent, referring to popular music talent-scout programmes on television such as 'Idols' and later 'The Voice of Holland', with allusions to 'winners', 'excitement', the 'challenge', 'goose-bump moments', and 'effort' related to the recognition of 'talent'.¹⁷

The adoption of such commercial strategies in the public sector went hand in hand with the increasing acceptance of an economic rationale as an objective tool for making decisions on public strategy. Some have maintained that the creation of a Nobel Prize in economics can be seen as a sign of a change in the status of economics in society. The prize, organized by a bank and called the 'Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel' may be not a real Nobel Prize, but with the word 'Nobel' added to it, most people would not doubt its recognition of 'scientific' values and its 'objective' character. This is a good example of the merging of banking and commerce with traditionally well-defined and distinct public institutions,¹⁸ now making it difficult to separate the commercial and the public spheres.¹⁹

In practice, the possibility of combining the best of two different worlds, such as traditional capitalism and social democracy, seemed to offer new possibilities. The application of new technologies to local specializations and cooperation between the public and private sectors stimulated mutual understanding and has transformed elements of the economy of cities.²⁰ Industrial sectors in decline and factories that had closed have been since transformed and updated, ensuring the survival of certain elements of traditional manufacturing, for example, from the car

¹⁶ 'ROC van Amsterdam: Het Podium Voor Jouw Talent!' <<http://www.roc.nl/default.php?fr=inst&inst=37>>. ROC stands for 'Regionale Opleidingencentra', Regional Education Centers in the Netherlands offering Middle Level Applied Education (in Dutch M.B.O. *Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs*).

¹⁷ Joris Luyendijk described the same mechanisms in parliamentary journalism, in which the influence of the Idols factor is visible in terms such as 'winners and losers'. In: *Je Hebt Het Niet van Mij, Maar...: Een Maand Aan Het Binnenhof* (Amsterdam: Podium, 2010).

¹⁸ See for a discussion of the matter: James Hepburn, 'Paul Krugman Did Not Win a Nobel Prize in Economics', *Daily Kos*, 14 April 2013 <<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2013/04/14/1167782/-Paul-Krugman-Did-Not-Win-a-Nobel-Prize-in-Economics#>>.

¹⁹ Erik S Reinert, 'Economics and the Public Sphere', *Working Papers in Technology Governance and Economic Dynamics*, 40 (2012).

²⁰ On historical paths and transformation see e.g. Montserrat Pareja Eastaway and others, *The City of Marvels? Multiple Endeavours towards Competitiveness in Barcelona, Pathways to Creative and Knowledge-Based Regions* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam Institute for Metropolitan and International Development Studies (AMIDSt), University of Amsterdam, 2007).

industry to automotive design, or from textiles to fashion, each taking a new form that is more in accordance with the e-Age.

In this context, and as Richard Florida observed, the globalized world was not as flat as one might suppose but, on the contrary, exhibited a sort of mountainous landscape with clear peaks.²¹ Those peaks, coinciding with some actual cities, showed that the most prosperous cities were no longer mono-industrial but diversified and contemporary urban enclaves that had adjusted their economies to a more creative form of production and way of life: these were cities where ‘not the professional soccer club but the gays and the rock concert were seen as attractive’.²² With this in mind, city marketing organizations started to apply explicit labels of ‘wanted’ to specific groups, such as ‘gays’ and ‘creative’ people, because of their positive economic influence on an urban society that had embraced unconventionality and tolerance as core values.

According to Evert Verhagen, Richard Florida’s visit to Amsterdam in 2003 was a key moment in the capturing of new ideas about planning a ‘creative city’, ideas that were applied to the development of the IJ shoreline. Thus, not only were a public library and a new music venue for contemporary music built, but the planning process also created room for small and ‘hip’ restaurants and bars, rather than merely housing and business.²³ During this time, higher education institutions in Amsterdam also started to develop a combined strategic vision of the city’s development.

A key term in the spatial planning policy for the coming years is “densification” [“*verdichting*”]. [And a key aim is to proceed to a] “rollout of the city center” [which is, in essence,] “in contrast to a suburban residential environment, more than just housing and a shopping mall. There are also businesses, small-scale shops and other amenities, such as facilities providing sports, culture and hospitality services and, perhaps the most important point of all, there is an attractive, bustling atmosphere on the streets, which makes it a pleasant environment for both residents and visitors of all ages and backgrounds to spend time in. The Dienst Ruimtelijke Ordening [City Planning Department] itself has aptly summarized the development of new urban residential environments in the description ‘rollout of the city centre’.²⁴

²¹ Richard Florida, ‘The World Is Spiky. Globalization Has Changed the Economic Playing Field, but Hasn’t Levelled It’, *Atlantic Monthly*, 2005, pp. 48–51.

See the elaboration about the flatness of the world in a globalized age in Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000).

²² Richard Florida, ‘The Rise of the Creative Class’, *Washington Monthly*, 2002, p. 3.

²³ The concept of the ‘creative city’ was introduced by the urban planner Charles Landry in the 1990s but ‘it took some time to reach Amsterdam’ in Sabine Lebesque and others, *Along Amsterdam’s Waterfront. Exploring the Architecture of Amsterdam’s Southern IJ Bank* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2006), p. 168.

²⁴ André Buys and Marlien Oederkerk, *Studeren in de Topstad. Visiedocument Op Studentenhuisvesting 2010-2014* (Amsterdam, 2010), p. 8.

The efforts made and interest in developing the city as a new contemporary space in which to live and to enjoy life are based on a reinterpretation of Amsterdam's tradition of rehabilitation of the inner city, which started in the 1980s. At that time, local inner-city residents, including students and youth in liberal professions (writers, journalists, artists), began to mobilize forces to maintain and rehabilitate the neighbourhoods of the Pijp and the Jordaan. They found support in the voice of housing alderman Paul Schaefer to whom the famous sentence 'You cannot live in bullshit' ('In geluk kun je niet wonen') is attributed. Perhaps not intentionally, but with a similar effect on the conservation of industrial patrimony, the occupation of old abandoned factories or industrial warehouses by squatters showed that such places could be reused for other purposes and that once transformed into unconventional cafes, eateries, theatres or ateliers people would go there to dance, eat, play music, perform and debate.²⁵

Following a general *air du temps* common to cities with historical inner-city centres, from that moment on the inner city of Amsterdam was declared a conservation zone and protected from any significant changes that could destroy its old buildings and authentic look. In addition, Amsterdam started to apply marketing tools to its development. One of the ways of doing this was the creation of a kind of public management network representing the interests of different sectors in the city. Duyvendak and Uitermark state that it was during these years that Amsterdam started to build for future target groups, rather than for the actual residents of the time.²⁶ 'City Partner' networks, for example, agreed on the designation of specific areas around nodal metro stations such as Sloterdijk, Amstel and Zuid as the sites for the development of business parks. The enormous increase in the number of students in economics and business was seen as offering an ideal potential workforce to feed banking, commercial and legal offices that would be located in the Amstel Business Park, Zuidas, Sloterdijk and Zuidoost. What is more, the area along the IJ shoreline underwent an enormous transformation, being positioned as a good place to live and to work in the creative sector.

The manifesto of Amsterdam Partners in 2003, the 'Making of the City Marketing of Amsterdam',²⁷ and the concrete documents that followed it emphasized the idea that if Amsterdam wanted to be a 'knowledge city' it would be necessary to solve the chronic shortage of student housing. In

²⁵ See 'Squatters' spirit' in Daphne Beerdsen, 'Out and About on the IJ', Lebesque and others, pp. 290–293.

²⁶ "'City renewal' [*stadsvernieuwing*]" became "*stedelijke vernieuwing*", with the focus shifting from "building for the neighbourhood" [*bouwen voor de buurt*"] (i.e. for the resident population) to building specifically for groups that were not yet represented in the neighborhoods: middle and higher income groups. The government started to react selectively to signals from deprived neighborhoods. It was not the case that the government no longer had any concern for poverty or neighborhood protests supported by community workers, but the relevance and effects of such protests decreased drastically.' In Jan Willem Duyvendak and Justus Uitermark, 'De Opbouwwerker Als Architect van de Publieke Sfeer', *B en M - Beleid en Maatschappij*, 32 (2005), 76–89 (p. 85) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1347/benm.32.2.76.66288>>.

²⁷ Amsterdam Partners, *The Making of ... the City Marketing of Amsterdam. Het Ontstaan van de City Marketing van Amsterdam*, ed. by City of Amsterdam Gemeente Amsterdam (Amsterdam, 2004).

retrospect, it is not difficult to agree on the fact that Amsterdam has made an effort to realize various affordable housing projects to meet the demand. Beginning in 2006, shipping container dwellings were built in different areas of Amsterdam (e.g. Amsterdam Noord, Strand West and Wenckebachweg). Additional campus-like housing has arisen in areas such as the Science Park at Watergraafsmeer, while new housing facilities have been built in 'empty' areas in Amsterdam South-East and the New West. In 2010, Top Amsterdam formulated its vision as follows:

The role that students play in the growth and flourishing of the current-day city is sometimes underestimated. The European Union has calculated that 25 to 50 per cent of a country's economic growth is ultimately based on scientific research and technology. The most important finding of the TNO study 'Kennis als economische motor' ['Knowledge as an economic dynamo'] was that each student contributes an average amount of €25,000 a year to the regional economy. Moreover, students are indispensable as the initiators of a whole range of social and cultural provisions and as pioneers in new urban residential environments. They contribute significantly to a tolerant, open and diverse residential climate, in which residents can develop and emancipate themselves.²⁸

The term 'studentification' (referring to an extension of 'gentrification' effects in contemporary city life) reflects the attempts of various city stakeholders to accommodate students by designing student-friendly environments, a process which is visible in many cities with tertiary education institutions. Student housing, for example, is moving towards the further development of off-campus facilities, with purpose-built facilities such as high-speed data networks and designated study zones.²⁹ Overall, the development of student housing in Amsterdam appears to be gradually reflecting international tendencies (although this may still not be as rapidly as some commercial parties would like).³⁰

1.3. Doing research in a place like Amsterdam

a. Cities and their Imaginary

Amsterdam can be easily compared with other cities in the Western world. In fact, sometimes the pictures of new buildings along the banks of the river IJ are so generic that for a foreigner it would be difficult to decide whether they were looking at Hamburg, Oslo, Ottawa or Amsterdam. Obviously, it

²⁸ Buys and Oderkerk, pp. 1–2.

²⁹ Phil Hubbard, 'Geographies of Studentification and Purpose-Built Student Accommodation: Leading Separate Lives?', *Environment and Planning A*, 41 (2009), 1903–23 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1068/a4149>>.

³⁰ See e.g., 'Conference on Student Housing' by ASVA Student Union, 'Wonen in de Ideale Studentenstad', *Congres over studentenhuisvesting* (Amsterdam: Pakhuis De Zwijger, 2013).

could be argued that this kind of replicability and repeatability has always characterized the renewal and evolution of cities; however, one of the most important differences today is that this simultaneity has become visible. One can literally see the same sort of architecture arising simultaneously in different places around the world, documented and disseminated on the internet.

In fact, global multi-referencing is one feature that seems to typify contemporary cities. As will be further explored in section 2.2., terms such as 'liquid modernity', 'late modernity' and 'reflexive modernity', coined by the sociologists Ulrich Beck, Zygmunt Bauman and Anthony Giddens, point to some of the characteristics of contemporary life in highly developed societies.³¹ 'Liquidity', for example, points to the difficulty of comprehending and defining clear concepts, ideologies or expressions of identity, while 'reflexive modernity' points to the process in which 'social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices'.³² Another important feature of the post-industrial Western city is the progressive commercialization of the public sector and the increasing mistrust of government policies. Bauman, Giddens and Beck state that today commerce and the profit sector are not necessarily perceived as any less authentic than the traditional non-profit public realm. The commercial world also seems to offer some kind of certainty to people, despite the fact that it can no longer be taken for granted that a job will be for life.³³ This apparent displacement of trust might be explained by the gradual shift in Western societies from state support to the privatization of services, with the latter appearing more dynamic and up to date and the former regarded as old-fashioned, bureaucratic and sluggish.

At the same time, and precisely because of those enmeshing features, the contemporary city is seen as a field of study in which we might gain a new understanding of the social, the cultural, the political, the economic and the scientific realms. Over recent years, 'the city', considered as a concrete place in a globalized world, has recovered its relevance and has increasingly been seen, among other things, as an 'example' of global processes. As Beck states, this is because 'one of the most important consequences of the globalization thesis is the recovering of the concept of place'. The local place reflects the global-local dialectics (and here Beck refers to Robertson's concept of 'glocalization'),³⁴ which means that globalization 'happens not out there but [also] in there'. Taking an additional step, Beck refers to Sassen's work, showing the significant implications of such

³¹ Ulrich Beck, Anthony Giddens and Scott Lash, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Traditions and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994). Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

³² Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 38.

³³ Those dynamics have led to what Ulrich Beck has called the Risk Society. In among others: Beck, Giddens and Lash, p. 6.

³⁴ The introduction of the terms Glocal, Glocalize and Glocalizations is mainly attributed to Roland Robertson and his book *Globalization, Social Theory and Global Culture* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publication Ltd., 1992). Uitermark suggests that the term was first used by Erik Swyngedouw who in turn mentions Andrew Mair. In Justus Uitermark, 'Re-Scaling, "Scale Fragmentation" and the Regulation of Antagonistic Relationships', *Progress in Human Geography*, 26 (2002), 743-65 (p. 750, and note 7) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1191/0309132502ph401oa>>.

concepts 'for the analysis and theorization of cities: not the city as a bounded territorialized unit, but the city as a node in a grid of cross-boundary processes'. This implies that 'this type of globalized city cannot be located simply in a hierarchical scale that places it beneath the national, regional and global. It is one of the spaces of the global, and it engages the global directly, often by-passing the national'.³⁵

Due to their new autonomy, cities have revived their emancipatory character. It is now possible to identify with them, without necessarily being identified with a nation, for example. In contrast to the idea of country and nation, the city is compared to a dynamic body of 'assemblages or collections of parts, capable of crossing the thresholds between substances to form linkages, machines, provisional and often temporary sub- or micro-groupings',³⁶ a place in which newcomers can start a new life, in which various vanguards can arise, stimulated by diversity, miscegenation and the melting-pot effect. Such cities are associated with liveliness and vitality that at its best offers the ideal environment for a contemporary society to reinvent itself, as well as find ways to reconcile the antagonistic character of concepts such as cosmopolitanism and nationalism.³⁷

Others, such as Valentine, however, state that although positive associations with the city can offer important 'reservoirs of hope', one should never take for granted that a contemporary city is a place of encounter in itself. Courtesy in brief encounters, such as being kind to each other, ceding one's seat on a bus or holding a door open for a stranger in a public space, are important in daily life, but are not the kind of in-depth encounters that enrich knowledge and the mutual and synergetic discovery of city life. In his profusely cited work, Valentine shows that encounters are not only restricted by specific place barriers but also by the prejudices of others, expressed in terms of class, gender, ethnicity and age.³⁸

This would mean that in the contemporary city nothing seems to have a very clear and univocal meaning. More than ever before the intertextuality and the multiplicity of references seem to enmesh meanings and contexts and combine elements as different as local traditions and global tendencies. In this context, traditional signs such as a Christian cross or the image of a Buddha, have

³⁵ U. Beck, 'The Cosmopolitan Society and Its Enemies', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 19 (2002), 17–44 (p. 8) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/026327640201900101>>.

³⁶ Elisabeth A. Grosz, *Space, Time and Perversion* (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 107–108.

³⁷ Beck and Sznaider argue that modernity should not necessarily be seen as a twilight, as cosmopolitan research offers us the chance to overcome dualisms in: 'Unpacking Cosmopolitanism for the Social Sciences: A Research Agenda', *The British journal of sociology*, 57 (2006), 1–23 (p. 1) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.2006.00091.x>>.

³⁸ Gill Valentine, 'Living with Difference: Reflections on Geographies of Encounter', *Progress in Human Geography*, 32 (2008), 323–37 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0309133308089372>>.

mostly lost their literal meaning and might be worn or found in homes as a decorative reference to a malleable and ambivalent 'something'.

The interesting aspect of this is that the meaning of such signs and their incorporation or reincorporation into the imagery of daily life in the Western world is actually reinterpreted and justified in the context of specific meaning-giving exchanges, as a part of specific 'imaginaries'. In this sense, an 'imaginary' would be 'the creative and symbolic dimension of the social world, the dimension through which human beings create their ways of living together and their ways of representing their collective lives'.³⁹ The undeniable importance of gaining a further understanding of the role of imaginaries in contemporary daily life means that it is crucial to develop new research approaches and strategies. I will return to a further elaboration of the term 'imaginary' below when discussing my approach and methodology. Meanwhile the question remains at which point the generic imaginary of 'the city' become a specific imaginary of, precisely, Amsterdam, and, even more specifically, Amsterdam as a self-proclaimed environment for emerging intellectuals and 3rd-level students.

b. Text as research material for self-representation

One of the biggest challenges of such fascinating conceptualizations of urban spaces and imaginaries is their factual applicability to concrete topics in concrete places. Assuming a city is such a complex and dynamic body and imaginaries are diverse and changeable, one of the important questions would be: 'Who questions, who decides, who justifies and who defines who 'who' is?',⁴⁰ when it comes to the consumption or use of specific signs and products or to the sense of belonging to a specific place.

Returning now to our topic of student life, the background presented above points to a specific imaginary with which students, higher education institutions and the city are understood, and which is visible due to its materialization in a concrete discourse. The language that has been used to discuss, document, negotiate, adjust, defend or reject changes in higher education and in the governance and urban development of Amsterdam, for example, can be seen as a reflection of the dialectics of a time. In this case, the answer to the question, 'Who questions, decides, justifies and defines who 'who' is?', in tertiary education and the development of the city would point not only to new conglomerations and organizations in public management, representing the interests of

³⁹The 'social imaginary' as defined by Cornelius Castoriadis and Claude Lefort and referred in: John B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), p. 6.

⁴⁰ Literally Ulrich Beck's words in 'The Cosmopolitan Society and its Enemies', p. 5.

different sectors or urban stakeholders, but also to other interdependent and influential factors and parties.

An examination of the various documents reveals that those network organizations express themselves in what one could call a pragmatic style, that is to say, vital, rational, targeted and free from references to explicit ideologies.⁴¹ It is in fact a language that has characterized the politics of the third way, combining the best of two different worlds, which seems to guarantee a win-win situation for all.⁴² One of its main advantages would be its capacity to reflect optimism and vigour.

However, to a significant degree, the pragmatic style adopted in public management networks has become impersonal and anonymous, with no clear references to authors and responsible parties. The impersonal character and anonymity of pragmatic models are also reflected in the way changes in education are communicated. Cost-efficient policies that affect future student grants are expressed in terms of 'inevitability', alluding to a sort of multi-referential and consensual truth. At the same time, the repetition of terms such as 'reform' seems to illustrate the multi-reflexivity of our contemporary reality, which does not stop to analyse and rethink results (or appears incapable of doing so) but works in a continuous state of movement. As one of the members of a similar public network management organization in Barcelona (Barcelona Activa), put it, this state is comparable to riding a bicycle: 'You need to keep pedalling or you'll immediately fall off'.⁴³

An examination of flyers and informational material from universities and vocational education institutes points to one of the spin-offs of this bicycle-like state: it reveals the emergence of a sense of urgency in attracting enough new students. The active promotion of educational programmes and institutions has become increasingly visible, especially so after 1999, when the internet was incorporated into educational institutions. As mentioned above, the promotional material shows evidence of the adoption of an advertorial style, emulating linguistic trends such as idols language, as noted in other fields, for example, by journalist Joris Luyendijk.

⁴¹ As typified by William James in the early 1900s and referred in Sandra B. Rosenthal, Carl R. Hausman and Douglas R. Anderson, *Classical American Pragmatism: Its Contemporary Vitality* (Illinois: Board of Trustees of The University of Illinois, 1999). See also James T. Kloppenberg, 'Pragmatism: An Old Name for Some New Ways of Thinking?', *The Journal of American History*, 83 (1996), 100–138.

⁴² In terms of economics, such cooperation is illustrated with the reintroduction of old distribution models such as Walras' Fundamental Theory of Welfare Economics, which has been so successfully extended because it is expressed in terms of pragmatism. 'It is no wonder', say Bowles and Gintis, that this model centred on the anonymity of the different parties, has proven to be '[...] so seductive to defenders of capitalism and socialism alike (for example, Bardhan and Roemer, 1992)'. In Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, 'The Revenge of Homo Economicus: Contested Exchange and the Revival of Political Economy', *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 7 (1993), 83–102 (p. 95).

⁴³ Presentations of the organization 'Barcelonactiva' <<http://www.barcelonactiva.cat/barcelonactiva/cat/>> Barcelona 29 November 2011 .

As we have briefly seen in the paragraphs above, focusing on the study of language as used in written texts by a network of people, enables the identification of a distinctive language style, which has at least two important consequences.

Firstly, it allows us to study the imaginary of specific groups of people seen through their performative use of language, as a group, at specific moments and in specific historical, social, economic, political and cultural contexts. Because of its performative character, language can bring images and imaginations to the surface and articulate identity. According to commentators such as Judith Butler, identity (including group identities, such as 'being a woman') is not a monolithic and pre-existing state but a performative expression that converges in different ways with the sense of being and belonging of oneself and others, and which is translated into performance depending on and relating to all kinds of contextual factors.⁴⁴

Secondly, focusing the research on language and written sources enables us to trace connections between texts that can reflect a unique group structure and a particular way of demarcating one group identity from others. In terms of operationalization, imagology, or the study of images, has demonstrated that literary analyses can provide a set of tools to identify and analyse the core of a group's performative identity. 'Imagology's theoretical framework' consists of concepts such as 'autostereotypes' (standardized self-images) and 'heterostereotypes' (standardized images of others) that enable, for example, work on focuses or enclaves of perspectives.⁴⁵ In addition, Even-Zohar's Polysystem Theory and systems dynamics can also shed light on the way those different focuses or enclaves grow, decline or even disappear through the mutual influence of different parts of a linguistic system on each other.⁴⁶

c. Student seen from the eyes of the Pragmatic Language Style: from Student to Client

Put in the context of dynamic and interdependent polysystems such as proposed by Even-Zohar, the 'pragmatic' style that has characterized the language concerning developments in education and the urban environment in cities such as Amsterdam can be seen as one such changing system. Its study would firstly show the visible emergence of pragmatism in Europe, probably linked to the revival of

⁴⁴ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, London: Routledge Press, 1999) See especially Chapter 1 'Subjects of Sex/ Gender/ Desire'.

⁴⁵ *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters: A Critical Survey*, ed. by Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 2007), p. 429.

⁴⁶ Thus, another important matter worth consideration is Even-Zohar's insistence on the heterogenic character of any system, no matter how insignificant and small it may seem: '[...] A semiotic system is necessarily a heterogeneous, open structure. It is, therefore, very rarely a uni-system but it is, necessarily, a polysystem – a multiple system, a system of various systems, which intersect with each other and partly overlap, using concurrently different options, yet functioning as one structured whole, whose members are interdependent'. In: Itamar Even-Zohar, 'Polysystem Theory', *Poetics and Comparative Literature*, 1 (1979), 287–310 (p. 290). See also: 'Factors and Dependencies in Culture: A Revised Outline for Polysystem Culture Research', *Canadian Review Of Comparative Literature*, XXIV (1997), 15–34.

American pragmatism⁴⁷ in contemporary life.⁴⁸ Secondly, we would also possibly see its progressive expansion through its adoption in different sectors of society, finally reaching supremacy in the centre of the system. Such a process would show shifts in the conception of ‘pragmatism’ due to its translation and adaptation to different milieus, and would also reveal ‘mistakes’, ‘misunderstandings’, ‘bad imitations’ and ‘deteriorated cultures’.⁴⁹

In my view, one of the most important shifts in the evolution of the pragmatic style seen in a polysystem would be the adoption of the term ‘client’, and even ‘product’,⁵⁰ to describe a university ‘student’. Moreover, as an interdependent effect, in turn, students have started to become aware not only of the value of their satisfaction as a ‘client’ but also of the value of their role as ‘informers’ of an important target group: the next generation of youth. This point has been reached, with recently graduated students being hired by new marketing and communication firms such as Bureau Keesie,⁵¹ or on research desks such as Motivaction,⁵² where they develop a picture of the new generations. In fact, books such as *The Einstein Generation* have also been published,⁵³ addressing and catering for the needs of educational institutions that fear they have lost contact with the ‘client’, in this case a new generation of students who have grown up in the internet era. In one of the first novels I read early in my research, written by a young law student in Amsterdam, the main character is precisely this kind of start-up who makes money giving presentations and writing reports about his generation for enterprises that are eager to connect to this lucrative young target group.⁵⁴

d. My stance in this story

At this point, and having almost reached the end of this introduction, it is necessary to make a statement about the meta-intentions of my research, as agreed with the acceptance of my position as a PhD candidate at the HvA: I do not condemn the commercial world in general and I am convinced, by Prahalad⁵⁵ among others, of the positive effects that being targeted as an interesting

⁴⁷ A pragmatism that, as Hausman states, was already characterized by James in 1908: ‘it is usually described as a characteristically American [sic] movement, a sort of bobtails scheme of thought, excellently fitted for the man on the street, who naturally hates theory and wants cash returns immediately’. Rosenthal, Hausman and Anderson, p. 1.

⁴⁸ Lorenz refers, for example, among others to the spread in the European higher educational policy discourse from the late 1990s of new buzzwords such as ‘the age of globalization’. Chris Lorenz, ‘The European Integration? Higher Education Policies in the EU and in the Netherlands before and after the Bologna Declaration’, *Sociologia Internationalis*, 2006.

⁴⁹ Even-Zohar, ‘Polysystem Theory’.

⁵⁰ In this context a ‘student’ is described as a ‘product’ to serve business life.

⁵¹ ‘Bureau Keesie’ <<http://www.keesie.nl>>.

⁵² ‘Onderzoek & advies| Motivaction International’ <<http://www.motivaction.nl>>.

⁵³ Jeroen Boschma and Inez Groen, *Generatie Einstein, Slimmer Sneller En Socialer: Communiceren Met Jongeren van de 21ste Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Pearson Education Benelux, 2006); Jeroen Boschma and Inez Groen, *Generatie Einstein 3.2: Slimmer, Socialer En ... Volwassener!* (Amsterdam: A.W. Bruna Lev, 2010).

⁵⁴ Ebele Wybenga, *Galerie Onvolmaakt* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2007).

⁵⁵ Coimbatore Krishnarao Prahalad, *The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid. Eradicating Poverty Through Profits* (New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc., 2010).

consumer can have on the self-esteem of specific groups. Nevertheless, one of the fundamental aims of this thesis is to contribute to a de-instrumentalization of the role of 'students' as merely a lucrative target group for cities and educational institutions. Rather than reducing them to 'talented heroes'⁵⁶ who will provide an immediate cash return to the city, my research on student imaginaries hopes to contribute to a greater understanding of their social position, cultural outlook and self-image.

The next chapter starts with a panorama of relevant perspectives that have broadly contributed to enlarging our understanding of contemporary life. The chapter will then reflect on the reasons why current reports on students in Amsterdam fail to capture something as essential as the students own self-representations. As an alternative to those reports on students, I will propose a research on a large amount of already existing textual and heterogeneous material created by students – and other young adults – that has already been publically exchanged through different means over the last 8 to 10 years and that I will collect in a research corpus. On this basis, I will attempt to identify clusters of self-representations (clusters of specific imaginaries in Amsterdam), forming 'tribes' or constellations of imaginaries. These will be analysed by means of a fusion of methodologies from 'imagology' and 'tribal marketing'.

This background and methodology will take as its starting point the idea that students' shared feelings of sense of place are expressed through shared stakes (e.g. supporting the local football club, or engaging in an Erasmus exchange programme in Amsterdam). These are feelings that emerge when sharing occurs in a context in which 'others not only understand what one says but also what one means'⁵⁷ and in which even prejudices can be freely expressed.

⁵⁶ In the above-mentioned presentation: 'Young, excellent and without a job' at Spui 25, someone in the audience referred to a quote on the windows of the American Book Center at Spui 12, on the other side of the square: 'Show me a hero and I'll write you a tragedy. Fitzgerald'.

⁵⁷ See: 'Although, on the one hand, language can certainly be activated in the politics of belonging, demarcating "we" from "them", on the other hand, it can also evoke a sense of community, the "warm sensation" to be among people who not only merely understand what you say, but also what you mean'. Ignatieff (1994), p. 7 quoted in Marco Antonsich, 'Searching for Belonging - An Analytical Framework', *Geography Compass*, 4 (2010), 644–59 (p. 648) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2009.00317.x>>.

2. Theories and Methods: Capturing the Imaginary

2.1. 'We say that times are changing; yet we tend not to change our research practices'

For me, a sense of urgency about achieving a more realistic view of current students' imaginaries arose from a feeling of discrepancy between, on the one hand, 'a sense of time', fed variously by daily observations, academic and other reading, and life experiences in an urban environment and, on the other hand, the monolithic approach by which most social and economic applied research practices are still taught in Management and Economics education. As lecturers in higher education in Amsterdam, we often feel that our students have somehow changed over the years, for example, they seem to see their life in the city of Amsterdam differently to previous generations. However, research on these new generations of students has remained unchanged. Current research on students in Amsterdam has generally remained limited to three perspectives: firstly, to quantitative research on student satisfaction about matters such as the quality of education and the facilities in the city; secondly, to a mix of quantitative and qualitative research related to the characteristics of current students as a 'generation'; and thirdly, to their diversity as a group, taking as a starting point that diversity is a natural synonym for matters such as ethnicity or nationality.

Robert Kozinets, one of the founders of research into online communities, described a similar discrepancy during an interview about his new discipline of 'netnography', summarized in the phrase: 'we say that times are changing; yet we tend not to change our research practices'.¹ In fact, this discrepancy has probably always been one of the big challenges to research on contemporary topics. While it might be true that times are changing, academic research and research practices need time and a couple of 'giant shoulders' on which to stand in order to see further and develop new horizons.

Where changes over time are concerned, in the previous chapter we reviewed some significant alterations and shifts in the organization of and communication about education that should lead to a change in the conceptualization of the ontology of students in higher educational institutions: they are no longer 'students' but 'customers', 'clients', or even 'final products'. At the same time, we have also seen that the egalitarian condition implied in the status of being a 'client' is combined with an appeal to a student's uniqueness, talent and originality. In fact, as is known, the emphasis on talent, pragmatism and originality are different faces of the same multi-faceted coin that makes up

¹ On *Netnography*, Interview with Professor Robert Kozinets (Canada: HYVE/YouTube, 2008) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=21etoaddZLS>>; *Intervista a Robert Kozinets' Serie Etnografia Digitale 1* (Italy: Netnografia/YouTube, 2012) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JcGIURnDeDE>>.

contemporary life. This ‘coin’ has been researched by different disciplines that increasingly converge on the idea that our contemporary society is postmodern, in that it has distinctive features that are different to those of ‘modernity’.

2.2. L’air du temps: Postmodernity, fluid cities and the urban tribe

In this section, I will elaborate on the conceptual background that has become the reference point for a better understanding of current societies in the Western world. Needless to say, this overview does not have any pretension to being complete or saying something new – experts have been working on these topics for many years. The intention, on the contrary, is to summarize a panorama of salient characteristics in order to establish a framework for this thesis. Such a conceptual background, for example, has enabled me to understand why a period that has been so marked by pragmatism and efficiency has also witnessed a visible revival of interest in metaphysical and transcendental human needs. It has also enabled me to see that, although in the late 1990s and at the beginning of the twenty-first century the general consensus about society was that it still displayed an individualistic character (a consensus that still influences most research practices), different thinkers and researchers had already begun elaborating ideas convergent to those which McLuhan had predicted would result in the ‘re-tribalization of society’.²

a. Postmodernism: Shift, continuation and the revival of community feelings

The postmodernist period is generally regarded as starting around the end of the 1970s and still persisting into the second decade of the twenty-first century. Postmodernism designates a shift in the approach to the study of the meaning of language and of life in general. The first well-known signs of this shift can be traced to Baudrillard’s *The System of Objects* and Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*.³ Barthes, Derrida, Kristeva and Paul de Man, among others, adopted a similar approach in their work around the same time, some of them working together and publishing in influential journals such as *Tel Quel*.⁴ Although there are clear differences in the works of the above-mentioned authors, they converge in believing that they were living at a moment

² See McLuhan’s prospective exercises on re-tribalization of society in: Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Berkeley: Routledge Classics, 2001) first edition 1964; Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium Is the Massage. An Inventory of Effects* (Penguin Books Ltd, 1967).

³ J. Baudrillard, *Le système des objets* (France: Tel Editions Gallimard, 1968/2008); J.F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Theory and History of Literature #10) (University of Minnesota Press). Original French: J.F. Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir* (1978).

⁴ For an analysis of the reasons for its repercussion, see Michele Lamont, ‘How to Become a Dominant French Philosopher: The Case of Jacques Derrida’, *American Journal of Sociology*, 93 (1987), 584–622 (p. 595) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/228790>>.

during which a shift in history had taken place. This shift implied that the master narratives of modernity in Western Europe, the meta-narratives of progress and traditional religions for example, had lost their credibility.⁵ Postmodernism proposes an acquisition of knowledge based on the acceptance of relativism and perspectivism, and the focusing of attention on the possibilities offered by new technologies and mass communication to gain an understanding of contemporary everyday life and of the diversity of cultural production.

Around the same time as the publication of Baudrillard's work, the media theorist Marshall McLuhan published his work, *The Medium is the Massage*,⁶ in which he foresaw the influence of new technologies in the future. He predicted the emergence of 'linked computers' that would favour a new 'tribalization of society'. New technologies would make it possible for individuals to engage in collectives of the like-minded, even if they were located far from each other.

b. Conceptualizing Society as 'Networked' and 'Reticulated'

The importance of notions such as 'the tribalization of society'⁷ and 'the end of religious and ideological Western meta-narratives' lies in their implications and side effects, which have been conceptualized in terms such as 'the relational character' of what is called the 'network' society (Castells) and the 'reflexibility' and 'liquidity' of its character (Bauman, Beck, Giddens, Maffesoli). These terms aim to describe the nature of relationships which are fluid and liquid, often based on subtle kinship ties. Furthermore, the recent publication in English of the work of the German philosopher Peter Sloterdijk has permitted the spread of additional insights into the way such a network can be imagined or visualized. Sloterdijk's 'foam',⁸ for example, is an evocative metaphor for the manner in which individuals in the world can be conceptualized: he considers them to be something like a pocket of gas in a liquid that when formed as an open cell may become reticulated, that is to say, linked to other pockets within a bigger net.

⁵ For example, theories should not be considered truth. See Paul De Man, 'The Resistance to Theory', *Philosophy and Literature*, 63 (1987), 3–20 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/phl.2007.0000>>. For revisions of subjects such as 'European Identity' see Julia Kristeva, *Crisis of the European Subject* (New York: Other Press LLC, 2000). For the rejection of dualisms such as 'inside and outside', 'meaning and expression', see Jacques Derrida, *La Voix et Le Phénomène* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967); Jacques Derrida and Alan Bass (translator), *Writing and Difference* (Chicago, London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978).

⁶ McLuhan and Fiore.

⁷ I will come back to this topic with reference to Michel Maffesoli, *The Time of the Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society* (Thousand Oaks: CA Sage, 1996).

⁸ Peter Sloterdijk and Isidoro Reguera (translator), *Esferas Vol. III: Espumas* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Ensayo Siruela, 2006) Originally Sphären III. Schäume, (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2004) . See also Peter Sloterdijk, 'Foam City', *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory*, 9 (2008), 47–59 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1600910X.2008.9672955>>.

c. 'Provincial Globalism'

It is also important to understand what is meant by the concept of 'globalization'. Scholarly work on globalization is exhaustive. I have already mentioned some of Sassen's ideas about the term⁹ and will come back to them later, but in my view it is also important to mention Peter Sloterdijk once more, since he provides some evidence for a complementary interpretation that results in the concept of 'provincial globalism'. Let me give an example: Sloterdijk insists that every new development should be placed in the context of the hyper-complexity of history and place. This means that current concepts such as 'imperialistic globalism' are no more than imaginaries of the Western mental perspective, a part of the 'monologue of the rich world'.¹⁰ According to Sloterdijk, current globalization should be contrasted with at least two prior globalizations: 1) 'the metaphysical globalization that begins with the pre-Socratic "global"' and 2) the terrestrial globalization begun in 1492 'with the "nautical ecstasies" of European powers which led to the discovery of the different continents'. These previous globalizations created 'cosmopolitanism' and the idea of a 'world history'.¹¹ In contrast, current globalization stands 'beyond history'¹² in a world that 'allows neither full understanding nor total comprehension' and that has resulted in a sort of provincial globalism, 'a network of immune systems, of cocoons and capsules'. That is why hyperbole and metaphors such as the role of the mother, the placenta and the womb can at least help in the acquisition of a certain notion of the nature of being in the world, that is, 'being in a place without being completely'.

d. Conceptions of language as a construction and a material with which to 'domesticate' the world

According to Sloterdijk, the world is too big for animals (and by 'animals' he also means human beings). Sloterdijk points out that this is the reason why 'Heidegger already said that man dwells in the home of language. For language is the form in which we at least transform this too-big world into a kind of home. As soon as one can dwell, this overkill, this *Ek-sistenz* is domesticated'.¹³ In this sense, language can also be seen as a material in which those processes of 'domesticating the world' remain traceable. In these processes, places become distinguished by different descriptors that serve to identify and classify them according to, for example, a specific related function and type of people.

⁹ See previous chapter.

¹⁰ 'I believe it comes down to the fact that people in the West are the only ones who speak of globalization, for all others the theme doesn't exist. Globalization is a theme in the monologue of the rich world', in Peter Sloterdijk, *In Medias Res*, ed. by W. Schinkel and L. Noordegraaf-Eelens (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011), p. 189.

¹¹ Henk Oosterling, 'Interest and Excess of Modern Man's Radical Mediocrity: Rescaling Sloterdijk's Grandiose Aesthetic Strategy', *Cultural Politics*, 3 (2007), 357–80 (p. 359).

¹² Words quoted and translated in an early stadium by Oosterling, p. 359. Peter Sloterdijk, *Im Weltinnenraum Des Kapitals. Für Eine Philosophische Theorie Der Globalisierung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2005), p. 247.

¹³ Sloterdijk, *In Medias Res*, p. 188.

In fact, Imagology teaches us that 'nationalisms', which are also linked to distinct territories, are formed through long processes of the linguistic appropriation of places, visible in a large array of literary works and other discursive cultural expressions. These kinds of critical comparative studies in literature and history, developed since the Second World War, demonstrate that national stereotypes related to places and to those who dwell there have all the features of socially constructed discourses. All national stereotypes, for example, consist of a fixed set of patterns expressing opposition between the 'we' and the 'other', usually attributing superior characteristics to 'oneself' or to 'one's own group' while reserving inferior characteristics for the 'other'.¹⁴

At the same time, similar developments in related disciplines have enlarged the understanding of crucial topics such as the 'point of view' of discursive constructions. Gender, feminist and postcolonial studies have addressed their attention to matters such as 'Eurocentrism' and the subjectivity of a 'male-centred' view of established discourses.¹⁵ A complementary view can be found in the above-mentioned work of Even-Zohar, who states that all of these perspectives and all of these linguistic and semiotic systems are equal in terms of authenticity. This means that an 'official culture of a ruling class', for example, should not be seen as less authentic than a 'folk culture'. What can be done is to study the repertoires of specific systems, which in some cases will reveal petrified forms and in others a large number of epigones or imitators.

Furthermore, postmodern thinkers, as in the case of Derrida, have elaborated theories on the internal referential character of language, refuting the idea that the meaning of a specific phrase or utterance could be fixed once and forever. Understandably, such theories unnerved many. It was as if Derrida was daring to deny 'that it was raining when it was raining'.¹⁶ What has come out of works such as his, however, is an awareness of language and texts, not as passive records of an objective reality, but as performative shapers of our understanding of reality.¹⁷

¹⁴ M. Beller & J. Leerssen, *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters: A Critical Survey* (Editions Rodopi. B.V. 2007), p. 429.

¹⁵ Beller and Leerssen, p. 439.

¹⁶ See blogs such as: Mananan, 'Derrida and Company', 2010 <<http://ageofsilver.blogspot.nl/2010/08/derrida-and-company.html> (2010).>

¹⁷ With this I am referring to among others Derrida's famed sentence '*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*', which Arthur Bradley translates differently than Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak as: 'there is no outside text', that is to say: "'there is nothing text free": there is nothing, in other words, that is not also a text.' Arthur Bradley, *Derrida's Of Grammatology: An Edinburgh Philosophical Guide* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press Ltd., 2008), p. 143.

e. A shift from Modern *Control* to Postmodern *Amor Fati*¹⁸

The end of a general belief in traditional Western religions and ideologies has led different authors to engage with Nietzsche's proclamation of the death of god and the birth of the *Übermensch*.¹⁹ In opposition to the 'last man', the *Übermensch* is the man who dares to take risks, is not indebted to a God, and is not afraid to live. The *Übermensch* embraces destiny as it comes, without pretending to control it. Nietzsche would call this attitude *amor fati*, 'love of destiny'. Maffesoli sees in the 'tribalization of society' a similar *amor fati*, which makes people adopt a sort of stoic mindset that, at the same time, does not impede people from living life fully.

Maffesoli puts it this way:

Waking from their Promethean dreams, more and more people have decided to adopt an attitude of stoicism, which when generalized provides us with an endless capacity for indifference. What *amor fati* means here is that destiny is not only something that happens to us but that we can also accept it and that we can love it for what it is. This engenders a certain form of serenity that may appear paradoxical, even though it constitutes the basis of many tribal attitudes of generosity, mutual support and goodwill as well as the humanitarian actions that are so frequent in our social lives and which have tended in recent times to proliferate. ... This may be how we move from the Hegelian-Marxist 'control', intrinsic to modernity, to what Bataille (1976) has called 'sovereignty', a construct that functions along the lines of structural reversibility that may be the mark of our pre- and postmodern periods.²⁰

f. Depicting it: 'As amorphous as an imperial organization'

Critics and thinkers from different disciplines also use references to forms of life in the past to illustrate possible similarities and differences with current society. Ghéhenno, for example, compares the transition from Modernity to Post-modernity with that from the Ancient Republic (the rational *Res Publica*, literally 'public affairs') to the Ancient Empire. While the post-Second World War period in Western democracies was dominated by the rational model of progress, the current organization of our postmodern society is an imperial one: this means that states no longer have the real influence and power they had during modernity and that society is more anarchic, amorphous,

¹⁸ Maffesoli refers to a Nietzschean *amor fati*: 'becoming free because of a full need for love' as expressed in Luigi Aurigemma, *Perspectives Jungiennes* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1992), p. 250. Maffesoli in Bernard Cova, Robert Kozinets and Avi Shankar, *Consumer Tribes* (Oxford: Elsevier, 2007), p. 32.

¹⁹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also Sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch Für Alle Und Keinen* (1883-85)., 1885.

²⁰ Maffesoli in Cova, Kozinets and Shankar, p. 29.

irrational and linked by independent and communal groups that have almost no mutual contact with each other, using their own institutions, their own places of amusement, etc.²¹

g. A recurrent use of symbolism and metaphor

With postmodernism, the importance of the irrational dimension of human beings seemed to be re-discovered by different disciplines as an integral human trait that needs to be fully taken into consideration. Sociologists such as Bauman have observed the emergence of new communities aimed at the visible revival of irrational and quasi-religious ways of gathering. The interesting element here is that such community feelings were not exclusive to the former communist countries in Europe, in which religion had been forbidden, but were present in advanced Western democracies as well. This can be explained by the 'strongly felt moral ambiguity' of our times. Bauman explains:

These times offer us freedom of choice never before enjoyed, but also cast us into a state of uncertainty never before so agonizing. We yearn for guidance we can trust and rely upon, so that some of the haunting responsibility for our choices could be lifted from our shoulders. But the authorities we may entrust are all contested, and none seems to be powerful enough to give us the degree of reassurance we seek.²²

At its best, Bauman argues, such a move would mean the recuperation of morality as an integral part of the human condition that allows humans to doubt, to interpret and to relativize, since, in the end, '[t]he greatest crimes *against* humanity (and *by* humanity) have been perpetrated in the name of the rule of reason, of better order and greater happiness'.

For some authors, a reacceptance of irrationality as inseparable from humankind seems to have the potential to become one of the most important achievements of postmodernity. It could mean the end to great divides expressed through dualisms such as 'soul and body' or 'rational and irrational'. Hart observes that such dualisms are so extensive and anchored in Western culture that they have even led to an opposition between 'words and numbers', which ontologically is very strange, since words and numbers have both emerged as a means of communication.²³

²¹ I found this specific reference to *Res Publica* and Empire in Jean-Marie Guéhenno in Kleinpaste, pp. 170–173. The book by Kleinpaste is not only an interesting essay about Dutch national dreams, but also an example of the work of a current student. During the writing of this book, he was a student of History at the University of Amsterdam. Jean-Marie Ghéhenno, *La Fin de La Démocratie* (Paris: Flammarion, 1992).

²² Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodern Ethics* (Malden, Oxford, Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 1993), p. 21. Coming quotation in the main text is from the same work p. 238.

²³ The opposition 'words and numbers', reflected also in the terms 'quality and quantity', 'seems to have reached critical proportions'. In this he recalls the novelist/scientist C.P. Snow who in a 1959 lecture claimed that the breakdown of communication between the 'two cultures' of modern society, the sciences and the humanities, 'was a major obstacle to solving the world's problems. In the process, specialists in words and numbers have come to occupy separate castes'. Keith

Huyssen shows a similar confidence in the potential of postmodernism to act in fields of tension without privileging one polar opposite over another. This means that contemporary postmodernism, even if it does not always succeed, or if it does so 'exploitatively':

[...] operates in a field of tension between tradition and innovation, conservation and renewal, mass culture and high art, in which the second terms are no longer automatically privileged over the first; a field of tension which can no longer be grasped in categories such as progress vs. reaction, left vs. right, present vs. past, modernism vs. realism, abstraction vs. representation, avantgarde vs. Kitsch.²⁴

In this sense postmodernism could be seen as a continuation of the projects of the historical avant-garde.

Finally, it is also important to note that differentiations between 'irrational postmodernism' and 'rational modernism', conceived as attributes *per se*, may also be misleading since these attributes are also examples of the dichotomies that have just been mentioned. In his book, *Nederland als vervlogen droom*, Kleinpaste, based on the work of Leerssen, argues that concepts such as national ideologies, which in modernity have been considered as rational and unalterable in themselves, are in fact a kind of religion, that is, a cult of nationality,²⁵ developed through a mix of ethnic prejudices and the romantic belief in the uniqueness of national characters. In this frame, it is also pertinent to recall Anderson's concept of national 'imagined communities'²⁶ which, despite the fact that they refer to projects of rational modernity, are also based on the evocation of 'emotions' and feelings of belonging.

h. A recurrent emergence of stardom and myths

According to Maffesoli, in tribal-type societies, 'empirical social life is not more than the expression of a succession of feelings of belonging'. In this sense, communal expressions always evoke a kind of repetition, a 'cyclical movement and a tragic [read also spectacular, breath-taking] conception of life'. He argues that such conceptions lead to the recurrence of archetypical figures, and sees in the emergence of pop stars and popular charismatic entrepreneurs in the 1980s and the 1990s a repetition and a recreation of old and persisting archetypes: 'the *puer aeternus* represented by Michael Jackson, the repentant depraved woman that Madonna plays so well or, more prosaically,

Hart, 'The Persuasive Power of Money', in *Economic Persuasions*, ed. by Stephen Gudeman (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), pp. 136–59 (p. 140).

²⁴ Andreas Huyssen, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 216–217.

²⁵ Joep Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006). 'Nationaliteitscultus' is also referred to by Kleinpaste, p. 126.

²⁶ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006). First edition 1991.

the divine rascals embodied by financial traders, without forgetting the belligerent hero figures that are our sporting icons [...].²⁷

Another very interesting aspect of these emergent stars and myths is that they seem to combine and overcome most 'longstanding contradictions in western societies'. Pountain and Robbins argue that this has been made possible through the emergence of 'Cool' 'as the dominant mindset of advanced consumer capitalism' that in turn makes it possible to unite 'the necessity for work and the desirability of play'. Stars such as Madonna have shown that work and play can result in a successful transformational process, manifest in different 'Cool looks' over the years. Translated into the realm of everyday life, the 'Cool factor' is the one that most precisely provides the 'emotional style more appropriate to the demands of working in a deregulated economy'.²⁸

While symbolizing a possible fulfilment of one's desires, archetypes are also evidence that humans see themselves as 'unfinished beings', that is, *inachevés*,²⁹ or 'beings in becoming'. Studies of symbolic consumption and cosmetic surgery show that some women's romantic fantasies and wishes to achieve a more sexually desirable and ideal self are illustrated by concrete reference to characters from television and films. These studies also show that, although some of the cases may be seen as extreme, they 'facilitate the discovery of themes that might be missed in a study of more mundane events' and that hopes of self-transformation, having some kind of model in mind, are inherent to the 'incurable unfinishedness which sets man apart from other living things'.³⁰

i. The visibility of tribalism in acts of consumption

Maffesoli also started to develop his ideas of neo-tribes through observing the way music and sport was consumed at festivals, concerts and sporting events. He saw that in such gatherings individuals were trying to fulfil themselves by becoming a better being, supporting a shared model of transformational power:

Big meetings, large gatherings of all kinds, group trances, sporting events, musical excitement and religious or cultural effervescence – all raise the individual to a form of plenitude that s/he cannot find in economic or political functionality. In each of these phenomena, there is a sort of magic

²⁷ Maffesoli in Cova, Kozinets and Shankar, p. 33.

²⁸ Dick Pountain and David Robbins, *Cool Rules: Anatomy of an Attitude* (London: Focaal, 2000), p. 32.

²⁹ Denis Jeffrey, *Jouissance Du Sacre: Religion et Postmodernité* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1998).

³⁰ Eric Hoffer, *Reflections on the Human Condition* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973). Quoted by John W. Schouten in 'Selves in Transition: Rites of Symbolic Passage and Consumption Personal Identity Reconstruction', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17 (1991), 412–25 (p. 412).

participation in strange things and strangeness, a globality that supersedes individual singularity. This globality is sacred in tone, and each and every one can commune with it.³¹

The consumption of drinks, psycho-stimulants and party drugs such as ecstasy, slowly but steadily on the increase since the 1970s, seem to favour the idea that we gain a feeling of plenitude when being part of a whole. Parties at unusual places enabled large numbers of people to break the routine of daily life, consecrating specific moments to joy and celebration. In the meantime, more or less conscious forms of New Ageism, emerging as a syncretism of Western and Eastern metaphysical traditions, merged with a philosophy of clubbing and partying, as in the case of nightclubs and 'rave' gatherings. Research done in this field convincingly shows the incorporation of vitality and dance as an expression of divinity and here again Nietzsche is referenced: 'I would only believe in a god who danced'.³²

j. Re-enchantment

New Age religions and tendencies, taken in their different forms and varying in profundity, are seen as an example of 're-enchantment', a counter-movement to 'disenchantment', a term Weber used to refer to the bureaucratic and rational 'modern' Western world. In practice, the different feelings of metaphysical life experiences are expressed through specific products and labels such as 'organic' and 'spiritual' and in the array of products that are meant to enable human 'transformational processes'.

Needless to say, New Ageism and new tendencies in relation to expressing religious feelings have been contested in different ways, either by the left or by the conservative right-wing: the first because of the connection of New Ageism to market and profit goals, the second because of the perceived menace it presents to Christian and Western traditional values. Despite this, however, all New Age mechanisms seem to perfectly adjust to the tendencies in contemporary consumer markets 'towards endorsing value-relativism and subjectivism, as consumers are constructed as the final arbiters of value amid an array of options'.³³ At once part consumer culture and part counterculture, the influence of New Age movements in a number of weak variants is something that has to be taken

³¹ Cova, Kozinets and Shankar, p. 32.

³² Quoted by Anthony D'Andrea, 'The Spiritual Economy of Nightclubs and Raves: Osho Sannyasins As Party Promoters in Ibiza and Pune/goa', *Culture and Religion: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 7 (2006), 61–75 (p. 61) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01438300600625457>>.

³³ A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 1991), p. 109.

into account when answering questions about social and cultural change³⁴ in contemporary Western societies.

k. Primacy of the *Homo Consumens*³⁵, commodification and fetishism

Although postmodernism can be seen as entailing an important shift in the approach to pivotal concepts such as the acquisition of knowledge and the ontology of language, authors such as Giddens, Beck, Bauman and Lash state that what is called postmodernism is in fact a continuation of capitalist modernity, a sort of 'late modernity' that can be identified in highly advanced Western societies. Such a conception helps us to understand the fact that such societies, despite their hybridism, are ruled by an evolved capitalism that has adapted itself to new forms of marketization and commodification.

In this sense, and for my research, it is interesting to take into account crucial concepts assigned to 'capitalism' during the emergence of the first capitalist societies in Western Europe. The 'Fetishism commodity', coined by Karl Marx³⁶ in *Das Kapital*, and the reflections on the influence of capitalism on society elaborated by Erik Fromm in *Escape from Freedom* approximately 80 years later are clear examples. In Marx and Fromm's view, the more ideal society would be located in the European medieval age, in the time before Luther's doctrine gained ground in Western societies.³⁷ Through the influence of Lutheranism and Calvinism, medieval thinking would transform its vision of a world in which each person was responsible for their own redemption, into another one in which each person would put the purpose of life outside themselves, in this case on 'economic productivity and accumulation of capital'. Of course, Luther was not directly defending the capitalism that would come later (he was rather still defending the medieval system of production), but Fromm argues that his thoughts paved the way for the capitalist system.³⁸

Among all the different features imputed to this new society, there are two concepts that are especially interesting. The first is a change in the conception of personal value: not the person but their possessions (the way they dresses, the goods they possess) will start to matter. The second is that the production of commodities is dissociated from those who make them, a dissociation that

³⁴ Remark by Guy Redden quoting Giddens in: 'Religion, Cultural Studies and New Age Sacralization of Everyday Life', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 14 (2011), 649–63 (p. 656) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1367549411419977>>.

³⁵ I take the term from Zygmunt Bauman, 'Homo Consumens. Lo Sciamè Inquieto Dei Consumatori E La Miseria Degli Esclusi' (Gardolo: Erickson, 2007) <http://archivio.eddyburg.it/filemanager/download/1647/ZB_Homo_consumens.pdf>.

³⁶ Karl Marx, *Das Kapital, Kritik Der Politischen Ökonomie*, 1867. Second part 1885 and third 1894.

³⁷ The label 'Western Societies' refers originally to Europe and to the places in which European migration had taken place, such as America and Australasia.

³⁸ Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (United Kingdom: Farrar and Rinehart, 1941), p. 73.

goes by the well-known Marxian term 'alienation'.³⁹ The current profusion of self-produced organic food, whether in public markets or in bistro-like eateries, as well as web-mastering, song-writing or performing one's own music in bars and clubs could be seen as a new revival of the medieval (or the later romantic) myth of personal achievement through home-made products.

I. The Restless Consumer: frozen desire and floating brands

Today it would be difficult to reject the idea that most commodities indeed do have a fetishist character, since their meaning is rarely exclusively connected to their intrinsic value. It is also commonly accepted that the cost of commodities is linked to given symbolic and representational value. Furthermore, it would also be difficult to refute that our current society is a predominately capitalist and market-and consumption-centred society.

Many authors agree that the great achievement of capitalism lies in its power to suggest the fulfilment of dreams through money and consumption. Money became the 'frozen desire',⁴⁰ the means to a desirable life. From the 1950s, for example, brands were seen as 'social glue'. Brands showed people how to live and how to organize their daily lives. In the United States, as later in other places:

Americans flocked from tightly bound urban ethnic enclaves to suburbs where their neighbours were strangers, often with different ethnic backgrounds. So they sought a common lifestyle in order to fit in it (Baritz 1989). National brands, which provided instruction for how to perform the collective good life, acted as the social glue that helped to bring together neighbourhoods of strangers. (Also, they constructed seductive images of the modern good life that acted as incentive for accelerating suburbanization.)⁴¹

Currently authors such as the Australian Peter Saunders still maintain that social glue through consumption is the merit of capitalism and see in its unstoppable extension the confirmation that markets can organize the world and bring prosperity without the necessity of rulers and thinkers imagining how it could (or should) be.⁴²

However, consumer researchers such as Holt argue that since the 1970s marketing has been obliged to continuously reinvent itself and that today it is very difficult (if not impossible) for new brands to

³⁹ Hegel and Marx laid the foundations for the understanding of the problem of alienation. Cf. in particular, Marx's concepts of the 'fetishism of commodities' and of the 'alienation of labour', in Fromm, p. 104, n 1.

⁴⁰ James Buchan, *Frozen Desire: An Inquiry Into The Meaning of Money* (London: Picador, 1998).

⁴¹ Holt, here also referring to Loren Baritz, *The Good Life: The Meaning of Success for the American Middle Class* (New York: Knopf, 1989). In Douglas B Holt, 'Why Do Brands Cause Trouble? A Dialectical Theory of Consumer Culture and Branding', *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 29 (2002), 70–90 (p. 82).

⁴² Peter Saunders, 'Why Capitalism Is Good for the Soul', *The Insider*, 2008.

achieve a stable long-term relationship with their consumers. The problem is that an important minority of consumers has become immune to advertorials, forcing new brands to change their strategies,⁴³ as we will see in next paragraph. At the same time, more gullible consumers, those who are less aware or less apprehensive of mass consumption marketing tricks, tend to be volatile in their choices; their loyalty is ephemeral, since most of them are always searching for something new and more affordable.

The result of such volatility and lack of stable loyalty can be considered to be what Bauman calls the 'restlessness of the consumer'. This restlessness had already been pointed out in 1968 by Baudrillard, who, when observing the extreme temporality of trends in fashion and other markets, said:

In our consumer society, we are moving further and further away from equality with respect to objects. This is because the idea of a model, in concrete terms, is hidden in more and more subtle and definitive differences: this precise length of a skirt, that particular shade of red, the perfect stereo system, the few weeks that separate Haute Couture from 'Prisunic', – all ephemeral things and that are very expensive to purchase.⁴⁴

m. Commodifying anti-consumerism

In the late 1990s and the beginning of the new millennium a variety of quality counter-culture books flooded the market in the US and became bestsellers. *No Logo*, *The Shock Doctrine*, *The Conquest of Cool*, *Fast Food Nation* and the magazine *Adbusters* offered accurate expositions of the process of the marketization of society. They revealed that capitalist-driven markets and brands operate by being guided by the clear purpose of increasing revenues and thus creating new needs for every facet of human life. In fact, this was already known but, according to Holt, one of the reasons for the incredible success of such books was that they provided information about marketing and branding practices to a highly educated audience that had never previously felt the desire to know more about things such as economics and marketing tools.

However, at the same time, these works were also evidence that the consumer society, as seen in late modernity, needed to be considered an inextricable part of society as a whole, since every anti-consumption act is incorporated into the process of commodification as a new distinctive element.

⁴³ The way marketing has turned its focus to a 'nostalgia boom' over the last two decades is an example of this process. See Stephen Brown, Robert V Kozinets and John F Sherry Jr., 'Teaching Old Brands New Tricks: Retro Branding and the Revival of Brand Meaning', *Journal of Marketing*, 67 (2003), 19–33.

⁴⁴ Jean Baudrillard, *Le Système Des Objets* (France: Tel Editions Gallimard, 2008), p. 215. Translation for this thesis by UvA Talen.

With such processes we have descended into what Holt calls 'the oxymoron' of postmodern consumption, in which, for example, corporate sponsorship supports counterculture projects.

Indeed, consumer research shows that anti-consumption and anti-globalization stances can become a source of inspiration for old and new brands alike. As a consequence, commodification and consumption have become more fragmented and arduous processes. A sort of higher educated 'good taste',⁴⁵ for example, is typified by a high degree of eclecticism and *connaissance* that is constantly trying to escape from pre-established marketing classifications. This has led to the emergence of a new sort of commodification, in which consumers reach a kind of personal sovereignty over consumption through processes of 'reflexive resistance'. With these processes, certain consumers resist the classification and life-style paradigms imposed by classic marketing practices.

Certeau and Fiske⁴⁶ see this kind of resistance as the sign of a potential process of empowerment of the sort of consumer who is increasingly immune to sales and promotional tricks. In fact, the postmodern consumer is forcing companies to:

build lines of obligation that link brand and company. [...] What consumers will want to touch, soon enough, is the way in which companies treat people when they are not customers. Brands will be trusted to serve as cultural source materials when their sponsors have demonstrated that they shoulder civic responsibilities as would a community pillar.⁴⁷

However, Holt also warns that theories about consumer sovereignty and empowerment that conceive consumers as 'artists' or as 'creators' may be misleading or, at least, overly optimistic when taken too literally as a general feature of postmodern consumption.⁴⁸ Processes of resistance and reflexive choice require a great investment of time and energy. Consequently, Holt foresees an increase in the number of 'cultural specialists' who understand new emerging principles and help to give form to new cultural materials. With this conclusion, Holt is, in fact, agreeing with Naomi Klein's statement that the market works in the anti-market scene, since counterculture can be seen as a sort of market experimentation with which the market 'rejuvenates itself.'⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Holt is referring to Pierre Bourdieu. Douglas B. Holt, 'Does Cultural Capital Structure American Consumption?', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 25 (1998), 1–25.

⁴⁶ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

⁴⁷ Douglas B Holt, p. 88.

⁴⁸ Nevertheless, A. Fuat Firat and Alladi Venkatesh offer beautiful examples of co-creation and the meaning of brands in 'Liberatory Postmodernism and Consumption the Reenchantment of Consumption', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22 (1995), 239–67. See also A.F. Firat and N. Dholakia, *Consuming People: From Political Economy to Theatres of Consumption* (London: Routledge, 1998).

⁴⁹ Douglas B Holt, p. 89.

n. A different understanding of the ontology of 'Place' and its role in human life

New approaches and studies have developed tools to dissociate the understanding of the concept of 'place' from merely topographic connotations. The intention of this dissociation is not to deny that specific topographic characteristics of places matter, but rather that a place cannot be seen as a fixed and static concept. In fact, there is already a consensus which accepts that distance and size are malleable concepts⁵⁰ and that the experience of a place's isolation depends on a net of different actors: the nature, the topologic layout, the technique, the means of transportation, the people, the materials, the language, etc.

Relatively recent theories, such as the Actor Network Theory of Latour, Law and Callon,⁵¹ understand places as performative spaces in which concepts such as 'place', 'placelessness' and 'movement' can offer some tools for analysis. These theories regard 'places' as a set of relations that not only (or not necessarily) gather what is happening in a specific site at a specific time, but rather 'fold and pleat' space and time 'into complex configurations'. According to Murdoch and based on Latour, actor network theories have shown 'how networks "draw things together" [...] by gathering diverse places and times within common frames of references and calculations. This "gathering" process results in very distant points finding themselves connected to one another while others, that were once neighbours, come to be disconnected'.⁵²

o. A different understanding of the relationship between place and identity formation

In this sense, postmodern research on anti-identity, based on stories of humans seeking more fluid identities, has resulted in important theorization about and illustration of the relationship between place and identity formation. Queer theory, for example, has shown that the process of homosexual 'coming out' used to be related to departure from one's place of birth, leaving the parental home and moving to an urban enclave. However, within this physical movement, the process of 'coming out' was itself still in motion, so that at the new destination many individuals felt a sense of loss and difficulty in finding their way in the new environment. Even well-known 'gay-friendly' places had to be conquered by arduous daily effort and the performance of identity and quests for integration.⁵³ In

⁵⁰ Jonathan Murdoch, 'The Spaces of Actor-Network Theory', *Geoforum*, 29 (1998), 357–74 (p. 358) <[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0016-7185\(98\)00011-6](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0016-7185(98)00011-6)>.

⁵¹ *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. by John Law (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986). See also Bruno Latour, 'On Actor-Network Theory. A Few Clarifications plus More than a Few Complications', *Soziale Welt*, 25 (1996), 1–16 (369–81).

⁵² Bruno Latour, *The Pasteurization of France* (London: Harvard University Press, 1988), pp. 170–171. quoted by Murdoch, p. 360.

⁵³ Frank Browning (1996) captures a similarly fraught relationship to place in his very personal account of his own journeys, as well as those of others, in his book *A Queer Geography* in Larry Knopp, 'Ontologies of Place, Placelessness, and Movement: Queer Quests for Identity and Their Impacts on Contemporary Geographic Thought', *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 11 (2004), 121–34 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0966369042000188585>>.

this context, it was precisely the anonymity of ‘placelessness’, while driving a car or walking through an anonymous shopping mall, away from new, well-intentioned neighbours, for example, that had the most liberating effect. With this, the authors suggest a very interesting aspect of space, which is movement – the quest in itself. As Knopp puts it: ‘It is clear that many gay men find the quest itself to be a source of considerable pleasure (Bech, 1997), and eventually, for many, it becomes a source of ontological and emotional security as well’.⁵⁴

In this light, the process of coming out, or other processes such as coming of age, should be seen as a reflexive, relational and continuous practical performance of becoming, with all its frictions and dynamisms. Those continuous processes become what Thrift⁵⁵ calls ‘passings that haunt’, a definition that (as Knopp observes) may be strange for those who are not familiar with identity studies, but has turned out to be particularly compelling for researchers studying identities fashioned through the process of questing.⁵⁶ Among other things, ‘passings that haunt’ us would point to places existing for us in the sense that they become a reference: to us places take on meaning by this interaction, which in turn can influence future paths and new places in people’s lives.

Also of referential interest are the argumentations of Casey around the concept of ‘place’. According to him body and place need to be seen as ‘consubstantial partners in the construction of a common place-world.’⁵⁷ Elaborating on among others Bourdieu and Heidegger, Casey develops the theories of the ‘arcs of embodiment’ defining a series of different habitus in which the self (understood as a body or a geographical-self) is always already ‘*implaced*’ (which as Casey emphasizes does not necessarily mean that the body ‘is always securely *in place*’).⁵⁸ With this Casey is not defending a conceptualisation of ‘place’ as an eternal and unalterable reality but is instead vindicating the importance of place and body as parts as much indispensable of being human as the Cartesian *cogitatio*. In this sense, and as Escobar strikingly concludes, humans can be at best described as ‘*placelings*’. According to the latter the attention that has been paid to Caseys’s works since their publication shows that despite the tendencies to emphasize the role of globalization and the erase of boundaries, place and place making are essential players in the ‘dynamics of culture, power and economics.’⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Knopp, p. 124. Henning Bech, *When Men Meet: Homosexuality and Modernity* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

⁵⁵ Nigel Thrift, ‘Steps to an Ecology of Place’, in *Human Geography Today*, ed. by Doreen Massey, John Allen, and Phil Sarre (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), pp. 295–321.

⁵⁶ Knopp, p. 127.

⁵⁷ Edward S. Casey, ‘On Habitus and Place: Responding to My Critics’, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 91 (2001), 716–23 (p. 718) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/0004-5608.00270>>.

⁵⁸ Edward Casey, *Getting Back into Place* (United States of America: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 104.

⁵⁹ Arturo Escobar, ‘Culture Sits in Places: Reflections on Globalism and Subaltern Strategies of Localization’, *Political Geography*, 20 (2001), 139–74 (p. 143) <[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298\(00\)00064-0](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298(00)00064-0)>.

p. A different sort of metropolis with large masses of immigrants and new actors in political life

As already mentioned, contemporary cities in the Western world are also seen as exemplars of globalization which provide interesting and concrete sites for research. Sassen, for example, takes Webber's notions of 'the city' and '*civitas*' of the late Middle Ages and extrapolates them to the contemporary city. She also offers some examples of the visibility of economic changes in the city during the second part of the twentieth century. The rise of the image of 'harmonious suburbs', for example, can be seen as a reflection of the decadence of the city during Fordism, an epoch in which 'the city' had lost its leading role. However, she also sees in the late evolution of economic and social powers, especially after the 1980s, the recuperation of the city as a meaningful site in which various powers are deployed:

One way of thinking about the political implications of this strategic transnational space anchored in cities is in terms of the formation of new claims on that space. The city has indeed emerged as a site for new claims: by global capital which uses the city as an 'organizational commodity', but also by disadvantaged sectors of the urban population, frequently as internationalized a presence in large cities as capital. The 'de-nationalizing' of urban space and the formation of new claims by transnational actors, raises the question Whose city is it?⁶⁰

Sassen's question, 'Whose city is it?', epitomizes a capital question that keeps postmodernist thinking at work. Firstly, this kind of questioning has led to the reformulation of research practices in disciplines such as ethnography and sociology over the last few decades. As have many others, sociologist Mitchell Duneier saw postmodern developments as a chance for the development of a dialogue with the positivist traditions of American empirical sociology. Significantly, Duneier claimed that the idea of democratizing the research process in his studies of homeless vendors in the US, came to him 'from reading a lot of abstract writings about ethnography that came out of postmodern and feminist writing'.⁶¹ Thanks to those readings he realized that an ethnographic encounter meant being aware of and recognizing historical relationships between the people being studied and the kind of person doing the study, in his case, as he puts it: 'a privileged white man and a group of poor US black descendants of slaves'.

⁶⁰ Saskia Sassen, 'The City: Its Return as a Lens for Social Theory', *City, Culture and Society*, 1 (2010), 3–11 (p. 8) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2010.04.003>>.

⁶¹ Mitchell Duneier and Les Back, 'Voices from the Sidewalk: Ethnography and Writing Race', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 29 (2006), 543–65 (p. 549) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01419870600598113>>.

Secondly, this kind of questioning has led to an important array of studies about the nature of sense of place and feelings of belonging. These studies show that emotional links are based on both material and immaterial involvement with a place. In this sense, the work of Valentine⁶² has shown that although postmodernism seems to be primarily associated with immateriality, it is crucial not to forget that practical and material conditions such as levels of income and quality of housing continue to have a critical influence on people's feelings of empowerment and sense of belonging.

Thirdly, and partly related to Valentine's claim about keeping a holistic eye on contemporaneity, these thinkers also pose questions about the influence of technology and the role of electronic communication in the appropriation of new spaces and in the development of feelings of ownership. In this sense, it is especially interesting to take into account the possibilities of online spaces as sites of research, since they have become a significant reference point for spatiality in a relatively short time. If time and place are essential to understanding humans and, if 'in youth', recalling Erikson's words, 'life history intersects with history',⁶³ it will also be essential to gain an understanding of the values, norms and artefacts of our times. Moreover, since the meaning attributed to those norms, values and artefacts, according to what has been said thus far, should be seen as less monolithic and more fluid than before, it will be necessary to continuously adjust our starting points and methodologies.

In summary, we can say that if Amsterdam is now seen as part of a Western world in which identities have become more fluid, malleable and less defined than before, it will be indispensable to find new ways of research able to do justice to this fluidity. In the following section, I will further elaborate on a methodological proposal in this regard.

2.3. In challenge to existing methodology

a. Why do most existing reports on students in Amsterdam fail to offer insight into the diversity of students' Imaginaries?

At the beginning of the previous section I stated that, despite the fact that cities such as Amsterdam have expressed their wish to maintain long-term ties with young students, little real attention has been focused on finding new ways of discovering how students currently view the city of Amsterdam

⁶² Gill Valentine, "'Sticks and Stones May Break My Bones": A Personal Geography of Harassment', *Antipode*, 30 (1998), 305–32 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1467-8330.00082>>; Gill Valentine, 'Prejudice: Rethinking Geographies of Oppression', *Social & Cultural Geography*, 11 (2010), 519–37 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2010.497849>>.

⁶³ Erik H Erikson, 'Fidelity and Diversity', *Daedalus*, 117 (2013), 1–24 (p. 20).

and what constitutes their sense of place and belonging to the city. Of course, in the last few decades networks of urban stakeholders have made great efforts to make the city more available to students and several studies have been conducted to create inventories of the wishes and needs of students, in terms of housing, for example.⁶⁴ And yes, we already have data available on current students in terms of composition and degree of integration into society.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, the reality is that this data, which may well have been useful for the goals it was designed for, tell us very little about how students form and express their bonds with the city and their sense of Amsterdam. Moreover, if they do tell us very little, it is because these matters are linked to meaning-giving processes, the mechanisms of which defy excessive simplification.⁶⁶

b. Reports as managerial tools: Requisites and set-up

In fact, the practice of approaching matters regarding sense of place from a managerial perspective indicate once more the discrepancy between most research practices in marketing and management in Amsterdam and the 'postmodernist' developments that have taken place in other social and human sciences. While social, behavioural and humanities research at the University of Amsterdam, at VU University or at the Hogeschool van Amsterdam⁶⁷ takes into account and refers to some of the insights of postmodernist studies (Bourdieu, Foucault, Derrida, etc.), studies in the field of management and marketing fields are mostly anchored in the pragmatic approach embodied by Kotler's work.

By a pragmatic approach, I mean that in marketing, management and organizational research into urban matters, the purpose is to provide management with the tools with which to proceed: they take a 'how to best manage' point of view. As such, research in these fields is not really intended to gain any real, in-depth insight into consumers' wishes and needs based on a strict scientific method, but rather to improve management methodologies. Tools such as the marketing mix provide management with handholds from which to anticipate and respond to markets and organizations and are therefore instrumental and prescriptive, often ending with a list of 'dos and don'ts'.

⁶⁴ For example, G. Schumacher, *Wie Is de HvA Student? Een Onderzoek Naar de Behoeftte Aan ASVA Diensten Op de HvA* (Amsterdam, 2006) <<https://www.asva.nl/node/254>>. In this piece, commissioned by the HvA board, the student association ASVA reports its research on differences in, among other things, housing and participation in 'student life' between students enrolled at UvA and HvA.

⁶⁵ The works of the Social and Cultural Planning Office and of Statistics Netherlands are frequently used as sources. See for example, Paul Schnabel and others, *Jaarverslag 2012* (Den Haag, 2013). Or 'Publications by "Centraal Bureau van Statistiek"', 2013 <<http://www.cbs.nl/en-GB/menu/publicaties/publicaties-per-thema/default.htm>>.

⁶⁶ I have already referred to the postmodernist insights into topics such as identity and sense of place. In addition, I will also refer to the ontological nature of 'images' in the section dealing with imagology.

⁶⁷ The research centres at HvA are relatively new, but such an approach is traceable at Center *Karthuizer*, HvA Faculty of Sociology and Law.

Obviously, when applied to students in Amsterdam, such approaches will not be able to grasp imaginaries and their sense of belonging. This is because these approaches are not conceptually equipped to conceive and effectually manage such complex ‘meaning-giving’ matters. It is not a matter of intelligence, it is simply that management research has not been built for this purpose. In fact, one of the first people to publicly express the failure of marketing and managerial approaches to gain an understanding of target groups was no less than Gerald Zaltman (years earlier, co-author with Kotler of *Social Marketing*, 1971). Zaltman also stated that such a lack was not good for marketing either. In his book, *How Consumers Think*, Zaltman maintains that after many years of dedication to marketing, his conclusion was that in 80 percent of cases, marketing plans were shown to be non-viable and failed. In his eyes, one of the most important reasons for this was the mono-disciplinary approach and the persistent focus on satisfying the supposed needs of the manager.⁶⁸ Those needs included a clear, unambiguous and to-the-point conclusion, because ‘managers don’t have time to lose in details’.

Thus, in fact, it is not surprising that the set-up of such monitoring research that has been conducted in Amsterdam within the frameworks of urban and educational development has been designed to meet the needs of urban managers and policymakers. In all probability, the adoption of such a ‘manager-centric’ style has also occasioned the necessity of gathering information about student populations in a way that could be manageable and easy in order to fulfil pre-formulated goals. If the goal of the city was to be an emancipatory machine, for example, then the information was compiled by classifying a priori the groups that were understood to be not yet emancipated versus the already emancipated groups. An increasing level of participation in education by a non-emancipated population would mean an improvement in integration in the city and evidence of the emancipatory character of the whole.⁶⁹ If the goal was to attract and improve contact with the new ‘internet generation’ of students, then research provided managers with tools to meet, seduce, approach and manage the younger generation.⁷⁰ If the goal was planning houses, then students had to be classified

⁶⁸ Gerald Zaltman, *How Customers Think: Essential Insights into the Mind of the Market* (Harvard Business School Press, 2003), pp. 3–46.

⁶⁹ In addition to participation in education, emancipation and integration have often been identified as the positive result of the transformation known as ‘becoming Dutch’. In this process, minorities such as homosexuals have gradually become a symbol of emancipation and as such placed in opposition to ‘cultures in the process of developing’, such as the eastern ethnic minorities, especially Moroccans and Turks. See, for an accurate analysis and interpretation of the matter, Bram Mellink’s PhD dissertation: *Worden Zoals Wij: Onderwijs En de Opkomst van de Geïndividualiseerde Samenleving Sinds 1945* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Wereldbibliotheek, 2013).

⁷⁰ Annemieke J.M. Roobeek, former professor at the University of Nijenrode and now director of ‘MeetingMoreMinds’ <<http://www.meetingmoreminds.com/>>. has been frequently consulted on the topic of ‘the network generation’. Often recommended works on education conferences and seminars include: Kim Castenmiller, *Generatie Y: Aan Het Werk* (Zoetemeer: Free Musketeers, 2009); Boschma and Groen, *Generatie Einstein, Slimmer Sneller En Socialer: Communiceren Met Jongeren van de 21ste Eeuw*; Jacob K. Eskildsen, Jens J. Dahlgaard and Anders Norgaard, ‘The Impact of Creativity and Learning on Business Excellence’, *Total Quality Management*, 10 (1999), 523–30 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0954412997488>>; Dennis Mensink, ‘Blijven Boeien. Binden Door Uit Te Dagen’, *Reed Business*

into short- and long-stay students, of low or high income, and in terms of specific places of origin, so that urban managers would have some grounds on which to design and create specific areas to host the student population.⁷¹

c. Qualitative and quantitative approaches are not the problem: the problem is the a priori attribution of fixed values to specific variables

The problem with such managerial approaches is not the use of specific 'incorrect' methodologies or a discussion that pits quantitative against qualitative approaches. Sociologist Paul de Beer shows very convincingly that against all prognoses about the invalidity of traditional abstract sociological segmentations (that would have become out of date in the Amsterdam of today), social categories seem to be extremely alive and low incomes and a low level of education have remained invariably coupled to specific classes, such as ethnic minorities and single mothers, for example.⁷²

The real problem is that the validity of any methodology becomes suspicious when one realizes that established classifications and segmentations are extrapolated to the study of other topics and other investigations and that specific categories are always accompanied by a fixed and particular interpretation of their attributes. This means that each category has its own descriptor: being a woman, a man, an immigrant, a white local, a commuter, or possessing a low or high level of education, would mean having inexorably fixed and different visions of life, and fixed and different feelings of belonging in the city.

Of course, a number of scholars and practitioners in fields such as city marketing or urban management have already pointed to the risk, and to the low effect, of applying pretended ideal formulas and marketing mixes to places. In relations to students and student cities the work of Willem van Winden has shown that the success of cities as educational-and-knowledge nodes has very little to do with traditional advertorial tools and much with cooperation and with a special and integral combination of factors such as creativity and innovation. This is a combination of factors that one can try to achieve; however, which composition will prove effective remains unpredictable.⁷³ Best practices of diverse cities cannot be merely copied and pasted; the maximum we can do is to

(Amsterdam, 2007); Don Tapscott, *Grown up Digital. How the Net Generation Is Changing the World* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2009).

⁷¹ Buys and Oderkerk.

⁷² Paul de Beer, 'Individualisering Zit Tussen de Oren', in *Kiezen voor de kudde*, ed. by Jan Willem Duyvendak and M. Hurenkamp (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 2004), pp. 18–36.

⁷³ Willem Van Winden, 'Knowledge and the European City', *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 101 (2010), 100–106 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9663.2009.00591.x>>.

use the examples and best practices from elsewhere as inspiration in their essences, and not as an all-fitting model.⁷⁴

Gert-Jan Hospers has introduced into Dutch city marketing critical conceptualizations about the ways in which cities and places are perceived. With terms such as the ‘Matthew Effect’ he referred to this quite irrational feature of places with a good reputation. The effect predicts that the more successful a place is felt to be, the more successful it is: ‘success breeds success’;⁷⁵ Places with a very good reputation for being a lively city with interesting street-life, such as Amsterdam, remain lively in our heads even when we see with our own eyes that on a winter’s day nobody is on the streets.

Indeed, the eagerness with which many city marketing practitioners have emulated successful formulas or praising one’s own piece of the earth ‘as the best of the world’ has probably failed to convince wider audiences. However, it has showed that in general we want to be acknowledged as a part of ‘a good place to be.’ Terms such as ‘place ambassadors’ that have arisen in the literature on places of the last two decades are meant to convey the importance of non-profit involvement of people with places they love and care about. According to Anholt and others, it is precisely in our current society where public governance is often mistrusted, that the importance of such ambassadors has become crucial. A place can become present to us simply because of the coincidence of having met someone nice from that place. We just tend to trust those ambassadors more than expensive publicity.⁷⁶

The growing awareness that places cannot be integrally treated as products has led to a reconsideration of the term ‘city marketing’. Kavaratzis, Warnaby and Ashworth for instance plead for a substitution of terms such as ‘city marketing’ and ‘city branding’ by terms like ‘city development’.⁷⁷ That is because they, like others, believe that place brands cannot be created top down as if places were a simple product. The initial ‘product’ approach to city marketing as understood by Philip Kotler has in academic and professional circles become a byword for an epoch and a formula which, although inspirational for many at that moment, is no longer considered

⁷⁴ Willem van Winden, Luis de Carvalho, Erwin van Tuijl, Jeroen van Haaren and Leo van den Berg, *Creating knowledge locations in cities: innovation and integration challenges*, (London ; New York: Routledge 2012)

⁷⁵ As Gert-Jan Hospers argues, this reputation is above all auto-empowering. As he paraphrases, referring to the so called Matthew effect: “success breeds success” and places that already have a positive reputation as creative spots will keep on being seen as such, even if perhaps in reality they are no more creative and livable than other less well-reputed areas. Hospers, G-J. (2004): “Place Marketing in Europe: The branding of the Oresund region” *Intereconomics*. 39-5, 271-279. 4.

⁷⁶ Simon Anholt, *Places, Identity, Image and Reputation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

⁷⁷ Mihalís Kavaratzis, Gary Warnaby, Gregory J. Ashworth, *Rethinking Place Branding Comprehensive Brand Development for Cities and Regions*, (Springer: 2014).

literally applicable. As authors such as Kavaratzis, Zenker and Braun insist, city marketing can only be meaningful if it is based on and supported by the inhabitants of the city.⁷⁸

Similarly, city marketing practitioners such as Geerte Udo from city marketing organization Amsterdam Partners are insisting more and more on their perception of the fluidity performed by current target groups and of the necessity of understanding more deeply the very delicate equilibrium that make cities attractive and liveable.⁷⁹ Urban researchers of different disciplines confirm this more recent scholarly view with the catch-phrase words: 'it's all in the mix'.⁸⁰

For the research proposed here, the analysis of the managerial approaches that I have referred to thus far and the combination of ideas about postmodernism discussed in the previous section have led me to a number of insights, which are discussed below.

Firstly, even if some of the managerial approaches that have been discussed are not correct in terms of validity, they reveal very interesting assumptions about who is who and who belongs and needs what. In this sense, it is very interesting to see that the application of so-called objective segmentation goes much further than a couple of useful age requirements, such as a playground for children or non-stair access for the elderly with walkers or the disabled in wheelchairs. The serious plans to build specific and separate housing for 'lowly educated young working people aged between 18 and 35'⁸¹ in Amsterdam, as laudable and well intentioned as they may be,⁸² also reveal an astonishing persistence of marketing segmentation practices. This means that marketing divisions that sound derisory to some are considered acceptable by others. It also implies that current students might share the feeling that such segmentations of society are normal and that it is logical that both groups – lowly and highly educated young people – are thought to need different sorts of housing.

Therefore, the second and very crucial insight is the seminal role of 'prejudice' involved in any human social act. In fact, in the sciences, a sort of 'notion of prejudice' has long been acknowledged as a mental construct, which might also inform the premises and procedures on which we conceive and

⁷⁸ Erik Braun, Mihalis Kavaratzis and Sebastian Zenker, 'My City – My Brand: The Different Roles of Residents in Place Branding', *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 6 (2013), 18–28
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/17538331311306087>>.

⁷⁹ Annually guest presentations Geerte Udo in programme minor 'City marketing in Europe', Urban Management/CAREM, HvA.

⁸⁰ In Pieter Terhorst, Jacques van de Ven and Leon Dében, 'Amsterdam: It's All in the Mix', in *Cities and visitors. Regulating People, Markets and City Space*, ed. by Lily M. Hoffman, Susan Fainstein, and Dennis R. Judd (Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

⁸¹ 'Ook Werkende Jongere Moet Wonen', *Het Parool* (Amsterdam, 6 September 2013).

⁸² Alderman Freek Ossel (Housing and Neighbourhoods, Poverty, Public Space and Green, Social Investment Program (PMI), etc. of the municipality of Amsterdam) has often expressed his concerns about the difficulties that poorly educated working youth has when attempting to find affordable housing in Amsterdam. Apparently, those concerns have been translated into the building plan. See among others the already referred conference 'Wonen in de ideale studentenstad' organized by ASVA Student Union.

study the world, and which may impede researchers in thinking beyond the familiar. It is for this reason that mathematics and physics have been so inspiring in their attempt to visualize the invisible and the unknown through pure abstractions: what Vaihinger would call ‘the worlds as it were’ and the ‘philosophy of as if’.⁸³

Prejudices are important, not only because they are extremely robust (as Einstein said in a frequently quoted phrase, ‘it is easier to split an atom than a prejudice’), but also because they are inherent to human nature: one cannot simply take prejudices away. The implication of such a finding is that the notion of prejudice has to be taken as the pivotal starting point in any analysis of imaginaries (and related topics such as sense of belonging and sense of place). Thus, I consider it to be beyond question that one of the most interesting contributions of ‘postmodernist’ studies has been that they have shown that there is no such thing as neutral and natural discourse. In the humanities and social sciences it has been increasingly accepted that, very often, social classifications and segmentations might say more about the one classifying than about the one being classified.

The third insight is that a study of young students’ imaginaries in a city such as Amsterdam will require us to keep in mind that, although a postmodern understanding of contemporary life will provide important tools and rationales to apprehend our current times, it is also important to recall that ‘eras’ are also not absolute categories and that this is precisely one of the reasons why contemporary life might appear so confusing. ‘Modern’ economic meta-narratives of progress and innovation, with their ‘old’ Fordist structures based on mass consumption and the increase of productivity, might have remained more alive than the term ‘post-Fordism’ would suggest. Moreover, they might also provide an attractive model to which young people still aspire.

Finally, my review of urban managerial and marketing reports on students has generally led me to become even more aware of the restrictions of the genre. Clarity is a virtue, but oversimplification is not. This means that as long as there is no real practice of looking beyond ‘how to manage’ goals, urban managerial reports run the risk of becoming the urban version of those plans with an 80 percent failure rate, which I discussed above in reference to marketing and to which Zaltman referred in his book, *How Customers Think*. This percentage, by the way, as he also notes, shows a level of failure that would be unthinkable in disciplines such as medicine or engineering.

The aim of this review, is not only to identify possible fallacies or erroneous reasoning and their causes but, more importantly, to discern potential and valuable solutions. One necessary step is that urban-management reporting practices need to break out of the restrictions of the genre, which it

⁸³ Hans Vaihinger, *De Filosofie van Het Alsof* (Utrecht: Ijzer, 2014) Originally: *Philosophie des Als Ob* (1911).

seems are compelling research practitioners to avoid complexity and perspectivism. In this sense, it is even highly questionable to assume that managers would not be interested in reading other kinds of reports. In fact, one can say that it sounds very 'prejudiced' to assume that everyone in a managerial position in the city is only willing to read management summaries and that managers do not have time for details and depth.

d. In short: This thesis attempts to fill a gap in the reports for policymakers

In addition to being a focus of urban managerial attention over the last decade, the city of Amsterdam has also been the focus of important sociological and urban studies.⁸⁴ The works of Vermeulen, Tillie, Deben, Duyvendak and de Beer,⁸⁵ for example, have been influential in providing insights and an understanding of urban sociology and human geography. However, as Paul de Beer suggests in his work on social and spatial differentiation in Amsterdam, for a possible explanation of why things are as they are, disciplines such as sociology would need to broaden their scope and engage with other, more interpretative disciplines that can provide greater insight into matters such as place and social class.

In reality and to summarize what has been discussed thus far, what the various studies of Amsterdam lack is this exploration of issues such as sense of place and imaginaries, which require the inclusion of contrasting perspectives and points of view. In other words, we need to gain a better insight into what is a more dynamic and continuous process of reassertion or rejection of one 'social aggregation' over another. In my opinion, and according to conceptualizations such as the polysystems of Even-Zohar referred to above,⁸⁶ the process of mapping students' imaginaries in Amsterdam must be one that takes into account the interdependent nature of those imaginaries: the process of defining them is based on the inclusion, exclusion or adaptation of one's own or the other's imaginary. In turn, this interdependence signifies the need to discover what tangible references are seen as significant in demarcating people's possible affiliations with specific groups or constellations of imaginaries.

⁸⁴ Conducted by Academic Urban Centres such as the Amsterdam Study Center for Metropolitan Environment (AME) and The Amsterdam Institute for Advanced Labour Studies (AIAS).

⁸⁵ Floris Vermeulen, Jean Tillie and Robert van de Walle, 'Different Effects of Ethnic Diversity on Social Capital: Density of Foundations and Leisure Associations in Amsterdam Neighbourhoods', *Urban Studies*, 49 (2012), 337–52 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0042098011403016>>; Paul Dekker and others, *De Moraal in de Publieke Opinie. En Verkenning van 'Normen En Waarden' in Bevolkingenqêtes* (Den Haag, 2004); *Kiezen Voor de Kudde*, ed. by Jan Willem Duyvendak and M. Hurenkamp (Amsterdam: Van Gennep, 2004); *Understanding Amsterdam*, ed. by Léon Deben, Willem Heinemeyer, and Dick van der Vaart (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 2007).

⁸⁶ Even-Zohar, 'Polysystem Theory'.

2.4. Imagology and Tribal Marketing

a. Fusing empirical research and discourse analysis

Examples of research on subcultures and community consumption – as in the case of new marketing approaches such as Tribal Marketing – open the possibility of looking at a larger array of distinctive patterns of consumption as a way of demarcating distinctive uses of place. Moreover, the further development of Tribal Marketing logic could permit an extrapolation, by which these patterns of consumption are considered as processes that bestow another layer of meaning on that given to specific uses of the city (the places where some people go and that others avoid, the products used at specific places by ‘specific’ sorts of people), which in turn could lead to significant discursive representations of Amsterdam.

The conceptual approach of Tribal Marketing became the first step in conceiving a possible research project on Amsterdam students’ imaginaries because it seemed to address the shortcomings of traditional marketing and consumer research when it came to the study of consumers themselves. As I argued above, in my view, the most convincing cause of those shortcomings is to be found in the goals of research meant for managerial review, which would also explain why the marketing, monitoring and managerial reports on students in Amsterdam showed similar shortcomings.

The reason why systems such as Tribal Marketing seem to provide a real alternative – providing a more consumer-centred kind of approach – mainly lies in the displacement of the research goals, that is, from the concrete proposition of ‘how to manage’ to the more philosophical question, ‘What does consumption mean?’ Logically, such a displacement of the research focus requires different research strategies, opening a way to an interdisciplinary approach in which fixed premises such as ‘targeting’ and ‘segmenting’ can be reconsidered.

Disciplines such as Imagology, which originated in comparative literary studies, have already made a similar leap into interdisciplinarity. In this case, the displacement occurred because of the increasing awareness of some researchers in the field that the comparison of literary production between different countries or languages, for example, necessarily entailed the reconsideration of fixed assumptions about national differences. Such an insight led to the displacement of the research focus: from the study of national literary production in itself to the study of the nature of national representations and the stereotyping process.⁸⁷

⁸⁷ In this way, they came to what Hugo Dyserinck calls ‘the essential insight’ that ‘national categories and even notions such as “nation” or “folk” are only conceptual models, images, cultural representations of the one and the other’, Hugo

In my view, the fact that in both Tribal Marketing and Imagology the need for interdisciplinarity has emerged as a consequence of a similar aim (i.e. the aim of gaining an understanding of the object of research), makes both disciplines especially compatible. In the following pages, I will first elaborate on a concrete example of this compatibility, which will be based on an array of topics that have occupied the attention of both Tribal Marketing and Imagology. Following this, I will further explain the processes of enquiring, gathering and interpreting data used in this research project.

b. Tribal Marketing: Brands, niches, lifestyle

Over the last two decades, marketing and consumer research has begun to highlight the problem of and offer some solutions to the isolation of marketing with respect to other social and human disciplines. The first signs of this change appeared in a newly labelled form of marketing that emerged in France and Italy, known as 'Latin Marketing'. In his first articles on the matter, Bernard Cova proposed a new focus for marketing studies, stating that until that moment traditional marketing had only focused on the rational and pragmatic aspects of consuming. With the term 'Latin', he wanted to indicate a difference in approach from traditional marketing, whose origins lay in Northern Europe and the United States.⁸⁸ Although the term 'Latin' no longer applies, Cova's publications were an important catalyst to work by an array of researchers in the fields of consumer research and marketing from England, Canada and the United States, among others. Since then, the group has been prolific, with Brown, Kozinets, Firat, Venkatesh, Shankar and Sherry⁸⁹ all publishing their studies and undertaking research emphasizing the implications of the postmodernist perspective for marketing.

These studies all pointed to the fact that it was very strange that marketing, which is based on consumer research, had not incorporated the findings of sociologists, philosophers, media and literary studies on the same kinds of postmodern topics. However, they also concluded that the disinterest shown to that point was probably due to a logical but emotionally based rejection of the previous all-French discourse of Lyotard, Baudrillard, Derrida and Foucault, etc., whose texts were difficult to fathom and could be dismissed as appearing more interested in impressing with all their

Dyserinck, 'Imagology and the Problem of Ethnic Identity', *Intercultural Studies*, 2003, p. 4 <<http://www.intercultural-studies.org/ICS1/Dyserinck.shtml>>.

⁸⁸ Bernard Cova, 'Relationship Marketing: A View from the South', in *New and Emerging Paradigms*, ed. by T. Meenaghan (Dublin: University College Dublin, 1997), pp. 657–72; Bernard Cova, 'Community and Consumption', *European Journal of Marketing*, 31 (2006), 297–316; Bernard Cova, 'From Marketing to Societing: When the Link Is More Important than the Thing', in *Rethinking Marketing: Towards Critical Marketing Accounting*, ed. by D.M. Brownlie, S.R. Wensley, and R. Wittington (London: Sage, 1999), pp. 64–83.

⁸⁹ A.Fuat Firat and Alladi Venkatesh, 'Postmodernity: The Age of Marketing', *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 1993, 227–49; *Consumer Research: Postcard from the Edge*, ed. by Stephen Brown and D. Turley (London: Routledge, 1997); Thomas S. Robertson and Harold H. Kassirjian, *Handbook of Consumer Behavior* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall College Div, 1990), pp. 548–591. See also Cova, Kozinets and Shankar (2007).

'meaningless French fads' and 'Gallic esotericism' than getting to the point. Thus, in fact, the disinterest could be explained by, again, a kind of prejudice and incompatibility of discourses. However, as Cova argued, those who overcame the initial difficulties would be rewarded: French postmodernism, he recalled, 'is too important to be left to French philosophers alone'.⁹⁰

One of the first Latin Marketing claims was that statistical, abstract categories were not infallible and that, in terms of consumption, traditional categories could not be seen as a pattern in themselves. An important array of consumer research studies by Schouten, Muniz, O'Guinn and others showed that, in terms of consumption, young people, who according to US census patterns had been reduced to one specific category, evidenced in fact unexpected consumer behaviour. In this respect, they also referred to their own life experiences and recalled that in specific subcultures patterns of consumption cannot be related significantly to places of origin or ethnicity.⁹¹ Thus, the performance of a 'Carlos', for example, was not attributable to an 'ethnic Spanish-minority young male aged 23', but rather to a fully recognized and interrelated member of a surf community, something that could be seen as a process of 'self-segmentation' and 'consumer sovereignty'.⁹²

These findings were confirmed by other studies on the consumption of brands such as Citroën, Saab, and Apple Macintosh, which in an abstract segmentation, gathered a very diverse (and as such, in traditional marketing, not significant) spectrum of consumers of different ages, genders, nationalities, ethnicities, etc. Additionally, Cova showed that this kind of 'community-like' pattern of consumption could even be identified in the consumption of some mass products, such as the hazelnut-chocolate spread Nutella, which gathered an online, demographically diverse community of consumers joined by their love for the product and the things they could make with it, combined with its referential power to recall memories of childhood and feed feelings of nostalgia.⁹³ Such examples enabled them to gain an understanding of consumption as part of social life, taking the axiom that human life is essentially social. 'This perspective' they stated 'rejects an atomistic, overly individualistic, information processor view of people as individuals who are to some extent sealed off

⁹⁰ Bernard Cova, 'The Postmodern Explained To Managers: Implications for Marketing', *Business Horizons*, 39 (1996), 15–23. Furthermore, the works of consumer researchers such as Schouten, McAlexander and Holt who produce excellent, easy-to-read overviews about postmodernism and consumer theories in Europe are with all probability contributing to its diffusion among young students and researchers elsewhere, especially in the United States and Canada.

⁹¹ In fact, the automatic application of social categories to marketing segmentations should never have become such an extended practice. In this respect, Schouten and McAlexander recall McCracken's earlier important work on the matter: 'Social categories are merely conceptual tools having no substance of their own until they are substantiated or given form through the use of agents such as material goods. This all goes to say that relevant categorizations cannot be known except as they are conveyed through consumption patterns' in John W Schouten and James H McAlexander, 'Subcultures of Consumption: An Ethnography of the New Bikers', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22 (1995), 43–61 (p. 59).

⁹² Schouten and McAlexander.

⁹³ Bernard Cova and Stefano Pace, 'Brand Community of Convenience Products: New Forms of Customer Empowerment – the Case "my Nutella The Community"', *European Journal of Marketing*, 40 (2006), 1087–1105
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/03090560610681023>>.

and separated from their experiential worlds – in short, assumptions underlying the type of research that still dominates the textbooks, journal articles and LISREL models of our discipline'.⁹⁴

Venkatesh and Firat saw postmodernism as a liberating power that would release consumption and research into it from the constrictions and reductionism of infinite logics to the single logic of the market.⁹⁵ In fact, many articles by the group exhibit a kind of liberating language. The other side of the coin was that Tribal Marketing could be seen as a new buzzword, with an effect on marketing similar to that caused by Gladwell's 'Rules of Cool'.⁹⁶ Referring to the latter, Southgate would say with self-irony that new consumer research theories, such as 'coolhunting', introduced new research topics that seemed to give a new élan and flamboyance to the long nights of dull focus groups: 'No longer did we want to be the eggheads with the charts and graphs. We wanted in on the action, we wanted to be part of the hunt because we knew when we bagged our first piece of the coolhunt's big game we too would be cool'.⁹⁷ However, Southgate was also stating that consumer research needed to keep elaborating and deepening its study of uncapturable concepts such as 'cool' through consistent analyses, not only of its current interpretations but also its tradition as a topic.⁹⁸

Thanks to this deeper examination, Tribal Marketing researchers have discovered that there is no such thing as a 'cool' product in itself, but that products become cool when used by cool people. This also means that one cannot claim to have established a monolithic and definitive description of the places and routes of consumption of a 'tribe', since they might change (even very quickly) depending on, among other things, the attendance of new audiences at a given place. In addition to the subject of coolness, Tribal Marketing has fleshed out important topics emerging in relation to consumer habits and attitudes, such as the search for authenticity. Well-elaborated studies on surf culture, for example, have examined the role of and fascination with indigenous culture and life in Western society and how the idealist vision of the stranger was translated into tribal tropes in surf culture. From this perspective, the consumption of cultural resources circulated through markets (brands, leisure experiences, and so on) are not the *sine qua non* of contemporary life; rather, they facilitate what are meaningful social relationships. As Bernard Cova has argued, the 'links' (social relationships) are more important than the things (brands, products, experiences, ideas).⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Cova, Kozinets and Shankar, p. 5.

⁹⁵ Venkatesh and Firat.

⁹⁶ Malcolm Gladwell, 'The Coolhunt', *The New Yorker* (New York, 1997).

⁹⁷ Nick Southgate, 'Coolhunting with Aristotle', *International Journal of Market Research*, 4 (2003), 167–90.

⁹⁸ This is a proposal that reveals an insight that is very close to the work done by Image Studies over recent decades. See the encyclopaedic layout of the book *Imagology*, edited by Beller and Leerssen.

⁹⁹ Cova, Kozinets and Shankar, p. 5.

For other disciplines the attractiveness of adopting insights from Tribal Marketing may partly lie in the fact that it allows for what one could call ‘marketing without marketing’, that is, marketing that does not have lucrative manipulation as its objective, a kind of marketing that shows that consumers might actually become the ‘owners of a brand’, such as in the Linux community. For Tribal Marketing itself, the focus on consumer communities has enabled it to claim a focus ‘on the consumers themselves’, a focus that marketing research had never expressed before. Looking at brand consumer communities, for example, both the community and Tribal Marketing saw that new technologies such as the internet were opening new fields of exploration, providing new sources for research and an increasing understanding of consumption. Thus, while traditional marketing started advising on how to capture customers’ attention on the internet to enhance a market, Robert Kozinets wrote the first methodological proposal for the study of online communities of consumers, paying special attention to the consumer and the ethical responsibility of research on consumption on the internet.¹⁰⁰

This kind of study allowed the identification of new seminal topics that enhanced our understanding of current consumption. Studying the cultures of ‘surfers’ or ‘skaters’ enabled them to recognize the strong emotions involved in consumption, such as those attached to the mythologizing of danger, originality, freedom, and a sense of being included in a group, while at the same time caring for each other. Apparently, the presence of these urban subcultures in specific places also influenced their perception. For some young people, specific surf locations acquired a kind of magic status. Revealingly, these were also the kind of descriptors that emerged from my first general exploration of discursive representations of Amsterdam, in which specific places were classified as ‘magic’, ‘cool’ and ‘free’, while it was also clear that other particular places should be avoided.

c. Imagology: Identities, self-images, articulations

At this point it became clear that further development of the Tribal Marketing approach would require a leap into text and discourse interpretation, and that a corresponding step would need to be made towards a framework in which the conceptualization of crucial notions such as culture and group identity would not only be compatible, but even necessarily complementary. For those who are familiar with the framework of Imagology this step would not be surprising. The work of Imagology is rich in useful conceptualizations, enabling us to gain an understanding of the way

¹⁰⁰ Robert V. Kozinets, ‘On Netnography: Initial Reflections on Consumer Research Investigations of Cyberculture’, *NA - Advances in Consumer Research*, 25 (1998), 366–71 <<http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/display.asp?id=8180>>; Robert Kozinets, ‘The Field behind the Screen: Using Netnography for Marketing Research in Online Communities’, *Journal of Marketing*, 39 (2002), 61–72.

cultural representations of places and people are concretized in the form of tropes that refer to some characteristic, such as a 'magic place' or 'a passionate folk'.¹⁰¹

Nevertheless, it is very interesting to note that, as far as I know, no study has looked at how such conceptualizations have been applied, for example, to our so-called multicultural society in the Netherlands and, in fact, even in research, ethnic and religious categories are still used more as 'explanations' than as 'descriptors'.¹⁰² Indeed, segmentations in terms of gender and ethnicity that have been used to study the degree of emancipation of students in Amsterdam, can be seen as examples of the application of attributes to specific groups based on prejudice (i.e. culturally constructed), in which ethnic minorities are a priori conceived of as less emancipated than the local population.

With this in mind, a short overview of the insights and conceptualizations of Imagology is of value, allowing us to understand why it is compatible with research in other disciplines such as Tribal Marketing or Urban Management. To begin with, it is important to recall that the need to develop a discipline around the concept of 'image' accompanied the emergence of comparative literature. Imagology as such was accepted by the French school of comparativism around 1950 'as the last consequence of the study of interrelations between the literatures'.¹⁰³ The reason for its acceptance as a discipline was that it had become clear that the study of influences between cultures and literary production conducted until then had not been methodologically correct insofar as the perspective of the researcher was not clearly defined. This is what Dyserinck refers to as the problem of 'L'étranger tel qu'on le voit' that led to Carré's adoption of concepts related to 'the study of otherness', such as *l'autre*, *alterity* and *l'étranger*.

Pointing to the notions of otherness and *alterity* as something that could be identified in any national literary production was without doubt the necessary step towards the conceptualization of a discipline that aimed at being culturally neutral and 'free of national philological ties'.¹⁰⁴ Imagology

¹⁰¹ In this sense, thinking of Imagology as a way to approach the study and interpretation of images of Amsterdam seems more than ever an obvious choice. Especially since, in the humanities and literary studies, postmodernist insights such as 'perspectivism' and the constructivist nature of 'identity' have become the general conceptual background. In addition, the contribution of Imagology to scientific research has also been acknowledged. The prestigious NWO Spinoza Prize was awarded to Joep Leerssen in 2008.

¹⁰² According to Leerssen, there has also been a visible revival of 'essentialism' in the conceptualization of identity: 'The retrieval, protection or cultivation of one's culture, tradition or "identity" in an increasingly plural and mediatized cultural landscape means that such categories are once again being reified into categories for the understanding of human affairs. The notion of identity has in the last thirty years come to be understood in an implicitly constructivist sense, rather than in the old transcendent-essentialist one – but, like the notion of culture, it is once again being seen in deterministic terms. Concepts like culture, nationality and identity are being used once more as explanations rather than as descriptions of explicanda (Leerssen 2006).' in Beller and Leerssen, *Imagology*, p. 25.

¹⁰³ Dyserinck.

¹⁰⁴ Dyserinck, p. 4.

was meant to be not only the common language of comparative literature, but also a field 'promising to form a bridge to other human sciences, in order to solve problems the importance of which indeed "depassé la seule littérature"''.¹⁰⁵ In this sense, imagological insights were especially useful to understand the nature of the conflicts (and the role of images and stereotypes within them) that had partly led to both World Wars, which would also explain the validity of imagological studies after the Second World War.

Imagology does not question the inherent human need to form collectives and to have a sense of belonging and of being 'sheltered'.¹⁰⁶ However, Imagology does problematize two important concepts. The first refers to the ontological status of national images or those shared by communities. According to Leerssen, such images do not reflect something that exists physically or originally, as would be the case of a picture of one's own children or a picture of the *Tour Eiffel*.¹⁰⁷ 'Images concerning people, human types or nations have arisen almost out of nothing, from literary commonplaces and intertextual formulae, and have solidified into belief systems and patterns of identification which in turn have given rise to the now-current set of tropes we call "national identities" – tropes with which many of us, most of the time, actively identify and which thus have become real things in the real world'. Thus, in terms of the ontological status of this sort of reality, these kinds of images would be 'something between concrete objects (the *Tour Eiffel* ...) and notional abstractions (the square root of 3 ...) that Karl Popper would even classify as a separate ontological class: "objects of the world 3"'.¹⁰⁸

The second important concept is that of culture. There has been a tendency to ally culture with identity, as a reflection of something that has been pre-ordained in human DNA and that causes national characters and cultural identities to be conceived of as innate. In this case, it seems that tropes such as those portraying specific skills as a 'national talent' have been literally interpreted as an empirical reality. This would suggest, for example, that having an excellent national football team means every individual in a nation is an excellent football player. Thus, while empirical evidence reveals great differences between individuals in a 'national culture', cultural essentialism would still see each one as embodying a monolithic and indivisible 'national character'.

According to Leerssen, the reason for this kind of mismatch lies in the conception of culture: culture is in fact the counterpart of nature, but cultural essentialism tends to identify culture with nature. In

¹⁰⁵ Quotation in Dyserinck follows: '(to cite here Carré's disciple and collaborator Marius-Francois Guyard)', p. 3.

¹⁰⁶ Dyserinck, p. 6.

¹⁰⁷ Joep Leerssen, 'The Downward Pull of Cultural Essentialism', in *Image Into Identity: Constructing and Assigning Identity in a Culture of Modernity*, ed. by Michael Wintle (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 2006), p. 36.

¹⁰⁸ Leerssen, 'The Downward Pull of Cultural Essentialism', p. 37, footnote 5.

contrast, Imagology defines culture as ‘*a way of doing things differently*, a pattern of behavioural differentiations. Those differentiations will run *within*, as well as *between* the various sub-groups and aggregates into which one may subdivide humanity’. It is also relevant to emphasize that, although cross-cultural theories have also had a clear tendency to emphasize the differences between national cultures as more important than their similarities, the legitimacy of this distinction cannot be substantiated by scientific logic but only by the nature of national tropes. In this respect, Leerssen says:

Human aggregates are never as homogeneous as our schemata and tropes would make them out to be. Human societies are not anthills. It follows from the very definition of culture that any society or aggregate of people will have its inner cultural differentiation – between regions, between genders, between communities, between age-groups, between social classes.¹⁰⁹

d. The combination

Hopefully it has been made clear that the interdisciplinary approach of Imagology offers a tool that is capable of both spotting the identification and differentiation processes creating diverse ‘tribes’ and ‘communities’, with such processes expected to become visible during the stereotyping of one’s own and others’ groups. In this sense, the processes involved in the formation of a particular consumer community, which Muniz and O’Guinn have identified in specific acts of consumption,¹¹⁰ could be applied and extended by an understanding of the nature of the stereotyping process, identifying ‘the one’ and ‘the other’, as elucidated by studies of images or Imagology.

For my research, the concept of ‘image’ as understood by Imagology has at the very least the following advantages:

- It explains the relation of images to and the nature of stereotyping, in which new knowledge and judgments are constructed on present biases. Images can include statements such as ‘Italians are good at design’ or ‘black people are good at running’, for example. In general, research shows that such statements are fallacies or products of erroneous reasoning because the conclusions are based on mistaken assumptions – in this case because causality has not been empirically determined and is related to a preconditioned idea about the nature of a group rather than its actual practices. The advantage of an imagological approach is that rather than denying the validity of stereotypes as merely emotional or irrational it

¹⁰⁹ Both quotations are from Leerssen, ‘The Downward Pull of Cultural Essentialism’, p. 35.

¹¹⁰ Muniz and O’Guinn distinguish the following markers in the ‘communities’ of brands: consciousness of kind; legitimacy; oppositional brand loyalty; ritual and traditions; celebrating the history of the brand; sharing brand stories; moral responsibility; assisting in the use of the brand; integrating and retaining members. See Albert M. Muniz Jr. and Thomas C. O’Guinn, ‘Brand Community’, *Journal of consumer research*, 27 (2001), 412–32.

turns them into interesting material containing information on the prevailing robust images of 'the one' and 'the other' alive in our cultures.

- It shows that images are always two sided: this means that a positive statement can be reversed to become something negative. Taking the prior statements as examples, the Italian's reputed ability to design ready-to-wear clothes may be considered indicative of the negative qualities of vanity and superficiality. In the case of the black person, their ability to run becomes a natural ability, which means that black people are more physical than rational, less civilized, more used to running in the jungle. In the logic of the stereotyping process, the positive conclusion for the white person would be that a good white runner always needs to put in more effort to achieve the same result, which makes it more meritorious.¹¹¹
- It also shows that 'auto' images are influenced by the image that 'the other' has of 'oneself'. In national stereotypes, for example, the image of the directness of the Dutch that stereotypically could be interpreted by another as 'rude', is embraced more positively by the Dutch set of auto images as 'honest', 'straightforward' and 'fair'.
- Finally, it shows that images and stereotypes about places and people are part of a tradition. The image of Parisian elegance, for example, has its own past, which could be studied to explain how this image was formed over the years. At the same time, new 'ways of being' in a city might actually entail a return to or adaptation of previous ways of being. This means that types, such as the hippies of the 1960s, not only have their own reference points in the past but also have been 'imitated' or 'reinterpreted' by others in more recent times.

The acknowledgement of such mechanisms enables us to design an approach that looks for contrasts, in which assimilations to and differentiations from others can be tracked. These differentiations would mostly be expressed through an emphasis on differences in acting and judging. For example, the nightlife of Amsterdam could be seen diversely as exciting, boring, provincial or metropolitan, depending on the internal negotiation of meaning within a given group. In such negotiations, judgments are substantiated with references to others (other cities, other places in the Netherlands, other kinds of people, etc.).

Moreover, a literary-device analysis is also thought to be able to register rhetorical differences and similarities among discourses. In this sense, groups shape their own discourse by using specific tropes, which in turn can point to differences in the way a particular 'tribe' or 'community' takes its

¹¹¹ Among other works on the matter, see Patrick B. Miller, 'The Anatomy of Scientific Racism: Racist Responses to Black Athletic Achievement', *Journal of Sport History*, 1998, 119–51
<<http://www.aafra.org/SportsLibrary/JSH/JSH1998/JSH2501/jsh2501g.pdf>>.

place in the 'world'. This means, for example, that while some imaginaries are expressed through evangelical (that is to say inclusive) tropes, others emphasize exclusivity and inaccessibility.

e. On the meaning of the Imaginary

Regarding the concept of the Imaginary, it is useful to elaborate further on its possible interpretation. In branches of sociological and cultural comparative studies, the concept of a community vision of life and feelings of connectedness are expressed through the term 'imaginary'. Imaginary also refers to 'the creative and symbolic dimension of the social world, the dimension through which human beings create their ways of living together and their ways of representing their collective lives'.¹¹² Thompson's studies on the theory of ideology also approach similar conceptualizations of the imaginary, emphasizing the relationship between the imaginary, ideology and language. Language is considered critical, 'for in using language we are constantly engaged in a creative, imaginary activity. We are constantly involved in extending the meaning of words, in producing new meanings, through metaphor, word-play and interpretation and we are thereby, knowingly or not, altering, undermining or reinforcing our relations with others and with the world'.¹¹³

In many cases, definitions of the imaginary – such as those I have just mentioned – have been considered as vague and untargeted and, in fact, one might agree that they are in a way. The arguments and logic around the conceptualization of the imaginary by Maffesoli, for example, do not lead to a single definition of the term. However, this 'vagueness' has an epistemological reason.¹¹⁴ The idea of the imaginary, as understood by Maffesoli, is grounded in at least two important sources found in the French tradition. Firstly, Durand's *Structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire*, published in 1960, a referential work in which the author proposes a theoretical alternative to the positivist structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss. In contrast to the latter, Durand argues that the imaginary has an essential role in human life and he conceives of it as the product of the euphemizing function of the imagination. Thanks to this function, thus thanks to euphemism, human fears and hopes can be named and shared in a bearable manner. As summarized by Carretero, the imaginary then enables us to compensate for the shortcomings of our hyper-rational modern society by giving a sort of global or cosmogonist meaning to our particular social experiences.

Secondly, Maffesoli's conceptualization of the imaginary is also rooted in the French tradition that, from the 1930s, would be further developed in the programme of the Collège de Sociologie.

¹¹² Stefan Scherer, referring also to Wolfgang Iser, *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993). In Beller and Leerssen, p. 346.

¹¹³ John B. Thompson, p. 6.

¹¹⁴ Ángel Enrique Carretero Pasín, 'Imaginario Y Sociedad. Un Acercamiento a La Sociología de Lo Imaginario En La Tradición Francesa', *Revista Internacional de Sociología*, 3 (2005), 137–61 (p. 5) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.3989/ris.2005.i41.217>>.

Maffesoli emphasizes the importance of the Collège to the study of the apparently ephemeral or insignificant. Caillois' studies on 'simple' stones, for example, are beautiful conceptual approaches to this idea: stones that are not adequate for jewellery or for use in grand buildings are at the same time a concrete sample of longevity and immanence.¹¹⁵ Similarly, Maffesoli praises Caillois' contribution to a sociology of the quotidian, enabling a better understanding of its fabric and ontology: '[...] what we call everyday life is made up of micro-attitudes, minuscule creations and one-time situations that are completely ephemeral.'¹¹⁶

In addition to the work of Maffesoli, it is also of interest to look at Iser's work on the conceptualization of the imaginary, which adds or at least emphasizes its featureless and inactive nature:

The imaginary is not a self-activating potential but has to be brought into play from outside itself by the subject (Coleridge), by consciousness (Sartre), or by the psyche or the socio-historical (Castoriadis), a list that by no means exhausts the potential stimulants. It follows that the imaginary has not intentionality of its own but has intentions imposed on it by the demands of its activator. And precisely because it is without intentionality, it appears to be open to all intentions that will always be tied to what they trigger, so that something will 'happen' to the activator. Thus the imaginary can never be identical to its intention-led mobilization (otherwise it would constitute the intentional activation of itself). Instead, the imaginary discloses itself in interplay with its different activators. This interplay is identical neither to the intentions nor to the imaginary gestalt that it brings about, although this gestalt could not come into being without the intention-led mobilization of the imaginary. The play movement that arises from this purpose-oriented activation is also the area in which the imaginary interacts in all its different ways with its activators. Consequently, play may be seen as a product of activation as well as the condition for the productivity brought about by the interaction it stimulates. It is this dual process that gives the imaginary its presence.¹¹⁷

In this way, if an imaginary becomes something meaningful it is because it becomes fulfilled by specific images. Many examples of the manner in which epochs and events are rejected or rehabilitated according to the specific judgments of times and places, can be seen as an illustration of this process. After all, 'a life without judgments would become insupportable'.¹¹⁸ One can also say,

¹¹⁵ 'One might, in speaking of flowers, just as well leave aside botany as the art of gardening and of bouquets – leaving one with much left to say – thus, I, in turn, neglecting mineralogy and ignoring the arts that stones make use of, speak of naked stones, fascination, and glory, where a mystery that is slower, more vast and more important than the destiny of one single short-lived species is hiding and at the same time revealing itself.', Roger Caillois, *Pierres: Suivi D'autres Textes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971), p. 9.

¹¹⁶ 'ce que l'on appelle la vie quotidienne est faite de micro-attitudes, de créations minuscules, de situations ponctuelles et tout à fait éphémères'. *Autour Du Roger Caillois*, ed. by Gilbert Durand and Michel Maffesoli (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992), p. 23.

¹¹⁷ Iser, p. 223.

¹¹⁸ Maffesoli quoting Nietzsche in Durand and Maffesoli, p. 23.

for example, that the arts, architecture and literary production have become a magnificent way of observing the mechanisms and the dynamics in which new generations – or new aggregations – occupy new spaces by contrasting themselves with existing traditions.

However, interest in this should not only be seen in terms of the mechanisms of a struggle for power – a struggle that Bourdieu in particular has influentially and convincingly described – but also in the mechanisms and patterns with which those struggles are expressed.¹¹⁹ In this sense, a new generation may form its identity by rejecting the antitheses of its own values: what was cherished by their elders becomes something to be scorned, what their elders had contempt for is something to be cherished.

From this it follows that attention to the fluidity and malleability of content seems to be of crucial importance. Even more so since, as Leerssen shows in his *Imagology* studies, images of ‘the one’ and ‘the other’ are both mobile and changeable. As he explains:

Much as images are mobile, so too they are changeable, both in valorization and in substance. Many images of denigrated →savages (e.g., indigenous inhabitants of Europe’s colonies, or the Irish) were revalorized in the sentimental climate of the decades leading up to Romanticism: the Nobel Savage is still bereft of the refinements of civility and proper manners, but this lack is now given the positive connotation of authenticity, intuitive honesty, moral forthrightness and closeness to nature.¹²⁰

Furthermore, it also seems important to remember that successive images and counter-images ‘do not abolish each other but accumulate’. This in turn implies that judgments about places and people never completely disappear: like images of a given nation, images in general also consist of a ‘compound layering of different, contradictory counter-images, with (in any given textual expression) some aspects activated and dominant, but the remaining counterparts all latently, tacitly, subliminally present’. Images, moreover, are intrinsically linked to the formation of ideas and ideologies and, as such, they may be put into play contradictorily.

Finally, and related to the prospect of making a life in a particular place, it is interesting to emphasize some of the specific characteristics of Maffesoli’s concept of neo-tribes, which can be seen as a sort of model – and as the plasticity – of the unstable character of contemporary group formation. ‘The word “tribe” refers to the emergence of quasi-archaic values: a local sense of identification, religiosity, syncretism, group narcissism, etc., the common denominator of which is the community

¹¹⁹ See, for example, the concepts of doxa, orthodoxy, and heterodoxy in Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1977), p. 169.

¹²⁰ Beller and Leerssen, p. 343 Next following quotations are from pp. 343-4.

dimension'.¹²¹ Here 'tribe' is understood as a 'societal micro group in which individuals share strong emotional links, a common subculture, a vision of life ... In our time, these micro-groups develop their own complexes of meanings and symbols and form more or less stable tribes which are invisible to the categories of sociology'.¹²²

2.5. Modus operandi in this study: Enquiring and interpreting

It is perhaps useful to recall once more that the goal of this thesis is to identify and capture some of the most current imaginaries of Amsterdam found among young students and 'other tribes'. The idea is that those images will enable us to map a sort of imaginary of the city of Amsterdam, a constellation of different images proceeding from and or leading to different 'ways of being' in a place.

One of the first goals of such an approach is to find potentially complementary views to what has become the official consensus or version of the nature of current students and the sort of city that appeals to them. By the official version, I am referring to the image of the talented student that has been emerging as the target group of universities and cities. The question here is: How do young people themselves, i.e. young students, relate to the city?

By asking this question, I generated a priori an array of general answers which could be taken as a guide: not all students and other young people in Amsterdam will have a univocal sense of place and feelings of belonging. The images they share will be differentiated according to shared common links and interests. The way they shape their lives and give meaning to the different places and uses of Amsterdam will be traceable in written material and will make it possible to map imaginaries. Ultimately, the research design that this thesis proposes should be able to offer a framework and facilitate a methodology that allows us to explore and report more accurately on the imaginaries of today's city. Consequently, in future research, the same kind of methodology should be applicable to other cities. Finally, the assumption that knowledge of local languages is a decisive tool by which to enter a local reality cannot be emphasized enough and underlies this study.

Additionally, the second goal of this thesis is to find or define a methodology that will enable us to look at cities in a different manner to the approach taken in research done to date. It should be a manner in which diversity and the diversity of imaginaries are not a priori attributed to a specific

¹²¹ Cova, 'From Marketing to Societing: When the Link Is More Important than the Thing', p. 67.

¹²² Bernard Cova and Véronique Cova, 'Tribal Marketing: The Tribalisation of Society and Its Impact on the Conduct of Marketing', *European Journal of Marketing*, 36 (2002), 595–620 (p. 7) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/03090560210423023>>.

abstract classification of gender, ethnicity, place of origin, etc., but rather emerge from ‘discourse’ expressed about the city. To achieve such a goal meant, in the first instance, gaining insight into the way meaning-giving processes take place. In this sense, the example of Tribal Marketing reveals that the meaning of consumption in society is not given individually. Thus, the question becomes: How should we proceed to capture those moments in which meanings about place in Amsterdam are given?

The a priori answer to the latter question is that the material that will be able to reflect such processes of meaning-giving also has to reflect group processes. It is also clear that the material has to be as unobstructed as possible – a reflection of the current mediatized society in which texts, news, songs, or events in the city manifest themselves as ‘always already’ criss-crossed with opinions and comments, on the internet, for example. This also means that the research corpus must be necessarily heterogeneous, since one can assume that students will not have been reading, watching or following exactly the same things and that, similarly, they will not be partaking in all the same kinds of dialogues, discussions and conversations online and offline. The possibility of analysing all these pre-existing texts with tools from literary studies seems to imply that I can avoid generating specific new material through interviews or focus groups. In making this decision, I aim to achieve a more realistic view of the subject of my research, in which the input will not be delivered in a context constructed by myself a priori but in its ‘natural’ environment.

Taking as a starting point that the texts in the collected corpus should provide a reflection of common acts of meaning-giving – in which referentiality would also point or lead to other texts – implies that the researcher, in this case myself, has to invest particular effort in becoming acquainted with the signs, codes, styles and references that are put into play. Therefore, and as the exploration and collection of material progresses, it will become necessary to build a specific list of secondary literature for each one of the different ways of being that should gradually emerge as distinctive. These considerations have led to the following process of data collection and interpretation.

a. Data-gathering: Capturing the ephemeral

I first started to collect material that could be directly related to student life, such as university magazines, programmes of events and happenings targeted at students, online television channels such as Campus Television, films and documentaries made by students in the Faculty of Media, websites of student unions or fraternity associations. One of the first things that appeared significant in university magazines and newspapers was an impressive array of new writers of fiction located in Amsterdam, all of them having recently studied or still studying in Amsterdam, which led to the definition of a first constellation of tribes consisting of what one could call the ‘Creative Class’.

At the same time, the concerts, festivals and nightlife pointed to the existence or rather persistence of music in Amsterdam that is related to city life, such as hip-hop, in which the lyrics could lead to the formation of specific images of the city. Furthermore, internal references and group differentiations pointed to other possible expressions of ways of being and feelings of belonging in the city, leading to an identification of potentially relevant 'tribes', such as the Ajax football club supporters, the Erasmus exchange students, or the students associated with specific fraternities such as the ASC (Amsterdam Students Corps).

Locating different potential groups was combined with the exhaustive compilation of written (or other easily transcribed) material, either online or offline, such as newspapers, magazines, event information, books, forums, blogs and websites. This material and the way it was collected is specified in more detail in Chapters 3 to 7, which discuss the various constellations of 'imaginaries of Amsterdam' that I identified and that are linked to the specific 'tribes' or 'communities'.

Moreover, after having collected and separately analysed each of the different 'ways of being', I proceeded to a review of all the partial results to that point. The review enabled the identification of additional and more overarching topics that in turn led to an additional and more general gathering of data on the influence that 'looks' (the way people and places appear) can have on judgments about the legitimacy of being at a specific spot or area. Studying this data led to the analysis and discussion that constitutes Chapter 8 and that should be seen as a complementary mapping of the influence that references to looks-and-place have in the identification of tribes or community formation in Amsterdam today.

Secondary literature gave me insight into previous research and information on the examples of different tribes/communities/constellations of imaginaries of football fans, hip-hop fans, Erasmus students, the creative class and the fraternity students in Amsterdam, in the Netherlands and abroad. Furthermore, at different times I have also asked students and young people in informal sessions about the use of specific words and their meanings to ensure that my references (sites, places, events) were indeed relevant. From the first of such informal sessions I concluded that it was necessary to ask such questions with the support of written material (not just orally), since it was clear that some references, even if they were very well known to them, could only be recognized when read, as in the case of the football support organization A.F.C.A., which I pronounced incorrectly as a word ('Afca') rather than articulating each letter separately. Additionally, over the last five years, I have also attended concerts, football matches, student-exchange gatherings, debates and other events in Amsterdam as a matter of informal observation, to ensure as much as possible that I was making valid choices when emphasizing specific topics and trends.

Finally, in addition to the necessary review of general secondary literature, as discussed in the first part of this chapter, it should be added that my current work at HvA, combining activities in the research group, 'Knowledge Economy of Amsterdam' with professional development and lecturing in the programme, 'City Marketing in Europe', has led to a 'natural' updating of the material studied, in terms of university and city branding, international positioning, city and educational monitoring reports, evaluations, policies, etc. This material has helped me to shape the departure point of my research from that of previous scholarship as discussed above.

b. Negotiating specific problematics

One of the primary difficulties of such an 'open' research approach is that now and then a researcher can be caught by the feeling of having 'reinvented the wheel': to identify an imaginary among a large group of young people, such as Ajax fans, is not a real discovery. Consequently, it was important to keep focusing on the fact that the goal of my research was not to identify specific groups of young students by a name but to gain an understanding of the way images of identity and feelings of belonging are given to specific and contrasting ways of sharing a certain place in Amsterdam. Moreover, finding a way of looking at cities in this manner could also mean finding a way to link or enhance local imaginaries with similar imaginaries in other places. The 'creative class' that Florida detected, and that seems to have become the prototype for cities attracting new talent, could probably be detected in Amsterdam as well, and the same could probably be said of other groups.

A second difficulty of the multi-referential approach to the already existing and heterogeneous research corpus which I have tried to describe, was that in the end I would not be able to deliver a list of interviewees as evidence that my research corpus could be seen as a reflection of an array of imaginaries belonging to 'real students'. This is indeed a risk that I tried to avoid as much as possible by, on the one hand, extending the definition of 'a student' to include a large array of individuals, from vocational education to university students, and, on the other, by making sure that there was enough evidence to ensure that students were really partaking and sharing in a specific tribe/constellation of images. If I have taken this risk, it was also because one of the important assumptions of such an approach is that students cannot be seen as completely segregated from society and that as such it would not be possible (and also not desirable) to separate and classify students as different a priori.

A third difficulty concerns the collection of material online, especially with the collection of material posted on forums, such as the YouTube 'comments' area. A clear distinction between the public and private domain on the internet is yet to be established. The most significant problems, in terms of privacy, for example, have occurred in medical research, in which information confidentially posted

in community forums was made public. Commercial research has also made use of ‘mystery guests’ online with the goal of promoting specific products to specific consuming communities, which has also been acknowledged in Twitter communities. To avoid incidents such as these, Kozinets strongly recommends that studies of online consumer communities exclude from the dataset those postings that are suspicious, in that they appear to have been posted by retailers or manufacturers for the purpose of self-promotion. In addition, Kozinets also recommends to researchers engaging in the online gatherings of consumer communities (with a logon), to identify themselves as researchers and to explicitly ask permission from the posters to use their postings or other material.¹²³

I have heeded the recommendations of Kozinets by adjusting my original plans of using my own Facebook or Twitter accounts as a means of observation, deciding instead not to use them as a source of data. In this way I limited my searches to forums and gatherings that were publicly accessible and I avoided Facebook pages, Twitter accounts and forums in which visibility depended on a logon account.

Following Kozinets’ advice, I continually took into account that, in a study of online communities, ‘the ultimate unit of analysis is not the person but the behavior or the act’¹²⁴ and that online identities are always disputable and uncertain. Nevertheless, and despite these concerns, I am aware of the ethical considerations surrounding the intentionality of posters: even if a posting is published on an open forum, the intention of the poster was probably not to have his or her posting reused in another place or context. To avoid these kinds of problems, I arrived at the following solutions: firstly, in my final dissertation, I would paraphrase quotations as much as possible; secondly, idiosyncratic quotations would be anonymized, not only by deleting the name of the poster but also by translating the mostly Dutch or (in the case of Erasmus students) Spanish and Catalan posts into English.

In addition to this, I have considered it legitimate to use other material without masking, where the identity of the author is clear (novels, websites, newspapers, blogs), even if, in all probability, it was not meant by its author to be a source used for research, thus following the widely held idea in literary analysis that published work can be freely interpreted, since the referential character of written texts goes beyond the intention of their authors in a process of multi-reflexivity and intertextuality. With this decision I understand that I risk what in ethnography is labelled the ‘appropriation of other people’s stories’,¹²⁵ which is a practice that in literature and cultural research

¹²³ Robert Kozinets, pp. 65–67.

¹²⁴ Robert Kozinets, p. 64.

¹²⁵ Barbara F. Sharf, ‘Beyond Netiquette: The Ethics of Doing Naturalistic Research on the Internet’, in *Doing Internet Research: Critical Issues and Methods for Examining the Net*, ed. by Steve Jones (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1999), pp. 243–56. In Robert Kozinets, p. 65.

would be seen as unusual.¹²⁶ This does not alter the fact that accuracy is a must in every discipline and that material used for research purposes should not be isolated from its original context. I am aware that researchers ‘who have published cultural secrets, portrayed people and practices inaccurately; or treated customs, individuals and beliefs disdainfully have tainted the history [of disciplines such as] ethnography’ and this is not my intention.¹²⁷

A fourth difficulty was the definition of ‘tribe’ and ‘community’, and the choice of a specific nomenclature to refer to ‘group formation’. Although the exploration of youth in Amsterdam that I conducted in the first phase of this research was focused on identifying possible neo-tribes, as defined in Tribal Marketing research, it gradually became clear that restricting the focus to neo-tribes would probably not answer the questions about imaginaries in Amsterdam formulated in my research. What I was attempting to identify and capture were the constellations of imaginaries of young students about contemporary Amsterdam. Therefore, after the first exploration, I opted for a more extensive definition of ‘tribe’, using it on some occasions as a synonym for ‘community’.

Not discerning a priori whether a specific potential group formation was a neo-tribe or a community enabled me to combine at least three interesting notions: firstly, neo-tribalism, as defined by Maffesoli and Cova, consists of the emergence of ‘ephemeral urban neo-tribes’, understood as a new re-aggregation in a hyper individualist society. Neo-tribes are ‘characterized by fluidity, occasional gatherings and dispersal’.¹²⁸ Secondly, the notion of ‘community’, understood as a social thought marked by ‘shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility’. According to Muniz and O’Guinn, community formation is still alive in postmodernism and has also been developed around brands, creating a kind of group in which social ties are less ephemeral than those described by Maffesoli and Cova.¹²⁹ Current urban communities might be different from those of the past in their voluntary character – in principle, affiliation can be withdrawn at any time – but they still show features such as moral responsibility, even if this responsibility is specialized in the use of specific brands and artefacts. Thirdly, the different roles that members of communities (including neo-tribes) adopt in the social process in which they are engaging are also particularly interesting. Kozinets, for example, clearly distinguished the role of hard-core ‘insiders’ from that of ‘tourists’ and

¹²⁶ In addition, the concept of copyright is mainly based on the concept of intellectual creation as ‘a vendible product’. What it should be protecting is the appropriation of the vendibility of an intellectual creation by someone other than its author. For a general exposition of transformative uses of intellectual property in society, see Neil Weinstock Netanel, ‘Copyright and a Democratic Civil Society’, *Yale Law Journal*, 106 (1996), 283–387 (p. 363).

¹²⁷ Robert Kozinets, p. 65.

¹²⁸ Muniz and O’Guinn quoting Maffesoli, p. 76. In Muniz Jr. and O’Guinn, p. 414.

¹²⁹ Muniz Jr. and O’Guinn, p. 426.

'minglers' in online communities which, in turn, points to the existence of more or less fixed repertoires of participation and communication.¹³⁰

Such differentiations have led to a progressive elaboration, not only of the concepts of the 'tribe' and 'community' but also of the different roles of their members, outlining robust images that would be incorporated into the research questions of each chapter of this study. Therefore, in the next chapter, I will start exploring and analysing the idea of Amsterdam as a city with a creative reputation and appeal to a 'Creative Class'. Chapter 4 will deal with the *Corps* Students, that is, students associated with traditional fraternities, whose imaginary and *modus vivendi* emerge as antagonistic to those of the 'Creative Class'. Chapter 5 will deal with the exploration of images around Ajax Football Club, taking as a starting point the notion that for many young people, football and Ajax may be indissolubly related to a specific way of understanding Amsterdam. Chapter 6 will explore the meanings of hip-hop and the possibility of defining a hip-hop imaginary related to Amsterdam. In this sense, the title – 'What about Hip-Hop?' – refers to the contradiction entailed in the fact that although hip-hop has been considered one of the most influential music cultures of the last decades, its possible values and its relation to sense of place in cities such as Amsterdam have generally remained quite neglected in research. Chapter 7 will deal with a possible common imaginary concerning Amsterdam which is shared by students coming from abroad – an exploration based on material related to and made by students partaking in the European Erasmus exchange programme, which should give us some clues about the constituents of such an imaginary.

In Chapter 8 I will attempt a complementary and more general mapping of images and stereotypes involving people, places and 'views' in Amsterdam. This mapping should provide some concrete clues about the relationship between the reputations of places and people in the city of Amsterdam. Finally, in Chapter 9 I will attempt to link the different and contrasting imaginaries by discussing the relationship between my findings and the conceptual background of Amsterdam, and of 'contemporary' and 'globalized' cities that I have sketched in Chapters 1 and 2. Ultimately, this discussion will lead to a twofold final reflection: firstly, I will sketch an alternative 'horizon' to aspire to when it comes to defining images of Amsterdam and its educational ambitions; secondly, I will reflect on the nature of imagining, and its performance and role in the elaboration of a sense of place and feelings of belonging.

¹³⁰ Robert Kozinets, p. 64.

3. Capturing the Imaginary: Creative Amsterdam in Current Fiction

'Amsterdam. Without your inspiration I would now be a divorced magazine delivery guy. Promise me you will never, ever, forget that you are the most beautiful city in the world.'

Acknowledgements, *James Worthy*.¹

3.1. Introduction: Amsterdam as generator of fictional narratives

This chapter has two main goals: firstly, the approach to and analysis of the material in this chapter is intended to apply and test the methodology proposed previously. On this basis, it should be possible to capture common imaginaries associated with places – and their related values and visions of life – by examining the way that self-representations are brought into relationship with place. These self-representations become visible through various performances, which may be similar to the those of like-minded peers while differing from and contrasting with others.

Secondly, the chapter aims to provide a first insight into current literary representations of Amsterdam as a creative city. Therefore, the texts that will be discussed here as a research corpus are fictional works, written by young adults with aspirations for a professional career in the creative sector in Amsterdam. These young adults are part of a larger group of individuals, many of them students, who have regularly published opinion articles and columns in several forms of media, old and new, over recent years, as well as giving presentations in theatres and clubs.²

In terms of imaginaries, the study of these texts should allow us to engage with the literary representation of Amsterdam, considered as place of coming of age for young 'members' of and sympathizers with the creative class in Amsterdam today. In this sense, it will be useful to first look at some of the sociopolitical conditions and literary precedents behind this understanding of Amsterdam as a place in which to have a creative life, and even become a creative professional.

¹ 'Amsterdam. Zonder jouw inspiratie was ik nu een gescheiden leesmapbezorger. Vergeet nooit, maar dan ook nooit, dat je de mooiste stad van de wereld bent. In Dankwoord James Worthy, *James Worthy* (Amsterdam: Lebowsky Achievers, 2011).

² Including Hanna Bervoets, Anna Drijver, Renske de Greef, Daan and Thomas Heerma van Voss, Nine Ludwig, Iris Koppe, Sterre van Rossem, Joost de Vries, James Worthy, Maurice Selek, Floor Westerveld, Ebele Wybenga, Kees van Nieuwkerk. They have published in *NRC Next*, *Overdose*, *Hard Hoofd*, *Volkskrant* and *Spunk* amongst other media. See for example: 'Literatuur van de Toekomst in CREA', *Folia.nl Magazine* (Amsterdam, December 2010) <<http://www.folia.nl/nieuws/literatuur-van-de-toekomst-in-crea-1612.html>>;. And Arjen Fortuin, 'Een Nieuwe Schrijfgeneratie: Op Welke Auteurs Onder de 30 Moeten We Letten?', *NRC* (Amsterdam, 2013) <<http://www.nrc.nl/boeken/2013/10/25/een-nieuwe-schrijfgeneratie-op-welke-auteurs-onder-de-30-moeten-we-letten/>>.

a. Sociohistorical and cultural-literary background

To start with, one significant sociohistorical element is related to the contraposition of city and countryside. Amsterdam has often been called the smallest metropolis in the world, one which, despite its size and number of inhabitants (less than one million), has the allure and the indispensable ingredients to be seen as a world city.³ As a metropolis, Amsterdam is synonymous with enlightenment and progress, in contrast to the more conservative countryside. Amsterdam is also often positioned as a Mecca for the avant-gardes; as a place where things happen.⁴

One of most recent and influential expressions of the opposition between city and countryside in the 'Western post-Fordist world', has been the conceptualization of the city as a 'creative spot'; the 'creative city', as postulated by Charles Landry and later by Richard Florida. They consider that the post-industrial city has again become a place for creative industriousness fed by new discoveries and serendipitous encounters with like-minded people. The 'creative city' contrasts with the coercive space and forces employed in countryside communities and 'provincial cities' to influence the life and the habits of their inhabitants. According to Florida, in those 'countryside and provincial-spots ... [m]any highly creative people, regardless of ethnic background or sexual orientation, grew up feeling like outsiders, different in some way from most of their school mates'.⁵ Therefore, if such individuals feel the appeal of 'creative cities', it is because they associate such cities with other values, such as tolerance and meritocracy, which they believe will also be applicable to them in such a welcoming and creative environment, allowing them to feel at home.

Extending the contradistinction of 'city versus countryside' to 'city versus other', cities such as Amsterdam may be considered by many of their inhabitants to be the ultimate expression of cultural development, a welcoming node for open-minded people from all over the world, a free city and a 'free republic'. Such considerations reflect their superiority, not only with respect to the countryside but also to other cities in the Netherlands, justifying, for some perhaps, the well-known 'arrogance' of Amsterdammers. The following blog reproduces one of the most extensive explanations of the origins and historical depth of the dissenting and rebellious spirit of Amsterdam:

³ 'To some extent, Amsterdam may owe its "global village" image quite simply to its physical geography and scale as when it is dubbed "the world's smallest metropolis" or the "smallest world city" [...]', Marco de Waard, 'Amsterdam and Its Global Imaginary', in *Imagining Global Amsterdam: History, Culture, and Geography in a World City*, ed. by Marco de Waard (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), p. 11.

⁴ As Gert-Jan Hospers argues, this reputation is above all auto-empowering. As he paraphrases, quoting the so-called Mathew effect: "success breeds success" and places that already have a positive reputation as creative spots will keep on being seen as such, even if perhaps in reality they are no more creative and liveable than other less well-reputed areas', in 'Place Marketing in Europe The Branding of the Oresund Region', *Intereconomics: Review of European Economic Policy*, 39 (2004), 271–79 (p. 275).

⁵ Florida, 'The Rise of the Creative Class', p. 7.

As has already been said: within Dutch politics Amsterdam traditionally pursues its own course. That is unavoidable: our city is unique and is faced with unique challenges. Amsterdammers are often accused of having an arrogant and know-it-all attitude – and rightly so. But our arrogance pales in comparison with the hubris of the policy makers in The Hague, who think they can counter city problems using country solutions, trying to get in their electorate’s good books in front of the cameras. Stadtholder William II could have told them as much: whoever sets out on the war path against Amsterdam from The Hague, will get lost in Hilversum and will have to give way to our regents. You can stamp your feet and throw your hat on the floor, but little has changed since the Dutch Golden Age.⁶

With this, Amsterdam also positions itself as a historically ‘smart’ city. Such positioning entails that Amsterdam, with its inventive and independent spirit, has resisted the force (and the stupidity) of national policies dictated by the Hague, the political capital of the country.

A second element has led to the consolidation of Amsterdam’s reputation as a place of innovation and permissiveness, in fact here Amsterdam is a pioneer, leading the Western world. In this case, it seems appropriate to talk about an earned reputation, that is to say, a reputation that – to use Anholt’s term – is based on ‘real substance’.⁷ James Kennedy has elaborated on the topic of the reputation of the Netherlands as an innovative and progressive country. In his work *New Babylon in aanbouw (Building New Babylon)* he argues that the Amsterdam of the late 1960s and the 1970s was indeed a place in which progressive change – although starting later than in other Western cities – was accelerated because the ideas were quickly co-opted by the city’s leaders. This led to the emergence of specific libertarian, well-known symbolic acts in such areas as public housing, welfare, abortion, euthanasia, and women’s and gay rights and to the ideal of the Netherlands as a referential progressive country.⁸

The inspiration for these new policies also came from local cultural developments, represented by Constant Nieuwenhuys, amongst others, and his conceptualization of a future Amsterdam as *New*

⁶ Marco Arbouw, ‘Welkom in de Republiek Amsterdam’, *Amsterdam Centraal* (Amsterdam, 10 December 2008) <<http://www.amsterdamcentraal.nl/archief/2008/12/10/welkom-in-de-republiek-amsterdam>>. It is relevant to notice that the data collected from internet forums, blogs, YouTube films and others that is referred to in footnotes in the coming chapters has been archived in a data base (Mendeley) mostly as pdf documents and films downloads. We did this because we wanted to prevent material from the internet becoming unavailable. The archiving of data applies to all that material. Nevertheless, in the cases that the URL of a specific forum or blog shows it is still working, the reference to the source will be still including the URL address for instance. When the links are clearly not working anymore, the observation ‘material in archive’ is mentioned. Furthermore, and as already mentioned, original texts in Dutch, which as this one, exceed 40 words, can be found in the appendix ‘Translations’, available on request.

⁷ ‘Substance’ understood as ‘real innovations, structures, legislations, reforms, investments, institutions and policies which will bring about the desired progress’. Substance becomes mainly visible through ‘symbolic actions’, that is to say: ‘a particular species of substance that happens to have an intrinsic communicative power’ because it is especially ‘suggestive, remarkable, memorable, picturesque, newsworthy, topical, poetic, touching, surprising or dramatic’. See especially ‘Images of Places: Is This About Marketing, or Isn’t It?’ in Anholt, *Places, Identity, Image and Reputation*, p. 13.

⁸ See the so called ‘Gidsland’ ideal in James C Kennedy and Simone Kennedy-Doornbos, *Nieuw Babylon in Aanbouw Nederland in de Jaren Zestig* (Amsterdam, Meppel: Boom, 1995), p. 157.

Babylon. Among other things, this New Babylon can be seen as the positive reinterpretation of the Babylonian myth, a new urban space in which some of the traditional sins associated with Christian doctrine have become virtues. Therefore, in the logic of Constant Nieuwenhuys, the inhabitants of this new city liberate themselves from guilt, sexual and other restrictions, as well as prescribed expectations. New Babylon becomes the city to aspire to, a future city that is able to fulfil expectations beyond immediate needs, the space in which *homo ludens* will find room for creativity and new experiences.⁹

Linked to both of these preconditions, a third concerns the image of Amsterdam seen through its literary and cultural production, and its influence on different audiences from around the 1960s. When it comes to gaining insight into the appeal that Amsterdam may have for prospective students, the testimonies of older generations of students – journalists, writers, critics, artists – recounting their attraction and love for the city of Amsterdam, offer critical input. One of the leading literary critics of recent decades, Elsbeth Etty, explains how she was seduced by all the news from Amsterdam and the literary representations of it she encountered when she was a young adolescent in the province of Gelderland – ‘long ago’:

I wasn't even sixteen when I ended up in a strict home for wayward girls in far-off Gelderland, in Jan Siebelink's small-town birthplace of Velp, although I knew nothing about that then. I wasn't allowed to do anything there, apart from read. These were the days of the Provo movement, [the protests surrounding] the Royal Marriage, the riot that broke out among construction workers in Amsterdam, Phil Bloom (from the same sleepy village I was from) naked on TV: in short, these were the times in which everything I considered at all worthwhile was happening in Amsterdam. And all the Dutch novels I was reading were set in Amsterdam or were about a desire to escape from narrow group or family ties and flee to that Free Republic, where everything was allowed.¹⁰

Some years later, like many others, she managed to start a new life in Amsterdam, principally guided by her literary interests. Her reflections offer an emblematic account of the irresistible attraction felt by and expressed in the life and work of writers and intellectuals who were in one way or another linked to Amsterdam. For Etty, Multatuli was the most important example. Etty explains how the reminiscences in Multatuli's work fed the reading and, literally, walking trajectory of aspirant writers.

⁹ Although, as Denaci argues, the meaning of New Babylon as a utopia is ambivalent, he also states that at the beginning of the 1960s, '[...] Constant and other visionaries could still be optimistic about the prospects of revolution, especially in a Dutch context [...]'. In this way, Constant's interpretations of Johan Huizinga's *homo ludens* was especially intended to transcend the differences between the state of work and the state of play. Mark C. Denaci, 'Amsterdam And/as New Babylon: Urban Modernity's Contested Trajectories', in *Imagining Global Amsterdam: History, Culture, and Geography in a World City*, ed. by Marco de Waard (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), pp. 201–17 (pp. 206, 215, n. 4;).

¹⁰ *Geef Mij Maar Amsterdam*, ed. by P. van Ojen, A. Pleizier, and P. van Trigt (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn Motief, 2008), p. 63. The following quotation 'afgelijkte boterham' is from the same page.

In her case, she even managed to live in the same building in the Noordermarkt in which Multatuli's main character Woutertje Pieterse had written his memoirs. There she imagined herself as a kind of Mrs Laps (Juffrouw Laps), a sensual being released from conventions. In that Amsterdam, being an '*afgelikte boterham*' (in English 'around the block a few times'), a derogatory expression in traditional milieus, referring to women who have had many lovers) was a virtue: 'een afgelikte boterham' is what she wanted to be, leading a life full of excitement, adventure and unconventional liaisons.

When Elsbeth ETTY arrived in Amsterdam in the 1970s, students like her who were eager to become absorbed in the world of the arts and literature could also count on a more contemporary source of inspiration. Nescio had immortalized specific places in Amsterdam associated with characters who struggled to live up to their ideals while facing the daily routine of boring office work.¹¹ Furthermore, in the late 1940s and in the 1950s, Amsterdam became part of the *Vijftigers* movement and a node and a nexus for the work of writers and artists such as Campert, Claus and Lucebert. Linked to Paris, the group of Dutch and Belgian artists known as the *Vijftigers* encouraged a revolution in Dutch literature. In poetry, for example, they advocated the renewal of form and content, arguing that Dutch poems had become obsolete and empty, 'corseted' by the classical rules of the sonnet and the romantic escapist thematic. Obviously, the renewal proposed by the *Vijftigers* was not accomplished overnight. According to Goedegebuure, as late as the 1960s, the word '*naaien*' (informal for 'making love', 'fucking') used in a poem by Remco Campert was still an issue, and caused the demise of the literary television programme 'Literaire Ontmoetingen' on the AVRO television channel.¹²

However, in the end, and thanks to the visible support of significant literary publishers such as De Bezige Bij, the literary scene would change definitively. Emerging authors and circles of intellectuals became symbols of a renewed cultural life in Amsterdam. Today, Remco Campert recalls his life at that time as free and unconventional, with his days and nights devoted to music and jazz, cigars and friends.¹³

In all probability, all of these gradual changes paved the way for Wolker's novel *Turks fruit* (*Turkish Delight*), published in 1969 and made into a film by Paul Verhoeven in 1973. *Turks fruit* is Amsterdam's *Love Story*, and has been widely seen as emblematic of the free spirit of artistic life and as an exaltation of love as sincere and romantic, free from traditional decorum and good taste.¹⁴

¹¹ The influence of Nescio's work, however, was probably greatest after the broadcast of the Dutch television series *Titaantjes* (KRO, 1983).

¹² Jaap Goedegebuure, *Nederlandse Literatuur 1960-1988* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 1989), p. 168 available online at '2005 dbnl/Jaap Goedegebuure', <http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/goed004nede01_01/downloads.php>.

¹³ See for example, 'Vurrukkuluk Was Die Tijd', *Geschiedenis 24- Andere Tijden* (VPRO, NTR, 2011).

¹⁴ Goedegebuure, *Nederlandse Literatuur 1960-1988*, p. 157.

Nevertheless, it is important not to forget that some Amsterdam-born writers also left the city, escaping its 'smugness' and 'auto-complacency'. Through the decades, writers such as Gerard Reve, and more recently Arnon Grunberg, illustrate this. In *Het boek van violet en dood* Reve called Amsterdam 'a lugubrious marquee on which a curse seemed to have fallen, because – no matter what gift or talent you have been blessed with – whoever stays there shall never achieve anything.'¹⁵

In addition to the feelings of attraction or rejection that Amsterdam awoke in these different cases, a review of literary production in more recent decades reveals some significant works that are doubtlessly worth mentioning as a reflection of specific changes to the cultural paradigm in Amsterdam from the 1980s to the present. Some of these works are now among the most highly recommended reading for Dutch literature courses in secondary schools throughout the Netherlands.

Van der Heijden's *De slag om de blauwbrug* is an example. The novel is an introduction to the extensive cycle *De tandeloze tijd* and is located in Amsterdam, which becomes the basis for an intermingling of various references and the start of a Proustian reconstruction of the time. The literary elaboration of historical events, such as the demonstrations on the symbolic Blue Bridge (*Blauwbrug*) against the coronation of Queen Beatrix on 30 April 1980, can be seen as an attempt to represent commonplace events as defining an epoch. In this novel, events are associated with the mantra '*geen woning, geen kroning*' ('no housing, no crowning'), especially the clashes between the protesters and the mounted police on the Blauwbrug, which are narrated from the perspective of the main character, heroin addict Albert Egberts.¹⁶ This gives the reader an insight into the complexity of the early 1980s. It is also the period of the Cold War, and a time in Amsterdam which is characterized by sometimes very violent youth protests against poor housing, high levels of youth unemployment and the nuclear arms race, but also by common street crime committed by those like Egberts, who smashes car windows looking for money to buy drugs.

On this basis, writer Joost Zwagerman sees his own work in the late 1980s as lying on the threshold of a new era in which the general pessimism of the youth – so palpable in *De tandeloze tijd* books –

¹⁵ 'een lugubere feesttent waarop een vloek schijnt te rusten, want welke gave of welk talent men ook moge hebben: wie daar blijft zitten zal nooit iets bereiken.' Quoted in Hans Nauta, "'Ik Haat Amsterdam'" Schreef Gerard Reve over Zijn Geboorte Stad. Een Wandeling Aan de Hand van "De Avonden"', *Trouw*, 11 February 2006 <<http://www.trouw.nl/tr/nl/4324/Nieuws/archief/article/detail/1692508/2006/02/11/ik-haat-Amsterdam-schreef-Gerard-Reve-over-zijn-geboortestad-Een-wandeling-aan-de-hand-van-De-Avonden.dhtml>>.

¹⁶ A.F.TH. van der Heijden, *De Slag Om de Blauwbrug* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 1983). Reviews for secondary school students written by students themselves can be found at websites such as *Scholieren.com*. Furthermore, experts in Dutch literature have contributed to compilations of summaries for secondary school students, such as the *Lexicon van Literaire werken*: Jaap Goedegebuure, 'De Slag Om de Blauwbrug', *Lexicon van literaire werken*, 1989 <http://media.scholieren.net/public/download/bijlage/1349212165_DeslagomdeBlauwbrugLEXICON.pdf>.

was gradually replaced by a wave of 'optimism' and 'lightness'. This feeling started to become palpable in the circles of new young artists. Their lifestyle, as reflected in Zwagerman's *Gimmick*, is seen as a prelude to the golden 1990s, the years in which not only bankers and lawyers made money but also artists, musicians and web designers. The new or established characters in the city started to develop a kind of nomadic but successful and affluent way of life, with long stays in hip locations made easy by the lower cost of flying. Later on, in Berlin, music journalist Tobias Rapp referred to this group as the 'Easyjet set'.¹⁷

In addition to a portrait of Amsterdam's own incipient 'Easyjet set', Zwagerman's novel also provides an interesting reflection on the changes in the ideological-political connotations assigned to the 'left' and 'right'. According to Zwagerman, 'left' progressively became a synonym for 'humourless and *ingekaktheid*' (from '*inkakken*' '*vertruten*', which mean something like 'becoming bourgeois/uncool/small-minded'). Being a 'right-wing' artist became 'camp', an attitude which gave a wink and a provocative nod to what at that moment had come to be seen by many as the negative 'bored and moralistic left tradition'.¹⁸

In this respect, the work of Kluun can be seen as reflecting the new city landscape of creative jobs which grew in the late 1990s and the beginning of the twenty-first century. Although Kluun's work has been almost unanimously criticized by established specialists, arguing a lack of literary quality,¹⁹ one can also argue that his novels provide a remarkable insight into specific changes in the make-up of the professional world in Amsterdam. Kluun's stories and characters are a reflection of a newly established professional creative class in a flourishing creative industry, which included advertising and communications experts, marketers and graphic designers. A review of the staging of novels such as *Komt een vrouw bij de dokter (Love Life)*,²⁰ together with the images of its successful film adaptation, leads the reader to new symbolic meanings of place in Amsterdam and beyond. The characters' move to a new home on the outskirts of Amsterdam and the places where they go on holidays, for example, mirror other changes in their lives. With economic success they move from an old apartment in the city centre to a modern townhouse in the surrounding area of Amstelveen, where new luxury housing had been built over the last two or three decades. In this context, it is also interesting to note that Kluun not only uses his own background in marketing to steer the plot of his

¹⁷ Tobias Rapp, 'Lost and Sound: Berlin, Techno and the Easyjet Set', *Innervisions*, 2010.

¹⁸ Eva Rensman, 'De Jaren Tachtig van Joost Zwagerman. "Rechts Zijn Was Camp"', *Historisch Nieuwsblad*, 2002 <<http://www.historischnieuwsblad.nl/nl/artikel/5874/de-jaren-tachtig-van-joost-zwagerman.html>>.

¹⁹ In the first instance, Kluun's work was reviewed in only two of many possible reputable locations, *Het Parool* and *Propria Cures*. See A. Storm, 'Kluuniaanse Aanstellerij', *Het Parool* (Amsterdam, 2003); JvdH, 'Kankerlijer. Vreemdgaan Was Nooit Zo Gemakkelijk', *Propria Cures* (Amsterdam, 13 November 2003). Quoted in Jos Joosten, 'Waarom Geloof je Kluun? Bourdieus "Croyance" En Komt Een Vrouw Bij de Dokter', *Neerlandistiek*, 07 (2007).

²⁰ Kluun, *Komt Een Vrouw Bij de Dokter* (Amsterdam: Podium, 2003).

stories.²¹ As Joosten remarks, Kluun had recourse to typical marketing tools for the analysis of the reception of his novels, drawing a SWOT analysis in order to assess his opportunities as a writer for the future. The marketing plan that followed was based on the results of the SWOT.²²

According to Joosten, the remarkable aspect of the kind of ‘revolution’ proposed by the approach of authors such as Kluun is that they do not attack high literature using literary strategies – such as shocking literary experiments – but ‘by radically challenging [...] the idea that high culture is not subject to economic laws’.²³ The NightWriters collective, founded on Kluun’s initiative, is a good example of the emergence of new activities in promoting literature by the writers themselves, using a common website and introducing themselves as a type of artist who is also able to perform in other contexts. In this way, writers enhance their radius of action while mixing references to low and high culture. In the words of thriller writer Saskia Noort – who takes part in the collective – NightWriters is so interesting because: ‘Dutch literature could do with some Rock ‘n Roll.’²⁴

b. Narrowing down the matter

The various stages and elements described above can be interpreted as different yet somehow complementary actualizations of Amsterdam as a place to be and to be seen. At the same time, these examples also show that literary work located in the Amsterdam of recent decades, and the effect that such works may have had on different audiences in their depiction of a particular view of Amsterdam, can provide interesting food for thought in a study of imaginaries. This is because those fictional works seem to compress specific shared images of place and time, and have even become a sort of life guide for some of their readers. In short, the interesting thing is that novels may not only have influenced the real life of some readers, contributing to the construction of certain place images and leading them to make decisions such as to move into a new home, but also that novels in themselves may be microcosms of worlds where we can observe interrelatedness and intertextuality.

Strangely enough, the content of fiction is, nevertheless, not usually taken into consideration as real-world research material. In this way, while many fictional characters come to be used in real-world references to places (with tour operators organizing visits to their habitats), using fiction to gain an understanding of the real world remains problematical. However, authors such as Jerome Bruner

²¹ For example, Kluun studied Commercial Economics at university which is a vocational stream rather than a traditional academic discipline. For an entertaining account of his experiences starting out in marketing see his book *Memoires van Een Marketingsoldaat* (Hertog Jan, 2008).

²² A SWOT analysis is a planning method used in marketing to evaluate the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats implicated in a project.

²³ ‘door het radical aan de kaak stellen [...] dat hoge kunst onttrekt zich aan economische wetten’. Joosten, p. 7.

²⁴ ‘De Nederlandse literatuur kan wel wat rock ‘n roll gebruiken’. See self-introduction by Saskia Noort on the website ‘Nightwriters.nl’ <http://www.nightwriters.nl/Auteurs/writer/3/Saskia_Noort>.

have insisted that fictional narratives may be extremely revealing in relation to how people cognize or make sense of the real world. This is because:

Given their constructed nature and their dependence upon the cultural conventions and language usage, life narratives obviously reflect the prevailing theories about 'possible lives' that are part of one's culture. Indeed, one important way of characterizing a culture is by the narrative models it makes available for describing the course of a life.²⁵

In fact, we might also conclude that if literature forms part of a process of cultural construction, it should not be considered irrelevant to cognitive processes.

Furthermore, such a vindication of literature as a research source also has a very practical basis. Despite the concerns about the disinterestedness of today's youth in reading and writing (today no one reads novels anymore), the truth is that literary production in Amsterdam seems to be extremely high. During the last decade not only have writers such as Kluun and some of his fellow NightWriters (all of whom are already in their 40s) been actively publishing novels set in contemporary Amsterdam, but a large array of young writers have also been actively working on all kinds of online and offline publications. Some of them have already taken the step into fiction, and in some cases, for example Kees van Nieuwkerk, they have also made movies.

In this light, Section 2 below will proceed to a short review of the specific conceptual framework that is likely to provide a basis for the analysis and interpretation of the research corpus. Section 3 will describe the approach to choosing and gathering data, while Section 4 will analyse this data. In Section 5, I will discuss whether this approach has been able to detect visions of life and feelings of bonding which have been projected onto the city of Amsterdam by this younger generation over the last decade. In order to sketch a way of extending the approach to the other chapters, I will finish with a consideration of the possibilities – and limitations – uncovered in this chapter.

3.2. Thematic focus

For this chapter it seemed to be of special relevance to combine the insights and conceptual frameworks of imagology, tribal marketing and the notion of the imaginary discussed in the previous chapter, with additional theoretical insights relevant to the topic at hand, that is to say: Amsterdam

²⁵ Jerome Bruner, 'Life as Narrative', *Social Research*, 54 (1987), 11–32.

according to the view of a creative class, as seen in an array of fictional works. Among those additional theoretical insights, the following topics stood out:

- a. The influence of place on people's lives
- b. The actualization of the concept of a creative city in contemporary life
- c. The tribal way of expressing shared links, as seen in one tribal marketing case study of white US students in the 1960s
- d. The role that literature (and the interpretation of dreams) plays in capturing real-world imaginaries
- e. The conceptualization of urban drifting as a creative process

a. The influence of place on people's lives

It seems especially interesting to consider place narratives as having a special connection with people's life expectations. In this sense, the reasons why one chooses to enrol at a university in one specific place could be seen as linked to the expectations about what the place offers with respect to fulfilling one's wishes. In his study, *Places, Identity and Reputation*, Simon Anholt discovered that successful narratives of place linked to universities such as Harvard or Berkeley in the US are associated with the positive role attributed to these universities in fulfilling students' desires for their future.²⁶ Real success stories outline the narrative of the place and conform to a positive 'place reputation'. Talented students with entrepreneurial ambitions can easily identify with the stories of such places told by university students who preceded them, revealing the prospect of an interesting and challenging education that will also help them become prosperous and independent. The reason for moving or staying in a place are, in short, related to the prospects that the place offers to people, which is to say, the way in which a certain narrative of a place meets the expectations of one's own projected narrative; one's own life story. This insight is supported by the idea that people assimilate a kind of meaning-giving story into their own lives (and explain their own lives in light of this) in a process which allows them to deal with the daily grind and face the drawbacks, such as accepting a lesser evil to achieve a major goal.²⁷

b. The actualization of the concept of a creative city in contemporary life

From this perspective, it seems more than plausible that the connection between one's own life expectations and the narratives of place are part of a meaning-giving process, and that individuals

²⁶ Simon Anholt, 'Keynote Speech' (Amersfoort: Nuffic, 2008).

²⁷ Robert J. Sternberg, *Love Is a Story: A New Theory of Relationships* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

who feel attracted to a specific place share this feeling and associated stories with other individuals, even if they do not know them in person. When attending similar venues or engaging in gatherings online or offline the creative class will recognize each other by the way they live an urban life. Creative people will not strictly differentiate between professional and private life. They can be seen at work, writing or designing in public, be it a park or a café. According to Florida, they want to be acknowledged merely for their merits, without adopting a style which identifies them as 'professional' in a traditional business sense. The image that serves as a basis for one of Florida's articles is of a young non-conformist student covered with tattoos, playing frisbee on the university campus – it is precisely these kinds of people who are of interest to the creative industry. That is why creative cities attract individuals who, although not consciously thinking of themselves as a class, 'share a common ethos that values creativity, individuality, difference and merit'.²⁸

c. The tribal way of expressing shared links, as seen in one tribal marketing case study of white US students in the 1960s

This way of connecting without knowing each other in person is not new, of course. However, in the present context, primarily focused on students as a starting point, it is especially interesting to review the Nancarrows' tribal case study on students in the US in the 1960s. In this study, the authors discovered that a great number of white students at that time felt linked to each other in their shared ways of being cool: 'it seemed as though a whole generation of white middle class students were making "cool" their own. Adopting the language of mysticism and astrology, they began to see themselves as a "hippie" tribe, quite literally adopting the signifiers of native Americans and hill tribes of the East – dream-catchers, incense burners and ethnic dress such as kaftans'.²⁹ In all of the examples of consumer behaviour studied from a tribal point of view, it is not the product itself which mattered but the consumer experiences, expressed through shared meaning-giving. Those tribal marketing principles were inspired by the concept of 'neo-tribes', coined by Maffesoli which led to conceptualizations such as 'societing' defined as 'the link which is more important than the thing'.³⁰

d. The role that literature (and the interpretation of dreams) plays in capturing real-world imaginaries

Expectations and desires about living a worthy life are often expressed by the word 'dream'. The idea that dreams are a guide to life has already been elaborated in such seminal studies as that by Caillois and Grunebaum, *The Dream and Human Societies*. According to Caillois, gaining a better

²⁸ Florida, 'The Rise of the Creative Class.'

²⁹ Cova, Kozinets and Shankar, p. 133.

³⁰ Maffesoli. Cova, 'From Marketing to Societing: When the Link Is More Important than the Thing.'

understanding of the way dream interpretations serve the waking world will shed light on their role as mobilizers of life. Expressions such as ‘Making Dreams Come True’ or ‘Following one’s Dreams’ seem to reflect mechanisms that give us some unity within the chaos of the dream world. This means that the infinite multitude of events that are involved in a dream need to be reduced to a narrow ‘gate’, which, as Caillois puts it, filters and controls the general facts of human life: ‘a meeting, an illness, a loss or a gain, success or failure, riches or ruin, a voyage, falling in love, and the inevitable *par excellence* – death’.³¹ By compartmentalizing life thematically, the quotidian is perhaps no less ephemeral, but at least it becomes interpretable and can be shared with others in a specific place and moment of life. Literature also responds to a mechanism similar to dream interpretation. This would explain why poetry, literature and mystery are so resilient and why they need to be seen as an inherent part of human life. As Caillois states: ‘[...] the complex, confusing correspondences into which the unity of cosmos has disintegrated. Everything that reminds us of this unity calls forth within our feelings, agreement and good will, an *ab initio* approving echo and longing for unanimity’.³² Understanding fictional works as interpretations of the chaos confronting life, supports the idea that the study of those works should be seen as an integral part of the study of our ‘real world’.

e. The conceptualization of urban drifting as a creative process

Here literary production located in cities can be seen as an entrance to the symbolic. The representation of the same feature – a street, a city dweller – can vary according to the individual looking at it. In fact, such representations say more about the observer than about that specific feature. According to authors such as Wirth-Nesher, subjectivity seems to be especially and visibly at play when describing city landscapes. This is because the size of a city does not allow us to see the whole and one overlooks more than one sees. In this manner, as Wirth-Nether suggests, ‘the city dweller inevitably reconstructs the inaccessible in his imagination’, which turns the cosmopolitan city into a sort of inspirational muse.³³ The main characters of those fictional works become windows to streams of thought about and various representations of the same city landscape.

Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that the city has also become the working space for professional creative research on which fiction or non-fiction is based. The work of notorious city ‘wanderers’ and *flâneurs* such as Chaplin, Simmel and Walter Benjamin are clear examples. As

³¹ *The Dream and Human Societies*, ed. by Gustave E. von Grunebaum and Roger Caillois (Berkeley and Los Angeles California: University of California Press, 1966), pp. 25–32.

³² Caillois, quoted by Iser, p. 240.

³³ Hana Wirth-Nesher, *City Codes: Reading the Modern Urban Novel* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 8.

summarized by Diacounu in her study of urban drifting, there is a strong analogy between urban strolling and creative and artistic processes, since the creation of art has ‘often been described precisely as an amalgam of passivity (the reception of an impersonal inspiration) and intentionality (the application of learned skills)’. In this sense, it is significant that urban drifting has been practised by professional ‘urban pilgrims’ – philosophers, journalists, writers, filmmakers – as a method to unify the paradoxes of that creative process. In Walter Benjamin, for example, the ambivalence of strolling is elaborated in what he calls ‘emotional knowledge’, which includes, on the one hand, ‘an almost physiological’ need to be absorbed and captured by city life and, on the other, a need to hunt for his own impressions and adventures. It is in this process that the ‘pilgrim’ acquires his typical ‘hunter’s flair’.³⁴ The drifting method is also the basis of the work of exemplary bohemians, such as Baudelaire, whose poems are filled with what he considers are street urbanites par excellence, the anti-heroes of society: the beggars, the prostitutes, the blue collar workers, etc. While evocative, these observations in *Tableaux Parisiens (Parisian Scenes)*, expressing a longing for authenticity, become an implicit criticism of the loss entailed by urban renewal.

If, as stated by Peter Sloterdijk, learning to live is a process of learning to be in places,³⁵ the fictional work of an array of young writers located in Amsterdam will necessarily give some indications of the way this urban space is understood by their characters during a period of coming of age. In the end, it might force ‘us to rethink’ what Maffesoli calls ‘the mysterious relationship uniting “place” and “we”’.³⁶

3.3. Corpus and characteristics

The reviews of the previous two sections have enabled us to gain an understanding of the connections between, on the one hand, places and people and, on the other hand, visions of life and life expectations. This understanding has helped me to design an analytic approach in which these topics can be linked to the notions of image, place narratives and place reputation. It is assumed that it will be possible to identify different visions of life and life expectations that are projected or related to specific interpretations of Amsterdam.

³⁴ Madalina Diacounu, ‘Urban Drifting as a Work Method of the Creative Class’, *Society*, 2 (2010), 100–112 (pp. 100–101).

³⁵ Peter Sloterdijk and Isidoro Reguera (translator), *En El Mundo Interior Del Capital. Para Una Teoría Filosófica de La Globalización* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Ensayo Siruela, 2007), p. 308.

³⁶ Maffesoli, p. 148.

The fact that the testimonies of older generations of writers, artists and intellectuals had already pointed to the influence of the imaginary of earlier literary works – and scenes – on their own perceptions of and attraction to Amsterdam was in my eyes concrete evidence of the interdependence of fiction and reality.³⁷ At the same time, those testimonies also pointed to the persistence of robust paradigms, such as the opposition of city-countryside and Babylon-Jerusalem. Those testimonies also showed that the virtues and defects that were attributed to any of those paradigms were not only interdependent but, above all, dependent on ‘the eye of the beholder’. The biblical city of Babylon, transformed into New Babylon – a virtuous place and a model for Amsterdam to pursue because of its permissiveness towards traditional ‘evils’ – is a good example.

Following this logic, I started making a provisional thematic index to enable a later comparison of specific topics. One of these concerned the characteristics of the ideal nightlife in Amsterdam, assuming that the characteristics would vary according to ‘the eye of the beholder’. In this, I was hoping to demarcate a tribe’s self-made ‘tipping points’, in other words, the decisive point at which a place becomes too boring or unattractive to a specific group.³⁸ An index of tipping points would be interesting, because they are not objective but depend on subjective beliefs and convictions. At what moment and for whom does the city become ‘boring’ because ‘once again’ is it forbidden for a café to remain open all night? At what moment does one start claiming that Amsterdam isn’t what it used to be and that it’s time to go to Berlin (seen in the online magazine *Hard Hoofd*)? How does this relate to the opinions of certain students who want to see Amsterdam ‘cleansed’ of squatters (seen on Right-Wing Youth Amsterdam – *Jong VVD* website)?³⁹

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, the first corpus was collected in order to detect the different tracks of possible ‘tribes’ and their respective ways of being in and belonging to Amsterdam. Among those different texts, the work of current young writers established in Amsterdam quickly stood out as a potential provider of the kind of material I was looking for; that is to say, material straightforwardly related to Amsterdam and created by a specific kind of youth. This material would then accomplish one of the most important tasks of capturing meaning-giving

³⁷ The contribution of literature to the construction of imaginaries was broadly analysed by Caillois in his seminal work on the image of Paris. See : ‘Paris mythe modern’, in Roger Caillois, *Le mythe et l’homme* (Paris: Gallimard-Folio, 1938 [1992]).

³⁸ According to Gladwell, they are points at which a change of condition is produced, the point at which the straw breaks the camel’s back. Tipping points are not predictable and would depend on three characteristics: contagiousness; little causes can have big effects; change happens not gradually but at one dramatic moment. In: Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 2002), p. 6.

³⁹ Krijn Lock, ‘JOVD Nieuws: Kraakverbod.... Het Werd Tijd’, *JOVD* (Den Haag, November 2007) <<http://www.vorigejovd.nl/nieuws/153/Kraakverbod.....het-werd-tijd.htm>>. See also: de Pers, ‘JOVD Opent Blijf van Mijn Huis-Huis’, *www.depers.nl* (Amsterdam, 20 July 2008) <<http://www.nuij.nl/algemeen/jovd-opent-blijf-van-mijn-huis-huis.3326767.lynkx>>.

processes and could in turn lead to the identification of specific senses of place as designated by specific kinds of young people.

After scanning the material, I selected a corpus of six works which appeared between 2007 and 2011: *Galerie onvolmaakt* (Gallery of the Imperfect) by Ebele Wybenga (Amsterdam 2007), *Dingen die niet kunnen* (You can't do that!) by Floor Westerveld (Amsterdam, 2008), *Ego Faber* by Maurice Selekty (Amsterdam, 2010), *Het is weer raak met Kees en Sjaak* (They're Up to It Again, Kees and Sjaak) by Kees van Nieuwkerk (Amsterdam 2010), the movie *Sterke verhalen* (Tall Stories) directed by Kees van Nieuwkerk and Teddy Cherim (2010) and *James Worthy* by James Worthy (Amsterdam, 2011).⁴⁰

There were important reasons for selecting these six works. Firstly, they could all be described as *coming of age* stories narrated in the first person by a young character, with ambitions for a future in which they have a creative job in Amsterdam. In fact it was also remarkable that literary critics had already started to refer to them as 'Generation I' (*Ik Generatie*) because of their tendency to write semi-autobiographical novels inspired by personal experiences. All their respective plots were based on well-known, important, status-changing rites of passage in the lives of young people stepping into adulthood: leaving their parental home, making new friends for life, falling in love, making plans for the future and entering into various liaisons.

The second reason for selecting these works was that they had been produced by young people who had been associated with student life in Amsterdam over the past decade. At the time that they published their works, Floor Westerveld and James Worthy had studied in Amsterdam (even if it was only for six months in the case of Worthy),⁴¹ while Maurice Selekty and Ebele Wybenga were still studying and Kees van Nieuwkerk was intending to study in Amsterdam.

The third reason was that all six works share a focus on narrating the process of the construction and definition of their character's way of being and behaving in Amsterdam – detecting, negotiating and judging their own preferences in contrast with those of others – and making their choices explicit in their descriptions and judgments. This was, in fact, the process I was searching for, as those 'meaning-construction' moments are thought to illustrate meaning-negotiations in relation to other people and to indicate their way of interacting with the physical city. The latter should enable the depiction of a subjective map of the city, in which places are linked to interpretations and in which the characters are described by place-bound and place-specific attributes.

⁴⁰ Below, the references to the novels will appear in abbreviated form as follows: *DDNK* (*Dingen die niet kunnen*), *GO* (*Galerie Onvolmaakt*), *EF* (*Ego Faber*), *K&S* (*Het is weer raak met Kees en Sjaak*), *SV* (*Sterke verhalen*), *JW* (*James Worthy*).

⁴¹ 'James Worthy Biography' <<http://james-worthy.tumblr.com/bio>>.

These shared patterns seemed to facilitate a joint analysis in which one could take into account not only the common *coming of age* topics but also the registration of signs of differences between youth/students made by students themselves. These difference should be manifest in the descriptions of people according to the stereotypes used to characterize them. Therefore, it was also important to take note of the different sorts of texts and the tropes used in each text, for example the sort of metaphor and the tone – irony, sarcasm, etc.

For this analysis of ‘group-forming processes’, it was assumed that in these tales, different sorts of people would also be distinguished in terms of the different reasons for them appearing (or not) at specific places at a specific time. Thus, the sort of groups frequenting the same venue could vary according to the day of the week, following a tradition similar to the unwritten rule in the past that students went out on Thursday night, while working youth would go out on the weekend. In this sense, it would be of special interest to take into account specific objects, artefacts and behaviour used to describe and identify these venues.

In summary – and because of the narrative nature of the material in the corpus – the initial exploratory analysis examined the following elements:

- a. Story and plot: the story as the account or recital of an event or a series of events that in this case is based on the process of growing up, a so-called coming of age story. The link between this process and the city forms the guiding thread of the stories selected. Their plots or stories show a similar process: initial rites of passage lead at the end to the achievement of a new stage in the personal development of the main characters.
- b. Character, characterization and trope settings: character concerns the way in which a person is portrayed. In the character analyses I have especially taken account of stereotypical attribution used in fiction to awaken the feeling of verisimilitude. In addition, and in light of the goals of this research, I have focused on characterization which is associated with references to place. In this way, personal attributes are related to concrete places in the city that are used to explain personality, economic or professional circumstances, etc. The analyses have also taken account of tropes. The use of tropes assists in the interpretation of a judgment, recreating an effect similar to nonverbal communication, like saying ‘yes’ while shaking one’s head. Well-known tropes are humour, irony, synecdoche or hyperbole. Through them, statements and judgments acquire meanings other than a literal one.

- c. The processes of cross-referencing with traceable additional sources: I have checked explicit references to concrete/real places, or of stereotyped characterizations appearing in non-fictional texts written by what could be real alter egos of the fictional characters in these stories. I have also collected references to the traditional images of Amsterdam, such as that of the free and unconventional city, mentioned above. Finally, I have also collected and analysed specific facts, places, buildings that are used as landmarks in Amsterdam.

Before proceeding to the analysis in Section 3.4, it will be useful to provide a short summary of each of works in the selected corpus.

a. Short description of the story and the main characters

Galerie onvolmaakt (Gallery of the Imperfect) by Ebele Wybenga, (Amsterdam, 2007)⁴²

Story of starting up a 'creative' enterprise. In addition to narrating the start of his enterprise, the story refers to 'the first real disappointment' of the main character's life, when his father goes bankrupt and the properties of the family are gone.

- Main characters:

Mees Blaeu: Male. 20 years old, main character and first-person narrator of the story. Grew up in the surroundings of Amsterdam (probably Hilversum or Naarden). He lives in Amsterdam in apartments that his father buys and sells in the Pijp and the Jordaan districts. He is a law student at the University of Amsterdam but has doubts about the professional direction he should choose. Caught between wanting to be an artist and an entrepreneur he decides to combine both. He starts his own enterprise called Galerie Onvolmaakt. The core business is to match customers, who want contemporary works of art, with emerging young artists.

Gijs: Male. Friend of Mees (only because they have always been). Like Mees he is 20 years old. Gijs doesn't work or study. With Mees, he usually occupies a floors of one of Mees' father's properties. Described as 'nouveau riche'.

Yfke: Female. Mees' girlfriend, probably the same age. She works on commercial television presenting a children's programme.

⁴² Wybenga, *Galerie Onvolmaakt*.

Dingen die niet kunnen (You can't do that!) by Floor Westerveld (Amsterdam, 2008)⁴³

Love story of Bobby and Otto. Encounter, difficulties and happy ending. Tag: 'I had no idea that this would be the beginning of a summer full of dreams'.

- Main characters:

Bobby van Kesteren: Female. 26-27 years old. Grew up in the Netherlands (place is not specified). Moved to Amsterdam to study journalism at the University of Amsterdam. Has completed her studies. Works part-time in Amsterdam and The Hague for the Groen links (Green Left) political party. She alternates with Otto as the first-person narrator of the chapters.

Otto: Male. Main character of *Dingen die niet kunnen*. Same age as Bobby. At the beginning of the story he lives with his girlfriend in their new home in the Jordaan district. Works for Marktplaats (literally Market Place, the Dutch eBay). His business card says 'Business Developer (Marktplaats)', but he looks more like a painter or an artist.

Ego Faber by Maurice Seleky (Amsterdam, 2010)⁴⁴

Story about friendship and love in Amsterdam. Having just arrived in Amsterdam, the narrator meets Ego Faber and his friend Rein. They quickly become his best friends, with whom he will get to know Amsterdam.

- Main characters:

Narrator: Male. 18 years old. His name is not revealed. Grew up in Brabant in the south of the Netherlands. After finishing grammar school he moves to Amsterdam, the city in which he expects everything to happen. He enrolls in law school at the University of Amsterdam.

Ego Faber: Male. Around 20 years old. Grew up in Amsterdam, where he attended Barlaeus Gymnasium grammar school. Ego Faber is popular: everybody knows him. Some young people in Amsterdam even wear a t-shirt saying 'I love Ego Faber'. His mother lives in the Jordaan district in a beautiful house with lots of books. He starts a relationship with Zara, the secret, ideal girlfriend of the narrator. During the academic year, Ego becomes more and more restless. He decides to enlist in the Dutch Army and go to Afghanistan. After a short period, his friends and mother in Amsterdam receive news of his death.

Zara: Female. Around 20 years old. She studies architecture in Delft but lives in Amsterdam (in Amsterdam there is no Faculty of Architecture). Zara is very beautiful and makes a living modelling.

⁴³ Floor Westerveld, *Dingen Die Niet Kunnen* (Uitgeverij Perziek, 2009).

⁴⁴ Maurice Seleky, *Ego Faber* (Amsterdam: Anthos, 2010).

Het is weer raak met Kees en Sjaak (They're Up to It Again, Kees and Sjaak) by Kees van Nieuwkerk (Amsterdam 2010)⁴⁵

The story of two best friends, Kees and Sjaak. Despite having different personalities they have been best friends for years. They have both finished their pre-university studies and have time for a long summer break before studying at Amsterdam's Film Academy in September.

- Main characters:

Kees: Male. 18 years old. Lives with his parents in Amsterdam. Completed school at the Vossius Gymnasium grammar school in Amsterdam. He likes living at home but thinks he should grow up and move out. As a first step he and Sjaak drive to Berlin. In Berlin, Kees finds out that he has not been accepted into the film academy. The admissions committee suggests that he does not have enough life experience. Kees is the first narrator of the story.

Sjaak: Also known as De Sjaak (as a hip hop MC). Lives on his own and has an old Peugeot. He is the daring one of the two and very often says that Kees is a pubescent boy. Back from Berlin, in Amsterdam (without Kees), he 'helps' Kees finish the story.

Sterke verhalen (Tall Stories) by Kees van Nieuwkerk and Teddy Cherim (Amsterdam, 2010)⁴⁶

The movie *Sterke verhalen* recounts the story told by a young writer who engages in an unplanned discussion with a small audience of adolescents sheltering from summer rain in a shed in a playground in Amsterdam.

- Main characters:

Young writer: Around 19 years old. He seems to be the alter ego of Kees van Nieuwkerk (who also wrote *Het is weer raak met Kees en Sjaak*).

Dennis de Boer: Male. Around 19 years old. Despite his Dutch name Dennis looks Dutch Moroccan (a repetitive motif in the story). Grew up on a farm in the Netherlands. He moves to Amsterdam to study at the university.

Sanne: Female. Around 20 years old. Student and actor. In the story, after finishing the movie, she meets the narrator, the young writer from the playground, with whom she had a failed relationship in the recent past. They reconcile.

The film opens at the moment in which Dennis gets a letter of admission to the University of Amsterdam. He leaves his parent's farm and goes to Amsterdam to begin his education. He arrives in the city on a ride-on mower. Dennis is somewhat naive and quickly becomes completely charmed by

⁴⁵ Kees van Nieuwkerk, *Het Is Weer Raak Met Kees En Sjaak* (Amsterdam: Moon, 2010).

⁴⁶ Kees van Nieuwkerk and Teddy Cherim, *Sterke Verhalen* (The Netherlands, 2010).

a beautiful blond girl, Sanne. She helps him with directions when he's lost on the first day in Amsterdam and also gives him a flyer for a party. Sanne, who at the beginning is only interested in selling as many tickets as possible for a private, 'obscure' party in Amsterdam North, will become increasingly touched by his kindness and help him when he is in trouble.

***James Worthy by James Worthy (Amsterdam, 2011)*⁴⁷**

The novel is described as the story of modern love.

- Main characters:

James Worthy: Male. Main character and first-person narrator. 30 years old. He is from Amsterdam. He went to school at the Montessori Lyceum in Amsterdam South (nearby the Hilton Hotel). After studying communications in Amsterdam for one year he drops out. He is a writer and additionally makes his living by working at the Artis Zoo as a photographer. He is 'tremendously happy living with Polly his ideal woman' until she leaves him for someone else. James has already published a novel and girls recognize and worship him. But Polly remains his ideal until Aafke appears on the scene.

Polly: Female. Around 25 years old. Student. Leaves James for a painter.

Aafke: Female. Around 25 years old. Lives in Rotterdam but studies theatre at the Theatre School in Jodenbreestraat in Amsterdam. At the end of the story she moves in with James in Amsterdam. The final scene depicts them still together, just married, with their 4-year-old son.

3.4. The analyses and interpretation

On the basis of the textual features listed in the previous section, two main relevant topics emerged. The first will be called the 'realization of a dream' and the second, the 'homecoming'.

The realization of a dream consists of various subtopics: a. professional future; b. making friends; c. gaining life experience; and d. finding true love.

The homecoming involves: a. a sense of belonging associated with place; and b. the typifying of Amsterdam.

⁴⁷ Worthy.

a. The construction of one's own life in a coming of age story: the realization of a dream

In each of the stories, the drive of the main characters to be in Amsterdam at a specific moment of their lives could be summarized in the adage 'follow your dreams' – it is the realization of a dream. Here, 'dream' refers to a realizable ideal to which they aspire, meaning to live a life that is as deep and sincere as possible, which includes finding out what really matters to them without renouncing their ideals. As far as they can see, they think this will be possible in Amsterdam.⁴⁸

These life aspirations, including leaving the parental home, do not seem to be opposed by their parents, who act with understanding and support in an anti-authoritarian relationship with their children. The parents act as a rearguard, ready to provide assistance when needed in the form of food, well-stocked refrigerators, help with cleaning, or a lift home from the airport when returning from abroad.⁴⁹

For these young men and women their dream encompasses and expresses a desired world beyond ordinary restrictions. In fact, it seems that dreaming, considered as the reflection of an ideal, is to be pursued, it is even presented as a duty, as a call to avoid mediocrity: 'a space beyond the constraints of ordinary living'.⁵⁰ In this sense, it seems pertinent to recall that dreams also formed part of the collective imagination of hippies in Amsterdam, who slept in large numbers in Vondelpark in the 1970s, sharing dreams and hallucinations of a better world during the summers of love.

In the corpus analysed, the word 'dream' seems to point to contemporary interpretations of life-needs referred to by the characters, which as we will see are concrete and specific. In *Dingen die niet kunnen*, the main characters challenge the logic of rational expectations and, from the summer of 2007, live a summer 'full of dreams'; a summer in which the wish for real love will come true. Here, the text appears to appeal to the notion that 'dreams are a guide to life'.⁵¹ For Floor in *Dingen die*

⁴⁸ For a discussion of leaving home and 'existential migration' see: Greg A. Madison, 'The End of Belonging. Untold Stories of Leaving Home and the Psychology of Global Relocation' (London: Unpublished version, 2009), pp. 1–44 (p. 2). According to him 'existential migrants' as him 'chooses to leave their homeland, pushed out by deep questions that can't be answered at home, pulled into the wide world in order to discover what life is. We are living paradoxes. We need to feel at home but have never done so, we need to belong but shun opportunities for belonging, we venture out into the unknown in order to experience the homecoming that will finally settle us, but doesn't.'

⁴⁹ Bobby is picked up from Schiphol airport by her always helpful father before she knows that Otto has broken up with his girlfriend and is also waiting for her (*DDNK*); the narrator leaves Breda with a bag filled with canned food (*EF*); Kees 'loves his mother and the refrigerator' (*K&S*); James Worthy's mother 'is an angel', having cleaned up his apartment during his stay in Paris and made everything ready for the new phase with Aafke (*JW*).

⁵⁰ Steve Pile, *Real Cities: Modernity, Space and the Phantasmagorias of City Life* (London, California, New Delhi: Sage Publishers, 2005), p. 33.

⁵¹ von Grunebaum and Caillois.

niet kunnen, it is clear in retrospect that everything that was happening already contained a sign that something extraordinary was about to happen:

That Friday afternoon in May then was the first really warm day of the summer. The beautiful weather hadn't been forecast; no one had been expecting it. Computers were shut down en masse at four o'clock. All the capital's Albert Heijn supermarkets had sold out of rosé. Suddenly the country was a gift to its inhabitants. And like every year, the sun and the summer it brought us were once again welcomed with open arms.

I had left my work early too that afternoon, infected by the summer virus. At that moment I had no idea that this particular sunny day would be the beginning of a summer full of dreams. A summer full of butterflies, full laughter, full tears. My summer of 2007 was under the sign of Love. And a hard lesson learned. That summer has now been set down on paper. (*DDNK*, 9)

In addition, each of the novels uses various texts, sometimes lyrics, quotes from other literary works, references to films and biographies of artists, as signposts and premonitions. During their first encounter, Floor and Otto refer to their respective favourite novels ('the best novel ever'), with both putting the title mentioned by the other on their mobiles, as a token of their increasing friendship. Otto, for example, refers to Somerset Maughan's *Razor's Edge* (1944), probably alluding to its defence of a life beyond overly materialistic goals and ambitions. Furthermore, Bobby's recommendation of Paulo Coelho's *Eleven Minutes* (2003) can be seen as an obvious reflection of the moment she and Otto share in the house of a common friend, feeling an incipient amorousness: "You must read it. It's about love at first sight. So beautiful". | We both stare out of the window again. | "Interesting."⁵²

For his part, James Worthy will call his artistic drive his 'inherent Tupac', alluding to rapper Tupac's struggle to transcend himself by means of the hip hop flow, developing his skills as a rapper in an attempt to overcome the limitations of his origin in a ghetto in New York (*JW*, p. 187). In turn, in *Ego Faber*, the allusion to a range of seminal literary works bought second-hand at the well-known Friday book market on the Spui seems to serve as a premonition and a model: 'I read Fitzgerald and Hemingway. I also devour Nescio's *Titaantjes*. I wish I spoke the way he wrote.'⁵³

This stream of thought in *Ego Faber* also makes reference to the lyrics of a song. The narrator confesses that sometimes he feels as though he is in a music video, which is to say, his life feels like a compilation of fragmented images and situations bound together by the story line of a song: 'And all

⁵² "Je moet het lezen. Het gaat over liefde op het eerste gezicht. Zo mooi". | We staren weer uit het raam. | "Interessant" (*DDNK*, p. 30).

⁵³ 'Ik lees Fitzgerald en Hemingway. Ook Nescio's *Titaantjes* verslind ik. Ik zou willen dat ik sprak zoals hij schreef.'*(EF*, p. 21).

the memories of the pub |And the clubs and the drugs and the tubs |We shared together, Will stay with me forever'.⁵⁴ These fragmented streams of thought have the ability to express a kind of 'hanging on state', in which hangovers overlap with parties or new encounters. Hangovers also express moments of semi-consciousness, lying in bed, in which life 'hurts' or is confusing (*JW, K&S*).

In addition to the explicit use of the word 'dream' to express desires and expectations, the city landscape also seems to emerge, offering inspiration to the dream world, similarly to the inspirational feelings attributed to watching clouds in the sky when lying on the ground in the countryside. This has to do with the drifting nature of these tales, in which the main characters interpret the city landscape according to their different emotional states. In fact, and as already mentioned in Section 2 above, the size of the metropolitan area and the impossibility of seeing everything is an ideal incubator for these kinds of thoughts. The pace with which our main characters traverse the city – whether by bicycle or tram – might also be reflected in affective images of contrasting speed and quiet observation.

- **Professional future: education and working perspectives**

Simon Anholt's study of images of place in university cities such as Harvard or Berkeley, also mentioned in Section 2, focused on the role that higher education institutions have in attracting young people to the places where they are located. Young people go to Harvard or to Berkeley not because of the cities in which the universities are located but because of the reputation of the university. They believe they will get a better education there than somewhere else.

For the characters in our stories, on the contrary, the reputation of the higher education institutions in Amsterdam is not the reason why they have decided to enrol. Mees confesses that he is only remaining enrolled as a law student at 'that institution' (referring to the law faculty of the University of Amsterdam) so he can keep his free travel card (*GO*, p. 51), while the narrator of *Ego Faber* admits that he and Ego have chosen law at the University of Amsterdam because it will allow them to do other things. In reality, taking university too seriously, studying hard and finishing on time does not reflect the kind of people they are. The key point might be that studying in order to make a living - '*brood op de plank brengen*'- (the Dutch expression literally means 'putting bread on the table', comparable to 'earning your crust' in English) is too banal (*EF*), in contrast with the entrepreneurial

⁵⁴ From 'Music when the lights go out' by The Libertines (2004). Quoted on the front page of *Ego Faber*.

spirit of the creative industry (*GO*) or with real talent (*JW, K&S*). Thinking about making a living from studying law is for 'allochtone' girls who have worked hard to reach university.⁵⁵

Studying hard is seen as something different to having intellectual capacities, but it is good, as long as it is a choice. The characters only look down on banal goals and would prefer to find an occupation that really will fulfil their personal dreams. They probably also share aesthetic objections; for example, Mees would definitely not be content to become a lawyer, forced to work in an ugly building (read: antiseptic, glass and steel 1990s building) and confesses to feel pity for all those current journalists who, after studying for so long to obtain an interesting job, end up working in an impersonal office building in suburbs of Amsterdam that are scary at night.⁵⁶

In fact, and this supposes a step into the character analysis, their sense of aesthetics has already attracted each of them to certain areas in Amsterdam: the Jordaan, the Pijp, Amsterdam Old West, the central canals, and recently also the area of Amsterdam North in which a gentrification process has started. These areas are considered places to both live and to work. Rather than high-tech parks in the suburbs, these places host small advertising, marketing, communications and internet companies, as well as, of course, art galleries, vegetarian shops, organic butchers, fashion, design and vintage shops, alternative hairdressers, patisseries, small restaurants and bars, precisely the kind of street in which Mees lives and starts his gallery.

In *Dingen die niet kunnen* the main characters have just finished university. Their working life reflects their short-term dreams for a future in Amsterdam. In this sense, in *Dingen die niet kunnen*, Amsterdam emerges as an attractive place for young professionals like the characters. They are the kind of young professionals that Richard Florida calls 'members of the creative class'. Otto, for example, works for Marktplaats. This company is an e-commerce site in which customers can buy or sell used goods for reasonable prices – an electronic and upgraded version of a traditional flea market. At the time in which the novel is set, Marktplaats could be taken as the paradigm of new business in the creative industry. It is an example of a successful contemporary enterprise based on one simple good idea, advantageous in terms of recycling and focused on community needs. It is not the name of this specific company that is interesting (companies quickly change their reputation) but the working style they instigated: an office in the city centre, easy to reach by bike, a personal

⁵⁵ In the Netherlands, the term *allochtoon* is not merely a synonym with 'foreign Dutch inhabitants' but a way of referring to immigrants or their descendants, especially those from Morocco or Turkey. We will see more definitions of this term along this thesis. One of the current trends that has been reported in the media is that *allochtone* girls are doing better than boys. *Ego Faber's* narrator calls them 'de hardwerkende stapelaars' (*EF*, p. 46).

⁵⁶ 'Then you've finally got a nice job at a good newspaper, just again to find yourself sipping coffee out of a machine in a room with a low ceiling. Tonight I'm seeing parts of the city where no one has any business being at night. When I get out of the car with a towel in my hands, I am very alert', (*GO*, p. 103).

atmosphere with only a few colleagues. Details pointed to style and refinement based on quality: for example, bad coffee is rejected at work; rather than Senseo (labelled as a B-brand), the office has excellent coffee from its own espresso machine (*DDNK*, p. 50). At work, employees are free to plan their working day however they want and are evaluated on results. They are trusted and when they have private concerns their boss shows understanding.

Being an employee of a new business such as Marktplaats offers them the ideal combination of working for a commercial company while maintaining one's principles. In this context, the main characters, Otto and Bobby (*DDNK*), James (*JW*), Kees and Sjaak (*K&S*) and Mees (*GO*), in the end do not face a dilemma. Amazon send Otto on a free course, allowing him to develop his plan for a charity project called 'Give-away-paper' ('*Geefwegpapier*'). Bobby makes her living as a communications advisor for the Green Left and spends part of the summer during the story in Togo working on a project to combat AIDS. Their work is accepted for publication (after meeting Otto, Bobby sends a column to the free newspaper *De Pers*, which immediately publishes her work), their business plans are accepted (Otto: for Marktplaats in Berlin, Amazon in California). In other novels, the opening of 'Galerie Onvolmaakt' is a success, the main characters have their books published (*JW* and *K&S*), and their movie released at the cinema (*Sterke Verhalen*).

Their work can also provide them with recognition in other fields. James Worthy, for example, thinks that if he has this enormous reservoir of women willing to have sex with him it is because he has already published a novel and has been on well-known television programmes such as *Hints*⁵⁷ and *De wereld draait door* (*JW*, p. 164). The latter ('The World Keeps on Turning' in English), is especially worth mentioning as it has become a catalyst for new creative talent. The programme, broadcast daily from Amsterdam since 2006 (rather than the standard television studios in Hiversum) is a mix of information, news and entertainment, includes interviews involving different guests gathered for an informal chat around a table, and also performances by young and mostly alternative bands. Having been around that table means broad recognition of being a member of the Amsterdam cultural scene.

Fissures in this rather idyllic future are the flipside of the coin, with a very fine line between authenticity and artificiality, excesses of drugs or alcohol, or the concern that writing a business plan is not enough to save the world. The words used by Ego Faber when volunteering to go to Afghanistan, give us an idea of the delicate balance between real adventure and the superficial life

⁵⁷ *Hints* was a real television programme, a Dutch word-guessing game (like *Charades*) which was broadcast during 2010, with writers, actors and stand-up comedians as its contestants.

and challenges offered by the inner city:⁵⁸ Fuck Amsterdam, man, fuck these times – all the girls have eating disorders, all the guys have a drinking problem and all the parents are divorced.’⁵⁹

In this sense, it seems clear that archetypical associations enclosed in the paradigm of the biblical Babylon also persist in the current imaginaries of fictional city dwellers such as Ego Faber. The city then, emerges as a corrupting, empty and soulless place, the opposite of the constructive biblical Jerusalem.

- **Making friends**

The main characters of the six works are indubitably psychologically different, but they share the need for friends and acquaintances in their immediate surroundings in Amsterdam. To be friends they need to do things together: living nearby, visit each other, talk about things and about life, tell jokes, and go out. Connecting through social networks appears to be a facilitator of physical encounters but not a substitute for the physical proximity of friends.

In *Ego Faber* and *Dingen die niet kunnen*, new friends are the result of accidental, face-to-face encounters. Conversations begin spontaneously, in the train, for example, and can be the start of a strong friendship. Friends accelerate the process of feeling at home and belonging (*EF*) and make dreams come true (e.g. sharing an expensive apartment in *Dingen die niet kunnen*). Friends are there to watch out for you when you are in trouble (‘Are you all right?’)⁶⁰ and they can do so because they are in close physical proximity – which is a very important factor. Going out together, sharing an apartment, going shopping, eating, having a drink at different places in Amsterdam, means that friends can also witness important moments (they are there when you get that call on your mobile. *DDNK*, p. 71). They dry tears, share laughter and tell jokes, becoming a kind of surrogate family.

In the characters’ lifetime, urban friendship had become one of the most important popular topics, for example, in the famous television sitcom *Friends* or in the columns of the *Diary of Bridget Jones*. The former series had an enormous impact, not least because it portrayed recognizable situations faced by young urban professionals, some of them with parents living outside the city, finding in new friends the unconditional support and company they needed. Like Bridget Jones, Bobby has few, but good friends – among them her ‘girl’s best gay friend’ – who give her advice and support and appear and disappear when required. The key values in these relationships are sincerity, honesty, humour,

⁵⁸ It is interesting to see that those sort of dilemmas are also discussed in scholar literature dealing with topics such as economic security versus authenticity in Amsterdam. See Terhorst, van de Ven and Dében.

⁵⁹ ‘Fuck Amsterdam, man, fuck deze tijd, alle meisjes hebben een eetstoornis, alle jongens hebben een drank probleem en alle ouders zijn gescheiden.’ (*EF*, p. 169).

⁶⁰ ‘Gaat het wel goed? Je zat daar zo raar in je eentje in het donker’, (*DDNK*, p. 39).

openness and acceptance. Indeed, the friends even accept moments of awkward and unpredictable behaviour from the protagonist.

For Mees, who is very conscious of contemporary personal brands and styles, the descriptions of his friends and acquaintances comes across to the reader as suggesting less straightforward relationships to those in the other five works. Nonetheless, Mees gives us an interesting view on the stereotyping of friendship. In fact, Mees is aware that he is trying to create a circle of friends and acquaintances that looks spontaneous, in despite of having to be carefully organized. This is because Mees knows that in relation to the creative ambiance that he wants to create, spontaneity and diversity are seen as an added value. One could say that he is already aware of the commercial impact of the friendship image transmitted by *Friends*. He is also very aware of the definition of diversity in the context of gentrification. The cargo bike they use for work in the inner city is not the cumbersome cargo bike used by blue collar workers or the squatters of the 1970s and 1980s, but a hip, upgraded version. He also believes that there is no real street culture in the Netherlands. His friends and acquaintances have all finished pre-university education. They have different styles: 'sympathetic alternative types, unsympathetic alternatives, artists' ('sympatieke alto's, antipatieke alto's, artists, etc.', *GO*, p. 94), but they are not really revolutionaries or artists (it's only a look – the influence of fashion). People like Mees do not like real street people, real squatters ('they smell', *GO*, p. 96) or ordinary poorly educated young people (*GO*, p. 111).⁶¹ However, they also dislike traditional businessmen. Mees' friends have to be 'Either young or beautiful or eccentric' (*GO*, p. 154).

In *Ego Faber*, friends are also a way of becoming acquainted with the surroundings without losing one's distinct identity. When they go to places like the Muziekgebouw concert hall or to a sophisticated café at the beach in Bloemendaal, where most people wear conventional chic, they support each other in knowing that they are not sensitive to this kind of conventional behaviour. They go to the Concertgebouw (the Concert Hall) because they can appreciate classical music and to the elegant Bloemendaal because they like the beach in the winter (*EF*, p. 37). They are not impressed by ostentation, only by real class and inherent elegance (with Ego Faber's mother a prime example, *EF*, p. 145).

While on a party boat in Amsterdam North, they find themselves amongst '*Fout folk*', literally 'wrong people':

⁶¹ 'You can see how they are changing from girls into women. This isn't baby fat, it's real fat. They won't think much about their future. Maybe they were deflowered by the same boy in the first year of the *vmbo*. That's been behind them a while now, now they're trying to stretch out their being young as long as possible before they stand before the altar with some Danny or Ronny. Just a while and they'll have their starter's home in a new housing estate, a new car and a husband with a busy roofing company'. (*GO*, p. 111).

[...] soap actors, gold-diggers, brokers, always those brokers, football women, wannabe models, real estate boys, society journalists, PR chicks, catering bosses and outright Mafiosi. This company has nothing to do with fashion. I like the idea that we detonate here. If people look at us in our black leather jackets they think that we are a rock band (*EF*, p. 127).

Soul-mate friends are the opposite of ‘the others’. For example, the opposite of fraternity students with their typical hairstyles, and of ‘boring’ people from the countryside (*EF*, p. 46). Old school friends or friends from childhood might also be seen as ‘the others’. For Mees, for example, his friend Gijs is a clear counterpart of his own spirit and aesthetic sense. In contrast to his own more bohemian style, Gijs is clearly a ‘nouveau riche’: ‘Everything in the small place he lives in is either black or white. The desk’s black. Computer screen: black. Couch: white.’ And to complete the description Mees adds: ‘There are a few plants with those brown granular things in the pots that you would expect to see in an open-plan office.’⁶²

However, within the ‘clan’, friends are often seen as having complementary personalities. Thus, the narrator of *Ego Faber* is noticed and becomes friends with Ego and Rein because – according to Ego – as a newcomer he provides them with a new perception of their own city. To be precise, they consider that the boy from Brabant embodies the Rousseauian image of country life. His gaze is seen as ‘pure and unprejudiced’. As Ego tells him:

‘You have a drive that most young people in this city don’t have. Just look at Rein, look at me. We have already seen everything and we hardly know what we want anymore. You arrive here with that look in your eyes, full of curiosity and zest for life. Unspoilt and open-minded.’ [...] ‘Don’t you go losing that, amigo.’ (*EF*, p. 34).

Clearly, and although obviously in a more humorous vein, the same kind of Rousseauian qualities are attributed to Dennis, the country boy with the mower and a penguin stolen from the Zoo. The fact that, in the end, he is admitted into the clan without needing to alter his kind and innocent personality can be seen as an idyllic projection of a beautiful, playful and diverse kind of friendship.

The distinction of the friends’ personalities is even the basis of a literary trick in the Kees and Sjaak narrative. Kees confesses at the end of his story that Sjaak does not actually exist, but instead symbolizes his ‘inner battle and struggle’. In the end, it is thanks to Sjaak’s advice that he decides to postpone a possible ‘*huis, bompje, beastje*’ [settling down to domesticity] in Amsterdam with the girl

⁶² ‘Alles in zijn woninkje is óf zwart óf wit. Bureau zwart. Monitor: zwart. Bank: wit.’ ‘Er staan een paar planten met van die bruine korrels in hun bak die eigenlijk thuishoren in een kantoortuin.’ (*GO*, p. 12).

of his dreams, overcomes the disappointment of not having been admitted to the Film Academy in Amsterdam and decides to apply to a film school in London.

In a general aesthetic sense, I believe we may say that the beauty of friends in this imaginary is unconventional: Ego Faber is a boy that sometimes looks like a girl (*EF*). Bobby is a girl that used to look like a boy: thin, lanky, without curves. Even now she is jagged/angular ('*hoekig*') and has small breasts (*DDNK*). Kees is shy. He is not good at 'small talk' but people like him anyway (*K&S*). Otto is a boy with a beard but also with feminine characteristics. He is not perfect, sometimes he stutters (*DDNK*). James Worthy also has a childhood of stuttering behind him and even at his age still 'sucks his thumb'. However, he is repeatedly described as the irresistible anti-hero (*JW*).

Clothes and accessories are carefully described: a t-shirt with the text 'Fuck the industry', worn by the beautiful Zara when she is not working as a fashion model, seems to be a statement about how they see real beauty: 'Her taste has an elemental quality; her kind of class doesn't need a lot to stand out.' (*EF*, p. 149).⁶³ Wearing white earbuds is a reference to the iPod that all of them use while cycling (at the time the novels were published having an iPod was a sign of being avant-garde).

Furthermore, the attractiveness of many of these people seems to lie in a combination of linguistic skill – often agile, witty and resourceful – and vulnerability. Bobby, for example, is compared by her friends to a puppy: 'Sweet, happy and cuddly. With a wagging tail, you know? But one that never listens, it's true. [...] She means well though. And then she looks at you with those innocent eyes. And it remains a joy to have her frolicking about.' (*DDNK*, p. 203). She is also unpretentious and sincere and has a style that one of the reviewers on the rear flap of the book summarizes as 'Bridget Jones meets *Alles is Liefde*, with a bit of Amélie Poulain'.⁶⁴ With this Bobby is related to the protagonists of well-known contemporary urban romance stories, set in London, Amsterdam and Paris, respectively. One could say that they have in common a female protagonist who is sweet and sincere but also awkward and somehow unusual.

⁶³ 'Haar smaak is elementair, haar klasse heeft niet veel nodig om opgemerkt te worden' (*EF*, p. 149).

⁶⁴ Quotation from a review in *Het Parool* by Karin Overmars. Flap text *Dingen die niet Kunnen*.



It is probably because of a preference for authenticity and ‘imperfection’ that they all frequent similar places. Beyond Amsterdam they choose places such as Berlin, which comes to stand for a hyper-city, with alternative night clubs, a lively squatter movement (*EF* and *K&S*) and even professional possibilities (*DDNK*). To all of the characters, Amsterdam offers the same kind of charm based on its imperfections, expressed in terms of a rented room with a broken window and no toilet (*EF*), buckled flooring (*GO*), cobbled streets (or even just sand if they are being repaired, which is commonplace in the centre of Amsterdam (*EF*), canals with ‘*klooibootjes*’ (‘shabby little boats’) next to the boats of the yuppies (*GO*), ‘*gammele*’ (‘clapped out’), old Peugeots they use to drive to Berlin (*K&S*) and front doors that are difficult to open (*JW*). If they had the choice, all of them would live in older characteristic Amsterdam buildings.

- **Gaining life experience**

Dreams about finding true love drive the sexual adventures of the various characters, always accompanied by alcohol and sometimes drugs. The sexual adventures are understood as a preparation; a learning experience. Sometimes they also have a consolatory function: sex provides comfort when real love hurts (*JW*, *EF*, *SV*). Drugs are seen as ‘a passport’ to adulthood (first experiences for Kees in Berlin [*K&S*] and for the narrator of *Ego Faber* in Amsterdam). Significantly, for the older characters, Amsterdam nightlife starts to become monotonous: ‘The faces never change, the gossip never changes, DJs never change, only drink prices are fickle’ (*JW*, p. 45).

The young male characters of the novels do not visit prostitutes, as the cliché of the Red Light district in Amsterdam might suggest, but they emphasize that many kinds of women in Amsterdam are worthwhile. Their openness and liberality is expressed through the large range of experiences they have: James Worthy does not mind intimate sexual relationships with older women, some with

pictures of their grandchildren on the bedside table, or the woman next door who has a child he might even take care of or play with, not to mention waitresses in bars and cafés, and also young girls of all different shapes, sizes, attitudes and cultures (*JW*).

In his turn, the narrator of *Ego Faber* demonstrates that he is getting to know the city by recounting which sort of girl will be where on which day of the week. Thanks to his friendship with Ego he has also become a connoisseur:

On Mondays and Tuesdays we take seventeen-year-old high school girls or drunk fraternity girls to the student disco 'Dansen bij Jansen'; on Wednesday evening we smoke a joint at De Dampkring coffee shop before hunting indie girls at Paradiso; on Thursday evening we're looking for sun-bed girls in Escape; we keep Friday free for unexpected circumstances and for the theatre school girls at dark squatters' parties in north Amsterdam on the other side of the IJ. (*EF*, p. 37-8).

James also has a sexual-specific mind-map of the city, relating the many girls he has had with the colour of their underwear and the place where they had sex. Thus, one of the recurrent elements in his story are sentences such as: '[She] seems familiar to me. Was it at Dansen bij Jansen? I fingered her once on the dance floor. I had just broken up with Polly then'.⁶⁵ In the meantime, Bobby practises sex with an experienced co-worker and learns to drink whisky like an adult (*DDNK*). For his part, Kees 'finally' has his first experiences of sex 'without love' in Berlin. 'It was about time' because as Kees' friend says, if he wants to be a writer or a filmmaker he will definitely need to acquire some life experiences. One needs to grow up: And do something about that miserable expression, that virginal look of fear in your eyes, that's never going to turn any woman on.'⁶⁶

It is not that sex is necessarily seen as something separate from love. There is a particular scene in *James Worthy* that is highly illustrative of the moment at which an initial sexual encounter with a quasi-stranger becomes the preamble to a new love story. James already suspects that something about this quasi-stranger, Aafke, has already – and without doubt – moved him: 'If I go and give my hart to the first woman that comes along, like some naive fool who believes in fairy tales – well, that would make me a jackass, plain and simple. Right?'⁶⁷

The reader is also aware that Aafke is not just 'the first woman to come along', '*de eerste de beste*', but she is the first serious candidate for healing James after the painful breakup with Polly. The excerpt below is very revealing in this respect. It is situated in France, where James, as advised and

⁶⁵ '[Z]e komt me bekend voor. Dansen bij Jansen? Ik heb haar een keertje gevingerd op de dansvloer. Het was toen nog maar net uit met Polly' (*JW*, p. 183).

⁶⁶ 'En doe wat aan die grafkop, die maagdelijke angst in je ogen, daar wordt geen een meisje nat van' (*K&S*, p. 68-69). :

⁶⁷ 'Als ik nu weer als een naïeve, in sprookjes gelovende lul mijn hart aan de eerste de beste vrouw overhandig, tja, dan ben ik gewoon een ezel. Toch?' This and the following quotations are from *JW* pp. 124-125.

arranged by his publisher, is staying after a nasty period in Amsterdam – one which had culminated in a fight in a karaoke bar on Warmoesstraat. The general idea is that in France he will find the tranquillity to work on his new book. On the motorway to France, he and his publisher stop to pick up a girl who is hitchhiking. At the beginning, James thinks that the girl could be interesting prey for the publisher, who never has a girlfriend, but after observing her more closely, he thinks she is somehow cute and perhaps good for himself.

The following scene describes their second encounter. The situation not only serves to emphasize the attractiveness of James as an anti-hero, it also indicates that Aafke may well be worthy of his love. This is because her language is at least as sharp-witted as that of James, and she shares with him a sort of natural shamelessness. She also shows that she can handle the situation, being acquainted with the work of well-known provocative writers such as the Belgian-Fleming Herman Brusselmans (a writer who, as any reader would have already noticed is much admired by James):

Her soft fingers pass over the bumps on my thumb. [68] 'I think it's quite sweet really, and all that thumb sucking has given you the most powerful tongue muscles I have ever had the privilege of feeling. They should sell your tongue in sex shops.'

'Oh, is that so?' I ask, while my right hand disappears under her skirt. 'And now I'm supposed to go down on you, right? To prove that it's really true? To prove that I'm better at it than Brusselmans? Here in the French countryside? With my tongue in your trench? I accept – I'm going to lick you dry.'

For years now, Herman Brusselmans has been seen as the Benelux's undisputed king of cunnilingus, the Dalai Lama of eating pussy. I do not agree with this at all. So once I have finished I want the woman in question to get on the phone and call Brusselmans.

A few years back I managed to get hold of his number through some other people. Since then, about three times a week, he receives a phone call from a woman, a perfect stranger. 'Is this Herman Brusselmans? The Benelux's undisputed king of cunnilingus? Your technique is outdated and revoltingly conservative. I just climaxed thanks to the tongue of a certain James Worthy, the Redeemer. Greetings, Aafke. P.S. Your books remain unsurpassed.' (J.W. p. 124-125)

- **Love: catching a glimpse and the partial visibility of the urban city**

None of the young characters of these stories seems to have doubts about the value of real love. Real love is described as the strongest feeling, as the engine of life. The conception of love they share is similar to the one they use to determine real friends: they appear in your path, like a destiny.

⁶⁸ Red: James is still a fervent 'duimzuiger'. That is why his thumb has bumps.

This is why, in the account of that special moment of finding love, the characters resort to words associated with apparitions, underlining the impression of an ‘unexpected occasion’, ‘fugacity of the moment’: In *Ego Faber*, love appears suddenly in the form of a girl travelling on public transport, but an encounter is thwarted by other people, including a mother with three children, and later on, near Leidseplein, a whole new load of passengers, who stop the narrator from approaching the girl or even seeing where she alights from the tram: ‘Among the anonymous faces she stands out, upright as a ballerina ... I stand at the tram stop and I get a feeling that is acute, imminent and irreversible. I’m in love’.⁶⁹

The same kinds of expressions are used at similar moments in the other works: James Worthy with Polly (*JW*), Kees with his dream girl, who is a student of theatre in Maastricht (*K&S*), Dennis when meets Sanne as he arrives in the city (*Sterke verhalen*), and Otto and Bobby in the boat, and later, at other places in Amsterdam, summarized by Otto as follows:

I’m sitting here in the shop of the Rijksmuseum with lots of Americans taking pictures. I have a series of pictures in my head myself, which pass by in a non-stop slideshow: you on the boat, our fingers touching when I passed you my cigarette, your face with a look of utter confusion on it on Leidseplein, sparks and crackles in your face at less than two inches from mine (my favourite!), you standing shyly next to your bike in the Vondelpark: I just wanted to look and look and then look some more. (*DDNK*, p. 163).

What is interesting in this case is that the narrators are already aware that real love will come at once, and that they also had the premonition that it would happen in a place such as Amsterdam, as they have learned from shared stories.

However, love does not necessarily lead to a happy ending. For the narrator of *Ego Faber*, for example, it is a bitter-sweet moment when, finally able to talk to his dream girl in the temple of pop, club Paradiso, she only has eyes for his friend Ego Faber. Nevertheless, the way feelings for a stranger are developed in encounters marked by short, quick glimpses is a recurrent theme used in the construction of the cosmopolitan city. The visual image of seeing the object of love from a moving vehicle or vice versa has a long tradition in films. In such images, the anonymous crowd suddenly gives way to a momentary glimpse of ‘the One’.

While the encounter in *Ego Faber* has a melancholic start and a dramatic ending, such an encounter will be the beginning of a love story with a happy ending in *Dingen die niet kunnen* (Bobby and Otto), *Het is weer raak met Kees en Sjaak* (Kees and Kikki) and *James Worthy* (James forgetting Polly after

⁶⁹ ‘Ik sta bij een tramhalte en heb last van een gevoel dat acuut, dreigend en onomkeerbaar is –ik ben verliefd. | Het meisje geeft licht’ (*EF*, p. 23).

meeting Aafke). The promise of love hangs in the air and arrives in Amsterdam, which becomes a city of real, meaningful love.

In collecting evidence, I have especially taken into account the descriptions of characters and places that already form part of the collective imaginary of the reader due to a process of cross-referencing. These are references that have been repeatedly used in other Dutch texts and already rely on a sort of shared meaning. For example, the mature women with short, cheap, self-dyed red hair has become a kind of stereotype of a woman who is not elegant but only practical. Writer and columnist Martin Brill has used the image frequently in his well-read columns in the *Volkscrant* newspaper. It is clear that the image occurring in our corpus is used as a reference to a woman the characters do not want to be, or be with, when getting older (*GO*, p. 158).

Conversely, the character of Ego Faber, with his dark eyes and hair, has the stereotypical attractiveness of someone of mixed race, half-Asian and half-European (he has a Javanese grandmother). Ego is extremely beautiful and intelligent but also mysterious and disquieting. An allusion to a picture of his father refers to an obscure past that makes him even more attractive. Ego becomes the irresistible but destructive personification of love, a reference to the dark sides of the city. At Ego Faber's funeral, the narrator reflects on his friend: Ego Faber, fallen angel, the bravest guy I ever knew. | He lies in his coffin with the graceful beauty of a vampire, capable you would think of suddenly opening his eyes at any moment and flying into the night in search of fresh blood.⁷⁰

Moreover, he finishes his account of the funeral by expressing the strength of his feelings for him, 'with just one thought keeping me in motion, keeping me alive – I LOVE EGO FABER.'⁷¹

b. The homecoming

• Sense of Place

Sense of place is of paramount importance to the works we are analysing. It is a sense that manifests itself as an intimate relationship with the starting point for the accomplishment of one's dreams. For the main characters who come from outside Amsterdam, having managed to make it to Amsterdam at all is already a step in the right direction. The feeling of arriving at the new place is like a 'homecoming', meaning that it suits one's life expectations.

⁷⁰ 'Ego Faber, gevallen engel, de dapperste jongen die ik ooit heb gekend. | Hij ligt in zijn kist met de gracieuze schoonheid van een vampier, in staat om ieder moment zijn ogen open te slaan en de nacht in te duiken op zoek naar vers bloed' (*EF*, p. 10).

⁷¹ 'met maar één gedachte die me in beweging, in leven houdt – I LOVE EGO FABER' (*EF*, p. 11).

However, this sense of place also needs to be seen as in the process of developing. That Amsterdam fulfils the first expectations of newcomers with creative aspirations does not mean that the initial sense will remain intact. Living in a city like Amsterdam while studying is seen by some of the characters as the right place to be during this particular time in their lives; however, it is not necessarily seen as the place they wish to spend the rest of their life. The narrator of *Ego Faber* seems to retain the feeling that when life in Amsterdam hurts too much, his home town in the south of the Netherlands will provide the comfort and solace he needs. In a similar vein, when things get difficult in Amsterdam, Mees moves with his friend to his grandfather's house in one of the smaller cities of Het Gooi (probably Naarden or Bussum), about 20 to 30 kilometres from Amsterdam.

In contrast, some of the other characters appear to have developed long-term ties with the city, finding a job and a more appropriate place to live than a student room. Bobby has managed to find a beautiful apartment that she shares with a friend, while James Worthy, who already has a conveniently located apartment near Waterlooplein, says that one day, should he ever achieve the serenity he associates with being older, he would like to live in Henri Polaklaan ('the nicest street in Amsterdam' *JW*, p. 60), a peaceful nineteenth-century street near the Zoo. Kees also sees his plans to move to London as only entailing a provisional stay abroad to address the inconvenient fact of not having been admitted into the Film Academy in Amsterdam. It is clear that he considers the prospect of study in London as means of gaining the required maturity he apparently lacks (remember that the Film Academy in Amsterdam had not admitted him precisely because of his lack of life experience), returning to Amsterdam with enough baggage to pursue a successful future as a writer and filmmaker.

Covering both short and long-term expectations, the topic of homecoming is also related to the idea of feeling at home, without the restrictions of one's childhood home and being under the guardianship of parents and others (no matter how sympathetic). In this process of making 'a life that fits', the city appears as the emancipating agent, the place to design one's own future, the place to establish new liaisons with like-minded people, regardless of one's origins or social class.⁷²

Conversely, the city also appears as a place of estrangement and alienation. In some scenes, Ego Faber's Amsterdam is seen in opposition to the warmth of the countryside (represented by cheerful scenes of Carnival celebrations in Breda). One of the most significant moments is a painful scene in Amsterdam's Paradiso, which the narrator sees as a symbol of the unattainable, a place before which he feels a paralyzing admiration ('all of the greatest have performed here'). When he is pushed away

⁷² Differences in income or social provenance are not expressed as relevant to this group.

by the bouncer with the message that they do not like ‘pill swallowers’ he seems unable to do anything other than agree, and so waits outside until the venue closes its doors in the early morning and his friends Rein and Ego emerge. In this way, while real Amsterdammers display their *savoir faire*, dancing and chatting with confidence, *Ego Faber’s* narrator becomes aware of his own clumsiness. To him, the despising gaze of the bouncer mirrors his own feelings of not counting for anything: ‘Men like him always know exactly who you are’.⁷³

In other clubs in the novels, the bouncers guarding the door, deciding which of the young people waiting in line will get in or not, are a decisive *factor* influencing feelings of belonging. Scenes of bouncers rejecting or allowing entrance are also significant in the Berlin of *Het is weer raak bij Kees en Sjaak*. One could say that here the contrast between provincialism and cosmopolitanism comes into play. For the bouncers in Berlin’s renowned underground clubs, tourists are tourists, even if the name of Amsterdam seems to confer some credit on our main characters. Thus, the ability of Sjaak to circumvent the door policies in such a club and in such a city may doubtlessly be interpreted as evidence of advanced social skills. (*K&S*, p. 54-56).

Concerning the sense of place, many of Kees’ observations in Berlin are doubtlessly to be taken as alternative accounts to those which idealize this city as a youth paradise. This is because, even if Kees’ narrative style is especially light and undramatic, he manages to express some crucial doubts about the right way to ‘be young’. While walking to what are, for his generation, mythical Berlin clubs, for example, he observes that ‘the nearer they are, the more rats they see’ (*K&S*, p. 41). In fact, it is clear that Kees questions the blind affirmation of the underground scene. Therefore, at times he doubts the extended, romanticized ideal, common among his friends, that being young and developing one’s own sense of self and belonging imply experiencing everything:

According to Sjaak it’s always possible to take it to the next level: better, faster, harder and crazier. That makes me feel really tired sometimes. Not that I think things are only getting worse, I’m not that depressed. It’s more a sense of powerlessness I feel. There’s no denying the fact that at some point I am going to have to leave the safety of home and make my way into the outside world.

And then?

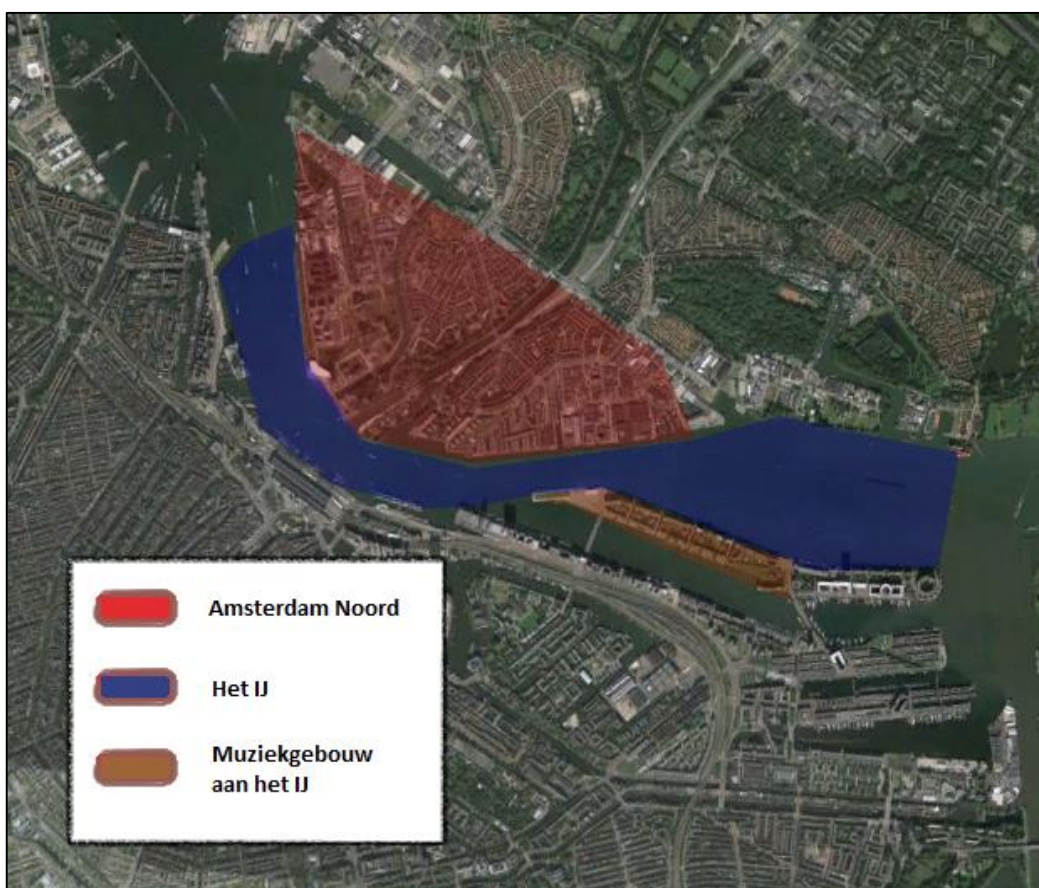
‘Then you can do whatever you please. Lead your own life. Listening to nineties hits completely naked, until deep in the night, with whisky and a some homeless guy. That kind of shit.’ (*K&S*, p.51).

⁷³ ‘Hij werpt een geringschattende blik toe. Mannen zoals hij weten altijd precies wie je bent’ (*EF*, p. 77).

For Kees, trespassing on the threshold of adulthood does not come without fear. As well as saying farewell to the ‘refrigerator’ in his parental house, growing up also means saying farewell to childhood and to school, when everything was sweet and friendly, and having doubts was only an intellectual exercise without consequences for real life.⁷⁴

- **Typifying Amsterdam**

In relation to typifying Amsterdam, it is very interesting to see that the lives of our main characters, even when they belong to different fictional works, are interconnected through their interpretations and demarcations of places in the city. Looking at those places using a map of the city, there appears to be a clearly defined area in which the action takes place, including specific regions of Amsterdam, demarcating the preferred locus of their various activities.



In terms of where to live, the characters all choose the former nineteenth-century blue-collar neighbourhoods of the Pijp, the Jordaan and the Old West. These areas are well known for having undergone a gradual gentrification process while seeming to have retained a reputation as a place

⁷⁴ ‘Cast doubt on everything, is what my history teacher had given me by way of a kind of homework assignment for life. [...] I had agreed with that wholeheartedly, but I had the feeling that living my life according to this maxim was starting to drag me down.’ (K&S, p. 52).

where unconventional and creative people tend to live. As such, they suit the imaginations of our main characters. If such areas maintain their attractiveness more than other areas in the city, it is probably because, as Paul Claval pointed out in one of his studies of the Jordaan, ‘the new residents include many well-educated young people, but few of the yuppies elsewhere associated with the gentrification process’. This could explain, ‘as emphasized by Edward Soja’, the evolution of Amsterdam as a ‘creative city’,⁷⁵ rather than a more traditional city with a concentration on yuppie careers in fields such as banking or law. Concerning their future, the neighbourhood around the Artis Zoo is named as a place to live when really ‘grown-up’ and settled: a place for serene maturity.

Where they live, or the fact that they use an old city bike rather than another form of transport (such as a motorbike), is even more meaningful that it might seem. The old rickety city bike separates inner-city dwellers from commuters living outside the city, and is, as a real-life blogger observes, the natural transportation mode of a sort of Amsterdam spirit.

Not only the bicycle as such but above all the way one rides a bike in Amsterdam seems to have a signification that is used to illustrate the feeling of freedom in Amsterdam. Bobby (*DDNK*), bicycling with one hand while trying to find her mobile in a bag banging from the handlebar of her bike, offers a recognizable image of a particular kind of cyclist in Amsterdam. Taking into account cross-references it is interesting to see that the blogger mentioned above writes: ‘It is amazing how people multitask on the bikes, women above all’.⁷⁶

Cyclists chatting on their mobiles while zipping along Amsterdam streets dodging cars, trams, pedestrians or other bikes can be understood as a metaphor for a lack of concern for the rules, or in other words, freedom. It suggests a form of anarchic behaviour that might be interpreted as chaotic, but is also free and unconventional.⁷⁷

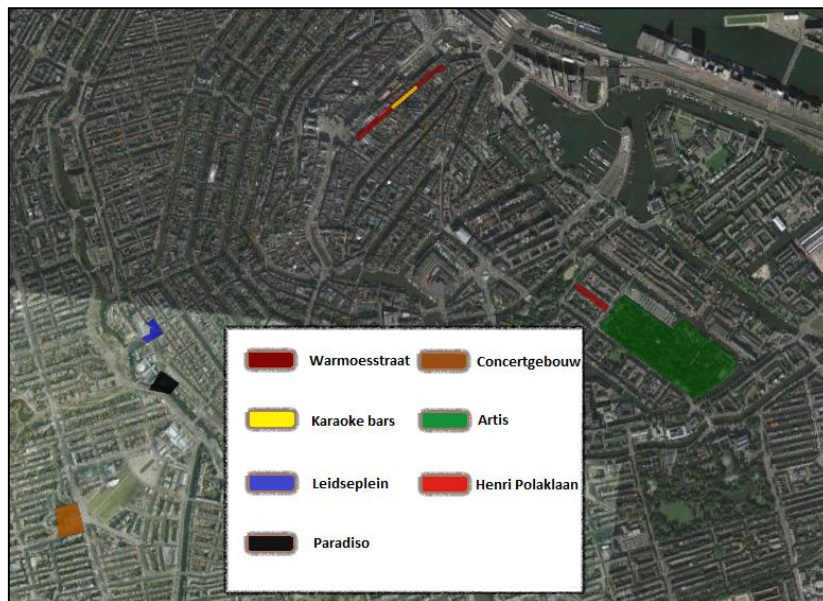
The fictional works also appear to locate the places where young people who are similar to our characters like to go out. The route would include small cafes within the so-called ‘ring-road’ around Amsterdam (the area inside the A10 motorway). A large number of them are described, some of them by name, such as the well-known Winston in Warmoesstraat or popular new, ‘ordinary

⁷⁵ Paul Claval, ‘The Cultural Dimension in Restructuring Metropolises: The Amsterdam Example’, in *Understanding Amsterdam*, ed. by Léon Deben, Willem Heinemeyer, and Dick van der Vaart (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 2007), pp. 59–92 (pp. 59–60).

⁷⁶ In Brian, ‘Amsterdam Bicycles. 82 Pictures of Bicycles Taken during 73 Minutes on 9/12/06 in Amsterdam, Netherlands’, *Weblog*, 2006 <http://www.ski-epic.com/amsterdam_bicycles/>.

⁷⁷ Scenes such as this one matches with what Soja has called ‘The successful achievement of highly regulated urban anarchism [...]’ In ‘The stimulus of a little confusion’, Deben, Heinemeyer and van der Vaart, p. 120.

peoples' places, like the Karaoke bar, also in Warmoesstraat, which are kept for moments in which nothing seems to matter anymore (JW).



Discos at the popular squares of Leidseplein and Rembrandtplein are viewed with disdain. The Escape disco on Rembrandtplein appears in Kees van Nieuwkerk's movie, *Sterke verhalen*, as the disco for provincial youth. Also, Leidseplein is seen as a kind of vulgar spot 'for football supporters and sixteen-year-old high school girls' (DDNK, p. 68). Nonetheless, considered just as an inner-city square, Leidseplein appears to remain interesting as a referent because it offers a cosmopolitan view of the city (crowded, noisy and the intersection of different crowds).

At their age, and despite becoming adults, the characters reveal that they still like to engage in some childlike activities and pursuits. Now and then, they still like to play, enjoying wasting time, with no regard for external duties and rules. Playfulness, for example, is concretized when using the facilities of the city in ways they were not designed for. Various scenes can be found as a constant in these works. They use the escalators in the department stores along the commercial shopping street (Kalverstraat) as an easy way to promenade, they hang off the fence of Artis Zoo rather than going in, they play with water guns on a boat in Amsterdam's canals, organize guessing games in the city, tell 'tall stories' sheltering from the summer rain in a shed in a playground, and even ride a mower around the city streets and steal a penguin from the Zoo.



Dennis and Sanne at the Museumplein Square in *Sterke Verhalen*.⁷⁸

The neighbourhood of the Old South in Amsterdam is used as a synonym for quality schooling. *Ego Faber's* narrator, for example, is convinced that among his co-students at university he can always distinguish those who went to 'Vossius, Hervormd Lycea and all those chic schools in Amsterdam South since they have a *quasi-nonchalant* way of looking good that distinguishes them from other students at the University of Amsterdam' (*EF*, p. 47). The prestigious venues in the South such as Paradiso – the pop capital of Amsterdam, located in a church building on Weteringschans since 1968 – as well as the Concertgebouw, Amsterdam's Concert Hall. Close to them, Vondelpark and its bars, the Blue Tea House and Vertigo, occupy emblematic buildings and have maintained their charm as a referent for this group as well.

Some new areas in the city also seem to have been welcomed. A tour that Bobby and Otto take on a friend's boat, which is a common real-life leisure activity, shows that in 2007, in which the novel is situated, the terrace of the new Muziekgebouw aan 't IJ (the Concert hall along the IJ foreshore) had already become a place that people such as Otto and his friends enjoyed – in the scene they spot a friend on the terrace drinking a wheat beer (*DDNK*, p. 21). In real life, almost imperceptibly, more and more cafes, restaurants and clubs are opening on the banks of the new Docklands area.⁷⁹ At the

⁷⁸ Source: Tim, 'DVD: Sterke Verhalen', *Film info. Fok.nl* (Amsterdam, 10 January 2011) <<http://frontpage.fok.nl/review/423926/1/1/50/dvd-sterke-verhalen.html>>.

⁷⁹ Daphna Beerdsen, 'Out and about on the IJ', which. In: Lebesque and others, p. 290.

same time, new facilities, such as stairs down to the water, make it possible to swim in natural water in the city. Jumping into the water in the summer is no longer something reserved for lower class children whose families can't afford a holiday outside Amsterdam, instead seeming to illustrate a new understanding of the contemporary urban environment. In this sense, it does not seem to be a coincidence that Richard Florida was one of those who advised the city council to incorporate such amenities in the area to ensure that it became lively and diversified – and as such attractive to the creative class.⁸⁰

Among these new areas, Amsterdam North is gradually being incorporated as a locus for the alternative creative industry and as a place of improvised parties in old industrial buildings taken over by squatters. The narrator of *Ego Faber* mentions that they usually get lost when they cycle to a party in the North, which points to a shared feeling of being pioneers in an unknown area (*EF*). Dennis, our naive country boy from *Sterke verhalen*, also ends up at an obscure party in the North, with the area being portrayed as a kind of local Berlin-style party scene.

Finally, the rooms and dwellings of the main characters (and their friends and acquaintances) have an important signification, as signs of independence and the development of identity during the coming of age process. In *Het is weer raak met Kees en Sjaak*, the fact that Kees is still living in his parents' house is seen as evidence of his lack of experience and maturity. His friend Sjaak puts it this way: 'Nothing ever happens to you [worth writing about]' 'We'll start work tomorrow. I'll come and pick you up tomorrow at eleven. Yes, from your parent's house – because that's where you still live. Hopeless! Getting it in your head to start writing a book, just like that, what were you thinking...'⁸¹

For the other main characters, who have already left their parental homes, the location of their new home is important. When arriving in Amsterdam, the narrator of *Ego Faber* is determined not to accept anything other than a place in the city centre, and finds a room on Singel with a view of the Maagdenhuis, the *University of Amsterdam* administrative centre, which evokes for him the student revolts of 1969. Later, when he gets to know more about Ego's Amsterdam, he moves to Ego's in a less touristy area of the city.

The places where Otto, Bobby and their friends live are carefully chosen: Westerstraat in the Jordaan, Jacob van Lennepkade in Amsterdam West or Rustenburgerstraat in the Pijp. In a city such

⁸⁰ Evert Verhagen includes the anecdote concerning Richard Florida's advice during his stay in Amsterdam in 2003. In: 'Cultural Drawcards', Lebesque and others, p. 169.

⁸¹ 'Jij maakt niets mee' 'Morgen gaan we meteen aan de slag. Ik kom je om 11 uur oppikken. Ja, bij je ouders thuis. Omdat je daar nog woont. Kansloos. Denk zomaar een boek te gaan schrijven, hoe haal je het...' (*K&S*, p. 9-10)

as Amsterdam, with its notorious housing shortage, the fact that they manage to find a place in these desirable old areas can only be interpreted as a sign of success. For Otto, living in Westerstraat in the Jordaan was a long cherished desire: 'our house is our most precious possession'. In order to live in the Jordaan they had to give up 'lots of weekends working on the new house, without shower, kitchen or anything other than a mattress and candle light' (*DDNK*, p. 42). It seems more than a coincidence that Otto, like the narrator of *Ego Faber*, refers to the Mirandabad, the public swimming pool on Westerstraat and Marnixstraat, as the temporary solution for the lack of a shower at home. There is no doubt that to not have a shower is preferable to living outside the city centre. In this way, stories about getting a place in a good location in Amsterdam constitute shared experiences, which distinguish the kind of people they are.

The party at the end of *Het is weer raak met Kees en Sjaak* provides an insight into the kind of place that is clearly not the sort of dwelling that would be appropriate for the creative class. In fact, it can be seen as an example of the typical student fraternity house,⁸² where friends of Kees and Sjaak who have already started university are living. The significant details that suggest it is a fraternity house are the house rules, in terms of the number of students living there and the fixed seasonal traditional activities: each year the eight students living in the fraternity house throw a big party before the annual house clean-up. The references to blackboards listing shifts in the kitchen are also revealing as belonging to the typical organization of a fraternity house, including ironic jokes such as 'the monthly minorities menu', related to inviting members of a minority group to the house each month ('the blacks, the Jews'). This seems to be a parody of the official policy of local councils to promote multicultural encounters with the aim of improving communication between different groups within neighbourhoods (*K&S*, p. 87).

Despite this irony, and the fact that references to minorities are not frequent in the works analysed, 'multiculturalism' and the idea of a diversified city are generally found to be a positive and inherently valuable aspect of Amsterdam. For the narrator of *Ego Faber*, diversity is a feature of metropolitan life that he aspires to. His first thoughts after arriving in Amsterdam, one day after 9/11, reveals a perverse pride in the possibility that Amsterdam could also be the target of a similar terrorist attack because of its ungodliness. He puts it this way:

If someone is planning an attack in the Netherlands they are bound to do it in Amsterdam, I am sure of that. After all, Amsterdam is the most godless city of Western Europe, a city of Jewish mayors,

⁸² The imaginary of the fraternity students is the topic of the following chapter.

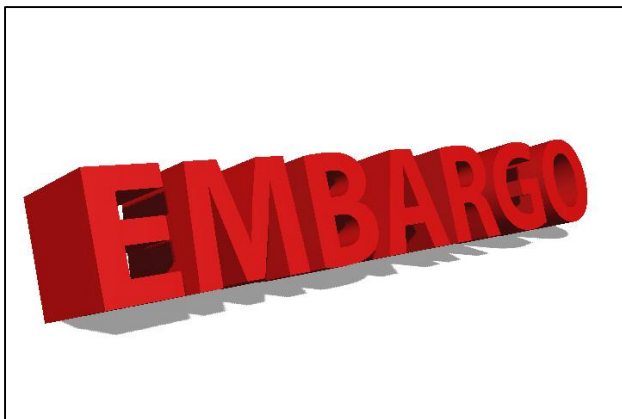
prostitutes, junkies, yuppies, criminals, illegal aliens, students and muslims – all of this, all of them, tucked away in this miniature version of a real metropolis. (*EF*, p. 20).

Concerning multiculturalism, it is also interesting to consider that it is a Moroccan lady in Vondelpark who, because of her motherly and caring gaze, seems to provide Bobby with the comfort she needs at a moment when she is losing control of her feelings for Otto:

Like Amsterdam's village idiot I cycle slowly through the Vondelpark in circles. Inside my pocket I grip the serviette from the monastery between my fingers. I can feel the tears about to break through but I won't let them. I get off my bike and look for a spot in the grass among the dandelions. I don't want to cry. Things were going so well. I was feeling so zen. Why did he have to go and do that? I pluck the dandelions from the ground with a wild, grasping motion. As if they had anything to do with it. I am surrounded by discarded dandelions but I keep going. I put one of them in my hair. I look around me in a dazed way. Next to me a Moroccan family has spread out a rug: pans, dishes and bowls full of tasty food are taken out of a bag. The mother looks at me with concern, her eyes questioning me. I raise my thumb. Slowly, I can feel my head clear. I've had enough of this. I hurry back home on the bike, sit myself down behind my laptop and, with my coat still on, start typing an email. (*DDNK*, p. 120).

Although in terms of literary quality the excerpt above can be considered as a precarious elaboration of popular clichés, the truth is that nothing in it induces us to doubt the sincerity of Bobby's feelings. Vondelpark, with its wild dandelions and bucolic picnics, including the understanding gaze of what seems to be an evocation of the primal mother, clearly provides a picture of paradise in the city. It goes without saying that images and clichés such as these could not be captured without intertextuality. Bobby's insistence on putting flowers in her hair and the context of the Vondelpark are all references to a hippy Amsterdam, actualized in the present by creative professionals such as Otto and Bobby.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the image of Vondelpark, distilled from the scene narrated by Bobby, seems especially related to the perception of a relative newcomer. Bobby's description does not include any reference to an extended personal bond with the park, for example, as experienced as a child or an adolescent. In contrast, James Worthy's narrative frequently draws on long-term first-hand experiences of Amsterdam. He recounts a scene in which he runs after an angry Aafke as she leaves the Blue Teahouse, which reminds him of the annual Vondelpark *Brandweerloop* (a fun run organized by the fire brigade) that he used to run as a child, with his father and his friends Mathias and Jules. (*JW*, p. 177).



Reminiscences of hippy life, Vondelpark 1979.⁸³

In this sense, through his eyes, the desire for reconciliation and to finally settle down and make a life in Amsterdam with Aafke are in concert with his memories of a happy childhood. The child that he is planning to have with Aafke will be a new symbol of the love, fertility and kindness of the city, which he transcends through his writing. It is not coincidental that he evokes one of the best known images of love in Dutch literary and film tradition, carrying Aafke on his back 'like *Turkish Delight* without a bicycle'. Their son will be the son of 'Apollo. The son of Zeus and Leto. The god of reconciliation, music and the city.'⁸⁴

James' references to music, reconciliation and the city may also be seen as the catalysts of new creative influences in the stream of city life. The truth is that in the corpus analysed, the projections of the artists are especially mixed with what we could call the archetype of the independent individual creator, either in the form of the complete rock star (*EF*), a hip hop MC (*K&S*) (*JW*), a successful writer (all of them) or a creative entrepreneur (*GO*, *DDNK*). As such, more than the stereotype of passive sleeping hippies with flowers in their hair, these creative narrators seem to appeal to and actualize different facets of the very broad imaginary of the bohemian and the urban wanderer as an artist and creator. Rather than extended sessions lying on the grass, their stories combine short periods of rest with extended periods of movement and activity along the streets.

For our main narrators, the experience of the rhythm of the city is also intertwined with the need to hunt for 'meaningful' signs and impressions. Doubtless, there are many moments at which the processes involved are visible – I have already referred to the alternative states of immersion and observation of city life – but there is a particular scene that is especially illustrative of the sense of

⁸³ ANP Community, 'Amsterdam, 8 September 1979. Hippies in Het Vondelpark', *ANP Foundation* <<http://www.anp-archief.nl/page/2180280/nl>>.

⁸⁴ 'Van Apollon. De zoon van Zeus en Leto. De god van de verzoening, muziek en de stad' (*JW*, p. 186).

momentum that is attributed to skilled hunters. The scene is from *Ego Faber* and takes place at Oosterpark on the day of the assassination of filmmaker Theo van Gogh by an Islamic fundamentalist, Mohammed Bouyeri, in one of the adjacent streets – 2 November 2004. As a point of reference, it is interesting to note that the real Oosterpark is a typical local city park. In contrast to Vondelpark, it is not frequented by tourists or other visitors. People from the neighbourhood jog in it, others cross it by bicycle, while the customary group of vagabonds and drunkards gather around the tables and benches at one of the entrances.

We are lying in the grass of the Oosterpark, it's already long past midnight. Lazy and languid, like a lion rolling onto its other side in the shadow of the African sun, I wallow in the greenery. The weed makes my senses tingle, soothing my main neuroses at the same time.⁸⁵

As if they were wanderers, the narrator and his friends, Ego and Rein, have spent the whole night in the park. At dawn they start to see the first joggers '[...] fiftysomethings who want to pass as fit thirtysomethings and fit thirtysomethings who hope one day to become sprightly fiftysomethings.'⁸⁶

Unlike their own nature, which opposes conventional sporting activities such as jogging, they only prepare themselves for challenging adventures: 'Guys like us don't go jogging. If we were to do anything, it would be swimming across the Bosporus or fencing with rapiers, without masks.'⁸⁷

Like lions at rest, they remain apathetic, sitting on a bench until they suddenly hear a strange sound coming from Linnaeusstraat: a sound that resembles gun shots in an action movie, followed by horrified screams. Shortly afterwards a man with a gun enters the park. He has no eyes for them and heads towards Mauritskade.

They quickly head towards Linnaeusstraat where they see the whole scene surrounding a dead man on the ground. 'One of the officers turns his head in our direction in annoyance'.⁸⁸ The policeman probably also thinks that they are vagabonds – with their pale faces and dark circles around their eyes, they could even serve as 'models for a drugs advertorial'. However, the interesting thing about their drifting is that, as often happens with wanderers, while other pedestrians cannot stop too long, or are already at work in conventional offices, the three become eyewitnesses to an important historical moment in the city's life: 'The lunacy has struck for the second time in this country. Someone is sprawled on the ground. A man in the midst of a growing circus of bystanders, police

⁸⁵ The following quotes related to this scene are from *Ego Faber*, pp. 87-89.

⁸⁶ '[...] vijftigers die willen doorgaan voor fitte dertigers en fitte dertigers die hopen eens kwieke vijftigers te worden.'

⁸⁷ 'Jongens als wij joggen niet. Als wij iets zouden doen, dan zouden we de Bosporus overzwemmen of schemeren met rapieren zonder maskers.'

⁸⁸ 'Eén agent draait zijn hoofd geërgerd naar ons toe'

officers and paramedics rushing toward the scene – he lies there motionless in a sea of blood.’⁸⁹ And after the hunt, the reflection of the urban drifter follows: ‘There is no after us. Just the deluge.’⁹⁰

With this last observation, the young country boy, with his ‘pure and unprejudiced’ look at things, the narrator who, from the beginning, has tried so hard to experience the city, ‘wandering and drifting’ on foot or by tram and trying to write about those experiences ‘met enige grandeur’ (‘with a certain grandeur’), testifies to what he thinks is the Flood Myth. It will also be the prelude to a less romantic view, as, in the end, he will describe Amsterdam as a:

[...] many-headed monster. Cyclists, cars, scooters, thousands of pedestrians. Everyone is wearing a raincoat, everyone is looking at the ground. Even if they aren’t looking at me, I can still see that all people are werewolves, constantly on the hunt, always on the lookout for prey. (*EF*, p. 211).

Despite the biblical Babylon associations and the sadness that the narrator feels, it is important to remember that his mission when arriving in Amsterdam had been to experience life in all its facets.

James Worthy, who is older than the narrator of *Ego Faber* and who overcomes the many troubles he has had, can afford a more benevolent view of the dynamism of city life while walking with Aafke through Vondelpark on a sunny day. He sees how:

Two preppy student types are throwing a frisbee about with a dog in their midst, like an indecisive island. Every time the poor mutt chooses a side the green disk is already on its way back again. Life, in a nutshell. (*JW*, p. 174).

For him this purposeless chasing that characterizes life in general is no longer a cause for anxiety because he has found his personal harbour in intimacy. He ends his reflection by saying to Aafke: ‘I am so happy with you, Aaf’.

3.5. Conclusions

The main purpose of this chapter has been to outline some salient features of the ‘imaginary’ of Amsterdam as perceived and represented by young adults within the Dutch cultural and literary frame. The characteristics ascribed to Amsterdam – social, spatial, emotional and moral – produce an

⁸⁹ ‘De waanzin heeft voor de tweede keer toegeslagen in dit land. Er ligt iemand op de grond. Een man te midden van een groeiend circus van omstanders, politieagenten en aangesnelde ambulance medewerkers – hij ligt stil in een zee van bloed.’ With the words ‘the second time’ he is undoubtedly referring to the assassination of politician Pim Fortuyn during the Dutch national election campaign in 2002.

⁹⁰ ‘Er is geen na ons. Er is slechts de zondvloed.’

informal typology; having established that typology and the bandwidth of its associations and connotations, in the following chapters we will be in a position to trace how various cohorts or ‘tribes’ of young adults negotiating the city come to terms, each from their own perspective, with its imaginary.

The image of Amsterdam as a creative place, which has emerged in this chapter, occurs within a literary tradition in which the free character of the city is underlined by the unconventionality of its people. The background of concrete change in Dutch society from the 1960s (and particularly in the 1970s and 1980s), which were especially visible in Amsterdam through the official adoption of liberal policies, have undoubtedly emphasized and contributed to the persistence of these images today. Informally, this typology suggests that Amsterdam is a place in which everybody can be who they really are, finding in this process of affirmation a degree of recognition through professional and personal experiences. This imaginary appears to be strongly influenced by stories from the 1960s and 1970s, by writers such as Remco Campert and Jan Wolkers. As mentioned above, the literary critic Elsbeth Etty also confessed that such works, and the ambiance they evoked, together with even earlier sources such as *Multatuli*, had already led the dreams of a generation of young people from the provinces who moved to study in Amsterdam in the 1970s, hoping to experience the kind of life they had read about in novels and seen in the news.⁹¹

The view of today’s Amsterdam, as depicted in the works of the young writers analysed above, is in line with this tradition. Furthermore, echoes of the young and creative ambience in Amsterdam around the end of the 1980s, as portrayed by Zwagerman’s *Gimmick* (1989), are indubitably present, especially in *Ego Faber* and *James Worthy*. Like *Gimmick*, the main characters of the corpus analysed here seem to operate in a space beyond the traditional ideological differences between left and right. In such a context, the characters’ way of being is continuously actualized and interpreted through adopted attitudes. Irony, for example, allows them to frequent the ambience of ‘wannabes’ without automatically becoming one of them. When mixed in the right combination, all of these ingredients enable our main characters to transcend a banal reality in becoming a better version of themselves. It is not coincidental that James Worthy finishes his novel by thanking Amsterdam for having liberated him from an unattractive future as a ‘*gescheiden leesmapbezorger*’, a ‘divorced magazine delivery guy’. Instead, he has become a ‘creative drifter’, a writer who loves to be alive.

As a primary conclusion, and linked to the words of Worthy, another important pattern to emerge from our discursive analysis of these representations of the Amsterdam imaginary is the

⁹¹ van Ojen, Pleizier and van Trigt, p. 65.

interdependence of the subjects' sense of identity and that of the city they find themselves in. The texts studied here are all 'coming of age' tales involving young adults whose careers take them into the 'creative class'. Their development, growth into adulthood and growing awareness of their own personalities, is a process described in tandem with their evolving relationship with the Amsterdam environment, as a binary process in which both elements – the subject and the city – mutually establish each other's identity in the course of the narrative; young people get to know (and shape) themselves in the process of getting to know Amsterdam. Indeed, this may be the fundamental pattern underlying the imaginary: that Amsterdam has an ambience which is necessarily identity-forming.

Most of the first-person narrators share a constellation of images and a notion of life in which success is based on the idea of making dreams come true. They share the dream of what Florida has called 'the creative class'. As we have seen, for them, the city is not attractive simply because of the 'high tech parks, the major opera or the professional sport teams but for the feeling that a place offers to its citizens and visitors of being tolerant, open and diverse'. They feel that in Amsterdam they will be recognized for their merits without having to wear a standard business suit. They are confident they will make it because they can write, put their ideas on paper, make business plans and attract the attention of the media when staging an event. They assume that Amsterdam, with its large population, is the place to develop the skills of every passionate and talented young person, giving them the opportunity to show them to the 'right' person, a person who will recognize and understand them.

What is remarkable is that they are clearly not interested in any official education offered at a specific university, but in an education in life. Similarly, for them, important encounters take place by coincidence. They are not at all interested in organized encounters with other students belonging to student associations or other groups. Their new friends and lovers are met by chance, after short encounters in trains, streets or open parties. Friends appear accidentally, as if this just happens, and as if they were real family. The idea of friends as an urban surrogate family recalls popular television sitcoms as well as other images from the press, cinema and other media such as social networks.

Furthermore, the various texts reveal a clear intertextuality, including contemporary creative influences and tendencies in city life. As we have seen, the projections of the sort of artists they want to become are not univocal. It seems to include a mix of rock stars, hip hop MCs, creative entrepreneurs, filmmakers and a diversity of alternative kinds of writers, including exponents of the 'lost generation', such as Fitzgerald. As such, rather than appealing to the stereotype of passive sleeping hippies with flowers in their hair, these creative narrators seem to actualize different facets

of the very broad imaginary of bohemian and urban wanderers, as artists and creators. One of the most important goals of their 'urban pilgrimage' would be the progressive acquisition of what is known as the 'emotional knowledge' of a place.

The idea of making dreams come true is crucial. That the dreams are projected onto Amsterdam is a strength of the image of the city. However, the true realization of these dreams appears intrinsically related to the development of 'feelings of belonging' during the move into adulthood. Overcoming different obstacles and achieving maturity will be a kind of rite of passage, in the context of which places in the city are explored and conquered: places where the different tribes can be found. All of these places are carefully named, showing that the characters become more competent in their knowledge of Amsterdam, discovering the nuances of the city themselves.

Therefore, the successful development of feelings of belonging can have important consequences for long-term feelings of bonding with Amsterdam. At times, the characters see Amsterdam as a place for young people, a city for young students, but not necessarily as a place to spend the rest of their lives. In this respect, Amsterdam is seen as a place to move on from, having achieved a certain goal or level of life experience, as well as, perhaps, achieving a concrete goal such as a degree, or even a life-partner or a child. Moreover, at times the city is associated with artificiality and superficiality, in direct contrast to the authentic feelings expressed in the romantic vision of life they share.

Consequently, it also seems legitimate to conclude that the creative literary imaginary into which we have entered reveals, in fact, a contradictory 'reality', a specific mix of traditions and images that were already latently present in the multiplicity of images of Amsterdam as a creative city. Those images oscillate from Amsterdam as the place in which personal and professional goals are completely intertwined with places and people, to Amsterdam seen as a 'voracious and insatiable many-headed monster'. For Amsterdam, this would mean that the general creative imaginary we have examined is attracted to the city because it is unpredictable and informal (fortuity, *carpe diem*, relaxed) but also safe (work, love, friends). It is authentic and pure (romantic vision), but does not take itself too seriously (youthful and vibrant).

In relation to Maffesoli's concept of the neo-tribe, the analysis seems to confirm that it is not abstract sociological segmentations *per se*, but the attachment to a specific 'way of being' that matters. We have seen that fixed images, clichés and stereotypes have an important function in the process of differentiating between people. They are used by our main characters to sketch the essential common attributes of what could be the primal character-types in urban student life, such as the bohemian, the boastful, the country boy, the talented entrepreneur, the connoisseur, the wannabe. However, at the same time, those attributions also show that valorizations depend on the

eye of the beholder. In this sense, the creative characters in Amsterdam may share images of the countryside as an undeveloped place, which in some cases and personifications would imply, as a counterpart, that boys from the country have purer ideals and are more curious about life than the indifferent cosmopolitan youth. Similarly, as we have seen, in Bobby's eyes, the Moroccan woman in Vondelpark becomes the personification of the primal mother, caring and understanding.

In terms of interpretation, these primal character-types can be seen as the necessary constituents of life narratives. In fact, we can consider that life projections are always connected with a narrative, for example, a traditional businessman working in a corporation projects a different kind of success than the one we have been examining. Therefore, it seems more than reasonable to conclude that a similar approach connecting actualizations of primal character-types, life expectations and places can be transferred to the analysis of other constellations of imaginaries in Amsterdam. Artefacts and stereotypes of behaviour that have emerged in this specific corpus of novels have already pointed to groups of antagonists, such as fraternity students (dasje-jasje/tie-jacket, hockey, beer, boast) or traditional business men, brokers and wannabes (traditional attire, women in 'bling-bling', and expensive cars).

One limitation of this approach might be that factual details such as artefacts and precise places cannot be presented as univocal evidence of a 'way of being'. We have seen that the reputation of places that are used as references can change, as is the case for Leidseplein in Amsterdam, formerly known as a progressive enclave, but now considered by this specific group as a commercial area for tourists and provincials. The Oosterpark area, which the narrator of *Ego Faber* frames as a piece of a genuine Amsterdam, is also currently undergoing an increasing gentrification process. It is believable that in the short-term, tourist guides will encourage a visit to the park, emphasizing its authenticity and *couleur local*. Likewise, artefacts such as a beard or iPhones used in these novels for realistic characterization might (and probably will) lose their credibility. The offices of the young Marktplaats company that were described by Otto in *Dingen die niet kunnen* have already relocated to a larger business area. The cargo bike that Mees used to express his status of hip entrepreneur has in the meantime mainly become the preferred mode of transport of young white mothers in gentrified areas. However, since it is not the actual references but the meaning attributed to them that matters, I presume that the final result of a broader analysis and interpretations applied to the entire corpus of texts will enable the depiction of a consistent typology of visions of life projected onto the city of Amsterdam.

At a meta level, the interesting thing about the analysis above lies in the possibilities it offers for a better exploration of the links between the quotidian – that is to say, the apparently insignificant and

ephemeral daily grind – and the ‘magic’ – as understood by Maffesoli, among others. The studies by Caillois analysing the relationship between dreams and the waking world, or between fiction and real life, are doubtlessly worth mentioning for further discussion. Finally, and in this regard, though I am not sure that the works we have examined here will become part of the annals of any future literary history of Amsterdam, they have accomplished at least two essential functions of literature.

Firstly, they have revealed something of ‘the logic of the imaginative’. All those confusing and chaotic moments that are an integral part of any human life are captured through the narrative that gives meaning to them. In this sense, the coming of age stories that we have discussed are the uniting form which gives sense to ‘that year’ or to ‘that summer’ in Amsterdam. Secondly, these texts have revealed a ‘creative’ tribe’s way of understanding and sharing their experience of Amsterdam, articulated through different versions of what Diacounu has called the ‘urban drifting methodology of the creative class’. In this drifting, and following the tradition of urban ‘wanderers’ and ‘tramps’, our characters become intertwined with the rhythm of the city in the double interplay of conquering and being conquered. The perseverance with which they depict or make reference to places they frequent is more than a mere literary trick for the sake of realism, it is above all a reflection of their experiences and progressive maturation, evidence of the development of their ‘emotional knowledge’ and of their idiosyncratic way of becoming a better version of themselves.

The dynamism and multifaceted character of the city also means that the self which is discovered in that context is a dynamic and fluid one, in tune with the postmodern ethos and time frame in which all of these tales are set (the turn of the twenty-first century). Accordingly, Amsterdam is positioned as a city allowing for an entire array of identities. These, indeed, are the ‘tribes’ which will be the successive focus of the next chapters. Having established this image of Amsterdam reflected in the contemporary creative literary imaginary, we can now analyse how that imaginary affects different tribal cohorts who currently derive their identities from their own ways of life in Amsterdam.

4. Capturing the Imaginary: the *Corps* as Tribe

4.1. Introduction: organized exclusivity of the student *corps* tribe

On the basis of the analysis of the novels in the previous chapter it can be concluded that for the specific ‘creative student tribe’ that emerged, a sense of place and belonging to the city is closely linked to spontaneous encounters with others. Following this logic, Amsterdam is perceived as a place with the potential to become the natural and permissive context for the actualization of their inner needs and dreams, intertwining their personal and professional experiences in a ‘creative city’.¹ The members of this tribe feel mutually linked by spontaneous, voluntary and informal ties. They are not interested in joining clubs or being involved in overly formal affiliations to specific associations.

Therefore, it almost goes without saying that one of the first contrasts with other possible tribes emerged in their own allusions to formalized traditional student associations whose members wear ‘uniforms’ and are described as ‘jackets and ties’. The few allusions were interesting, as a certain bias could make one believe that traditional student associations were not as common or persistent in Amsterdam as they were in other cities in the Netherlands such as Delft or Leiden, which are often referred to as traditional ‘student cities’. My own opinion was, in fact, that traditional student associations no longer played a significant role in the Amsterdam of today.

Nevertheless, it is obvious that Amsterdam – as a student city – is undeniably home to vestiges of a tradition and a past that lives on in the story of its institutions. The original faculties of the University of Amsterdam are housed in the oldest buildings in the city. Today, on the streets around the original Atheneum Illustre (1631) at the Agnietenkapel it is still possible to visualize former scenes of student life going back to the guilds of the Late Middle Ages, or scenes such as depicted in Rembrandt’s ‘Anatomy Lesson’.² In this context, it is not difficult to imagine the emergence of stable student associations during the nineteenth century.

¹ I am referring to the terms popularized by Charles Landry and Franco Bianchini, *The Creative City* (London: Demos, 1995); Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class And How It’s Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

² The portrait of professor Nicolae Tulp hangs on one of the walls of the main room at Agnietenkapel along with other portraits of former professors at UvA. van P.J.J. Regteren Altena, I.Q. Thiel, *De Portret-Galerij van de Universiteit van Amsterdam En Haar Stichter Gerard van Papenbroeck. 1673-1743* (Amsterdam: Swets en Zeitlinger, 1964).

In fact, as soon as one looks a little closer, the persistence of traditional student association life in the same surroundings becomes apparent. The ASC/AVSV³ clubhouse on Warmoesstraat, one of the oldest streets of Amsterdam, and the LANX⁴ clubhouse on Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal 163-167 are two examples.⁵ Could these large old clubhouses be seen as testimony to a kind of revival of traditional student life? Although *sensu stricto* the number of students who are members of these societies are proportionally small, over the last decades traditional student associations have experienced a clear growth in membership. At the time of writing, LANX had approximately 700 members, while the ASC/AVSV had more than 3,000 and has been compelled to introduce restrictions on the admissions system.⁶ In addition, the fact that student associations such as LANX and ASC/AVSV own specific buildings in the inner city provides food for thought about the current use of spaces in the older areas of Amsterdam. What does it mean to own a clubhouse in the inner city of Amsterdam? Is this a historical choice? Could it be related to the more general revival of old or traditional associations for professionals and traders?

Remarkably, while Amsterdam's inner city has – since the 1970s – predominantly been the area where more bohemian and transient inhabitants moved, much of them later establishing themselves in dwellings within the 'canal belt', today it is also becoming a place for the revival of conservative traditions. A certain return of localism has led to the rekindling of the concept of the 'only-for-members clubs'. Amsterdam houses a number of gentlemen's or 'gremial' clubs, located on Dam Square, the Nes and Rokin. The Industriële Grote Club, for example, has completely revived its character, claiming to be 'like a second home, where friends meet'. The building has an original polished wood interior and has even recently obtained the appellation of royal ('*koninklijk*') as an acknowledgement of its role in the city.⁷ In recent years, the work of young conservative historians such as Thierry Baudet have brought new *élan* to the discussion of what it means for cities such as Amsterdam to have a national past.⁸

³ Founded in 1851 as a student association of the University of Amsterdam (UvA). The complete name of the association is Het Amsterdamsch Studenten Corps en de Amsterdamsche Vrouwelijke Studenten Vereeniging (ASC/AVSV). See: 'A.S.C./A.V.S.V.' <<http://www.asc-avsv.nl/>>.

⁴ Founded in 1880 as a student association of VU University Amsterdam (VU). LANX stands for *Leonum Arida NutriX*. See: 'L.A.N.X. Studenten Corps Aan de Vrije Universiteit' <<http://www.lanx.nl/societeit>>.

⁵ For both associations, the decision to remain in the city centre has been clearly ratified, since they both bought their current clubhouses relatively recently – LANX bought its new location for its 'Thirsty Lions' in 1991 and ASC its NAI (*Nos lunit Amitia*) in 1994. See among others the just referred associations' websites.

⁶ The membership numbers oscillate, depending on different sources, from 2700 to 3300. See exchange of information about admissions and raffles in forums such as *Elle girl*: 'ELLE Girltalk', 2011 <<<http://www.ellegirltalk.nl/showthread.php?646911-A-s-c-a-v-s-v-2011/page2>>>.

⁷ 'Opening Jubileumjaar IGC' (Amsterdam: Industriële Grote Club, 2013) <<<http://www.igc.nl/>>>.

⁸ In some of his articles Baudet translates his ideas into the realm of architecture, arguing for a return to traditional architectural styles. Thierry Baudet and Bastiaan Rijpkema, 'Fuck de Context? Fuck de Koolhaas!', *Academia.edu* (Leiden, 2011) <http://www.academia.edu/1933767/Fuck_de_context_Fuck_de_Koolhaas_>.

Related to the above is the question of whether it is possible to capture a distinctive student imaginary in current Amsterdam through the study of specific student associations that are actually showing clear signs of vitality. Firstly, this is interesting because it can lead to the understanding of another specific tribe's imaginary of the city of Amsterdam and provide insight into a complementary 'view', seen from the perspective of the oldest student associations of the city. Secondly, it could provide more insight into the nature of this kind of traditionalism. What does traditional association life stand for and how does this life manifest itself in the use and interpretation of places in the city? Thirdly, and linked to the second point, it is interesting because it could explain or shed some light on the reasons for the noticeable increase in the number of students choosing to become members of old and traditional Amsterdam student associations. Is this a sign of an emancipation of 'fraternity' values? If we conceive the imaginaries as manifestations of tensions, negotiations, mergers and adjustments of meanings in the context of a polysystem, what does this possible 'emancipation' mean?

4.2. Narrowing down the matter: the importance of the tradition

In relation to this current research project, and as briefly mentioned above, the persistence of a tradition of student associations in Amsterdam today became apparent only after the contrasting analysis of the 'creative class'. These creative youth saw themselves as eclectic and unclassifiable, and as they are not governed by a concern for formal membership of a group, their nature remains ambiguous. They share and recognize in each other the desire to be different, original and authentic. They would only dress in exactly the same kinds of clothes if they were going to a 'theme party'.⁹ This is in clear contrast to the references to Dutch '*corps* students' – students from traditional associations – that emerged from different sources in my research and who are unanimously typified as the 'jasje dasje' (jacket and tie) students. In order to gain more insight into the general concepts of '*corps*' and '*corps* students' – and before outlining the data gathering and consequent analyses – an overview of some facts concerning their origin, ideology and the further development of this group in Amsterdam may be of use.

⁹ 'The fact that I start to feel nervous when asked to define myself in terms of a subculture probably has to do with me living in Amsterdam, where the very idea of a subculture is seen as 'so nineties' that it is impossible to conform to it. In Amsterdam we are all unique personalities who like the strangest combinations and styles. You keep hearing people say things like '[the musical genre of] Smurf house is just so uncool, but that's what makes it cool!' and more of such nonsense.' In: Marjolein, 'Je Bent Zelf Een Genre', *Hard/hoofd* (Amsterdam, September 2009) <<http://hardhoofd.com/2009/09/08/je-bent-zelf-eeen-genre/>>.

The origin of the word '*corps*' derives from the Latin '*corpora*' understood as 'student bodies', and it can be readily related to the first associations or student bodies in Europe during the Middle Ages. At this time, students formed a somewhat transient corpus, completing their education at different universities across Europe. One of its most well-known examples were the *nationes*, in which students from the same place of origin formally organized themselves into a 'fraternity' or blood alliance as a protective measure. In return for this mutual protection, the members of the same *corps* of *nationes* were obliged to help each other, including fighting to defend each other in the event of offence and grievance. It was the disruptive character associated with such actions that led them to be banned at different times. Nevertheless, even during times in which they were banned the *nationes* managed to survive, adopting a policy of secrecy that would become part of their allure.¹⁰

The current student *corps* are predominantly found in North and Central Europe, where they still flourish. To an outsider, their character and organization may appear similar to the 'Greek-letter' student fraternities in the United States, with the visible difference being that instead of Greek, the Dutch *corps* use Latin to shape mantras, logos and the titles of certain functions.

In the Netherlands, the first student *corps* were founded in the 1830s, with each association belonging to the university of a particular city. At that time, all students were automatically members of the corps. Until 1900, the organization of universities in the Netherlands followed a format similar to the master-apprentice model. The professors and their students formed a kind of class, the members of which were dedicated to each other, each in their own designated capacity. Each master or professor had a maximum of 16 students. According to Daalder, Dutch universities were at that time 'an "elitist reserve", catering to at most 3 percent of any age group'.¹¹ All teaching was in the hands of the full professors and the relationship between professors and students functioned smoothly due to 'common social origins and traditions which tended to be gilded and polished in the society-life of the corpora (fraternities)'.¹²

These '*corps*' saw themselves as standing apart from the rest of society. They were not involved, for example, in the emerging political movements that brought students and workers together in other

¹⁰ The importance of secrecy and its relationship to the development of a sense of brotherhood have been studied in particular in relation to the Freemasons. According to Jacob, '[t]he ritual, complete with secret signs and passwords, disguised as much as it illuminated'. In Margaret C. Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 128.

¹¹ Hans Daalder, 'The Dutch Universities between the "New Democracy" and the "New Management"', *Minerva*, 12 (1974), 221–57 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF01553179>>.

¹² Henry L. Mason, 'Reflections of the Politicized University: II. Triparity and Tripolarity in the Netherlands', *AAUP Bulletin*, 60 (1974), 383–400 (p. 11).

European cities. As Hagendijk puts it, 'they were not bohemians' and they felt superior to and different from the working class:

This was summarized very succinctly in Groningen in the 'Statutes' for the student senate information 'Vindicat atque Polit', which stated: Freedom, independence and mutual equality are and always were the privileges accorded to the student's station.¹³

In short, one might say that:

In the 19th century young men went to college to consummate (if they were of noble or aristocratic birth) or to acquire (if they came from middle-class families) the lifestyle of the Dutch gentleman, of the 'Regenten' (originally the name of the Dutch commercial elite that ruled the Republic in the 17th and 18th centuries, later used generically to designate the Dutch upper classes).¹⁴

However, by 1900 the social composition of the student population had started to change. From then on, different sources point to the emergence of the '*spoor student*', the 'railway student'.¹⁵ This new kind of student travelled by train to university and lived in their parental home, thus no longer taking part in traditional student life. This was not only for reasons of it being too expensive, but also because students started to see education as an investment in the future and something that had to be completed as efficiently and quickly as possible. Such '*spoor studenten*' were seen by *corps* students as opposing their traditions and as a threat to the essence of student life, which for them was based on a romantic view of male friendship or brotherhood. Thus, Klikspaans – an author who was very popular among *corps* students – described these 'railway students', who merely 'passed through' (*sjeesden*) quickly, as pseudo-students.¹⁶

From then on, the process of the increasing diversification of the student population would continue.¹⁷ In 1966, the number of students assigned to one professor had increased to around 50.

¹³ 'This was quite tersely summarised in Groningen in the "Regulations" for the student senate "Vindicat atque Polit", founded in 1915 which states that "Freedom, independence and equality are and always have been the privileges of the student class."' ('Heel kernachtig werd dit in Groningen samengevat in de "Bepalingen" voor de in 1915 opgerichte studentensenaat "Vindicat atque Polit", waar gesteld werd: "Vrijheid, onafhankelijkheid en onderlinge gelijkheid zijn en waren steeds de voorregten aan de studentenstand voorbehouden."'). Rob Hagendijk, *Het Studentenleven. Opkomst En Verval van de Traditionele Studentenkultuur* (Amsterdam: SUA, 1980), p. 34. References to new kind of students are from p. 68 and footnote 66 .

¹⁴ Lammers suggests Boxer (1965): Chapter 2 for more on the '*Regenten*' and their lifestyle; and Daalder (1966) for the persistence of the '*Regenten*' mentality. See: Cornelis J. Lammers, 'Student Unionism in the Netherlands: An Application of a Social Class Model', *American Sociological Review*, 36 (1971), 250–63 (p. 251 and note 3) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2094042>> footnote number 3.

¹⁵ Godert Theodoor Allard Calkoen, 'Onder Studenten. Leidse aanstaande medici en de metamorfose van de geneeskunde in de negentiende eeuw (1838-1888)' (Leiden: Uitgeverij Gingko, 2012) <<https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/20129>>.

¹⁶ Klikspaans (Knepelhout, J.) *Studenten Typen*. Sketches & drawing. Compiled by: A. J Luyt, *Klikspaans Studentenschetsen* (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1919). Quoted in: Hagendijk, pp. 37–38.

¹⁷ Daalder, p. 227.

Tests and exams changed from individual to group occasions. Students started to realize that their future and their wellbeing depended not only on the professor and the traditional *corps* organization, but above all on the relationship with other students, and began to see their situation as similar to other kinds of union.

The occupation of the Maagdenhuis (the administrative centre of the University of Amsterdam) in 1969 was symbolically supported by the Dockworkers Unions in Amsterdam. It was a definitive moment, in which an amalgam of diverse progressive tendencies united and chose a student mode of being that was not inspired by the *regenten* model of the *corps*, but by a democratic understanding of education for the public good. In this period the *corps* came under 'attack' from two sides. As they had never been a political force, or played a political role, the *corps* did not share in the unionist enthusiasm and were increasingly perceived as a 'somewhat ridiculous anachronism', while a new organization founded in 1963, the Studenten Vak-Beweging (SVB) (Student Union Movement) was gradually gaining the top position.¹⁸ In addition, for those students who were still willing to join a *regenten* community, the *corps* was facing difficulties in assimilating all of the new middle-class students who had not been educated in the tradition of upper-class norms and values.¹⁹

Hagendijk reproduces a range of statistics from the period between 1950-1970, on the basis of which he analyses the decline of the student *corps* during those years. In this analysis he takes into account, on the one hand, the relationship between the social background of the students and their inclination to register with a *corps* association, and on the other hand, the field of study they took up. Students from middle- and lower-class backgrounds, independently of the sort of subjects they studied, and students enrolling in the faculties of mathematics, physics and humanities, independently of the backgrounds from which they came, preferred modern, non-traditional student associations. They simply ignored traditional associations such as the *corps*.

Surprisingly, despite an obvious decline during the 1960s and the 1970s, the *corps* organizations managed to survive. The news of a revival of the *corps* in the 1990s seemed to confirm, according to Hagendijk,²⁰ the start of a change that was already evident in the 1980s. In his detailed overview of the kind of student that joined, in terms of their field of study, he found that from the 1980s onward the majority were students of Law, Economics and Medicine. He argues that as these disciplines still adhered to traditional values mirrored in the professions that the students were preparing for, the student *corps* were in fact training such students for a life in which tradition, fraternity and respect

¹⁸ Hagendijk, p. 115.

¹⁹ Lammers, p. 253.

²⁰ Hagendijk, p. 132.

for the hierarchy in the group were essential. In the meantime, and definitely from the end of the 1980s onwards, Hagendijk (and others) have identified a new period of de-politicization among students and the slow but steady growth of traditional student *corps*.

All things considered, it seems important to take into consideration that the rejuvenation of student *corps* associations might have gone hand in hand with the reactivation of a certain use of the city of Amsterdam that can be defined as specific and distinctive to a 'student *corps*' tribe. In the following sections, I will proceed to the description of the data gathering and consequent analysis aimed to develop an understanding of what seems to be a still active and distinctive student imaginary in Amsterdam: the *corps*.

4.3. Data gathering

The review above briefly examined some of the salient moments in the history of student life which occurred in tandem with the redefinition of the nature of 'students' and 'student life'. Once the potential of *corps* life as a distinctive imaginary of Amsterdam became apparent, I commenced exploratory research aimed at identifying possible centres of *corps* life. To achieve this I took into special consideration expressions revealing antagonisms and contrapositions between *corps* students and others. Online research using the entry 'jacket and tie' (in Dutch 'jasje dasje') immediately resulted in an impressive amount of material, with *corps* students discussing or even quarrelling with non-*corps* students about the legitimacy of their associations. These discussions brought to the surface a general process of characterization: *corps* and non-*corps* students saw each other as different types of people. *Corps* students were described by others as arrogant, but at the same time as submitting to authority, while non-*corps* students were classified by *corps* students as not being real students at all: they were '*knorren*' (grunters), people lacking decent habits and rituals, or proletarian.²¹

At the same time, during the campaign for the Dutch elections in 2010 a number of politicians made references to their past membership of a student *corps* associations as a way of defining their personalities. In the television programme, *College Tour*, in which a well-known public figure is interviewed at a different student location each week, a former Prime Minister of the Netherlands, Jan Peter Balkenende, started his interview by spontaneously singing with a group of young students who were in the audience at VU University (Free University) in Amsterdam. All of these students

²¹ Comments in: *Ontgroening Amsterdamsch Studenten Corps in Amsterdam* (The Netherlands: Campustelevisie/YouTube, 2007) <http://www.youtube.com/all_comments?v=18jr-FmdhdY>.

were indeed wearing a jacket and a tie and it is clear that Balkenende connected with them in recalling his past as a member of the VU *corps* association LANX.²² In Leiden, another politician, Alexander Pechtold, did something similar in visiting his old student society house. Once inside, he noted that everything seemed intact despite the passage of time: the camera showed a door with no bell, a couch outside on the pavement, stacked crates of beer, pictures on the wall with students wearing a ‘jacket’ and a ‘tie’ and a young student in the kitchen doing the assigned chores.²³

Once these most significant descriptors had been located, I proceeded to a further compilation and clustering of the different sources according to their nature and idiosyncrasy. A first group of sources sharing similar characteristics was written material from discussions in forums such as ‘Fok’ or ‘Viva’ or on YouTube or other channels that offered ‘room for comments’. Such open gatherings are frequently visited for the sake of discussion. Students post items such as ‘Student associations, yes or no’, ‘Which association?’, ‘Does being a member of an association interfere with your studies?’, or ‘Is freshman initiation a bad thing?’ This kind of material assisted in condensing and listing the array of topics that appeared to be relevant to these students.

A second group of sources concerned material made by *corps* associations as a way of ‘going public’. This search enabled the identification of a large array of student associations, which included a broad spectrum from *corps* to non-*corps*. In the end, and as we will see in the analysis section, all of this material had already led me to increasingly focus on the specific University of Amsterdam association, ASC/AVSV, since it seemed to be the most paradigmatic association of its sort in Amsterdam. Thus, all the channels used by this association to communicate with the ‘outside world’ were seen as offering potential research data: websites, almanacs, films on YouTube announcing annual celebrations such as ‘NIA week’, Christmas, galas, or lustrums (five yearly celebrations) and other important events.

A third group was especially relevant because of the atmosphere of secrecy that surrounds *corps* activities. The book *Wij Amsterdamsche studiosi: 150 jaar*, published by ASC/AVSV in 2002, is one of the rare places anecdotes of daily *corps* life are available to non-*corps* members.²⁴ However, to capture the meaning of being a *corps* student in today’s Amsterdam – and to understand more about

²² Balkenende spontaneously sings the association’s anthem with young members of the *Oratorische Vereniging P.a.s.c.a.l.* In Twan Huys, ‘NOVA College Tour. Jan Peter Balkenende’ (The Netherlands: VARA, 2010) <<http://tvblik.nl/nova-college-tour/jan-peter-balkenende>>.

²³ These sources appeared fortuitously during the course of the political campaign in the Netherlands in 2010. These elections brought out some interesting material in various media, including newspapers, television and internet. In a series of short films made by Campus Television, politicians who were now in their 40s and 50s went back to their student houses of two or three decades ago, with Pechtold, a member of the D66 political party, visiting his old student house in Leiden. References in: Arjen Segers, ‘Kies de Lekkerste’, *DUB* (Utrecht: DUB, 2010), pp. 13–14 <<http://www.dub.uu.nl>>.

²⁴ Jan-Willem Ebbinge and Piebe Teeboom, *Wij Amsterdamsche Studiosi: 150 Jaar ASC/AVSV* (Amsterdam: ASC/AVSV, 2002).

the role of secrecy – much more material was needed. In this sense a subgroup of sources consisted of what we could call ‘rumours and indirect allusions’; one illustration being the accounts of initiation ceremonies, including news about a ‘mystery guest’ pretending to be a student. An additional rumour was that since this occurrence aspiring members must sign an agreement stating that they will pay a fine of 25,000 euros should they ever make public what happens during a ‘ragging’ or ‘hazing’ ceremony.²⁵

Another subgroup of sources consisted of material likely to provide some nuancing of the rather monolithic image of ‘jacket and tie’. Interviews with the university magazine *Folia*, a variety of press articles, and short films from online campus television channels can be seen as examples of these sorts of sources. In addition, two works of fiction seemed to open possibilities in this area. One was the novel *Niemand in de stad* (‘No One in Town’) by the young writer Philips Huff.²⁶ The novel, published in January 2012, tells the story of the similarly named Philip Huffman, just arrived from Groningen and enrolling as a first-year student at the University of Amsterdam. According to its author, the story is partly based on his own experiences, both as a student and as a member of the ASC/AVSV. The novel is rich in descriptions of the ambiance of the different places in which his life as a *corps* student takes place: the student house in which he lives, the sorts of conversations he has with his new friends, the habits and his thoughts about life and being a student in Amsterdam. As was the case in one of the novels analysed in the previous chapter, the death of a friend is one of the most dramatic episodes. Jacob, a major character and one of Philip’s dearest friends, commits suicide during a stay in London, where he was supposed to be doing his mandatory medicine internship.²⁷ The progressive unveiling of Jacob’s motives for killing himself cover a large range of topics related to student life, including relationships with his parents when growing up and his struggle to meet their high expectations.

A second fictional portrait of *corps* life in Amsterdam is the television series *Feuten* (‘Freshmen’), which started in 2010 as an online television series but which has since been broadcast on commercial television with more than considerable success. An important objection to using this series as research material is that, in contrast with *Niemand in de stad*, it is not written by students but by two screenwriters in their late 30s and 40s.²⁸ Nevertheless, the ambiance in the series

²⁵ Ernst-Jan Hamel, ‘Niemand Praat of Twittert over de Ontgroening’ (Utrecht, 2011) <<http://www.dub.uu.nl/artikel/niemand-praat-twittert-ontgroening.html>>.

²⁶ Philip Huff, *Niemand in de Stad* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2012).

²⁷ I am referring to the attractive and mysterious Ego, in the novel *Ego Faber* analysed in the previous chapter. In both novels, the death of the characters seems the inevitable consequence of their tormented situations in an extremely confusing coming-of age process.

²⁸ The screenwriters are William Bosch and Michael Leenderste, ‘Feuten’ (The Netherlands: BNN, 2010) <<http://programma.bnn.nl/12/feuten/home>>.

overlaps with the other data, and posts on Fok forums state that, with the exception of a few details, the series is convincing as a reproduction of *corps* life.²⁹ The series tells the story of a group of members of a student *corps* association in Amsterdam. The main character is Bram Wagtmans, a young boy from the provinces who has just started studying at the University of Amsterdam and has joined the student association in the city. In one of the first scenes, Bram's father drives him to the association by car. It is apparent that he is a butcher and Bram asks him to stop before arriving at the association building because he wants to avoid others seeing the car which displays the butcher's name. In the first episodes we are presented with the 'initiation' and, following this, Bram progressively gaining the respect of the older *corps* members and becoming increasingly close to the very wealthy brother and sister, Olivier and Marie-Claire de Ruyten.

In addition to these works, a complementary subgroup of data consists of an array of material in the form of short news items that relate individual real-life stories that could provide insights into the motivations for joining ASC/AVSV. For example, news items about accidents involving young people sometimes mention association membership. Friends and parents give accounts of the role the association played in the lives of the young deceased students, shedding new light on concepts such as the meaning of friendship and the company that they had found in the association.³⁰

In addition, I also draw upon articles posted on Wikipedia, which include interesting data, such as lists of 'famous' ex-ASC/AVSV members. Curiously, such lists not only include names of bankers or lawyers at renowned companies or firms, but also well-known entrepreneurs, comedians and other celebrities.

In general, the criteria for establishing the relevance of the data was, on the one hand, the frequency that certain topics were mentioned and the level of involvement with which they were discussed and, on the other, the identification of possible 'new' topics. I followed this process until I was confident that new material was no longer providing relevant insights. In general, the following topics were listed after the first compilation of sources: the value of tradition; the quality of the clubhouse/location of student association; possible needs of students and, related to this, the benefits attributed to these associations (gathering/popularity/exclusivity/fraternity-brotherhood);

²⁹ 'Not very realistic. In reality, you can tell by the backside of the sorority girls what year they are in. The longer they have been a member, the larger the rear.'

'I am actually struck by what a good job they have done. They get most things right, only now and then do they include a detail or a remark that is mistaken. 'We, the members of this student association...' says one of those guys at a certain moment (during a speech at the clubhouse). The evening socials aren't very well attended either, but that probably has more to do with the budget for extras. But anyway, only a real stickler (or grunt) would quibble over these details. An enjoyable series, and well-acted as well.' 'Feuten #2', *forum.fok.nl*, 2010 <<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/1564517>>.'

³⁰ A number of ASC/AVSV students died in a road accident on 6/7 June 2012. The association opened its doors for memorial gatherings and ceremonies. Anne Kleinstra, 'Studenten Omgekomen Bij Ongeluk Op A2', *RTVNH*, 2012 <<http://www.rtvnh.nl/nieuws/81325/Studenten+omgekomen+bij+ongeluk+op+A2>>.

and the student profile distilled from these descriptions. As mentioned, all this material increasingly led me to focus on the specific University of Amsterdam association ASC/AVSV as the most paradigmatic of its sort in Amsterdam.

4.4. Analysis

In the following pages I will offer an analysis of the source material collected, aiming to provide an insight into specific elements of a *corps* imaginary in Amsterdam. I took as a guideline the particular elements by means of which ‘tribes’ could be distinguished as constellations of differentiating and contrasting imaginaries, as proposed in this thesis. In this sense the idea is that *corps* students recognize each other – and distinguish themselves from others – by specific features, such as the use of particular artefacts, the use of *habitats* and their adoption of particular attitudes.³¹

As mentioned, ASC/AVSV is the abbreviation for *Het Amsterdamsch Studenten Corps/Amsterdamsche Vrouwelijke Studenten Vereeniging* (Amsterdam Student Body/Amsterdam Female Student Association). On its website, the ASC/AVSV claims to be the oldest *corps* in the Netherlands, founded as the ‘*Amsterdamsch Studenten Corps*’ in 1851.³² At present it is the largest organization of its kind in the Netherlands, with membership reaching figures between 2,700 and 3,300.³³ Although they operate rather independently, the *corps* associations in the Netherlands are linked through the *Algemene Senaten Vergadering* (‘General Senate Meeting’), which describes itself as ‘the oldest and largest Dutch coordinating student association, with 11,000 members, whose purpose “is to look after the general interests of the associated *corps*”’.³⁴

An examination of its website immediately shows how the association introduces itself to new students and other interested persons. The first characteristic to note is the emphasis on its size and long-standing tradition.³⁵ Moreover, further reading reveals that students who join the ASC/AVSV commit themselves to accepting, adhering to and respecting the rules and regulations of the

³¹ Calkoen. See also: Alexander Ver Huell, ‘Spoorstudenten Zijn van Aller Tijden’, *Mare Leids Universiteit* (Leiden, 15 November 2012).

³² Although on information on Wikipedia points to older *corps* in Leiden 1839, Utrecht 1848, Groningen 1815 and Delft 1848. ‘Algemene Senaten Vergadering’, *Wikipedia* <http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algemene_Senaten_Vergadering>.

³³ Retrieved from: ‘A.S.C./A.V.S.V.’.

³⁴ ‘Corps.nl’ <<http://www.corps.nl/>>.

³⁵ Also emphasized on the Wikipedia page on ASC/AVSV, which at the moment of retrieving was extensive and quite recently created (July 2010). Retrieved from ‘ASC/AVSV’, *Wikipedia*, 2010 <<http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/ASC/AVSV>>. Furthermore it is of interest to see the distinctions made between kinds of student associations in the general classifications of ‘*studieverenigingen*’ (study association), ‘*studentengezelligheidsverenigingen*’ (student association for leisure) and the ‘*studentenverenigingen*’ such as ASC/AVSV which are the so called *Corps* or Fraternity associations traditionally linked to a specific university. See as example of such lists in Amsterdam: ‘ASVA Studentenunie’ <<https://www.asva.nl/association/type/4>>.

association. In return, the members are guaranteed a range of important and interesting prospects, life experiences and access to the association's network. The fact that successful alumni continue to support the organization is given as proof of the positive consequences that membership can offer, even after members have finished studying in Amsterdam.

In this sense, the ASC/AVSV and alumni website reveals that most of the support by alumni concerns the guarantee of the continuation of ASC/AVSV traditions. Alumni contribute financially to the replacement of banners, furniture and facilities in 'de Toko', the association's clubhouse, and they also support freshmen activities, galas and other celebrations. Furthermore, the alumni manage the Golden House foundation ('het Gulden huis'), named after the earlier location of the association on Raamstraat, which financed the purchase of the new clubhouse on Warmoesstraat.

In addition to a general contribution of around 130 euros, ASC/AVSV students pay 40 to 100 euros per month to the association, which makes ASC/AVSV slightly more expensive than others. The membership fees enable the association to emphasize its independence and financial autonomy. For example, the association insists on the fact that the facilities at the clubhouse are exclusively for members, and it is, as far as I could discover, the only student association in Amsterdam that does not rent out its clubhouse facilities to third parties.

Unlike other associations, ASC/AVSV does not advertise practical advantages for students, such as discounts on textbooks or facilities for buying bicycles, as is the case for other associations such as the ASVA.³⁶ In principle, admission is only permitted to first-year students younger than 23, but discussions in forums show that this rule is not very strictly applied. One of the posts remarked that there were newly registered students who were aged 23 and 24. Other, more critical voices in the forum suggest that joining a corps when you are older than 18 does not make much sense, as one already has more experience and a better formed personality.³⁷

a. Contrasts between student associations

Based on the above, it can be deduced that ASC/AVSV projects a specific character, defining its position in the spectrum of association life, as the oldest and largest corps, not only in Amsterdam but also in the Netherlands. However, obviously such details are not precisely known by all new

³⁶ 'Fietsen', *ASVA Studentenuit* <<http://www.asva.nl/fietsen>>.

³⁷ The poster writes: 'In Amsterdam, with ASC and LANX in any case, you can no longer get in if you're more than 22 years old. Then the whole thing is not so very useful anymore anyway, and it might be time for you to go do something more interesting with your life. ♣ I can tell you from my own experience that this is not true. In the year I became a member there were quite a few 23- and 24-year-olds.' 'Studentenvereniging', *forum.fok.nl*, 2010 <<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/1452523/1/50#81238645>>.

students; consequently, one of the first things that is interesting to look at is the way they talk about association life.

An analysis of various forums on the internet shows, for example, that new students, or second-year students not yet fully integrated into student life in Amsterdam, do ask for advice about becoming involved in an association. Most of them emphasize that they are not interested in starting discussions about the pros and cons of corps associations. In one of these forums I found the following long post that is worth reproducing in its entirety because it offers a good summary and interesting interpretation of the differences between associations.

s.v LANX is the student association of VU University. Amsterdam is the only city in the Netherlands with two classical universities and, therefore, two corps-style associations. It used to be the norm for new students to automatically join an association connected to the university. That is where the name '*corps*' comes from, which simply means 'body/association'.

That is why Papist universities such as the one in Nijmegen also have a corps association of their own. State universities [*Rijksuniversiteiten*] such as those in Groningen and Leiden have a public corps association [*openbare corps*] (*Vindicat* and *Minerva*, respectively). After the process of socioreligious compartmentalization got underway (initiated with the foundation of VU University), a number of associations of a confessional (mostly Papist) nature were also established (*augistenes* and *Albertus Magnus*). As far as I know, these only became attached to the State Universities at a later stage.

ASV is the umbrella organization for the corps associations and AHC is the umbrella organization for the confessional (i.e. Catholic) associations. These days they are very similar in terms of their structure, and tend to compete with each other to some extent. In the world of the students this offers a very amusing example of competition, although in practice it only happens very sporadically. The competition between the different years and debating societies within the associations is considered much more important.

LANX is known as a sympathetic disco/girls' type of club that organizes a lot of great parties. Although less formal than the ASC, depending on the particular debating society you belong to, it does have its fanatical side, which is by far the most important factor if you want to have a good time in a serious student association. At both the ASC and LANX it is important that you join a debating society that suits you, as membership of a society is virtually compulsory. If you don't really belong, then it isn't half as much fun as it could have been.

Apart from the ASC and LANX, Amsterdam also has a couple of smaller and less 'fanatical' associations (of which *Unitas* and *SSRA* are the most interesting examples). The benefit of

these is that you don't have to undergo hazing, they won't cost as much money, there are fewer social obligations and there is less of a preppy/upper-class atmosphere. For some people this is very important but the downside is that they don't have the same buzz and energy and many people get sick of it after a year. The atmosphere is also a lot tamer than at the two larger associations.

As far as I know, both the ASC/A.V.S.V and LANX work with a lottery system. This means there are only a limited number of places for new members to undergo hazing each year. At the smaller associations you can usually be sure of a place, and it may also be possible to join later in the year.

No-one can tell you in which association you'll have your coolest student days. That depends on what you want, the kind of people you know and the association your friends/family members are/were a member of. Don't pay too much attention to things like hazing and obligatory occasions. You'll have got through or got used to all that in six weeks times, and then you'll have a great time.³⁸

This quote is all the more interesting in that it not only summarily maps traditional association life, but also brings together a list of important references that offer a starting point for an analysis of its character.

Firstly, references to the traditional 'compartmentalization' or 'pillarization' of Dutch society can be seen in the mention of the specific religious origins of the various educational institutions, such as the Protestant universities or the Catholic universities, the latter being distinguished as 'papal'. These references are a reminder of the link that corps student associations maintain with their own history. At the same time, the references to the importance of mutual competition among corps associations point to the traditional cultivation of rivalry as a 'raison d'être'.

Secondly, words such as 'amusing', used to describe the character of the rivalry, indicate a specific choice of words that are characteristic of the particular use of language by corps students, a mix of formal words and made-up slang. In this case 'amusing' is a formal word that expresses a mix of contention, distance and condescension. The use of such words and the way the poster structures his arguments can also be seen as a reference to the debating skills that students are required to practise in associations (and which Pechtold referred to as a typical corps characteristic: *goedgebekt*, verbally versatile and able to properly engage in a linguistic duel with an opponent). All in all, the

³⁸ 'SES Studentenverenigenen', *forum.fok.nl*, 2010 <<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/1452523/2/25#81273671>>.

ironic discourse that seems to characterize corps language when elaborating an argument is in line with an Horacian tradition that considers discussion a game (a *ludus*). Seen from this tradition, irony is in fact a kind of camouflage.³⁹

Thirdly, the post indicates that the advantages of corps life increase with involvement. The more you are part of it and believe in it, the more interesting it becomes. In this sense, the expression ‘*retefanatiek*’ (damn fanatic) stands for a quality that at least guarantees a lively association milieu. This poster clearly maintains that societies that are less corps-like in character, such as UNITAS and SSRA, ‘are less sparkling’ and their atmosphere is a great deal less lively compared to corps associations.

Fourthly, from this and other comments in this forum, one can learn that possible objections by anti-corps students to practices such as hazing are seen by corps students as the ultimate evidence that ‘grunTERS’ (*knorren*) and other ‘nobodies’ are unable ‘to get’ and comprehend the meaning of such ceremonies and initiation rites. According to corps defenders, it is precisely because of those rites that one becomes a member of the corps ‘and is guaranteed a fantastic time’.

Fifthly, it points to the existence of a hierarchy of student associations, ASC/AVSV being perceived as the most elitist and exclusive – and therefore the most ‘corporative’. In this sense, it is clear that students who enrol in associations such as UNITAS and SSRA are looking for options with less of a ‘hockey mentality’ or ‘ragging periods’. UNITAS, for example, has a ‘democratic intention’ as its epithet (to encourage everyone to participate in association life), which is clearly a very different positioning.

In the following paragraphs I will discuss an array of issues, illustrated with concrete examples and related to these five elements.

b. Quality, exclusivity and awards

One of the first noticeable aspects of the introduction to ASC/AVSV on their website is the use of Latin. Their society building is called NIA ‘*Nos Iungit Amicitia*’ – the mantra is engraved in the façade of the building on Warmoesstraat in Amsterdam – and the board’s functions have Latin names: ‘*Praeses*’, ‘*Abactis*’, ‘*Questor*’, etc. The use of Latin is especially striking because it is not a language

³⁹ In fact as we will see, non-*corps* students commonly dislike *corps* students because of their artificiality, as if they are hiding behind words and facades. Remarkably, this is also the reason why Epicureans and Stoics strongly disliked irony. They saw it as a kind of artifice ‘incompatible with the pursuit of truth’. Zoja Pavlovskis, ‘Aristotle, Horace, and the Ironic Man’, *Classical Philology*, 63 (1968), 22–41.

that students in the Netherlands generally master, let alone use. It is obvious that Latin functions as a reference to the past and the academic tradition. In addition, the association's website stands out in its formality and stylish layout. Further reading shows that the association was also recognized for having published the best student 'almanac' of 2011⁴⁰ in the Netherlands, and again in 2013.⁴¹ The comments in the jury report about the winning almanac in 2013 explain why ASC/AVSV deserved the award once again:

It's exactly what you would expect from an association that has been making almanacs for no less than 183 years: a perfectly produced edition. Nicely designed, original, with a clear layout, and it also stands out in terms of the advertisements. These are people who know what they are doing, know what an almanac stands for and have got to grips with it in a serious way. The photos in the almanac exude professional quality and it reads like the eyes and ears of the almanac committee were everywhere, because not a single event or remark (stupid or otherwise) by a member seems to be missing. This is a publication that can even be fun for a non-member to read and thumb through.

c. Other peculiarities

Examining the different material, one can see that the peculiarities of corps language are not limited to formal and professional appearances and utterances. Corps students contributing to public forums express themselves using their own corps slang, which in turn serves as a clear marker to distinguish them from non-corps students. It quickly becomes clear that words such as '*vomeren*' (vomiting) and '*kleien*' (defecating) are part of the identity of corps students and that those who the corps students call 'grunTERS' specifically avoid such words to indicate that they should not be associated with corps students. It is not without reason that the editor of the online document 'Student Language' writes in the introduction that corps language might not only be 'unfamiliar' to many people but might not be 'loved' either.⁴²

An overview of different student corps languages also shows that the corps vocabulary and expressions vary, depending on the association or the city, but that it is evident that all variations include words that refer to habits, mores and artefacts that are intrinsically related to corps life. One example is the specification of dress as 'white tie' and 'full dress tie' that corps students wear to galas and other special occasions. Also significant are class references such as 'prols' or 'proletarian', words that are no longer commonly used in Amsterdam today, but which *corps* students seem to use

⁴⁰'A.S.C./A.V.S.V.'

⁴¹ Joost and others, *Doe Normaal* (Amsterdam) <<http://www.almanakaward.nl/profile/view/1065#/5>>.

⁴² See those examples in the comments in a discussion about ragging ceremonies: on 'Corpsballen' (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2009) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nY8YD5ltFQ&feature=related>>. On differences between student language and ABN Dutch, as well as the various versions in different cities, see website www.soggen.nl.

frequently as a synonym for bad quality. For example, a *'proletensigaar'* (proletarian cigar; *'proleten'* is a derogatory variant of the Dutch word *'proletarians'*) is defined as: 'Cheap cigar of such bad quality that it makes you vomit straight away (bought at petrol stations and supermarkets)'.⁴³

d. 'You don't get it, do you?'

Obviously, the particular use of language is not only self-referential, but also refers to specific practices and views of life. In this regard, initiation rituals, referred to in Dutch as *'ontgroening'* (ragging, hazing), are without doubt one of the first practices that come to mind when thinking about *corps* associations. The connection of student *corps* with such rituals can be very negative. The deaths of two boys over a short period of time in initiation ceremonies in Groningen led to a national parliamentary debate and restrictive rules for student associations, such as a ban on alcohol during ragging.⁴⁴ However, comments found in many discussions show that students have a very different view of these rituals and that they are still fervently defended by *corps* students. In Amsterdam, the list of comments is long, a typical one being:

you don't know what the hell you're talking about do you, don't start talking crap about things you know nothing about. If students want to do this they should just go ahead and do it and there is nothing wrong with that. What's wrong is types like you who always have an opinion on everything but don't know what things are really about. Grunt!⁴⁵

Rather than considering the possibility of ceasing the practice, *corps* members only voice doubts about their performance in public space on the streets of Amsterdam. These *corps* students believe that 'hazing should take place indoors', for the obvious reason that outsiders will not share these views and will always raise objections.

e. Bravado

If outsiders fail to grasp the essence and importance of such initiation rites, it is also because they do not like the way *corps* students behave in public. An article in *De Volkskrant* newspaper, entitled 'Bravoure in de verdrukking' ('Bravado being oppressed') – written on the occasion of the closing of ASC/AVSV clubhouse NIAS by the city council because of irregular behaviour in the streets around it –

⁴³ 'Proletensigaar; goedkope sigaar van een dermate slechte kwaliteit dat je er spontaan van moet gaan vomeren (te vinden bij tankstations en supermarkten)'. From: 'Studententaal' <http://npcwin.home.xs4all.nl/specials/cursist/page_studententaal.htm>.

⁴⁴ Tessa Heitmeijer, 'Top 10 Uit de Hand Gelopen Ontgroeningen', *Studenten.net*, 2011

<http://www.studenten.net/lifestyle/lifestyle/18193/top_10_uit_de_hand_gelopen_ontgroeningen>.

⁴⁵ Comments in 'Corpsballen.'

captures one important characteristic of this special way of being a *corps* student and its controversial character: 'Bravado'.⁴⁶

Bravado is not only expressed in the streets, for example by challenging passers-by with provocative taunts such as 'Hey Negro' or 'Hey Turk', but is also apparent in a certain indifference to one's body and clothes. For example, ties and suits may get dirty, and *corps* students are careless when it comes to keeping a clean house or following a healthy diet. In various films, one of most hackneyed images is the dirty dishes in the kitchens of student houses. The scene in *Niemand in de stad* is illustrative: as a first-year student, Philip, the main character, makes the mistake of wanting to create some order in the kitchen, sticking different labels on the shelves with the words 'glasses', 'dishes', etc. The next day all of the labels have been removed by the superior in the house (a second- or third-year student), who reprimands him: 'Please, don't ever do such a thing again. This is not a house for homos'.⁴⁷ Alexander Pechtold referred to a similar scene, but this time related to the bathroom: the whole student house was really upset when an inexperienced first-year student, new to the house, cleaned off the 'fungus that had been carefully cultivated on the walls of the shower over the years'.⁴⁸

The *corps* is not a gay-friendly environment: 'homo' and 'gay' are clearly insulting terms, alluding to a lack of masculinity and power. In fact, one can also see that currently the ASC/AVSV does not mention gay members at all. Furthermore, they maintain a strict distinction between men and women. In the *corps* dictionary mentioned above, women are referred to as '*Muts; doos, twat, gleuf, flamoës*', all slang terms for female genitalia. Nevertheless, the *praeses* and the board are led by a commission consisting of three male and three female students.

f. A sense of ownership in the city

Since 1994, ASC/AVSV has owned the old Union building on Warmoesstraat, one of the oldest streets in Amsterdam, near Dam Square and the Royal Palace and close to the Red Light district. As a journalist at *De Volkskrant* put it, the association house is located in one of the streets of Amsterdam mainly known for its 'whores, drunks, tramps, lost, robbed and swindled tourists and a police station with a dubious reputation'.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, over the last two decades the area has also become

⁴⁶ Sander van Walsum, 'Bravoure in de Verdrukking', *de Volkskrant* (Amsterdam, 11 July 2002) <<http://www.volkskrant.nl/dossier-archief/bravoure-in-de-verdrukking~a626975/>>.

⁴⁷ Huff, p. 25.

⁴⁸ Britt Gommans and Loek Zanders, 'Het Studentenleven Van... Alexander Pechtold', *Nultweevier.nl*, 2012 <<http://www.nultweevier.nl>>.

⁴⁹ 'johns, tramps, drunks, lost and/or robbed tourists, and a police station with a dubious'. ('hoerenlopers, zwervers, dronkaards, verdwaalde dan wel beroofde toeristen, en een politiebureau met dubieuze reputatie'). In: Walsum.

known for its attempts to rejuvenate the space as a place to live and work. Here and there retailers have followed the example of the 'Condommerie', the famous condom shop on Warmoesstraat, and established 'upmarket' sex and gadget shops, maintaining that they are contributing to the liberalization of sex for women and for the *lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community* (LGBT). Furthermore, a number of old family businesses, such as flower shops and patisseries, have experienced a revival and young middle to upper class families in liberal professions have begun to think that rather than leaving the area, they might let their children grow up in the district.

In this context, people living or working in the area did not appreciate the '*corps* students' moving into Warmoesstraat. Various contemporary press releases reveal that they did not object to students in general, but to *corps* students in particular, because they were known for being conservative, anti-gay, noisy, arrogant and traditionally having little consideration for their surroundings. A clear example of the resistance of local residents to the ASC/AVSV moving in here is that the police, at the request of the neighbours, stopped the students' opening party one hour after it started. The association had to implement various improvements to the building and did not receive definitive permission to use it until 1996.

Examining articles about conflict between the association and the media shows that the 'bravado' of *corps* students is experienced as offensive, especially in the old city centre, and *corps* students are also seen as invasive. As we have seen, *corps* students sometimes provoke dislike merely because of their attitude and vocabulary ('the noisy and arrogant student'), but the core of the matter probably lies in the way *corps* students operate in the surrounding area as a whole. A good example of a habit which annoys local retailers is what the students call '*corps* shopping', which involves 'a group doing their shopping in the local supermarket five minutes before closing time and discussing special offers endlessly, forcing the staff to wait'.⁵⁰ This bravado of *corps* students is seen for what it is, a provocative display that relies on a false sense of courage derived from operating as a group.

From the *corps* point of view, '*zooien*' ('making a mess', 'creating havoc') is an inherent part of a traditional student life, which members seem to avidly cultivate. One of the forms of *zooien* is, for example, when 'association members grab each other by the jackets and swing each other round and round until one of them turns out to be the strongest',⁵¹ which can lead to broken bones. Similarly, the objections of the neighbours in Warmoesstraat to the opening of the clubhouse recall other objections in the past. It is well documented, for example, that in 1905, when the ASC/AVSV was

⁵⁰ 'Studententaal.'

⁵¹ 'corpsleden elkaar bij de jasjes grijpen en net zo lang in de rondte zwiepen tot er een de sterkste blijkt.' In: Arjen Fortuin, 'Gezellig Zooien', *NRC boeken* (Amsterdam, 24 August 2002).

housed at the 'Kroon' on Rembrandtplein, a prominent member of the association ended a performance of one of Beethoven's sonatas by destroying his cello – setting fire to the instrument. The other students continued his work by destroying the rest of the furniture. In response, the social-democratic oriented newspaper of the time, *Het Volk* (The People), started a similar campaign against the 'decadent rich sons'. The consequence of this episode was that ASC not only had to pay a fine, but also had to look for new premises.⁵²

g. Symbolic clashes over territory: rivalry between student associations

In addition to conflict with non-*corps* 'knorren', neighbours and others, *corps* associations cherish a traditional rivalry with other *corps* associations. In Amsterdam, this rivalry is particularly apparent between the two official *corps* associations ASC/AVSV and LANX. Traditional expressions of this rivalry include practices such as breaking into the clubhouse of the adversary and taking its relics. *Corps* student clashes in the city centre are not only cherished by the students themselves, but are also considered newsworthy by student news channels such as Campus Television and 'Studenten.net', with headlines such as: 'Massive fight between student associations'⁵³

Although factual news about real clashes is scarce in the media, its persistence over the years is a reminder of old traditions and shows the importance of rivalry to the preservation of cherished and traditional self-representations and reputations.

h. Victimization: 'Corps being oppressed'

One particular aspect of these conflicts concerns the fact that the arrival of *corps* students in the area coincided with the plans of the city council to rid the Red Light district of excessive partying, drugs and alcohol use and to further restrict street life. In this respect, *corps* students can ironically be seen as 'victims' of the more restrictive policies in city life. In the eyes of the *corps* students, the local authorities' restrictions are seen as a sign of a lack of humour, while neighbours' complaints are seen as a reflection of the boring attitudes of the petty bourgeois. Seen from this perspective, it is highly plausible that in a time in which they face this type of 'oppression' from the authorities the *corps*

⁵² 'The social democratic daily newspaper *Het Volk* used the incident as an occasion to launch into a litany against the 'decadent rich kids'. Apart from every member being charged with a 'head-tax' of five guilders, the consequence of this 'monumental party' was that the ASC once again had to look for new premise.' In: 'Walsum.

⁵³ The item follows: 'The competition between two student associations has got completely out of hand. On Monday morning a huge fight broke out in front of the L.A.N.X. clubhouse on the Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal'. ('De rivaliteit tussen twee studentenverenigingen is totaal uit de hand gelopen. Voor de deur van de studenten sociëteit L.A.N.X. aan de Nieuwezijds Voorburgwal ontstond maandagochtend een massale vechtpartij.). In: 'Massale Vechtpartij Tussen Studenten', AT5 (Amsterdam, 22 April 2009) <www.at5.nl/atikelen/15591/massale-vechtpartij-tussen-studente>.

may gain greater sympathy than in previous years, and that their particular brand of humour may now be seen by some as an essential element of student life.

The writer Robert Vuisje, who visited the association at the invitation of one of the debating societies, noted that according to the *corps* students, the opposition of the neighbours and the city council was only a kind of conspiracy led by ‘deputy mayor Lodewijk Asscher’: It ‘forms part of the plot hatched by acting Mayor Asscher. He wants to clean up the red light district and get rid of all the revelry’⁵⁴

i. An extended *habitat*: hockey, rowing and such

Other than their premises on Warmoesstraat, the *corps* uses other spaces in Amsterdam that the members of the society have frequented for generations, usually located at stately sites in the city. Among them are the Hollandse Manege equestrian centre on Vondeslstraat in the Old South, rowing facilities at Nereus on the Amstel river and hockey fields and tennis courts in Vondelpark.

Furthermore, the association carefully organizes various celebrations. A film made by the ASC/AVSV to commemorate the lustrum celebration in July 2012, for example, shows an impressive array of large and well-known sites, combining formal and solemn venues with leisure spots such as swimming pools for their ‘bacchanal parties’. This means that they have both official gatherings at the University of Amsterdam, addressed by the Rector Magnificus, and do everything they can to make sure that the swimming pool in Amsterdam’s Sloterdijk district will never ‘forget them’. The caption to the pictures of the Sloterpark swimming pool reads: ‘I’m sure that next time they will not rent it out to us for a party like this one’.⁵⁵

Another special event seen as typical of *corps* students is the Varsity rowing competition. A reporter from the University of Leiden publication *Mare* covering the event, clearly disapproved of the socially closed character of *corps* life. To the author, Rivke Jaffe, the Varsity race appeared to be a kind of anthropological curiosity:

Well, not all the variants of student life in the Netherlands are represented there. You could say Varsity is like the larger music festivals, a similar kind of generational-formative event, only for *corps* members. (...) but here it is above all the Dutch community of *corps* members who are working on the construction and reproduction of a collective identity, and more specifically one that is very closely related to class identity. The aspect of class is evident in prominent members that make up the

⁵⁴ Het ‘maakt deel uit van een complot van waarnemend burgemeester Asscher. Hij wil de Wallen schoonmaken en ontdoen van alle jolijt.’ Robert Vuijsje in a weekly article for the weekend magazine, this time about the ASC. Robert Vuijsje, ‘Corps’, *Het Parool* (Amsterdam, 29 May 2009).

⁵⁵ From *Lustrum ASC/AVSV, kiescorps.nl*, 2012 <<http://www.kiescorps.nl/media.php>>.

Committee of Recommendation of the Varsity, as well as in the 'closed character' that representatives like to emphasize.⁵⁶

Jaffe is not the only one who finds the *corps* strange. *Corps* students are often parodied in satirical programmes such as the popular 'Lullo's', where they can be recognized through a combination of typical outward appearance, their way of talking and the topics of discussion: beer, sex, affluent 'daddies', sports such as hockey and rowing. Concerning sex, for example, one of the most widely mentioned topics is STDs (*soa's*; *seksueel overdraagbare aandoeningen*), which *corps* students are rumoured to often contract because they do not like to use protection. Thus, one of the typical scenes portraying *corps* life occurs the day after a party, where the party-goers all see each other again in the waiting room of an STD clinic in Amsterdam.⁵⁷

j. Living in a society house

While the image of *corps* students seen from the perspective of neighbours, commentators or non-*corps* students is clearly one-sided, testimonies of *corps* students themselves show a more diverse reality within the actual club. Firstly, there are differences in character and personality related to each of the various debating societies which make up the association. There are also literary, theatre, political or even shooting clubs which *corps* students can join according to their personalities and tastes.

Furthermore, members classify themselves and others according to their level of involvement in *corps* life. Some are considered 'boarded-up' – those who do everything within the context of the *corps* – and the 'normal ones'. *Corps* student Sophie, who considers herself to be 'normal', explains the differences this way: 'The boarded-up (*dichtgetikt*) are those who are at the Toko at happy hour every day. They only want to get as many jobs as possible inside the *corps*, are exclusively engaged in the society and have no other interests outside it'.⁵⁸ In contrast, 'normal' members such as herself go

⁵⁶ Rivke Jaffe, 'Naakt in Het Water? Cultureel Kapitaal', *Mare* (Leiden, 16 April 2009) <<http://www.mareonline.nl/artikel/0809/28/0101/>>.

⁵⁷ Koefnoen, *Koefnoen - Dispuutstrutjes Terras* (The Netherlands: Koefnoenkanaal/YouTube, 2010) <<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLYPFFHuzawXdku1UQDmzLPndZjo3XVJMY>>. Koefnoen, *Koefnoen - Dispuutstrutjes Ziekenhuis* (The Netherlands: Koefnoenkanaal/YouTube, 2013) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kp9I77zagkU>>.

⁵⁸ 'Generally speaking members in their first or second year who immerse themselves completely in the life of the association. Everything revolves around the association and matters such as family, friends, sleep, studying and working are forgotten as a result. There is nothing quite so cool and awesome as the club and everyone needs to hear about it.' In 'Studenten Woorden Die Beginnen Met de Letter: D' <<http://studenten-woordenboek.nl/d/>>. Other definitions say 'over maar 'één ding kunnen lullen' ('only being able to gab [*'lullen'*] about one thing') in 'Studententaal (Deel 1: A T/m K)', 2007 <<http://mens-en-samenleving.infonu.nl/communicatie/7507-studententaal-deel-i-a-tm-k.html>>. >.

to the society only once a week and also have contact outside it and friendships with students who are not members.⁵⁹

Another way of measuring the level of involvement is to distinguish between students who share accommodation with other *corps* students and those who do not. For a *corps* association such as ASC/AVSV, this distinction is especially significant because a 'real' *corps* owns accommodation for part of its membership. In the case of ASC/AVSV, these houses belong to each of the debating societies. ASC/AVSV has a total of 38 such group houses, 20 for male and 18 for female students,⁶⁰ providing room for four to eight students each. It is also worth mentioning that the rooms in the houses are distributed through a system in which newcomers are allotted the smaller rooms while older members take the bigger and better located spaces of the house. Each year, once the initiation period has been completed, two to four new students from each society are invited by the older members to live in the house, while the graduates move out.⁶¹

In a city such as Amsterdam, which has always had a student housing shortage, it would not be surprising to find students regarding membership of and participation in a *corps* as merely a means to gain accommodation in the inner city. ASC/AVSV houses are located in much desired areas, such as along the canals, and the contribution of 300 to 400 euros a month is affordable. However, the remarkable thing is that students who feel no affinity with the *corps* would never choose such an option. Accepting the invitation of older students to live in a society house already implies full membership. While there are privileges, there are also duties. Some testimonies in the research material reveal that students who choose such a trajectory do not see any disadvantages in what is called a total immersion in *corps* student life. One who had just graduated says: 'I lived there with eight male students and it was a very nice time. There was always a very nice ambiance. People came in and out so there was always something to do. I cannot easily think of any downside'.⁶²

However, not all members prefer to live in a *corps* house or become completely immersed in *corps* life. In the same article, Sophie, who defined herself as 'normal', writes that she had also been asked by her society to join the house, but that she refused because she did not want to restrict her student life to the ASC/AVSV set. She preferred to live in a house with a greater variety of students. Nevertheless, she also admitted that she liked the idea that in the case of any problems with her

⁵⁹ 'Ssra (Amsterdam) - Een Vereniging Met Humor', *Studenten.net* (Amsterdam, 2000)

<http://www.studenten.net/studieeven/verenigingen/447/ssra_amsterdam_-_een_vereniging_met_humor>.

⁶⁰ The precise number of debating societies slightly varies, depending on the sources. This number is reported in the article 'Goedkoop wonen in een dispuuthuis' Marlous Blogger, 'Goedkoop Wonen in Een Dispuutshuis', 2013 <<https://marlousblokker.wordpress.com/2013/01/12/153/#more-153>>. and on the official website of the ASC/AVSV. 'A.S.C./A.V.S.V.'

⁶¹ Cheap living in a debating society house. Marlous Blogger.

⁶² Retrieved from: Marlous Blogger.

current room she could always ask co-ASC/AVSV members to help her out because there were plenty of members who lived in pleasant houses in Amsterdam, bought by their well-to-do parents, precisely so they could live in Amsterdam with other students during their studies.

k. Friendship

Antagonists of student *corps* life have argued that one of the things they dislike most about *corps* associations is their resemblance to a military organization governed by a clear and formal hierarchy. They dislike what they see as a lack of spontaneity and freedom of thought. In contrast, testimonies of members show that they in fact like the use of symbols such as a particular form of dress and see them as signs of friendship and brotherhood. The account by one member, Max Janzing, who died in 2013 from leukaemia, illustrates this idea. He always felt the *corps* and military life suited his character. So, when he went to study at the University of Amsterdam he immediately joined the ASC/AVSV Nereus sub-association, enjoying the company of friends that he met at the rowing club:

I really love student life. I have always felt a need for a form of brotherhood. When I was younger I wanted to join the army. Not because I wanted to fight, but because of the bond you establish with the other guys. [...] At high school I already had a very close group of friends. We acted in a very corporate way [*corporaal*]. We had identical ties made for us.⁶³

The walls of the society house, NIA or 'de Toko', are also a kind of metaphor for the way the society seems to protect and insulate its members. In *Niemand in de Stad*, the character of Jacob sheds some light on this aspect:

The club building is windowless, so we don't have to look outside. We barricade ourselves against the world, against the sheepshearers and their knives and the hunters with their guns, against our fathers and their expectations, and our mothers and their safety net. Just for a little while. In this small, artificial and unimportant society of ours.⁶⁴

⁶³ Annemarie Haverkamp, 'Voordat de Dood Ons Scheidt', *NRC* (Amsterdam, 2013) <<http://www.annemariehaverkamp.nl/vandaag-in-nrc-voordat-de-dood-ons-scheidt/>>. Max Janzing died in September 2013 at the age of 22. On the occasion, Nereus announced a few days of mourning, halting all regular activities. The announcement by Nereus reads as follows: 'In connection with Max's death the governing committee has proclaimed a general state of mourning for the association, with immediate effect, to last until 13 September 2013. All the scheduled events, the social at Café Dansen bij Jansen, the outdoor and the social at Nereus, are hereby cancelled. You will be able to get tickets for the final rowing camp next week, the possibility to train will remain open only to competition rowers.' Retrieved from: Stefanie Driever, *In Memoriam* (Amsterdam, 2013) <http://www.nereus.nl/nieuws/artikel/1620/in_memoriam/>.

⁶⁴ Huff, p. 105.

I. Unwritten rules

As already noted, access to the clubhouse ‘without windows’, referred to by Jacob, is on the whole closed to outsiders. This means that accounts from outsiders are scarce in my sources. Anouk Kemper, journalist for the university magazine *Folia* was one of the few outsiders who gained entry. In her *Folia* article she wrote about a visit to the ASC/AVSV clubhouse in which she was shown around by the rector of the association: a beautiful library, various rooms of every size for the different activities and an impressive bar with 12 tables for the different debating societies. She also noticed that in a very short time she seemed to have infringed on several *corps* rules: wearing the appropriate shoes and taking one’s correct place at the bar were only a couple of the rules that members must observe. Those rules are unwritten, even the new rector admitted that he did not know before his appointment that jackets could only be removed if the temperature was above 58 degrees Celsius. The mores, habits and social codes of the association and the acquisition of a certain style and *savoir faire* are only acquired through endless repetition.



Phillip Bos, Senator ASC/AVSV in the ‘borrelzaal’. Clubhouse NIA Warmoesstraat
 Source: Anouk Kemper, ‘Een Lange Traditie in Stand Houden’, *Folia* Magazine (Amsterdam, December 2010), pp. 18–19.

Another interesting testimony comes from the writer Robert Vuijsje, who had been invited by the ASC/AVSV debating society *Homerus* to talk about his work (Vuijsje does not specify this but the invitation was probably made in relation to his ‘bestseller’ *Alleen maar nette mensen* [Nice People Only]). In the Amsterdam newspaper *Het Parool* he wrote:

You think, I've seen everything, as they say ... How is it possible that after 30 years you end up in a place which is nothing like anywhere else. In this part of town only Krasnapolsky [a five star hotel on Dam Square] and the Bijenkorf [department store] have more space available to them.⁶⁵

The society serves 300 meals and many more litres of beer every day, he added. However, as soon as the image of beer-drinking students bothering tourists and outsiders in the streets was introduced, the writer continued: 'these students were involved and asked me relevant questions'.

m. Internal rivalries

Vuijsje's comment points towards less well-known aspects of ASC/AVSV, such as a self-imputed reputation as a cultural and intellectual enclave. In this context, the debating societies, such as Letterkundige Dispuutgezelschap HEBE, claim to be proud of having resisted important changes in society and having become, in their own words, '*a perpetuum stabile*' a 'permanent forever', amidst social 'equalization trends' and other catastrophes since its foundation in 1901.⁶⁶ Such comments reveal, above all, an anti-social-democratic way of understanding intellectualism that accords with the general view of the *corps* held by antagonist outsiders.

However, the list of ASC/AVSV alumni also contains an array of names that at first may seem surprising in the context of a traditional student association such as ASC/AVSV. The stand-up comedian Freek de Jonge, for example, seems an unlikely candidate, because he has been considered the voice of left-wing conscience in the Netherlands for many years, and this seems a mismatch with the traditional philosophy of the association. The same goes for other well-known names in Amsterdam, such as the feminist journalist Xandra Schutte, chief editor of the left-wing *Groene Amsterdammer*. Her name on the ASC/AVSV list is an invitation to identify a group of ex- and present students who felt they were the 'rebels within the ASC/AVSV'. In the book *Rebels within the Rules*, Schutte and Bronkhuyzen recall the excitement of having been part of ACT Arktos – a female debating society with a reputation for including mavericks – at a moment of a collective lesbian coming out. From then on these women 'went to women's discotheques such as Ditis and Homolulu, to old cafes at Zeedijk and to Petit Poucet on Marnixstraat'.⁶⁷ Arktos' reputation remained intact until its closure in 2010. One of the last members recalls that Arktos was the refuge for students who did not wear stilettos, preferring flat shoes, and who preferred to spend a summer travelling to unusual holidays destinations such as Siberia, rather than Ibiza or Australia.

⁶⁵ In: Vuijsje, 'Corps.'

⁶⁶ 'H.E.B.E.: De Ontstaansgeschiedenis van Een Perpetuum Stabile', *H.E.B.E. Letterkundig Dispuutgezelschap* <<http://hebe.nl/pages/view/geschiedenis/>>.

⁶⁷ Jeanet van Omme, Annemarie Aalders and Vilan van de Loo, *Rebels Binnen de Regels. Het Vrouwendispuut Arktos, 1917-1997* (Hilversum: Verloren b.v., 1997), p. 195.

Sometimes during one of the socials I would look around me', says Marie-Claire. 'At the other debating societies with forty guys or girls, while we were in a group of just ten.' To the girls in their stiletto heels, looking like they'd stepped from the pages of a fashion magazine, despite the fact that the musty old hall was permanently flooded with beer. 'We, the members of Arktos, wore boots with flat soles, because heels made your feet hurt.'⁶⁸

Although Arktos has disappeared (in the end it only had two members left), some passages in the novel *Niemand in de stad* reaffirm the idea that ASC/AVSV student members vary in interests and intellectual aspirations. In this sense, it is interesting that the main character, Philip, and his friend Matt have completely different ideas about life and intellectualism. The novel reproduces one of the moments at which those differences become visible. The scene is a presentation given by 'the chief editor of a well-known intellectual magazine from Amsterdam' during the ASC/AVSV lustrum festivities. While Philip concentrates on listening to the call for the engagement of intellectuals in the public debate and considers applying for an internship at the magazine, his friend Matt says:

'I am not a member of the gang that dike is talking about,' he says. 'You are the intellectuals.' 'Not me. I am the masses. And I don't see that as a problem. What I do see as a problem is that I need to take a dump now.'⁶⁹

The references to a 'dike', in Dutch 'pot', a pejorative term for a lesbian, and to intellectuals as 'bende', a 'gang', makes clear that Matt does not feel any kind of sympathy for them. At the same time, the details allow us to assume that the scene in the novel is based on a real-life presentation given by ex-ASC/AVSV member Xandra Schutte – in which she indeed discussed the role that intellectuals should play in opposing increasing populism in contemporary society. It also allows one to assume that Philip, unlike Matt, has sympathy for Schutte's left-wing ideas, as he is even thinking about applying for an internship as a journalist at Schutte's publication.

n. More internal conflicts: 'signs of degeneration'

The examples in the previous paragraph show that although an image of ASC/AVSV as a monolithic whole first emerges – in which conflict and differences are limited to antagonisms with outsiders – a more careful look at the material points to different levels and kinds of internal antagonism. Some of them are in fact inherent in the structure of the association. It may be considered logical for debating societies to be each other's rivals, because they all compete in similar ways with respect to quality, characteristics and in attracting new members. However, additional contradictory aspects, such as

⁶⁸'De Rebellen van Het Corps', *de Volkskrant*, 28 December 2010
<<http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/2844/Archief/archief/article/detail/1308424/2010/12/28/De-rebellen-van-het-corps.dhtml>>.

⁶⁹ Huff, p. 326.

maintaining club identity under the pressure of the increasing popularity of ASC/AVSV, have perhaps resulted in the development of a dynamic similar to that which threatened the unity of the association in the 1940s, as mentioned above. It is important to realize that at that time, the association found itself unable to properly absorb and instruct the members of the middle classes and the nouveaux riche who were joining it.

In fact, the research sources include many testimonies that claim that ASC/AVSV has become a club for provincials, meaning students who are merely focused on future gains. In this sense, the analysis below may be somewhat confusing, because there are not always very clear delimitations of what should and should not be considered 'real' *corps*. Some delimitations can be identified through different kinds of expressions and channels. The satirical material put together by the *corps* for the annual celebration of the association during NIA week includes remarks such as: 'Is DIDO an HBO fraternity? Or is it OSIRIS?'⁷⁰ This refers to the opinion that students of universities of applied sciences (known as HBO, *Hoger Beroepsonderwijs*, Higher Vocational Education) are traditionally seen as being less than 'real university students'. These students complete a different and 'lower' secondary education curriculum and their university courses result in a Bachelor of Applied Sciences degree. On this basis, they cannot practise as a doctor or as a lawyer, for example. Thus, the reputation of an HBO debating society suffers from having a kind of nouveau riche attitude attributed to it, including references to 'excesses in the use of drugs' and 'stupid acts', such as stealing a miniature plane from the Madurodam miniature theme park and then admitting guilt in front of the police while crying.⁷¹

Furthermore, the material reveals that ASC/AVSV has reservations concerning members and ex-members who limit their social aspirations to proletarian partying or professional ambitions to merely making money. ASC/AVSV also rejects those who brag of luxury and bling or who wear clothes that are too fashionable or trendy. Their statement is that a young *corps* man should wear a suit. He does not drink fancy cocktails, but drinks beer and strong liquor: gin, whisky and a chaser of beer and gin. The short film made by the association to introduce the theme of the 2013 almanac is a good illustration of this point of view, summarized in the words '*Doe normaal*' ('Act normal').⁷²

This film starts with a full shot of a young *corps* student dressed in an elegant, plain black suit. From the text one learns that this young man has had enough of the increasing degeneracy visible

⁷⁰ A.S.C./A.V.S.V., 'Intro van Radioniaweek 2 T/m 5 Februari van 16:00 - 20:00. Live Streaming Op www.Niaweek.nl' (Amsterdam: Radio Niaweek/YouTube, 2010) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4reKwJYORCA>>.

⁷¹ Kamran, 'Studentikoze Vliegtuigslopers Hebben Spijt', *The Post Online* (Amsterdam, 8 September 2008) <<http://cult.thepostonline.nl/campustv/asc-feuten-slopen-madurodam-vliegtuig/>>.

⁷² *Almanak A.S.C./A.V.S.V. Bekendmaking 2013* (Amsterdam: A.S.C./A.V.S.V./YouTube, 2013) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gu-cfG5wQ8A>>.

everywhere within the association. Instead of glasses of whiskey he sees shots and cocktail glasses, sneakers and V-neck sweaters, and members fighting.⁷³ He rips up a wooden floorboard and proceeds to attack all those who he considers to be ‘grunters’, that is to say, opponents and ‘*proleten*’, with their cocktails and the like. Significantly, we see him also on the verge of hitting a group of female members who are taking selfies with their smart phones.

Another example of the difficulties of deciding on the right way for an ASC/AVSV member to behave deals with the use of hard drugs such as cocaine. The following comments, posted on the occasion of the news that the association had been obliged by city council to close its doors for one week, provide some interesting details about the difficulties of maintaining some sort of discipline on these matters:

It is a regular mixed-bag society. ASC is no more than a coordination body of debating clubs. The Committee and Senate are not even allowed to club them on the head without being hit back severely. They can't deal with the large number of members anymore. Going to the dogs. By mongrels with white noses ...

It becomes clear from these comments that it is also difficult for such associations to decide whether their members should be punished or not for the use of hard drugs such as cocaine because its use is so extensive in the city.⁷⁴ The following posts reveal some of the different views on this specific topic: ‘It’s not surprising that this should happen in Amsterdam again. The only thing this rotten club does for the other student *corps* is to give them a bad reputation: coke, fights and other prol behaviour!’ Another poster objects: ‘You mean the effects of a real city. Something all these provincial student *corps* are rather jealous of.’

Press stories concentrate on excesses in the association during the initiation of new students, the use of cocaine or fights with other student associations or with people in the neighbourhood. However, despite its actual disparate nature, it seems that the association is mainly defined by two archetypical characters, as will be discussed in the following paragraph.

o. Main characters: the rich, the old boys’ network and the ‘well-off butcher’

In the two fictional stories I examined for this chapter, two main characters stand out – in terms of social background – and they are also represented in the material found on forums and other media.

⁷³ ‘ASC has had it with the increase of grunters: drinking shots, fighting, V-neck sweaters ... The theme of this year's almanac is: ACT NORMAL’ in: A.S.C./A.V.S.V., ‘Doe Normaal. Je Bent Toch Lid.’, *Facebook*, 2012

<<https://www.facebook.com/ascavsv/posts/504844652871829>>. See film: *Almanak A.S.C./A.V.S.V. Bekendmaking 2013*.

⁷⁴ This and the following references in this paragraph are from: ‘Sociëteit ASC Drie Uur Vroeger Dicht’, *soggen.nl*, 2010 <<http://www.soggen.nl/?p=1225>>.

One represents the members of old, wealthy families, while the other is embodied in the more recent set of well-off professionals working at lawyers and banking firms in new business areas such as the Zuidas business district.

Some exponents of the first group can be found in Philipp Huff's novel *Niemand in de stad*. Jacob, a friend of the main character Philip, is a good example. He is a student of medicine (at least, this is what the reader thinks until discovering at the end of the novel that Jacob quit university years before). Jacob's parental home has the largest entry any of his friends had ever seen. The piano, the old clocks, the enormous garden, the antlers on the wall and his mother's knowledge of classical music creates a similar ambiance to that used in the series *Feuten*, in which the wealthy main characters carry the stereotyped names of Olivier and Marie-Claire with a double-barrelled family name. In forums, the status of the wealthy upper classes is expressed in terms of the activities attributed to these groups, such as playing hockey (hockey in the Netherlands has traditionally been an upper-class sport), a specific way of speaking with a characteristic 'r' and, for girls, a hoarse voice.

We also have the children of well-off merchants and entrepreneurs who study law or economics in Amsterdam and join ASC/AVSV because it is the oldest student association. A large number of comments reveal that many do so because they believe that becoming a *corps* student will benefit their successful professional life.⁷⁵ In their comments, the posters seem to take as a serious fact that a specific education in law or economics implies being member of a student organization, preferably a *corps*. The *corps* is thought to give members more than a practical network: it is thought to provide the required experience for the development of specific personal and professional skills and the attitude which can cope with minor discomforts such as hangovers or lack of sleep. It is hardly a coincidence that at this time in *Feuten*, the father of Bram, the main character, is precisely a 'butcher' (in the forums the stereotype of the butcher is replaced by other middle-class occupations such as a 'more successful french-fries merchant'⁷⁶) and that joining the *corps* is seen as a step by which to emancipate oneself from a 'humble' and provincial origin. It is not a coincidence that in *Feuten* the 'process of becoming' of the main character, Bram, begins with him joining the *corps* and the first initiation ceremonies, and is only completed when Bram shows that he is able to resist his former 'proletarian' temptations and remain loyal to his new friends. Only then can he regain the love of the upper-class girl 'Marie-Claire' and the friendship of her brother Olivier.

⁷⁵ 'Het Corps' (ForumFok.nl, 2005) <<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/738521/1/999#29578184>>.

⁷⁶ '3000 members is rather a lot; this club has gone quite far in embracing the common element, it seems 😊 But you do need to join a decent debating society, because otherwise you will be stuck with paupers and the sons of chipshop owners made good. A good society = a good time, a mediocre society = a mediocre time.' 'In: 'Het Corps.'

p. Traces of *corps* life in professional environments

A further analysis of the research material enables us to identify some of the important connections and implications of joining a *corps* for the professional future of students. Members can profit from the association network and are often approached by recruiters for internships or junior positions, especially in banking, law companies and larger corporations. ASC/AVSV publications such as the *Almanak* reveal the interest that sponsors have in the association and the general consensus in forums and the like is that the skills, knowledge and experience acquired in the association create advantages in life.

In fact, it is also very interesting to see that this estimation seems to be confirmed by the comments posted on specific online sites, on which recruiters and employees deal with different topics concerning working life and the employability of new aspirants. One of those sites is the blog 'ZoZuidas' ('So South Axis'), hosted by three anonymous writers who only reveal that they are 'three young women employees in the business area of Zuidas'. The same three women are the authors of a book with the same title, which is meant to be a funny self-caricature of life at Zuidas.⁷⁷ In their book they give some tips to aspiring employees and trainees who are willing to work in what some see as the Amsterdam 'magic circle'.⁷⁸ The kind of clothes that they recommend are clearly related to the style of the *corps*: simple, well-made women's suits in neutral colours and a bag with the necessary equipment (make up, refreshments etc.) to deal with unforeseen situations or to camouflage the effects of Zuidas habits such as long working nights or excessive alcohol consumption in the weekly 'borrels'. Furthermore, the authors have some tips concerning Zuidas ethics: do not complain about work, get used to a lack of sleep, manage frustrations, acknowledge the hierarchy and cope with the internal codes.⁷⁹

On the website, one can see that those codes might be easier to deal with if an aspirant has been member of a *corps* association. It seems to imply that they are Dutch and white. The following text refers to the archetypal wealthy white Dutch male, here called Floris – it could be also Olivier or Willem – and to the Moroccan immigrant typified as Fatima – or Rachid and Mohammed for males – and aims to trigger a discussion on the topic of diversity in Zuidas.

Floris & Fatima

[...] If the Zuidas was a person, it would be an amiable *corps* type [*corpsba!*] in his early forties who pulls on a lycra playsuit in the weekends to practice one of the typically Dutch outdoor sports (skating

⁷⁷ De Zoza's, *Zo Zuidas. Overwerk & Achterklap in de Amsterdamse Kantoortjungle* (Amsterdam: Pearson Education, 2010).

⁷⁸ Referring to its model in the City of London.

⁷⁹ De Zoza's.

or cycling). After all, the Zuidas is still a bastion of whiteness, with a strategically positioned Rachid or an adopted Chinese person here and there for the [United Colors of] Benneton-feeling. That may sound crude and pretty rotten. But let's not beat around the bush here. Despite the fact that you see much more diversity in terms of colour in university auditoriums, you hardly ever see any coloured Dutch people at the case-law breakfast meetings at the office.

The Bar Association wants to change that and launched a diversity programme. The word diversity is met with a high degree of indifference among colleagues. 'But often they don't even want to work for one of the large firms. They prefer to set up on their own.'⁸⁰

This comment by an experienced recruiter immediately sheds some light on the reason why a 'sociable frat boy' (a '*gezellige corpsbal*') is the best employee at Zuidas. In the eyes of this recruiter, students who have not put any effort into leaving their parental home during university and have not been a member of a *corps* are not made for Zuidas life. According to him, the lack of such experience is a real handicap that not only affects Rachids and Mohammeds but also 'white students from the border municipalities of Amsterdam' who 'remain lax, still living in their grumpy world with the same soccer friends they had when they were eight years old'. He concludes: 'Clients and confrères have no use for grunts, it's as simple as that'.

The Dutch 'political arena' also suggests that politicians seem to immediately recognize those who have been members of a *corps* association. Pechtold expresses it this way:

In the then cabinet, [known as] Balkenende IV, there were a number of ministers and state secretaries who had been members of corpora – you know that about each other. You see that in all manner of ways and customs, such as the debating techniques, which are a specific mixture of humour and knowing your history. In Leiden they call that a 'Leidse bek' ['a Leiden gob']. Having a quick tongue, not letting yourself be talked into a corner easily. Approaching your opponent with respect, a kind of duelling with words. So not just stating your opinion bluntly. A study association can be a really formative influence in that regard.⁸¹

Every year, initiation rituals are disruptive and can end with police detention, but ultimately it seems that the bad reputation of such practices is not as detrimental as it may have been in the past, as though it is now assumed that such rites are legitimate aspects of a formative process. The emergence of more commercial initiatives in the media and the tendency to tolerate political incorrectness may have led to the more sympathetic tone registered on new media when covering

⁸⁰ This and the following two citations with quotations marks are from: Zozuidas, 'Floris & Fatima', 2011 <<http://www.zozuidas.nl/2011/11/floris-fatima.html>>. In the translations we have kept possible misspellings, as it is the case of the word Benneton (instead of Benetton).

⁸¹ Gommans and Zanders.

association news, as shown in the following quotation: ‘The fourteen lads who were picked up after a rough ragging have all been released again. The *corps* chicks may continue unimpeded with their ragging in the centre of Amsterdam. Even when they blindfold the freshmen with rubbish bags’.⁸²

4.5. Conclusions

I would like to start by stating that in Amsterdam today, student life is clearly not synonymous with the organized *corps* life that used to exist during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nevertheless, I believe that in this Amsterdam of today, such life has not disappeared. In fact, once I had started to collect data, the signs of vitality were so evident that it was clear that if I wanted to capture a diverse and realistic imaginary of ‘present student life’ I would need to focus more attention on this group.

Indeed, the possibility of identifying current *corps* life in Amsterdam seemed to be especially attractive because it could lead to contrasting and complementary student imaginaries of the city. This realization was prompted by evidence of visions of life and a sense of belonging that stood in stark contrast to the creative imaginary reflected in the fictional works of young adults discussed in the previous chapter. While the creative type emphasized the charm of fortuitous and unexpected encounters in the city, the *corps* students seem to long for an organized life in which encounters are ruled by fixed practices such as introductions and initiations.

The research in this chapter addressed three main issues. The first concerned the view that these students had of life. How does life in Amsterdam look from the ‘window’ of a *corps* student? The second issue was that of the traditional nature of these kinds of associations. How does this traditionalism look today? What does traditional student *corps* life mean? and How is this life manifest in the use and interpretation of places in the city? Finally, the third aspect concerned the visible revival of traditional *corps* life ‘even’ in cities such as Amsterdam. Was it possible to talk about a sort of emancipation process in *corps* life? Could the study of this shed some light on the reasons for the visible increase in the number of students in Amsterdam willing to become members of an old and traditional student association? Could one argue that this was a sign of an emancipation of ‘*corps*’ values?

⁸² ‘Corps lads arrested, chicks carry on with hazing’ *Corpsknappen Opgepak, Chicks Ontgroenen Gewoon* (The Netherlands: Campus Television, 2009).

With respect to the first issue, it seems clear that a *corps* life concretized in the membership of the ASC/AVSV student association provides students with places and spaces that are exclusively meant for members. As we have seen from the research data, ASC/AVSV does not rent its NIA clubhouse to third parties, which undoubtedly contributes to its exclusive character. In this sense, the Chesterfield couches, the wooden bookcases, the special candle-lit dining rooms, the enormous bar and the impressive cellar with its eight large kegs of beer are exclusively reserved for members and alumni. As the various testimonies demonstrate, all of these spaces are generally ruled by unwritten internal laws which are continuously repeated to first years by older students: those rules range from clothing requirements to the proper use of spaces or language. In short, it is clear that a Foucauldian analysis of the place would be of great interest. Yet, for the goal of this specific research project, one of the most interesting aspects was the way the use of place and space recalled the specific uses and traditions of the past.

This leads to the second aspect of the study, how traditionalism becomes actualized in a specific use and interpretation of the current city of Amsterdam. Clearly, a complete answer to this question would require very exhaustive research, which again would exceed the goals of this chapter, but there are some essential elements here. The first is the location of the ASC/AVSV clubhouse, the NIA, in the oldest part of Amsterdam, establishing the continuity of present student life with that of earlier periods, extending right back to medieval times. The current initiation ceremonies, in which new students are required to jump into the canals of what is now the Red Light district, or walk the streets wearing outlandish outfits, means that the students engage with the contemporary environment made up of souvenirs shops and tourists, but also with the prostitutes, the popular old bars, the drunkards and the district priests still operating in the area, in other words with the types of characters well-known to a medieval harbour district. In addition, NIA is located in the '*regenten*' area, very near the Royal Palace on Dam Square. For the ASC/AVSV, the references to the palace are not meaningless. The portrait of reigning Queen Beatrix (at the time) in the NIA clubhouse presides over the place (and is only respectfully taken off on occasions when excesses are permitted in the clubhouse).⁸³

The second important place references are the 'debating houses' which are the property of the association located along the beautiful, celebrated canals, made famous in Amsterdam's Golden Age. Here, *corps* students live a traditional student life. That is to say, spatially and temporally separated from parents and other external authorities and only ruled by *corps* habits and mores. It is not coincidental that the different debating houses have names such as '*het Weeshuis*' ('The

⁸³ Kemper.

Orphanage'). The tradition is also maintained by the strict separation of female and male houses and debating societies, as well as by what one could call political incorrectness when referring to women or homosexuals.

The third important reference is to the use of an internal language which ensures that a very specific meaning-giving process is applied to places and situations. This language means that *corps* students immediately recognize one another, no matter where they are or what they are wearing. It is a language that combines a vernacular *corps* speech using allusions to sexual and physical acts with manners of speech and debating techniques such as eloquence and persuasiveness. In addition, the use of Latin to define functions and mantras contributes to making *corps* language especially noticeable in the context of a Dutch-speaking society which today tends to have recourse to English.

In terms of a sense of place, it is also important to mention that the activities of *corps* students in Amsterdam extend beyond district 1012 and are more widespread than one would first think. *Corps* students, equipped with their own artefacts – hair styles, specific clothes, a good quality traditional watch – can be identified in various old and prestigious sporting venues in the city: hockey clubs, equestrian and rowing centres on the Amstel and in the South. They can also be found in groups at large new venues, celebrating galas and partying, or commemorating anniversaries in an official ceremony chaired by the head of the University of Amsterdam. The versatility of their performance and the combination of endurance, discipline, immoderation, condescension and *savoir faire* seems to make them recognizable to insiders even when they are alone or 'undercover'. Therefore, it is also clear that for many of its members involvement in the ASC/AVSV is seen as an opportunity to gain access to a world which offers good professional prospects; in which alumni in strategic positions in law and economics, for example, will recognize them and prefer them over a so-called 'knor'.

Evidently, the long list of ASC/AVSV alumni, including many well-known and successful Dutch personalities in different fields, contributes to ASC/AVSV's credibility as a highway to success. However, the revival of *corps* student life seems to reach even further than the merely utilitarian prospect of getting a good job. The revival of traditions seems to point to a genuine emancipation of these traditional organizations in Amsterdam, organizations that for a couple of decades – starting from the 1960s – had been seen as 'ridiculous anachronisms', but that today, as we have seen, are increasingly part of city life. In fact, there seems to be two sides to the coin: the image of discipline, militarism, secrecy, arrogance and excessiveness that has been used to negatively typify *corps* life by outsiders on the one side, and a charismatic reverse side defined in terms of trust, exclusiveness,

knowledge and brotherhood, on the other, which, along with an element of Amsterdammer and Dutch traditionalism, undoubtedly contributes to its increasing popularity.⁸⁴

The *corps* have not only become the scene of the coming of age story of Phillip Huff but also of the booming television and film production *Feuten*. With this, the media seem to have discovered the media-genic potential of the *corps* as a *rara avis* and has begun the process of the humanization of its characters. Therefore, it seems more than reasonable to conclude that because of its capacity to survive in an original form, the *corps* has become a charismatic niche, which is illuminating in its reliance on traditional values and on a kind of 'class-ism' that seems to have evoked more student sympathy in the Amsterdam of today than in earlier decades.

Obviously, it is probably unnecessary to say that not every student will join in *corps* life with the same intensity of purpose. We have also seen that the testimonies of some allude to internal tensions, conflict and betrayals. However, at the same time, and according to the many comments posted by *corps* students themselves, *corps* life is also seen to be definitely worth taking part in and to have long-lasting positive effects. In the eyes of many members, if outsiders do not understand *corps* life, it is because they do not believe in it. In the end, one could also conclude that this is the main message of the story: '*Nihilisten*' and '*Knorren*' will never get it, but for *corps* believers the mantra is clear – the more you become involved, the better it works.

⁸⁴ The above-mentioned article, 'Bravado being oppressed', was one of the examples of a new perspective in approaching the revival of the *corps*. Walsum.

5. Capturing the Imaginary: Ajax Supporters and Amsterdam

5.1. Introduction: When Ajax is Amsterdam and vice versa

This chapter will explore the sense of place that young adults express through their support of Amsterdam's local football team, the Amsterdam Football Club Ajax (AFC Ajax or simply Ajax). A link with Ajax consistently appears as a relevant topic in association with the name Amsterdam in forums and other online and offline gatherings. This persistent association suggests that being an Ajax supporter is not an experience isolated and separate from feeling a connection with the city, that is, merely an addendum, but rather an inclusive and legitimate way of expressing a sense of place. This means that in addition to being attracted by specific future prospects, such as becoming a writer or a business man, many young adults, including students, may in fact intrinsically relate their attraction to Amsterdam – their love of the city – to being an Ajax supporter.

Being an expressive Ajax supporter is clearly not limited to a few old hard-core hooligans from the 'F-side'.¹ During recent years, the new Vak410, mainly comprising a younger generation of supporters, has increased the visibility of support. The name 'Vak410', deriving from the section of the stands in the Amsterdam Arena where the group first gathered, not only appears in that area within the stadium but can also be seen outside, online or offline, as graffiti, etc. In one of the issues of *Havana*, the weekly magazine of the Hogeschool van Amsterdam (Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences), Jeff Pinkster revealed that a significant group of students were fervent participants in this group and were especially happy to have their courses held in a building so close to the stadium.² Also, this same journalist, at that time a recent graduate student of VU University Amsterdam, confessed to being a fervent '*Ajaciëd*', a passion and a feeling that he shared with the great majority of young journalists in the editorial staff of the University of Amsterdam's magazine, *Folia*, where he works at the moment of writing these pages.³

What is interesting about football in particular is that support for a football club seems to extend beyond the exceptional forms – for example, hooliganism or the outstanding impact of a decisive match – infiltrating the daily life of young people. In fact, in the last few years an array of studies

¹ 'F-side' is the name of the first 'ultra supporters' club. For a narrative of its origins and development see: Ronald Pieloor, M. Bakker and B. van de Meer, *F-Side Is Niet Makkelijk! Een Kwarteeuw F-Side over Vriendschap, Geweld, Humor, Amsterdam En Ajax* (Amsterdam: Het Spectrum, 2003).

² Jeff Pinkster, 'Vak410. Sfeermakers van de Arena', *Havana*, 2011
<http://www.havanaweb.nl/archief/jaargang_16/havana20_16.pdf>.

³ The same was corroborated by *Folia* chief editor Jim Jansen during his Master Class recorded on 19 September 2012. Jim Jansen, 'Reporting the City of Amsterdam' (Amsterdam: City Marketing in Europe, Hogeschool van Amsterdam, 2012).

have also pointed to the idea that the presence of football in daily life is greater and more important than one would at first think.⁴ Football fandom seems to contribute to the ontological need for security and safety, providing routines that 'are critical for social actors at the most basic levels of existence'. 'Therefore practices which allow for routinization (e.g. football fandom) are potentially important sites for instilling feelings of social belonging, stability and security'.⁵

In turn, the sociologist Ramón Spaaij, who specializes in football fandom, remarks that the commercialization of football has not actually changed the authentic feelings that many people associate with support for their club. Moreover, he sees fandom today as representing what Erikson has called the psychosocial *moratorium*, 'during which the young adult through free role experimentation may find a niche in some section of his society, a niche which is firmly defined and yet seems to be uniquely made for him'.⁶ This implies that, although membership of an official football club may be considered by some as a cliché, nevertheless, for the member experiencing acceptance, the feeling of uniqueness remains. In sum, considering the existence of a link to place and community through football as obvious and therefore superfluous and irrelevant to 'real life matters' – especially when attributed to students – could mean failing to appreciate that a love of football is not only expressed in small talk but is also the expression of a sincere and authentic feeling of belonging and a viable way of fitting into specific environments.

In the following pages I will briefly review some of the ideas that stand out in the literature relating to football, fandom, contemporary cities and social bonding (among others).

5.2. Literature review: On football, fans and Ajax

Over recent decades, numerous authors have studied the influence of professional football teams on city life. Most of the earliest works focused on the effect that new forms of football violence had on the experience of football spectators, who were forced to change their old ways of watching a match due to safety measures in the stadiums. At the same time, the growth of hooliganism as a

⁴ Chris Stone, 'The Role of Football in Everyday Life', *Soccer & Society*, 8 (2007), 169–84 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14660970701224319>>.

⁵ This and the following reference are from Kevin Dixon, 'A "third Way" for Football Fandom Research: Anthony Giddens and Structuration Theory', *Soccer & Society*, 12 (2011), 279–98 (p. 282) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14660970.2011.548363>>.

⁶ Erikson (1968: 156) quoted in Ramón Spaaij, *Understanding Football Hooliganism. A Comparison of Six Western European Clubs* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), p. 51.

phenomenon, in the first instance incomprehensible and therefore extremely seductive as a research field, monopolized the attention of researchers.⁷

Later on, new aspects of football support appeared in the literature. New insights into the economic advantages that a well-supported football club could provide a community attracted the attention of marketing and business research, and sport was introduced as a recurrent topic in city marketing activities.⁸ The core aim of the investigation was to determine whether the successful support of football in particular, and sport in general, could be encompassed in a model and thus be reproducible in order to increase the attractiveness of a city, or even a country.

FC Barcelona (Barça) is an example of a success story when it comes to supporters. Consequently, a large amount of literature on place branding has been centred on the city of Barcelona, which culminated in the Olympic Games of 1992 and in the evolution of FC Barcelona into one of the best teams in the world (it was the first Spanish club to win 'the treble' in one season: the Champions League, the Spanish League [*La Liga*] and the Spanish Cup [*Copa del Rey*] in 2009). The conclusion of the most reliable research has been that, while some aspects of the city of Barcelona's success in using sport to enhance its reputation might be reproducible, the politically exceptional circumstances of that specific period in Spain cannot be simply reproduced, or at least, not easily.⁹ Nevertheless, the example of FC Barcelona reveals how a football club can become a strong shared symbol based on emotional and rational values.¹⁰

Strong shared symbols, however, do not need to be specifically related to politics. In his comparative study of European fandom, Spaaij analyses the core values of the fan clubs of several professional clubs and points out that, like FC Barcelona, every football fan club has its own specific values. In the Netherlands, he compares the fan clubs of Sparta and Feyenoord, two professional teams based in Rotterdam, concluding that Sparta is a club for the elite, with its supporters representing the qualities of friendly and civilized fandom, while the supporters of Feyenoord still represent the blue-collar qualities of dock workers – rough but authentic.¹¹

⁷ Dougie Brimson, *Eurotrashed: The Rise and Rise of Europe's Football Hooligans* (London: Headline, 2003); *Football, Violence and Social Identity*, ed. by Richard Giulianotti, Norman Bonney, and Mike Hepworth (London: Routledge, 1994); *Fighting Fans: Football Hooliganism as a World Phenomenon*, ed. by Eric Dunning and others (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2002).

⁸ For example: Jordi Portabella, 'Barcelona: Identity and Cosmopolitanism', *Paradigmes*, 2010, pp. 115–23.

⁹ Toni Strubell, *Les Penyes Barcelonistes*, Editorial (Barcelona, 1998); Gabriel Colomé, 'Conflictos E Identidades En Cataluña', in *Fútbol y pasiones políticas*, ed. by Santiago Seguro (Madrid: Temas de debate, 1999), pp. 169–74; Miquel Porta, *Del Franquisme Als Jocs Olímpics (1975-1992)* (Barcelona: Editorial Barcanova, 1995); Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, *El Fútbol: Una Religión En Busca de Un Dios* (Madrid: Debate, 2005).

¹⁰ Amir Ben Porat, 'Football Fandom: A Bounded Identification', *Soccer & Society*, 11 (2010), 277–90 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14660971003619594>>.

¹¹ Spaaij, pp. 186–245.

Further examination of the relevant literature sheds more light on the nature of contemporary football fandom. Over recent years, literature on football fandom has already incorporated the notion of tribe formation, described by Maffesoli, to assist in understanding the special link that fans develop among themselves when supporting a specific football club. In referring to Maffesoli, these authors underlined his description of neo-tribes as emotional communities of heterogeneous members that are characterized by the fluidity of occasional gatherings and sudden dispersal. As has already been mentioned in previous chapters, this tribalism is mainly characterized by the concept of 'societing', in which links of shared consumption are emotional and felt as authentic. This would explain why tribalism helps us in 'the search for a more hedonistic everyday life, that is, less finalized, less determined by the "ought" and by work'.¹²

Literature on football supporters has also pointed to a transformation in football fandom influenced by the increasing marketization and commodification of the experience of football spectators. In his revision of the literature on the matter, Giulianotti summarizes the changes with the term 'disorganized capitalism', coined by Lash and Urry. In their words, disorganized capitalism 'is postindustrial, postmodern and post-Fordist in its structural and cultural forms and highly reflexive in its social manifestations'. Furthermore, this disorganized capitalism 'is characterized by the genesis of intensified flows between individuals, social groups, objects, and institutions across an increasingly globalized terrain rather than through a more organized chain of relations within national boundaries'.¹³ This would explain why some local clubs have massively transcended their local support base and can claim fans all around the world. Conversely, Tim Parks has observed that for an Italian club like FC Verona, with its many transient players temporarily contracted as part of a football industry dedicated to financial-corporate gain rather than athletic triumph, the sense of identity is now primarily located in the local fanbase.¹⁴

Giulianotti also refers to Castells' work on the importance of information flows in the 'electronic age', which have led to an increase in the aestheticization of expressions of identity.¹⁵ This would mean that supporters might adopt similar styles despite being in different countries or having different cultural backgrounds. Reusing signs and symbols of the past for aesthetic reasons, and combining them through electronic means to transmit new messages, could be seen as a sign of this increasing aestheticization process. The same can be attributed to the tattoos used by 'members' of a

¹² In Stone, p. 180. Original text in Maffesoli.

¹³ Scott Lash and John Urry, *The End of Organized Capitalism* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1987), p. 10. Quoted in Richard Giulianotti, 'Supporters, Followers, Fans, and Flaneurs', *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 2002, 26–46 (p. 29).

¹⁴ Tim Parks, *A Season with Verona. Travels Around Italy in Search of Illusions, National Character and Goals* (London: Vintage Books, 2003).

¹⁵ Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

community to express their identities and affiliations or, for example, by the acquisition of Buddha images to show sympathy with an oriental mystique.

In addition to a 'disorganized capitalism' which rules football more than any other commercial field, the two-way mutability of team identity and fanbase locality illustrates the concept of 'Liquid Modernity' or 'Late Modernity' as used by sociologists Ulrich Beck, Zygmunt Bauman and Anthony Giddens for the notion of reflexive modernization. Their essays, collected in their joint publication, *Reflexive Modernization*,¹⁶ point to the compulsion of individuals to produce new certainties rather than succumbing to the precarious conditions of work and private life (flexible contracts, extension of divorce practices, etc.). As already referred to in the introductory chapter of this thesis, their view of highly modernized societies is that a displacement of consumer trust has taken place and commercialized practices are increasingly seen as genuine expressions of personality and identity. Authors such as Naomi Klein have also convincingly developed arguments that point to the paradoxes of trust in commercial brands (*No logo*),¹⁷ referring to the process of the increasing presence of brands in sport and elsewhere. There is a displacement of trust that might be explained by the gradual shift in Western societies from state support to the privatization of services. In this process, private services start to feel more natural and dynamic than the state's support, the latter being experienced as bureaucratic and sluggish.

All these reflections can probably explain the feeling of enmeshment that occurs when looking at the nature of sporting events in highly modernized societies. Analysing groups such as football fans leads to feelings of confusion and uncertainty. In this sense, the concept 'enmeshment modernism' is very interesting here because it refers to the confusion and the difficulties of defining the univocal significations of specific consumption acts. This enmeshment is also related to the above-mentioned concept of 'liquidity', as a characteristic of current modernity which is 'difficult to apprehend even in its details'. In this sense, 'reflexive modernity' would also point to the process by which 'social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices'.¹⁸

All in all, experts in the field point to the fact that traditional football fandom has also experienced a shift in its nature, which is similar to the 'enmeshment' described above, while entering into liquid modernity. Updating the prior work of Taylor and Critcher, Giulianotti proposed a taxonomy of different football supporters in line with changes in football consumption, distinguishing traditional

¹⁶ Beck, Giddens and Lash.

¹⁷ Naomi Klein, *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies* (Knopf Canada, Picador, 1999).

¹⁸ Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, p. 38.

hooligans (what he calls the supporters) from the followers, fans and flaneurs.¹⁹ It is a taxonomy that has similarities to the types suggested by Cova when studying consumer communities²⁰ and with the types described by Kozinets in his netnographic studies of consumer forums. In the latter, Kozinets categorizes consumers in virtual communities into the following kinds: tourists, minglers, devotees and insiders. He bases this categorization on the individual's level of involvement, whether it is with the community or with the consumption activity in question. 'Tourists', for example, lack strong social ties and interest and tend 'to post casual questions', while insiders show the strongest ties 'to the online group and to the consumption activities and tend to be long-standing and frequently referenced members'.²¹ In the words of Giulianotti, posting-fans 'represent an epistemic break from older forms of football fandom in that they are cognizant of the constructed nature of fan reputations and the vagaries of the media in exaggerating or inventing such identities'.²²

Emphasizing the discourse about a fan's awareness of the construction of fandom can lead us to once again question the authenticity of fandom. What has support to do with real feelings of belonging to a place? In the end, at best, fandom experiences can be explained as a metaphor and, at worst, as merely part of a game. Despite this, the participatory narratives of football supporters included in the studies we are reviewing often refer to the authenticity of feelings related to the course of the game (the preparation, the feeling of sharing, the collective sadness or happiness, etc.). At the same time, the language used by supporters of football seems to have been reinforced by new extended connections between local and global, something that still seems unquestionably relevant. According to Dunning, global influences have been especially manifest in fandom in Europe, 'showing a remarkable creolization', as 'indigenous fan groups merged the adopted patterns with their own distinctive cultural forms'.²³

Returning to the topic of this chapter, centred on Amsterdam and Ajax supporters, it is remarkable to observe that, apart from some illustrious exceptions, there is a relative lack of academic literature on the values of Amsterdam's fandom.²⁴ This might explain why the origin of specific symbols and such as those referring to the Jewishness of F.C. Ajax received comparatively scant attention.²⁵ Perhaps one of that of most explicit views on the matter is Simon Kuper, who offers a number of significant interpretations of the originality of Ajax as a Jewish club. On the one hand, he says, there is the

¹⁹ Giulianotti, 'Supporters, Followers, Fans, and Flaneurs.'

²⁰ Cova and Cova.

²¹ Robert Kozinets, pp. 64, 65.

²² Spaaij. 2006 p. 27 quoting Richard Giulianotti, *Football: A Sociology of the Global Game* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), p. 148.

²³ Dunning and others. Quoted by Spaaij, p. 46.

²⁴ Among those exceptions, see for example: Ruud Stokvis, 'Ajax Isn't Ajax Anymore: On Power, Rhetoric and Identity', *Soccer & Society*, 9 (2008), 497–508 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14660970802257564>>.

²⁵ Ajax fans have adopted the name of 'Jews' and the Stars of David as part of the club paraphernalia, and metaphorically identity with a Jewish identity stereotypically ascribed to their sports club. In doing so they have internalized and given pride to what originally was an anti-Semitic taunt levelled at Ajax by its rivals (see below paragraph 'Ajax and the others').

information given by Ajax historian Evert Vermeer that states that factually the club itself did not have at all an explicit 'Jewish culture before War World II.' The origin of the name then is given to the circumstances that supporters of Ajax's opponents used to arrive at Amsterdam through the Weesperpoort Station 'where there were a lot of Jewish streets vendors. So they would say "we are going to the Jews"'.²⁶ But on the other hand, complementary views on it say that Ajax did at that time have an important link with Jewish life in Amsterdam. According to Kuper's testimonies, pre-war Ajax might not have had Jewish players but it had many Jewish fans for the simple reason that 'Jewish people like something good, and so they enjoyed going to Ajax.' They appreciated quality entertainment: 'They went to the theatre, to the casino, gambled, and football was entertainment too.' Thus although testimonies always express subjective views, Kuper states that it is convincing that in this, in contrast to the 'joyless Calvinism that gripped the pre-war Netherlands, you see they might have [had] a point.'

The symbolism of Ajax as a Jewish club remains complex. For one thing, as suggested by Kuper, the club should nowadays dare to confirm a link with Jewish culture as a sign of solidarity with those who were deported and murdered during the Nazi occupation. At the same time, as Russell Hargrave suggests:

Football clubs are more or less the same as any other cultural institution in this sense. Fans, like consumers, will respond to ideas of 'heritage' and 'tradition' with great enthusiasm, provided that this heritage is sanitized into something easy to digest and morally uncomplicated.²⁷

In Spaaij's account, the heritage and interpretations given to identity symbols such as Jewishness, which have been increasingly antagonistic since the 1980s, are seen by hard supporters as a legitimate way of expressing arch rivalries –as it is the case between Ajax and Feyenoord.²⁸

In this sense there is a general agreement between the football researchers and experts we have seen, that the identity of a football club is in great part composed by word testimonies, experiences and beliefs of fans. Books by professional writers such as Johan Faber's '*Het mysterie Marco*' (*The mystery Marco*) are in fact biographies of football lovers who combine the factual details of specific matches with an evocation of the fans' emotion of the moment, for instance. This is a habit that according to Faber comes from the time in which important football games were not always recorded, or could be seen on television. Written accounts were in this sense indispensable for a football fan. But his conviction about the value of written football biographies goes further. His

²⁶ Simon Kuper, *Ajax, The Dutch, The War: Football in Europe During the Second World War* (London: Orion Publishing Groups Ltd., 2003).

²⁷ Russell Hargrave, 'Football Fans and Football History: A Review Essay', *Soccer & Society*, 8 (2007), 240–49 (p. 242) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14660970701224459>>.

²⁸ Spaaij quoting a testimony of Wim Bot's *Leve Feyenoord één*. Spaaij, p. 197.

account documents the notion that being a football lover is a process of continuous development of knowledge about football in general and the club one loves in particular. In the end, having seen something impressive at a given moment in your youth does not necessarily mean that it was already impressive for yourself at that time. His love and admiration for former Ajax player and coach, Marco van Basten, for instance, came later, when as a more developed football lover he could appreciate the uniqueness of van Bastens' play.²⁹

Needless to add, however, the relative lack of academic literature on Ajax, to which I alluded, is in stark contrast to the interest that Ajax arouses in daily media. The city of Amsterdam shows visible signs of the existence of this prestigious football team. The club was founded in 1900 and is currently the only professional premier division club in the city. As in the case of other prestigious old clubs, its inception is owed to the initiative of a group of friends and is accurately documented on the club website and in the Ajax Museum.³⁰ In the following pages we will also try to go beyond the official testimonies in an attempt to capture some of the features of 'Ajax fandom's imaginary of Amsterdam', as distilled from the writings and declarations of supporters in different media.

5.3. Methodology and Approach

The purpose of this research is to develop an understanding of the meaning that young people give to themselves as supporters of Ajax, especially those who are studying (or intending to study) in Amsterdam. My assumption is that this 'meaning-giving' will correspond to a different performed 'imaginary' than those relating to other tribes' senses of place and feelings of belonging. Similar to my analysis of other groups, I have followed the principle that to have access to meaning-giving contexts implies finding a way of locating first-hand material in which those contexts are manifest. Following the recommendations of Kozinets in his research on online communities, I have centred my analysis on material that is as unobstructed as possible.³¹ In my approach this means that instead of generating research material via interviews or surveys, I opted to use material that had already been produced for reasons other than this research.

In a preliminary effort to become acquainted with the groups and to achieve a sufficient degree of 'fusion of horizons', the following steps have been taken:

²⁹ Johan Faber, *Het Mysterie Marco. Van Basten, Ajax & Oranje* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Thomas Rap, 2004). Foreword.

³⁰ 'Tour' in Dutch, English, Spanish and Chinese on the official Ajax website: 'History Tour' <<http://www.ajax.nl/De-Club/Historie/History-Tour.htm>>.

³¹ Robert Kozinets.

- Compilation of a list of (sociological) studies published on football's role in society in general and in the Netherlands in particular, as seen in the previous literature review.
- Compilation of journalism accounts of hooliganism and football supporters of different clubs, such as the paradigmatic books: *A Season with Verona*, *Hand in hand* and *F-side is niet makkelijk*.³²
- Performance of periodic reviews of different Ajax supporters' websites such as Ajax.net.F-side.nl, Vak410.nl, and popular and extensively used forums such as FOK.nl.
- Construction of an online and offline compilation of media (with additional comments by posters) concentrated on 'symbolic moments', such as the tenth anniversary of Vak410, Ajax's victory in the national premier division ('*Eredivisie*'), the different 'incidents' around the 'supporters' home' or clubhouse, the dispute over the Ajax Board of Directors' Presidency involving Crujff and Van Gaal, the reactions to the death of a hooligan known as Sven on 12 August 2011, and what we will call 'the Wesley incident' on 21 December 2011.
- Participation in direct offline gatherings, including observation and informal conversations with spectators at Ajax's home matches at the Arena Stadium, with the objective of becoming familiar with specific references and terminology.
- Construction of a list of words and expressions that were commonly used within the group. These words and expressions have since been used to locate relevant topics within the fandom community and, subsequently, to locate the media that are used by them to transmit and exchange their messages. This has meant creating a sort of dictionary for my own use, in which texts and catch cries are explained. Recurrent inscriptions such as '1312' appear, for example, with the definition: '1312, code for the acronym ACAB ('All Cops Are Bastards')'; 'XXX, the three Saint Andre's crosses symbolizing the city of Amsterdam'; 'March 18th, used as a symbol of the foundation of Ajax Football Club in 1900'.
- Compilation of interpretations of the occasionally confusing logic in the use of group denominations. In this context, an examination of different significations given to terms such as 'Jew' was needed. As we will see in the analyses and discussion, such terms have become commonplace for Ajax supporters and supporters in general.

An attentive examination of the content of the material gathered has enabled me to define ways of organizing it. In doing so, I have focused on the reciprocal and binary character of various groups' own definitions of one another: that is to say, on the possible 'stereotypes' as understood in imagology, where 'stereotype' is defined as a process of fixation on a limited number of foreground

³² Parks; Paul van Gageldonk, *Hand in Hand. Op Stap Met de Hooligans van Feyenoord* (Singel Pockets, 1996); Pieloor, Bakker and van de Meer.

attributes of the other ‘while reciprocally reserving for oneself, or for one’s group, the contrary (usually superior) characteristics ... Such ascriptions of reciprocal qualities are known in social psychology as “hetero-stereotypes” (standardized images of others) and “auto-stereotypes” (standardized self-images)’.³³ Toolkits of text analysis deriving from the literary sciences have helped me in the analysis and systematization of a heterogeneous corpus such as this by attending to textual differences derived from intentionality, etc.

I have also used the same binary principle to systematically organize the multiple textual details that emerge from fandom texts into a more manageable set, using a thematic division³⁴ based on the various shared visions of Amsterdam. In the analyses I have also taken into account the insights of Section 5.2, to which returned when looking at the knowledge gathered about fandom in contemporary societies and contemporary consumption in general. The previous steps led to the delimitation of general topics that will be described further and used in the following section that is devoted to the analysis and discussion of the research corpus.

5.4. What it means to be a supporter: Analysis

a. Criteria of belonging

The central questions directing the analyses are: What does it mean to be a football supporter, and more specifically what does it mean to be an Ajax supporter? What image of Amsterdam arises through the meaning given to Ajax?

The assumption is that in the texts produced by supporters, Amsterdam will be tangible to them, consisting of concrete places, streets, buildings. At the same time, the interpretation of these ‘tangibles’ is affected by distinctions in sequential urban rhythms. By this I mean the attendance at specific venues at specific moments, which helps to distinguish types of fandom, for example. Furthermore, the material collected should be able to provide information about the sort of artefacts and behaviours that come into play when identifying ‘types of people’.

Therefore, I have organized one level of analysis around topics concerning essential shared values among supporters. Those essential values are related to a kind of shared understanding of the essence of being a supporter, no matter how it is manifest. They have to do with fidelity and the

³³ Beller (2007) ‘Stereotype in Imagology’. In: Beller and Leerssen, p. 429. Following reference from Leerssen is from the same work, chapter ‘History and Method’, pp. 17-32.

³⁴ Craig J Thompson, ‘Interpreting Consumers: A Hermeneutical Framework for Deriving Consumers Insights from the Texts of Consumers’ Consumption Stories’, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34 (1997), 438–55 (p. 446).

defence of supporters' own 'colours', which are defined by antagonism towards other teams' 'colours'. In addition, the essence of those shared values is expressed through the idea of fans sharing in a game, in which the antagonists are not only the other colours but also the outsiders: those who impede the natural course of the game. Insider language is marked by the use of phrases such as, 'it's part of the game', 'the ambiance', 'the right mentality', referring to the positive associations that outsiders do not immediately understand.

Parallel to this level of analysis, I have organized another that considers the different ways in which supporters manifest their support. Through this, I wanted to see how supporters understand their condition of being a supporter and, subsequently, what they believe it means to be an Ajax supporter.

Both these general ideas will be developed in Paragraphs a. and b. below. The first paragraph asks what it means to be a supporter, and develops and analyses this question under the following thematic subheadings:

- Compliance with tradition and continuities with the past
- The persistence and diffusion of hooligans' signs
- The paradoxes of support: between hero and criminal
- Self-made man = hero
- A man's world
- Ajax and the Others: the rivals
- Shared codes with the fandom of other clubs (friends as well as enemies)

The second paragraph interrogates how one demonstrates the condition of being a supporter under the following subheadings:

- Knowing the history of the club
- Showing the way: masters and newcomers
- Distrust of intentions: who is the real hard-core supporter?
- Distrust of conditional support: disdain for the so-called 'success supporter'
- Disputing the style of real supporters: who is a 'real Amsterdammer'?
- The Wesley B. incident: 'the moron from Almere'
- Choosing a seat in the stadium
- Support expressed through generosity and hospitality towards the one who wants to be integrated
- Describing character and skills through reference to race and place of origin

- Being acquainted with players' lives and personalities; choosing favourite and less favourite players in one's own club; discussing performance and squad formation
- Some general core values: celebrating the 'leading role' mentality

- **Compliance with tradition and continuities of the past**

One of the first impressions one has when examining supporter material is that being a supporter means being ready to defend one's club even in difficult situations. A supporter should not be afraid, or at least he should be able to control his fears, because even if he is not a hooligan, he should know that 'being for' a club automatically means being against others. A supporter is by definition someone who will have enemies. That is probably the reason why supporter sites such as F-side.nl issue a warning to the user, 'Enter at your own risk, your life may be in danger', in Gothic letters.³⁵ If the visitor is a rival, a spy of another club, he should know he could be recognized and punished. If the visitor is a supporter, he should be aware that support is for life. It is by no means insignificant that the most repeated slogans by football supporters refer to infinite and eternal support, such as 'AFCA forever', 'AFCA Till I Die', 'CBS (Can't Be Stopped)', 'AFCA You Never Walk Alone', for example.³⁶

The defence of one's own colours, which hooligans have interpreted as requiring a physical confrontation with the rival, is in fact a common denominator of being a supporter. 'When an opponent makes a mistake or loses you don't feel sorry for them', writes the author of a contribution on the internet, alluding to the pacifying nature attributed to women.³⁷ The message is that in football it is legitimate to denigrate rivals. Only women think that the opposition is also 'cute'.

Supporters commenting on material posted by hooligans on YouTube also adopt the aggressive and denigrating tone proper to hooliganism. Nevertheless, incidents or serious physical violence on the streets are scarce. This contradiction also emerges in the online comments of supporters who mutually accuse each other of only being courageous at home in front of the computer: 'Why don't you sod off and die mate!!! How old are you exactly?? Ten or something//!! What a loser, playing the

³⁵ 'Enter at your own risk', and skull and crossbones could be found on the former public website of Ajax F-side.nl. Those images are not directly visible anymore.

³⁶ See for instance: 'AMSTERDAM HOOLIGANS' (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2008), pp. 1–74 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FjWU0YswozE>>; *AFCA YOU NEVER WALK ALONE. Films* (The Netherlands: Richard Haring/YouTube, 2012) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvDiFXviexc&index=2&list=PLAC9CF1838364EEEE0>>.

³⁷ 'Het is niet zielig als een tegenstander een fout maakt of verliest', Marcotica, 'Mannen Houden van Voetbal; Vrouwen Houden van Mannen', *ajax.netwerk.to*, 2005 <<http://ajax.netwerk.to/forums/HTML/forum23/562.php>>.

hooligan safely hidden behind your computer!!! Only gays walk hand in hand!!! AFCA ULTRAS TILL I DIE!!!'³⁸

The chants posted by different Ajax supporter groups such as AFCA describe how to be a supporter in Amsterdam, that is, in a place in which traditional male 'forbidden pleasures' (sex, alcohol and drugs) can be easily enjoyed: the lyrics of the chants refer to the red light district, the beauty of the canals, and the coffee shops.

The lyrics of such chants are posted on YouTube and read like the one below:

Ajax from *Mokum* Pride of the *Joduh*

The brave warriors, from the Dam to the Leidsche [plein]

You can have a hot hooker [*termeijer*] for money

Snorting and Smoking you can also do in the Red Light district

Amsterdam... Amsterdam...

Amsterdam... Amsterdam³⁹

Despite the tone of the lyrics, the posts under the video reveal an interesting mix of comments and registers, alternating between the supply of information to posters who have inquired about details of the club's traditions, with insults to outsiders. A comment by a poster from the rival team of Feyenoord is given the following reply in the form of a neatly formulated piece of text:

Dear Rttrdam010, I am intrigued by the comment you have posted. It appears Ajax is your archrival and yet you have taken the trouble to look up a video and respond to it with a non-rhyming and completely redundant bastardization. I'm a student of Psychology and we have an apt term for these kinds of people: Retards.

- **The persistence and diffusion of hooligans' signs**

An important factor to take into account is that the presence of hooligans on the terraces is not necessarily seen as very dangerous by other, less extreme supporters. The unspoken code is that hooligans only fight with other hooligans and that they, despite their aggressive behaviour, are selective in the focus of their violence. The belief is that they will never hurt women or children.

³⁸ The original data in Dutch has typos and grammatical errors, many of them typical of quick internet posting. 'AMSTERDAM HOOLIGANS.'

³⁹ 'Ajax uit Mokum de trost van de Joduh| De dappre strijders, van Dam tot het Leidsche| Een geile termeijer van geld kan je ballen| Snuiven en Blowen kan ook op de Wallen| AMSTERDAM... AMSTERDAM... | Amsterdam... Amsterdam'. Terms such as 'Mokum' [Jewish name for Amsterdam] and 'Joduh' (Joden) ['Jew'] are examples of the typical for Ajax /Amsterdam slang with its references to Jewish identity. 'Joduh' (Joden) and 'dappre' (dappere) are not correct grammatical forms but they seem here to be intentionally used as a guide for singing. Following quotes are from *Ajax Uit Mokum!!!!* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2006) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7SkC1nsC0Vw>>.

Most probably this contributes to a milder concern about hooliganism by other supporters or football lovers, in comparison to outsiders who are not football lovers.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that every supporter approves of incidents occasioned by extreme supporters. One controversial topic is that the acts of hooligans or expressive supporters such as Vak410 may spoil the whole spectacle for everybody. On one such occasion flares and fireworks caused injuries to people attending the match who had nothing to do with the antisocial behaviour. Conversations on forums such as Ajax.net illustrate attitudes to these kinds of activities:

[...]: What do you think would happen if this were to happen more often? The UEFA is already keeping a close eye on AJAX and AJAX doesn't need this kind of publicity right now.

It is not AJAX' own fault. The people who brought those fireworks in and set them off are the ones who are responsible. They are rightly being held responsible. Perhaps that is one of the reasons the ticket prices are so high: they are factoring in the fines that will follow for fireworks. 😊

[...]: Joking apart, for safety reasons setting off fireworks cannot be condoned. It adds atmosphere and is a nice sight but you can't have people getting hurt. That this may have happened now is a real shame. I saw a message on afca.nl in which they expressed regret and that is a start, at least. As always, it is a few rotten apples who spoil it for the rest. So don't go and tar a whole group with one brush! Here, too, the good guys suffer because of a few bad'uns. 410 has done a lot of good things for Ajax, don't forget. And that does deserve respect. The people that organize 410's tifos put their hearts and souls into creating them.⁴⁰

- **The paradoxes of support: between hero and criminal**

A careful examination of the material occasioned by the death of a hooligan called Sven in the summer of 2011 enables us to gain an understanding of the reasons for the paradoxical seduction of violence and support. The attractiveness of resistance to the law and the police has been shown in numerous documentaries. The cultural TV channel VPRO, for example, made a programme about graffiti and football, in which a young Sven is portrayed as a graffiti artist working on his 'trail/circuit' through the underground from Amstel station to Central station. At that time, he and his mates 'felt like the kings of heaven'. In the programme, Sven and his companions explain the rules of graffiti and the different meanings of the tags, such as 'USA' (United Street Artists, and not supporters of the United States of America as a layman might expect) or 'CBS' (Can't Be Stopped graffiti group).⁴¹ One

⁴⁰ 'Forum. Onderwerp: Vak 410/F-Side', *ajaxfans.net*, 2010 <Material in archive.>.

⁴¹ *Amsterdam Subway Graffiti Documentary from VPRO: Onrust* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2009) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oG983Sc3Nlw>>.

of the young Sven's tall tales involves him remembering the moment when he and his mates found (by accident) the master-key to Amsterdam's entire underground system.

This same Sven, who would become a long-standing member of the hard-core AFCA's supporters club, was murdered in front of his house in the Amsterdam district of Slotervaart, in an apparently planned liquidation. His death inspired numerous posts on FOK, many of them especially negative: 'In any case, he doesn't seem to me to be a person of added value'.⁴² In other forums, however, supporters posted comments in tribute to him: 'By the way, here he's also mentioned, our Sven/High ... on FOK 42'.⁴³



In the picture left: A graffiti artist/Ajax supporter covers his face in front of the camera to avoid being recognized by the police. His comment: 'It's part of the game' ('Het hoort er bij')

Next to him it is easy to identify another Ajax supporter wearing a t-shirt with the Star of David, adopted by *Ajacieden* as a symbol of the club.

- **Self-made man = hero**

A romanticized conception of Sven, associated with resistance and the clever folk hero, alternates with others in which Sven is seen as a criminal *pur sang*. In fact, the discussion is clearly visible in an article in the *NRC* newspaper about hooliganism, which maintains that the attitude and lifestyle of fanatical supporters cannot be separated from the criminal context of illegal gambling and drug dealing.⁴⁴

On the other hand, interesting material posted by AFCA on YouTube continues to offer tributes to Sven, with titles such as *Memorial HIGH - SVEN C.B.S* or *R.I.P.* In the film, *Sven AFCA R.I.P.*, the voice of the also deceased folk singer and Ajacied, Andre Hazes, accompanies the images: 'You won't be forgotten friend, it's so crazy, it's difficult to believe | friendship transcends the pain, you will never be forgotten friend'.⁴⁵ In this way, the blues of the self-made Hazes are entwined with the memory of

⁴² 'Prominent Figuur Harde Kern Neergeschoten', *forum.fok.nl*, 2011 <<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/1695936/1/999>>.

⁴³ 'SVEN HIGH CBS', *Afca*, 2014 <<http://www.afca.nl/remember-2/sven/>>.

⁴⁴ City preparations of a predictable Ajax celebration in: Inleiding Voorbereiding, 'Viering Landskampioenschap Ajax 2011', 2011, 1–31.

⁴⁵ 'Je wordt niet vergeten vriend, het is te gek om waar te zijn | de vriendschap overheerst de pijn, je wordt nooit vergeten vriend'. 'Memorial HIGH - SVEN C.B.S.' (The Netherlands: AFCA.nl/YouTube, 2011) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7IIGMYFBt4>>.

Sven, making of the latter a beloved man of flesh and blood. The message is that although some believe that he made mistakes, real friendship overcomes everything.

- **A man's world**

Although there are some exceptions – the statement, ‘women like football’, is one of only a few isolated examples I found on a Facebook page – the attendance at Ajax football matches and the presence of supporters on the internet are hugely dominated by men.

In this male world, one of the discussions dealing with the topic ‘women and football’ occurred after the Wesley B. incident.⁴⁶ The national football association decided to penalize Ajax’s home stadium, the Arena, after charges that it had failed to guarantee the safety of the players. In the first instance, the association ordered a repeat of the match without spectators, but a commission of experts connected to the Ajax Board started to look for a solution that avoided a match without spectators and found an example in Turkey, where a club had been punished by a similar measure. Their solution was to play the match before an audience of women and children.⁴⁷

When gay organizations also asked to be admitted to any possible replay of the match, it reinforced the idea that admitting women only was based on the idea that they were not capable of violence. At the same time, the proposal of the gay organizations could also be interpreted as strange, since it seemed an act of ill-considered or unreflecting self-discrimination, in that it publicly suggested that gays, in contrast to real men, were as impotent as women. The topic is heavily discussed in forums and on websites. While some of the reactions point out the incongruity, other posters insist on the most traditional prejudices against homosexuality, making jokes about the atmosphere on the terraces and also about the true intention of homosexuals (they might be merely interested in seeing the players’ bodies). We even see a sarcastic, ‘Why not? The concrete pillars of the Arena stadium can also be illuminated in pink’.⁴⁸

All in all, the whole discussion points to the fact that in Amsterdam football is mainly seen as a male concern and supporters do ‘men’s things’. Women may like football and some may even have a column in the city’s newspaper *Het Parool*, as does Janneke van der Horst, or be the host of a

⁴⁶ The coverage on Wikipedia says: ‘On 21 December 2011, Alvarado was sent off by Bas Nijhuis in a KNVB Cup match against Ajax after an Ajax supporter tried attacking him. A 19-year-old Ajax fan who had been drinking entered the pitch after 36 minutes of play and ran towards the AZ goalkeeper “attempting to land a kick towards the face of the Costa Rican — who proceeded to kick the fan to the ground”. Alvarado was subsequently sent off for violent conduct, with AZ manager Gertjan Verbeek ordering his players to leave the pitch and head to the dressing rooms in protest— the game was subsequently abandoned.’ ‘Esteban Alvarado’, *Wikipedia* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esteban_Alvarado>.. I will come back to this incident from another perspective in the paragraph ‘The Wesley B. incident’.

⁴⁷ Shari Deira, ‘Alleen Vrouwen En Kinderen Bij Bekerduel Ajax-AZ’, *Elsevier*, 2012 <<http://www.elsevier.nl/Sport/nieuws/2012/1/Alleen-vrouwen-en-kinderen-bij-bekerduel-Ajax-AZ-ELSEVIER326934W/>>.

⁴⁸ Comments in: Novum, ‘Laat Ook Homo’s Toe Bij Ajax - AZ’, *Nu.nl* (Amsterdam, 6 January 2012) <<http://www.nu.nl/opmerkelijk/2708950/laat-homos-toe-bij-ajax---az.html>>.

programme such as *Football Fans*, but they are exceptions. The overwhelming idea developed in the texts analysed is that football is a 'sport for machos'. Consequently, the idea exists that women like football only because they like men. Posters refer to women dressed in seductive clothes waiting for the players or trying to contact them.⁴⁹ The term, 'football women', is frequently used to describe a 'sexy' woman who chases players with the dream of living a life of luxury. In turn, they may contribute to the players' fame and cachet. Well-known 'football women' in the Netherlands in 2010-2011 were Yolenthe Cabau Sneijder and Sylvie van der Vaart. Wannabes are represented by women such as 'Barbie', a character in the popular Dutch television programme *Oh Oh Cherso*, an idea that will also be discussed in one of the later chapters of this thesis. As women, they symbolize the world of the ceasefire. By the same logic, a 'supporter's woman' is his partner outside the stadium and the football world.

One of the most complete summaries of the situation and of the role of women in football appears in an article posted by a football fan concerning an incident in 2005. In his explanation, the author does not seem to be questioning the role of women in society or in working life, but he is firmly convinced that football is not for women:

Football is and always will be a sport for machos, for guys amongst themselves. Women shouldn't try to get involved. Because it's all about performing, about winning. Improving by telling each other the truth. About team spirit. As soon as female elements get involved, things are bound to go downhill. That's when the scheming starts. That's when you get lies. You suddenly need to start taking your own feelings and the feelings of the other players into account. Lobont is right as far as that is concerned. Give football back to the men. No *Babsen*, no female line referees and, above all, no women's football.⁵⁰

Masculinity is expressed in camaraderie between men, through rough hugs or pats on the shoulder, but is also expressed in terms such as 'real love'. However, in cases where they suspect this could be confusing, the posters clarify that expressions of love addressed to a player have nothing to do with possible hidden homosexuality: 'I'm no gay, but I love this guy', referring to Jan Vertonghen.⁵¹

Ajax supporter sites such as 'Ajax Showtime' put the issue of women's football to a poll, with their questions offering the options: 'no', 'yes' and 'yes, if they are hot chicks' (ajaxshowtime.com). In the different comments, some of the posters considered that women's football could be advantageous for the club as an innovation, but the majority made jokes, saying that the merchandising would soon

⁴⁹ 'Voetbalfans. Even Op de Jongens Wachten' (RTL7, 2011)
<<http://www.uitzendinggemist.net/aflevering/32059/Voetbalfans.html>>.

⁵⁰ Marcotica.

⁵¹ Comments under film 'Vertonghen Thuis in Amsterdam' (The Netherlands: AFC Ajax/YouTube, 2011)
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTTxxfMHLIs>>.

consist of women's underwear and that the field would be filled with lots of balls, referring to female football players' breasts.⁵²

Ajax onderzoekt vrouwenvoetbal

Door sv, 30 december 2011 10:05, 415 keer bekeken, Bron: AD | ▶ Wed 50 euro gratis op wedstrijden

VROUWEN MET BALLEN - Een woordvoerder van Ajax zegt in het Algemeen Dagblad dat Ajax aan het onderzoeken is of het een vrouwenafdeling kan starten.

'De club staat zeker niet afwijzend tegenover vrouwenvoetbal. We zijn ons aan het oriënteren. Binnen de club is er iemand mee bezig die onderzoekt wat de voordelen en nadelen zijn aan deelname aan de vrouweneredivisie', aldus de woordvoerder.

(foto: Orangepictures.nl)

SHOWTIME POLL

Vrouwenvoetbal bij Ajax?

Niet doen!

Ja, goed voor Ajax

Ja, alleen als die meiden lekker zijn!

Stemmen →

(2407 stemmen)



Tribal Wars
Verover samen met je vrienden de wereld!
Nu gratis meespelen!

From ajaxshowtime.com captured on 19 March 2012

- **Ajax and the others: the rivals**

The rivalry of Amsterdam with other places in the Netherlands is indisputably related to its status as a capital city, which triggers the rhetoric of capital versus the provinces. Amsterdam is commonly referred to by the number '020', corresponding to the telephone prefix of the Amsterdam area, and is commonly associated with arrogance and feelings of superiority. Amsterdam is also associated with an easy and superficial life, while in other parts of the country people are considered to be hard working. An ex-Ajax player who moved to the NAC Football Club (in the Dutch city of Breda), said in an interview that he was surprised to see how people in the Netherlands appear to detest Ajax in particular and Amsterdam in general. He also said, however, that he understood this aversion

⁵² 'Fair's fair. What could be hotter than 11 girls in Ajax T-shirts???P. I think if they put this in we wouldn't pay attention to the game anymore, but just to the 2 x 22 other balls?' Comments under: Sjoerd Valkering, 'Ajax Onderzoekt Vrouwenvoetbal', *AjaxShowTime.com*, 2011 <<http://www.ajaxshowtime.com/hoofdnieuws/58087/ajax-onderzoekt-vrouwenvoetbal.html>>.

because ‘we Amsterdammers are indeed overconfident and presumptuous’ but, he adds, ‘that’s precisely what he likes about Amsterdam, since it denotes a spirit of victory’.⁵³

The expression of the rivalry based on oppositions such as affected/unaffected and authentic/non-authentic that Spaaij noted in his study of hooliganism in the Rotterdam clubs Feyenoord and Sparta still appear to be alive and are further developed through numerous online posts and other forums that I have seen during the compilation of my material. Also, when it comes to Feyenoord, in contrast to Ajax, the city of Rotterdam is symbolic of a ‘real’ harbour city, in both a positive and a negative sense. In the positive, the harbour becomes a metaphor for real workers, unaffected, masculine, strong; in its negative, it becomes a metaphor for underdevelopment, rudeness, and a lack of sophistication. The same occurs with Amsterdam, when sophistication, ingenuity and genuine elegance are interpreted by rivals as feminine and affected.

A post from a supporter of Amsterdam’s arch rival Feyenoord states that the authenticity of Feyenoord continues to reveal the advantages of the club. He put it this way, and his comment has not been refuted on the national forum site:

Kijk 020 has been privatized. It has become a joint stock company. And what happens in a joint stock company? Unfair enrichment and jostling for the best position. That is why I am a supporter of the Netherlands’ most wonderful club and that is and always will be Feyenoord. A club that treasures the human factor. A club where greatness doesn’t descend into megalomania. Where emotions are honest and heartfelt. Where you can still find real companionship. During and after the game the Kuip [stadium] was literally trembling on its foundations. That is true happiness.⁵⁴

In the context of denigration and stereotyping, we can also see a range of religious and ethnic allusions, using terms such as ‘Jews’ and ‘Germans’, which have clear links to historical references. It is commonly accepted that the term ‘*Joden*’ was first used by Feyenoord fandom in the 1970s as a denigrating word for Ajax supporters, and that afterwards, the Ajax supporters appropriated the insult, adopting it as a mark of their identity, turning the insult into a glorious name to use together with the more classical ‘de Godenzonen’ (‘the Children of God’), like the mythological Ajax.

⁵³ Redactie, “‘Kan Me Voorstellen Dat Mensen Zich Aan Ajax Ergeren’”, *Algemeen Dagblad* (Rotterdam, 27 April 2011) <<http://www.ad.nl/ad/nl/1441/Ajax/article/detail/2424479/2011/04/27/Kan-me-voorstellen-dat-mensen-zich-aan-Ajax-ergeren.dhtml?redirected.>>. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the arrogance and feelings of superiority could also be explained as a sign of the blasé attitude that Georg Simmel, as long ago as 1903, attributed to the attitudes of citizens in cosmopolitan cities. Georg Simmel, ‘The Metropolis and Mental Life’, in *Metropolis Centre and Symbol of our Times*, ed. by Philip Kasinitz, Reprinted (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), pp. 30–45.

⁵⁴ ‘Hoe Één “Supporter” AZ Uit de Beker Wipt. Doelman van AZ Is Misschien Een Beetje Fout, Maar de Supporter Mag Natuurlijk Nooit Meer in Een Stadion Verschijnen!’, *We houden van Oranje*, 2011 <

The references to Jews are complex and surely an insult to actual descendants of victims of the Holocaust. In using the term 'Jews', Ajax's rivals are referring to what they regard as the cowardice and passivity of Jewish people during the Second World War in accepting Nazi internment without resisting. The anti-Semitic insults expressing the rivalry between the clubs was initially limited to Ajax-Feyenoord but has slowly extended to other clubs. In 2009-2010, this became explicit in the rivalry between Ajax and Utrecht, with the Utrecht fans chanting words such as: 'Jews like to go by train! The train to Auschwitz'. The same words can be found on forum discussions on important matches Ajax-Groningen, for instance.⁵⁵

In the text below one can see how an Ajax supporter responds to the insult 'Jew', implying cowardice, by denigrating his rival through allusions to homosexuality, using one of the most well-known Feyenoord chants – 'hand in hand'.

@[...] so when is it we run away then? ! you nasty faggots can go and walk hand in hand you bastard!
 Vak410 < 3 and [...] adds: FUCK MUSLIMS or [...]. Haven't seen you yet. AND I CAN STILL SHOUT AFTER
 THOSE 2YEARS!!! AFCA CHAMPIONS. Drag queens walk hand in hand in Rotterdam.⁵⁶

In addition to the use of militaristic and masculine rhetoric, antagonists also ridicule symbols or landmarks that are used by certain cities as a mark of civic pride. For example, the Dome of Utrecht is a well-known symbol of the city, with Utrecht being known as the Domstad ('city of the Dome'), is ridiculed by Ajax supporters with the pun, 'Utrecht "*domstad*"', Amsterdam "*hoofdstad*"' ('Utrecht dumb city, Amsterdam capital city'). In Dutch, the word '*Dom*' also means 'dumb' or 'stupid'.⁵⁷

- **Shared codes with fandom of other clubs (friends as well as enemies)**

Fans consider their own team to be unique and special but of course fans of each club have exactly the same feelings. Consequently, this can lead to a situation in which one club's fandom copies expressions and attitudes of its rivals. Some authors have pointed to the visit of Tottenham Hotspur in 1974 as the day on which 'Dutch football lost its innocence', the day on which Dutch supporters became acquainted with the phenomenon known as hooliganism and would decide to imitate it. The later so-called 'Ultra movements' are more a copy of southern European supporters, in which fans express their support for the club with chants and flares. 'AFCA forever', or the equivalent, is the cry of the Ultras of many supporters' clubs around the world. The same can be said of the self-

⁵⁵ 'Hamas, Hamas, GIVE THE JEWS SOME GAS! Where do Jews come from, oh, where? From a camp a long way from here! Is that where shitty Jews live, too? That's where shitty Jews live too! Do Jews like outings on the train? Yes, off to Auschwitz on the train! Farmer Till I Die! Go Groningen!' 'AMSTERDAM HOOLIGANS.'

⁵⁶ 'AMSTERDAM HOOLIGANS.'

⁵⁷ The site also immediately announced that many of the comments, which apparently must have been more denigrating than this one, had been deleted by the blog keepers: 'Voor FC Utrecht Supporters Is 6 December D-Day', *Blog.nl*, 5 December 2009 <Material in archive>.

differentiation of Ultras from regular fans: 'Nobody likes us, but we don't care', is a repeated phrase in texts written by supporters of various clubs on websites, forums, etc.⁵⁸

In his book *Hand in Hand*, Gageldonk defines the hooligans' feelings for their club as 'the ultimate boy's dream', characterized by love for the team and for each other, the ultimate feeling of camaraderie 'till the end', always ready to stand up for each other and for the club. This feeling is also nicely described by Tim Parks in a *Season with Verona*. In the words of the journalist, he called his year following the Verona club 'research' as an excuse, so that his wife would not complain about his absence and his dedication to something as superficial as football. The justification could be seen as a narrative technique of course, but it remains an interesting commonplace.

It is also interesting to note that being at the football and being a real supporter is felt to be the only time in which normal rules of correctness do not apply. More than at any other time, Tim Parks said he felt the real meaning of 'deep camaraderie'. As the son of a priest, he found that if there was anything sacred in the world, it was felt when 'sing[ing] supporters' chants together with others'. As mentioned, in his documentary about Vak410, *Havana's* journalist Jeff Pinkster also emphasized the 'ultimate feeling of being together', when supporting Ajax.

This feeling is shared by both a club's friends and enemies. In *Hand in Hand*, Paul van Gageldonk described Feyenoord's hooligan profile as mixed groups of 'young males between 20 and 40, black and white, stupid and clever, petty criminals and small businessmen, students, workers, civil servants and dutiful husbands and fathers'. The magic thing is that:

On Sundays, or on other game days, they step out of this social straitjacket and there are no rules for a short while, no social code of conduct, only their own codes. It's a boys' club in which the football is just as important as the rioting, and rioting just as important as the jokes and banter and being mates.⁵⁹

This is a profile that appears in descriptions of hooliganism in football clubs with important supporters' movements. As a common denominator it is argued that one of the most important attractions of being together to support a club is that the rules can be the rules of the real game. In terms of the kind of support, riots would be the most extreme form of action, but supporters also say that in football, both words and gestures are meant to challenge political correctness.⁶⁰ Like playing

⁵⁸ 'No one likes us, we don't care' is a football chant which originated with the supporters of Millwall Football Club in the late 1970s and which can be seen on the fan sites of many clubs, sometimes with misspellings: Ultrasliberi, *No One Like Us*, *We Don't Care* (Hungary: HUNGARY ULTRASLIBERI/YouTube, 2012) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=coUd-AaLkjQ>>.

⁵⁹ In van Gageldonk, p. 41.

⁶⁰ According to them, race allusions should also not be taken so seriously: 'it isn't racism, it's just people shooting the breeze, talking crap'. Comments on the posted film *Elia: 'Kanker Marokkaan Filmpje'*. *WK 2010 Zuid Afrika* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2010) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSViE_abzCM>.

at being a member of some clandestine gang, one of the most seductive draw-cards is the potential to be mischievous in the face of authority, represented by the police, and one of the rules is to circumvent that authority.

Posters, for example, ridicule the actions of riot units, or express disdain for the exaggerated police show of force. Only recently, police activity has been repeatedly classified by supporters as 'exaggerated', 'a waste of time', and 'a ridiculous show of authority'. Police, it is suggested, can easily show their authority because they are officially equipped with arms or weaponry, horses and technical support. Clashes between police and supporters typically spill out into the city. Places that are emblematically occupied by supporters included, for example, certain squares in the city in which supporters congregate before a match. Traditionally they gathered at Leidseplein, but this seems slowly to have been displaced by Heinekenplein.

This does not mean that the clashes between police and supporters have completely ceased. On 15 February 2012 police arrested a large number of fans. Supporters expressed their aversion to this kind of police intervention in the following way:

it's funny that everyone seems to know what may have (!!) happened. when I read this article what is made crystal clear once again is that as a football supporter you have no rights! preventative arrests because - gosh! - there's a teeny tiny chance that something may have happened. what's next? a stadium ban if you have a ticket on you and you have a tendency (!) to empty your bladder in unauthorized places??⁶¹

Football club boards and players have always found it difficult to establish a completely satisfactory relationship with hard-core supporter associations. The current Ajax manager, Frank de Boer, expressed his gratitude to Vak410 during the tenth anniversary of the organization, but the same words from Ten Have (now ex-director of Ajax) were received with scepticism by the supporters.⁶² Supporters often associate boards of football clubs with calculating business people, who have little passion or love for the club. Organizations such as the Witte Olifant, which works with the Ajax Supporters Delegation, have made the most serious attempts to introduce the voice of supporters to the Ajax Board of Directors and also to explain the popularity of Johan Crujff, who is still seen as 'one of the boys'.⁶³

⁶¹ '70 Ajax-Fans Opgepakt Door Politie', *AjaxShowTime.com*, 2012

<<http://www.ajaxshowtime.com/hoofdnieuws/59521/70-ajax-fans-opgepakt-door-politie.html>>.

⁶² On Website Vak410 'Nieuwsarchief', *Vak410*, 2011 <<http://www.vak410.nl/archive/all/2011>>.

⁶³ Retrieved from: 'Rood Witte Olifant', *roodwitteolifant.nl*, 2011 <<http://www.roodwitteolifant.nl/>>.

b. Distinctions within fandom

Supporters define themselves as belonging to different groups and as having different ways of being fans. Authenticity, for example, is one of the concepts that is extensively commented on in forums. Nevertheless, authenticity can be demonstrated in many different forms, as we will see in the following sections.

- **Knowing the history of the club and showing the way: masters and newcomers**

One way of demonstrating real love for the club is by knowing its history. This means knowing the year of Ajax's founding, the meaning of abbreviations, important places associated with victories or even defeats, and of course knowing about the game and the quality and skills of different players, both now and in the club's past. Some supporters, and even anti-supporters, complained that some people who celebrated after Amsterdam won its thirtieth national title in the premier division did not even know the names of the players in the match.⁶⁴

The ignorance of newcomers in forums or on shared Ajax fan sites does not always provoke hostility, at least not if those newcomers ask questions with humility. Questions such as 'What does Ultra really mean?' or 'What does CBS mean?', accompanied by an appropriate 'Perhaps a stupid question' are answered kindly by other posters.⁶⁵ Sometimes, however, long-term and well-informed supporters, or 'masters', adopt a condescending tone or even offer a sort of reprimand. This is the case with the following poster, who said that he was unable to understand that someone claiming to be a supporter could ask what 'Mokum' means:

What does Mokum mean? If this was a quiz, YOU would NOT be through to the next round, because everybody knows what Mokum means. Mokum is the nickname of Amsterdam, the Netherlands' capital city, the city of Ajax, the Red Light District and coffeeshops that don't serve coffee. Mokum is a word that comes from Bargoens, a type of slang used among criminals. It derives from the Yiddish word *mokem*, which means city. That is the way it was used in Bargoens, as a word for city in general.⁶⁶

- **Distrust of intentions: who is the real hard-core supporter?**

Some fans question the nature of real support and accuse hard-core hooligans of using their support as an excuse for their criminal activities. This attitude and opinion was clearly visible in the comments about Sven, to which we referred above. His business involved ticket sales and AFCA clothing

⁶⁴ Kasper van Royen, 'Geen Supporter', *Hard/hoofd*, 2010 <<http://hardhoofd.com/2010/06/21/geen-supporter/>>.

Other comments on other sites have a different style but refer to the same theme: An illustration: 'you say a Jew through and through and you don't even know who carlo is?! then fuck you, you phoney!!! R.I.P. Carlo never forget you by Youth AFCA. 2 years ago.' Forum, *Amsterdam Hooligans* (The Netherlands: YouTube) <Material in archive>.

⁶⁵ 'Prominent Figuur Harde Kern Neergeschoten.'

⁶⁶ *Ajax Uit Mokum!!!!*

merchandising, which for some is evidence that he simply used the name of Ajax for his own financial gain.

Another important objection to the older hard-core F-side has been expressed by Vak410 members and sympathizers, according to whom, one of the most important differences between them and the old F-side is that they are willing to encourage the players during the entire match, while F-side supporters do not hesitate to leave the terraces when they feel that the match is lost.

- **Distrust of conditional support: disdain for the so-called ‘success supporter’**

Connected to the authenticity discussion is another subject: disdain for the ‘success supporter’ and those who claim to be a fan of two clubs at the same time. A ‘success supporter’ is defined as a person who is a supporter of a club only because it is winning. Posters seem to accept the idea that being a ‘success supporter’ is understandable if one’s motivations are based on emotions or on emotive links with a winning club. In one of the discussions developed in the forum ‘Success Supporters’,⁶⁷ posters discuss the matter for a considerable number of pages. Some, for example, admit to following two teams, one local and the other playing in the first division, because a beloved family member introduced them to good football by a successful club. The influence of important family members and childhood memories that left a strong impression, such as ‘my first attendance at a professional match’, are commonly referred to as decisive in becoming a supporter. This explains why some individuals do not support their local clubs (for example AZ), but follow Ajax instead, or why they can love and support two clubs.

- **Disputing the style of real supporters: who is the real ‘Amsterdammer’?**

One of the most standard images of Ultra supporters today would be similar to Sven: tattoos, a shaved head, muscles and other related attributes. However, although there are some positive comments Sven’s appearance is generally considered to belong to the underworld of Amsterdam.



In this respect, one poster with a name related to a ‘customers service department’ writes:

⁶⁷ ‘Successsupporters’, *forum.fok.nl*, 2011 <<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/1664405/1/999>>.

I don't understand how you can marginalise yourself from society in that way, by getting those kinds of tattoos! Cheeks, foreheads, the sides of heads and even lips are covered with AJAX ink...I have a few nice pics myself, but not any places where people will see them.⁶⁸

In general, the image of the genuine Amsterdam football player is one with a more stylized appearance and masculine but boyish suppleness. Johan Crujff, who is still considered one of the most attractive representations of the Ajax way of being, is prized for the way he represents the virtues of an Amsterdammer: elegant, displaying bravado (*'bluf'*), strong but not excessively muscled, sophisticated, possessing an innate aura of leadership combined with a 'folksy origin', and the persistence of a typical Amsterdammer accent.

This image of the winner is also used to illustrate a more successful and more cultivated football fan, and appears in posters in business areas such as the Zuidas. This supporter wears a nice suit and acts with conviction (he does not readily waste his energy in stupid fights, but equally he is not afraid to defend Ajax).⁶⁹



- **The Wesley B. incident: 'the moron from Almere'**

Personally, the so-called 'Wesley B. incident', which I have briefly referred to above, can be seen as paradigmatic because it contains a series of critical stereotypes contrasting Amsterdam smartness to provincial scruffiness and stupidity. In this sense, it is interesting to carefully examine the comments and news posts that followed the Wesley B. incident. On Sunday, 21 December 2011, a young man, who later would be known as Wesley B., ran onto the pitch and tried to kick the AZ goalkeeper, the Puerto Rican Esteban. The keeper, in his turn, hit the intruder twice. The match was interrupted and the spectators were asked to leave the stadium.

At first, before the character and details of the aggressor were known, some early posters expressed their admiration for his courage and found Esteban's reaction exaggerated. Ajax had been winning, so it seemed that the opposing team used the incident for its own benefit.⁷⁰ However, one or two days later, as details about Wesley B. emerged, the condemnation became more general. The aggressor was nineteen years old, had a very low IQ, problems with alcohol and drugs, and was from the suburban city of Almere. In some people's eyes, he confirmed Almere's reputation as a place for

⁶⁸ J. Geerdink, 'Neergeschoten Man Blijkt Ajax-Prominent', *Spits* (Amsterdam, 2011) <<http://www.spitsnieuws.nl/crime/2011/08/neergeschoten-man-blijkt-ajax-prominent>>.

⁶⁹ 'DOSSIER Ajax En Johan Crujff', *De Telegraaf Telesport*, 2012 <http://www.telegraaf.nl/telesport/voetbal/ajax/10941086/___DOSSIER_Alles_over_Ajax_.html?p=1,1>.

⁷⁰ After the match, the hooligan supporters of Ajax clashed with the riot police. People interviewed on the streets declared that they did not share the feeling of these hooligans and that they were against this kind of 'stupid violence'. Comments in: 'ME in Actie Bij de Arena' (The Netherlands: AT5, 2011).

‘strange, under-developed people’, for a ‘randdebiel’ with mental retardation. The hero turned out to be a ‘moron’ and his family was increasingly pictured as typical ‘white trash’ without intelligence or skills. For many, the fact that Wesley B. came from Almere and/or was a provincial explained the whole situation. Posters started to state that, in fact, the place in the stadium in which Wesley was sitting during the match could be a sign of his ‘retardation’, since ‘Wesley was sitting in the north section, the terrace for provincials’.⁷¹ These comments point to other interesting elements, leading us to our next point.

- **Choosing a seat in the stadium**

For insiders, clearly the place you choose to sit as a spectator in a football stadium matters significantly, and may explain the explosive interest of young supporters in sitting in the places in which the most authentic or visibly involved supporters take their seats. It is important to note that Vak410 was originally at the northern end of the stadium (in section 410, the place in which Wesley was actually sitting), but that it was later relocated to the south, next to the old supporters’ F-side. The police, by the way, were glad to have all of the Ultras concentrated in the same part of the stadium.

As well as those in the northern section, ‘real’ supporters in the southern section express disdain for the other side of the coin: the terraces with business people, who they believe are not really interested in football and know nothing about it. The charge is that they have turned Ajax into a publicly listed company without having feelings for it. One Ajax supporter puts it this way:

I just read on nu.nl that Ajax supporters are now scrapping with the anti-riot squad outside the Arena [stadium]. I hereby declare that from today I am no longer a supporter of Ajax. Johan, thanks for creating this aggro vibe everyone seems to share. I’ll come back in around ten years, when we’ve gone back to talking about football. (December 2011 23:33).⁷²

- **Support expressed through generosity and hospitality towards the one who wants to be integrated**

Signs of successful integration and of becoming a real Amsterdammer can be expressed in different ways. One that appears to be effective is to acquire a sound knowledge of the rivalries that the club has with others. During the celebrations for their thirtieth premier-division championship at Museumplein, the Ajax footballer, Jan Vertonghen, originally from Belgium, expressed his bond with the audience by singing the first three words of the chant ‘They are only “kut” cockroaches’, a

⁷¹ In ‘Aanvaller AZ-Doelman Zou Almeerder Zijn’, *omroep flevoland* (Almere, 22 December 2011) <<http://www.omroepflevoland.nl/Nieuws/86939/aanvaller-az-doelman-zou-almeerder-zijn>>.

⁷² From: We houden van Oranje: ‘Hoe Één “Supporter” AZ Uit de Beker Wipt. Doelman van AZ Is Misschien Een Beetje Fout, Maar de Supporter Mag Natuurlijk Nooit Meer in Een Stadion Verschijnen!’

reference to Feyenoord, Ajax's arch rivals.⁷³ He was not afraid to scream it, while in the background the Ajax directors laughed discretely, covering their mouths with their hands. The directors' actions contrasted strongly with the daring of Vertonghen as he held the trophy in his hands. Feyenoord supporters were indeed not pleased with his chants (as no doubt the Ajax Board was already aware) and Vertonghen expressed his apologies to Feyenoord later on, but the damage had already been done and Feyenoord supporters made clear that he would not be excused: 'This season you should stay home injured during the Classic or you'll leave the Kuip injured'.⁷⁴

- **Describing character and skills through reference to race and place of origin**

It seems to be the general reasoning of posters and other commentators that stereotyping through denoting race, colour or place of origin should be taken as part of the game. Of course, this is meant to bother and annoy rivals, but that is supposedly something that is justified by the game itself. Such an assertion is consistent with the observations that research on racism and Ajax fandom has previously made. In one article on the matter, the authors point out that both the fans and the players generally believe that the acts themselves are only racist when they are committed by a racist person. They avoid accountability by claiming that they did not intend to be racist.⁷⁵

Typically, comments related to race, gender and place of origin, are explained as a '*gein*' (just a funny joke). In the corpus analysed in this thesis, this kind of '*gein*' is also related to what is called 'Amsterdam humour', which is meant to show ingenious verbosity. Funny jokes can also be taken as a way of linking the football world with the 'real' population of Amsterdam, for example, blue-collar workers or market vendors. In the blog of a 'provincial come to Amsterdam to study', the writer gives a couple of examples of the kind of impressions a newcomer will have of the city of Amsterdam (especially in the original working-class enclaves around the 'Noordermarkt' in the Jordaan): a female student buying a cucumber is told by the vendor that if this one doesn't work she can always come back for a new one that would 'suit her better', or a student just arrived in the city carrying a ladder who has to field the question 'Do you perhaps need a ladder?' a couple of times.⁷⁶ These newcomers should know that reacting angrily to these kinds of 'jokes' will be counterproductive. Taking things too seriously, taking these expressions too literally means that you do not understand the game and

⁷³ *Het Zijn Maar Kut Kakkerlakken [HQ]. Met Tekst* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2010)
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwlrDtGjp10>>.

⁷⁴ Redactie, 'Feyenoordfans Waarschuwen Jan Vertonghen', *Algemeen Dagblad* (Rotterdam, 18 September 2010)
<<http://www.ad.nl/ad/nl/1441/Ajax/article/detail/1939558/2010/09/18/Feyenoordfans-waarschuwen-Jan-Vertonghen.dhtml>>.

⁷⁵ Floris Müller, L. van Zoonen and L. de Roode, 'Accidental Racists: Experiences and Contradictions of Racism in Local Amsterdam Soccer Fan Culture', *Soccer & Society*, 8 (2007), 335–50 (p. 336)
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14660970701224608>>.

⁷⁶ Hoofdredacteur, 'Het Gein-Gen van de Mokumer', *Cultuur HPDETIJD* (Amsterdam, 20 August 2010)
<<http://www.eijsbouts.eu/index.php?/meninkjes/amsterdamse-humor/>>.

at the same time ensures its continuity, because newcomers adapt and use the same techniques, just to avoid being seen as outsiders.

- **Being acquainted with players' lives and personalities; choosing favourite and less favourite players in one's own club; discussing performance and squad formation**

In online comments, it is possible to trace the construction of the public image of the players, an image that can sometimes change from week to week but that, in the end, seems to have quite a fixed form. Place of origin is not always used as a joke but as a kind of obvious reference that should help clarify a comment. The confrontational behaviour of Suarez, for example (who was a beloved Ajax player before later joining Liverpool), was normally explained by his impetuous 'Latino' character, in reference to his country of origin, Uruguay. His attempts to learn Dutch were put in a positive light (no denigrating jokes about him, in comparison to a regular immigrant or '*allochtoon*'), which means that in general his efforts were seen as fitting and as showing a willingness to assimilate into the club and the city.

Allusions to origin may also be used in a negative way, however. For example, the bad performance of Ismail Aissati was attributed to a lazy nature, which is considered typical of Moroccans. El Hamdouie, for example, also occasioned a long chain of comments:

That Hammadoei is such a fag, my goat is better at football than he is. Sell him to that fag king of morocco! [...]

- A top striker is self-seeking, egotistical and hardly ever gives away the ball... but shoots most of them in the net. El Hamdouie is self-seeking and egotistical but does not perform consistently. And that gets on people's nerves!
- I am really behind Ajax but i prefer not to see someone like el hamdaoui in ajax' red and white. I mean it, even if he shoots another 30 into the net this year, i think he's an asshole of a player who only thinks of himself and doesn't play for the team. Suarez was also self-seeking but then he is ten times better than el hamdaoui and apart from all the goals he also produced many assists.⁷⁷

The 'stranger' does not necessarily have to be someone of another nationality. The player Theo Janssen, for example, although Dutch, is seen by many Ajax supporters as a foreigner. Janssen previously played for the club FC Twente, in the east of the country, and supporters harbour the suspicion that his poor performance with Ajax is due to the fact that he does not feel connected to

⁷⁷ Top 10: Mounir El Hamdaoui (The Netherlands: AFC Ajax/YouTube, 2010) <http://www.youtube.com/all_comments?v=EyKmJNnMI9E&page=1>.

the city of Amsterdam. Moreover, he is also seen as lacking suppleness, which means that he does not have the typical air and style of an 'Ajacied'.⁷⁸

One player who is currently seen as well integrated is Jan Vertonghen, whose performance during the celebrations for winning the Dutch premier league was mentioned above. The symbolic act of expressing his gratitude to Vak410 supporters and singing the anti-Feyenoord chant stole the hearts of many supporters.⁷⁹ Vertonghen is a young player from Belgium who arrived in Amsterdam aged sixteen. As he has said, Amsterdam was from the very beginning his city: 'The city in which I feel at home'. His girlfriend is Dutch and at the time he was studying Sports Marketing at the Johan Cruijff University, part of the Hogeschool van Amsterdam (2011).

In one of the videos made by Amsterdam's local television station, AT5 Television, the player shows his house to the press. It is a nice, but soberly decorated house, without the ostentation that is commonly associated with professional football players, and the kind of roof terrace that is normal in the inner city. Indisputably, this sort of house can be found in the Rivierenbuurt. The online comments speculate until they find the possible address, next to a supermarket, which they recognize from the images. Vertonghen's house is painted in an elegant and refined way, but according to the posters the colours are unquestionably the red and white of Ajax. The bread and cheese he eats is also used to illustrate his normal, no-nonsense Dutch taste for simple things. It is also seen as healthy, in contrast with what the posters think would be on the menus of other players. Interesting comments about the lifestyles of football players include:

- you should make something like this about sulejmani (:
- @[...] then they need to take the camera crew to the mcdonalds, the febo [chain of snackbars] and jimmy whoo [Jimmy Woo; a famous Amsterdam nightclub] [...]
- if they go round to verhoeven's place jeroen will need to clear up all the pizza boxes quickl:P.⁸⁰

All these references are meaningful, since they are used to denote a certain taste and way of doing things. They also imply that the posters identify with these descriptions, adopting favourite players and their lifestyles. The places they associate with the player Miralem Sulejmani, for example, are connected to fast food and probably also to all sorts of other common tastes. Jimmy Woo is a night club in Amsterdam that was created in the 1990s to cater to a more sophisticated public and is now

⁷⁸ Redactie, "'Volgens de Media Kan Ik Er Niks van En Pas Ik Niet Bij Ajax'", *Het Parool* (Amsterdam, 5 March 2012) <<http://www.parool.nl/parool/nl/13/AJAX/article/detail/3218141/2012/03/05/Volgens-de-media-kan-ik-er-niks-van-en-pas-ik-niet-bij-Ajax.dhtml>>.

⁷⁹ 'Vertonghen Thuis in Amsterdam.'

⁸⁰ Comments under: 'Vertonghen Thuis in Amsterdam.'

seen (because of its ostentation) as a place for the nouveau riche, ‘bling bling footballers’ and ‘wannabes’. The references to pizzas and the imagined habits of Jeroen Verhoeven are indubitably an allusion to his ‘round’ appearance and apparent lack of sophistication.



Jan Vertonghen



Miralem Sulejmani



Jeroen Verhoeven

- **Some general core values: celebrating the ‘leading role’ mentality**

‘Ajax has always maintained the arrogance of a winner’ says ex-player John Goossens ‘even when it hasn’t won anything for a long time’.⁸¹ Descriptions of Ajax depict the club as having one of the most defined personalities, and a remarkable influence on European football. A frequent argument is that there is an ‘Ajax way of playing’ that could be called ‘the Ajax School’, which is represented by the Ajax Academy.

On Wikipedia, the author of the article on the Ajax Academy summarizes this Ajax style as follows:

The inside knowledge about Ajax training is unique. Central within the club is the style of play (4-3-3), training, behaviour and house rules. Ajax strives to keep the way of playing football recognizable; attractive, offensive-minded, creative, fast, fair and preferably far away from the own goal on [...] the opponents’ half.⁸²

This Ajax style has become the ‘trademark’ of a large number of successful players. Information websites such as the Dutch ‘Voetbal International’ keep track of them all, whether playing in Europe or even further away⁸³ and in ‘Dutch Forum International’ posters comment on changes and follow up on ex-Ajax players. According to the usual argument, the Ajax School has disseminated its vision throughout European football, thanks to football players with a significant role in first-rank clubs, such as Johan Crujff at Barcelona or Marco van Basten at Milan. With very few exceptions,⁸⁴ the

⁸¹ Redactie, “‘Kan Me Voorstellen Dat Mensen Zich Aan Ajax Ergeren’.”

⁸² ‘Ajax Youth Academy’, *Wikipedia* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ajax_Youth_Academy>.

⁸³ ‘Voetbalfans. Ajax’ (The Netherlands: RTL7, 2012) <<http://www.uitzendinggemist.net/aflevering/117665/Voetbalfans.html>>.

⁸⁴ AD nuances the influence of Crujff by stating that Crujff would rather have had Marco van Basten as the successor to Rijksraad and that it was Laporta who chose the inexperienced Guardiola instead. Redactie, ‘Crujff Had Bij Barcelona Nooit

victory of FC Barcelona in the Champions League was generally considered in Dutch newspapers and online press⁸⁵ as the logical consequence of Crujff's vision, transmitted through the current coach of Barcelona, Pep Guardiola. Guardiola himself, when asked about the influence of Crujff, indeed acknowledged the impact of the old coach.⁸⁶ It is not the goal of our current analysis of Ajax fandom to elucidate the real influence of the Ajax style across the world, but rather to draw attention to the capacity for self-attribution by the protagonists, which sheds light on the auto-stereotype of Ajax as a club with international influence, also kept alive by its supporters. At the same time, on the other side of the coin, Ajax players have also confessed that it is not easy to play for Ajax supporters, as they are hard to please.⁸⁷

Traditionally, indeed, Ajax supporters are famously demanding. In the old Ajax stadium, de Meer, most of the fanatical supporters in the F-side did not hesitate to leave the stadium protesting loudly when they thought the game was not up to standard, while only demonstrating tempered enthusiasm with a victory, as if they took it for granted. Some old supporters described this feeling as Amsterdam's way of being, critical and demanding, although when looking back they also talked about emotional moments at de Meer, 'a stadium in which, unlike the Arena', you could feel the city. For these supporters, nothing was greater than crossing the city by foot from de Meer stadium to Leidseplein, where they joined other Ajax supporters who had not been at the stadium to see the players holding up the winner's trophy on the balcony of the Schouwburg.⁸⁸

To many of them, the new Ajax stadium, the Arena, in the southeast of the city, does not feel like Amsterdam. In fact, this feeling is understandable, given that the Arena is also physically isolated from the rest of the city of Amsterdam, circumvented as it is by roads and motorways that make it impossible to walk to from the city centre. Inaugurated in 1996, the new stadium was designed as a multifunctional complex for concerts and other events. Old supporters kept referring to the new stadium as a 'beton blok' (block of concrete) – cold and without the famous ambiance of de Meer. In the meantime, a new generation of supporters arrived on the scene. They were born in the late 1980s or beginning of the 1990s and had never been to de Meer. In addition, the football competition increasingly became a commercial activity. Having grown up during the commercialization of football, the new generation of supporters do not seem to mind the

Een Rol Zoals Nu Bij Ajax', *Algemeen Dagblad* (Rotterdam, 30 March 2011)

<<http://www.ad.nl/ad/nl/1441/Ajax/article/detail/1896720/2011/03/30/Crujff-had-bij-Barcelona-nooit-een-rol-zoals-nu-bij-Ajax.dhtml>>.

⁸⁵ Comments on *De Telegraaf*, *Volkskrant*, *Het Parool*, *Nrc Next* and on online media *Powned* concerning the victory over Real Madrid. 'Guardiola Evenaart Crujff in El Clasico', *powned.tv*, 2012

<http://www.powned.tv/nieuws/sport/2012/01/guardiola_evenaart_crujff_in.html>.

⁸⁶ "'Crujff Heeft de Meeste Invloed Op Mij Gehad"', *voetbalzone.nl*, 2011 <<http://m.voetbalzone.nl/doc.asp?uid=154292>>.

⁸⁷ Jan Vertonghen before the decisive match in 2011-2012, *Het Parool* 3 March 2012.

⁸⁸ Nostalgia in 'Stadion De Meer', *ajaxinside.nl* <<http://www.ajaxinside.nl/pagina/demeer>>. And in the testimony of an old Ajax supporter on the television programme 'Voetbalfans. Ajax.'

commercialized aspects of the Arena (e.g. far more expensive food in comparison with the old de Meer). The contradictions and paradoxes of being a current supporter are visible in the discussion above. In 2001, a group of new-generation supporters, young boys who claim to love Ajax at least as much as the traditional F-side, decided to change their way of expressing it in the Arena, adopting the methods of the Italian *tiffosi*: supporting the team more visibly with flares, big banners and loud chants.

On 27 January 2012, Vak410 celebrated its ten year anniversary.⁸⁹ They have a large number of participants and sympathizers and lately it has become the most publicly recognized supporters group by the players, as shown, among other things, by a clear, 'thanks Vak410', during the celebration of Ajax's victory on 15 May 2011. Because of the internet, supporter groups such as Vak410 share the lyrics of chants before the matches with other non-affiliated supporters. This means that in important and decisive matches, when even casual supporters are infected by the enthusiasm, Vak410 wields significantly more influence than that represented by only the core members, as illustrated by the general chants that erupted in the celebration at Museumplein on 15 May 2011. Videos with titles such as: 'Supporters work on banners', show members of Vak410 investing 600 hours in sewing to create the biggest banner in Europe and confessing to be really nervous, not especially for the match against Feyenoord ('010 always loses'), but above all for the successful deployment of the banner. As a poster on the same channel states: 'This was perhaps not their most creative banner, but 600 hours of sewing for the club, that is love! If others criticize their club, slag it off, that is more Ajax hatred than love for their own club.'⁹⁰

Additionally, and in the meantime, the Arena stadium has been turning into a less isolated place. On the one hand, shops and sports megastores such as Decathlon have started to attract a mix of different people to the site. On the other hand, the Arena seems to be increasingly associated with the club. Negative references, such as 'that stadium's a UFO', are only made by non-Ajax supporters. The house known as the 'Toekomst' and the supporters' base are in the neighbourhood and students of Sports Marketing are glad to study in the southeast (at the Frailemaborg building of the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences).

Despite this, young supporters still seem to prefer the older parts of the city for important celebrations and gatherings. The bars at Leidseplein, in the Pijp and at the Wallen are always packed during Ajax matches. Posters also frequently mention watching matches at home alone or with

⁸⁹ *10 Jaar VAK410 Promo (versie 1), Vak410* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2011)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TuFUB6a0y_A>.

⁹⁰ *In Making Of van VAK410's Grootste Spandoek van Europa* (The Netherlands: Ondergrond.Tv/YouTube, 2008)

<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NvhD3AhMa4c&feature=related>>.

friends on the internet, and gatherings after an important victory are often organized via Facebook. During the Ajax-Twente match on 15 May, for example, the city council decided not to put big screens in well-known public spaces such as Museumplein. Private individuals were quickly communicating about possible places to watch the game through online channels and via mobile phones. In addition to the above-mentioned more traditional football enclaves, the match could also be seen in places such as Bitterzoet, which is a more alternative café/music venue on Spuistraat.

[..] Do you know how many bars there are...

you don't have to analyse the match do you.. it's all about the party. Come on.. if we win you're going to miss that immediate euphoria..

I completely agree. I will definitely be in the city centre. I'll find a tv somewhere. At someone's home if need be, as long as I can watch that bloody match, with a beer and some *bitterballen* in reach.

[...] - Wednesday 11 May 2011 - 15:10

How did you find out about that? I would like to include it as a tip, but I need to be sure about it. Via bitterzoet's facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/BitterzoetAmsterdam>.⁹¹

Others simply improvised screenings around the stands of local vendors, such as the one near the fishmonger, 'Visharing Frens'.



The comments on pictures posted on internet present this unorganized chaos as charming. (Picture by Ben Zwerink Arbonés).

⁹¹ Comments in the days leading up to the match on 15 May 2011. 'Topic: Ajax Kijken in Amsterdam Op 15 Mei', *forum.headliner.nl*, 2011 <<http://forum.headliner.nl/topic-21480/p2/>>. *Bitterballen* are a typically Dutch deep-fried snacks.

Naturally, after the party comes the hangover: incidents that occur during festivities in Amsterdam are understood by those living in the vicinity of the celebrations (Museumplein and Leidseplein, among others) as the invasion of provincial fans from outside Amsterdam. One old supporter wrote a letter to the newspaper *Het Parool* expressing the opinion that only people living outside the city could destroy the beautiful environment of Amsterdam South in the way they did after their victory the previous year. This is the same argument that the same inhabitants of the elegant area of Amsterdam South express after festivities such as Queen's Day, with the damage blamed on provincials who, apparently, year after year invade the city centre and engage in their vulgar way of partying. This paradox can be interpreted in the light of an interesting observation by Tim Parks, who concluded that trying to correct such behaviour in people who precisely relate their identity to such incorrect behaviour is impossible: 'This is a group who have invested all their collective identity in the idea that they are incorrigible. So how can they correct each other?'⁹²

5.5. Conclusions

Through the analysis of this material I have attempted to answer the main question of this chapter, What does it mean to be a football supporter in general, and a football supporter of Ajax in particular, according to the supporters themselves? To answer these questions I have analysed material produced by the supporters themselves in combination with specific historical circumstances and background information that could be considered paradigmatic. This material could be considered 'as unobstructed as possible', since it has not been especially produced for this current research or, indeed, for any research.

The intention of the analysis was to gain better insight into the 'imaginary' of football supporters in Amsterdam. This insight should shed light on the specific bonds that young people have with the city. These links could be separate from or combined with the links of other groups, bound in one way or another to the city of Amsterdam. To understand the connections, I set out to identify how football supporters can be recognized; what artefacts they use; and when and where they gather or can be seen.

The analysis indicates that there is a range of important factors that supporters use to distinguish other supporters, both of the same club and of other clubs. To make this more concrete, I have taken into account the binaries inherent in phrases such as 'my sort of people' and 'other people'. This was then used to contrast the fandom of one's own club and with the fandom of other clubs. Thus, is it

⁹² Parks, p. 15.

be possible to see that traditional hooligans, for example, immediately recognize the same kind of hooliganism in other clubs, while other sorts of supporters adopt other forms of expression that are comparable with those of other clubs? In the following, I will summarize the most important conclusions.

Ajax has different kinds of supporters, from traditional hooligans to ‘success supporters’ and commercialized supporters. This implies that Ajax is seen as a club with allure, since success supporters do not affiliate with losers. Supporters and media seem to agree that Ajax is an influential club both in and outside the Netherlands. ‘Stars’ such as Johan Crujff, Marco van Basten and, later on, Sneijder – once students of the Ajax Academy, even if only for a short period – are seen as ambassadors of the ‘Ajax way of doing things’ and as still influencing the play of important European clubs such as FC Barcelona, AC Milan or Real Madrid. The narrative of effective influence mirrors the idea of the Netherlands as a small but clever country. The narrative of Ajax remains linked to the image of David and Goliath, but can also be personalized in the physical features of some players, like Sneijder, who is small, but quick and smart in the game.⁹³

According to the analysis of its fandom, Ajax sees itself as a sort of big heterogeneous family, including adopted children in the ground and on the terraces. International players such as Suarez and Vertonghen ‘are Ajax’ in the eyes of the supporters, because they adopted ‘the special swing and the Ajax mentality’, accepting jokes with nonchalance. The ‘*gein*’ of Amsterdam humour can be summarized by the adjectives ‘quick, joyful, ingenious and a bit arrogant’. However, it is not for nothing that Ajax is the club of the capital of the Netherlands and is hated by ‘the rest of the Netherlands’, for the Ajax that we have seen during our analysis only contributes to legitimating this reputation.

Like other clubs, the character of Ajax has been formed through processes of adoption and rivalry. In his study of European football, Spaaij showed that the identity of professional European football clubs is constructed through antagonism with others. His analysis demonstrates ‘epistemological coincidences’ on the basis of Imagology Studies, which see the distinction of one from the other as the essential way that images and stereotypes are created and developed throughout history. Ajax, then, is formed by its antagonism with its arch rival, Feyenoord, among others. While Feyenoord sees itself as ‘direct and authentic’, *Ajaciëden* call it ‘rough’ and ‘brutish’. In turn, standardized self-images of Ajax point to attributes such as technical ability and beauty, cosmopolitanism and *savoir faire*, while Feyenoord’s fans manipulate these characteristics in a negative way, describing Ajax as having affected technicalities and hence as being effeminate and mannered. What appears to be highly

⁹³ Kees Jongkind and Rimko Haamstra, *De Sneijder Tapes* (The Netherlands: NOS Studio Sport, 2012).

effective in the denigrating rhetoric is the ridiculing of the other's self-symbols, such as adding feminine or homosexual attributes to well-known catch-cries of the enemy: 'walking hand in hand as transvestites' for Feyenoord, or 'every Jew is a homo' for Ajax.

In relation to its members, and keeping to the allegory of the big family, one can say that Ajax fans express themselves as tolerant of the different habits of players, such as the nouveau-riche tastes attributed to the Serbian Ajax player Miralem Sulejmani, or the inelegant appearance of keeper Jeroen Verhoeven. Thanks to the ability to share posts about films and player news, supporters are able to choose a position, and debate it with other supporters, so that each fan is always able to demonstrate their own particular kind of support.

The power of a club such as Ajax, which can gather together a heterogeneous group of supporters, could be explained by the merging of new commodification and communication potentials with traditional forms of support. In this manner, every individual supporter can adopt a suitable way of expressing that support to others. Concerning artefacts and symbols, there is hybridization. Typical hooligan slogans such as 'AFCA forever' or '1312', which hooligans tattoo on visible parts of their bodies, are commercialized and adopted by other supporters in hidden tattoos or on shirts. Slogans are also used as a signal of identity when accompanying posters' contributions on the internet. The extended use of electronic media has even popularized the term 'internet hooligan', as we have frequently seen in our corpus. The type of influence of fandom on one's 'real life' depends on each individual, ranging from the tattooed appearance of the murdered hooligan Sven to contributions based on technical knowledge that appear on different forums and platforms.

However, it is important to note that there are certain requirements before one can call oneself a supporter. A supporter has to have at least a certain degree of knowledge of the football code in general and of their club in particular, he knows – or actively acquaints himself with – signs and important moments. A supporter also has to be able to show evidence of having seen Ajax matches and must be able to comment on them. In addition, a supporter has to attend particular events such as celebrations, and join in plans for gathering with others. Finally, a supporter is, by definition, against all opponents and may, or even should, denigrate them.

Despite the auto-stereotype of cosmopolitanism, the supporters of Ajax emphasize the traditional characteristics of football fandom, understanding that football is a man's world. This predominance can be seen in the frequent allusions to male attributes and qualities underlining physical vigour and power. Words like 'sissy' (*'mietje'*), or feminine characteristics attributed to other supporters or to players, are never used in a positive way. Concerning the content of the comments, and as far as it was possible to identify gender, a very large majority of contributions are made by men.

Masculinity also appears as a tool to ensure complicity: sharing the male condition with others presupposes suffering the same kind of impediments before being fully able to enjoy a match. For example, Tim Parks had to convince his wife that his participation as a supporter of FC Verona was in fact research in order to get her permission to attend the matches. Supporters are thus sometimes obliged to invent an excuse to create time for football. The 'we know what we are talking about' attitude excludes women in general from the condition of valuable co-supporter, no matter how understanding and nice they are. Women may be partners in life but not in football. Comments about Vertonghen's girlfriend or about football for women are illustrative of this.

When it is not about power over or complicity against the other gender, the 'man's world' is manifested by reference to so-called 'men's qualities'. Having technical knowledge about football, which is supposedly passed down to sons as a kind of inheritance from fathers (or grandfathers), is one of these. Female sport journalists like Janneke van der Horst are exceptions to the rule. In the case of more content-focused forums, supporters show patterns common to similar forums on other 'male matters', such as cars, IT and train hobbyists. In these electronic gatherings, communication is catalysed through exchanges of knowledge and insights, and masters introduce newcomers into the game as if they were their disciples.

While hybridism in supporting practices can be seen as a characteristic of successful clubs, the vast majority of supporters of Ajax show their contempt for the image of the 'strong but stupid supporter', embodied in the person of Wesley B., 'the moron from Almere with a very low IQ'. The Wesley B. incident illustrates the operation of stereotypes built around the binary opposition 'capital/clever versus province/stupid'. Other cases, such as that represented by the hooligan Sven, are more complex, since his versatility represents the paradoxes of football fans torn between the extreme boundaries of the game. Is he a hero or is he a criminal?

All in all, it is evident that the game has seduced and captivated a large number of people. Being a supporter enables people to be part of a 'boys' club' with its own rules, in which the limitations and rules of outsiders such as local authorities are mostly seen as nonsense (i.e. the boring and bureaucratic state). Being part of a supporters' community can be seen as being involved in a modern tribe, which in the words of Maffesoli (quoted above) allows people 'to search for a more hedonistic everyday life, that is, less finalized, less determined by the "ought" and by work'.

With respect to places, supporters of Ajax not only watch the matches in the fully packed Ajax stadium, the Arena, but also outside in bars or at home, with friends, with family, or alone in Amsterdam or the provinces. After every match supporters gather together on the internet; in important and decisive matches they organize their gatherings offline; and in general celebrations

they are the ones who know the core catch phrases and codes of the club. In addition, Ajax supporters dedicate a considerable amount of time to opinions about other places and other cities, and even like to follow the progress of other professional clubs such as FC Barcelona, Manchester United, Real Madrid and AC Milan.

In contrast with other indisputable 'student' tribes, such as the *Corps* students, who must be enrolled in college, the data on Ajax cannot give clear indication of the link between Ajax and student life. Despite this, the data indicates important Ajax supporter enclaves in educational institutions such as the Johan Cruijff University and in Sports Marketing and Sports Economics at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (where Ajax player Vertonghen was still studying at the time of writing the first draft of this chapter), and the Sports Marketing department at VU University Amsterdam. I have also found signs of connections with students in other kinds of education, such as working at the editorial offices of the University of Amsterdam's magazine *Folia*, for example. Further research could offer better insight into this particular link.

A more general but interesting final conclusion, however, is that love for a football club appears to be a bit like real love, no matter how clichéd this may sound. Erikson's work sheds light on the conspicuous way young people devote themselves to clear, formalized niches, thinking paradoxically that these niches are waiting especially for them.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ Erikson quoted by Spaaij.

6. Capturing the Imaginary: What About Hip Hop?

6.1. Introduction: and why about Hip hop?

Most young people in the Netherlands today have grown up with hip hop and the music influenced by it. Whether consciously recognized or not, the spread of hip hop has been extensive and extends to very different milieus: the video clips announcing the activities of the *corps* students seen in Chapter 4 are often enlivened by hip hop beats; the novelist James Worthy identified with the rapper Tupac in his search for an inherent creative form. His acknowledgements for the novel *James Worthy* went to people involved in the hip hop scene, Farid Belaruk and Kees de Koning – the latter the head of Amsterdam's hip hop label TopNotch. The adventures of Kees and Sjaak in the novel *Het is weer raak met Kees en Sjaak* were also inspired by hip hop, with Sjaak being a sort of MC, the Master of Ceremonies emblematic of hip hop, this time in charge of arranging a kind of grown-up programme for his naïve friend Kees. Similarly, the influence of hip hop is tangible in the means of expression adopted by an element of Ajax fandom – the Ajax 'graffers' or graffiti writers, expressing their support to the club on walls, bridges and in other public areas. In addition to the examples from previous chapters, and as we will see extensively in this chapter, in Amsterdam today, two of the most successful bands among young adults are the hip hop groups: De Jeugd van Tegenwoordig and The Opposites.

Nevertheless, and apart from some relevant exceptions, hip hop has not yet received serious interest as possible material for research on ideas or thoughts concerning the sense of place held by current youth in the Netherlands in general and in Amsterdam in particular. One of the factors influencing this lack of academic interest may have been that gangsta hip hop, as staged in video clips since the introduction of the music channel MTV in 1981, has been considered artificial and alien to Dutch reality. Indeed, in contrast to the usual Dutch egalitarianism and sobriety, the MTV clips of artists such as N.W.A. (Niggaz With Attitudes), Ice Cube and later Jay Z. brought in the alien world of bling. The videos staged scenes populated by virile, muscular, strong men, looking dangerous, women with deep cleavages, and guns and cars as recurrent artefacts. The death of a number of rappers in the United States at that time contributed to the consolidation of the idea that this sort of gangsta style was a literal mirror of a criminal reality. Partly because of this negative image, audiences in the Netherlands generally dismissed

hip hop. Journalists and concert organizers preferred to turn their attention to safer and more consolidated sorts of music and artists.¹

Similarly, the tradition of hip hop as a genre deeply rooted in the ghetto, with its repetitive references to the difficult conditions of life there, have also been seen as artificial and out of place when translated into Dutch society. The high indexes of criminality and murder in the United States during the 1980s and 1990s cannot be compared at all with the very low levels of serious criminality in the Netherlands during the same years. Moreover, in cities such as Amsterdam, one of most important concerns of the municipality has for a long time been the universal access to affordable housing for its inhabitants, irrespective of race, gender or social class. The state, in turn, has for years ensured a minimum level of payment to the unemployed. Consequently, for a long time the idea that Dutch youth could justifiably identify their circumstances with the conditions of a US ghetto was seen as highly improbable.²

At the same time, hip hop has also been considered as an easy target for mockery and stereotyping. Parody of hip hop is easily done. The Dutch rapper Brainpower pointed to this tendency, noting in one interview that when people who are not really into hip hop hear that he is a rapper, they inevitably say ‘yo, yo’, moving their hands in front of them in a gesture mimicking the ‘scratchy’ technique of a hip hop DJ.³



Brainpower showing the stereotype ‘Yo, Yo’ in the television programme ‘Weltevreden op 10’ in ‘Percy’s place’, in the Bijlmer.

¹ Thomas Heerma van Voss, ‘Hoe de Nederlandse Hip Hop Volwassen Werd’, *State Magazine* (Hilversum, 2 December 2013).

² Adam Krims, ‘Rap, Race, the Local,’ and Urban Geography in Amsterdam’, *Critical Studies*, 2002, pp. 165–79 (pp. 170–171).

³ Interview with Brainpower in ‘Percy’s Place’, broadcast on 9 June. ‘Weltevreden Op 10’ (The Netherlands: NTVF, 2004).

Nevertheless, and since the interest in hip hop seems to be persistent, it may be time to reconsider some of the above-mentioned generalizations which assume that hip hop does not accord with the reality of Dutch society. In fact, hip hop seems to have become a very natural music environment for a large sector of native Dutch youth. Some of the younger hip hop artists today have never known a period without it. Also, in the meantime, hip hop has created a more professional infrastructure. Kees de Koning (born in 1971), who was only 15 years old when he saw the first hip hop performance of the Beastie Boys in Edenhof in Amsterdam in 1987, has become one of the key people in this professionalization of hip hop artists. The results are visible in the success of De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig and The Opposites, among others.

Concerning external socioeconomic factors, it can also be said that in the meantime the great social differences between the United States and the Netherlands may have become less obvious. Although Amsterdam still has a very low incidence of common criminality and its inhabitants still have an assurance that their basic needs will be covered, the differences between various inhabitants of the city seem to have increased, along with their relative chances for a prosperous life. With respect to the ghetto feeling, for example, it would be difficult today to deny that some areas of Amsterdam are actually formally called '*achterstandswijken*' ('disadvantaged neighbourhoods').⁴ While these areas have a large concentration of immigrants, they still do not suffer from an excessive amount of violent crime, although they do have a concentration of ghetto-like features such as low economic and educational level and a high level of unemployment.⁵ Also, there is little doubt that the second generation of immigrants would have been marked by a feeling of isolation from mainstream society, or living in-between two worlds.⁶ The emergence of hip hop from these areas may demonstrate that it is considered a way of expressing 'ghetto' feelings.

⁴ These districts are also known as '*probleemwijken*' and since 2007 as '*Vogelaarwijken*', referring to Minister Vogelaar, who composed a list of 40 secondary school books which include the topic, for example: W.B. Brinke and others., 'De Vernieuwing in Overtoomse Veld', in *De Geo. Lesboek 2 VWO* (Amersfoort: Thieme Meulenhoff, 2009), pp. 36–37. Nevertheless in this book it is also stated that many people feel good and safe living in the area.

⁵ For example, the first sentences of the abstract to the Social and Cultural Planning Bureau's 2001 report on ethnic minorities, Integration and schooling make this extremely clear. They begin with an explicit reference to African-American ghettos (Tesser and Idema, 2001): 'There's a wide range of opinions on the position of minorities. Some people think that the integration of minorities has failed and that an ethnic underclass has been created similar to the Afro-American ghetto population.' ('Over de positie van de minderheden wordt zeer verschillend geoordeeld. Sommige menen dat de integratie van de minderheden is mislukt en dat er een etnische onderklasse ontstaat naar het voorbeeld van de zwarte Amerikaanse gettobevolking.') In Bowen Paille, 'On Comparing a "Black" and a "Zwarte" School: Towards Relevant Concepts and Illuminating Questions', *Intercultural Education*, 13 (2002), 7–19 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14675980120112904>> Footnote 1. This will be further discussed in Chapter 8, What is someone like you doing in a place like this?

⁶ The topic seemed especially relevant in the context of cultural and social-work education at The Hogeschool van Amsterdam in which the lectures of Heshmat Manesh were given. Students and lecturers in such disciplines were thought to be or about to

In addition to the interpretations of hip hop as a mirror of real life in the ghetto, it seems that during recent years the style of hip hop has been increasingly freed from overly literal interpretations. In this sense some authors see hip hop as a metaphor of postmodernism.⁷ The process of sampling and remixing would refer to what Bernard Schütze calls a 'remix culture', that is, 'an umbrella term which covers a wide array of creative stances and initiatives' based on mixing, reusing, bastardizing and recycling. In the remix culture, references should be taken less literally than those used in the 'modern era'.⁸ Also, hip hop experts have repeatedly argued that the hip hop scenes of gangsta life are not always meant to be interpreted literally. Seen from this perspective, it is clear that many of the MTV video clips to which I alluded had in fact become a fictional genre in themselves, very close to filmography, full of references not only to older musical texts converted into samples for the hip hop beats, but also to other films and even to advertorials for cars, fashion, gaming, etc. Moreover, remixing, so inherent to the nature of the work of hip hop DJs, has even passed beyond the boundaries of the music video and become emblematic of the work of postmodernist full-length filmmakers such as Tarantino.⁹

In a similar way, the conception of 'hood' that originally seemed to merely apply to the concrete ghetto environment of the original artists has also acquired a more figurative sense. Put briefly, the 'hood' feeling might even be applied to a whole country or even an imaginary place. The feeling of hood can also refer to the intimate world of the emotions of youth: the development of feelings of belonging, or the personal experiences of the artist. In this way, according to Adam Krims, hip hop artists become a voice of the neighbourhood, connecting with others through the authenticity of their feelings. For him a 'hood' should be understood as the essential grounding of a rapper in a specific community, whether this occurs through a shared referential language or through a feeling of binding and 'rootedness'. In Krims' words, in hip hop the artist can be seen as a 'neighbourhood organic intellectual that lies at the heart of an internationalized hip-hop cultural ethos'.¹⁰

become professionally involved in areas where the majority immigrant population would have an 'in-between' sense of belonging. Sharog Heshmat Manesh, 'Book Presentation: Mijn Wereld in Amsterdam' (Amsterdam: Hogeschool van Amsterdam, 2009).

⁷Michael Rennett, 'Quentin Tarantino and the Director as DJ', *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 45 (2012), 391–409.

⁸ With this, I am referring to what have been seen as the salient features of modernity and postmodernity, as discussed in the introduction of this thesis.

⁹ In this sense, his film *Pulp Fiction* can be seen as emblematic of a postmodern attitude which, according to Dana Polan, means that 'the universe is not meant to be seen as meaningful but is, to put it bluntly, simply to be seen, to be experienced', in Dana Polan, *Pulp Fiction* (London: BFI Modern Classics, 2000), p. 79.

¹⁰ Krims, p. 176.

For all these reasons it seems more than worthy to consider that hip hop today is an interesting realm to study, revealing specific images held and shared by youth, and which as such could also give us insight into matters such as sense of place and feelings of belonging in present-day Amsterdam.

Therefore, and prior to presenting an analysis of hip hop, the following section 6.2. provides a short history of the origins of hip hop and its diffusion in the Netherlands. This review also aims to shed some light on tendencies that have been attributed – and interpretations that have been given – to hip hop from its inception and the different stages of its reception, including the nature of the audiences and the different messages.

6.2. From Brooklyn to Amsterdam

Hip hop originated in the immigrant districts of Brooklyn and the Bronx in New York in the 1970s. The story is that its emergence was the consequence of the decline in the political idealism of the 1960s after the deaths of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, which had left a significant void. In this period, the economic circumstances of black and Latino Americans deteriorated visibly. The unemployment level had reached 80 percent and hard drugs made their devastating entrance into poor neighbourhoods, combined with the formation of gangs, many of them enemies.¹¹

In these circumstances, pioneers such as Afrika Bambaataa proposed a new sort of army that would replace the guns and the knives of violent gangs with other kinds of weapons. Jeff Chang reconstructs the impact of Bambaataa's initiative as follows:

[S]o here they were, Bambaataa's army – the MCs, the DJs, the graffiti writers, the b-boys and b-girls, the crews they brought and the crowds they moved. They were elemental in their creative power – four, after all, was 'the foundation number' representing air, water, earth and fire, and in another sense, the rhythm itself. What they were doing was yet to be named. However, in the cooling sunlight of a park jam or the mercury-bursting intensity from everywhere a crowd rising, the DJ excising and extending the groove, ciphers and crews burning, distinctions and discriminations dissolving, the lifeblood pulsing and spirit growing – Bambaataa took Herc's party and turned it into the ceremony of a new faith, like he knew that this was exactly how their world was supposed to look, sound and flow.

¹¹ Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (Great Britain: Ebury Publishing. The Random House Groep Limited, 2007), p. 11 . Next quotation is from p. vi, same source.

This message and its energy seemed to have been felt so strongly that even those outside the hip hop world started to become interested in this new genre. In this sense, hip hopper FAB can be seen as signalling the emergence of a new sort of artist who, due to his sensitivity and charisma, was able to reconcile the 'bourgeoning world of downtown' with the 'collecting of bootleg cassettes of the rap crews'. Downtown he partied at the Mud Club with people such as Blondie, Keith Haring and Andy Warhol. Looking back to the radical avant-gardism of the Dadaism and Futurism of the beginning of the twentieth century he found the same kind of searching spirit in graffiti. 'To me, [he would say] it was like, wait a minute, this shit is a lot like what graffiti is'. This awareness gave him the inspiration to look at hip hop as a holistic form of artistic expression.¹²

Also of essential importance seems to be the understanding of the kind of black position that hip hop was willing to occupy and claim. In this sense, hip hop distanced itself from the 'folksy' black spirit of earlier musical styles, proposing as an alternative a life based on independent self-expression. In this respect, the following words are significant: 'We are not folks. If blues had grown under the idea of oppression by working, hip hop had grown by the idea of not work'. The latter also implies that hip hop creates a sort of self-sufficient world in which perspectives based on one's own values and works become dependent solely on skills acquired by personal effort and motivation, and can only be assessed by experts and insiders who know the codes.

In retrospect it is easy to understand that the enormous diffusion and interest in hip hop had to do with this capacity for empowering, not only in relation to social matters but also in relation to personal achievement. Moreover, and as FAB had already foreseen, its multimedia character, based on the combination of different forms of expression, such as music-making, sampling, mixing, writing, rapping, drawing and dancing, acted to amplify each other. The mediagenic power of the combination of the different hip hop elements, its hybridism, humour and complexity, as well as its potential to be simplified and commercialized as a mainstream experience have undoubtedly contributed to the extension and adoption of hip hop practices around the world, becoming one of the most visible urban cultures of the last three decades.¹³

¹² He expressed his thoughts about in this way: 'I once read somewhere that for a culture to really be a complete culture, it should have a music, a dance and a visual art. And then I realized, wow, all those things are going on. You got the graffiti happening over here, you got the breakdancing, and you got the DJ and MC-ing thing. In my head, they were all one thing'. Chang, pp. 148–149. Next following quotation is from p. 13, same source.

¹³ According to hip hop lovers such as Heerma van Voss and Venz. It is also worth noting however that as a mainstream product the quality of hip hop is not guaranteed. According to Salaam Mtumee, while originality was one of the most important prerequisites of independent label hip hop artists such as Too Short, Ice-T and N.W.A., mainstream hip hop followed the logic of

When translated into European cities such as Amsterdam one can add without hesitation that most young people in today's Amsterdam have grown up listening to music influenced by the sampling of hip hop, whether of good or bad quality, and that some of them have been especially caught up in hip hop as a way of life. The general adoption of hip hop among the youth in Amsterdam, and the Netherlands generally, did not occur all at once but in different stages. In the first stage, around the beginning of the 1980s, hip hop was primarily adopted as a street culture, which mainly attracted the children of immigrants, the *'allochtone jongeren'*.

In fact, hip hop in the Netherlands quickly manifested itself as problematizing a so-called tolerant and racially 'unmarked' Dutch society. One of the few white experts on hip hop who has supported this problematization from the beginning is music journalist and writer Saul van Stapele, who has repeatedly argued that the relationship between race and denunciatory rap is not 'only something for the United States' but is in many cases also factually justified in the Netherlands. In one of the interviews in 'Hiphopleeft', van Stapele remarked that environments such as his journalistic office at the newspaper *NRC* had always been characterized by their 'whiteness': 'In the worlds I have seen, being white was often advantageous to one's career opportunities. My upbringing has helped me to recognise this instead of considering it to be normal.'¹⁴ In his book, *From Brookling to Breukelen*, he quotes a rap by black Dutch rappers formation E-life and Postmen in this respect: 'I wanna see more black reporters, | more black people giving orders ...'¹⁵

Stapele also reproduces the following excerpt from an interview with the same rappers:

'I am a rebel. It's an illness for which there's no medicine. I say things nobody wants to hear, even if that means I won't be played on TMF anymore or the media boycotts me. I'm not going to play the role of 'happy nigga'. I know that, as a musician, I can contribute to a new society. If necessary, everything needs to be broken down in order to construct something healthier. Everyone acts like it's such a paradise here, for many *allochtonen* the Netherlands is a cold, complicated country where there is no place for them. It's just crazy: millions are being spent on constructing huge, beautiful new buildings in the city, but the

the best-seller and keeps repeating what sells. Mtume ya Salaam, 'The Aesthetics of Rap', *African American Review*, 29 (2012), 303–15 (p. 305).

¹⁴ 'In de werelden die ik heb gezien was het vaak een voordeel om blank te zijn om carrière te maken. Mijn opvoeding heeft mij erbij geholpen om dat in te zien, in plaats van het normaal te vinden.' Timo Koren, 'Het Verhaal Van... Saul van Stapele', *hiphopleeft*, 2012 <<http://hiphopleeft.nl/het-verhaal-van-saul-van-stapele/>>.

¹⁵ Saul van Stapele, *Van Brooklyn Naar Breukelen. 20 Jaar Hiphop in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Nationaal Pop Instituut, 2002), p. 13.

government can't even reach a large share of the people who live in the cities anymore.' A quote from rapper/producer The Anonymous Mis of the Rotterdam rap group Postmen.

Clearly The Anonymous Mis sees his work as a hip hopper as contributing to the creation of a 'new society', a society in which black people would not feel compelled to play fixed roles such as the 'happy nigga' to be liked by whites. In this sense, Dutch hip hop does appear to facilitate a process of empowerment that was earlier initiated in the United States.¹⁶

Later on, and according to Stapele, the 'fuck off' mentality of hip hop also became contagious in the Netherlands, where white youth gradually started to become interested in the genre. At the time of the emergence of the famous American group Public Enemy, hip hop had visibly broadened its audience not only to white youth who were interested in hip hop, but also to those who until that time had considered themselves lovers of other genres. At that time, even hard rockers started to wear Public Enemy t-shirts.¹⁷

Nevertheless, and paradoxically, it seems that it was precisely the performance of Public Enemy on 5 November 1987 in Amsterdam that began a new race schism among a potentially emerging broader hip hop audience. It seems that Public Enemy gave a new impetus to black awareness, and at the specific performance at Jaap Edenhal, white boys were not well treated by part of the black audience:

Things were out of control at the entrance, with white kids from the provinces running into rude-boys who were waiting to steal their tickets from them. Suddenly colour became an issue. When house started to come up at the end of the eighties, many white guys made the move to that scene. I think that hip hop in the Netherlands could have been much bigger by then if that aggressive atmosphere hadn't put so many people off.

From that moment on the expressions of hip hop in the Netherlands would again become associated with 'black'¹⁸ youth, until the emergence of the group Osdorp Posse in 1989, which as well as consisting

¹⁶ As Jeff Chang noted in his exhaustive and detailed book on hip hop, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*, hip hop culture was truly contributing to a change of the paradigm of white racial supremacy. Hip hop offered an urban, post white, poly cultural (instead of multicultural) option, and Wittma's work *Bomb the Suburbs* was its manifesto. See the famous words 'Bomb the Suburbs means let's celebrate the city. Let's celebrate the ghetto and the few people who aren't running away from it.' In: William Upski Wimsatt, *Bomb the Suburbs* (Berkeley: Publishers Group West, 2008), p. 11 [First edition 1994].

¹⁷ This and following quotation are from van Stapele, *Van Brooklyn Naar Breukelen. 20 Jaar Hiphop in Nederland*, pp. 22–23.

¹⁸ Works such as Stapele's 'Van Brooklyn naar Breukelen' clarify that in the Netherlands the term 'zwart' ('black') is not merely used to refer to the colour of one's skin but also as a denomination for any 'allochtoon' (understood as 'coloured' immigrant). In: van Stapele, *Van Brooklyn Naar Breukelen. 20 Jaar Hiphop in Nederland*, pp. 10–17. The term is confusing. Currently, it is still a common adjective used to distinguish sorts of schools, for example, by alluding to the colour of their students: 'zwarte en witte scholen'. Paille. See also: Saul van Stapele, 'Kleurenziend', *Current Affairs, Lebowski Publishers* (Amsterdam, 26 March 2014) <<https://medium.com/nonfictie-current-affairs/saul-van-stapele-a0d8a3c3184e>>.

of white rappers was also the first well-known rap group in Amsterdam using Dutch as a hip hop language. In this sense Osdorp Posse marked the start of Dutch hip hop, or 'Nederhop', in which one can see what Adam Krims would describe as a new conception of the crucial term 'representativeness'. If, until that moment, the representativeness of hip hop in the Netherlands was seen in terms of its similarity with the reality in the United States (raps in English about the same kinds of situations in disadvantaged neighbourhoods), the use of Dutch and the references to the local sense of place would lead to the conception of representativeness based on a relatedness to the 'hood', the artist's own locality, their own reality and their own people.¹⁹ The frame was America, the substance Dutch.

Moreover, that the feeling of neighbourhood does not necessarily need to be identified with an existing district or specific city is testified to by examples such as 'Roffadam' in the 1980s, referring to the Rotterdam of the 'up tempo' hip hop by The Moonrunners, Supersonic Cru, TC Boys, DCO and Dope Syndicate,²⁰ as a city with an imagined dimension. More recently, the emergence of internet media such as YouTube in 2006 enabled the same artists to share videos of their performances with a broader audience, increasing the transboundary spread and exchange of local music that already shared similar characteristics.²¹ In the same way, rappers and producers continued working together in different forms, uniting a large array of cities in the Netherlands. A successful example was the Buitenwesten tour in 2006 with artists Stick, Jawat and Kubus, among others, that was sold out in every city.²²

Despite this visible expansion of hip hop into the Dutch youth music scene, studies such as that by Kooijman show that the mainstream acceptance of the genre is closely related to the meaning of its message and the way it is seen as a legitimate reference to a shared reality. The enormous popularity in the mainstream media of tracks such as 'Het Land Van' by Lange Frans and Baas. B. shows the increasing general interest in reflecting on values and Dutch identity and the ability of rap to (con)textualize feelings of belonging to a broader audience, with references to winning football championships or

¹⁹ Krims.

²⁰ *Smoelwerk. The Ontwikkeling van Hip Hop in Nederland 1999-2009.*, ed. by Dave Vanderheijden (De Boekfabriek), p. 11.

²¹ On the influence of YouTube on music: Simon Reynolds, *Retromania: Pop Culture's Addiction to Its Own Past* (New York: Faber and Faber, Inc., 2011). See especially chapter 2 'Total Recall. Music and Memory in the Time of YouTube', pp. 55-85.

²² Buitenwesten: 'It was really great to do, especially at the highpoint last Saturday (the last Buitenwesten in the Paradiso, editor's note). Sold out and people just going crazy. Awesome!' ('Het was heel tof om te doen, vooral het hoogtepunt van afgelopen zaterdag. (de laatste Buitenwesten in de Paradiso red. [Amsterdam]). Uitverkocht en mensen die zo uit hun dak gingen, te gek'.) In: Vanderheijden, p. 359.

national food such as *'kroketten [...]* that you can order right down to the Spanish coast' (*((d)ie je tot aan de Spaanse kust kunt bestellen*').²³

Kooijman, who has analysed the reception of 'Het Land Van', concludes that the clue to its mainstream success has been the positivity of its core message ('we love our country') and the legitimacy given to Lange Frans and Baas B. to express this message as a credible one.²⁴ This means that its potential critical voice against the Dutch contribution to the Afghanistan war or the reference to the word 'apartheid' as 'the most internationally well-known Dutch word', becomes mitigated by their final declaration of love for the Netherlands: 'The land where I was born and raised. | The land that has my heart. | This is to the Netherlands | Baas B. | Lange Frans.'²⁵

In contrast, and again according to Kooijman, the denunciatory raps of the 'Moroccan' Salah Edin, accusing Dutch society of intolerance, have not achieved the popularity and resonance of 'Het Land Van' by a long way.²⁶ In this regard, it becomes critical to see whether it is necessarily the case that the mutual attributions of a sense of belonging that would mean that a person who combines foreignness with criticism has less chance of becoming mainstream and broadly accepted.

These reflections provide food for thought about the nature of hip hop, understood as a reference to a shared reality and about its capacity to give voice to shared tribal imaginaries. The analysis conducted by Kooijman, together with the overview I have presented above, led me to consider that a study of a hip hop corpus made up of material based on different possible core messages could make sense.

Therefore, in the following pages the analysis will distinguish three main tendencies in contemporary hip hop, according to a presumed shared message:

- a. The first will refer to the idea of the ghetto and the protest nature of hip hop born in the *'achterstandswijken'*, the disadvantaged neighbourhoods of Amsterdam. The analysis will end by focusing on Bijlmer Style hip hop as a possible example of an accusative and protest hip hop that has continued to emerge over recent years.

²³ In: 'Het Land van Lange Frans En Baas B.' (Amsterdam: Walboomers, 2005). A *kroket*, plural *kroketten*, is a typically Dutch deep-fried snack.

²⁴ Jaap Kooijman, *Fabricating the Absolute Fake. America in Contemporary Pop Culture* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), p. 130.

²⁵ 'Het land waar ik geboren en getogen ben. | Het land waar ik mijn hart aan heb verpaid. | Dit is voor Nederland | Baas B. | Lange Frans.' In: Lange Frans and Baas B.

²⁶ Kooijman, p. 130. See also: *Salah Edin - Het Land Van...* (The Netherlands: TopNotch/YouTube, 2007) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1o-2K6vUaYM>>.

- b. The second will refer to the work by hip hoppers elaborating on the topic of being ‘in-between two worlds’. In these works, artists reflect on antagonisms such as ‘*autochtoon*’ and ‘*allochtoon*’ and deal with matters such as the feeling of being at home, adaptability, choices in life, and group bonding.
- c. The third will refer to more general feelings of coming of age and being young, mixing different registers and in some cases claiming the right to ‘just not have a message’. We could call this kind of hip hop ‘avant-garde’, alluding to its postmodern vagueness, its search for eclecticism and desire to escape fixed classifications.

Moreover, the presumption is that these three different focuses of hip hop culture will express different visions of life and senses of belonging in Amsterdam. One can also assume that such differences would be partly expressed through the specific artefacts and the physical appearance of hip hop artists.

As a way of exploring these assumptions, in Section 6.3 I will elaborate on the approach and methodology common to all the cases studied in this dissertation, adjusting them to the peculiarities of hip hop. Section 6.4 will then provide an analysis and interpretation of the array of topics that emerged from the research. Finally, in Section 6.5, I will present a number of conclusions concerning hip hop and its possible role as a catalyst of ‘images’ of the city of Amsterdam over recent years.

6.3. Methods and approach

For the specific analysis of material related to hip hop, it was particularly important to set some limits: the goal of this chapter could not be the achievement of an all-encompassing, profuse and monolithic understanding of hip hop as a genre, but rather the identification of signposts that could enable me to depict a possible mapping of feelings of belonging and sense of place in Amsterdam, as expressed through hip hop. In this respect, one of the first characteristics that appeared was that although hip hop understands itself as coded language par excellence, it is also understood as a carrier of stories.²⁷

²⁷ This is possible because, as the rapper and activist Typhoon from Zwolle often says: ‘rap is not about words but about the stories that words carry, about the flow, about the knowledge and insights we all develop and acquire during our lives’. Paraphrased from interview with Typhoon in: Lex Bohlmeijer, ‘Podcast: Voor Typhoon Is Rap Een Spons Waarmee Je Het Leven Opzuigt’ (Amsterdam: De Correspondent, 2014) <<https://decorrespondent.nl/966/Podcast-Voor-Typhoon-is-rap-een-spons-waarmee-je-het-leven-opzuigt/40042051434-fac2b1e2>>.

Therefore, I have attempted to focus my attention on general patterns related to the understanding of hip hop 'stories'.

Following the general methodology of this dissertation, I started to collect first-hand material that in this specific case was publically available on the internet in the form of videos of performances by different artists and the comments that posters left on different hip hop forums and on YouTube. At the same time, I collected the programmes of hip hop events and performances at different live music venues such as Paradiso, Melkweg and Bitterzoet and special events at discos and cafés such as the hip hop evening at Jimmy Woo. Furthermore, I collected the programmes of annual music festivals, some of them especially created to offer hip hop a podium in the city, such as Appelsap at Oosterpark.

A simultaneous search using the terms 'hip hop' and 'website' led to important signposts along the way. One example is the following comment posted on the website 'Hiphopleeft': 'Another good development for hip hop are the TV/radio shows of Ali B and Lange Frans. It is through them that a different audience other than the puna/state/hiphopleeft/funkimag crowd comes into contact with rap artists.'²⁸ This not only refers to an array of indispensable sites for any hip hop lover in the Netherlands, that is to say – Puna.nl, Statemagazine.nl, Hiphopleeft.nl, Funkimag.nl, but also a relevant allusion to the status of artists who have enhanced their audiences outside the hip hop 'community'.

Furthermore, it was also interesting to map the peculiarities and differences among the above-mentioned hip hop sites. Most are accessed to provide and receive opinions or announcements of releases and performances, including short interviews and breaking news. In this sense the rather long and deep articles and interviews on 'Hiphopleeft' stood out and became a complementary source of information, in addition to the radio and television broadcasts on hip hop by VPRO and later BNN, including programmes such as *3voor12*. For hip hop Op Lijn5 and FunX, the radio programme by Venz and Jiggy Djé, *Wat Anders*, stood out. Other indispensable sources include documentaries on Dutch hip hop such as Stolker's, *Smoelwerk - De ontwikkeling van hiphop in Nederland 1999 – 2009*,²⁹ which provides insight into the period in which, according to the makers, hip hop became more professional in the Netherlands.

²⁸ Comments on Randall Spann, 'In Het Land Der Platenlabels Is Kees de Koning', *hiphopleeft*, 2011 <<http://hiphopleeft.nl/in-het-land-der-platenlabels-is-kees-de-koning/>>.

²⁹ Danny Stolker, *Smoelwerk - De Ontwikkeling van Hiphop in Nederland 1999-2009* (The Netherlands: Holland Doc, 2009) <<http://www.documentaire.net.nl/review/smoelwerk-de-ontwikkeling-van-hiphop-in-nederland-1999-2009/>>.

An additional group of sources was tracked from the newspaper *NRC* (music), in which journalist Saul van Stapele has published a large number of articles on hip hop that could help in gaining an understanding of the codes and meanings of the genre. The novel *White Panthers* also by Saul van Stapele, set in Amsterdam-Southeast, was also worth taking into account as an introduction to the topic of the selfish interest that journalists have in hip hop. Such journalists are only interested in selling new ‘urban stories’. Furthermore, looking at hip hop as a mean of expression for minorities in underprivileged districts, leading to the work of hip hoppers in Rotterdam and Amsterdam, including styles such as the Bijlmer Style, also helped to contextualize the possible influence of rappers such as Tupac and the meaning and reception of poems such as ‘The rose that grew from concrete’.³⁰ In this context, following up on the work of rapper Gikkels led to unexpected new insights, such as his participation in the local political elections in Amsterdam-Southeast as a candidate for the Bijlmer Style political party. Attendance at a book presentation, which included a performance by Abdelaziz Ajaarouj, a student, rapper and poet, led me to track down a number of local activities in social housing and civil initiatives such as the award for the best rapper.³¹ In addition, I also collected material used in workshops in Amsterdam concerning topics such as discrimination and empowerment of minorities that could provide some additional insight into topics such as the sense of belonging ‘in-between two worlds’.

Furthermore, published interviews related to the hip hop label TopNotch, which is practically the only professional hip hop label in the Netherlands, and definitely in Amsterdam, helped to understand the scale of the commercialization of hip hop. That TopNotch boss, Kees de Koning, is also called ‘the King of hip hop’ for his almost unique role in producing hip hop, led me again to the topic of the possibilities and difficulties of professionalizing hip hop life in Amsterdam and the Netherlands.³²

Websites such as 22tracks, inspired by an old juke box, were a good way of listening to a selection of hip hop made by experts in the genre. Also, websites such as ‘Naalden.nl’ provided particular insight into items that could be related to hip hop aesthetics, including specific brands. Some articles in magazines such as *Overdosis* were also very useful for understanding some changes in the aesthetics of hip hop,

³⁰ Tupac Shakur, *The Rose That Grew from Concrete* (Amaru Interscope, 2000).

³¹ Performance during the already mentioned book presentation *Mijn wereld in Amsterdam* at the Hogeschool van Amsterdam. Dichter Abdelaziz Ajaarouj: *Mijn Wereld in Amsterdam* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2009) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1LifW1goBY>>.

³² De Koning was the producer of ‘not only the acts of Raymzter, Opgezwolle and De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig but also the “butt freak” rapclown Def Rhymz with his “Doekoe” from 1999’. See ‘10 Jaar Nederhoplabel TopNotch’, *3voor12 VPRO*, 2005 <<http://3voor12.vpro.nl/nieuws/2005/oktober/10-jaar-nederhoplabel-topnotch.html>>.

while links to feminine hip hoppers in the United States led to concepts such as the ‘new ghetto girl’.³³ In all searches, the use of the online urban dictionary (to check words), the articles on Wikipedia (to check artists and albums) and YouTube videos and ‘*uitzending gemist*’ (‘missed broadcasts’) (to see performances) have been great tools for exploration and compilation.

During the entire compilation process it became clear that the spread of hip hop in the Djing form (the art of DJ and mixing) had been very important, with the emergence of artists such as Chick, Dirty Dutch and producer Afrojack. This the electronic dance music has been internationally acknowledged and has become associated with the ‘brand’ of Amsterdam. However, electro music as such remains outside the scope of this study, not only because of clear limitations in time and space, but primarily because – although it can incorporate rap – it is not exclusively based on the textual expression of hip hop which characterizes rap and informs the textual analysis proposed on these pages.

In this way, I was able to obtain basic insights into the way that hip hop could capture images of city life shared by specific people. These insights were as follows:

- Hip hop culture is especially rich in mutual cross-references and explicit allusions to others, creating an intertextual cohesion for the genre.
- The nature of hip hop makes it highly suitable for fusion with other genres, to the point of eclecticism.
- Hip hoppers may take different artistic names according to the style they are adopting or to the message that they are trying to get across.
- Hip hop reframed Dutch situations by articulating them through an attitude rooted in the American experience of racial exclusion.
- At the same time the moral emphasis placed by many hip hop artists on social values such as tolerance and inclusivity plays into a specifically Dutch auto-image.
- A rap is always a creation of an artist interpreting the world, this means that a rapper is also a kind of ‘songwriter’.
- A rap is also meant to have a message and has references to the personal, emotional, social and economic life of the rapper.

³³ ‘She is smart and beautiful and has no need to use stilettos to underline her power’. Definition of an ‘Around the way girl’ on blog Agathakubalski, ‘Around the Way Girl’, *agathakubalski.com*, 2011 <<http://agathakubalski.com/2011/05/18/around-the-way-girl/>>.

- A rap can also be seen as a part of a conversation with others and may have a controversial character. Raps may be used to disqualify other rappers.
- Raps also provide comments and are responses to breaking news and current events.
- Taken as 'literary creations', raps will necessarily have the potential to be analysed in the context of reception.

Furthermore, the material consisting of texts written by the 'audiences', whether in the form of a post on a YouTube video or as a professional hip hop journalist, for example, provided further insight into topics that were often mentioned, such as:

- The commercialization of hip hop (its dangers, its advantages, etc.).
- The value and role of hip hop in people's lives (identification, empathy, rejection, etc.).
- The matching criteria between a specific work and the sort of audience connected to it.
- The ways of measuring success (number of views, cooperation links between artists, level of creativity and originality, etc.).
- The role of connectors and translators in spreading hip hop to broader audiences.

6.4. Hip hop and Amsterdam

The first issue that seemed crucial to analyse was the meaning that hip hop artists and their audiences attribute to hip hop. The example of rapper The Anonymous Mis, demanding more 'black reporters, more black people giving orders', as mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, pointed to a sort of hip hop that was in line with the social and political involvement of Public Enemy and black awareness. For them, hip hop was primarily a tool to disseminate a message of emancipation and a proposal for a new society. These rappers were critical of the commercialization of hip hop that had derived from the extreme diffusion of the gangsta style, which they interpreted as a new misuse of blackness for the sake of commercialization and catering to white audiences.

The 'protest' raps of the student Abdelaziz Ajaarouj, heard during the mentioned book presentation at the Hogeschool van Amsterdam, were undoubtedly in line with this tradition. Ajaarouj emphasized the gap between the two worlds: the 'we' versus the 'you' society, the 'natives' against the 'immigrants'. A society that, in his words, 'had appropriated to itself the right to point at his back', the right of the media that 'spirited him away', and only paid attention to him 'to put him in a bad light'. He ended with the

words ‘it is sad’, ‘and why are we always the ones who lose?’³⁴ Gradually, the material collected was giving clear hints that suggested the importance of local hip hop, emanating from neighbourhoods such as the Kanaleneiland in Utrecht where Ajaarouj had grown up. In the Amsterdam area of the Bijlmer this could be seen, for example, in ‘Bijlmer Style’ hip hop.

However, at the same time, it was also clear that not all hip hop in Amsterdam seemed to identify with an explicit social and political message. Pepijn Lanen, one of the members of the successful hip hop group, De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig, put it this way:

It’s a reaction to an era of music in which people point the finger at others. If we, De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig, have a message at all it is that people shouldn’t nag and moan so much. At the most we are protesting against the rigid nature of authority. Why shouldn’t you be able to tint your windows, when it’s your car? These days, hip hop is the most important musical genre for kids between twelve and eighteen years. That’s going to have an effect on the language as a whole. It’s not just a few words here and there; it has its own rules, conjugations and grammar. I think that influence is going to be considerable and lasting. Young people use sentence structures taken directly from English: ‘beter ga je naar huis’ for example. It may once have started in the Bijlmer, but since then it has spread beyond the level of a subculture. Even people in tiny villages in the Achterhoek [semi-rural area in the east of the Netherlands considered remote by people in the Randstad] are speaking this language.³⁵

Lanen does not explicitly state which musical traditions enjoy nagging and pointing the finger at everybody, but a further extrapolation in the world of journalism shows that he is also addressing his criticism to what he calls ‘intellectual pomposity’. As a graduate in European Studies from the University of Amsterdam, Lanen is familiar with the world of university publications and magazines. He adds that he is also familiar with the work of other ex-students, who first started writing in the university publication *Folia*, where they learned to make lots of noise about pure banalities, the worst of all being the journalist Aaf Brandt Corstius: ‘She is champion in not saying anything’. Another intellectual pretension he dislikes is the tendency of critics to over analyse.³⁶ Specialists in the Dutch language, for example, started to note that the ‘rap’ modus of hip hop could be seen as a sort of contemporary

³⁴ *Dichter Abdelaziz Ajaarouj: Mijn Wereld in Amsterdam.*

³⁵ Daan Heerma van Voss and Daniël van der Meer, ‘Pepijn Lanen vs. Herman Pleij’, *hiphopleeft*, 2010 <<http://hiphopleeft.nl/interview-pepijn-lanen/>>.

³⁶ I am paraphrasing from the Interview: Voss and Meer.

poetry.³⁷ However, according to Lanen, the interest of these older scholars and other researchers was becoming so great that they decided to stop providing them with their lyrics, to avoid all this ‘over analysis’ and pomposity.³⁸

It must be said that Lanen does not exaggerate when he says that their work has aroused great interest in different audiences. De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig have been extremely popular over the last decade. However, significantly, while Lanen defends his right to just play with words without any hidden signification and decided to not make his lyrics readily available, in the district of the Bijlmermeer, the rapper Gikkels, in contrast, started a political party with others to draw more attention to the political message of his lyrics.³⁹ In this respect, it is striking to see how far Gikkels will go to ensure his ideas reach new audiences, even giving an interview to the sensationalist journalist Rutger Castricum. Watching this interview, it appears that Gikkels and his mate Coblijn, aiming at a major goal, let come the fact that Castricum is evidently there to ridicule the Bijlmer and probably also their initiative of creating a Bijlmer Style political party.⁴⁰ In short, while Lanen thinks that there is too much effort being put into deciphering his ‘message’, Gikkels insists on precisely explaining the political meaning of his work and the importance of literally understanding his message.

In the following paragraphs we will see that these tendencies might be in line with specific meanings attributed to urban spaces. The ghetto, the in-between world, the contemporary and somehow vague city, all seem to become references to specific imaginaries that will be interesting to look at in more depth. Furthermore, and related to these, we will also identify some actualizations of specific hip hop topics, such as violence or sexism, that have been generally related to this genre. Ultimately, and since the primary focus of this dissertation is to ‘capture imaginaries’ of Amsterdam that are especially related to students, I will end with a short analysis of the way ‘hip hop’ regards education and learning.

³⁷ Anne Sollie claims to have written her Master’s thesis on hip hop with the intention of giving it the cultural significance that it deserves. She even obtained the permission of the artists to use authorized versions for her analysis. Anne Sollie, ‘Hip Hop Holland. Een Talige Karakterisering van Nederlandstalige Rapteksten Als Genre’ (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2012).

³⁸ Voss and Meer. Op cit.

³⁹ The party was founded in 2009/2010 by Robert Coblijn and Gideon Everduim (Gikkels), collective hip hop. Job Hulsman, ‘Robert Coblijn En Gikkels: Mannen Met Een Missie’, *hiphopleeft*, 2011 <<http://hiphopleeft.nl/robert-coblijn-en-gikkels-mannen-met-een-missie/>>.

⁴⁰ *Broeder Rutger Op Bezoek Bij Bijlmer Style* (The Netherlands: Geenstijl/YouTube, 2009) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSYAt9M3lh4>>.

a. Ghetto feeling in Amsterdam

'Why are we always fighting, and does nobody draw the right conclusion.' (Osdorp Posse)⁴¹

In Amsterdam, the origin of 'Dutch' hip hop is linked to the Amsterdam group Osdorp Posse formed in the New-West neighbourhood, which as mentioned is considered to be the initiator of Dutch spoken Nederhop. Experts on the hip hop scene say that the influence of this group, which broke up in 2008, is still alive in the most hard, loud and raw stream of current hip hop. Perhaps one of their most crucial innovations was legitimizing their position as spokespersons of life in the ghetto-like neighbourhoods of Amsterdam, such as some areas of the New-West or Osdorp: 'I grew up in an ordinary working-class neighbourhood | Which was deteriorating at a rapid pace and was being mismanaged | Then we went to Osdorp which was meant to be better | Well, it wasn't much as we came to realise.'⁴²

In a society such as that in the Netherlands, internationally known for providing opportunities to everyone, being critical of 'hard life conditions' was seen by some as a pretentious joke. Music reviewers stated that the work of Osdorp Posse was not credible, and they were seen as affected poseurs: white Dutch boys flirting with ghetto imagery. In fact, these music critics seemed to revoke their right of comparing the situation in Amsterdam New-West or in Osdorp to ghettos in the United States.

Nevertheless, Osdorp Posse claimed the right to talk about street life and the inequality of opportunity in Amsterdam. In 'Ghetto'tje Spelen', the group embraced the hip hop tradition of publicly responding to what others were saying through music. They wanted to make it clear that no music reviewer had the right to decide whether someone had 'seen enough' to make ghetto music or not.

I never said, Goddammit
that Osdorp looks like a ghetto
and that there are murders here every day,
so I don't know what the fuck you're bitching about.
Do things need to end up as hopeless
as in the fucking USA?
Before everyone is allowed to rap about

⁴¹ 'Waarom hebben we altijd ruzie, en trekt niemand de juiste conclusie.' (Osdorp Posse)

⁴² 'Ik groeide op in een gewone volksbuurt | Die met sprongen achteruit ging en verkeerd werd bestuurd | Toen gingen we naar Osdorp want daar was het beter | Nou dat was weinig en dat hebben we geweten.' Osdorp Posse, 'Een Doogewone Boerenlul' (Amsterdam, 1995).

what you see and hear in the streets here in the Netherlands.⁴³

The importance of Osdorp Posse's statement lies in the transformation of the ghetto from an objective observable fact to a subjective experience. This means that, as Krims had already noted in his analysis of the term 'hood', Dutch hip hop started to find its legitimacy in shared feelings about the conditions of life without necessarily appealing literally to descriptions of US ghettos. Doubtlessly, one of the decisive catalysts for this change was Osdorp Posse's switch from English to Dutch. The story goes that the shift started as a kind of translation service for friends who were not proficient in English, but that there was also some kind of revelation following a visit by the group to the United States. This led to an awareness of the importance of the lyrics and the realization that their existing English lyrics were more like 'Sinterklaasrijmpjes',⁴⁴ referring to the simple rhymes that many Dutch people have practised since childhood when composing poems for the Sinterklaas festivities on 5 December.

In 'Afslag Osdorp'⁴⁵ they started using themes that they considered were influential in Dutch society: they introduced, for example, a criticism of those who see money and political power as a goal in life. On this basis, they proclaimed brotherhood between humans and rejected pomposity and the commercialization of fame. The following fragment of the track 'Godvoordomme' is a good example of this.

Each human life starts out neutral
 And then the parents force religion on a child
 Without them ever having asked for it
 Idiots palm religion off on you
 Saying it's part of your education
 But all it produces is madness and frustration
 And when you grow up you have to make a choice
 Lose your parents or throw away your life

The expansion of this kind of Nederhop through young people resulted in the emergence of a sort of visible street-life style. Social community centres started to see hip hop as a way of attracting youth to their facilities.

⁴³ 'Ghetto'tje Spelen' in Osdorp Posse, *Vlijmscherp*. 1993 (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2010) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n5A3bkd0AcE>>. About the boycott of the number on radio and television, see: Eyal van der Reep, 'Twintig Jaar Osdorp Posse: Afschijf', *3voor12 VPRO*, 2009 <<http://3voor12.vpro.nl/artikelen/artikel/42569516>>.

⁴⁴ In documentary by Danny Stolker.

⁴⁵ Osdorp Posse, 'Songteksten Afslag Osdorp' (Amsterdam, 1995) <<http://www.songteksten.nl/songteksten/25450/osdorp-posse/afslag-osdorp.htm>>.

It would seem that public libraries even became the best collectors of hip hop music. That they had good taste was apparent in the fact that their tapes and vinyls were often stolen.⁴⁶ In addition, institutions of vocational education such as the ROC and the Hogeschool van Amsterdam at that time started to design their brochures in graffiti style and invited rap artists to their opening parties.

However, while the use of hip hop style in marketing activities at schools can be seen as merely instrumental and inspired by the need to find ways to connect with new students, part of the student population obviously considered hip hop an authentic means of self-expression. In the Jaco Youth Centre – the so-called ‘hip hop temple’ in Amsterdam East – young rapper students wrote lyrics in which they clearly tried to describe the way they felt about the big themes of life such as the sense of belonging.⁴⁷ The rap below provides an example, with the author explaining his situation as a citizen of Amsterdam connecting with brothers from all races in other cities.

I look around me and see a world full of drama
 I see Saddam, I see Bush and Osama
 Childless mamas, and children without parents
 Things are going wrong, we need to lessen the hate
 So the children can live in a world without hate
 No war, no hunger, no bodies in the street
 No racial hatred, and no Bush talking
 In the Capitol, no nitwit for president
 Because such a war wasn't supported by this Amsterdam resident
 Who serves no master, apart from heart and soul'
 by Kimo

- **Nederhop and Dutch Muslims**

The references to Afghanistan and Bush in the raps from the Jaco Youth Centre point to the extended adoption of hip hop as a catalyst for emotions of estrangement. Youth centres such as Jaco started to become clubs for ‘immigrants’ during a time in which the assault on the twin towers in New York was marking a before and an after in the way that Arab immigrants were regarded. In Amsterdam, an additional crucial event was the death of Theo van Gogh, already referred to in Chapter 3. Theo van

⁴⁶ See ‘Digging’ in: Vanderheijden, p. 366.

⁴⁷ Katja Kreukels, ‘Hiphoptempel Versterkt de Identiteit van Jonge Rappers’, *Het Parool* (Amsterdam, July 2003). See also: Katja Kreukels, ‘Katja Kreukels’ <www.katjakreukels.nl>. The next following piece of rap comes from this same source.

Gogh was a film director, actor and columnist, who had also worked with the Somali-born writer Ayaan Hirsi Ali to produce the film *Submission*, a critique of the position of women in Islam. He was assassinated on Amsterdam's Linnaeustraat by Mohammed Bouyeri on 2 November 2004.

The emergence of forums on the internet enable us to see in what way youth and secondary school students in Amsterdam were involved in discussions of the topic. They started to express their feelings about Van Gogh's assassination on online social platforms such as '*scholieren forum*', with amateurs posting contributions for or against the murder in 'rap form'.⁴⁸ Later, with the surfacing of the political party the PVV, the diss raps addressed to its leader, the anti-Islam politician Geert Wilders, were posted on YouTube, causing a similar avalanche of comments, often with insults delimiting two clear extremes in opinion. At the same time, others, either '*autochtonen*' or '*allochtonen*' or a 'mix of both', pleaded for reconciliation:

This hatred between dutch people and allochtonen is really starting to fckng annoy me, i am partly dutch and partly foreign so where the hell do I belong? nowhere because we just need to work together and show that fucking geert wilders that multi-culturalism can work.⁴⁹

Although some of the posters observed that the quality of the raps left much to be desired, alluding again to the childish '*Sinterklaas*' rhymes,⁵⁰ the use of raps as a means of expression filled a need. Here and there, it is apparent that this specific theme in hip hop has an international character, as a chain that binds children of immigrants, in opposition to public detractors of Islam.⁵¹ In this sense, hip hop is used as a channel to comment on the world. According to Miriam Gazzah, who has studied an array of closed hip hop sharing sites, much hip hop of this sort does not have the intention of breaking 'into the mainstream music industry and obtain[ing] official record files'. Its charm and its function is to give voice to personal feelings of 'frustration, anger, or powerlessness' distributed through closed 'peer to peer file-sharing sites ... such as Kazaa or Lime Wire'.⁵²

⁴⁸ Forum, 'Rap over van Gogh (+Fortuyn) [Archief]', *Scholieren.com forum*, 2004, pp. 2–11 <<http://forum.scholieren.com/archive/index.php/t-1001814.html>>.

⁴⁹ Comments under 'Wilders diss' on YouTube. Retrieved from: *Scheme015 Ft. Flex, N.A.G, DoGy, Skitzo, Nektar - Wilders Diss* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2008) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpV-_MX88ww>.

Described as the most recent 'Geert Wilders diss': *Scheme015 Ft. Flex, N.A.G, DoGy, Skitzo, Nektar - Wilders Diss*.

⁵⁰ A variation of this expression is 'Fristi rhymes', referring to the name of a popular yogurt drink for children in The Netherlands.

⁵¹ 'Onderwerp: Rapper Samir B. Krijgt 9 Maanden Cel Voor Bedreigen van Dewinter' (Maroc.nl, 2010)

<<http://www.maroc.nl/forums/nieuws-de-dag/296902-rapper-samir-b-krijgt-9-maanden-cel-voor-bedreigen-dewinter.html>>.

⁵² Miriam Gazzah, *Rhythms and Rhymes of Life. Music and Identification Processes of Dutch-Moroccan Youth* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), pp. 210, 129–229.

Around the same time, the rapper Salah Edin took on the appearance of a ‘terrorist’ as a symbol of his fight against Islamophobia and American Imperialism. As Martijn de Koning remarks in his studies of Edin’s work, ‘this appropriation of the negative stereotypes’ is a manner of problematizing the dominating images of Muslims and Islam in Dutch society. It was also an attempt to ‘push the boundaries of what is permissible’, which places Salah Edin within the tradition of controversial rappers.⁵³ In this sense the image of him as a terrorist on his debut album *Salah Edin Nederlands Grootste Nachtmerrie* (2007) became very well-known, all the more since Geert Wilders used the picture in his anti-Islam film *Fitna* (2008), ‘pretending that Salah Edin was Mohammed B., the assassin of Theo van Gogh’ (or ignoring that he was not).⁵⁴ The video of the track ‘Het Land Van’, included on the album, dramatizes a story of injustices in the Netherlands against Arabic people, contrasting scenes of daily humiliation undergone by members of the Arabic population (such as preventive searches on the streets) with placid images of white Dutch families laughing and enjoying a meal in a comfortable house.



‘Salah Edin. Nederlands Grootste Nachtmerrie’ (Amsterdam: TopNotch, 2007)
 <<https://tnfeeds.wordpress.com/2012/01/10/salah-edin-nederlands-grootste-nachtmerrie/>>.

Fiction or not, these hyperbolic narratives seem to be anchored in a very concrete passage of moments in the life stories of the children of immigrants. In an interview on ‘Hiphopleeft’, Salah Edin refers to one of these. As a child in the city of Alphen aan den Rijn, he explains, he had never questioned the fact that

⁵³ Martijn de Koning, ‘Het Land van Salah Edin’, *International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM)* (Leiden, 24 May 2007) <<http://www.kennislink.nl/publicaties/het-land-van-salah-edin>>.

⁵⁴ Daan Heerma van Voss and Daniël van der Meer, ‘Salah Edin vs. Halleh Ghorashi’, *hiphopleeft* (Amsterdam, 2010) <<http://hiphopleeft.nl/salah-edin-vs-halleh-ghorashi/>>.

Also interview on television programme Paul & Witteman the day after the release of Geert Wilders’ movie *Fitna*. *Salah Edin P&W INTERVIEW* (The Netherlands: Salah Edin/YouTube, 2011) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qm-Co3OZOa8>>.

he was as Dutch as anyone else, but on turning 12 he started to realize that white Dutch people did not see him as such.⁵⁵ The complicated denominations of Moroccan Dutch and all these differentiations annoyed him. He also thought that when he described these difficulties people would recognize that he was right and would feel some 'guilt' or at least show some understanding, but instead his raps were silenced by the official channels. He also noticed that when he was abroad his criticism of the system was not a problem at all – in fact, he felt that he was listened to more abroad – so he decided to focus his professional career outside the Netherlands where he started to feel more at home.

Edin's 'Het Land Van' has to be understood as a paraphrase and retort to the 'Het Land Van' by Lange Frans and Baas B. (mentioned above). In Edin's version, the references to the Netherlands do not contain the endearing Dutch symbols such as 'football' and 'croquettes', but words such as 'hypocrisy', 'intolerance' and 'discrimination'. In the end, one of the interesting points is the self-reinforcing power of the controversy it created; a controversy that is clearly visible in posters' comments on his video 'Het Land Van' on YouTube. The central argument from the perspective of the 'native' position is that foreigners never say anything positive about the country so it would be better for them to just leave: 'Why don't you just leave? If you don't like the vibe at a party you just leave, right? Just look for a country that you think is better. Or maybe the Netherlands isn't so bad after all?'⁵⁶

The answer in the following comment highlights the issue, since in the end Edin's problem is that he doesn't feel free to express his opinions or his experience of discrimination and that the only thing that 'local natives' keep repeating is that he can leave whenever he wants to. The following poster proposed a solution: 'Why shouldn't we all try to make this country better together? Your reaction, saying "Well, just go back then", is exactly what Salah was talking about.'

However, perhaps one of the major aspects of the problem is that not everybody seems to think that rap is a good way of becoming a respected Dutch citizen. As one of the posters notes: 'Why do all those Moroccans always rap, let them go to the desert to rap'.

In fact, what is clear is that the internal discourse of denunciatory hip hop strengthens and reinforces the construction of antagonist auto-images and hetero-images. It is also clear that the use of negative meta-images as a way of catalysing protests and making one's point do not readily challenge the

⁵⁵ Heerma van Voss and van der Meer, 'Salah Edin vs. Halleh Ghorashi.'

⁵⁶ In *Salah Edin - Het Land Van...* The two following quotations are from this same source.

understanding of posters such as the one above, who already think that rap is not something worthwhile.

- **Stigmatized neighbourhoods**

One of the interesting consequences of what has been said so far about feelings of discrimination is that they create a mechanism of contrapositions at different levels. In this paragraph I will especially look at the manifestations of mechanisms of stigmatization and auto-defence, taking as a starting point the notion that they become most evident and visible when related to a specific place. This is because people who live in an 'underprivileged area' may complain about the situation (or denounce it) while at the same time generally disliking outsiders referring to their neighbourhood as a 'bad area'.

The case of the Bijlmermeer helps explain this more clearly: the neighbourhood was built in the late 1950s in the southeast of Amsterdam, designed to meet the expectations of a large population increase. The conventional explanation was that the modern apartments were needed to house Amsterdam's middle-class population who were moving from the city centre to escape the deteriorating old inner-city buildings for housing that was more comfortable. According to the perceptions of the time, the area was also planned with spacious parks and with connections by car and train that would transport the new inhabitants to their work places in offices in the vicinity of motorways and transport nodes.⁵⁷

However, as is well known, the story went quite differently. Not only did the population not increase as had been foreseen, the locals who moved from the centre opted for other areas such as Purmerend and Almere, with low-rise housing and their own gardens. Very soon there were big problems in finding occupants for the housing in the Bijlmermeer. In the late 1970s, the area became the place where naturalized immigrants from the old colonies in Suriname and the Antilles settled, and later for other immigration flows, principally from Africa. In this way, as has been the case in other European cities, Amsterdam started to develop specific districts with specific 'ethnicities'.⁵⁸ The Bijlmer became the

⁵⁷ The case Bijlmermeer is extensively documented in works such as: Gerben Helleman and Frank Wassenberg, 'The Renewal of What Was Tomorrow's Idealistic City. Amsterdam's Bijlmermeer High-Rise', *Cities*, 21 (2004), 3–17 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2003.10.011>>; Frank Wassenberg, 'Demolition in the Bijlmermeer: Lessons from Transforming a Large Housing Estate', *Building Research & Information*, 39 (2011), 363–79 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09613218.2011.585104>>.

⁵⁸ Susan Fainstein remarks that in Amsterdam the circumstances explaining the origin of spatial segregation in neighbourhoods such as the Bijlmer do 'not fully capture the reasons for its persistence'. In this respect, she also quotes Oostindie, who stated that from the 1970s 'the steps from curiosity to racial discrimination, via xenophobia and resentment, sometimes seemed to have been taken all too quickly'. Gert Oostindie, 'Caribbean Migration to the Netherlands: A Journey to Disappointment?', in *Lost Illusions: Caribbean Minorities in Britain and The Netherlands*, ed. by I. M. Coss and H. Entzinger (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 54–72 (p. 68). In: Deben, Heinemeyer and van der Vaart, pp. 104–105.

mainly black district and, intended or not, started to acquire the characteristics associated with relative poverty and deterioration, including drugs and crime, especially when improvements to the inner city (and subsequent increased police surveillance) resulted in a shift of junkie meeting points from Waterlooplein and Nieuwmarkt in the centre to Bijlmermeer in Amsterdam-Southeast.

Since then, importantly, the whole Amsterdam-Southeast neighbourhood has been remodelled, with lower-rise housing, fewer corridors cutting through the open spaces and a better infrastructure, with a new railway station and shopping area. However, as rapper Gikkels states in an interview on television, the youth in the Bijlmer do not have the same opportunities in life as other people from other neighbourhoods in Amsterdam. For these boys and girls 'going to university is not a given'. Perhaps some of them start, because they are smart, but their problem is that they don't know whether they will be able to finish. Every new academic year means a new challenge: can the fees be paid, are the circumstances at home favourable?⁵⁹ Nonetheless, as will be clear in his work as a rapper and political activist, he also finds that the Bijlmer has great potential and that people are also happy living there. Thus, according to him, the main reason for the negative image of the area is the way Bijlmer inhabitants are portrayed in the media. This negative image results 'in fewer opportunities when looking for a job or an internship, even when they are successful at school'.

In this respect, his track 'Doofpot' ('Covered Up') can be seen as paradigmatic. The lyrics start by introducing the way that Gikkels considers that Bijlmer residents are perceived by the Other (that is to say in terms of their meta-image). In this case, the Other is white politicians and journalists portraying them as a group of cavemen fighting each other. A voiceover reproduces the words of a politician, who says: 'It should be made compulsory for people from the underclass to go to school or to take a job. Then they wouldn't have time for criminal activities and the whole problem would be solved.' The same voiceover demands 'more police checks and preventative searches',⁶⁰ which Gikkels translates into the message: 'If you are black and you come from the Bijlmer you can be sure that you will be "preventatively searched"'. The lyrics continue with allusions to the bank-owned buildings shadowing the area – a reference to the business area of Amsterdam-Southeast which houses some of the most

⁵⁹ Paraphrase based on: *DHHVA Afl 9 2011 R.I.P., De Hoge Heren van Amsterdam* (The Netherlands: Vimeo, 2011) <<http://vimeo.com/24056392>>.

⁶⁰ 'mensen uit de onderklasse moeten verplicht worden om naar school te gaan of verplicht een baan te nemen. Dan hebben ze geen tijd voor criminele activiteiten en ben je vanaf.' The words of SP councillor (Socialist Party City Council of Amsterdam) Evert Hartog, who referred to the inhabitants of the Bijlmer in Amsterdam-Southeast as 'primitive cavemen'. In Peter van Brummelen, 'Politiechef Welten Krijgt Een Rap Terug', *Het Parool* (Amsterdam, 4 September 2009) <<http://www.parool.nl/parool/nl/4/AMSTERDAM/article/detail/260885/2009/09/04/Politiechef-Welten-krijgt-een-rap-terug.dhtml>>.

important, well-known banks and international firms, accusing these organizations of being the real criminals.

The video finishes with images of what he states to be ‘the real face’ of his hood and his own view of ‘his people’: children playing on bicycles, doing wheelies, while adults prepare barbecues, laughing with each other, inoffensive old junkies sitting outside on a sunny day (perhaps they are addicted but at least they don’t steal from people like bankers do). Remarkably, these tranquil images of the hood, in which life seems to acquire a delicious lightness, recall the words of hip hopper Jazzy Jay, remembering life as a little boy in the Bronx, believing that he was growing up in a place with great music and lots of talent. Jazzy Jay remembered the influential Bambaataa in this way:

Bam used to put his speakers out the window and play music all day. [...] The community center was right in the middle and Bam used to live to the left of it. He used to play his music, and I would ride my bike around all day popping wheelies, you know?⁶¹

In general, the denunciatory message from Gikkels, stating that society applies double standards to the detriment of Bijlmer inhabitants, prompted a large number of posters on YouTube, most of them supporting him:

‘born and raised in the B, you come out the metro station and they stop and search you preventatively’

Gikkels is right to criticize this hypocrisy: When in people were being assassinated one after the other in Amstelveen and Oud-Zuid in the period 2000-2005 (HOLLEEDER!), on Gelderlandplein, DID ANYONE SAY THEN THAT IS WAS BECAUSE OF THE PEOPLE WHO LIVED THERE???????? NOOOOO! Because that’s where the rich live. But in this case they do, because it’s where the poor and the *allochtonen* live. What DA FUCK is up with that??⁶²

While another poster backs up the argument, adding:

I don’t know why people feel they have a right to talk when they haven’t even been to Zuidoost. Do you know how you are treated there if your skin is a little darker. it has nothing to do with playing the victim. They discriminate [on the basis of colour] and there’s nothing else you can say about it. If you don’t come from that area you are never going to get it. In other towns and villages people also get mugged and there

⁶¹ Chang, p. 89.

⁶² This and the following two comments are from posts under *Gikkels - Doofpot* (The Netherlands: Teemong/YouTube, 2009) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XNvWVj6Bk44>>.

are also incidents with guns but you hear nothing about it – only months later on the crime programme. Cockroaches.

However, comments also show that some people see the complaints and accusations directed against Dutch society as evidence of the typical self-victimization of immigrants. In the opinion of the following poster, everybody has the same opportunities in the Netherlands. Achieving a good economic position is a matter of putting in the effort required:

@[...] Do you know what's easy? Putting the blame on a truancy officer when you don't want to function... Little dudes like this one who only complain about the government are almost always to blame for their own lot. They then take on the role of victim because they realise too late that education is what gives you a future. A university degree isn't that difficult really... But it's more difficult than being lazy. @[...] So what does he mean then? @[...] What is the message then?

Furthermore, it is interesting to see that, as is habitual with any well-appreciated rapper, Gikkels does not work alone. The message of his activism and the politically engaged raps suit the philosophy of other rap groups in the Bijlmer, including De Vaderloze Troupen (The fatherless troops), consisting of four young men whose common denominator has been a childhood without a father at home. In their raps they make a claim for a new generation in Amsterdam-Southeast in which fathers take responsibility for their kids. In the videos of raps such as 'Verder' and 'Koningszoon', the children riding bikes in the background is clearly not a mere ornament, but a reference to their growing engagement with the youth in their 'hood'. Rapper Dret thinks that it is important to keep explicitly referring to the Bijlmer and to the people he knows because the problems he sees around him are real: 'my neighbour is a girl of only 18 and she already has two children'.⁶³

Despite the problems, Dret also adds that he belongs to the Bijlmer and would not change his life there for another place: 'Actually the place is lovely now', adding, 'if you are a nigga the Bijlmer is the best place to live. In any case better than in a farmer's village. There they really are racists'.

For those not from Amsterdam, he describes the Bijlmer in more detail:

'Is Bijlmer different from Amsterdam?'
'Yes it is.'

⁶³ Yasmina Aboutaleb, 'Geen Blingbling Maar Betrokkenheid', *Z&Z, Nrc Handelsblad* (Amsterdam, 25 May 2013).

First of all it is a different mix of black ethnic groups. I was born in Suriname and my parents came to Holland when I was 3 years old, directly to Kraaiennest [that is, an apartment building in the K-district of the Bijlmer]. At that time there weren't too many people living there, there were Surinamese, Antillean later, then Dominican and the last ones to arrive were African.

That is Bijlmer.

In the early years you couldn't see white people and if you saw them they weren't the typical white people. All the white people we met we were like 'Wow man, what happened to you?'⁶⁴

Members of the rap groups Hopi-boys and Green Gang share the feeling of belonging to the Bijlmer. They mark their involvement in their specific *territorium* with the green colour and the letter H – referring to the 'H-buildings' because their names all start with the letter 'H'. In this, they are supposed to be seen as different from the purple gang of Kraaiennest, for example. However, what they share with other gangs are the feelings of belonging expressed by sentences such as: 'We're staying in the hood. I want to grow old here. We have everything here. We are Hoptille.'⁶⁵

For rapper Nina – who has finished a degree at VU University Amsterdam – the feelings of belonging are still confusing. She says she loves the Bijlmer, but at the same time she believes that her place of origin, the colour of her skin and her pronunciation of Dutch (with a Surinamese accent) have made her incursion into the world outside the Bijlmer difficult. 'Every time I got off at the station I felt the prejudices, the more so because I went to the building in which better courses were given, and every time I went to an interview for a part-time job I was rejected "because I had such a heavy accent"'.⁶⁶ Thus, she summarizes her perception of the prejudices of white Dutch people, who assume that someone black like her would not go to university, even less so to study science.

b. The dilemma: in-between-two-worlds

A further analysis of the material collected shows that one of the most commonly experienced difficulties for immigrants undertaking higher education is the combination of reputation and actual circumstances associated with belonging to a different world. The versatility of the hip hop expressions

⁶⁴ Agnese Roda, 'Dret En Krulle Bijlmer Style a Story of Amsterdam Rappers', *HOOP DOOP magazine* (Amsterdam, 2014) <<http://issuu.com/hoopdoop/docs/hoopdoop4/35?e=0>>.

⁶⁵ 'We blijven in 'the hood.' Ik wil hier oud worden. We hebben hier alles. We zijn Hoptille.' Laura van der Wal, 'Hopi-Boys in Bijlmer Inmiddels Stukje Ouder En Wijzer', *NAP, Nieuw Amsterdams Peil* (Amsterdam, 9 October 2009) <<http://www.napnieuws.nl/2009/10/09/hopi-boys-in-bijlmer-inmiddels-stukje-ouder-en-wijzer/>>.

⁶⁶ Paraphrased from interview with Nina by Aboutaleb.

enables us to capture some of these feelings, which are also expressed through mediums other than rap texts. A good illustration of this are two movies made by the Habbekrats label.

The first is a short film from 2009, *Wolken # 2*.⁶⁷ The story introduces the main character as a young student of Moroccan origin living in Amsterdam, with a part time job washing dishes in a trendy restaurant, just like white students. One day, two old friends from his old neighbourhood (who are also 'Moroccan-looking') come to meet him after work 'as if by coincidence'. In fact, they have been asked by the main character's white girlfriend to distract him while she prepares a surprise birthday party for him at midnight at home. However, the main character is not aware of these noble intentions and becomes impatient with his friends because he notices that they are just trying to keep him busy. In the end he gets angry and just can't help himself, telling them that he is not like them anymore; – not a 'loser who can lose the whole day just doing nothing'.

The issue of colliding worlds approached in *Wolken #2* is further developed in the second full-length film, *Rabat*,⁶⁸ with the same three actors and made by the same Habbekrats production team. Nadir, according to the script, 'the most intelligent of the group', has had enough of the 'feckless lifestyle of his friends'.⁶⁹ The story develops into a road trip to Morocco, which has the following significant moments: the departure from Amsterdam East, where they live, heading for Morocco with the hidden purpose of taking Nadir's father's old taxi (a Mercedes 250D) to the family of Nadir's 'prospective' wife as a gift; a conversation with an old Arab truck driver on the road; an encounter with Julie, a French student who they pick up hitch-hiking; an amorous interaction between Nadir and Julie; a night in Barcelona; a farewell to Julie and troubles on the Spanish roads with the police and racism; their arrival in Morocco; swimming in the sea and the revelation of the true value of the friendship of his two old friends, who are there to help him 'not because they are losers and have all the time to waste' but because they knew about the purpose of the trip, were worried and didn't want to leave him on his own; their arrival at their destination and a conversation with Yasmine, who he is supposed to marry; the decision by them not to marry because they both already have other plans for the future.

⁶⁷ Jim Taihuttu, *WOLKEN #2* (The Netherlands: TopNotchNL/YouTube, 2009) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WXi9pYeSJA>>.

⁶⁸ 'Rabat', *filmtotaal*, 2011 <<http://www.filmtotaal.nl/recensie.php?id=22063>>; Habbekrats, *Rabat, Het Boek van de Film* (Amsterdam: Lebowsky Achievers, Lebowsky Publishers & Habbekrats, 2011). The publisher is part of the network of hip hop label TopNotch.

⁶⁹ Review at film totaal: 'Botsende levensstijlen en ambities, evenals onuitgesproken frustraties, zorgen ervoor dat de jarenlange vriendschap tussen Nadir en zijn twee vrienden tijdens de reis stevig onder druk komt te staan'. In: 'Rabat.'

Sef, the rapper who performs the theme song of the movie, explains that he especially enjoyed working on it because it touches something which is real without picturing the '*allochtoon*' as being different from other human beings.⁷⁰ In this way, the movie states that although stereotypes influence people's perceptions, human beings are complex and layered: the apparent losers are good friends and Yasmine, who was supposedly a traditional illiterate bride in Morocco, confesses to Nadir that she would rather study than marry him. The necessity of bringing nuances to the stereotypes appears to be shared among this collective of hip hoppers. According to Ome Omar, for example, this kind of new approach shows that original hip hop producers such as Habbekrats are finding new ways of expressing the conflicts occurring in second-generation immigrants' daily lives.⁷¹

Another interesting case that can be understood in terms of this 'two worlds' theme is the work of rapper Ali B., especially his work as a comedian. The first sentence of his performance 'Leven van de Straat' is 'I'm angry, Still'. What happened to him, he explains, is that while he is supposed to be happy because things are going well, everybody seems to be looking for hidden motives. Some rappers, for example, have threatened him, saying he has lost his 'street credibility', but if he goes to the police to complain about them, the police do not believe him 'because they are not used to having a Moroccan as a victim'. The same happens with his cooperation with the War Child organization. Nobody seems to believe that his intentions are sincere, suggesting that he would only do it for his image; or even worse, in order 'to smuggle illegal arms'. At the same time, his old friends say he has lost his street credibility not only because he has moved from 'Amsterdam East to the suburban Almere' but also because instead of performing at the district club houses he has dared to become professional and now performs in the biggest venues in the Netherlands, such as Ahoy in Rotterdam.

As a comedian, and using the example of some older Moroccan comedians such as the successful Najib Amhali, Ali B. uses stereotypes to joke about his youth in Amsterdam. Thus, he explains that he used to work as a pizza driver, but could not make enough money until he realized that the pizza box was the size of a laptop. The audience laugh: immediately understanding the story as a reference to criminal activities imputed to the Moroccan population. However, the most touching story follows when he explains his troubles getting into a disco, waiting in line in his 'dress to impress' clothes. While the Jans and the like (all the white boys in the line) are relaxed and confident, Ali B. and his little friend Otje

⁷⁰ 'Rabat I liked, but other movies about "*allochtonen*" they are so stupid'. In: Venz & Jiggy, 'Conversation with Sef', *Wat Anders Lijn 5* (Amsterdam, 7 June 2011) <<http://www.funxhiphop.nl/radio/watanders/3121-lijn5-wat-anders-sef>>.

⁷¹ Venz & Jiggy, 'Conversation with Ome Omar', *Wat Anders Lijn 5* (Amsterdam, 15 May 2011).

(from what he says, Ali B. and Otje are probably not the most attractive young men) already knew that they would have trouble getting in. Once their fears are confirmed and they are indeed denied entrance, they only had two options left. One: 'Threaten and insult the doorman'. And Two: 'Just leave and go home'. Ali B. always chose both: 'I first went away and when I was far enough I insulted and threatened him: "I know where you live"' (and to the audience: 'I didn't know where he lived').⁷²

Clearly, the strategy employed by Ali B. is to give his predominantly white audience a degree of acknowledgement through confirming some of the stereotypes about Moroccans that he is convinced they will have. Only after this can he proceed to dismantle some of the possible resistance to believing him. Admitting to the audience that he has stolen laptops and committed criminal offences in the past enables him to open doors to his more intimate feelings: the loneliness, the disappointing evenings waiting outside the disco with his little friend and the new difficulties resulting from his acknowledgement as a famous artist. Also in his second performance as a comedian, 'Ali B. responds', he shows how at critical moments (he once lost all his mother's savings in gambling at the Red Light district but was given her forgiveness) he unexpectedly discovered that he could count on the help and understanding of his mother to re-direct his life. He reveals the difficulties of fitting into his in-between reality and a desire to connect with others simply as human beings.⁷³

Finally, another example worth mentioning is the group The Opposites, consisting of the tall white boy Big Two and the short(er) Antillean, Willie. In their inaugural act, in 2005, they started with the rap 'Fok jou' in which, due to their 'two culture' perspective, they could address the stereotyping issue in a very convincing way:

You would see the gratitude if you knew,
 Your biggest source of income is Dutch tourists,
 bitch, Antillian, what an annoying race,
 like the Morroccans, nothing but trouble!
 all you do is scream,
 that we are all bad,
 and that Holland will be better once we're all gone,
 but we're not called the Dutch Antillies for nothing,
 think of the consequences when starting colonies!

⁷² 'Ali B Vertelt Het Leven van de Straat' (The Netherlands: BNN, 2007) <http://www.npo.nl/ali-b-vertelt-het-leven-van-de-sstraat/POMS_S_BNN_097274>.

⁷³ 'Ali B. Geeft Antwoord' (The Netherlands: NPO, 2013) <www.uitzendinggemist.nl/afleveringen/1334357>.

refrain

fuck you, fuck you, fuck you, fuck you, fuck you, fuck the Netherlands and fuck Curaçao!

look at us fighting, we look like children,

when will the hate between us both subside?⁷⁴

To summarize, it is clear that in all of these illustrations of the ‘in-between two worlds’, from *Volken #2* and *Rabat*, to *Ali B.* and *The Opposites*, the core message involves an attempt to construct a conciliatory discourse. It is a discourse based on the argument that every culture has internal contradictions and that it is childish to keep emphasizing stereotypes and making accusations based on one’s place of origin.

a. Hip hop auto-images

As mentioned above, the most well-known images associated with hip hop by mainstream audiences seem to be related to the commodified ‘gangsta’ artefacts, seen as valorizing material goods and the use of stimulants – drugs, alcohol and sex. In addition, gangstas also surround themselves with an aura of violence or aggression. In the following paragraphs I will attempt to clarify the meaning given to these stereotyped gangsta values with reference to their actualization in contemporary hip hop.

- **Praising violence**

Violence reveals itself as a shared value at specific moments. Violence is the answer to strange or disapproving gazes. It may be directed against an authority figure in a train who wants to stop you from writing graffiti or pulling the emergency brake, as seen in Riske de Rat’s film *Fatcap Express*.⁷⁵ It can also be used against the merely unpleasant gaze of a stranger in a club when using the bathroom. One of the first hit numbers by De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig shows this unrestrained and rough ‘let everything hang’ attitude, which proposes violence as the only answer: ‘Because one is fat and another’s a user | I am scum, of the first-class type | And you wash your hands while you’re still pissing | Look at me, you know exactly what’s coming | Brickbat, and the rest is history.’⁷⁶

⁷⁴ *The Opposites*, ‘Fok Jou’ (Amsterdam, 2005).

⁷⁵ Danny ‘Kas’ Stolker, *Fatcap Express* (The Netherlands, 2008) <<http://www.molotow.com/magazine/blog/blog/2012/02/29/fatcap-express/>>. Starring Riske de Rat and Jiggy Djé.

⁷⁶ ‘Want de één is dik en de ander gebruikt | Ik ben tuig, van de eerste klasse | En je wast je handen al tijdens het plassen | Kijk me aan, je weet precies hoe laat het is | Baksteen, de rest is geschiedenis.’ *De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig - Watskebert?!* (The Netherlands: TopNotchNL/YouTube, 2008) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjER3EX948w>>.

In such cases the adoption of violence can also be seen as a funny or humorous look at life, especially when they confess that one of their examples in contextualizing their raps was the film *Scarface*.

However, connections between rap, criminality and violence have also been made in 'very real life'. One of the best known examples are the words of police chief Welter who, in 2009, declared that hip hop was a bad example for youth in areas such as the Bijlmer because it encouraged criminality. The examples he gave were the activities of the Green Gang rappers, whose members had been involved in a shooting incident on a street in the Bijlmer in 2009. As an antecedent, the police pointed to an interview on the local television channel AT5 with some of the members a couple of years earlier, in which they boasted about the kinds of offences they usually committed. It was clear that they wanted to make sure that they did not come across as just petty thieves.

- **Challenging authority**

Daring to use violence is, of course, daring to challenge authority (and having no fear of the possible penitentiary consequences of using violence). In this context, challenging authority is explicitly praised in several hip hop forms, from lyrics to graffiti. With all the necessary differences of contextualization, the top 10 film, *New Kids Turbo*,⁷⁷ seems to offer a clue regarding the popularization of this principle. The film is set in Maaskantje, a small village in the province of North Brabant, and tells the story of four friends who, apparently 'affected by the economic crisis', can no longer find work. The joke is, of course, that their situation is not totally due to this crisis but to their inability to do anything right. They get to work too late, break things or just misbehave. After a while, their government benefits are cut and so they decide not to pay for anything anymore. From here on the plot evolves through a succession of acts in which initial attempts to make some money become increasingly complicated, leading to nation-wide repercussions, until the government feels obliged to officially declare the neighbourhood a centre of 'social unrest'. Encouraged by the mantra 'Niemand komt aan Maaskantje!' (No one messes with Maaskantje!) the friends prepare an act of total resistance.

Obviously, one interpretation of the film sees it as ridiculing the rules dictated by the country's central political authority. In any case, the truth is that the 'fuck authority' attitude, and the vulgar sense of humour, have been celebrated by student audiences. In Amsterdam, the movie was awarded the

⁷⁷ *New Kids Turbo*, The movie. Directed by Steffen Haas and Fluip van der Kuil. The Netherlands 2010.; *The Opposites - Broodje Bakpao Ft. Sef, Gers Pardoel. 2009* (The Netherlands: TheOppositesVEVO/YouTube, 2012) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDFuVWSX9N8>>.

Netherlands audience prize at the Escape discotheque.⁷⁸ The audiences liked the exaggerated characters using guns on the slightest pretext or masturbating to the rhythm of hardcore music, eating fast food with no manners, etc. It is this hyperbole, in contrast to *'wat hoort'* ('the right thing'), that makes the film funny. In this context the police are made to look ridiculous. Indeed, members of the police force skating fearfully in full kit, including uniforms and knee protectors, do not look great. These scenes readily recall memorable references to the power of music and subversion: for example, the Blues Brothers mocking the entire army and escaping from the theatre. The 'fuck authority' groove becomes actualized in the lyrics of these rappers and in the portrayals of the characters in the film.⁷⁹

- **Looks, accessories, gender**

'You're no better than me.' (*'Ik ben niet te min.'*) Nina

In the most commercialized gangsta hip hop, the male artist often appears lazing around, surrounded by women in bikinis or party clothes with a deep cleavage and high heels. In his turn, the gangsta shows off his own body, underlining his masculinity. One secondary school student described the hip hop style he saw at his school in this way:

[Gangster clothing] really does boost your image. It makes you physically broader. It is clothing which is comfortable to walk in but don't try running in it. And they really are the type of clothes that make you stand out. They mostly have large logos on them featuring jewellery, cars and lots of other things and all kinds of weird colours. You also see it is mostly black people who wear it. Why that is? They are prepared to pay money for it and they are the people who identify most closely with the rap musicians. And a lot of money, too. A decent sweater will cost you about €80 Euro and a pair of trousers around €100. We do also buy this kind of gear ourselves but not too much of it because then we would be broke in no time. You can also see what kind of effect this has had on people's mentality. If you wear this kind of clothing you usually give out a vibe of being dangerous and aggressive. It really gives you a strong image.⁸⁰

'Get low' hip hop music and the fashion industry have fed each other and contributed to the sexualization of fashion, with sexy clothes and accessories for women and men. For some people, this new accentuation of femininity or masculinity has been seen as part of the evolutionary process of women's emancipation. Others see in the re-sexualization of society, grounds for criminality and

⁷⁸ New Kids wins Rembrandt audience award: 'Rembrandt Award Voor New Kids: Turbo!', *Omroep Brabant*, 2011 <<http://www.omroepbrabant.nl/?video/68439912/Rembrandt+Award+voor+New+Kids+Turbo!.aspx>>.

⁷⁹ See as example the very successful hip hop number by *The Opposites - Broodje Bakpao Ft. Sef, Gers Pardoel*. 2009.

⁸⁰ School assignment by Ruub (2004). Patrick, Ruben and Bart, 'Rap', *scholieren.com*, 2004 <<http://www.scholieren.com/werkstuk/16720>>.

loverboy stories.⁸¹ However, there are also those who see this sexualization as a clear response to sexism and second-wave feminism. In addition, 'play boys' and 'play girls' are taken as a sign of independence, with some arguing that women gain 'the confidence to become more sexually empowered'.⁸² This would mean women are more willing to use certain attributes and to behave in a sexy and playful way but also as a powerful woman.

The above could also explain the success of hip hop groups such as De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig among young women. Music reviewers confessed that they became confused trying to grasp the essence of the apparently un-emancipated behaviour of females during the concerts of these groups: why did so many young women attend De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig concerts despite their sexist lyrics? Why do all of them react so enthusiastically to numbers such as '*Hengel at a bitch*', in which the audience become engaged with the message from the stage and imitate the gesture of fishing (which in this case refers to men's weekly fishing for women and sex on Friday night).⁸³

However, once more the clue seems to lie in the humour. Some music journalists think that the success of groups such as De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig is due to their personality and sympathy, and their capacity to create a world in which words lose their ordinary meaning. This would suggest that those who necessarily want to find a 'message' in their lyrics can interpret the references to sexism or racism as a parody.⁸⁴ In fact, many comments on YouTube do confirm that the most attractive aspect of such groups is their frivolity, nonchalance and absurd cheerfulness on stage. An illustration of these comments can be found in posts on the video 'Deze neger komt zo hard' performed by Willie Wartaal. In his lyrics he 'irreverently' combines an account of his sexual encounters with self-references such as 'deze neger'. The posters discuss the adequacy of terms such as '*neger*' and '*komt zo hard*', but the great majority seem to conclude that what makes it brilliant is its absurdity:

⁸¹ 'Girls call themselves slut, pussy juice or horny bitch. What motivates them?' in: Myrthe Hilken, *McSex. De Pornificatie van Onze Samenleving* (Amsterdam: Atlas Contact, 2008); See also: Bernard Hulsman, "Yo, Ouders, Denk Eens Na!", *NRC* (Rotterdam, 22 November 2008) <<http://vorige.nrc.nl/achtergrond/article2069909.ece>>.

⁸² It is commonly assumed that television series such as *Sex and the City* have had a very important influence on this effect since they 'blurred the boundaries between pornographic and mainstream media, giving women all over the nation the confidence and initiative to become more sexually empowered'. In Feona Atwood quoted by Kate Wilt, 'Married to the MOB: Sexually Empowering Women across the Globe through Brand Image', *K Wilt - services.library.drexel.edu*, 2011, pp. 1–7 <[www.library.drexel.edu/publications/dsmr/Wilt Final.pdf](http://www.library.drexel.edu/publications/dsmr/Wilt%20Final.pdf)>. See also Atwood's *Mainstreaming Sex: The Sexualisation of Western Culture* (London, New York: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2009).

⁸³ However, reviewers also admit that nobody seemed concerned about the lyrics. Women and men were there (in this case at Paradiso) for the spirit and the party. 'De Jeugd van Tegenwoordig Zet Paradiso Op Zn Kop', *Festival Junks* (Amsterdam, 2011).

⁸⁴ Elja Looijestein, 'Kijk Terug: De Jeugd van Tegenwoordig-Documentaire', *3voor12 VPRO*, 2013 <<http://3voor12.vpro.nl/nieuws/2013/november/Preview--De-Jeugd-van-Tegenwoordig-docu.html>>.

the jeugd van tegenwoordig genius who else would make a song about a *neger* it's ridiculous and genius at the same time. what is even better is that they are coming to the festival in the park in our town aaaaaaaaa XD

lol, this is a pretty funny politically incorrect tune, maybe the double message isn't strong enough, but come on, if you hear the whole population of the netherlands singing along with 'this nigga comes so hard', then the absurdity of the connotation and meaning of the words flows over in all its banality. All is one. Have some fun... That there are better groups/musics/lyrics out there is certain. But in between the lines we all just want to goof around, that's why this nigga comes so damn hard...⁸⁵

Less clear is the role of female rappers in Dutch hip hop. In fact, in my compilation I have only found two examples of semi-professional female rappers in the Amsterdam locality. One of them, Nina, is in fact the only female rapper with a professional music producer.⁸⁶ While co-rappers such as Ali B. praise her courage and personality, the comments on YouTube are usually addressed to her physical appearance. Some examples can be read under the track 'Straattaal', in which Nina translates an array of slang words into standard Dutch. One of the less offensive comments says: 'what is a diet book in street language because that is what you need.'⁸⁷

Such observations about Nina's appearance are very different to those addressed to male rappers such as the corpulent Willy Wartaal. Unlike Nina, Wartaal seems to attribute a great part of his support to his weight and looks, which he uses consciously, making sure that he also gets plenty of compliments: 'I am the ideal image of all fatsos.'⁸⁸

Nevertheless, and although the comments on rapper Nina do have a clear sexist nature, the physical appearance of current successful Dutch rappers does not fit with the gangsta aesthetics of woman with cleavage and men in Gucci, as often seen on MTV videos in the past. The tracksuit pants designed by Venz because he could not find ones with the right pockets, are an example of the multifaceted talent of

⁸⁵ *De Jeugd van Tegenwoordig - Deze Donkere Jongen Komt Zo Hard* (The Netherlands: TopNotchNL/YouTube, 2009) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_N2Rp7IQYI>.

⁸⁶ 'There are still too few women doing their thing. This conclusion is a driving force for me.' Nina (1981) is the first female MC to have a record contract with TopNotch. If she gets her way, in the future she won't be referred to as a "powerful female rapper", but simply as a "dope MC". at: 'Nina - Female MC - de Lastigste', *Extince Fans*, 2007 <<http://www.extincefans.nl/featured-artists/nina-de-lastigste/>>.

⁸⁷ *Nina - Straattaal* (The Netherlands: NinaVEVO/YouTube, 2009) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2u-nQmKqO0>>.

⁸⁸ 'Ik ben het ideale beeld van alle dikkerds.' Comments under *De Jeugd van Tegenwoordig - Deze Donkere Jongen Komt Zo Hard*.

hip hoppers, who make clothes that fit best with their activities.⁸⁹ Vjeze Fur from De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig, for example, is used to making the clothes for the group. He learnt to use his mother's sewing machine when he turned 18, and since then he sees it as a relaxing activity that fits well with his art studies at the Rietveld Academy.⁹⁰

In addition, it is also worth making a brief mention of the 'clothes' that hip hop has given to different items on the streets – 'the walls' or 'the trains'. Watching films such as *Fatcap Express*, among others, one learns that graffiti artists not only have a need to express themselves but also to be noticed. They also want to make a difference in life, challenging formal fashions, colours, clothes and the corporate lifestyle.⁹¹ A similar point is made by Quiñones, who describes graffiti activism as a way of challenging corporate America and its habits of putting people into alienating work, as if human beings were robots: '[The subway] was used as an object of transporting corporate clones. And the trains were clones themselves, they were all supposed to be silver blue, a form of imperialism and control, and we took that and completely changed it.'⁹²

The way in which some respected rappers insist on the importance of doing 'one's own thing' and having a good time without focusing too much on money, clothes, physical appearance or other restrictions finally becomes understandable when the old hippy Armand, taking part in one of Ali B.'s programmes, 'On Tour' (in which old Dutch artists meet the new rapper generation), makes an aside to the camera: 'Don't tell them [because maybe they wouldn't like it] but these kids [insisting on doing their own thing] are pure hippies'.⁹³

⁸⁹ Interview with Venz by Emma Boelhouwer, 'Welkom in de Wereld', *Het Parool, PS van de Week* (Amsterdam, 19 March 2011). 'The Best Pants in Life Are Free', *rassionmagazine*, 2008 <<http://rassionmagazine.wordpress.com/2008/08/11/the-best-pants-in-life-are-free/>>.

⁹⁰ Looijestein. See Vjeze fur from minute 49:12.

⁹¹ 'As a graffiti artist you have fun spray-painting international trains. You also enjoy painting trains that are a different colour. In the Netherlands they're usually yellow, in Belgium they're red, in France they're white and blue, in Barcelona they're white and red. At a certain point it becomes a sort of collection. You want to have done this train and the other train, in the same way you used to collect picture cards.' Roel Janssen, 'Fatcap Express', *State Magazine*, 18 February 2008.; Thiemo, 'Fatcap: De Eerste Echte Nederlandse Hiphop Film', *Leipeshit*, 25 February 2008 <<http://www.leipeshit.nl/forums/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=16207&start=0>>.

⁹² Chang, p. 122.

⁹³ I have paraphrased Armand's words from: 'Ali B Op Volle Toeren' (The Netherlands: TROS, 2011) <<http://www.uitzendinggemist.nl/afleveringen/1118542>>.

c. Avant-garde hip hop: Intimacy and personal experiences

- **Coming of age (again)**

Armand's allusions to hippies, which is his way of defining a sort of artist eager to develop their own talents independently of external motivations such as money, may be a good way to understand what seems to be a transition in the actualization of current hip hop. This transition is visible in the track 'Zo Volwassen, Zo Beleefd' by De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig. Although it is clear that youth is seen as a unique period in life, deserving of different rules and liberties, there is also an increasing awareness that it has a temporal limit. Thus, the lyrics refer to a process of maturing that everyone eventually faces:

I used to be shady, didn't give a shit
 Never paid my bills on time
 I was shady, your boy was lazy
 My royalties always went on blow

Shit, and just hiding behind walls of bills
 Bailiff knew everything, was being snitched on by the neighbours
 Just to keep one step ahead of that nigga
 Had to change my registered address

I have changed, your boy has grown
 Now my patience is as long as extra-long cigarette paper
 No longer scared of the post or papers
 And now I just love internet banking.⁹⁴

In similar lyrics it is also clear that instead of the topics of the 50 Cent tradition, anchored in a 'dog-eat-dog' environment in which 'only the strongest survives',⁹⁵ the references are now less about women, pills and coke and more about heartbreak and the dark side of fame. Even Willie Wartaal ultimately sees

⁹⁴ From *De Jeugd van Tegenwoordig - 'Zo Volwassen, Zo Beleefd', #1 De Lachende Derde* (The Netherlands: TopNotchNL/YouTube, 2010) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=teY5BBSFzG4>>.

⁹⁵ Mark Duffett, 'Fear Nothing: Self-Fashioning and Social Mobility in 50 Cent's *The 50th Law*', *Popular Music and Society*, 34 (2011), 683–92 (p. 686) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03007766.2010.537902>>.

himself as a grandfather with a beautiful grandmother next to him, a nice home, lots of grandchildren and work for everybody.⁹⁶

A comparable evolution can be seen in the work of The Opposites, whose lyrics reveal a clear development from the early to the later work; from provocation to introspection. In this respect, it is worthwhile reproducing a fragment of an article by Johan Fretz, a young writer and comedian who, as he remarks himself, has grown up simultaneously with these hip hop groups. He sees in the lyrics of The Opposites a sort of reflection and summary of his own life and believes that hip hop is the genre that will be associated with the music culture of his generation:

And these days what strikes me is that it is the Dutch hip hop music, especially, which seems to capture the spirit of the times. The popularity of De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig and the Opposites is unparalleled. The track 'De Leven' ['The life'] by Sef didn't just become a hit, but also turned into a catchphrase that you still see on social media on a daily basis: 'I'm sitting on my rooftop terrace with my dearest friends, summer in Amsterdam! #deleven'. In that flourishing hip hop scene The Opposites are now at the top.

Is that also because they are managing to capture the current spirit of the times? Is that a question we can even answer yet? What we can say is that, apart from some louder tracks, what really characterises their latest album is a sense of vulnerability. Willem is singing more in addition to rapping, and through the lyrics we get to know the guys as young men who have passed their first youth. They sing about the journeys they are on, a lot of attention is paid to the darker side of all the partying they celebrated in their earlier work, to the darker side of being young. Two of the albums most successful hits, 'Slapeloze Nachten' ('Sleepless Nights'), which got to no.1, and 'Sukkel voor de Liefde' ('Sucker for Love'), are not mindless party tunes in the category Dumb, Crude and Famous, but rather very vulnerable, introspective songs with candid lyrics about major doubts, and dreams that are just as big. That is undoubtedly because the guys have grown up, but also fits in with the times. We live in uncertain times in which we are faced with great changes. At the moment there is so little solid ground that perhaps it is the introspective, sometimes rather bitter lyrics of 'Slapeloze Nachten' that we can identify most, as with the wandering and the questions as to how you can turn dreams into action and how you can keep body and soul together in these times.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Sara Berkljon, 'Willie Wartaal', *de Volkskrant Magazine* (Amsterdam, 19 March 2011).

⁹⁷ Johan Fretz, 'The Opposites: Eenheid van Tegenpolen', *Het Parool* (Amsterdam, 11 October 2013).

A fragment of the remarkable 'Sukkel Voor De Liefde' is undoubtedly a good example of this vulnerability:

Surrounded by chicks who want to hang out for the fame,
 hang out for the fame.
 Crawling around me like fucking snakes,
 Tears roll past my heart and to the floor, I hide my pain, I just laugh along with them.
 They want to hang out for the fame, hang out for the fame, it really ain't that strange
 I'm a sucker for love, king of the discotheque
 You said your heart was broken right, so I gave you mine
 I had kept it for myself right, if I'd known you'd take it and disappear
 Now I'm walking around an empty house
 just a mirror to look me in the face, black hole in my soul sucking me dry
 What the city hands to me again after the silence
 Full of pride, chest forward (I don't miss you x3)
 But still, each step forward, it's related to you, that you didn't know.⁹⁸

It is interesting to see that this form of hip hop seems to have acquired legitimation as representative of shared life experiences. The song, 'De Leven' by Sef, mentioned by Fretz in the previous quote, can be seen as an example of a lyric that has often been quoted by a diverse audience. 'De Leven', with the article 'de' instead of the grammatically correct 'het' (*het leven*), is not only an allusion to a mistake that foreigners frequently make with the use of 'het' and 'de' in Dutch. In my view 'De Leven' is above all an artistic construction of the concept of life as something that has its ups and downs. The message may seem obvious and almost clichéd, but it is not. When placed in contrast to the rhetoric of life as success, the rhetoric with which many of these youth have grown up in the Western world, taking life as it comes and considering that not everything in life is possible constitutes a renewed approach to life:

⁹⁸ *The Opposites - Sukkel Voor De Liefde Ft. Mr. Probz* (The Netherlands: TheOppositesVEVO/YouTube, 2013) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnNU-EwYjaQ&feature=kp>>.

Sometimes Okura, 8 courses Sometimes tempura, Champagne Sometimes, sometimes Visvim Sometimes Gucci Sometimes Comme des Garçons Sometimes Louis Sometimes dancing Sometimes lights Sometimes, sometimes drinks Sometimes flashes Sometimes 150 pairs of kicks And sometimes Nothing At All (nix)	Sometimes New York Sometimes London Sometimes, sometimes high, dead drunk Sometimes, sometimes Tokyo Sometimes Paris Sometimes Neat Sometimes won the rocks Sometimes shows Sometimes attention Sometimes, sometimes weekend from Monday Sometimes, sometimes lots of chicks and sometimes Nothing At All (nix)	Refrain This is the life And I know that this is the life And I don't know how long it's gonna last But as long as it's still here I'll enjoy it, every day And I know that this is the life And I don't know how long it's gonna last But as long as it's still here I'll enjoy it, every day	Sometimes down Sometimes crying Sometimes, sometimes preferring not to go out Sometimes, sometimes scared for the future Sometimes, sometimes I miss my father Sometimes, sometimes crisis Sometimes sadness Sometimes, sometimes a break Sometimes, sometimes a bad patch And sometimes Nothing At All
--	--	---	---

The accessibility of the text, putting brands such as Hiroki Nakamura's VisVim street wear and the avant-garde and minimalist Japanese brand Comme des Garçons alongside luxury Italian brand Gucci is a mix of all these influences; the specific allusion to dinners at the Okura building, which is well known for its Japanese one-star Michelin restaurant, the connections with a specific kind of world city (significantly, including Tokyo), the drinks with or without ice, undoubtedly alluding to the cocktail par excellence of the moment. Being drunk and sometimes high but not forgetting to allude to the moments of crisis, of momentary sadness and other downers, all of these point to an eclecticism that is representative of a certain kaleidoscopic imaginary.



Different scenes from Sef, 'De Leven', 2011 <http://www.puna.nl/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/00-sef-de_leventje_ep-cover-800px-72dpi2222.jpg>.

According to the most recent material in my research corpus these kinds of lyrics can be seen as an example of a new European hip hop, best represented by the work of the Belgian rapper Stromae. In his interesting article in *Vrij Netherland*, Heerma van Voss explained that the power of Stromae lies in the combination of the 'chanson' of Jacques Brel and the accessibility of David Guetta. The sorrow of the lyrics combined with the lightness of the melody seem to express something similar to a certain sorrow currently felt in Europe that specific groups in Amsterdam may also have started to share. In the words of Thomas Heerma van Voss: 'Stromae's songs are peopled with worrying twenty-somethings, who grew up in luxury and are suddenly faced with economic uncertainties and dark prospects. This

transformation is painfully obvious in *Alors on Danse*'.⁹⁹ The impact of this relatively new form of 'hip hop' has even led the boss of hip hop, Kees de Koning, to comment:

I've been listening to hip-hop for twenty-five years ... Lately I haven't been much impressed by American releases. In the Netherlands and in Europe as a whole there's much more room for things besides bravado. Songs here are more personal, more emotional. Listening to Stromae I hear the same charisma of the old chansons, the same sorrows and the same passions. His music truly affects people.

- **The extension of hip hop: Social impact**

The words of Kees de Koning and Heerma van Voss, together with the fragment from Johan Fretz reproduced above, provide a good indication of the reasons why hip hop groups such as The Opposites and De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig have been as successful as they are. The warm welcome they receive at festivals such as Lowlands, Noordeslag and Pinkpop are undoubtedly a sign that hip hop is also alive in the trendy and 'alternative' music scene in the Netherlands. In this respect, it is apparent that, at the very least, the hip hop produced by these groups has achieved a very general level of acceptance among youth and students (who frequently attend such festivals).



De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig, Lowlands, 2013.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ The following words of Kees de Koning are also quoted by Heerma van Voss in 'Formidable: Het Verhaal van Stromae', *Vrij Nederland* (Amsterdam, December 2013) <<http://www.vn.nl/Archief/Media/Artikel-Media/Formidable-het-verhaal-van-Stromae.htm>>.

¹⁰⁰ Lowlands and Coen Brandhorst, 'Opposites En De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig Op Lowlands', *de Volkskrant* (Biddinghuizen, 24 May 2013) <<http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/7424/Lowlands/article/detail/3446618/2013/05/24/Opposites-en-De-Jeugd-Van-Tegenwoordig-op-Lowlands.dhtml>>.

What is also interesting to see in retrospect is that the crossover of hip hop in the Netherlands from merely engaging a black audience to becoming attractive to a wider audience seems to have required the involvement of white artists. In the Netherlands, the perception of hip hop as a black cultural music stream started to change around 2004 and 2005, partly because of the enormous celebrity acquired by the white American rapper Eminem – who, according to popularity charts, peaked at number 2 for 40 weeks in the Netherlands.¹⁰¹ The meaning of his impact seems to lie in the fact that his popularity was not merely mainstream and for outsiders. Even respectable insiders compared him with the ‘great Tupac’. Thus, it was not only that he was a white rapper but above all that he ‘was the first white rapper to rap so well, to handle wordplays the way he did’.¹⁰²

Similarly, in Amsterdam, the extended popularity of hip hop coincided with the emergence of an important number of white rappers who alone – or in combination with others – facilitated the entrance and understanding of hip hop into different milieus. The list of these rappers would be long, but as an illustration it is interesting to consider Brainpower, one of the first and most officially recognized rappers in the Netherlands. Reporters and interviewers never cease to mention the fact that he had a university-stream secondary education in Alphen aan de Rijn and that he moved home to Amsterdam to study communications at the University of Amsterdam. In all probability, these are details that have increased his accessibility as a role model for the media. As such a model, he was invited to a lunch with Prince Willem Alexander and Princess Máxima of the Netherlands, with another ten remarkable young personalities, for example.¹⁰³ Due to his being a white Dutch native he could talk about prejudices differently to his black co-artists: in one of his interviews, Brainpower explained that as the only white man in the group he was generally seen as the manager (instead of the rapper).¹⁰⁴

With Colin Benders, who uses the name Kytteman, hip hop addresses wider circles in a new form.

According to the press reviews, it gave a large audience ‘goose bumps’¹⁰⁵ at the summer and winter

¹⁰¹ Eminem quickly gained popularity in 1999 with his major-label debut album, *The Slim Shady LP*, which won a Grammy Award for Best Rap Album. And later in 2004 and 2005 with *Lose it* and *Encore: ‘Eminem - Encore’*, *dutchcharts*, 2004 <<http://www.dutchcharts.nl/showitem.asp?interpret=Eminem&titel=Encore&cat=a>>.

¹⁰² ‘In the United States the Beastie Boys and Vanilla Ice preceded him.’ Isabelle Esling, ‘Eminem: A Major Influence in Hip Hop History’, *theeminemblog*, 2004 <<http://www.theeminemblog.com/2004/07/14/eminem-a-major-influence-in-hip-hop-history/>>.

¹⁰³ ‘Brainpower Luncht Met Prinses Maxima En Prins Willem Alexander’, *hiphopinjesmoel*, 2009 <<http://www.hiphopinjesmoel.com/magazine/nieuws/brainpower-luncht-met-prinses-maxima-en-prins-willem-alexander>>.

¹⁰⁴ Percy’s place and the interview with Brainpower: ‘Weltevreden Op 10.’

¹⁰⁵ ‘More virtuous and more exciting isn’t possible’. *De Volkskrant*. The comments posted around his performances used to refer to ‘tears’, ‘emotions’ and ‘goose bumps’. See, for example, comments on Kytteman’s ‘Sorry’ performance at Lowlands: ‘I won’t ever do it again’ ...he really plays from the soul and you feel it just bubble up to the surface... your hair stands on end, you get tears in your eyes,... a universal musical apology that you can identify with... BEAUTIFUL!!!! [...] I get goose pimples all

festivals, from Pinkpop to Lowlands, from Oosterpoort and Noorderslag in Groningen to Tivoli in Utrecht, from Paradiso to the Melkweg in Amsterdam (2009-2011). His number 'Sorry' in which 'he says, with his trumpet, the sorry that he cannot say with his voice to his girlfriend' literally becomes a tearjerker. Son of a white Dutch father and a mother of African origin, brought up in a hippy squatter community in Utrecht, Kytelman's Hiphop Orkest is the optimistic merging of races and ages 'playing with each other and for each other'.¹⁰⁶

In the meantime, hip hop lovers in Amsterdam have started to engage in significant international cooperation with hip hoppers abroad. Vincent Reinders, alias Venz, is an interesting example of understanding music such as hip hop as an urban, genuine but international language. Starting in his studio on Prinsengracht, he now runs his website, 22tracks. His ambition to disseminate the hip hop that is heard in Amsterdam has now been expanded with another 21 genres: 'I hope I can extend this initiative with similar websites in other cities. It would be very cool to hear music that people are listening to in the favelas right now, led by a good website by someone who knows what he is talking about'.¹⁰⁷ He presents the weekly hip hop programme *Wat Anders* ('Something Different') together with rapper Jiggy Deé, with the show being considered the authority on the matter. Venz's initiatives are illustrative of the bridge-builder who is not only able to mediate between different environments but also between different epochs: 'I would like to show to my current audience that hip hop has a link with the past. That good tracks often refer to an original'.¹⁰⁸

In addition, it is important to mention that 'lifestyle' websites have also contributed to the diffusion of hip hop. Among those that stand out, the website Nalden.net has been considered a reliable guide to the hip hop scene in Amsterdam. The creator, Nalden, fits the narrative of the success story of young entrepreneurs who never quite completed their higher education. At the time of writing, he was around 27 years old, had not graduated as an 'internet services administrator' from the ROC in Amsterdam, but drove a Lotus Elise that he was given by one of his sponsors. As a blogger he now has an open door to the university, and has been invited to give presentations to marketing students, for example, at the

over my back and it's not from my electric fan [...]. 'Kytelman - Sorry (Live @ Lowlands 2009) (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2009) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3xr4bJtxhg>>.

¹⁰⁶ Words of Kytelman introducing his orchestra in Groningen: City is burning with his performances at Kytelman paradise Excerpt from 'The Hermit Sessions - Live', a full show by Kytelman's Hiphop Orkest, recorded on 23 September 2009 in De Oosterpoort, Groningen and released on DVD on 13 November 2009. *Kytelman's Hiphop Orkest - City Is Burning* (The Netherlands: Colin Benders/YouTube, 2009) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duyw6asVi50>>.

¹⁰⁷ The app was the best sold application after a television performance on Bart Breij, '22Tracks Meteen Bestverkochte iPhone-App Na Tv-Optreden', *iculture*, 7 April 2011 <<http://www.iphoneclub.nl/110318/22tracks-meteen-bestverkochte-iphone-app-na-tv-optreden/>>.

¹⁰⁸ Paraphrased from 'De Wereld Draait Door. Interview with Vincent Reinders "Venz"' (The Netherlands: VARA, 2011).

exclusive Nyenrode Business University. Nalden started his website in 2004, just to show to his friend Willis in his home town where he was going out in Amsterdam. It became the main site for the hip hop scene. Offline he could always be found at Bitterzoet on Spuistraat, the centre of the avant-garde hip hop scene in Amsterdam. Online he filtered new music that the listener could download for free and included tips for new products. After a while 'enterprises such as Nike, Apple and Vodafone stood in line to be allowed to advertise on his website'.¹⁰⁹ While the story of Nalden is motivating, purists also recall that excessive collaboration with commercial brands could kill the authenticity of hip hop: 'The danger of collaboration with such brands, especially with brands that have nothing to do with hip hop, is that the audience won't believe him anymore'.

In this regard, the work of Heerma van Voss as a commentator on hip hop life is doubtlessly worth mentioning. His website 'Hiphopleeft', launched in 2007, is a clear illustration of a tendency – and a will – in younger generations to normalize hip hop as a genre. He started working on the site as a secondary school student in the loft of his parent's house in Amsterdam-South. Of course, he was not the only secondary school student constructing a hip hop website at his age, but his writing skills were remarkable. Very soon the website would include an impressive array of interviews with current hip hop artists from the Netherlands and abroad, accompanied by detailed reviews of a large variety of hip hop work. 'Hiphopleeft' managed to stay more than alive, with a high degree of productivity, until 2012. It was fed by a group of volunteers, young people who, like Heerma van Voss, were not only interested in hip hop but also in writing and who did not lose their interest in the genre despite finishing secondary school and entering university. In his farewell article, Heerma van Voss said that his aim had been to give hip hop a platform that could go beyond the album release and concert accounts of the websites of the moment. According to him, hip hop needed to be treated just as any other quality genre because this was the only way of contributing to its improvement and diffusion.

- **Hip hop pedagogics**

Hip hop fans, in their different modalities, seem to populate different educational institutions in Amsterdam, either at the ROC, HvA or, in the first years of university at the UvA and VU University. According to testimonies by Venz, Heerma van Voss and Pepijn Lanen, hip hop seems to be the first choice music genre of students in the last years of secondary school in Amsterdam, independently of the

¹⁰⁹ The following quotation comes from the same source: Maurits Martijn, 'Nalden: "Mijn Leven Is Hilarisch"', *Vrij Nederland*, December 2009 <<http://www.vn.nl/Archief/Media/Artikel-Media/Nalden-Mijn-leven-is-hilarisch.htm>>.

sort of curriculum they are following. Nevertheless, the main message of hip hop is that to really learn about life, school and university are useless.

This also implies that in their eyes it is next to impossible for an outsider to understand or reflect on their world. Therefore, and according to experienced graffiti writers, the film *Fatcap Express* made by real graffers is the only film in the Netherlands that has been able to enlighten us on some of these essential traits. This is because such films are usually made by older documentary makers who are not really interested in them. They put it this way:

Jiggy: 'I think that [Fatcap Express] is one of the first real hip hop films in the Netherlands.' Turrie: 'I think it's the first, in any case. There are a few films and documentaries that have been made but no real hip hop films.' Kas: 'Films are being made about so-called urban culture but every time you see these you think, jeez! Because the makers are documentary makers in their forties and fifties who don't interests us in the slightest. And they're not really interested in us, either.' Jiggy: "'Bolletjes Blues" does not have anything to do with hip hop apart from the fact that there are a few rappers who act in it and it was a reasonably good portrait of a subculture. I am sure that in a few decennia Fatcap Express will be seen as the mark of an era. Because it was made by someone who is a trendsetter in the world of music videos and because the film is set against a genre that represents a large part of youth culture.'¹¹⁰

With feelings of hatred, more or less, the fact is that hip hop advocates a kind of life outside formal education (though some like Riske de Rat admit that the idea for a hip hop film emerged at the KunstAcademie, the Art Academy in Rotterdam). Hip hop fan and entrepreneur, Venz, did not complete his degree in Communications and Psychology at the University of Amsterdam. Farid Bembarek A&R (Artist & Repertoire) of TopNotch was encouraged by Kees de Koning to give up his studies at VU University Amsterdam because he had 'too much talent' to be wasted at university,¹¹¹ and Willie Wartaal gave up his degree in education after the first year. His rap in the number 'Sterrestof' offers some explanation:

Well begun is half work
 But well begun is also but half work
 The second half but I don't need any half
 Wiwalean was eleven, I did everything by myself

¹¹⁰ Janssen. *Fatcap Express HD Official Movie HD* (The Netherlands: Check me Produczies/YouTube, 2013) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30ZctJbcej8>>.

¹¹¹ Thomas Heerma van Voss, 'Het Verhaal Van... Farid Benmbarek', *hiphopleeft*, 2012 <<http://hiphopleeft.nl/het-verhaal-van-farid-benmbarek/>>.

I go myself to school, now I get myself on TV.¹¹²

You have to do it yourself. All of these artists took another path, guided by hip hop, which in its purest form is based on the personal achievement of wisdom and skills developed through hip hop forms. Well-skilled hip hoppers take this process of improvement as a flow, apparently effortlessly.¹¹³ Successful hip hop entrepreneurs such as Nalden call their own success ‘hilarious’, underlining how little (apparent) effort they have made to achieve it.

In addition, and in terms of learning potential, hip hop is conceived in itself as a learning process. Most rappers refer to their initiation into hip hop music through a brother or an older friend who gave them that first and decisive ‘cassette tape’ when they were young boys around 12 years old. Such ‘first-time moments’, embodied in a tape or branded CD, seem to start a process of reconstruction that is especially important in hip hop because in their origins the beats always proceed from something that is already made. The beats of the famous ‘Planet Rock’ of Afrika Bambaataa, for example, were taken from the white German electronic group Kraftwerk. Finding something like the original track in a vinyl shop gives them an enormous kick:

What feels better than buying a record yourself (and I am talking about vinyl here) and finding out when you get home that, say, Black Moon has used that track. That feeling is hard to describe but it’s kind of like ‘EUREKA.’¹¹⁴

Moreover, in terms of the acquisition of ‘knowledge’, it seems crucial to keep in mind that for many hip hop lovers the ‘message’ of hip hop from the United States offered them a better introduction to social and political matters than any history book.¹¹⁵ In addition, respect for ‘hip hop history’ is also manifested through esteem for the old hip hop vanguard, which in Amsterdam is visible in comments about the hip hop godfather De Koning or Dj XL. Comments that express ignorance are corrected. Concerning Riske de Rat, for example, ‘he’s not exaggerating, he is a good graffer’. On the one hand, ‘dissen’ often refers to someone’s ignorance: ‘how stupid are you’ or ‘how adolescent you are, you have a long way to go in hip

¹¹² Een goed begin is het halve werk | Maar een goed begin is maar de helft | De tweede helft, maar ikke hoeft geen helft | Wiwalean was elf, ik deed alles zelf | Ik ging zelf naar school, nu kom ik zelf op tv”. In version: *De Jeugd van Tegenwoordig*, ‘Sterrenstof’ <<http://genius.com/De-jeugd-van-tegenwoordig-sterrenstof-lyrics/>>. See also: *De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig - Sterrenstof* (The Netherlands: TopNotchNL/YouTube, 2010) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNMxSkfWfLQ>>.

¹¹³ ‘Cool involves originality, self-confidence and must be apparently effortless. It is often transgressive. It is certainly narcissistic’. ‘Cool is non-impressionable’. In Clive Nancarrow and Pamela Nancarrow, ‘Hunting for Cool Tribes’, in *Consumer tribes*, 2007, p. 135.

¹¹⁴ Vanderheijden, p. 366.

¹¹⁵ van Stapele, *Van Brooklyn Naar Breukelen. 20 Jaar Hiphop in Nederland*, p. 17.

hop'.¹¹⁶ On the other hand, respect can take the form of large-scale collaborations between artists, carefully observed by fans. These can be special collaborations, explicitly meant as a sign of deference to older artists, such as Brainpower's collaboration with the Jamaican Fire House Crew, or simply collaboration on specific projects.

6.5. Wrapping up and conclusions

As discussed in the introduction to this chapter, the first inducement to focus the study on hip hop had been the observation that although hip hop seemed to have an important presence in the lives of contemporary Dutch youth, its role as a possible carrier of an authentic sense of place and related imaginaries had not yet been broadly explored. The explanation for this lack of serious attention probably lies in the fact that the circumstances mirrored in American hip hop could not be literally related to life in Dutch society. In this sense, hip hop video clips on MTV only reflected a world far away, seen as very different to the reality of cities such as Amsterdam.

Nevertheless, in Amsterdam, hip hop developed into Nederhop, vindicating its role as a genuine transmitter of street life. For hip hop pioneers such as Postmen in Rotterdam it was clear that life for immigrants was not as easy and egalitarian as some suggested. Seen from this point of view it is not difficult to identify a strain of Dutch 'protest' hip hop, in which artists expressed feelings of alienation and injustice, mirroring the perceptions of other young people in specific parts of the Netherlands, including certain neighbourhoods in Amsterdam. At the same time, in Amsterdam, hip hop had experienced a further process of diversification: new streams and artists used hip hop as a way to expand their personal and musical knowledge. In recent years, some have been extremely successful among youth and student audiences.

Concerning protest hip hop, it is important to emphasize that seeing music as a form of protest is not unusual. The list of protest movements that are inextricably related to specific songs in the Western world is large and well known. However, as Bauman would probably say, if they are well known it is because in many cases they were adopted as a 'legitimate discourse' within modern democracy during

¹¹⁶ Comments on *RiskeDeRat Ik Maak Al Genoeg Mee* (The Netherlands: DownLowProductions/YouTube, 2008) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOejpW2JA0&feature=related>>.

the last decades of the twentieth century.¹¹⁷ Therefore, the specific performances of protest hip hop in contemporary Amsterdam are not only interesting because of their message but also because of the peculiarities of their reception. It is in any case obvious that Dutch protest hip hop has not become part of the standard repertoire of Dutch music.

In order to obtain a better understanding of this phenomenon, I concentrated the analysis of protest hip hop on a few specific 'tracks' mostly related to the Bijlmer Style hip hop movement. The analysis showed that the difficulty in getting such messages about social and economic injustice across lies not exclusively in the nature of hip hop – indeed, the rap and the words are so quick and slangy that they may be hard to understand. The fact is that even if one understands the words they may not reflect one's own perception of life in the city of Amsterdam. Having arrived at this point, it becomes clear that the most important marker for separating the 'we' from the 'other' lies in the concept of '*allochtoon*', and particularly the contraposition of 'integrated' and 'non-integrated'. Rapper Gikkels is an example of an '*allochtoon*' expressing public criticism of what he sees to be the increasing politics of discrimination against immigrants that he experiences in his neighbourhood in the form of concrete activities by the police, such as preventive searches at metro exits. The antagonists among the posters identify this kind of '*allochtoon*' with a 'non-integrated' immigrant. Such posters close their comments with the message: 'If you don't like it here you should go back to your country'.

This means that, apart from some notable exceptions, protest by means of hip hop irritates the 'Dutch local natives'. They see too much rage and anger in it, a lack of humour and no self-reflection. As a consequence, the most general responses of antagonists are expressed in terms of boredom ('Why are they always so angry?') or incomprehension ('They should realize that life in the Netherlands is better than in the place they come from'.) In summary, it seems clear that rap which consciously and overtly criticizes the situation of immigrants in the Netherlands does not cross over to other audiences that could potentially feel empathy. Such criticisms might elicit sympathy if they came from abroad, for example, as part of the Arab Spring or the protest against Putin by Pussy Riot. However, again, in the Dutch context, such rap is mostly seen by outsiders as misguided and exaggerated.

Nevertheless, posts under videos reveal large numbers of encouraging comments, praising Gikkels' initiative and expressing support. Many suggest that Gikkels and the Green Gang express precisely what

¹¹⁷ According to Bauman, stories of justice, for example, 'cannot be told by anyone except today's victors'. In: *Postmodern Ethics*, p. 227.

they are feeling themselves. Obviously, such posters express solidarity, a sense of camaraderie, they are what in Dutch might be expressed by the word '*lotgenoten*', literally 'partners in destiny'. In this particular performance '*allochtoon*' becomes something like '*lotgenoten*', 'the partners in distress,' 'the fellow-sufferers' who, despite having different nationalities or religions, are basically united by a similar sense of being. They share the experience of growing up in the Netherlands and realizing (mostly all of a sudden, as Salah Edin confesses) that despite having grown up there, they are seen as foreigners and different. Dret's words, referring to the few white people living in the Bijlmer, are also revealing. As we have seen, he explains that when he and his black friends see a white man living in the Bijlmer their first reaction is: 'Wow, what happened to you?', or in other words 'What have you done to deserve such a destiny. Have you misbehaved?'

According to my analyses, the meaning given to current immigrant neighbourhoods such as the Bijlmermeer remains ambivalent. On the one hand, certain comments by '*autochtonen*' suggest that 'the state' or the 'city council' are already giving immigrants more than enough, which would implicitly suggest that they all live in optimal conditions. On the other hand, the material shows that the districts in which immigrants live are seen as underprivileged neighbourhoods. Thus, exaggerated or not, and even if the area has been beautifully renovated and the statistics on current actual crime in the Bijlmer are not worth mentioning, the material reveals that white Amsterdammers generally avoid living in the Bijlmer. Thus, manifestly the Bijlmer is seen by outsiders as a good place for immigrants to live, but not for themselves.¹¹⁸

In this context, protest hip hop articulates itself through an appropriation of the negative images that one assumes the other has about oneself, an appropriation in fact of what imagology calls a negative meta-image. At the same time, it is also interesting to see that the contra image that Bijlmer Style rappers want to show is precisely that the Bijlmer, the hood, 'is a good place to live'. The video clip for 'Doofpot' significantly ends with images of a nice sunny day in the life of the Bijlmermeer, in contrast to the Hobbesian state of nature depicted at the beginning of the clip and encompassed by the words 'primitive people' used unthinkingly by an Amsterdam municipal politician in response to some incidents that occurred in the neighbourhood.¹¹⁹ As we have seen, in contrast to the 'Cavemen' opening scenes

¹¹⁸ Those kind of generalized mechanisms are explored in among others: Bill Yousman, 'Blackophilia and Blackophobia: White Youth, the Consumption of Rap Music, and White Supremacy', *Communication Theory*, 13 (2003), 366–91 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ct/13.4.366>>.

¹¹⁹ I am referring to the horrific state of nature, prior to civilization and contract, as postulated by Thomas Hobbes in 1651 in *Leviathan* (United States of America: Barnes & Noble Publishing, Inc., 2004).

and the voice over, the closing shots reproduce the images of a local city park, with women preparing a barbecue, older men peacefully smoking on a bench, people from different races/origins walking together and children laughing and doing wheelies on bicycles. These peaceful 'Kantian' scenes can certainly be associated with the obverse of the 'ghetto-image'. They reflect a garden of optimism, pride, empowerment and close links of solidarity, friendship and familiarity. It is especially interesting to see how these evocations are almost literal reproductions of testimonies of life in the Bronx as reported by Chang. At these moments, life seems to acquire a delicious lightness and the 'hood becomes a place with great music and examples of talents'.¹²⁰

The examples of crossovers show that the communication among the imaginaries of '*autochtonen*' and '*allochtonen*' can here and there be overcome by means of personal universal stories. Ali B., for example, is able to touch others through his capacity to connect human feelings, giving room to the other (in this case the '*autochtoon*') to hold on to his or her own images of the group they are thought to represent. In this sense, one of the consequences is that Ali B. is seen as an exception to the rule of the Moroccan immigrant and, therefore (and understandably), his performance will not necessarily mean the automatic redemption of an entire ethnic group.

More important than ethnic background appears to be the matter of local rootedness. The styles, beats, lyrics and cinematographic images that are intrinsically mixed in a hip hop track provide an immediate sense of place and way of doing things: Gikkels in the Bijlmer, Salah Edin as a terrorist fighting a repressive and dystopian world, rapper Sef in a taxi driving through Amsterdam or beautifully dressed in the desert with a suit and a trendy turban, Willy from The Opposites showing moments of light and shadow in the night life of Amsterdam, and De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig floating around with golden suits, wearing James Bond jackets and fishing for 'bitches' at the clubs on Friday night, to name but a few. However, it is not only the rappers who give shape to their sense of place. Hip hop related entrepreneurs such as TopNotch, Venz and Nalden also seem to carefully choose their workplaces, transmitting from the Red Light District¹²¹ or setting up offices on the canals or at Westergasfabriek.

¹²⁰ The great Bambaataa, as recalled by Jazzy Jay, putting his speakers out the window and playing music all day while Jazzy Jay still a young boy would ride his 'bike around all day popping wheelies'. In Chang, p. 89. Reference already quoted.

¹²¹ In the meantime, the TopNotch hip hop label has opened a small bar, 'Quartier putain', in the heart of the oldest part of Amsterdam. It pays homage to the erotic tradition of the area, which attracted bohemian Amsterdam in the 1960s and the 1970s, and which is now in a clear phase of revitalization. *Feestelijke Opening Quartier Putain* (The Netherlands: TopNotchNL/YouTube, 2013) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8XY-ruiNfUI>>.

For a genre such as hip hop, based on the idea of the authenticity of intentions, the principle of connection through sharing symbols and images with 'partners in distress' can be applied as a whole. The comments of posters show frequent expressions of identification with the raps or with the personalities of the artists. In this respect, it becomes clear that these kinds of partners in distress have grown in number in recent years among youth/students, in response to a 'Nederhop' represented by groups such as De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig and The Opposites. Johan Fretz seems to hit the mark when he says that for many people of his 'generation', students, or recent graduates like him, hip hop has become the expression and the sign of their times par excellence. As audiences, youth 'like him' have identified with the nonchalance and the lightness of these new hip hop artists, appreciating the humour and the lack of pomposity. '*Niet zeuren*', Pepijn Lanen would say: 'Do not point your finger accusingly at everything as previous generations have done'. Later on – and evolving together with the artists – they joined them in a process of growing up. The older they got, the more open they became to expressing their thoughts and self-reflections concerning the meaning of fame and all the dazzling prospects of wealth and success with which their generation had grown up. In this sense, authenticity also means a life in which one does not need to expect that every day will be successful. It also reminds us that it is important to have fun and enjoy life while doing 'one's own thing' as freely and independently as possible, to keep on learning, searching and engaging with others.

Clearly, the limitations and stereotyped vision of hip hop as a reflection of a gangsta world ridiculed by 'yo, yo' gestures, does not actually coincide with the evolutionary process we have seen in the research corpus gathered here. Clearly, many young people in Amsterdam, often students, see hip hop as a sign of their times and as a reflection of their 'spirit', which is often changing, confused and in a process of adapting. The reflections about managing external appearances and deceptions, the frequent allusions by rappers to 'girls who only like them for the fame' have become common. This symbolism does not seem to literally separate men and women but is a reflection about love and life in general. Rather than the dependent women depicted in gangsta harems, the girls in the latest lyrics of Nederhop songs such as '*Sukkel Voor De Liefde*' hurt men and have no compassion or qualms about using them. The lyrics of '*De Leven*' have a similar element of resignation and seem to underline feelings of personal loneliness and the search for shelter.

At a meta-level of analysis, it is clear that for many hip hop and its derivatives have become an inspiring form of criticism, emancipation, vindication, creativity, humour and cooperation. One could reasonably conclude that this power is not a matter of the specification of the content of its different

manifestations but concerns the way hip hop has been seen as a process of engaging in a flow. The flow varies; sometimes it is empowering, recreating images of self-esteem like Tupac's 'rose growing in the concrete', sometimes humorous and banal, sometimes aggressive, sometimes introspective. However, the clue always lies in the flow and its capacity to engage with others while sharing stories and expressing opinions about life today in a city such as Amsterdam.

7. Capturing the Imaginary. International Students in the City: 'Going Erasmus' in Amsterdam

'Different but the same'

Juanma or Juanmafi, Erasmus student, Amsterdam 2012

7.1. 'Going Erasmus': An introduction

In previous chapters we have seen that sharing support for a local football club such as Amsterdam's Ajax Football Club can give form to the way the city is felt and understood, shared with soul mates and defended from others. Similar tribe formation processes could be seen when observing the views and self-representations of creative characters in Amsterdam, the 'fraternity association students' and the constellations of youth sharing hip hop culture, each group brought together by certain views and uses of space in Amsterdam. This current chapter will deal with possible shared imaginaries of Amsterdam held and expressed by students coming from abroad.

It is not very controversial to assume that students coming from abroad to study in Amsterdam could also develop similar shared feelings in relation to the city. In principle, one can assume that students from abroad will not be acquainted with the city and that they will need to be introduced to it – literally needing to get to know their way around the streets, find addresses, become familiar with the city as a whole. Furthermore, these students will also be introduced to more general elements of Dutch culture and society, including the peculiarities of its inhabitants, their habits, lifestyle, the facilities and services.

Over recent years, Amsterdam's tertiary education institutions have developed websites in English especially addressed to 'international students', summarizing the kinds of peculiarities they will face and the conditions, advantages and other aspects that may be of interest to this specific group. Thus, the specific targeting of international students can give the impression that the group is in fact a clear and well-defined category, which could be seen as a community in itself.

However, upon closer investigation one quickly becomes aware of the large variation in modalities in which students from abroad take part in university life. There is indeed not only a large variety in the type and duration of education, but also in terms of the place of origin and the conditions faced by these students. Indeed, as Hans de Wit observes, the definition of an international student is

anything but univocal. In his review on the matter, he shows how recent developments in tertiary education have contributed to enmeshing the concept, making sustainable comparisons and categorizations of international students even more difficult than before.¹

This means, for example, that the use of one's foreign 'nationality' (the passport one has or the place in which one is born) as a marker of being an international student partaking in a 'mobility education programme' becomes problematic. In this respect, one of the reasons why international students cannot all be classified as 'mobility students' would be, for example, that 'a French student enrolled in a programme of a US university delivered at a branch campus in France' is a 'non-mobile student'. Similarly, students with a foreign passport but already living in a country are mostly not included in the list of international students.² In the case of the Netherlands, those in the latter category are mostly called '*allochtonen*', which literally refers to inhabitants of the Netherlands born abroad.³

Furthermore, additional research on the issue also reveals that trends and factors stimulating outward and inward mobility have sensibly varied over recent years. To summarize, in the Netherlands of the 1970s and 1980s, internationalization was focused on capacity-building, which in fact was synonymous with the educational development of 'developing' countries, followed by the fostering of mutual understanding between cultures. In recent years, however, other decisive factors, such as 'revenue earning' and 'skilled migration', have increased in prominence.⁴

The global search for skilled talent to which I referred in the first chapter of this thesis is in fact one of the visible consequences of current pull factors focused on attracting revenues to Dutch institutions. This would also imply that, similarly, students choose one or other destination according to their own changing necessities and contexts, and basing their decisions on a correlation between these needs and expectations and the image of the country, the image of an institution, and/or an evaluation of the programme.⁵ In addition, the sort of students and the internationalization efforts and instruments that are employed also depend on the level of the courses that are offered. The undergraduate level deals with short-term exchange, aiming to provide cultural experiences and the opportunity to learn another language, for example, while at the graduate level, efforts are primarily

¹ *The Dynamics of International Student Circulation in a Global Context*, ed. by Hans de Wit and others (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2008), p. 27.

² However, this criterion may not be generally applied as such. A study on 'mobility' undertaken by Nuffic in the Netherlands still seems to identify nationality with mobility. See Diagram 26: 'Institutions with the largest number of students from a specific country in 2009-10' in: Eric Richters, Eric Beerkens and Rosa Becker, *Mapping Mobility 2010* (The Hague: Nuffic, 2010), p. 33.

³ As we have seen, in previous chapter the term '*allochtoon*' is also understood as synonymous with 'non-Western coloured immigrant' and sometimes as a member of a 'lower social class'. We will also discuss this topic in the next chapter.

⁴ de Wit and others, p. 27. Marijk van der Wende, 'Internationalization of Higher Education in the OECD Countries: Challenges and Opportunities for the Coming Decade', *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11 (2007), 274–89 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1028315307303543>>.

⁵ de Wit and others, p. 26.

focused on research excellence or professionalization through a Master's degree in such fields as Business Administration.⁶

When focusing on the city of Amsterdam one can quickly observe that the potential choices of students in following a particular course of study at one of its tertiary institutions are also limited for purely practical reasons. Amsterdam, despite being the capital of the Netherlands, does not offer the entire spectrum of subjects at its educational facilities as do other capitals in Europe. Thus, if international students (or locals) studying engineering do not come to Amsterdam, it is not necessarily because they do not like the city, or because the image of the faculty is bad, but for the simple reason that in Amsterdam there is no Engineering Faculty at the University of Amsterdam (UvA) or University Amsterdam (VU).⁷ The actual research-oriented technical universities in the Netherlands are in Delft, Eindhoven and Enschede, with the Technical University of Delft (TU) being the oldest and with a longer tradition and better reputation for attracting a diversified international student population. Not surprisingly, these days Amsterdam city marketing addressed to audiences abroad emphasizes that Delft can be considered part of the metropolitan area of Amsterdam, only one hour by train from Central Station, day or night.

Above all, and returning to the concept of a tribe or community, one conclusion that can be drawn from previous considerations is that it would be unreasonable to suggest that the mere condition of being a student of foreign origin could be a descriptor of a specific tribe, or the basis for a shared imaginary of a place. As has occurred previously in this thesis, one already intuitively that a term such as 'international student' is somewhat of a floating signifier, the meaning of which would need to be identified in specific meaning-giving contexts.

While trying to make sense of these different factors, I noticed that across the whole spectrum of international student types, one picture repeatedly came to the forefront. It was based on a clichéd image which, with the necessary variations, could have been a photograph taken by any arbitrary group of young people. The only difference would be that as a common denominator the pictures had an explicitly international look: groups of young adults, men and women of different sizes and colours – blond, dark, short, tall – hugging each other spontaneously and with enthusiasm, posing for the camera with a drink in their hands (beer or a cocktail), laughing or with a big smile. Perhaps the

European Commission, 'Lifelong Learning Programmes', *Education and Training*
<http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/llp_en.htm>.

⁶ van der Wende, 'Internationalization of Higher Education in the OECD Countries: Challenges and Opportunities for the Coming Decade', p. 279.

⁷ The situation may change with the developments in the Faculty of Technology at the University of Applied Sciences in Amsterdam, which is already offering Bachelor exchange programmes to Erasmus students.

most interesting detail was the captions appearing under the pictures, saying things such as ‘Friends for life’ or ‘The year we lived together on Erasmus in the Netherlands/Spain/England’.

These pictures were evidence of community-forming, expressed by the common denominator ‘Erasmus’. What then is an Erasmus?

As is broadly acknowledged in European tertiary education, Erasmus is a mobility exchange programme open to Bachelor’s students enrolled at European universities. According to the official Erasmus website, the programme, established in 1987, ‘is named after the philosopher, theologian and humanist Erasmus of Rotterdam (1465-1536), known as an opponent of dogmatism’.⁸ Following his legacy, the Erasmus mobility programme offers young people the chance to diversify their education and to complete part of their curriculum abroad at another European university for a period varying between three months and a year. According to the Erasmus programme, ‘going on Erasmus offers students the opportunity to experience another culture and a new way of looking at [one’s] own subject’. In addition, with an Erasmus one ‘can make new friends and grow as a person’.⁹

In relation to the above-mentioned rationale of internationalization, lifelong learning programmes such as Erasmus are seen as instrumental in achieving a common European educational space based on cooperation. The institutions, groups and individuals partaking in European-wide programmes are thought to share a cooperative philosophy, which is something that is ultimately understood as a metaphor for a shared Europe of nations.¹⁰ This cooperation in turn aims to make Europe a more competitive actor in a globalized world since as remarked by Marijk van der Wende there is ‘a general awareness of the importance of the “attractiveness” of European higher education’ and as such ‘the Bologna declaration’s aim to promote international competitiveness has been adopted as a priority in a great number of countries.’¹¹

This is of interest here because when one thinks about European cooperation programmes one cannot avoid thinking of the voices that accuse Europe of being a bureaucratic machine, creating

⁸ ERASMUS in capitals stands also for *EuRopean Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students*. See: ‘History of the ERASMUS Programme’ <http://web.archive.org/web/20130404063516/http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/history_en.htm>.

⁹ Today, the Erasmus programme is part of the EU’s Lifelong Learning Programmes, consisting of Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius and Grundtvig. It is interesting to note that of each of them is focused on a different phase of life or on a different kind of education. While Erasmus stimulates the exchange of young adults studying at universities, the Leonardo da Vinci focuses on exchange in vocational education and training. Similarly, the Comenius focuses on primary and secondary school, while Grundtvig concentrates on the education of older adults. In: European Commission.

¹⁰ Interestingly, the work of Favell shows how those ideals are embodied in highly educated individuals from an array of European countries, enjoying a sort of independent European citizenship, in what he calls ‘Eurocities’. Adrian Favell, *Eurostars and Eurocities. Free Movement and Mobility in an Integrative Europe* (Malden, Oxford, Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), pp. 107–111.

¹¹ Marijk van der Wende, ‘The International Dimension in National Higher Education Policies: What Has Changed in Europe in the Last Five Years?’, *European Journal of Education*, 36 (2001), 431–41 (p. 437).

ivory towers far from the ‘reality’ of daily life and national concerns. Nevertheless, although the start of programmes such as Erasmus were far from smooth – with adjustments to policies requiring arduous negotiations – the fact is that in many countries student participation in the Erasmus programmes has been enormously successful and has had an important impact on European university life. This impact might be especially noticeable among the three most popular destination countries, which in 2011-2012 were Spain, France and Germany. Spain also sent the largest number of students abroad, followed by Germany and France.¹²

For scholars concerned with education and identity formation, the impact that Erasmus had on the real life of European students became clear after seeing the film *L’auberge espagnole*. Indeed, these authors maintain that the film should be interpreted as going beyond the comical – and its apparent superficiality – in reflecting an Erasmus stay as a big party.¹³ As is probably well known, the film tells the story of a group of Erasmus students living together in an apartment in Barcelona. The film starts by portraying them as stereotypical national characters: the French as arrogant, the English obstinate, the Spanish eclectic, the German rigid and the Italian muddled. However, as the story develops, all the characters undergo a process of humanization, unveiling other dimensions of their personalities. In this way, they become increasingly involved with their flatmates and end up as a kind of surrogate family. For this reason, the above-mentioned authors see the story as a metaphor of a new European identity, which has the ‘extraordinary characteristic of not being imposed from above and not eroding national and local identities.’¹⁴

The fact that the film tells the story of a crucial moment in young adult life enables us to see the relevance of such a story as an important part of people’s biographies. On this basis, literature on identity in contemporary life reveals important ideas that are also interesting to take into account. The adventure of a year abroad, for example, could be seen as a part of what Lash called the ‘do-it-yourself’ or ‘bricolage’ biography.¹⁵ According to King and Ruiz-Gelices, this concept seems to be especially relevant to the ‘year abroad experience’, in which students have the opportunity to explore different ways of being, beyond the more or less fixed patterns of behaviour they engage in at home.¹⁶

¹² See ‘Number of Erasmus Students Tops 3 Million’ <europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-657_en.htm>.

¹³ Chantal Cornut-Gentile d’ Arcy, ‘Laughing across Frontiers. L’Auberge Espagnole (Klapisch, 2002) as Cultural Mediator of / for a Borderless Europe’, *World and Text, A Journal of Literary Studies and Linguistics*, 2012, 212–23 (p. 214).

¹⁴ ‘straordinaria caratteristica di non essere imposta dall’alto e di non cancellare la identità nazionale e locali’. Antonio Nicita, ‘Erasmus in Un Appartamento Spagnolo: E Se Fossero Già Nati Gli Europei?’, *Meridiana*, 46 (2003), 241–44 (p. 243).

¹⁵ Scott Lash, ‘Individualisation in a Non-Linear Mode’, in *Individualisation: Institutionalized Individualism And Its Social And Political Consequences* (London, California, New Delhi: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2001), pp. vii – xiii.

¹⁶ In Russell King and Enric Ruiz-Gelices, ‘International Student Migration and the European “Year Abroad”: Effects on European Identity and Subsequent Migration Behaviour’, *International Journal of Population Geography*, 9 (2003), 229–52 (p. 246) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ijpg.280>>.

In terms of narrative, a second important idea is that such experiences abroad can also be studied on the basis of related acts of consumption. The relationship between specific acts of consumption, such as buying a ticket to the destination country, and the background that gives meaning to them, allows the 'unfolding [of] a narrative of oneself'. According to Thompson, it is because of this relationship that some specific life events acquire a biographical significance and will be taken as paradigmatic when telling one's own story. In this sense, and as Thompson argues in his studies of consumer behaviour, the information and promotional material behind any act of consumption might not only 'provide entertainment or information', but also 'offer culturally salient representations from which consumers can assess their own lives'.¹⁷ Similarly to what Host called the educational character of marketing a lifestyle, which had taught suburban America of the 1950s how to live in such new environments,¹⁸ the experience of a year abroad could be related to the meaning a society gives to it as an essential step in the coming-of-age process.

A third idea, related to this, is that while claims suggesting that a year abroad is 'good for your CV' could point at a merely instrumental interest without deeper consequences for one's life, the pictures of Erasmus students accompanied by captions such as 'friends for life' suggest that the experience is felt to be authentic. That is to say, these images suggest that Erasmus students feel that they are members of a genuine community. It could also mean that, although Erasmus as a governmental and European initiative is often seen as a bureaucratic machine, the Erasmus programme may have become a mechanism by which its beneficiaries feel a natural and shared sense of community and of belonging to a shared place, which characterizes tribal formation.

All of these thoughts are interesting enough to prompt further research, as they shed further light on the way in which community feelings take form, even in (or perhaps thanks to) already formed niches in which people can develop the idea of a place especially made for them.¹⁹ In fact, this has already been seen with Ajax supporters and with *corps* students and it probably could be applied to many activities and important passages in our lives. However, to develop a more detailed understanding of these possible shared meanings it will be necessary to gain access to the meaning-giving contexts in which this community is manifested. In the following section I will briefly review some of the relevant topics which may shed light on the context of the Erasmus experience in particular, looking at visions

¹⁷ Kellner 1992; and O'Guinn and Shrum 1997, quoted by Thompson in *Consumption Stories*. Reviewed work(s): Craig J Thompson.

¹⁸ I have referred to this in Chapter 2.

¹⁹ As observed by Ramon Spaaij, concerning Football fandom and in reference to Erikson's *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968). Spaaij, p. 51.

of Europe as seen from different countries, and at the complexity of the links within the European landscape.²⁰

7.2. Erasmus in the European landscape. Narrowing the focus to Erasmus students coming from universities in Spain

Visions and emotional links within Europe not only change over time, but also change between countries and even regionally within a country. Díez Medrano compared the differences between feelings that were supportive of Europe in Spain and Germany with the negative view felt in the United Kingdom, for example.²¹ The reasons given for the pro-Europeanism of the youth in Germany and Spain partaking in exchange programmes include the search for a European identity which is less marked by historical circumstances, such as the Second World War in Germany or the repression of a variety of nationalisms in Spain during Franco's dictatorship. This does not mean that all youth in Germany and Spain are pro-European, but that the students undertaking exchange programmes are more likely to embrace the ideal of a united Europe of nations.²²

The issue is, of course, far from simple. Diverse authors propose different solutions in their studies of these links with Europe in general, and between regions and countries in Europe in particular. Anholt sheds light on the fact that the traditional links between European 'cultures' are multiple and of different kinds, whether through trade or through identification with countries with similar characteristics, languages and cultures.²³ Culturally well-developed Northern Europeans, for example, might feel a connection with Italian culture and gastronomical traditions, while feeling suspicious of its politics or its economic system.

For this reason, Favell's approach, proposing research centred on what people do in Europe rather than what they feel about their European identity, seems to be a better way of understanding this complexity. For example, while European working mobility has remained extremely low, Europeans consider themselves to be mobile cosmopolitans.²⁴ In comparison with working mobility, student

²⁰ The 'fusions of horizon' in interpretative consumer research is a term used by Thompson in: Craig J Thompson, pp. 446–449.

²¹ Juan Díez Medrano, *Framing Europe: Attitudes to European Integration in Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003).

²² Bernhard Streitwieser, 'Erasmus Mobility and Students' Conceptions of National, Regional and Global Citizenship Identity', in *Internationalisation revisited; New dimensions in the internationalisation of higher education*, ed. by Jos Beelen and Hans de Wit (Amsterdam: CAREM, 2012), pp. 135–50.

²³ Anholt, *Places, Identity, Image and Reputation*, pp. 140–160.

²⁴ Adrian Favell, 'Europe's Identity Problem', *West European Politics*, 28 (2005), 1109–16
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01402380500311863>>.

mobility can be seen in general to have been successful, even if at present the desired figure of 20 percent suggested by the European Commission has not been achieved. Following Favell's argument, this would mean that students have embraced mobility more than the working population and that at a given moment of their lives they have acted as united Europeans.

With Duchesne, one can also say that European identity is full of contradictions, but as such can 'deal with human paradoxes, even those that may never be finally resolved'.²⁵ At the same time, this does not mean that these identities are not susceptible to being singled out and analysed. From an imagological point of view, the different images and feelings of identity depend on the elements chosen for examination, since 'every image has its alter image'. Framing this in the words of Leerssen, '[...] each identity needs its own contours, its own outline and demarcations from one or more alterities, and every auto-image needs its hetero-image.'²⁶

Considering the Netherlands, and Amsterdam in particular, as a destination for Erasmus students, it will be very interesting to see what kind of images that prospective students may have shared before their arrival. It will be interesting to see, in other words, what auto, meta and hetero-images are at play when it comes to an imaginary of Amsterdam from the viewpoint of Erasmus students. In this I will focus on Erasmus students coming to Amsterdam from universities in Spain. The choice of Spain is based on feasibility but also on the fact that students from universities in Spain seem to be the most enthusiastic partakers in European exchange programmes such as Erasmus. With this choice, I hope to achieve a more focused analysis of the international characteristics in question.

a. Europeanism in Spain

In focusing on Spain there are different topics worth taking into consideration. Firstly, it is interesting to recall some of the reasons that have been given to explain the enthusiastic participation of students from Spanish universities in European programmes. Some authors think that this can be explained by the positive economic developments that resulted from Spain's affiliation to Europe over recent decades.²⁷ Other studies, however, point to the fact that pro-European feelings in Spain

Favell, *Eurostars and Eurocities. Free Movement and Mobility in an Integrative Europe*.

²⁵ Sophie Duchesne, 'Waiting for a European Identity... Reflections on the Process of Identification with Europe', *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 9 (2008), 397–410 (p. 6) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15705850802416796>>. Also: Sophie Duchesne and André-Paul Frogner, 'National and European Identifications: A Dual Relationship', *Comparative European Politics*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 143–68 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.cep.6110128>>.

²⁶ '[...] elke identiteit zijn contouren, zijn silhouet en zijn afbakeningen ten opzichte van een of meerdere alteriteiten nodig heeft, en elk auto-image zijn hetero-image'. Joep Leerssen, *Spiegelpaleis Europa. Europese Cultuur Als Mythe En Beeldvorming* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij Vantilt, 2011), p. 191.

²⁷ The 'shaken' economy of Spain would explain the positive feelings towards Europe according to Streitwieser.

have been long-lasting, were also latent during Franco's dictatorship of 1939 to 1975 and should not be directly linked to the resulting economic prosperity.²⁸

Secondly, it is interesting to note that in Spain Europeanism has been frequently expressed and associated with contempt for the country. Indeed, in Spain, the issue of self-deprecation, in which one's own country is found to be backward in contrast to what are considered to be more progressive cultures, has a long tradition in modern times.²⁹ In Catalonia, for example, a European vocation and Europe as the symbol of civilization was mostly established through the work of Noucentistes at the beginning of the twentieth century.³⁰ The idea was that to be modern, Catalonia and Spain *had* to be open to Europe. Later on, in intellectual and progressive Spain, Europe was seen as representing freedom and democracy not shared by Spain due to the Franco dictatorship. This is a Spain that sees itself through a dual mirror of pride and pain, in which self-blame and self-criticism should be understood as a sign of development and self-reflection.³¹

Thirdly, it is interesting that the Europeanization of Spain occurred quite quickly after Franco's death. The first punks could be seen on the streets,³² while the 'typical stereotypical Spanish' man who was 'short, fat and bad at sport'³³ started to be transformed. He jogged on the same streets and started to play football, hockey and tennis at school and in sports centres. In 2007, Nike launched its guerrilla marketing slogan 'Being Spanish is not an excuse anymore, it's a responsibility', capturing with

²⁸ The relatively little influence of economic motivations on pro-European feelings in Spain is also exposed in: Yehuda Cohen, *The Spanish Shadows Of Embarrassment. Heritage, Society and National Identity in the European Union* (Eastbourne, Oregon, Ontario: Sussex Academic Press, 2011), pp. 196–197.

²⁹ One starting point of this progressive discourse is that it is important to acknowledge one's own shortcomings in order to improve oneself. One of the most well-known examples illustrating this tradition is the article 'Vuelva usted mañana', written by Jose Maria Larra in 1832. Larra was part of the progressive liberal stream and his work should be seen in the context of the heritage of the Cadiz Constitution of 1812, inspired by the ideals of equality and freedom of all citizens associated with the French revolution, which are in fact the same principles underlying European programmes such as Erasmus. The adoption and interpretation of Spanish contemporary history is elaborated in among others: *Ser Españoles. Imaginarios Nacionalistas En El Siglo XX*, ed. by Javier Moreno Luzón and Xosé M. Núñez Seixas (Barcelona: RBA, 2013). See also: Javier Moreno Luzón, 'Memoria de La Nación Liberal: El Primer Centenario de Las Cortes de Cádiz', *Ayer*, 52 (2013), 2017–2235.

³⁰ The work of its leader, Eugeni d'Ors, included lessons in civilization in the form of narratives under his pseudonym Xènius. As a paradigmatic story, Xènius narrated a traffic incident in a civilized city of England, a city which was clearly contrasted with the 'stone camps' that could be found in Catalonia. In England, the conflict was resolved in absolute calm – while one is left to deduce that the same incident in Spain would have involved screaming and fighting. With this example, Xènius projected an image of *savoir faire* and good manners that he saw as ideal for Catalonia. Eugeni d'Ors, 'Urbanitat. (1906)', in *Glosari* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1982).

³¹ The poet Salvador Espriu put it this way: 'Oh! I'm so tired of my| coward, old and so wild land| and how would I like to go far away| to the north |where it is said that people are clean| and noble, cultured, rich, free| awake and happy! [...] |But I will never follow my dream| and I will stay here until I die| because I'm also very coward and wild| and I love| with a desperate pain, this poor| dirty, sad and unhappy homeland.' Salvador Espriu, '*Assaig de Cantic En El Temple*' 1954-*Performed by Ovidi Montllor* (Països Catalans: YouTube, 2012) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhAVbYAV4Ps>>. Translation is mine.

³² Carles Freixa, *De Jóvenes, Bandas Y Tribus. Antropología de La Juventud* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1998) <<http://www.scribd.com/doc/8753074/Carles-Freixa-De-Jovenes-Bandas-y-Tribus>>.

³³ In her popular song 'Un año más' Ana Torroja of Mecano was still referring to 'españolitos, enormes, bajitos' ('little Spanish, round and short'). Mecano's hit has been one of best sold L.P. record of all times in Spain. Mecano, "'Un Año Más' Descanso Dominical' (Madrid: BMG, 1988) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jl-a_j0Y7GY>.

precision one of the national auto-stereotypes, in which shortcomings are justified by 'being Spanish'.³⁴

In addition to this meta-image of Europe that prevailed in progressive Spain, it is also interesting to review the expectations about and reputations of different exchanges in general and specifically in relation to Amsterdam. There is, in fact, an extensive array of sources in which preferences are exposed and analysed. Rankings appearing in different studies point to England, Italy and France as unquestionably the top three countries preferred by students from Spain because of the prestigious universities of Oxford, Bologna and the Sorbonne respectively. Research by Willem van Winden, however, also points to successful stories of students and cities in Sweden and Norway, establishing a typology of student cities in north-western Europe.³⁵

At the same time, the international offices of different faculties have also undertaken in-house rankings of the most popular universities among their own students. In such reviews, Newcastle, for example, seems to offer the ideal conditions for students of engineering from the Universitat Autònoma of Barcelona. In one such ranking, the Netherlands appears as the fourth most attractive destination. According to these studies, the choice of the Netherlands for students from Spanish universities would be justified by 'emotional' factors (less practical in nature) such as the charm of the Netherlands (and especially Amsterdam) and its permissiveness within a 'civilized and safe context'.³⁶ Students choosing the Netherlands would have, as more essential goals, 'mastering a second or third language, curiosity about other ways of learning (innovation) and desire for adventure'.

The following sections will look more closely at these views of Amsterdam.

³⁴ The banner, written by the well-known football players Cesc Fàbregas, Carles Puyol, Fernando Torres, Sergio Ramos, Andrés Iniesta and David Albelda, was displayed at an important football match and gained prime time coverage in the main TV News and printed press from Spain. Belén Gayán, *Momentum Futbol* (Spain: Nike/YouTube, 2007) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQAen-Dg2no>>.

³⁵ Willem Van Winden, Leo Van Den Berg and Peter Pol, 'European Cities in the Knowledge Economy: Towards a Typology', *Urban Studies*, 44 (2007), 525–49 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00420980601131886>>.

³⁶ Josefa Gil de Gómez Rubio, Maria Teresa Diaz Allué and Etienne Mullet, 'Studying, Working, and Living in Another EU Country: Spanish Youth's Point of View', *Journal of European Integration*, 24 (2002), 53–67 (p. 65) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07036330290014660>>.

7.3. Set up for an analysis of core material

As already suggested, I opted to focus this chapter on the Erasmus imaginary of Amsterdam primarily on students from universities in Spain who were intending to take, were taking or had already taken an Erasmus in the Randstad (especially in Amsterdam).

The choice to focus the analysis on the material related to these specific students had not only to do with their enthusiasm but also other practical reasons. With Spain as a starting point I could ensure that the fusion of horizons would be facilitated by my familiarity with the languages spoken in Spain, as well as its cultural, economic, social and historical background. At the same time, the cooperation with universities in Barcelona in our joint programme (IVCF Amsterdam-Barcelona-Paris) also simplified the research gathering process related to formal documents, etc.

General information that was important to take into account included a) messages launched by Erasmus related organizations, and b) messages launched by organizations and stakeholders in Amsterdam.

- a. The material originating from Erasmus-related organizations could be used to recognize trends in social and ideological criteria that influence the way in which societies assess quality.³⁷ On this basis, we could conclude, for example, that according to the philosophy of Erasmus exchange programmes, a good student should be ‘open minded, adventurous, curious and internationally oriented’. Different documents and publications offer clear impressions of the general instructions given to students to make their Erasmus stay as profitable as possible.³⁸
- b. Concerning the city of Amsterdam, non-governmental publications such as *Time Out Amsterdam* illustrate how the city is presented to students and expats from abroad by what we could call ‘the creative class’. The website of ‘I Amsterdam’ and publications offered by organizations such as Erasmus Amsterdam or ISN Amsterdam and Insiders also provide an interesting insight into the way the city is presented to exchange Erasmus students.

Parallel to the array of background material mentioned above, I collected additional data in order to understand the particular visions of life, or the artefacts, that describe the group under study. This means that part of the data collection effort involved observing the various activities (in this case

³⁷ Douglas Kellner, ‘Popular Culture and the Construction of Post-Modern Identities’, in *Modernity & Identity*, ed. by Scott Lash and Jonathan Friedman (Oxford U.K.: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 141–77; Thomas C. O’Guinn and L. J. Shrum, ‘The Role of Television in the Construction of Consumer Reality’, *Journal of Consumer Research*, 23 (1997), 278 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/209483>>; Referred by Craig J Thompson, p. 449.

³⁸Pauline Kneale, ‘Getting the Best from an International Year’, *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 32 (2008), 337–45 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03098260801966000>>.

mainly through electronic channels) and understanding the community's specific language, idiosyncrasies and the existing hierarchy that in the end would help to determine the group's features.³⁹

As a complement, informal observations in situ at places such as student housing in Amsterdam mentioned in their texts, enabled me to locate specific references, such as a view from a room, etc. Furthermore, I gained an insight into the literature on the lifestyle associated with 'being an Erasmus'⁴⁰ in publications on the topic *ERASMUS year abroad*.⁴¹ This literature discusses the special characteristics of exchange students in contrast with local students. Exchange students, for example, tend to form groups with other international students and have little contact with local students. The reasons are varied and have helped me to distinguish and interpret core themes appearing in this research corpus.

Needless to say, concerning data collection and following the recommendations of Kozinets in his research on online communities, I continued to opt for a system of analysis that would, as far as possible, take advantage of unobstructed material.⁴² In my approach, this means that instead of generating research material through interviews or surveys with students, I opted for material that had already been produced by them for aims other than our research.

Therefore, the core material analysed in this chapter consists of a heterogeneous corpus of texts gathered from blogs, forums, interviews on radio, or short movies made by students (the latter mostly posted on YouTube). The material collected is limited to that produced over the last six years (although one of the forums has been open since 2005) by students themselves or with their participation. The material was found on the internet via general searches, using phrases such as '*estudiar en Amsterdam*', '*Erasmus en Amsterdam*' or '*un año de Erasmus*', and enhanced in a second search of redirected links from the same texts. The use of Spanish or Catalan as a search language, linked to specific references to home universities, allowed me to ensure a traceable context. Although limited, the corpus which was collected was able to ground a theory offering a sufficient

³⁹ Cova and Pace, p. 7.

⁴⁰ In Spain, the name 'Erasmus' (plural 'Erasmuses') appears in literature on students partaking in the Erasmus programme as a sort of generic designation to those students (instead of the most official grammatical form 'Erasmista' plural 'Erasmistas'). The general adoption of the term has been undoubtedly legitimated by its extensive use among Erasmus students. In this chapter I have also adopted this designation and use it to respectively refer to Erasmus as a programme and to Erasmus(es) as a person or persons. I believe that the context in which those words are used will be clarifying enough to avoid confusions between both.

⁴¹ Emmanuel Sigalas, 'Cross-Border Mobility and European Identity: The Effectiveness of Intergroup Contact during the ERASMUS Year Abroad', *European Union Politics*, 11 (2010), 241–65 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1465116510363656>>.

⁴² Robert Kozinets.

vision on this issue (new material, found later in the same way, only complemented the vision without adding significant new insights).

To analyse the texts, I used tools derived from imagology. As already stated, this focus on 'images' is suitable to my research because it goes beyond factual statements and reports and allows the subjective elements to be captured, which seem to play a very important role in determining why the students choose a country and how they experience their time there. In fact, an initial exploration almost immediately corroborated that these kinds of dynamics are not abstractions but appear in the daily reflections and observations of Spanish and/or Catalan students undertaking an Erasmus. The following will outline some important textual characteristics of the research corpus before we proceed to a more contextualized analysis.

a. Characteristics of the material

As mentioned, the tools used in imagology can be of great help in the study of a corpus such as the current one, for which it was first necessary to establish the most relevant topics by taking into account the sorts of texts and genres at play.

For example, the narratives of the blogs analysed generally proceed to the successful achievement of the goal pursued: the stories have a clear starting point in choosing an Erasmus, followed by arriving at a new place, an account of a process through which the main character adapts to their new environment and way of life, and eventually reaches its conclusion as the Erasmus period comes to an end. Some blogs also provide an epilogue, often a sort of homage explaining the importance of the time spent away and a promise to keep the memories alive.

While the styles and personalities of the authors vary, the blogs analysed share important characteristics, such as the use of self-deprecation (making oneself ridiculous in a new situation). Blogs are also used as a vent in which the authors reveal both a positive sense of humour and a positive sense of life. In some cases, the narrative is comprised of video blogs with which students cover their stay from beginning to end. While not directly put this way by their creators, additional videos posted on YouTube by them enable us to gain an insight into different events experienced during their stay, such as a particular video made as a birthday present for a co-student/new friend in Amsterdam, a specific recommendation to visit a place, or their first-day experiences at the new university, made as an assignment for a course (in video journalism).

Furthermore, while most forums appear to be used for orientation before an Erasmus exchange, there are also interesting examples of forums on specific subjects related to Erasmus, such as the

nostalgia experienced after having finished. Participants in the forums generally fall into the categories of inexperienced or experienced (novices or masters). The former, for example, ask for specific information, while those students who have already completed an Erasmus respond and give their recommendations. The tone of the conversation varies from an informal but serious exchange of information about how to find a place to live, to discussions about the real goal of an Erasmus stay, which combine some elements of provocation and boasting with more serious reflections about being an Erasmus student. The general dynamic includes posters who appear when things threaten to get out of control, restoring equilibrium, as in the case of a girl who observes something like that: 'you are all here boasting about the number of girls you have had during your stay, but probably most of you have only had them in your wet dreams'.⁴³

The interviews collected were mostly done by the university or faculty website/magazine and follow a more or less fixed format, balancing information provision and entertainment. Questions which are often asked include: What do you like most about the new place and what do you miss? with the answers often starting with: 'It could be seen as a cliché but the thing I miss the most/or I like the most is ...'.

Furthermore, the analyses of the corpus brings out a series of relevant subjects which are, in part, already related to different matters in the literature reviewed. These subjects are:

- Exchange of information on expectations: What does Amsterdam/the Netherlands look like? How can I find housing? What can I expect about the level of the courses?, etc.
- Recommendations: learning from the experience of others and their insights to assist in the interpretation of the foreign reality (e.g. contrast with Spain in relation to food, customs, character matters), tips for a quick and successful adaptation (e.g. how to adapt after having first arrived at a destination, how to overcome homesickness, how to behave, where to go partying, free time, sport, etc.).
- Distinction and recognition of the phases during a stay (from homesickness to dreading the end of the stay) and the impressions and filters influencing their views.

⁴³ 'Habéis Follado En Vuestro Destino Erasmus?', *Erasmus World*, 2010 <Material in archive>.

b. Distilled topics

After a careful reading of the material and the classification of the texts, I coded the corpus according to topics derived inductively, which are all related to an understanding of becoming a 'Homo Erasmus'. These are summarized under the following topics:

a. Homo Erasmus

Becoming an Erasmus. First steps: Where to go? Who goes where?

Freedom, sex and partying. Homo Erectus

Sense of humour

b. Erasmus stay: Entering another reality

Making friends for life

Reviewing and rearranging perspectives

Process of adaptation. Overcoming problems. Typology of standard situations

Everything will be all right

Instructions from the Masters: Take care! Do not isolate yourself!

c. The Halo Effect. The Dutch are...

... Well organized,

... Efficient and no nonsense,

... Freedom-loving,

... Laid-back,

... Good at foreign languages,

... More independent,

... Handsome.

d. Dutch food and cleanliness!

Interpreting codes.

e. Nostalgia and longing. The Post Erasmus Syndrome.

f. Landmarks of Amsterdam.

Coffee shops and sex shops.

Ecological, natural, not contaminated.

Places to go.

Other places marked as special

In summary, the steps I followed were:

- Search for first-hand material.

- Recognition and naming of the general features of the different kinds of texts in the corpus.
- Establishment and recognition of general topics (those most recurrent in the texts).
- Selection of those which have a possible influence on the topic researched.
- The contrasting and combining of these topics with the selected meta literature in moving towards an analysis and the provision of results.

7.4. Analysis and interpretation

a. Homo Erasmus

- **Becoming an Erasmus. First steps: Where to go? Who goes where?**

The material shows that when students decide to apply for an Erasmus stay they enter what some of them see as a complex process of *'papeleo'* or *'paperwork'*. In this process they have to choose from a list of universities provided by their home university. After choosing, students have to fill in forms and make a study plan (including which courses and modules are they planning to take). In most destination countries within Europe they will also need to show they have a satisfactory level of English by taking an official exam, such as the TOEFL, Cambridge or Oxford certificates. In *'Erasmus Forum'* the head text already warns that:

When you are choosing the place in which you will spend your next term your personal preferences will play an important role, but at the moment of truth it is perfectly possible that it will be the circumstances that decide what your fate will be.⁴⁴

Contributions of students to the blogs of the Erasmus community site *'Erasmus'* confirm the impression that the choice of destination is not as extensive as it may seem. In the words of one of the Spanish students attending a university in Sweden, the choice should be understood as follows:

One thing that will decide your mark and Erasmus is the hassle of validation. To choose your destination, you need to know if you can validate the subjects you want to do. Often there is not all of the subjects you'd want, or they are not in the language that you can do. At my university most of the subjects are in Swedish, whether you have to find that they are not. Do not put destinations on your list, and finally you can't go on Erasmus. You do not need to do a complete inspection of all

⁴⁴ We have not corrected misspellings and grammatical errors in any of the texts quoted. Source from: *'Como Elegir Nuestro Destino de Erasmus'*, *Blog oficial de Erasmus* <<http://es.erasmoos.com/blogs/erasmoos-blog/como-elegir-nuestro-destino-de-erasmus.html>>.

universities. Just have a look on the internet and ask people from other years that have gone to these destinations.⁴⁵

As can be seen here, in addition to contacting their own international office and inspecting the websites of the universities on their lists, students are encouraged to ask directly for information from other students who have already undergone the Erasmus experience.

For another blogger, the analysis of what it means to be an Erasmus includes the following points:

Jan 11, 15:32

What I have been seeing all this time since I thought about applying for the grant is that there are many different ways of approaching an Erasmus grant.

You have some who see it as a way out, a way of finishing their degree, easily passing courses that they would have trouble passing at their own university.

Then you have the type who wants to go to a particular place, whether it is because of their preferences or concerns or whatever, but not for academic considerations. That is to say, they are not going to pass X subjects. He or she is going to enjoy that country, and get a few credits along the way. But not with the sole intention of passing. Because for that you would need to look for faculty X in city X.⁴⁶

A Homo Erasmus is also, incidentally, someone who will probably live away from their parents for the first time. Some students give specific information on subjects to follow, how to find a place to stay and even the complete budget for a month, with specifications of costs and comparisons between supermarkets at home and the study destination.⁴⁷

In addition to the more official choices about specific subjects that are approved by the home university and recommendations and information about the necessity of learning the local language, blogs show that a stay in Germany, in which the language is considered important enough to be learned, attracts specific students, as is also the case with France and Italy.⁴⁸ Furthermore, for countries such as the Netherlands or Finland, some ability to use the local language is found to be useful but not really necessary.

⁴⁵ 'Steps for Getting an Erasmus', *es.erasmoos.com*, 2010 <<http://es.erasmoos.com/blogs/StepsforgettinganErasmus/?p=3>>.

⁴⁶ 'Destinos Erasmus', *mediavida*, 2011 <<http://www.mediavida.com/foro/106/destinos-erasmus-306250/25>>.

⁴⁷ Blog student Hector living during his stay in students housing in Sarphatistraat Amsterdam and film by Raul student Computer Engineering University Granada second semester 2008 in University of Amsterdam on Raul Jimenez Ortega, *Erasmus En Amsterdam* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2008) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23QSxRWe4ag>>.

⁴⁸ 'If there's something you don't know, don't just ask the teacher. Ask the Germans around you, who are always anxious to help. If you're going to take some courses and your German isn't at an acceptable level, it'd be better to reconsider. It's not easy, not at all. There aren't many courses in English around here, not to come right out and say that there aren't any at all. Apart from that, you'll find out for yourself!!' by a Erasmus student in: 'Comentaris Del "Movers EUETIB"', *Escola Universitària d'Enginyeria Tècnica Industrial de Barcelona* <<http://www.euetib.upc.edu/comunitat-universitaria/mobilitat-destudiants/vols-marxar/comentaris-dels-movers-euetib>>.

LIDL	BCN (Mineria 51)	AMS (Hemonylaan 25A)					
	març	setembre	octubre	novembre	desembre	gener	abril
Petxuga de pollastre 400g	2.69		3.69	3.69	3.69	3.69	3.55
Filets de llom de porc 400g	3.39		3.29				
Poma verda a granel (€/kg)	1.59		1.39	1.39	1.39	1.39	
Blat de moro (llauna)	0.49	0.39	0.39	0.39	0.45	0.45	0.45
Pèssols (llauna)	0.49	0.45		0.45	0.45		
Arròs Basmati 1kg	1.69	1.09	1.09			1.49	
Spaghetti/Macarrons 1kg	0.79		0.69				
Enciam iceberg	0.69	0.49 / 0.59	0.49	1.19	0.89	0.79	0.89
Galetes de xocolata	0.79			0.95	0.95	0.95	
Tomàquet fregit (brick)	0.29	0.35	0.35				0.35
Xampinyons (llauna)	0.59	0.39		0.39		0.49	
Oli d'oliva verge 1l	2.55		2.99	2.99	2.99		
Oli de girasol 1l	1.19	0.69	0.89		0.89		0.75
Llet sencera 1l	0.69	0.65 / 0.55	0.65	0.65			
Ous classe M (12 unitats)	1.09	0.99 / 0.95		0.99	0.99	0.99	1.09
Suc de poma 1.5l	0.99					0.99	
Confitura de maduixa	1.19			1.05	1.05	1.05	1.05

A comparison between a supermarket in Barcelona (BCN) and Amsterdam (AMS) made by Homo Erasmus Hector. Hector, 'Homo Erasmus', *blog.hector*, 2008 <Material in archive>.

On the forums during this orientation phase, most reasons adduced for choosing Amsterdam are related to it being a bigger city, and more than just a student city, and for its image of permissiveness and tolerance. One of the posters asking for advice explains his indecisiveness in choosing between Amsterdam, Krakow or Manchester, and it is clear that his association of Amsterdam with 'drugs, prostitutes and parties' is taken as positive, and that the Netherlands is a country in which he is 'rather interested':

Where shall I go for Erasmus? Amsterdam, Krakow or Manchester

Of all the destinations I can choose from, I have already whittled it down to these three that interest me, but I'm finding it difficult to decide. I believe I will receive a grant of 600 a month, which means I could live like a king in Krakow and I understand it's a great place to party; and it's located in an area that strikes me as being a great one to travel in, as it is near to a number of borders with other countries. Amsterdam is the most expensive city of all in terms of rent, but it also has drugs, hookers and parties and it is a country I find pretty interesting. Manchester is also interesting because I love big cities and partying and I wouldn't have to learn another language. The only thing is that I am half English (my parents are English) and I have been to England many times but, despite this, Manchester still interests me.

I am studying business administration and management, so I'm also looking for a university that has a good rep for business studies – I don't want to learn the kind of crap they teach me here, which is worthless.

what do you recommend? advice please!!!!⁴⁹

Another advantage that students mention is that Amsterdam is well connected with Europe, both by air and land. Some posters add that if the choice of Amsterdam cannot be made because it is not in the list of options for an Erasmus Exchange from the home university one should not worry because 'the Netherlands is very small, so you can easily go from one place to another'. However, the positive perspectives are often nuanced by financial matters, principally in terms of transportation, as Erasmus students do not receive free or subsidized public transport in the Netherlands.

Transport is good, but it costs a lot and Dutch students get to travel for free which sucks even more.

For example from Utrecht to Amsterdam costs about €8 which is good but that is only a single and you have to pay the same again to get home. Though if you travel with another Dutch student then you get 40% off.⁵⁰

All in all, disregarding those who solely go to Amsterdam for its own sake, the general opinion in response to calls for recommendations are: 'That wherever you go will work out fine and that after a while you will probably feel home everywhere thanks to the new friends you make -'in the end you can get through anything thanks to your mates'-'. Testimonies of posters typically state: 'It was not my first choice but in the end it turned out to be the best one: it couldn't be better'.

- **Freedom. Sex and partying. *Homo Erectus***

In forums such as '*Forocoches*', the informal criteria for choosing a destination are as follows:

To make your choice you must allow yourself to be led by a number of criteria, according to what you are looking for:

- Passing the subjects you haven't passed yet.
- How easily you speak the language.
- Scoring with chicks.

Once you have your wishes straight it is easier to pick a place. (forum February 2005).⁵¹

In such forums, posters often make jokes and boast about the number of international sexual encounters they had during their Erasmus stay. Instead of 'Homo Erasmus' we are talking about 'Homo Erectus', an allusion to male sexual power. A poster ends the discussion with the following:

⁴⁹ This and following quotations in Foro Forocoches '¿Donde Me Voy de Erasmus? Amsterdam, Cracovia O Manchester', *forocoches*, 2011 <<http://www.forocoches.com/foro/showthread.php?t=2522463>>.

⁵⁰ 'Which University in Netherlands Do You Recommend?', *erasmus-exchange*, 2012 <<http://www.erasmus-exchange.info/viewtopic.php?f=25&t=561>>. This next following quotation is also from the same source.

⁵¹ 'Forum', *forocoches*, 2005 <www.forocoches.com/foro/show/head.php?t-1479377#>.

‘Vaya gilipolleces comentáis por aquí... el Erasmus es mucho más que toda esa parafernalia... ah! Y dejar de tratar a las personas tanto hombres como mujeres) como simples objetos sexuales’.⁵²

Here, Erasmus is also called ‘Orgasmus’, and one of the forums is called ‘*me voy de Orgasmus*’ (‘I’m going for an Orgasmus), paraphrasing the expression, ‘*me voy de Erasmus*’. There is also a radio programme that has asked students returning from their stay whether it was difficult to maintain fidelity to their partner while abroad. To these kinds of questions they answer: ‘Yes of course, Erasmus is a time of great permissiveness’ – ‘*al final casi todos caen*’ – ‘in the end they all fall’, even those who are not used to it. During their stay some of them also realized that they might be attractive to people from other places simply because they are different and exotic.⁵³ This makes that at once Erasmus students might feel themselves as sexually active ‘as a porn star’, as one of the students notes on the forum *cafebabel*.⁵⁴

There are also students who attempt to distance themselves from this scenario, such as Carmelo from Andalucía, who explains that ever since deciding to apply for an Erasmus he has only heard comments such as: ‘Man, I heard you’re going to ORGASMUS! You’re going to be partying hard there!’ He adds that he studies English language and literature so it seems to him very logical that he wants to spend time in an English-speaking university and that he is also curious about experiencing other methods of learning. He also clarifies that he never drinks alcohol.⁵⁵

Another example of similar discussions in the forums is the legitimization of the Homo Erasmus lifestyle. In *Forocoches*, there is one illustrative discussion centred on ‘whether Erasmus should be paid for by everybody’s taxes when it seems it is only to be enjoyed by a bunch of lazy students’. For us, this point is interesting, since it shows that there are also students in Spain who are detractors of Erasmus stays and would never partake in such a programme. Similarly, there are also detractors of the Erasmus goals in general, that is, of creating a multicultural European whole, who clearly express their disapproval of the idea of students of different races having sexual relationships with each other.⁵⁶

⁵² ‘Off Topic: Habéis Follado En Vuestro Destino Erasmus?’, *Erasmus World* (Spain, 2011) <Material in archive>.

⁵³ Interview with ex-Erasmites in radio broadcast: Las chicas de La mar de noches, ‘La Llamada. Me Voy de Orgasmus’ (Spain: La mar de noches, 2010) <<http://blogs.los40.com/lamardenoches/2010/11/>>.

⁵⁴ ‘Post-Erasmus Syndrome: Sos Distress’, *cafebabel*, 2007 <<http://www.cafebabel.co.uk/society/article/post-erasmus-syndrome-sos-distress.html#login>>.

⁵⁵ Blog Carmelo, ‘Carmelo Se va de Erasmus. De Lidar Con La Fama de Otros’, *Erasmooos.com*, 2011, pp. 1–5 <Material in archive>.

⁵⁶ Foros. Guardería, ‘Año Erasmus. Año “Orgasmus”’ (Burbuja. Foro de Economía, 2009) <Material in archive>.

- **Sense of humour**

Although there are a number of general features that describe the Erasmus way of life, most are presented in a humorous way. One form of humour, for example, adopts the language of an instruction manual, similar to a 'survival' toolkit. Others adopt the language and technical terms of a scientific report and take the form of 'anthropological reports'.

One of the many examples of a 'survival' manual includes the Erasmus survival kit issued by a lecturer from the University of Granada. It contains a small bottle of whiskey and a condom, with the lecturer also sarcastically stressing the importance of taking the Erasmus period very seriously – to the student who insists on taking an Erasmus because he actually wants to study in another country, he suggests that he should give up his position to other students who are willing to take real advantage of an Erasmus grant.⁵⁷

Some posters also use humour in the form of a pseudo-scientific or anthropological parody. According to these posts: 'Homo Erasmus is someone who lives in a permanent state of amnesia, due to the constant consumption of $\text{CH}_3\text{CH}_2\text{OH}$ C and a permanent lack of regularity' as explained by one of the bloggers from the student housing block in Sarphatistraat in Amsterdam.⁵⁸ The post concludes: 'the ways of $\text{CH}_3\text{CH}_2\text{OH}$ are inscrutable...'

The use of formulas such as the composition of alcohol, and the paraphrasing of well-known expressions such as 'God's ways are inscrutable', together with the recommendation to try all those things that could be seen as destructive (such as not remembering who you talked to because you were drunk) has a humorous effect. The same effect is seen in the invitation to a party put on by the ESN of Inholland, the international student association that promises all participants: 'an unforgettable evening', or just an evening that you will not remember at all.⁵⁹

All in all, Erasmus students seem to agree that everybody is free to do what they want according to their own beliefs. This would mean that tolerance, or at least a *laissez faire* attitude, is seen as one of the most valuable attributes of being a Homo Erasmus. When the initial poster notes that it is unlikely that an illustrious thinker such as Erasmus would have this degree of liberty in mind, other

⁵⁷ Laura Cabello and Sara Cerrada, *Documental 'Esto Es ERASMUS: Mitos Y Realidades' (Parte 1)* (Spain: YouTube, 2010) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5G8zchfBFs&feature=relmfu>>; *Documental 'Esto Es ERASMUS: Mitos Y Realidades' (Parte 2)* (Spain: YouTube, 2010) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xcu2RtnE9Lk&feature=related>>.

⁵⁸ Hector, 'Homo Erasmus.'

⁵⁹ 'Do you want to experience one amazing evening with a lot of drinking, dancing and fun. Then the ESN Pub Crawl is the right place for you :P. It will be a wild night, unforgettable, full of memories and probably lack of memories :D'. ESN INHolland Diemen, 'ESN Pub Crawl' (Amsterdam, 2013) <<http://galaxy.esn.org/content/esn-pub-crawl-1>>.

posters reply that Erasmus of Rotterdam was not a conservative thinker but a tolerant and freeman, which is why his name is so appropriate for the ERASMUS acronym.⁶⁰

The fact that Erasmus students strive to achieve a particular mindset which is in accordance with what is perceived to be an Erasmus attitude has to do with another characteristic attributed to the Erasmus experience, as we will see below.

b. Erasmus stay: Entering another reality

Students describe the Erasmus experience as a sort of interruption of reality, using words such as ‘bubble’ to describe the feeling. This appears to be an extensively recognizable feeling, a ‘between brackets feeling’, as mentioned by blogger Sickodelic,⁶¹ or ‘a parallel reality’, as described by bloggers such as Hector.⁶²

Because of the freedom they feel, life in the new place is also seen as a gateway to the exploration of other places, ‘which means coming to a third or fourth parallel reality’. In their blogs, students include narratives about trips from the Netherlands to other places by car or by train: ‘And if you do it right’, recommends an ex-Erasmus, ‘you will sleep for free in lots of new places thanks to your Erasmus connections’.⁶³ In this respect Amsterdam partakes of an ectopic quality, what we shall encounter in more salient form when discussing the symbolical, though elided presence of the Red Light District, bellow paragraph 9.1.b.

- **Making ‘Friends for Life’**

One could say that this bubble effect gives life a different dimension, driven by new habits and rules. One account of the start of a friendship between a German student (Pascal) and a Spanish student (probably Juanma or Juanmafi), was posted on YouTube under the title: ‘Different but the same. Amsterdam Erasmus experience’.⁶⁴ In the first scene, the arrival of Pascal at the front door of the house in Amsterdam (Diemen) and his first meeting with Juanma is accompanied by sceptical thoughts, emphasizing differences. He is considering why he would be ‘living with a Spaniard?’, while

⁶⁰ It is extended to see Erasmus of Rotterdam as the personifications of the Erasmus programme ideals: ‘The name comes from the humanist Erasmus (1465–1536), a tireless opponent of dogmatic thinking.’ (‘El nombre proviene del humanista Erasmo (1465-1536), un adversario infatigable del pensamiento dogmático.’) Meritxell Diaz, ‘El Erasmus, Un Programa de Movilidad Europea’, *buscarempleo*, 2007 <<http://www.eliceo.com/sistema-educativo/el-erasmus-un-programa-de-movilidad-europea.html>>.

⁶¹ Sickodelic, ‘No Men Land. Tierra de Nadie. El Albergue Español’, *blogspot.nl*, 2008, pp. 1–4 <<http://sickodelic.blogspot.nl/2008/01/q.html>>.

⁶² Hector, ‘(Almost) Ending 2007 “back to reality”(BCN) and Welcoming 2008 in AMS’, *blog.hector*, 2008 <Material in archive>.

⁶³ ‘Website Erasmusworld’, *Erasmusworld*, 2012

<http://www.erasmusworld.com/portal/modules/newbb/print.php?form=1&topic_id=55082&forum=93>.

⁶⁴ ‘Juanmafi, *Different but the Same - Amsterdam Erasmus Experience* (The Netherlands: Juanmafi/YouTube, 2012) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKGNIq5zTUY>>.

recalling the painful defeat of Germany by Spain (in the semi-final of the 2010 World Cup). In the next scene, Pascal and Juanma go to the supermarket together and, in front of the cold meat shelves, discuss the quality of the different products. The Spanish student picks something that looks like Spanish *Serrano* ham and shows it to Pascal, who in turn picks something that looks like a German *Fleischwurst* and continues the discussion, but in the end they decide that as Erasmus students the best choice is the cheapest. In that way, says the voice over, the cheap brand 'Euroshopper became their national Erasmus brand'. They soon discover that they have more in common. They go to the Red Light District together to gain a first impression of Amsterdam and then go to a coffee shop and decide that they are 'different but the same'. The following scenes show them partying in the common kitchen at their apartment in Diemen, playing the same kind of music, drinking, dancing, playing football, going on ESN (Erasmus Student Network) tours of Amsterdam and the surrounding areas. They finish their film with the statement: 'Thank you Amsterdam and thank you Diemen for having the best time in our lives.'

- **Reviewing and rearranging perspectives**

Another effect of this bubble feeling is the rearranging or reviewing of perspectives due to the temporary condition of being a foreigner. An example can be seen in the following, in which Laura, during her Erasmus stay in Delft, illustrates how she realized that when people talk about other races/ethnicities and do so as if they are a homogenous whole ('they all look the same') it is because of the perspective of the speaker. So, she explains with humour, it is not as strange as she thought that a 'Chinese student (or Korean/Vietnamese/Japanese)' asked her if she was Dutch, when it was obvious, she had thought, that everybody could see that she was Spanish:

And speaking of Dutch people it's the same and it can be really crazy sometimes. I think one of the times I really flipped the most in that country was when a Chinese/Korean/Vietnamese/Japanese (I think Japanese, based on her appearance) girl asked me if I was Dutch. No, I said, I am Spanish, do I look Dutch? And what was her answer? Yes, well, I don't know, to me they all look the same...

We Spanish people are short, dark and hairy with dark eyes; the Dutch are tall, blond, with blue eyes and lots of gel in their hair. We are NOT the same.⁶⁵

During their stay in the Netherlands, rivalries and conflicts within one's own geographic region are resituated, and students from different parts of Spain, for example, get to know each other in the new situation:

⁶⁵ Laura, 'Erasmus En El Pais de La Lluvia', *lauradeerasmusendelft.blogspot*, 2008
<<http://lauradeerasmusendelft.blogspot.com/search?updated-min=2009-01-01T00:00:00%2B01:00&updated-max=2010-01-01T00:00:00%2B01:00&max-results=50>>.

There are so many people who have really left an impression on me this year... I have overcome many prejudices and have made such friends I can't even believe it myself (Here's looking at you, Miquel: you, from Gerona, nobody more Catalan than you; and me, a Madrileña by definition, when are we going to see you in the capital of your country? Hahaha =P). I suppose your Erasmus time depends more on the people you meet than the place where you are. I have been very lucky indeed.

The video made by Juanmafi to congratulate Eloy on his 21st birthday confirms a similar view. The new encounters outside Spain erase possible conflicts and rivalries between Spanish students. The same goes for Erasmus students from different countries. Like Juanmafi in Amsterdam/Diemen, with his new German friend, Laura in Delft writes that she has also lost her prejudices about Scandinavian countries:

Silje, Kaja and Stine: thank you for changing my concept of Norwegian girls. No more dull and polite Victorias but funny and cheerful Viking drinkers! Girls' nights were the best, and we didn't even need to leave boring Delft to have so much fun.

The origins of all of the people who the Erasmus students have recently met are repeatedly mentioned and the internationalism is enjoyed through sharing typical products or habits from each other's countries or regions. Posters refer to meals made by different people of different nationalities in their homes or explain how they have helped organize a party with 'tapas and sangria' prepared by the Spanish Erasmus students in Amsterdam.⁶⁶

- **Process of adaptation. Overcoming problems. Typology of standard situations**

Posters use humour and self-deprecation to portray their experiences during the adaptation process: In the video 'My First experiences in Amsterdam',⁶⁷ Juanmafi and his co-student/friend from Turkey describe the first two weeks in the Netherlands as 'a disaster': the weather, the food ('I have started to dream about my grandmother's meals'). When going to the supermarket, 'everything is in Dutch', 'you do not know if you are buying milk or wine'. English is a second problem, 'at the university nobody seems to understand our English'. The weather and the bicycles are bad but what is worse is the combination of both: 'riding bicycles in bad weather raining in the centre with other trams, other bicycles, cars, motorbikes and buses'. 'It is crazy'. However, they optimistically conclude: 'there is hope that in two months we will [have] control [of] the situation'.

The Dutch language remains a source of jokes: 'Dutch people sound like they are angry but they are not'. Even 'they are friendly', 'maybe they will not talk to you immediately but when you ask them

⁶⁶ Leticia, 'Un Año de Erasmus En Amsterdam', *leticiyamsterdam.blogspot*, 2006
<<http://leticiyamsterdam.blogspot.nl/2006/09/3-cada-da-ms-liada.html>>.

⁶⁷ Paraphrased from: Juanmafi, *My Experience in Amsterdam* (The Netherlands: Juanmafi/YouTube, 2011)
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MXjWpV6Npog&feature=relmfu>>.

something they will answer' and 'they are the best to ask if you do not understand something about the university' (Leticia). In contrast to the positive impressions of some Erasmus students, a Dutch poster who works on the University of Amsterdam welcoming team thinks that in general the Dutch are rude and not interested in international students:

Well, I'm Dutch myself, so I can't judge about Erasmus life. I got to know international students through ISN and all of them said that they had a great time in A'dam. They all loved the city. Even the people who weren't partying all the time. However, they also all said that it is a lonely place and they couldn't really make contact with the locals. The Dutch are not open, they are rude and do not care about you, for sure. That is okay, but it means that you might find it hard making friends with locals (which is not a huge problem if you come for 1 year and just hang out with the internationals). The good thing about Amsterdam is that it is a very international city and you will meet a 'bajillion' people from around the world.⁶⁸

The style of courses at the university is mostly seen as positive and very different to their home university. They find it remarkable that they are often asked to give oral presentations rather than sit written exams, and in contrast to university in Spain, there is not much reading to do. What they find most difficult is working in teams, because you need to reach consensus with the other team members in order to complete an assignment.⁶⁹

- **Everything will be all right**

The process of adaptation follows a very similar dynamic in all blogs. The mixture of excitement, new accommodation and the discomforts of the first few days after arrival gradually disappear. This student explained it in this way:

My place...I am completely settled in!! You'll remember how I complained about my bathroom at first? Well now it's almost starting to grown on me!

My room is much better, I bought a load of small things from Ikea and it seems life a different room and, well, I don't know! I'm almost starting to think living in the outskirts of Amsterdam agrees with me!...I know Diemen inside out, I love the supermarket, the market on Wednesday mornings, the place is really nice and quiet, I go everywhere on my bike in a couple of minutes, I have signed up to a gym which is just below where I live (yes, yes!! And there we are every day, Anna, Jakobine and me, taking classes of 'bodyshape', 'Low impact', 'Pilates'...we have a great time!), so I am happy with everything!!⁷⁰

⁶⁸ 'Erasmus in Amsterdam', *thestudentroom*, 2010 <<http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/showthread.php?t=1214848>>.

⁶⁹ Leticia, 'Un Año de Erasmus En Amsterdam.' blog. Also in Mar Juárez, 'Erasmus a Utrecht, Países Baixos' (Utrecht: Erasmus World, 2011).

⁷⁰ This and the following quotation are from: Leticia, '1.-Y Por Fin Aquí Estoy!!!', *leticiyamsterdam.blogspot*, 2006 <<http://leticiyamsterdam.blogspot.nl/2006/09/1-y-por-fin-aqu-estoy.html>>; Leticia, 'Un Año de Erasmus En Amsterdam.'

This idea that 'In the end everything will be all right' reveals that students such as Laura and Leticia are aware that their decisions are not binding forever and that the Erasmus will eventually come to an end. This would explain why they do not feel the need to make such careful decisions about the location they choose, as they would at home. At the same time, they have learned to find solutions that enable them to enjoy Amsterdam's night life without any problem. Leticia explains:

And when I am too lazy to come back here to sleep because I've gone out in Amsterdam or whatever, there's always a student house where I can stay, so in other words it couldn't be better.

We found an apartment and everything to move to in a place where some Italian friends of ours live (who study Architecture with my friend Jakobine) and we were really on the point of leaving to go there, but, in the end...we're super happy where we are! We have a fantastic internet connection (which we would not have in the other place), we would have had to buy furniture, we have got everything super clean now and, after all, we're not going to be in Amsterdam for the rest of our lives! So in other words, Diemen forever!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Posters share their experiences and reassure readers who are hesitating about taking an Erasmus, giving them some tips while also assuring them that no matter what happens, in the end 'everything will be all right':

I was there the whole of the last term, this year I am almost finishing and I still feel homesick. The accommodation, the classes, the cold...the least of your worries when you don't even have time to think of them... In any case, as I have already said in a few other posts, be careful about what they offer you.

Rental websites usually require that you register and pay them a commission to find an apartment for you, and it's pretty difficult (the first hurdle you will run into is the language, but don't worry, they are not angry, they just sound like it hahaha). In addition, what is also really popular is advertising very cheap apartments, sending the key in exchange for the deposit because the owner is not in Holland and then when you get there it doesn't exist, so look out. It didn't happen to me but I witnessed it happening up close to a girl who later became my flat mate...

I have had bad experiences with university accommodation but, nevertheless, it's the best way to meet people, and in the long run they're an unending source of parties, so don't let that stop you!

With the support of your mates and happiness you can get through anything! (...)

You can take a look at facebook sites such as Erasmus amsterdam or ISN Amsterdam to see if someone is sub-letting their room, and they can also come in handy when looking for a bike, which you are going to need ;)

Lots of luck and enjoy your time there! ⁷¹

⁷¹ This and the next coming quotation are from: 'Website Erasmusworld.'

However, in addition to the liberating ‘between brackets period’, the term ‘bubble’ is also applied in reference to a less positive effect that Spanish posters see as characteristic of Spanish students. According to an experienced Erasmus student, some Spanish students tend to only join groups with other Spanish or Spanish-speaking students – ‘an attitude that they sometimes share with French and Italian people’. That is why she gives this piece of advice to other Erasmus students: ‘By way of advice, try not to hang around in all-Spanish cliques, you’re going to have a better time if you mix with other people and it will also help you a lot with learning the language (and not to mention the year of travel experiences I got for free...hahaha).’

In general, the negative criticism tends to be applied to themselves, while Dutch society is seen very positively. This is something that we will look at more closely in the following paragraph.

c. The Halo Effect. The Dutch are ...

... Well organized:

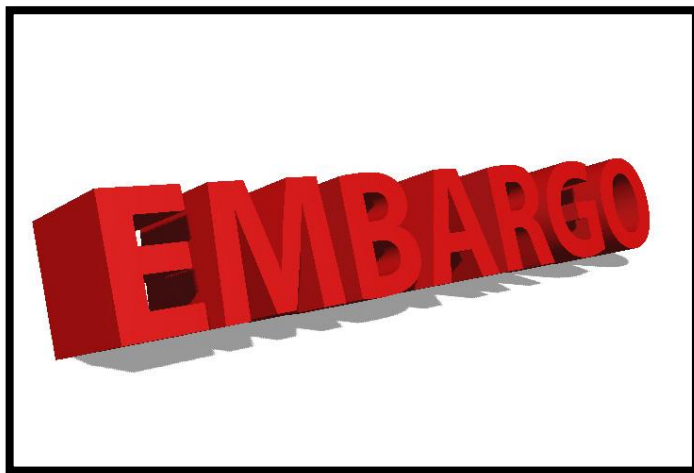
The fact is that the narratives of our corpus reveal a kind of openness to the new place that seems not to refer to a sense of isolation and even provides evidence of a ‘halo effect’, which is to say, when comparisons are made between personal cultural habits and those of the new place, they tend to favour the new place. This means that even situations which could objectively be interpreted as negative, occurring when first arriving in the Netherlands, are posted as evidence of good organization. This was the case for a student who, on arrival in Delft, found that his accommodation had not been arranged (the same happened to his friend who had also just arrived). Instead of blaming the Dutch system, they appreciate the fact that they are given a room in The Hague for a while and conclude that if the same thing had happened in Spain they would probably have not been provided with a solution. While they could well have complained (The Hague is 14 kilometres from Delft and the fact that both students faced the same situation could be interpreted as evidence of substandard or bad organization), they conclude that everything was very civilized.⁷²

... Efficient and no-nonsense:

A similar attitude can be seen regarding typical Dutch activities such as buying a second-hand bicycle in Amsterdam, which is something that the Erasmus students would probably not do at home. They associate the second-hand markets in the Netherlands with a lifestyle that they also admire in Scandinavian countries – lifestyles based on efficiency and an intelligence that is capable of producing social, non-profit solutions. One of them says: ‘more than a business, I see [flea markets] as a service

⁷² Erasmus, ‘On et Vas Allotjar?’ (Informació Erasmus, 2009) <Material in archive>.

to the citizens. Finnish people are like that'.⁷³ A similar sense of admiration for second-hand markets can be seen in the short film made by Erasmus students Juanma and Yadikar, in which a girl shows off the incredible bargains she has found in the IJ-Hallen in Amsterdam, while making the point that Dutch people of all social classes behave in this way and see it as contributing to sustainability.⁷⁴ Second-hand markets are seen as a token of an intelligent, non-profit-oriented attitude, which is found to be synonymous with a better kind of culture and progressive social thinking.



'But my best buy was a black leather sofa that I bought for €20, which was new! The guys from the shop transported it to my place (about 4 km away) for only €10 extra. It was a real bargain'.⁷⁵

... Freedom-loving:

One of the most obvious examples of interpretation according to an already acquired positive hetero-image can be seen in the narrative of Aleix, a student of literature at the University of Barcelona spending time in Amsterdam.⁷⁶ The author presents himself as a student starting an Erasmus stay in Amsterdam, describing the University of Amsterdam as similar to a contemporary science museum (referring to the more modern buildings). 'I was speechless', he confesses. To him the facilities at the University of Amsterdam are evidence of a people who love learning. The nonchalant way that Amsterdammers ride their bicycles also reveals a relaxed character and a love of freedom. In fact, while his first impressions at Schiphol were a disappointment ('Is this the tolerant

⁷³ 'Yo Fui Erasmus La Cultura de Segunda Mano En Finlandia (Kirpputoris)', *Erasmooos.com*, 2009, pp. 37–40 <Material in archive>.

⁷⁴ Juanmafi, *The Largest Flea Market in Netherlands: IJ HALLEN* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2011) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCvBMXQ-VYI&feature=relmfu>>.

⁷⁵ 'Yo Fui Erasmus La Cultura de Segunda Mano En Finlandia (Kirpputoris).'

⁷⁶ Aleix, 'Erasmus', *Universitat de Barcelona. Xarxa de Dinamització Lingüística. UB.Edu*, 2012 <<http://www.ub.edu/xdl/premis/erasmus.html>>.

society we have learned about in our secondary school books in Catalonia?’), he found what he was looking for when he arrived at Amsterdam’s Central Station. Indeed, the love of freedom of the Dutch people was there to be seen at Central Station. For him it was a fascinating place, in which the seagulls and a compass (rather than a typical station clock) seemed to him to encapsulate stories of the free seafarers: ‘A freedom that was only interrupted by Nazi occupation in the Second World War’.

... Laid-back:

In addition to the fact that these Erasmus students are well aware that they will need a bicycle for practical reasons, they also share a view of bicycles as symbols of freedom and coolness. It is not really clear if all these posters know that Dutch bicycles do have brakes (back-pedal, operated by pedalling in reverse), but when reading their comments it seems that they think that Dutch people in Amsterdam are so good at cycling that they do not need brakes to stop. It is almost as though they see them as incredible circus performers or acrobats. Without exception, they refer to their own first experiences of those ‘big bicycles without brakes’. For them, having a Dutch bicycle also makes them feel more part of the city, although some students opt for safety and buy a small one – ‘not very attractive, for a small girl but with brakes’ – even if they are aware that they are ‘making a fool of themselves’ with this un-cool artefact (again another Spanish auto-image). Those who come back to Amsterdam, for example, to celebrate Queen’s Day the year after their Erasmus stay, confess they feel more like outsiders with their hired yellow or red bikes (undoubtedly referring to the bikes rented by Yellow Bike or MacBike).⁷⁷ In fact ‘rent a bike’ entrepreneurs in Amsterdam have already realized that tourists prefer a black bicycle so they look less like tourists. MacBike, for example, has begun delivering black bicycles to hotels and apartments instead of red ones.



‘Yes, it is a Gazelle (a Dutch bicycle make). And it is almost as old as I am’.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ ‘We All Lived In Erasmus Amsterdam’, *amsterdam08.blogspot*, 2009 <<http://amsterdam08.blogspot.nl/>>.

⁷⁸ Ville Lampi, ‘How Am I Supposed to Nof Feel like a Tourist’ (Amsterdam: IES Abroad. Inside Student Blogs, 2011) <<http://blogs.iesabroad.org/author/ville-lampi/>>.

For the Spanish students, a critical attitude towards themselves is repeatedly expressed through deprecating comments about their own culture in comparison to the Dutch, which they find represents quality and success. Such thoughts are also expressed in topics such as the following.

... Good at Foreign Languages:

Dutch people speak English well, whereas according to some Spanish posters: ‘in Spain, after a whole life studying English you only can say thank you’. In this way, they identify the competent use of English by Dutch people as one of the factors indicating good education and cultural development.

... More Independent:

Laura in Delft compares her own immaturity with what she sees as the maturity of Dutch students: ‘When they turn 18, they go to study in another city and they cook and do everything by themselves’. They paint their rooms and apartments and repair their bicycles. ‘It’s incredible’.

... Handsome:

‘And they are very beautiful too’. At ‘first I thought that I found them all beautiful because it was new, but it is true, they are very handsome’, says Laura. At the university in Amsterdam, says Leticia, there are lots of beautiful Dutch boys, so, she says to her blog readers: ‘just come over here’, inviting them to come to Amsterdam and see for themselves (‘Mucho niño mono, o sea que venid’).

- **Dutch food and cleanliness!**

Despite the kind of halo effect seen in previous examples, students still think there are some things which are better in their own country, such as the food and the meal times. They also often miss a certain standard of cleanness and comfort. One of most repeated complaints is associated with the notion of ‘dirtiness’, explicitly referred to by some students in the documentary *Destino Europa* (Destination Europe) published on YouTube, which includes comments such as, ‘The residence was terrible, dirty and so on’.⁷⁹ For Leticia from Madrid, arriving at her ‘apartment’ in Diemen-Amsterdam was a sort of shock:

I was happy because my experience was starting! But at the same time the tears were rolling down my cheeks when I thought of everything I was leaving behind in Madrid.

[he/she] accompanied me to my place and, well,that is when the worst of started...when I opened the door I took a quick look at my bathroom, my room...The Bronx doesn’t describe it...Antti must have noticed the expression on my face, and the truth is he was really supportive.

I went to his apartment and there I met two girls from Valencia, Lorena and Cristina, who invited me

⁷⁹ ‘Destino Europa’ *Destino Europa: Amsterdam (2/5)* (Spain: Acca Media/YouTube, 2009).

to eat with them (and just speaking a few words of Spanish with them filled me with happiness) and soon people started coming into the kitchen of that apartment.⁸⁰

The furniture at the student housing facilities of DUWO is referred to as ‘a pre-IKEA mess’ and they miss the comfort and nice smell of their own bed or the well-equipped bathroom at their parental home in Madrid, Barcelona, Sevilla, Girona, etc. They find a solution in cleaning their new ‘apartment’ and going to IKEA to buy the basics ‘to feel a bit more like home’. References to IKEA are numerous and it seems that students even consider a visit to IKEA to be an unofficial necessity during introduction week ‘to purchase household items’ (‘para comprar menaje’),⁸¹ the first time by public transport but later on, when they are more organized, even by car.



Erasmus artefacts: Ikea

Other important reasons for not choosing to go to Amsterdam when thinking about possible destinations is that it is cold (too cold), and very expensive in terms of housing and transportation and not very well organized in terms of housing. The adventurous character of a student stay in a room without facilities no longer seems to have any romantic quality, not even for students in more creative fields who attend the Rietveld Art School.

- **Interpreting Codes**

Laura’s Blog, which students recommend to each other as good, contains interesting examples of the efforts of this student to interpret codes about other people in her new environment in the city of Delft. She starts by saying that she likes the way Dutch people treat immigrants, but also observes

⁸⁰ Leticia, ‘1.-Y Por Fin Aquí Estoy!!!’

⁸¹Luis van Haarlem, ‘God Bless ESN Haarlem’, *es.erasmoos.com*, 2011, pp. 1–5 <Material in archive>.

that her apartment, near the Technical University (TU Delft), must be in some kind of a slum because the majority of the population is of Turkish origin, with her conclusion being that perhaps, despite its reputation for tolerance, there is ‘a sort of discrimination’ in the Netherlands. She also sees a difference between the majority of students at TU Delft ‘who are mostly human beings with striped shirts and gel in their hair’ (‘pijos’ or ‘preppies’) and the girls at the counters in the supermarket or the canteen, ‘who are more “choni” (tacky)’.⁸²

Nonetheless, the issue of decoding reality in terms of tolerance or racism seems to be more of a worry for those students who are thinking about moving to the Netherlands to find a job. Some sources show that messages about and the image of tolerance in the Netherlands have recently become contradictory. One of the posters says: ‘Until now the intolerance is above all addressed to Moroccan people and people from Suriname. I haven’t noticed intolerance against other European people, ‘but everything will come’.⁸³

Concerning student populations, some students try to describe the differences they have seen between different universities. A student from the University of Barcelona writes that the ambiance in Delft is similar to that found at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (technical and without girls), while girls like those at the University of Barcelona can be found in Leiden. Another explains the differences by specifying that Amsterdam is not just a student city filled with student associations, while in Delft university life is very strange: ‘It works in a really curious way, based on societies and suchlike (as the yanks do it)’.⁸⁴ This poster is referring to fraternity associations such as the *corps* students described in Chapter 4 of this thesis. She finds them a curiosity because she has never seen this kind of student fraternity in Spain.

d. Nostalgia and longing. The Post Erasmus Syndrome

Once the Erasmus stay is over, nostalgia soon comes into play. Ex-Erasmus students refer to the shared places and experiences as ‘our’ bar, ‘our’ square, ‘our’ bicycles,⁸⁵ places that brand their ‘forever’ as ‘*Erasmistas*’ or ‘*Erasmuses*’ in Amsterdam. Once back home, they say they feel strange – their old friends do not understand them anymore. At home, old friends and relatives may think that Erasmus tales are somehow exaggerated, providing an idealized version of the Erasmus experience.⁸⁶

⁸² Laura.

⁸³ On: ‘Estudiar En El Extranjero: Estudiar En Holanda’, *spaniards*, 2012 <<http://www.spaniards.es/foros/2012/02/22/estudiar-en-holanda>>.

⁸⁴ ‘Delft, Amsterdam Y Den Haag’, *ABC.COM*, 2007 <Material in archive>.

⁸⁵ ‘We All Lived In Erasmus Amsterdam.’ See also: Encarna Cuenca Carrión, ‘Erasmus 25 Años Cambiando Vidas, Un Antes Y Un Después’, *OAPEE* (Madrid, 2012) <<http://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&btnG=Search&q=intitle:No+Title#0>>.

⁸⁶ Radio televisión de Castilla y León, ‘¿Hay Vida Después Del Erasmus?’, *rtvcyl*, 2014 <<http://www.rtvcl.es/Noticia/AC807F1E-96F1-8344-0163634991707E8B/20140807/hay/vida/despues/erasmus/>>.

For many *Erasmuses*, life has ‘a before and an after’ and this feeling might even be somewhat negative if pre-existing relationships are broken or daily habits have changed during one’s absence.⁸⁷ As in the case of Xavier, in what many have found to be an inspirational story in *L’auberge espagnol*, an Erasmus stay may even mean ‘a total change in their life’.⁸⁸ Once back in Paris, for example, the main character Xavier abandons his ambition of working for the French civil service and starts a professional career as a writer. In the meantime his relationship with his girlfriend in Paris has also come to an end. As many in the Erasmus internet forums have also said, Xavier confesses that once back in Paris he feels like ‘a foreigner in his own city’. This post from a Spanish girl talking about her feelings once back home provides an illustration:

😞 I identify so much with all of you...I believe the thing that makes me saddest of all is knowing that the friends I left behind in my country of birth don't understand what I am going through, don't understand this sadness, these "changes in mentality", these "inovative" ideas. I feel trapped, I don't like not being "independent". My parents tell me or make it clear that I have to get over it but I am sad that I will have to put behind me in some way, I don't want to forget everything I experienced..because how can I leave behind something that has made me a different person.. 😞 and on top of that I also had a boyfriend there..and despite the fact that we are no longer in a relationship I still think about him a lot...what a horrible feeling! :S How can I balance living the life I had before with my life post erasmus?!! HELP!! 😞⁸⁹

Furthermore, the exceptional nature of the Erasmus stay, understood in terms of the feeling that it will not be repeated, increases the nostalgia. It is a feeling shared in many similar pages from different countries on the web. This is the testimony of one ex-Erasmus student back in Italy:

I need Erasmus once again...it completely changed my life and my points of view....now I'm different, I've understood what I want to do in my life...not a boring job, the one I've been and I'm studying for, but something I really love and feel as a part of myself, because it's possible!! the only problem is I have some exams left before finishing university but I have no will left to study it...what can I do???????? HEEEEELP!!!!⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Alvarito, ‘Volver a España: “Depresión Post-Erasmus”: Los Psicólogos Detectan Un Nuevo Síndrome Entre Los Universitarios Que Regresan Tras Una Estancia En E’, *Spaniards*, 2009 <<http://www.spaniards.es/foros/volver-a-espana/depresion-post-erasmus-los-psicologos-detectan-un-nuevo-sindrome-entre-los-universitarios-que-regresan>>.

⁸⁸ Blogs Laura and Sickodelic, among others.

⁸⁹ On: ‘I Am Not a Tourist. Post-Erasmus Depression’, *Babelblogs*, 2010 <Material in archive>. See also similar forums with titles calling for help such as: ‘Post-Erasmus Syndrome: Sos Distress.’

⁹⁰ ‘I’m Not the Same after My Erasmus. Because I’m Better’, *Facebook*, 2009 <https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=195990557154&id=184617826148>.

e. Landmarks of Amsterdam

Those places that stay in their memories described as ‘our’ square, ‘our’ bench or ‘our’ house on Sarphatistraat or in Diemen become an important reference to their experiences. They are not necessarily the best known places in Amsterdam, but places that have acquired a meaning because they set the stage for their shared Erasmus life in Amsterdam. However, this does not mean that they do not appeal to more well-known images of Amsterdam (or of the Netherlands in general) when writing their posts or taking pictures for their blogs. In addition, for many posters, familiarization with the destination city will start with an exploration of the landmarks and other aspect before they leave home. Many of them have already attempted to prepare themselves for a life in Amsterdam as a citizen (rather than a tourist). The following student, ready to go to Amsterdam, is an example. Asked by an interviewer about her expectations, she demonstrates that she has already done some research on Amsterdam, trying to go beyond the most well-known clichés. They have the following conversation:

‘What do you expect in terms of ambiance on your Erasmus in the city of Van Gogh, Anna Frank, Heineken and marihuana?’

[And she answers:] ‘I don’t think I will be disappointed. And what I like best and think I’m going to enjoy most is the quantity of culture that’s on offer in Amsterdam. Despite being known for its oversimplified image as a place to smoke cannabis, I think it’s one of the richest cities in culture for all of its inhabitants, both in terms of museums and in terms of street culture. I have a lot of confidence in the quality and quantity of things I’m going to do, and you’re all invited to enjoy it with me! :=)’⁹¹

The invitation to join her adventure and visit her there seems to be more than a courtesy. It seems to express a feeling shared with other *Erasmuses* – that in the destination city they will have their own house to which they can invite people if they want to. In the following paragraphs we will see an array of landmarks that they similarly seem to find worth sharing, and that are particularly interesting because of the interpretation given to them.

- **Coffee shops and sex shops**

In addition to the bicycle, as one of most suggested must-dos, a visit to a coffee shop is obligatory. Stereotypically, the good things about the Netherlands are in general ‘cheese, beer and joints’ (*‘queso, cerveza y porros’*), and all posters mention all of these within the array of things that one needs to try. Furthermore, there are also references to sexual permissiveness – if you go to the sex

⁹¹ ‘Entrevistamos a Olga, Futura Estudiante Erasmus En Ámsterdam’, *Erasmooos. La comunidad de los estudiantes internacionales*, 2010 <<http://es.erasmoos.com/blogs/entrevistas-erasmus/entrevistamos-a-olga->>.

museum, *'no te cortes'*, that is, 'feel free, don't be shy'. Posters also add that 'Dutch people find "sex shops" very normal and there is nothing to hold you back'. There are also some recommendations: 'One of the nicest places to go is the Condommerie, a shop in which you can find all kinds of condoms', referring to the well-known shop on Warmoesstraat, considered a pioneer of its kind. For gay students, Amsterdam would be also one of the best choices *'per la fama'* ('for its reputation' for permissiveness concerning homosexuality).⁹²

- **Ecologic, natural, not contaminated**

In addition to tolerance and a sort of chaos in the city centre, students also highlight the greenness of the city and the presence of the canals. In fact, we see that students try to send home images that sustain the perception before they left home. They post, for example, pictures of the University of Amsterdam with, as expected, a coffee shop in front. In addition to the ubiquitous presence of bicycles, nature is also shown in the form of two swans under a bridge, the green parks or birds on their balconies. Other students refer to windmills in the city, which can be seen from their window, probably referring to the windmill which now houses the Het IJ brewery and bar.

- **Places to go**

In the blogs, students talk about attending activities organized by the exchange student association as a good place to meet other students, and they also recommend going to the weekly *borrel* (drinks), organized for international students at cafes such as de Heffer, although some of them say that this is more an activity to be involved in at the beginning of their stay. In Amsterdam during the introductory period they can participate in 'typically Dutch' excursions and activities such as a visit to the cheese market or ice-skating at the Jaap Eden rink. Cultural activities undertaken in the past, such as trips to museums, have been replaced by visits to 'urban' sport centres, such as the local indoor climbing centre near Sloterdijk Station. Other tours referred to are a guided visit to the Red Light District, which is also classified as interesting and even mandatory.

The University of Amsterdam encourages Erasmus students to discover more than the tourist districts, to go beyond the clichés and enjoy more contemporary sites such as Westerpark, which is a redeveloped industrial complex adapted for cultural and free-time activities. Some students recommend the pop temple, Paradiso, which is a classic in references to Amsterdam, and talk about 'all kinds of restaurants' as possible places to eat. Interestingly, McDonalds is commonly included in this list. Nevertheless, most comments refer to parties and gatherings organized by the students

⁹² 'Website Erasmusworld.'

themselves in their own residences, rooms or apartments. Master Erasmuses recommend that new students should not miss Queen's Day, a 'very special day in Amsterdam'.

This student of the University of Alicante reflects on her experience in Amsterdam:

I had the fortune of doing my [Erasmus] exchange in Amsterdam, Holland. Leaving to one side all the topics relating to the weather, tolerance and other stereotypes, in general Amsterdam and Holland are places that offer a great variety of experiences, and it is worth getting to know them better than just as an incidental tourist.

Living in this city means you can experience an Amsterdam that is different to the one advertised in the guidebooks: its street markets, its concerts, its apple pie and the Noordermarkt, and a few beers at the Sound Garden[a local bar] are, in fact, milestones that all of us should experience.

By the way, if you can you should really try to catch a concert in Paradiso, even if it's just one; it's a mythical experience.⁹³

- **Other places marked as special**

Juanma also posted other videos, including an assignment on Amsterdam as a city for all kinds of people, centred on the emblematic old hippy/squatter village of Ruigoord, including interviews with its inhabitants. The video emphasizes the openness of the village to all religions 'we have people from different tribes of India, from Tibet, we also have Christians and Catholics and all kinds of orthodoxies'.⁹⁴ Another video that he posted was, *The Largest Flea Market in the Netherlands: IJ Hallen*. The market is shown to be less well known by tourists or students from abroad, despite the fact that it is the largest flea market in the Netherlands.⁹⁵ A final example of a highlighted event is IDFA, the international documentary festival.⁹⁶

All of these images are consistent with Amsterdam's tradition of hippies, culture and openness, exhibiting some very interesting coincidences with the creative imaginary that we examined in Chapter 3 of this thesis. That is to say, these Erasmus students discover that the non-commercial and independent cultural aspects of the city fulfil their own expectations.

General forums such as *Erasmoo*s include a selection of places to visit. In general, these coincide with the information provided in current tourist information, recommending, for example, a walk through

⁹³ 'De Erasmus En Amsterdam, María Abadía', *Escuela Politécnica Superior, Alicante*, 2012 <Material in archive>.

⁹⁴ This and the following references are from: Juanmafi, *11 Video Final Assignment Visual Journalism* (The Netherlands: Juanmafi/YouTube, 2011) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hax3HxGYs7E&feature=relmfu>>.

⁹⁵ Juanmafi, *The Largest Flea Market in Netherlands: IJ HALLEN*.

⁹⁶ Juanmafi, *Review IDFA.wmv* (The Netherlands: Juanmafi/YouTube, 2011) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tu7Wl5Nyy_l>.

the neighbourhoods of the Pijp and the Jordaan, which are described as beautiful, cosy and bohemian. In addition, the students are advised to see ‘typical’ places such as the flower market.



Erasmus student from the Pompeu Fabra University, Barcelona, in Haarlem. Source: ‘Anna Martínez, Estudiant de Comunicació Audiovisual a Holanda. Testimonis de Mataronins Que Viuen a L’estranger’ (Mataró: capgros.com, 2012), pp. 3–5 <Material in archive>.

In this way, the Erasmus biotope appears as an interesting mix of itineraries, with references which are often used as explanations of the desired way of being in Amsterdam and a model to which these students try to adhere during their stay in the city and its environs.

In the following section, I will attempt to draw an array of conclusions based on the analyses of this chapter.

7.5. Wrapping up and conclusions

In the introduction to this chapter I remarked on the suspicion that Erasmus students staying in Amsterdam and its environs might share a specific tribal view of the city. It would be tribal because the view would be adjusted and in accordance with the specific state of being an Erasmus student abroad. Related to this interpretation, it was important to develop an understanding of the particularities of this specific ‘Erasmus way of being’.

Focusing on students from Spanish and/or Catalan universities as a primary referent enabled us to analyse their perceptions in light of an array of images – auto, hetero and meta-images, as are

usually described in imagology. These images would mainly form part of the students' own cultural tradition and would therefore be fairly stable. This means that the way these students see Amsterdam, the Netherlands and Europe is substantially pre-formed in the light of their own cultural and educational background. That is why it was crucial to take this general cultural background into account.

A first conclusion is that despite the actual positive development of Spain in sectors such as education, sport and social policy, the students still seem to have old-fashioned attitudes concerning 'national shortcomings'. This traditional attitude is illustrated in work such as 'Vuelva usted mañana' ('Come Back Tomorrow') published as early as 1832, as well as by the work of Xènius at the beginning of the twentieth century. According to this tradition, the Northern European other is seen to be more developed. In this light, the students of our corpus see Amsterdam as an example of free and democratic values: as a free and civilized place in which one can experiment in a safe way. The attractiveness of this combination seems to lie in the mix of risk and safety available in Amsterdam,⁹⁷ and the students admire the city in which even prostitutes have formal labour agreements. Students send and share appreciative messages about the legal coffee shops, adventures on bicycles, the laughable chaos mixed with calm, the greenness of the city, and pop temples such as the Paradiso, all part of 'the culture that you breathe everywhere'.

In fact, what they write on these matters is extremely consistent with the English information they have access to via websites and publications produced for Erasmus students, in which the University of Amsterdam, for example, presents itself as a tolerant and open institution in an open and tolerant city, according to a tradition which started in 1632.⁹⁸ It is also very probable that having the Dutch philosopher Erasmus of Rotterdam inspiring the acronym ERASMUS helps to emphasize the perception of the Netherlands as a place of free thinking, in line with what young people in Spain learn in secondary school. For them, there is probably no reason to look for arguments that contest these positive images. As Simon Anholt would say: 'Why should they?'.⁹⁹ In addition, the Erasmus students do not really have the tools to develop a more in-depth, contrasting view. The filter of English makes them largely unable to engage with possible opposing arguments and current discussions in Dutch society about issues such as Dutch and European identity and tolerance. We

⁹⁷ A mix that is also discussed in works such as: Terhorst, van de Ven and Dében.

⁹⁸ 'The University of Amsterdam continues a tolerant, open and international academic tradition dating back to 1632. The faculties are located in either the heart of the old city or state of the art purpose-built facilities'. On: 'UVA FEB, Marketing, International Programmes', *University of Amsterdam*, 2009
<http://issuu.com/uvafebmc/docs/09301_uva_mb_algemeen_eng_proef7>.

⁹⁹ Changing one's opinions requires effort, and is the consequence of necessity, as Simon Anholt states in his work on images and identity. Anholt, *Places, Identity, Image and Reputation*, pp. 140–160.

have seen that only students who are planning to move indefinitely to the Netherlands express some concerns about recent news on intolerance and other similar issues.

Thus, it is not strange that the students maintain an interpretation of their new experiences which is in accord with the positive image of the Netherlands they have gained from home, and that they relate specific habits and artefacts they observe in Amsterdam to intangible values such as tolerance, openness and internationalism. In this city, the more skilled film-makers among them report and share the ambiance of creative enclaves and events: the emblematic Ruigoord, the second-hand and vintage markets in Amsterdam North, or the IDFA (the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam). These are enclaves and events that continue in the tradition of Amsterdam as a creative locus that we saw in Chapter 3. In fact, it is easy to imagine that if some of these Erasmus students had been natives they would have joined the circles of friends of the literary creative characters we have analysed.

However, within the Erasmus context, these students in Amsterdam, or other cities relatively close by such as Delft, create their own exchange world, consisting of apparently trivial daily occupations: going to their courses, partying, cooking, sport, visiting new places, travel. The triviality is only apparent. Their narratives point to the exceptional feeling of being a Homo Erasmus, with most of them also living independently for the first time. Although the students may partake in an Erasmus exchange for different reasons, as they repeatedly say, they share a kind of tolerant mindset. In agreeing with the Erasmus conditions, they also seem to accept that they will face some problems, but also that these will be overcome and that they will develop independence and have new experiences in a different country.

Policymakers and experts in Europe admit that although the Erasmus programme is functioning as a mobility programme, it has its problems. Educational institutions in Europe can give the impression of being impersonal and slow machines obsessed with numbers and agreements on paper. Experts on the internationalization of tertiary education argue convincingly that the goal of mobility within European educational institutions is hindered by an emphasis on ranking, participant numbers and various financial factors,¹⁰⁰ with this being found to be detrimental to the student experience. Others question the validity of the programme because Erasmus students tend not to mix with locals and are therefore isolated from real local life. The movie *L'auberge espagnol*, in which Erasmus students in Barcelona spend their time 'partying with each other', illustrates this. However, the posters and

¹⁰⁰ Hans de Wit, 'Erasmus at 25: What Is the Future for International Student Mobility?', *The Guardian* (London, 21 May 2012) <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/higher-education-network/blog/2012/may/21/erasmus-programme-and-student-mobility>>.

bloggers we analysed show that this movie was an enormous revelation to them. In the words of bloggers such as Laura or Sickodelic, it was a film that ‘marked us all’ (*‘una película que nos ha marcado a todos’*), inspiring them to become a Homo Erasmus themselves. In the film, Erasmus students highlight the exceptional nature of international friendships, being ‘different but the same’ and feeling that these differences are appreciated by others, even becoming sexually attractive to others in a new place because of their exoticism.

In addition, the exceptional character of this experience, expressed by words such as ‘bubble’ and ‘reality between brackets’ is seen to be transformative – ‘their life will never be the same’. In fact, being an Erasmus seems to have a ‘psychosocial moratorium effect’ as described by Erikson, in which experiences are felt as more authentic than experiences undergone at home; for example, in relation to similar feelings about friendships made during compulsory military service, or during long summer holidays. The agreed suspension of normal habits far away from family and regular friends allow young people to dedicate more time to new friends, even to develop a new personality in which prejudices or national or regional differences no longer matter. These new friendships are deeply felt, as is documented in the material posted to congratulate or greet others on special occasions such as birthdays.¹⁰¹ Whereas some would dismiss all of the parties and alcohol as a waste of time, in reality the Erasmus students communicate, share and create a sort of community that coincides with the features of a contemporary tribe, as described by Maffesoli and Cova amongst others.

The Erasmus community also seems to benefit from the combination of safety and excitement. Students feel a previously unknown freedom as temporary citizens of a new place, also knowing they are allowed to not only feel but also explore this freedom. They feel they have permission and are even encouraged by institutionalized social assessments, intakes and programmes. It is the Erasmus programme itself and its philosophy that encourages openness and curiosity. Being an Erasmus student offers them a space that, despite being prearranged, they feel is especially created for them, thus producing the moratorium effect.

During the first period of their stay in Amsterdam these Erasmus students will be seen at parties organized by ESN, in cafés such as de Heffer, on guided tours of the city or involved in organized sport activities. They will post pictures of themselves on the internet outside a coffee shop or in front of a windmill. After a while, they tend to gather in residences and rooms, enjoying a time ‘that will never come again’, the year ‘We all lived in Amsterdam’.¹⁰² During this time, they feel a part of a kind of surrogate family, the charm of which lies particularly in the apparent differences of its members,

¹⁰¹ Juanmafi, *Feliz Cumpleaños Eloy* (Erasmus Amsterdam: Juanmafi/YouTube, 2011).

¹⁰² Joint blog ‘One Year After’ in ‘We All Lived In Erasmus Amsterdam.’

joined together by the same unrepeatable experience. Luckily, some have carefully registered their Erasmus lives, allowing us to examine them.

8. Capturing the Imaginary: ‘What Is Someone Like You Doing in a Place Like This?’

A Tribal Topography of Amsterdam

8.1. Place and ‘look’ references in today’s Amsterdam

The previous five chapters focused on capturing a diversity of images of Amsterdam in accordance with distinctive sets of shared tribal links held by young adults and students in Amsterdam. In this chapter we will focus on a more general and complementary view. The aim of this chapter is to develop a broader mapping of images, appearances and stereotypes of people that are associated with specific places in Amsterdam. The one-liner, ‘What is someone like you doing in a place like this?’, in the title of this chapter, reflects an ambivalent but recognizable feeling of being a part of or being seen to belong to a place or not.

The issue seems to be of crucial importance in providing further insight into the ways young people today give meaning to ‘physical appearances’, in other words, into the ways they see themselves and others according to their physical characteristics, how they dress and the sorts of accessories and possessions they have. On the one hand, this is important, not because one should expect to find unknown or extreme ‘looks’ and subcultures within the city of Amsterdam – which might be the first association since Amsterdam is internationally known for its exuberant and explicit ‘tolerance’ of ‘sex, drugs & rock and roll’ – but because what ‘people look like’ seems to be a critical factor in group identity formation.

On the other hand, the way young people see themselves and others is important because it can help to shed light on the multiplicity of perspectives that might be at work when defining Amsterdam in terms of its multicultural nature and as a melting pot. If Amsterdam is a melting pot – an idea often based on the number of nationalities listed in the population register – in which way are references to skin colour or nationality still used to distinguish and judge people and biotopes?¹ Do students, for example, ultimately recognize each other as such independently of their tribal affiliation? What role is played by recurrent terms such as ‘*allochtoon*’, used to define and judge neighbourhoods and people in the city of Amsterdam?

¹ In the Amsterdam Museum, for example, this diversity of nationalities is celebrated in a tapestry called ‘Mijn stad: een feest van verscheidenheid’, representing the 179 nationalities registered at that moment in Amsterdam. Sophie van der Salm, ‘Amsterdam Museum Toont Tapijt Met 179 Nationaliteiten’, *Het Parool* (Amsterdam, 26 June 2012) <<http://www.parool.nl/parool/nl/12/CULTUUR/article/detail/3277279/2012/06/26/Amsterdam-Museum-toont-tapijt-met-179-nationaliteiten.dhtm>> This symbolic number has oscillated over recent years, from 174 to 180.

According to the general line of argumentation in this thesis, the city of Amsterdam can be studied as a place in which young adults perform and develop their identity while getting to know and coming to grips with its different environments. In this sense, for many young adults, the diversity of the city is likely to provide them with an array of tools that will enable them to work on the shaping of a 'do-it-yourself-biography'. The constructive nature of this building on ones' identity through tribal negotiations and adjustments has been made visible throughout the previous chapters. My expectations are that when light is shed on a more general, inter-tribal area of construction, similar processes of negotiation will be visible. These negotiations will also result in images and stereotypes of persons and groups in which reputations or discursive representations will be based on foreground characteristics. In the process of making such attributions, certain images will be recalled, rejected or combined in a particular way.

Those foreground characteristics will be attributes such as outward appearance, dress, artefacts and ways of behaving in public spaces. Therefore, and because images never arise in a void,² it will be necessary to take into account some of the salient typifications embodying the essential outward characteristics of inhabitants of cities in general and the capacity of cities to best serve the needs of urbanites in shaping their outward appearances. Furthermore, it will be necessary to take into account new developments in post-industrial Amsterdam that may have had a role in the process of giving meaning to places and people. The latter refers, among other things, to changes in the composition of the population and the progressive adaptation of politics to a more market-oriented social structure.³

For these reasons, and before turning to a further specification of the research questions, it will be useful to briefly discuss the reputation of cities in general and of Amsterdam in particular in terms of fashion and street life over recent decades. I will also sketch some important changes in the appearance of the city of Amsterdam that are worth taking into consideration before proceeding to an analysis of the research corpus.

8.2. Cities and Urbanites

Since the original publication of Simmel's 'Metropolis and Mental Life' in 1901, much has been written about the peculiarities of inhabitants of cities and the influence that city life has on their

² Manuel Castells, 'European Cities, the Informational Society, and the Global Economy', in *Understanding Amsterdam*, ed. by Léon Deben, Willem Heinemeyer, and Dick van der Vaart (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 2007), pp. 1–18.

³ Justus Uitermark, 'An in Memoriam for the Just City of Amsterdam', *City*, 13 (2009), 347–61
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13604810902982813>>.

behaviour and appearance. In his book, Simmel stated that the need to deal with the stress created by an over-stimulating environment determined the typical 'blasé outlook' of city dwellers, and this psychological phenomenon was unconditionally related to city life. To achieve such an outlook, the 'metropolitan types' needed to 'intensify consciousness' of their own behaviour, using it as a 'protective organ'.⁴ It is more than plausible to accept that this consciousness has had an influence on the way metropolitan types present themselves, in terms of the way they dress, keep themselves in shape and how they use their bodies.

Because of their proximity to the core of fashion and because of the possibility of seeing fashion trends first hand, city dwellers exhibit a higher awareness of the latest fashion trends than dwellers in the countryside. Figures show that city dwellers have always spent more money on clothes and shoes than country inhabitants⁵ and that this difference has grown exponentially during the last 20 years.⁶ In this respect, the transformation of the design and fashion retail economy has been critical. In post-industrial societies, retail chains such as H&M, Zara and Mango have literally brought the catwalk styles onto the streets. This process becomes visible in the form of new characters in street life, such as the 'City Girl',⁷ the flesh-and-blood incarnation of *Sex and the City's* fictional character Carrie Bradshaw.

The emergence of character-types such as the 'City Girl', who shares a characteristic outward appearance with others she may not even know, can only be understood in terms of the contemporary idea that city dwellers are less individualist than Simmel and others after him may have thought. The concepts of the human herd⁸ and the urban tribe⁹ point to the essential need of human beings to share forms of behaviour, expressing this in more or less structured cultures and countercultures.

Because of the increasing availability of various means to work on one's own image, achieving a specific look can entail a complex process of construction in which 'others' have an important role. This process of constructing one's own look may be reflected by and visible in a city's shopping options. In some inner-city neighbourhoods, for example, the gentrification process has been accompanied by the introduction of relatively affordable but personalized new services that express

⁴ Simmel, pp. 31–32.

⁵ See especially the section 'Shoes and the City' in Edward Glaeser, *Triumph of the City. How Urban Spaces Makes Us Human* (Basingstok and Oxford: Pan Books, 2012), p. 126.

⁶ Minas N. Kastanakis and George Balabanis, 'Between the Mass and the Class: Antecedents of the "Bandwagon" Luxury Consumption Behavior', *Journal of Business Research*, 65 (2012), 1399–1407 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.10.005>>.

⁷ Kay S. Hymowitz, 'The New Girl Order', *City Journal* (New York, 2007), pp. 1–8 <http://www.city-journal.org/html/17_4_new_girl_order.html>.

⁸ Mark Earls, *Herd: How to Change Mass Behaviour by Harnessing Our True Nature* (John Wiley & Sons, 2009).

⁹ Maffesoli.

the needs of the inhabitants: small retail shops, alternative wellness and beauty centres, retro unisex hairdressers, etc. Some authors maintain that having survived more than a decade in a specific place, those services and facilities can be seen as a reliable reflection of the habits and ways of life of the people living in or frequenting the place, as is the case in gentrified areas of contemporary cities all over the world.¹⁰

In addition to being an expression of the local way of life, shops and services in specific places might also act as a link to an intercity/global network: they indicate how cosmopolitan the place is.

Products are shown in relation to their place of origin, not only to contextualize their qualities (Indian spiritual centre, Scandinavian dress) but also to underline the local connection to other 'significant' parts of the world. In addition, the absence of specific products in the local environment may also increase the attractiveness of those products to certain groups. The wish to be one of the first to have a specific artefact from New York or Tokyo is not restricted to fashionistas.¹¹ In Amsterdam, young intellectuals such as the novelist Philip Huff explicitly express their concerns about events such as the opening of a flag-store for one of their favourite brands: it could threaten that nice feeling of exclusivity and the sense of complicity that he used to feel with other people who were wearing that brand before it could be bought in his own city.¹²

The really interesting thing about what has been said so far is that prior considerations reveal the referential character of outward appearances. 'Fashion, dress and the dressed body' have acquired a critical meaning in culture.¹³ All three articulate the body, gender and sexuality that defines those who use them. In the 'liquidity'¹⁴ of highly developed societies, in which traditional religious, ideological or political signs and symbols do not automatically express their literal meaning, the study of the referential process of meaning-giving has become indispensable.

a. Narrowing-down: Amsterdam

The cosmopolitan and tolerant reputation of Amsterdam over the last four decades is most apparent in the laid-back, cavalier appearance of unconventionally dressed people, who started to populate the city in the 1970s. The power of this image as a cosmopolitan token lay in the flower-power message and the cheerful nonchalance that was also effectively and so abundantly present on the

¹⁰ Gary Bridge and Robyn Dowling, 'Microgeographies of Retailing and Gentrification', *Australian Geographer*, 32 (2001), 93–107 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00049180020036259>>.

¹¹ The wish to be original has stimulated second-hand shopping. See e.g.: Denis Guiot and Dominique Roux, 'A Second-Hand Shoppers' Motivation Scale: Antecedents, Consequences, and Implications for Retailers', *Journal of Retailing*, 86 (2010), 383–99 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2010.08.002>>. p. 355–371.

¹² Philip Huff, 'Abercromby & Fitch', *Het Parool* (Amsterdam, December 2012).

¹³ Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body, Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2004).

¹⁴ Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*.

streets and in public spaces. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the fact that this street-style was present to the degree that it was because the city was well supplied with hippy clothes and artefacts, and the mass production of fabrics and ready-to-wear clothes could have had a role in this.

Claval has stated that the increasing mass consumption of clothes and accessories after the Second World War started in Amsterdam before other places in Europe. It was an effect of the so-called Americanization process, which according to Claval had already begun in the 1960s in Amsterdam. Claval maintains that the social-democratic tradition of the city, and the attitude of not differing too much from each other, 'paved the way for the massification of its culture'.¹⁵ The down-grading of central city shops would be an example of this evolution.

The interesting aspect of Claval's observation is that it offers an explanation of some unexpected effects of massification. Because of the early adoption of this phenomenon, Amsterdam was able to develop its own interpretation of mass ready-to-wear styles before other cities. More than a concern with the quality of clothes, which would have made them more expensive, Amsterdam was concerned with expressing originality. The influence of hippy culture, for example, brought fashion from India to mainstream shops such as C&A as early as the 1970s.¹⁶

Patricia van Ulzen argues that there is a relationship between the outward appearance of a place (the layout, the houses, the streets, etc.) and the emergence of a particular youth culture. While the inner-city of Amsterdam, with its outward appearance as an old village, had been a dream locus for flower-power, its originality started to decline in the 1980s. In fact, new streams in street culture, such as New Wave, did not find a place in Amsterdam but did so in its 'antagonist', Rotterdam, the city with robust sky lines and the necessary industrial look.¹⁷

Today, however, 20 to 30 years later, Amsterdam has visibly changed its appearance. While the old village atmosphere has been preserved in neighbourhoods such as the Jordaan and the Pijp, the silhouette of the city has been complemented with the development of architecturally designed high-rise buildings. These new structures surrounding the city centre have enabled Amsterdam to increase its density, something that today is seen as necessary for cities that wish 'to attend to the

¹⁵ Claval in Deben, Heinemeyer and van der Vaart, p. 87.

¹⁶ Interview with Rattan Chadda, founder of the Dutch brands Mexx and Didi, in Jonathan Witteman, 'Hoe Goed Is Nederland. Hoe Goed Is... de Ondernemer? Interview Met Rattan Chadda', *de Volkskrant* (Amsterdam, 5 February 2013). The former traveller and hippy Rattan Chadda has become one of the richest men in Amsterdam at the moment, according to the ranking Quote 'Top 5: Waar Wonen de Meeste Miljonairs?', *Quote* (Amsterdam, 2 August 2011), pp. 4–6.

¹⁷ Patricia van Ulzen, *Imagine a Metropolis. Rotterdam's Creative Class, 1970-2000* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2007), pp. 112–115.

world'¹⁸ and become more sustainable,¹⁹ abandoning policies that promote sprawling suburban areas, typical of prior decades. At the same time, these unique buildings allow the city to express its modernity along the South Axis (Zuidas) and the banks of the IJ. Architectural delights such as the Eye Film House and the recent developments at the IJDock show an Amsterdam flexing its 'muscles. In fact this 'atypical' development of the city was already noted by journalists reporting on buildings such as the Muziekgebouw aan't IJ, which was called 'Un-Amsterdams'. Patricia van Ulzen convincingly called this process the 'Rotterdamming of Amsterdam'.²⁰

One could say that, at present, it is apparent that the city has a more 'versatile' appearance than before (the city marketing organization, Amsterdam Partners, uses the mantra 'the versatile city').²¹ In addition to being a hub connected to the international financial world through the South Axis, Amsterdam also wanted to be seen as a hub for a creative economy, including media, television, film, design and fashion. The realization of new facilities along the banks of the IJ river and Amsterdam North testify to the serious nature of these intentions.

Moreover, this Amsterdam has also experienced important changes in its population. The current make up of Amsterdam's population is not the same as the Amsterdam of the 1960s and the 1970s. The relatively diverse affluence of newcomers of different ethnicities and from various countries has been partly replaced by the more massive inflow of immigrant minorities, especially from Suriname, Morocco and Turkey, who, in general, are congregated in specific areas of Amsterdam. Although the city council makes efforts to emphasize the value of these new citizens, incorporating them into the welcoming, egalitarian and tolerant allegory of the city – 'a tolerance that goes back to the time of Spinoza' – the fact is that little has been done in terms of understanding the way in which young people in Amsterdam express and define their identity in this new context.²²

¹⁸ Jonathan V. Beaverstock and others, 'Attending to the World: Competition, Cooperation and Connectivity in the World City Network', *Global Networks*, 2 (2002), 111–32 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1471-0374.00031>>.

¹⁹ Glaeser. See also as illustration the case of Vancouver in Gordon Price, 'Why Is Vancouver Number 1?' (Amsterdam: MRA Congress EYE on the Future, February 2013).

²⁰ The term 'muscle balls' was used by Volkskrant journalist Machteld van Hulst and quoted by van Ulzen, pp. 183–185.

²¹ Amsterdam Partners.

²² This should be seen as an urgent topic, since newcomers have been increasingly portrayed as a problem. In the Netherlands the professor of minority policies, Hans Welmölder have theorized that the high level of criminality of Moroccan and Antillean young boys in Amsterdam are caused by their cultural nature based on inherited traits such as narcissism, double moral, racism, territoriality, machismo and the likes. Welmölder's theories have been questioned in the Amsterdam's academic world but in fact, and as a representative of a specific discourse it is clear that he embodies ideas that are important to be taken into account. His discourse of 'cultural pathologies' of immigrants states that those youth do not belong to Netherland because they are the opposite of Dutch values. According to this imaginary their maladjustment to Dutch society is endemic and partly based on anti-white resentment. The only possible solution is keeping them short with a firm hand and tolerate only those of them that show to be happily integrated in Dutch Society. See as illustration piece of comment Hans Werdmölder, 'Marokkaanse Macho's Accepteren Geen Autoriteit van "Vreemden"', *de Volkskrant* (Amsterdam, 7 December 2012) <<http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/3184/opinie/article/detail/3359417/2012/12/07/Marokkaanse-macho-s-accepteren-geen-autoriteit-van-vreemden.dhtml>>.

If Amsterdam is traditionally a tolerant city, 'free of value judgements', do outward attributes such as the colour of one's skin, the shape of one's body or the choice of specific clothes play a significant role for young people in today's Amsterdam? Which criteria are ultimately in play in the imaginary mapping of and belonging to Amsterdam? Who is seen as symbolically belonging to a specific place or area and who is not?²³ The following research questions are designed to direct us towards a better understanding of such issues:

What kind of references in relation to 'place' and 'look' are used to describe young people in Amsterdam?

Who 'belongs' where? Which people are – or are seen to be – related to which places? What do they look like? How are they distinguished or recognized? Which objects/artefacts are used to identify them? What are the most visible group generalizations/stereotypes?

What is the general relationship between such generalizations/stereotypes and the 'look' of Amsterdam today?

8.3. Method

As the purpose of this chapter is to gain insight into the role that references to particular locations and 'looks' play in group identification among students in Amsterdam, the first necessary step was to explore which of those references could be seen as significant. Effort was first put into tracing words and expressions that contained specific references to locations and/or 'looks', which, when used in particular combinations, could have the potential to be easily understood by a community of users – defining a 'sort of person'.

For that purpose, and as was more extensively discussed in chapter 2, the research corpus consisted of material that was not made or generated for this present/specific study but was already publicly available online and offline: including websites, blogs, forums, magazines, newspapers, video channels and television programmes. The idea is that such material is likely to offer better access to

²³ With the words 'symbolically belonging' I am referring to the anthropological concept of 'matters out of place'. As explained by Hall, such criteria help us to decide what belongs to a place and what does not: 'It is a quite simple matter: in general we do not worry about dirt in the garden but the moment we see dirt in the bedroom we need to do something about it "because it doesn't symbolically belong there"', in Stuart Hall, 'Race: The Floating Signifier', *Media education foundation film*, 1996, 1–17 (p. 3).

the real-world ‘pictures in our heads’²⁴ and thus to stereotyping processes (i.e. ‘generalizations about a group of people’).²⁵

Because of the heterogeneity of the material collected, it was necessary to put considerable effort into becoming familiar with the nature and specific idiosyncrasies of the various sources. A first group of sources sharing a similar nature and idiosyncrasy were forums, such as the Dutch-language Fok, which are open to a diverse group of users across the Netherlands (and thus not necessarily only for students or only for the city of Amsterdam). This means that for the analysis of Fok it was necessary to take into account possible signs pointing specifically to young users and students. Clear signs include, for example, ‘WO Rechten’ (university education in law), with posters using names such as ‘the Van Dongen’ case (alluding to a trial that is used as a case in law schools). A further examination of the forum, for example, showed that the discussion had occurred between law students, with posts concerning daily activities such as putting a pizza in the oven mixed with comments about exams at the university and discussions of the links between intelligence, social class, outward appearance and place references. In some cases, such forums redirected the study to films posted on YouTube or 9gag, which also provided useful material. One of these films included a television quiz in which a blond girl is unable to answer a question about the number of eggs contained in a dozen, which generated a long list of comments about appearance and intelligence.²⁶ On Fok, other groups also discuss topics such as clothing brands and methods of transportation in relation to particular ethnicities,²⁷ which enabled me to identify the sort of issues that were seen as relevant to the visitors to the forums and also to establish an initial list of distinct descriptors.

A second group of sources consisted of sites and forums that directly refer to specific nationalities, communities or areas. Performing searches using terms relating to ethnic minority groups in Amsterdam led me to sites such as the Marokko Community, the Dutch-Moroccan community website.²⁸ These sites enabled me to find conversations between young people on different subjects,

²⁴ According to Beller, Lippmans uses the word ‘stereotype’ to refer to the fixed ‘pictures in our heads’ in the latter’s book *Public Opinion* (1922), in: Beller and Leerssen, p. 429.

²⁵ ‘A stereotype is a generalization about a group of people in which incidental characteristics are assigned to virtually all members of the group, regardless of factual variation among the members. Once formed, stereotypes are resistant to change on the basis of new information’, Beller and Leerssen, p. 249. See also the entry entitled ‘Stereotype’ for a useful overview and references, pp. 129-233.

²⁶ See, for instance: ‘How Many Eggs Are in a Dozen’ (RT(5)/YouTube, 2008)

<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JkXxOceqbs&lc=a3NYQfkNAOvt6ZHsPf92T0A-ErhorNxBWUuWutisGFs>>.

²⁷ ‘Marokkaanse Jeugd Draagt Dure Kleding’, *Fok.nl*, 2003 <<http://frontpage.fok.nl/nieuws/168559/1/1/50/marokkaanse-jeugd-draagt-dure-kleding.html>>; ‘Marokkaanse Jeugd Kleedt Zich Duur’, *Marokko Community*, 2004

<<http://forums.marokko.nl/archive/index.php/t-318428-marokkaanse-jeugd-kleedt-zich-duur.html>>; ‘Marokkaanse Jeugd Kleedt Zich Duur’, *scholieren.com*, 2003, pp. 1–11 <<http://forum.scholieren.com/showthread.php?t=671867>>.

²⁸ ‘Marokko Community’, *Forums.Marokko.nl* <www.forums.marokko.nl>.

such as the difference between Amsterdam and other cities,²⁹ the use of specific transport methods,³⁰ and the best areas to live.³¹ It also enabled me to track down concepts that were being used in the community at that specific moment, such as a 'shisha lover' (a boy in a water pipe smoking lounge), which in turn addressed the relatively new emergence of 'Shisha' bars in Amsterdam.³² Other important topics of discussion included the meaning given to particular clothes and accessories. Searches linked to specific areas of and environments in Amsterdam also led to discussions of youth in certain groups, for example, Amsterdam South-East (Bijlmerenzo.nl) and Almere (Jonginalmere.nl).

After an initial exploration of the two types of sources it was possible to establish or deduce an additional list of search terms, including specific places in Amsterdam, such as bars, restaurants, shops and shopping areas. This additional list included more specific search terms such as: 'kakkers' (posh, preppy) and 'Amsterdam Zuid' or 'Oud Zuid', 'IQ' and 'MBO', 'Amsterdamse meisjes' (Amsterdam girls), 'Bontkraagjes' (fur necks), 'hipsters', etc. Performing searches using these terms not only led me to more forums and blogs but also to more films posted on YouTube or to television programmes that had, in turn, been a source for other new online discussions. The term 'Oud Zuid' (Amsterdam Old South), for example, led me to other material that seemed to be relevant. The YouTube film *Boven gemiddeld* made in the Old South area of Amsterdam, or the television programme, *Bij ons in de P.C.*, are examples of material that triggered a large list of posts about the area and its people.³³ While Facebook could undoubtedly have been a rich source of a more detailed view on topics shared by specific groups, privacy concerns prevented me from using material that required logging on. This means that I restricted my use of Facebook sources to the views available on cover pages. In fact, the material compiled without logging on seemed more than enough for the goals of this specific chapter, which is of a more general nature.

A third kind of source consisted of specific material on fashion that could fill me in on shopping possibilities, new initiatives in fashion, special events and happenings, and new trends in distribution and so on. Therefore, I collected online fashion blogs and also online and offline fashion sections from publications such as the newspapers *NRC* and *NRCnext*, *Volkscrant*, *Het Parool*, *De Telegraaf* and

²⁹ 'Den Haag, Rotterdam, Amsterdam En Utrecht', *Marokko Community*, 2011 <<http://forums.marokko.nl/showthread.php?t=4069093&s=c447a2f1788fb1416cc4092e536c51be>>.

³⁰ 'Hoofddoekjes Hebben de Show Gestolen in Amsterdam', *Marokko Community*, 2012 <<http://forums.marokko.nl/archive/index.php/t-4281820-hoofddoekjes-hebben-de-show-gestolen-vandaag-in-amsterdam-p-9.html>>.

³¹ 'Den Haag, Amsterdam of Rotterdam', *Marokko Community*, 2011 <<http://forums.marokko.nl/archive/index.php/t-4507878-amsterdam-den-haag-of-rotterdam.html>>.

³² 'Den Haag, Amsterdam of Rotterdam', p. 6.

³³ See film and comments at: *Boven Gemiddeld: Oud Zuid* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2008) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9lQfubJ1ag&lc=ZJYSgTInsg4OXf2Py_VP32sBPi2j5SCV1uu8NVrf3jc>.

fashion magazines such as *Elle* and *Red*. In this context, I especially took into account the work of well-known older fashion reviewers such as Cecile Narinx and Milou van Rossum and young trend-and-lifestyle-watchers such as Ebele Wybenga³⁴ who reports on Amsterdam in magazines such as *Adformatie* or the *Lux katern* of *NRC*, or the young blogger Nalden,³⁵ who has remained a reference through a new enterprise, *Present Plus*. In addition, new initiatives in the city, such as the opening of the new bookshop, Books & Bubbles, led to a list of online magazines that reviewed the opening positively. This allowed me to obtain a better view of other networks concerned with fashion, design and lifestyle in Amsterdam, including: [Moderne Hippies](#), [Boekblad](#), [AT5 020 LIVE](#), [Marie Claire](#), [925](#), [Overdose.am](#), [Talkies Magazine](#), [Overdose.am](#), [BoekenBijlage.nl](#), [Amsterdam Curated](#), [FALL MagazineChicklit.nl](#), [Horecatrends.com](#), [PC Hoofstraat.nl](#), [Boekblad](#), [I Love Fashion News](#).

The fourth type of source consisted of a list of meta-literature that could provide the relevant background to significant topics for this research, such as developments in city life over the last three decades. This meant, among other things, an exploration of patterns of economic, aesthetic and ideological development in 'Late modernity' or 'Liquid modernity' and the 'Network society'.³⁶ In addition, I explored literature on fashion in order to acquire a conceptual understanding of topics such as the meaning attributed to clothes and accessories.

Having looked at all four types of sources mentioned and taking the research questions into account, I started a process of archiving, collating and cross-referencing sources. This process enabled me to discern a number of topics that seemed to be relevant to the research questions. After a first analysis of those topics, I made some necessary adjustments and came to a final set of topics, which are analysed and discussed below.

8.4. Analysis and discussion

This section is divided into three paragraphs, each focusing on a distinct topic:

- The first discusses the general demarcation of the city of Amsterdam into different areas and

³⁴ 'Stories by Ebele Wybenga', *wybenga.contently* <<https://wybenga.contently.com/>>. Sites on Tumblr commented on by Wybenga provide various links along with a practical explanation of how start a website on Tumblr. He also provides a list of examples of interesting Tumblr sites, such as: Milstil, 'Nerdy Boyfriend', *nerdboyfriend.tumblr* <nerdboyfriend.tumblr.com>, the *pursuitsthetic.com*, FuckYeah Menswear (fuckyeahmenswear.tumblr.com), in Ebele Wybenga, 'Verslavend Plakboek', *NRC*, 16 February 2013 <<http://www.nrc.nl/handelsblad/van/2013/februari/16/verslavend-plakboek-12618110>>.

³⁵ 'Nalden', *Weblog* <<https://www.nalden.net/#/newsitem/2827/>>.) Nalden was one of the first in Amsterdam to blog about all sorts things he considered beautiful and worth sharing, such as commercial advertorials.

³⁶ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990).; Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*.; Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*.

sub-areas, according to the attribution of reputations apparent in the corpus researched.

- The second narrows the focus to one specific area of Amsterdam, the Old South (Oud Zuid). The focus was needed to keep the analyses workable. At the same time, the area seemed to offer a starting point for a contrast with other areas, subsequently offering sufficient insight into the processes behind judgements based on place-and-‘look’ references.
- The third refers to what could be called ‘cross global references’, referring to global patterns in the diffusion of fashion, place and life experiences, and trends.

a. Demarcations of areas and places in Amsterdam and a small ‘sample’ of student daily life

In order to obtain an initial overview of the way Amsterdam is demarcated into areas, we will start this paragraph by focusing on what seem to be the most generally shared references and descriptors. Afterwards, and since the focus of the present research is on students, we will examine the descriptions of and judgements about the different educational institutions in Amsterdam, which are based on the kind of people attending them. This means that the analysis will take into account characterizations of ‘looks’ (that is to say, ‘the ways people look’ or ‘the physical appearance of people’) which are used to typify the kind of students associated with a specific school or university in Amsterdam. Furthermore, we will also have a ‘look’ at a sample of student life, with a brief examination of the ‘Gespot’ (Spotted) page on Facebook, where students post ads in an attempt to contact someone they have seen at their school or university. Because most contact ads use outward appearance descriptors to help identify the person addressed, this sample of daily life is relevant to the topic of ‘look’ references. As we will see, all three of these points are interesting because students then use them to make choices concerning specific universities or about where to live, or even on undertaking a specific activity such as studying which might provide the possibility of getting to know a certain person or someone of that type.

Concerning the general demarcation of areas in Amsterdam, it is important to recall that the city has the reputation of having a chronic shortage of housing to host incoming students. The volume on forums dealing with the item ‘searching for a place to live in Amsterdam’ corroborates this reputation. One of the first things that surfaces is the preference of students for specific areas. Their preferences – and their objections – are expressed through their use of adjectives such as ‘criminal’, ‘allochtoon’, ‘truttig’ (dowdy), ‘oersaai’ (utterly boring), which is very interesting because it gives us an idea of the sort of ‘posters’ who post these descriptions, based on a combination of certain ingredients. These descriptions are accompanied by a listing of the services and shops in the areas. For example, the following poster classified the different parts of the city as follows:

On Wednesday 23 June [...] wrote [...] de following:

Where you do not want to live:

- Zuidoost
- Bos en Lommer
- Geuzenveld-Slotermeer
- Osdorp
- Slotervaart
- Noord

Where you do want to live:

- Centrum
- Oud-Zuid
- Oud-West
- De Baarsjes
- Oost-Watergraafsmeer
- Zeeburg
- Zuideramstel
- Westerpark

Diemen and Amstelveen are relatively cheap and are not areas with lots of crime or large numbers of *allochtonen*, but I wouldn't want to be found dead there. Conventional, suburban and geriatric, for the most part.

While another poster objects: 'Noord isn't so bad, right? 😊 There's not a lot to do there, sure, but it's a pretty nice place to live.'³⁷

In general, the posters confirm what seems to be a shared understanding: Amsterdam properly speaking, is 'the area inside the ring', alluding to the area inside the A10 motorway. Thus, the motorway divides the city into areas 'inside the ring', which are 'good areas', and an 'outside the ring', which are 'the bad areas'. In addition to specific enclaves, the areas 'inside the ring' mainly have 'white residents', while the area 'outside the ring' is mainly home to immigrants (*allochtonen*). The arguments seem to speak for themselves until one poster objects that the area of Amsterdam South-East is outside the ring but not as bad as the poster says:

3 friends of mine live in Kleiburg, Amsterdam Zuidoost. I may be moving there soon too. The people there are easy to get on with – you're just a bunch of racists, all of you. If you've never even been there yourself you can hardly form a well-founded opinion of it. Sure, the high rise apartments aren't

³⁷ 'Wijken in Amsterdam.. Waar Wil Je Wel/niet Wonen [part Deux]', *forum.fok.nl*, 2010, pp. 1–8 <<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/1481547/3/25#83276237>>.

great, but if you fix things up a bit before you move in it's fine. Especially handy when you're a student as it's dirt cheap.

The response of another poster is:

I just want to come back to your comment, can't help it 😊

I have been visiting those block of flats my whole life and its still a sorry mess there. Huge numbers of sad types, nothing but *allochtonen*, there is eff all to do there, it's far away from everything and not the safest place to hang around at night.

It's not an ideal place to live for a student, not if you want to have a halfway decent social life that is.

Areas not to live in:

Outside the ringroad

Yes:

Inside the ringroad, with a preference for the following neighbourhoods:

Centrum (everywhere really)

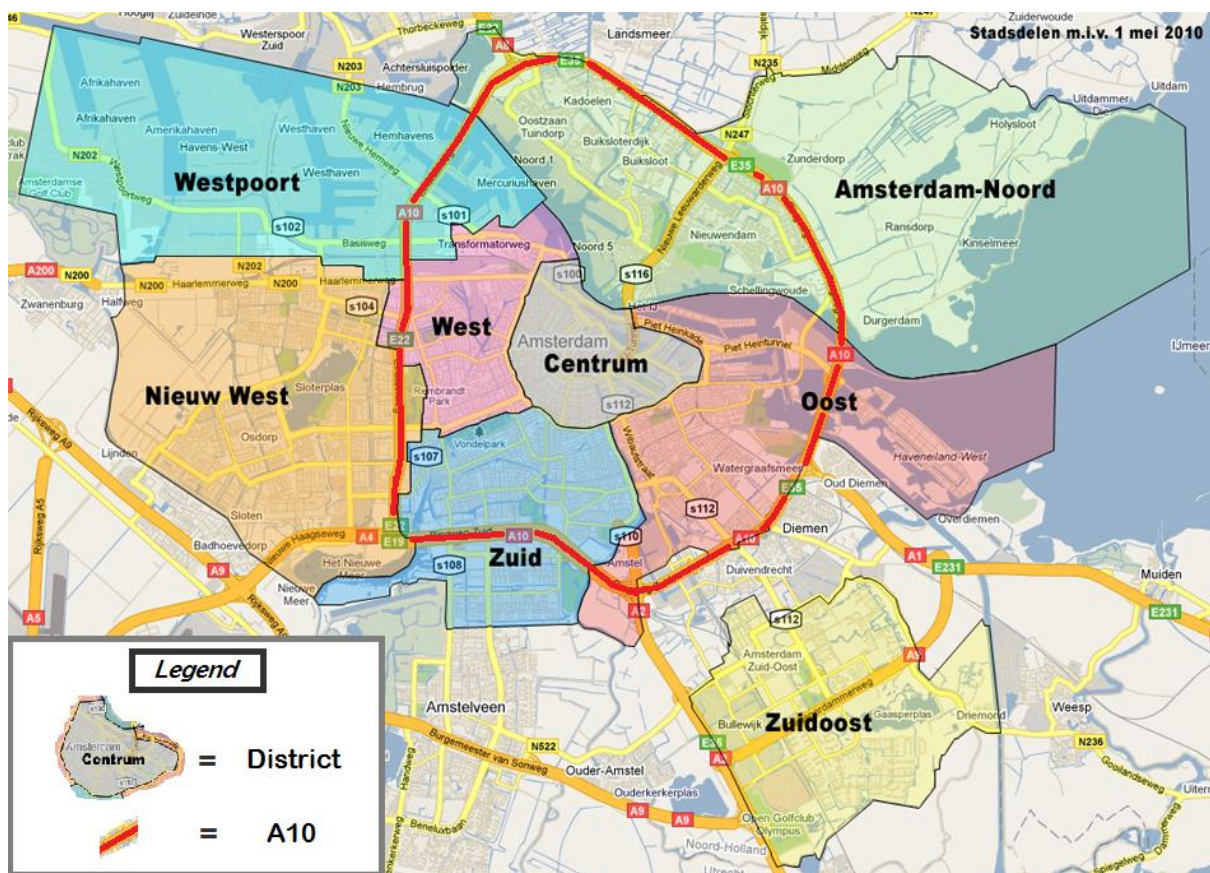
Oost, Transvaal, in the area around the windmill and the good section of the Dapperbuurt

Pijp

The Rivierenbuurt is also acceptable

Comparing these posts with the descriptions offered on the *I Amsterdam* website, one can see that terms such as 'innate multiculturalism', used by official sites, become '*allochtoon*' in the forums studied here and that the *I Amsterdam* description of a neighbourhood 'with many families, children and seniors', is described by the young posters as 'utterly boring' ('*oersaaï*'). The contrast between the descriptors gives us an idea of the different registers used depending the different target groups.³⁸

³⁸ The *I Amsterdam* website describes the district of Osdorp New West in this way: 'Your neighbourhood. The area combines everything from high-rises to row housing to detached canal-side condominiums. As a neighbourhood with many families, children and seniors, the infrastructure for these groups has improved immensely in the last years through efforts by both government and community groups. Its innate multiculturalism is best experienced shopping on Osdorplein with its covered market arcade Shoperade. Additionally, Osdorp's Tuesday outdoor market on Tussenmeer was a finalist for the 'Best market of the Netherlands 2010'. At: *I amsterdam. I am local, 'Osdorp' (Amsterdam)*, pp. 2–3
<<http://www.iamsterdam.com/en/local/official-matters/amsterdam-city-districts/stadsdeel-nieuw-west/osdorp>>.



Amsterdam city map: districts. The A10 motorway (my marking in red) marks the common delimitation 'in and outside the ring'. Another important 'ring' in Amsterdam is the one delimiting the canal area of the Centre district and adjacent.³⁹

In the context of this research, the use of the term '*allochtoon*' as a descriptor is especially interesting because it seems to speak for itself. While etymologically '*allochtoon*' means a 'person originally from another country', in the corpus studied it appears as a descriptor with a specific current meaning understood by all.

- '*Allochtoon*' areas to avoid: According to the indications of the posters, the issue is to avoid areas with a high concentration of '*allochtoon*' residents. Nevertheless, students may appreciate some of the characteristics of such areas, for example 'foreign' shops for groceries, etc. Therefore, in areas such as Amsterdam East they recommend some specific sectors, as in the case of 'the good section of the Dapperbuurt', or the area around the windmill hosting Brouwerij 't IJ (the IJ Brewery). In all of the comments, the term '*allochtoon*' is used as something that does not need to be explained (immigrants, low social class), visibly expressed in terms of balconies with satellite antennas and street corners where groups of

³⁹ Source: 'Stadsdelen Gemeente Amsterdam' <<http://www.amsterdam.nl/gemeente/stadsdelen/>>.

young men, *'hang jongeren'*, loiter, hissing at girls who pass by. The fact that some posters object to the ease with which the term *'allochtoon'* is used in the forum as a synonym for 'criminal' or 'sad' is an example of the controversial nature of racial references. However, it also shows that in this group the use of *allochtoon* as a synonym for an area to avoid speaks for itself.

- *'Allochtoon'* areas to live in: When looking at specific sources of information about the preferences of ethnic minorities with respect to neighbourhoods to live in, as expressed on the forum of the Moroccan community for example, we can see that the term *'allochtoon'* is replaced by references to specific countries or races: *'koelies'*, blacks, Moroccans, Turks. Most of those who post on the Marokko Community Forum describe some specific places in Amsterdam as beautiful precisely because they look like 'little Morocco', as in the case of Amsterdam West. In contrast, they tend to advise others against looking for a place to live in areas with too many Indonesian and black people.⁴⁰

In terms of the description of educational institutions, it is interesting to see that the term *'allochtoon'* is also frequently used to depict the general atmosphere and personality of different schools and universities in Amsterdam. Other important descriptors that are applied to those institutions in the corpus include 'laid-back ambiance', as opposed to 'structured' or 'high-school-like ambiance' that students seem to clearly associate with certain institutions when starting tertiary education in Amsterdam.

The schools and universities in the city are the University of Amsterdam (UvA), which positions itself as 'the university whose campus is the whole inner city', having faculties distributed in different buildings throughout the city centre; University Amsterdam (VU), with a campus at De Boelelaan in the newer south part of the city; and the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences (HvA), which has the same board of directors as UvA but is in fact concerned only with applied sciences (in Dutch HBO – *'Hoger beroepsonderwijs'*). The HvA has separate facilities from the UvA, most of them around Wibautstraat and Amstel Station, but also in other areas, such as Amsterdam South-East.

Students trying to orient themselves when beginning their studies or enrolling at a new school or university visit various forums asking for advice from students who have already enrolled and can relate their experiences first hand. The forum discussions are initiated by questions such as: 'UvA or VU?' or 'HES (HvA) Amstel or HES (HvA) Fraijlemaborg?'

⁴⁰ 'Den Haag, Amsterdam of Rotterdam.'

In general, the posters describe VU as a more 'school-like' institution that mainly appeals to the 'neat' students (*'netjes'*): those who like order and organization, mostly with a Christian or other religious belief and with fewer anxieties about experiencing life in Amsterdam than the students who go to UvA. The UvA, in contrast, is said to offer students a 'real city-life' setting, with different locations in the city centre and a 'laid-back' atmosphere. Students who prefer VU say: 'the whole city centre idea of the UvA is overestimated':

After the first two weeks all the charm of the city centre will no longer be an added factor any more really, and Amsterdam is so small anyway - if you want to go to Leidseplein, say, then you can get there nearly as quickly from the VU as from the Roeterseiland campus, for example.⁴¹

To which another poster objects: 'That is complete bullshit. You need to cycle effing miles to get to anything in the city centre from the VU, you get there a lot quicker from all the UvA locations (apart from Science Park of course).

In addition to being a place for those who are not especially charmed by city life, VU is described as a university with more '*allochtonen*' and '*HBOers*'⁴² than UvA. The general opinion is that VU students 'do not live in Amsterdam but come by bus or train to Zuid station'.⁴³ One of the posters, a UvA student and fervent defender of inner-city life, says that one of the most important differences between the universities is that VU students are '*spoorknorren*',⁴⁴ 'travelling by train to go to college' and that the real students are those who ride bikes and live in the inner city.⁴⁵ Students at the UvA also state that the atmosphere there might be more chaotic than at VU but at the same time it is more relaxed. Above all, students at the UvA are 'treated as adults' and not as secondary school students.⁴⁶

Some posters on the Marokko Community Forum stress the idea that the UvA is for white Dutch people. However, for the 'Moroccan' student from Nijmegen who wants to study law, the UvA is definitely the right place to be because it is 'left oriented' and also because it has international classes. For this student, the feeling of community does not come from being with people who have the same ethnic physical 'look' but from liking and being interested in the same things. It is very

⁴¹ 'Verschil UvA En VU?', *forum.fok.nl*, 2013 <<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/1902108/1/50>>.

⁴² 'HBOers' in this case are students of the University of Applied Sciences (HvA, for example) who switch to the University of Amsterdam once they have accomplished a first-year HBO bridging programme which makes them eligible for the latter.

⁴³ 'Verschil UvA En VU?'

⁴⁴ 'Only "railway students" take public transport – "real" students of course cycle. Into the city centre, for example (why you'd avoid the centre even once 'the novelty has worn off' escapes me). In: 'Verschil UvA En VU?'

⁴⁵ As we have seen in the chapter on the *corps* student, the term '*spoorknorren*' ('railway students') has a long tradition. A C J De Vrankrijker, *Vier Eeuwen Nederlandsch Studentenleven*, 2008 dbnl (Voorburg, 1936). See also: Calkoen.

⁴⁶ Fok Forum: 'Verschil UvA En Vu?', *forum.fok.nl*, 2012 <<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/1902108/1/999#119918358>>.

interesting to note that the discussion deals with the idea of a sense of community based on a range of elements, from sharing the same interests and political convictions to sharing the same religion and/or ethnicity. On the one hand, there are the '*allochtone*' students at VU who feel at home there because they share the same ethnicity with other students, while on the other hand, students such as the one from Nijmegen defend the cosmopolitan outlook on life which makes them feel at home without necessarily sharing a majority common ethnic background.⁴⁷

The HvA is also a topic of discussion on student forums. Some students do not like the style of HvA, '*a pauper instituu*t' ('a pauper's institution'), where you are 'treated as an ROC moron',⁴⁸ while in other discussions students claim to be satisfied with the ambiance and the lecturers. The references to ethnicity are very common on these pages which are clearly used to provide good tips to help others make a good choice. At the HvA Fraijlemaborg building in the South-East, they say you will find more black and Turkish students, while in the HvA Leeuwenburg campus near Amstel Station there are more Moroccans. However, at the same time 'there are also lots of "Hollanders"',⁴⁹ adds a poster on the Marokko Community Forum, referring to white Dutch students. All in all, the different forums corroborate the statistics that suggest higher professional education in Amsterdam at HvA is more 'coloured' than at the other universities.

To complete this general depiction of the different educational institutions in Amsterdam, it is important to mention what is considered the lowest level of post-secondary education: the MBO institutes (*middelbaar beroepsonderwijs*). The largest MBO organization is the ROC, referring to a number of educational centres concentrated in one or more locations in large cities in the Netherlands.⁵⁰ As we saw above, one of the posters on a forum discussion complained about being treated like an 'ROC moron' at HvA. This qualification refers to the reputation of the ROC, visible on different forums, which is depicted as a school for those with a low IQ and from a low social class. The image of ROC students gathered in groups in front of their institutions, annoying passers-by with comments and making it difficult for them to pass, is also depicted. That some ROC students feel happy completing a vocational programme that will ensure them a good life as an electrician, plumber or welder is not considered relevant. Broadcasters such as PowNed tend to rely on clichés

⁴⁷ 'And support from Moroccans? You get support from your fellow students. What difference does it make if they're Moroccan or Antillean or English or Dutch? That way you're just widening the gap between immigrants and non-immigrants;)' 'Pro's En Contra's VU En UvA', *Marokko Community Forum*, 2007 <<http://forums.marokko.nl/showthread.php?t=1357620&s=d3749c5b7eba151afb05511614a7>>.

⁴⁸ Officially ROC (*Regionaal Opleidingscentrum*) is the name of a large educational organization for secondary vocational education 'Verschil UvA En VU', *forum.fok.nl*, 2009 <<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/1342715>>.

⁴⁹ 'Right, you've got a lot of Moroccans, but also a lot of Dutch people [...]: I have a friend who studies at the Bijlmer School of Economics and there are also a lot of people from immigrant families, but mostly Blacks and Turks.' 'Bedrijfseconomie Fraijlemaborg of Leeuwenburg HvA?', *Marokko Community Forum*, 2011 <<http://forums.marokko.nl/archive/index.php/t-3677054.html>>.

⁵⁰ 'Education in The Netherlands', *Wikipedia*, 2015 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_the_Netherlands#Mbo>.

regarding MBO students as a kind of 'drain on society', frequently showing how 'stupid' MBO students are, with their 'gangsta' clothes⁵¹ and expressing themselves in what is clearly street language. The Campus television channel (the channel 'for students and by students in Amsterdam') also jokes about calling MBO pupils 'students', confirming the image of this sort of education as being 'the last in line', with a pejorative "euhhh": 'Students, euhhh that is to say students of MBO, are awarded credits for attending laughing session.'⁵²

While the previous discussion in this paragraph has enabled us to gain a general sense of the differences between and the existing hierarchies in the perception of educational institutions according to the kind of students they have, the following will examine one of the new practices in student life: the contact ads on the 'Spotted' Facebook page ('Gespot' UB, VU, HvA).

A recent article referring to the new 'Spotted' phenomenon emphasizes the idea that university libraries are becoming the ideal place to flirt.⁵³ This was illustrated with a story about a student at UvA saying to a friend that before joining her in the library she had to go home and put on more appropriate clothes, and not something more comfortable but something fashionable and more appropriate for flirting.

As mentioned in the methodology section above, I did not log on to these Facebook pages, nevertheless, the cover pages of the Gespot Facebook site already give the visitor a good idea of their success, with views of up to 6,000 or 8,000. They are also a good example of the revival of classic contact ads, enabling us to find descriptions of the different 'looks' that have stolen the heart of the person in question. The type of encounter described is usually brief: 'a smile', 'a long green coat', 'nice red hair in a knot', a 'dude surfer look', a 'little China girl', 'a good cape', 'a beautiful coloured face', 'neat shoes', 'the highest stilettos I've ever seen', 'beautiful long hair'...

Some of the ads also reveal the 'weakness' of the person who placed them, as in the case of a boy writing to a girl who seems so perfect to him: she even has a key ring with the logo of the local Ajax football club!:

[...] To the girl in the blue shirt with brown hair and even more beautiful brown eyes, who was sitting behind a PC by the window at the University Library on the Singel yesterday (4 April).

⁵¹ 'Hoger -Lageropgeleiden' (The Netherlands: PowNews/YouTube, 2011) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LK1QISAQVzg>>.

⁵² Patricia Gooijer, 'Studenten Euhh Mboers Krijgen Studiepunten Voor Bijwonen Lachessie', *The Post Online* (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Campus Televisie, 16 January 2012) <<http://dejaapcampus.thepostonline.nl/campustv/studenten-euhh-mboers-krijgen-studiepunten-voor-bijwonen-lachessie/>>.

⁵³ 'Gespot: UB UVA', *Facebook*, 2012 <<https://www.facebook.com/GespotUBUVA>> <https://www.facebook.com/GespotVU>; 'Gespot: VU', *Facebook*, 2012 <<https://www.facebook.com/GespotVU>>; 'Gespot: HvA', *Facebook*, 2012 <https://www.facebook.com/GespotHva/timeline?ref=page_internal>.

I wanted to talk to you, but I lost my chance. I went home to get a bite to eat and when I came back you were gone, what a bummer. You even have an Ajax keychain, please stay a little longer next time.⁵⁴

The posts also illustrate the classic experience of enchantment produced by a sudden crush. In the case of the post below, the confession of a sudden crush is followed by a call for action:

Asian boy studying in the large hall on the third floor.
 Your appearance makes it hard to concentrate.
 There's something I really need to tell you
 You are the *pinda* I would like to peel.
 You keep checking your phone so I hope you'll see this,
 Will you come home with me around ten?

Although it is difficult to judge the seriousness of this sudden crush (the rhymes 'pellen'/'vertellen' might point to playful flirtation)⁵⁵ the personal ads on 'Gespot' enable us to glimpse a moment of daily life in a university library. In terms of clothes and accessories, the mix of different dress codes and the way posters emphasize specific details seem to reflect the situation reported by fashion media: there is no one unique colour or a unique trend but a coexistence of different styles that anyone can combine as long as it is in the right combination – from surfer to neat, from sexy lady to cool girl. 'The life of a fashion journalist has become very difficult', jokes journalist Evelien van Veen, referring to her difficulties when trying to describe new fashion trends. According to her, it is impossible to say what clothing is exactly 'in' or exactly 'out':

No, the game is infinitely more subtle, and there lies the crux. The leggings can be a good thing, if worn in the right way by the right fashion-conscious girl. They are even an essential component of a certain type of current look, further consisting of an oversized coat and low-top sneakers, a bag dangling from the forearm. Platform shoes can look great with an outfit that is super-respectable for the rest. And even a Desigual coat can undergo a miracle if Bernhard Wilem digs it up from the darkest corners of a thrift store in seven years' time and transforms it. I know, that sounds highly unlikely, but when the hipsters start wearing a coat like that, then you'll find yourself liking it - that's the kind of thing that happens in fashion. In fact, it's what the whole industry revolves around.⁵⁶

⁵⁴'Gespot: UB UVA.' Following quotation is from the same source.

⁵⁵ I'm also aware that some could object that in this context the word '*pinda*' (peanut) could even result offensive to the addressed since '*pinda*' has been also used as an offensive term to refer to Indonesian people and, by extension, people with an Asian appearance.

⁵⁶ Evelien van Veen, 'Wie Zegt Me Wat Ik Aan Moet', *Volkskrant Magazine Mode* (Amsterdam, 2013).

Previous analyses have shown that descriptors can have different interpretations according to different perspectives. For example, the reputation of a ‘laid-back atmosphere’ appeals to some students at UvA, while others choose VU because the latter has the reputation for being more ‘high school like’. Furthermore, the analysis not only shows that descriptors, including place and ‘look’ references, are interpreted differently by different ‘sorts’ of people, but also that there is a difference in perspective among posters depending on their role. Some posters, for example, claim greater insider knowledge, demonstrating this by contributing new or more concrete details about the topic of discussion. This means that in order to acquire an understanding of an intricate map of demarcations occurring in Amsterdam it is important to not only be aware of the perspective of the speakers, but also of the degree of ‘focus’: the closer in, the greater the variations and the more refined the nuances we can see. The following paragraph will focus on one specific area of Amsterdam, the Old South, which is likely to offer a perspective that contrasts with those of other areas of the city.

This analysis will enable us to register the emergence of new characters on the city streets, who stand in contrast with the original dwellers in this particular area of Amsterdam. The ‘preppy’ and the ‘dandy’ will be contrasted with ‘the *allochtoon*’, ‘the wannabe’, ‘the Barbies’, ‘the bimbos’ and ‘the ugly’. We will start with a short description of the Old South area, followed by an explanation of its reputation in terms of its ‘native inhabitants’ and the role of the incursion of strangers, whether in the form of ‘*allochtonen*’ or ‘wannabes’. Finally, we will look at the natural boundaries of the area and discuss some of the responses to the Old South preppies when they overstep those boundaries and visit other parts of the city.

b. The case of ‘Oud Zuid’

The official *I Amsterdam* website introduces the Old South with the words: ‘Regarded as the poshest neighbourhood in Amsterdam, the Old South has a decadent mix of culture and shopping. Residents feel generally safe and are pleased with their schools and other infrastructure. Certainly very few complain about having the Vondelpark as a neighbour’.⁵⁷ Indeed, a further look at other sources immediately confirms that the area is broadly associated with quality and prestige.

Related to its development during the nineteenth century, the area is home to traditional upper-class bourgeois locations such as Vondelpark and the Concertgebouw, various significant museums and even an equestrian centre, the Hollandsche Manege. It also includes the three oldest university

⁵⁷ *I Amsterdam*. I am local, ‘Oud Zuid’, 2–3 <<http://www.iamsterdam.com/en/local/official-matters/amsterdam-city-districts/stadsdeel-zuid/oud-zuid-neighbourhood>>.

preparatory schools, the Barlaeus, the Vossius and the Ignatius *gymnasia*, which seem to have become even more significant status symbols.⁵⁸ The area also includes the oldest *Lycea* in Amsterdam, the Amsterdams Lyceum and the Hervormd Lyceum Zuid. Furthermore, apart from Kalverstraat – the shopping street in the inner-city centre which fell into decline in the 1980s but was later refurbished – Amsterdam Old South hosts the most chic shops in the city along Pieter Cornelius (PC) Hooftstraat, such as the prestigious Oger,⁵⁹ and is today home to luxury brands such as Valentino, Chanel, Tiffany and Gucci.⁶⁰

Recently, the emphasis on prestige, luxury and savoir faire in terms of fashion and lifestyle seem to have gained greater popularity in the Netherlands. The journalist Jort Kelder is undoubtedly one of the most important contributors to the diffusion of the ‘preppy’ look and way of life, making it a topic for television and press. His television programme, *Bij ons in de P.C.* (‘Among our PC People’, referring to the chic PC Hooftstraat) can help us gain an understanding of matters that, according to him, are closely related to the area, such as the distinction between ‘old money and new money’. In addition to being an area associated with the most traditional bourgeoisie, the area is also well known for its Dutch celebrities, or the *B.N.* (*Bekende Nederlanders*).

Kelder’s programme includes different items every week, some of them based on students living ‘in the South’. One interesting character is the young economics student, Joris Lam. Very affluent, he goes to the beauty salon in the Old South after ‘a very exhausting’ weekend shopping in Paris. We also see him at a bag-shower party, a sort of a ‘baby shower’, but in this case to show off to other friends the Chanel bag that a friend bought for herself, of which he will be the ‘god father’.⁶¹ In one of his conversations with Kelder, Lam explains that the area is known as a ‘white reserve’, because it is indeed a place extremely adjusted to the needs of wealthy white people. He adds that he sometimes likes to leave the ‘reserve’ and go to Ikea to observe ‘fat teenagers pushing a baby buggy carrying a half-blood’, but afterwards always loves to be back ‘in the white reserve of the Old South with its beautiful people’. Such statements occasion an avalanche of material on the internet. In this case, his response was that he had not intended to insult ‘half castes’:

Secondary school pupil⁶² Joris Lam (19) regrets his outspoken remarks about ‘fat teenage mothers’ and ‘half-breeds’ in the programme ‘Bij ons in de PC’.

⁵⁸ Kuin Inger, ‘Opmars van de Elitescholen’, *Nieuw Adam Peil. USG VOX* (Amsterdam), pp. 14–16 <http://www.usgvox.nl/html/nieuw_adam_peil_051028.html>.

⁵⁹ Oger is considered a reference in the area. Other shops and services have been increasingly included in guides such as: *Style City Amsterdam* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007).

⁶⁰ ‘PcHooftstraat.nl’ <<http://www.pchooftstraat.nl/node/35>>.

⁶¹ ‘Bij Ons in de PC’ (The Netherlands: KRO, 2011) <<http://www.uitzendinggemist.nl/afleveringen/1108188>>.

⁶² [‘rijkeluis’ is a play on the words ‘rijkeluiszoontje’ (‘rich kid’) and ‘luis’ (‘louse’).]

In the programme ‘Bij Ons in de PC’ he is introduced as a student Economy (Broadcast on August the 4th. 2011) .

In the programme, hosted by Jort Kelder, the boy from Amsterdam-Zuid says that he finds a visit to Ikea an amusing experience. 'Ikea is like whiling away your time a pavement café, really. A real joy. Looking at fat teenage mothers pushing buggies with their little half-breeds in them.'

He continues: 'Then you arrive back in Amsterdam-Zuid from Ikea and you think: finally, good looking people.'

Joris is the talk of the town, especially on the internet forums. The '*rijkeluis*' – as he is being called everywhere – has received a barrage of criticism. On Wednesday, Joris apologized for his remarks on Radio 3FM. But what he really did is blame the makers of 'Bij ons in de PC': 'They misrepresented me, creating a distorted image. Now it looks like I have something against fat teenagers and half-breeds, which is of course nonsense. Some of my best friends are half-breeds.'⁶³

To express his apologies, he offered to treat everyone who felt insulted to a meal of Swedish meatballs, referring to the fast food restaurant at Ikea. The story and the reaction provide fascinating examples of various levels of delimitation and judgement. For example, in the apology, there is a gesture which could be construed as a parody of a generous 'old money gesture'. At the same time, the comments on fat teenagers reveals a provocative, prevalent image which contrasts 'poor ugly suburban youth' with the 'wealth and beauty' of the city centre. Further analysis reveals other important criteria of differentiation.

- **Attributes of poverty: On fatness and 'half-bloods'**

While this student might not have intended to insult racially mixed people (he explicitly says that he has lots of half-blood friends), the term '*halfbloedje*', using a diminutive and spoken in an elitist tone, sounds condescending to say the least. In addition, he makes a clear distinction between the beautiful people back home and the 'fat teenager mother' in Ikea, linking this to poverty and low social class. In the following, we learn that this idea is extensive within certain student forums, such as that of a group of law students, which sarcastically states that low IQ/low social class people always have more children and that, as a consequence, one could say that intelligence is disadvantaged by an increase in the birth rate: 'Low social classes shouldn't even be allowed to have children because that is disadvantageous for the development of the intelligence of the human being': 'You really don't get it, how amusing 😊 Yes. (...) being intelligent is detrimental to the reproductive chances of the human race. And now I am going to shift my attention to the much more useful topic of civil law.'⁶⁴

⁶³ 'Ophef Rond Scholier Bij Ons in de PC, Joris Lam. Onzin Voor Je Leven!', *forum.fok.nl*, 2010, pp. 1–3 <<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/1532824/1/25#86709485>>.

⁶⁴ '[SC] WO Rechten #154 Rohde Nielsen/De Donge. P. 5', *forum.fok.nl*, 2012 <<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/1908073/2/39>>.

Similar attributions of low social character appear in the form of a reference to a fat young woman in Aldi's discount supermarket, with a 'fat belly and an atrocious dress', and is clearly associated with specific lower class areas of the city and its environments (such as the New West, some parts of Bos en Lommer, some areas of the East).



Source: 'Barbie' pictures

The posters also refer to famous characters (*de typetjes*) from television and reality shows. The picture above shows one of them, 'Barbie', a character who became popular through the reality soap *Oh, Oh, Cherso*, based on a group of young Dutch people on a beach holiday in Greece. The holiday consisted of drinking, going to a disco and having sex, but also of private moments in which the different characters explained their problems and expressed their wishes for the future. Barbie's real name is Samantha, but 'from an early age she has had only one goal: to live like Barbie'. On the website of *Oh, Oh, Cherso* one can read: 'She spends a lot of time of her appearance and preferably dies her hair a shade of 'pornstar blond'. Her ideal man is an *anabool* [i.e. someone who looks like he lifts a lot of weights and takes anabolic steroids, someone who is 'pumped']'.⁶⁵

The character of Barbie is the opposite of the elegance and discrete glamour distinctive of Joris Lam and friends at the 'bag shower' in the Old South. Other student forums use the character of Barbie to illustrate how certain people have no capabilities, 'they are useless': 'I said, (...) that I don't write people off as stupid unless they are really useless. So I don't mean people like bus drivers and mechanics but people like Barby or Brit Dekker (although Brit is quite sweet actually)'.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ 'Ze besteedt heel veel aandacht aan haar uiterlijk en heeft het liefste 'pornoblonde' haar. Haar ideale man is een anabool.' In: 'Oh, Oh, Cherso. Reality Show' (The Netherlands: RTL.NL, 2010).

⁶⁶ National forum, including students from different law faculties. '[SC] WO Rechten#154 RohdeNielsen/De Donge. 2010-2011, posts December 2012 '[SC] WO Rechten #154 Rohde Nielsen/De Donge. P. 5.'

- **On how the term ‘white reserve’ becomes positive**

The term ‘white reserve’ was originally meant as a pejorative qualification, referring to inequality of opportunity and inequality within society in Amsterdam. The research organization, *Corporatie.nl*, for example, specializing in research on urban spaces, warned in one of its articles that, if not remedied, this ‘Amsterdams Zuid-achtige’ phenomenon will be irreversibly extended to other areas of Amsterdam:

Attractive central locations will turn into Amsterdam-Zuid-like enclaves for highly educated, white, double-income couples who don’t like surprises. The people who clean their houses will have to settle for a house in Osdorp, Almere or Purmerend, far away out of the sight of the higher classes.⁶⁷

However, it is precisely the private and elitist character of the area that seduces its inhabitants and attracts visitors. The feeling of belonging to the place is commonly expressed by the phrase ‘bij ons’ (in the place where we belong), accompanied by the statement that ‘someone has to be the best’. In this reasoning, there is no room for equality because it is not in the nature of this vision of life.⁶⁸ The idea that a city will always need to have privileged areas and poor areas, appears to be emphasized in the use of a language which asserts its ‘right to use clear words’ without being afraid of offending people in terms of race or social class, or a contempt for excessive bureaucracy and its rules aimed at decreasing urban segregation.

The notion of the Old South as a reserve might, to some, also point to the idea of an oasis of tranquillity and wellbeing in a city that has gradually changed its demographic composition. The title of the novel, *Alleen maar nette mensen*, refers to a statement repeatedly used by the mother of the main character, David, to refer with pride to the Old South neighbourhood in which they live (and from which David would like to escape): ‘only nice people live here’. David will explain in the novel that for people like his mother the sentence ‘only nice people’, means a place without ‘*allochtonen*’ or visible conflict and poverty.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Marnix Groenland, ‘Welkom in Het Witte Reservaat’, *CorporatieNL*, 2012 <<http://www.corporatienl.nl/welkom-in-het-witte-reservaat/>>.

⁶⁸ In this respect, it is pertinent to refer to the popularity of the theories of Milton Friedman during the 1980s and the 1990s and his influence as a spokesperson for free market capitalism from then on. His answer to Donahue during their classic conversation in 1979 has become emblematic: ‘Is it really true that political self-interest is nobler somehow than economic self-interest? You know, I think you’re taking a lot of things for granted. Just tell me where in the world you find these angels who are going to organize society for us? Well, I do not even trust you to do that’. In: Milton Friedman, ‘Greed. Where Are These Angels?’ (martinkronicle.com, 2010).

⁶⁹ Robert Vuijsje, *Alleen Maar Nette Mensen* (Amsterdam: Nijgh & Van Ditmar, 2008).

- **Artefacts belonging to whom?**

Once we have seen the logic of the argument, it is easier to see that the manner in which things are selected provides legitimacy and gives different values to the same product. A good example is the Vespa scooter. In Jort Kelder's programme on PC Hoofstraat we see an array of girls with Vespas, presents from their 'daddies' for their sixteenth birthdays.⁷⁰ According to Jort Kelder, the Vespa is a traditional gift on this birthday in this area. The girls explain to him that they have carefully chosen a colour that matches their clothing. An important accessory is the helmet, from the Fashion Helmet brand, along with Ray-Ban sunglasses and a Louis Vuitton bag in front of their feet while riding. Their hair is long, predominately blond and styled, and as the hairdresser will comment, 'they all try to look the same'.⁷¹

Probably because of the preppy image associated with Vespas, the same Vespa becomes suspicious when ridden along PC Hoofstraat by dark-skinned boys: 'they have probably stolen it, or are in the area to make trouble or steal something', are the comments. The same goes for the use of luxury articles such as expensive cars. The Moroccan Community is aware of this. On YouTube someone has posted a film in which two policemen patrolling PC Hoofstraat on their bikes question a man with 'north-African looks' who is driving a new Lamborghini. One of the posters comments on the video:

[...] on a bicycle 'heee hee stop the car'! That man in the car is driving normally isn't he, is that not allowed or something?! Why don't you go and do something more useful with your time, officer dear! Go and catch the real criminals instead of bothering people! Just typical for the Dutch police...'They see an expensive car, and those feelings of frustration come bubbling up from inside'.⁷²

It is obvious that the policemen in the film did not realize that the man in the Lamborghini was Badr Hari, a popular boxer, admired in boxing circles for his talent in the ring and for being a self-made man. Ironically, a couple of weeks after this incident Badr's face would become a familiar image in the daily news after he was violent outside the ring, hitting the millionaire entrepreneur Koen Everink in a

⁷⁰ Dutch '*pappie*': Expression used by presenter Jort Kelder in 'Bij Ons in de PC.'

⁷¹ Siko (aan de telefoon): 'Blond? Oud-Zuid? No way, it's just a trend among students and anyone who identifies with that group. Boys want to have shoulder-length hair too. Long and straight hair is in fashion, blond stands for sex, and curly hair is a disaster. At the moment everyone wants to look like each other, because the more you look like each other the less you stand out and the more success you will have with others. Everything needs to be same for the moment.'

Monique, 'De Geblondeerde Golddigger Rukt Op', *BeautyJournaal*, December 2009
<<http://www.beautyjournaal.nl/2009/12/02/de-geblondeerde-golddigger-rukt-op/>>.

⁷² Comments in *Badr Hari Met de Nieuwe Lamborghini* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2012)

<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b7cpbXe8cdY>> After the incident in the Sky Lounge at the Arena in August 2012 the video was quite quickly removed from YouTube. Posted again in 2013 as *Badr Hari Lamborghini Aventador 2013* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2013).

Sky Lounge during the 'Sensation White' party in Amsterdam's Arena.⁷³ He would also become widely known for being the new partner of Estelle Cruijff, a blond, white Dutch woman related to the famous football player, Johan Cruijff, and the ex-wife of black football player Ruud Gullit. I will not go into all the details here, the important point to understand is that these stories have been repetitive news items in very popular press and news sites. All of the different details have been commented on in youth and other forums, leading to discussions about possible racism, of Badr's guilt, about his possible violent character, about the violent character of '*allochtoon*' males in general, and about his good taste in clothes.⁷⁴ Going back to the posts on the film of Badr in a Lamborghini, the main discussion is focused on the fact that Badr has the money to buy such a car and on the racism of the police, who ask him what he is doing in the street apparently just because of his appearance.

Using other examples collected, in which the use of luxury items are discussed, it is plausible to deduce that expensive branded artefacts, whether clothes, caps, jewels, accessories, cars or scooters, combined with a specific skin colour will arouse suspicion. The starting point is the belief that ethnic minorities cannot have the money for these items and if they have, it must be because of illegal activities. One student put it this way:

[...] of course you can go and make a crude generalization, but that's just too easy...
 I wonder what they're complaining about then??? Based on my grant and my part-time job I would NEVER EVER be able to spend 1700 euros a year on clothing.... That's half my annual salary....
 But then most just get a lot of students loans out.. It's because of this kind of thing that young people borrow too much money.... because they just think well, I'll pay it back later...
 It's hopeless, because you can also get a bunch of normal and cheaper clothes for that money (What's wrong with places like C&A?) and you can decide not to borrow money to pay for your car, but yeah, that's probably just me on my high horse.....

To which the original poster of the topic concludes with irony: 'Based on some of the reactions my post basically came down to this: An *allochtoon* wearing new clothes = a thief | An *autochtoon* wearing new clothes = a hardworking person'⁷⁵

A further analysis of the issue leads to forums on immigrants living in areas such as the New West. Some posters explain that the fact that Moroccans and Turkish people can afford luxury products is

⁷³ Paul Vugts, 'Badr Hari Werd "Zwaar Beledigd" Tijdens Sensation White', *Het Parool*, August 2012
 <<http://www.parool.nl/parool/nl/4/AMSTERDAM/article/detail/3305303/2012/08/23/Badr-Hari-werd-zwaar-beledigd-tijdens-Sensation-White.dhtml>>.

⁷⁴ 'Blanke Vrouwen Die Perse Een Marokkan Willen!!!', *partyflock*, 2012
 <<http://partyflock.nl/topic/1130494/PAGE/A.html#pgcntrl>>.

⁷⁵ 'Marokkaanse Jeugd Draagt Dure Kleding.'

because they prefer to spend their money on clothes rather than on alcohol, which is an important difference with their Dutch generational counterparts. Others suggest that perhaps they have money because some families, especially Turkish families, have successful small enterprises. Others remark that lots of Vespas and other scooters are leased. Others think that the clothes are fake, bought for a couple of euros in Turkey or somewhere similar: *'allemaal huichelarij'* ('only hypocrisy'). On the Marokko Community website the posters discuss – with some self-criticism – the idea that the Moroccan community exhibits herd behaviour: 'one could see it last year with the girls, at once everybody was wearing Prada shoes'. Another poster characterizes Moroccan girls as follows:

Do you know [...],
 There are three types of Moroccan girls in Amsterdam: Bimbos, bimbos with headscarves. And the rest falls into the category of non-bimbo.
 these qualifications are based on thorough empirical research, having reference to the population among Moroccan girls.
 And now for the shocking part: Moroccans have a herd mentality (generally speaking)!
 And all this, my dear [...], formed a reason for me to open a topic on Moroccan girls (with headscarves) who own or drive vespas.⁷⁶

In the opinion of a young Moroccan social worker, Sadik, the desire for certain brands, whether a specific scooter or an item of clothing, leads children into delinquency, that is why in his boxing lessons at Diamantstraat everybody wears a uniform. 'In my school', he says, 'everybody is the same'. His initiative is supported by other posters on the forum: '[...] this is well hard man wollah iela respect to you guys]]]]]. [...] yo sadik respect man for everything you're doing there... [...].⁷⁷

- **Unmasking the fakes**

In reviewing the previous discussion one can deduce that an important underlying topic is what belongs to who, that is to say, who has 'the right' to possess specific artefacts, enjoy certain privileges, etc. and who does not. From the perspective of the Old South we are led again to the relevance of the place of origin and the associated look as a determining factor in relation to lifestyle. Someone originally from the area seems to have more right to adopt its lifestyle than someone who is not.

⁷⁶ 'Hoofddoekjes En Holleeder', *maroc*, 2008 <<http://www.maroc.nl/forums/wie-schrijft-blijft/251758-hoofddoekjes-holleeder-3.html>>.

⁷⁷ Project by Sadik Kaynak in Amsterdam's Diamantbuurt. 'Op de maat is iedereen gelijk' *MTK-GYM Sadik Kaynak* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2010) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0u0Uw4cEII&lc=oV0zUhq1v0nNPDoqujGZh7PaqC4-RSrZXI7HovkK9Hg>>.

Another interesting example in this respect is the ‘coming soon’ announcement about a new internet sitcom *020 Zuid* in Amsterdam. The sitcom has a plot similar to a popular show on MTV called *The Hills*, which is situated in Los Angeles, or *Gossip Girls* from New York. Both shows are reality soaps, with *The Hills* following the lives of several young women in Los Angeles, while *Gossip Girls* is based on the life of young upper-class adults in New York.



In the plans for the new programme, *020 Zuid*, the preview announces ‘the very interesting adventures of three girls from the area, who although being affluent have the same problems as everybody else’. However, the expert eyes of the reporters for the Amsterdam magazine *Quote* (specialized in the ‘real world rich society’) do not hesitate to unmask the programme’s pretence to Old South authenticity, stating with irony: ‘Yes, real exclusive, one of those girls working at Palazzo with all the Badrs and Regilios’.⁷⁸ In this way, *Quote* refers to the ‘Non-Old South’ ambiance of Café Palazzo on Leidseplein and to the patrons of the venue – wannabes, as well as boxers and footballers such as Regilio and the already mentioned Badr Hari.

Hoe real is reality? Well, the programma *is* 'scripted'. Moreover, we haven't heard the typical Vossius 'r' and we, loyal frequenters of Amsterdam Zuid, don't recognise these women at all. A trustworthy source has told us none of the girls actually comes from Zuid, but rather from Osdorp, Amstelveen and Hilversum.

⁷⁸ ‘And we follow tattoo artist in training Mignon, who works at the stylish, high-end Palladium in Leidseplein. Say hi to Badr and Regilio for us!’ (‘En we volgen tatoeëerder in opleiding Mignon, die werkt in de stijlvolle klasse-zaak Palladium aan het Leidseplein. Doe Badr en Regilio de groeten van ons!’). In: Henk Willem Smits, ‘Reality-Soap over “Luxe Leven in Amsterdam-Zuid”’, *Quote* (Amsterdam, 14 August 2012) <<http://www.quotenet.nl/Nieuws/Reality-soap-over-luxe-leven-in-Amsterdam-Zuid-18013>>. Following quote is from the same source.



Quote even ridicules the pillows used by the three girls in a silly pillow fight during a sleep-over, with the sarcastic title: 'luxury pillows' ('*luxe kussens, hoor*').

- **Those are real! The celebration of money**

The appearance of the clip *Boven gemiddeld* on YouTube leads to similar kinds of inquiries and deductions regarding the authenticity of the posters. In the clip, a group of four preppy looking boys sing a song they have written entitled 'Boven gemiddeld' (Above Average). The big question that arises in the forum is: Are the four boys (and the girls dancing around them) real Old Southerners? Some posters, for example, expresses their doubts because they think that they have seen the girls working in a bar (that would mean they are not affluent) or observe that they behave oddly, suggesting that they're not authentic: '... those girls don't even know how to pick up a wine glass -- ALWAYS GRAB IT BY THE STEM, OTHERWISE YOUR BODY TEMPERATURE WILL RUIN THE WINE... and I'm no snob.'⁷⁹ However, redemption comes with the words: 'we know those guys they live on our street, in het Gooi in Laren'. ♥'

This means that they are 'in', because despite the fact that Laren is not in Amsterdam, it can be considered one of its extensions, enjoying the same and even a higher reputation as a luxury place to live. In the clip, the four boys describe the Old South with the sorts of expressions that are often used by others to parody them and with a specific pronunciation: '*Oud Zuid! Supermooi, superduur, fucking mooi*' (Old South! Super beautiful, super expensive, fucking beautiful).

⁷⁹ This and the following quotes are from the comments under Clip *Boven Gemiddeld: Oud Zuid*.



The boys sing about how proud they are to be typically upper class and that this position is restricted to the more than 'above average' population. Under the clip on YouTube, numerous contributors engage in a discussion about the message of the song and the personalities of the singers. Some people say they dislike this kind of upper-class student type (arrogant and lazy because they already have everything), or point out that 'not everybody in the South is rich and preppy', but others, especially girls, express their love. 'They are genius/brilliant'. And yes, perhaps going to VWO (pre-university secondary education) and to university means that they are from a better class, but 'That's life!'. They conclude with the words 'VWO 4 Life!'. In this way, VWO, considered the highest level of secondary school in the Netherlands, seems to be synonymous with being better, smarter and wealthier than non-VWO youth, corroborating the previous discussion of ROC students, who are considered to be the 'last in the line'. 'VWO 4 Life' expresses a sort of privileged community feeling that connects participants in this forum through an Old South feeling of exclusivity.

- **Outside 'Oud Zuid': Fraternity students, preppies and yuppies not wanted**

However, preppies, fraternity students, yuppies and the like in their turn arouse aversion in other areas of the city. In the district called the Pijp, the former blue-collar neighbourhood next to the Old South, a blogger uses the invasion of the Vespa and the Vespa people to symbolize his rejection of the annoying sort of gentrification that has overtaken the area. The Vespas parked in front of hip bars, such as the Chocolate Bar, clutter the footpaths, while their owners look suspiciously at every 'poor cyclist trying to find a way to ride' past, afraid their Vespas might be damaged:

[...] when that truly likeable guy or that genuinely cute girl tries to make their way through the Albert Cuyp coming from the 'de van der Hel' pushing their bike along by the hand, they receive underhand looks or are even pushed to the side by the foot soldiers of the Zuidas invasion: the lawyers and accountants are afraid of their pontifically displayed scooters getting scratched. These sad little Vespas are stationed on the Pijp's many squares in their dozens and are only the latest expression of herd

behaviour. No, these hordes of uncreative types are sadly lacking in the ability to distinguish themselves as unique individuals.⁸⁰

According to this blogger, the owners of the Vespas are lawyers and economists who have just finished their education and are now working 'as slaves' in the business area of the South Axis. 'That's why they need to blow off some steam at night'.

- **New hippies and hipsters: An entrance into preppy antagonist areas**

Parallel to the preppy reality of the Old South, in another part of the city, the Bloemenbar took a stand in 2011 by forbidding entrance to preppy fraternity students and later on becoming selective about yuppies.⁸¹ A poster explains:

[...] If the name of this bar sounds familiar but you are sure you have never actually been there, that is probably because one Friday in March it demonstratively closed its doors to show the members of the Amsterdamse Student Corps that they weren't welcome there. The local media jumped on this, giving the place instant fame. The *corpsballen* haven't allowed themselves to be driven away completely. It's up to you to decide whether that makes you happy or otherwise. In any case, go to the Bloemenbar and you will see a colourful cocktail of different people, ranging from guys in collared shirts to girls wearing ironic neon leggings. Plenty of fun, in other words.⁸²

Looking at the general profiles of the frequenters of the Bloemenbar one can see that they are students in fields such as anthropology, comparative literature, American Studies and communications, with a political preference for the Green Left party.⁸³ The website *Moderne hippies* is a good way to get to know more about the ideals of the group: 'We want to be modern hippies, with our heads in the clouds, but with our feet on the ground'.⁸⁴ The idea of starting a website arose on a summer evening, while reflecting on the group of friends, everybody different but all of them enjoying themselves while drinking beer and wine.

A similar 'hippy/progressive' philosophy can be seen in the editorial group of the online magazine *hard//hoofd*, which was founded by a group of friends who, after visiting Berlin, thought that it must be possible to change the ambiance in Amsterdam into something more creative. Both sites share

⁸⁰ 'De niet leuke mensen in de Amsterdamse Pijp'

'Het de Pijp-Gevoel?', *thelognessmonster.wordpress*, 2012 <<http://thelognessmonster.wordpress.com/2012/01/15/12/>>.

⁸¹ 'Bloemenbar Is Korpsballen Zat', *AT5*, 2012 <<http://www.at5.nl/artikelen/78678/bloemenbar-is-korpsballen-zat>>.

⁸² Comment by Paul D., 'Bloemenbar', *tupalo*, 2012 <<http://tupalo.com/nl/amsterdam/bloemenbar>>.

⁸³ As an example, see public Facebook profile of Max Somojiono, a student from Almere >> 'Max Somojino', *Facebook* <https://www.facebook.com/r.php?profile_id=100000884733373&next=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2Fmax.somjiono&friend_or_subscriber=friend>.

⁸⁴ 'Hoofd in de wolken, voetjes op de grond', 'Moderne Hippies', *modernehippies* <Modernehippies.nl>.

some outward appearances that distinguishes them from old hippies. They refer to modern habits such as 'shaving', and being eclectic with clothes: 'we do not wear a flower dress every day'. The *hard//hoofd* editorial team describe themselves in a similar eclectic way 'we are naked but with well-trained bodies, we are hard workers but also tanned by sunshine'.⁸⁵ It is probably because these emergent progressive young people identify themselves with an eclectic style that they feel the need to explain the reasons for their choices, or even their contradictions, through well-elaborated articles, manifestos and reviews of online and offline publications.

Concerning clothes and other artefacts, it is interesting to see their rubrics about favourite items of clothing, which they insist on telling the story behind, seeking to distance themselves from mere materialism. They also advocate TV series such as *Girls*, which they celebrate as the sitcom that portrays people as they are (unlike series such as *Gossip Girls*, in which everybody always looks fantastic but artificial). The exploration of these aesthetics leads to their rejection of the old culture of baby boomers and grey intellectuals, who still desperately occupy cultural and media podiums in the city, wearing sneakers as if they were Steve Jobs. In the end, if this youth celebrate the emergence of sitcoms such as *Girls* it is also because at least it is written and directed by a twenty-something: 'for once something different from the old journalists and researchers who until now have portrayed their generation'.⁸⁶

In this sense it is also clear that the expectations of what or how a 'young someone in Amsterdam should become' are far from simple. Without the necessity of doing it with every writer, it is interesting to read some extra information about the way novelists such as Seleky, which work we have been seeing in chapter 3, had experienced his 'real life' in Amsterdam as a young student and the contradictions between him and his alter ego in the novel *Ego Faber*. In this respect, Seleky says: 'I was 19 when I came to Amsterdam. I wanted to come here because every good writer has lived in Amsterdam but I also went immediately to the student association ASC.' At that moment, he explains, he thought it was important to experience different ambiances en meet different kind of people. But he also thinks that those are more details and that real persons are less consequent than one would expect. Preppy *Corps* girls will be found incognito as bohemians in the Pijp area and so forth. It suggests that youth is above all a confusing moment at which it is hard to find a personality

⁸⁵ Redactie Hard/hoofd, 'Wat Is Hard//hoofd?', *Hard/hoofd. Online tijdschrift voor kunst en journalistiek* (Amsterdam, 31 August 2009) <<http://hardhoofd.com/wat-is-hardhoofd/>>.

⁸⁶ 'I mean, what's the difference? I'm ecstatic that I found this series. In *Girls*, for once it's not older researchers or journalists telling our generation's story, but we ourselves. Luckily HBO recently announced that a second season's coming. Finally there's an unconventional TV series that I can totally identify with. Feel your heart go out to these four young women and their young men in their difficult but beautiful existence. They don't know who they are or what they want, they're self-centred and spoiled, but I wouldn't underestimate them.' In: Rutger Lemm, 'Verwend En Verward', *Hard/hoofd* (Amsterdam, 2012) <<http://hardhoofd.com/2012/06/08/verwend-en-verward/>>.

that suits. What his story was, and what I believe is clear in his novel, is the transmission of a general feeling of longing: 'I also can say that our generation has a sort of melancholy. We have everything but also very often a broken family. A mother who becomes lesbian and a father who goes away with a young chick.'⁸⁷

The stereotype of the current bohemian intellectual in the nightlife scene are the hipsters. Blogger Jill Mathon tells us about their features:

The classic hipster

This type of hipster avoids anything mainstream and focuses on propagating his or her personal style. The classic hipster prefers to shop in 'undiscovered' places where second-hand things are sold or things that have an old or vintage look to them. Favourites are Amsterdam's Noordermarkt on Monday mornings, the flea market in the IJ-hallen but also shops such as Monki, American Apparel, Velours and Episode. The classic hipster's favourite place to show off their garb is Café Brecht. Here he or she can also hang around with other members of the hipster classes talking about literature, poetry and the beauty of the analog camera that also serves as an accessory. The X-Ray tent at the Lowlands festival serves as the epicentre of the national hipster scene, although the place has lost some of its popularity due to the arrival of the wipsters (wannabee hipsters). Melt!, Fusion and other German festivals are therefore much more interesting.

Apart from this, the classic hipster likes to go to parties in Berlin, the Bloemenbar, Jägerland nights, the Chicago Social Club, Roest and club nights such as Colors in Trouw. In terms of beverages, the hipster's preference is for old-fashioned filter coffee, chai latte, beer, red wine, a gin and tonic or Jägermeister. Television narrows the mind and is too mainstream. Literature and difficult philosophical theories, on the other hand, are not and are therefore common topics of discussion. The XX, James Blake, Nicolaas Jaar, Soulclap but also old legends such as Johnny Cash and Dolly Parton are popular. The more obscure something is the more deserving it is of hipster interest.'⁸⁸

Following this description, the blogger distinguishes three other variations of the classic hipster according to the areas they frequent and to the authenticity of their hipsterness: the vipster, the flipster and the wipster. In this respect, it is also interesting to note that although this description concerns Amsterdam, it is clear that the term 'hipster' has become a widespread word in contemporary cities and that it defines a somewhat new character in city life. The picture below, for example, shows a scene of Cafè Brecht in Amsterdam. According to its owners, the style of the cafè is

⁸⁷ Paraphrased and translated from interview with Maurice Seleký in Jim Jansen, "Mijn Generatie Schippert Enorm", *Folia* (Amsterdam, 2010), pp. 10–11.

⁸⁸ Jill Mathon, 'De Evolutie van de Hipster in de Amsterdamse Uitgaansscene', *blog.youngworks*, 2012 <<http://blog.youngworks.nl/blog/de-evolutie-van-de-hipster-in-de-amsterdamse-uitgaansscene>>.

inspired by a Berlin sense of romanticist no-nonsense.

In the following paragraph, we will also see some other global tokens that can be found in contemporary Amsterdam.



In the picture above: Hipsters in front of Café Brecht. Café Brecht is described on its site as ‘Berlin’s living room at Weteringschans 157 in Amsterdam. That means standard lamps, old armchairs and teacups from grandmother’s day. Nothing overly trendy, but rather timeless romance.’⁸⁹

c. Aestheticization. Cross global references

The analysis in this paragraph focuses on the tokens of global and mainstream characteristics found in the material researched. Some of the blogs written in English from Amsterdam, for example, show some global trends in fashion blogs, such as soft colours and classy but personalized pictures. One of the reasons why a large array of such sites look a bit the same in terms of layout and organization doubtlessly has to do with the availability of standard formats on the internet such as *Tumblr* or *Instagram*. Furthermore, there is also a clear coincidence in terms of



⁸⁹ ‘Cafe Brecht’, *cafebrecht* <<http://www.cafebrecht.nl/>>.

language style. Most bloggers introduce themselves as passionate fashion lovers, as is the case with Fadtony: 'I'm a fashion victim that likes to horse around with his camera'.⁹⁰

Like Fadtony, bloggers include subsections entitled 'My confessions', in which they reveal their minor sins, such as 'addictions to chocolate, shoes or perfume'. Subversive terms such as 'revolution' or 'riot' appear combined with words such as 'good taste', 'hipster' or even 'bouquets of flowers', for example, 'the revolution of good taste' or a 'riot of flowers'.

Often the blogs refer to a Scandinavian 'look', associated with values such as sustainability, minimalism and innovation. At the same time, the blogs recommend places to go outside Amsterdam, as is the case with the Green Girls, who recommend a visit to Tarifa in Costa de la Luz, Spain:

[...] Tarifa is a little surfers' paradise. We had lunch at Bamboo, in a hippy-like atmosphere. They are known for the fact that they make everything themselves, such as fresh juices and pastries. I had a delicious homemade veggie burger here. You do need a little patience because the style here is pretty laid back, but it was definitely worth the wait!⁹¹

The value of such places is expressed in terms of their organic and vegan priorities for example, taking after the traditions of old hippy communities in Goa or Ibiza.

Back in Amsterdam, bloggers recommend new services, such as the bookshop, Books & Bubbles, offering a new experience, in this case combining the beauty of books with a glass of champagne, in what is called the 'Oxford meets Versailles' experience. The search for and design of the right logo might also be followed by discussion and comment, as we can see below:



So cool, Books & Bubbles has its own logo! Designed by Charlotte Amber.

The coat of arms fits in with the style of *Books & Bubbles* completely: 'Oxford Library meets Chateau Versailles and a little touch of Shakespeare and Company'

An extra nice detail are the French lilies, which you also see in the arms of Du Maine's. A complete coincidence, but really cool!⁹²

The fashion blogs demonstrate that international and, above all, intercity trends are well known and

⁹⁰ 'The UK Bunch', *fadtony.blogspot*, 2009 <<http://www.fadtony.blogspot.nl/>>.

⁹¹ 'De Groene meisjes vegan vintage city' 'De Groene Meisjes', *degroenemeisjes.blog* <<http://www.degroenemeisjes.nl/tag/spanje>>.

⁹² 'Het Books & Bubbles Logo!', *books-bubbles*, 2012 <<http://books-bubbles.com/2012/10/16/het-books-bubbles-logo/>>.

that there is a general consensus about what to put in such a blog, reproducing the global trends in the local context. As in other cities, fashion blogs in Amsterdam report on topics such as the 'look' of the day, in which they discuss the most unique outfit found on the streets on a particular day, and the OOTD (Outfit Of The Day) films and updates. In addition, the introduction of concepts such as 'Camp' and 'Kitsch' point to aesthetic representations of old fashions or banal objects, as do 'camp' set designs produced by Pauline Goedhart and Kunna Haan, which are used to set the scene in clubs and for parties, such as the setting for a holiday camp shown below.⁹³ They think that their pictures feed a need in their generation to have fun: 'At a party we do not want to talk about Syria', they say.

The success of the initiatives of those students of media and communication also points to having a good intuition about what people will like. Possibly, this is a good example of what the successful lingerie designer, Marlies Dekkers, calls 'Dutch Amsterdam entrepreneurship' and the 'Montessori feeling',⁹⁴ arguing that Amsterdam's inhabitants dare to have fun and to commercialize their crazy ideas.



A picture promoting Bungalup, a festival that, according to the set designers, brings the whole of Amsterdam's nightlife scene together outside the city for one weekend.⁹⁵

⁹³ 'Sprookjes Bestaan', *PS van de Week, Het Parool* (Amsterdam, 2 February 2013).

⁹⁴ Montessori refers to the schools following the educational approach of Maria Montessori 'characterized by an emphasis on independence, freedom within limits, and respect for a child's natural psychological, physical, and social development. The approach is characterized by an emphasis on freedom, independence and respect for children's choices.'. In: 'Montessori Education', *Wikipedia* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montessori_education>.

⁹⁵ 'And tonight they're at Bungalup, the festival that attracts the Amsterdam club scene for a weekend at Center Parcs De Eemhoff in Zeewolde. And so the duo has emptied the Episode, the IJ-Hallen, the Noordermarkt and their regular 'little

A look into more mainstream sites such as *Ellegirl* reveals that young people who were not necessarily into buying second-hand clothes have also tried to find their way into the vintage scene. They have various opinions, as we can see below:

‘What do you think of Waterlooplein’:

Xxxx us :cool:

[...]! I pass through there now and then but I think it's a really terrible place

it's like Queen's Day only worse

really dirty things and stoned idiots walking around eeewww

[...] fantastic!! _oo-⁹⁶

Young MBO communications students in Almere doing their internship on the local Almere website go to inspect the fashion scene in Amsterdam to collect material for a report, but find it less vibrant than expected. In the well-known vintage store, Laura Doll, they are not even allowed to take pictures! The following is part of their report:

[...] ‘Amsterdam! The city of sex, drugs and.. fashion?’



Generally speaking I would say yes, but last Wednesday we didn't see a single fashion bunny. Most of the time you see quite a few girls around who look like they have just stepped off a catwalk. Unfortunately that wasn't the case this time, as we only saw girls who dress exactly the same as the girls you see in Almere. We covered quite a

section of Amsterdam: Rokin, Dam square, Kalverstraat, and even the Nine Streets area (*de negen straatjes*). For those of you who don't know this area, it simply consists of nine little shopping streets where you can find lots of unique little shops. We paid a visit to Laura Dols ourselves (one of Amsterdam's best known vintage boutiques), where we weren't allowed to photograph the clothes, unfortunately. Located a little further along on the same street is Episode, a larger (and busier) second-hand clothing store. Certainly worth taking a look!



fellow' on Waterlooplein in their quest to find 'brutal items' like berets, ball gowns and glittery size-42 platform shoes – these are convenient, they will fit anyone. In: 'Paarden Kracht', *pkfashion* <Worldofpaardenkracht.nl>.

⁹⁶ 'Waterlooplein', *ellegirltalk*, 2005 <<http://forum.ellegirl.nl/showthread.php?53430-Waterlooplein>>.

Another thing we found out is that guys are more likely to take the trouble to stop and listen to what you're saying. In the end, we did ask a few people about their style, but some didn't really cooperate at all (no photo), or couldn't think of an answer to our questions, which was a shame. But thankfully we had a really great time in the big city.⁹⁷

Another interesting path leads to other mainstream blogs showing the emergence of the girl-next-door blogs. Bloggers such as Shirley do not have the look of a model (they have problems keeping themselves in shape and now and then have a bad day), but Shirley's followers say they love her because they feel as though 'they know her very well'. As it happens, in other blogs, at a certain moment, the readers are curious to know details, such as where she lives. In fact, one of them even accuses her of not living in Amsterdam but in Osdorp (an Amsterdam outer suburb): 'And that is not Amsterdam', says the poster. To which she answers: 'Yes, I live in Osdorp. We were looking for a good place to live and here we could find something affordable'.⁹⁸

This leads us to blogs that give us an entry into more budget-related matters and which (intentionally or not) are less sophisticated. The South-East community website in Amsterdam has open forums on topics such as 'Gangsta lower trousers for boys, yes or no', which reveal low-budget practices: 'I like gangsta trousers but not when the underpants are Zeeman', referring to a well-known budget chain of shops, 'or when white with tracks', referring to a possible lack of hygiene. The comments also show that it is difficult to wear such trousers in the right way: 'You can also take things too far, | of course you don't need to pull it up to your navel, | but so low down that it looks like your back's a metre long? | No thanks'.⁹⁹

Posts such as the one above show that some young people in Amsterdam South-East are particularly interested in discussing details about how to wear a specific item of clothing or certain accessories.

This probably explains why some older people, such as the fashion designer Aziz Bekkaoui, think that the internet has not brought about the explosion of creativity that he was expecting:

Just look at the teenage or high school girls: All wearing an Adidas jacket and Uggs to match. They are scared to death of not looking like the rest. We thought the internet would boost people's creativity. Because it allows you to explore the whole world in a virtual way. But the enormous demand seems to be deadening the creative spark. Just take a walk down Leidsestraat. Everyone looks the same. Where are the punks? The New Wave kids? Where are the subcultures?¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Jacqueline and Valentina, *'Amsterdam! De Stad van Sex, Drugs En... Fashion'*, *Jongin.nl* (Almere, 2011).

⁹⁸ Blog Shirley 'Back to School', *shirleyschrijft* <<http://www.shirleyschrijft.nl/>>.,

⁹⁹ 'Wat Vinden Meisjes van Broek Laag Dragen???' , *Bijlmerenzo* (Amsterdam Zuidoost, 2012).

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Aziz Bekkaoui in: Ringel Goslinga and Sheila Kamerman, "'In Marokko Voelde Ik Me Vrijer'", *NRC* (Amsterdam, 10 November 2012).

At parties at clubs it is the ‘bitch door’ who brings exuberance and extravagance to the nightlife, an extravagance that is to be found less in the audience itself. Clubs try to attract exuberant types (we would like to see ‘*travestieten, homo’s en lilliputters*’ says the owner of Club Trouw) but above all attract ‘normal looking students’. The poster below, who lives next to the club, remarks that he has often observed the line in front of the club, but what he sees above all are people in normal clothes. He also adds that he does not understand why people always have to be ‘exuberant and creative’:

I regularly see the row of visitors waiting in line outside. Those are always average-looking boys and girls – no strange outfits or anything. Nothing to show that these people have a special or even their own sense of style. Unless the latest trend is to show your style by looking just the same as everybody else. I’m afraid that the only Lilliputian in that club is the owner himself :).¹⁰¹

The following section will reflect on the research and draw some conclusions and points for further discussion.

8.5. Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to identify possible stereotyping processes in the way young people, especially young students in Amsterdam, see themselves and others as forming a part of a group. The idea was that the study of some recurrent place and ‘look’ references in the descriptions of youth in contemporary Amsterdam would lead to the identification of fixed combinations or stereotypes in which incidental characteristics are assigned to a whole group. Because ‘look’ references, that is to say, references to how ‘people look’, are especially related to physical appearance, one of the focuses of the analysis was on which physical characteristics were particularly used as ‘descriptors’ of a group.

Simultaneously, the analysis also focused on the role that place references play in the assignation of group identities. As already mentioned, the one-liner ‘What is someone like you doing in a place like this?’, used in the title of this chapter, is meant to express the idea of an ambivalent but recognizable feeling of being part of or being seen to belong to a particular place or not. As a starting point, I took students in the broadest sense of the word, as currently used by the Dutch Ministry of Education: those who are studying in any kind of post-secondary educational institution, whether universities,

¹⁰¹ Comments about Club Trouw on Wibautstraat Amsterdam on Klaas Knooihuizen, ‘Volentekriebels | Club Trouw’, *sargasso*, 2013 <<http://sargasso.nl/volentekriebels-club-trouw/>>.

higher professional education or vocational educational institutions (in Dutch WO, HBO and MBO 3 and 4 streams, respectively).¹⁰² Another important starting point was the definition of ‘stereotype’ as ‘the ascription of psychologisms to foreground attributes’, such as location or place references, physical appearance, dress, artefacts and ways of behaving in public spaces.

The question being considered here was triggered by two contradictory observations. First, there was evidence that young inhabitants of cities invest considerable time and effort in working on their ‘look’. This ‘look’ is considered to be used and seen as a sign of identity and as linking them with others. The second important observation was Amsterdam’s widespread reputation as a melting pot of cultures and nationalities. These two observations seem contradictory, because this melting pot idea would seem to suggest that young inhabitants of Amsterdam, when judging themselves and others, would not pay attention to possible place-of-origin attributes, such as skin colour or the sort of clothing people wear. A melting-pot idea would also seem to suggest that every place in Amsterdam would be ‘free of value judgements’ and that there would be no differences between those who live in one area or another. At the same time, however, research on social issues continues to relate cultural attributes to specific demographic groups, using categories such as gender and place of origin to describe the psychologisms of, usually, ethnic minorities. Cross-cultural research practices, usually based on Hofstede’s theories, apply those criteria in a deterministic manner, as if they were a scientific truth rather than a stereotype.¹⁰³

Nevertheless, the fact that stereotypes are not the same as scientific evidence does not mean that they do not have an important function. Stereotyping is an essentially human behaviour¹⁰⁴ and as such, stereotypes may inform our choices when it comes to friends and partners, place of residence, school and university, or professional career. Furthermore, it is interesting to keep in mind that the image of Amsterdam as an egalitarian, multicultural melting pot has long been symbolized by the layout of its streets and houses, and by the absorption of migrant groups in the past, conforming to its robust reputation as a ‘free city’.¹⁰⁵ However, the city of Amsterdam has undergone important changes in its outward appearance and demographics over the past decades, and thus it was high time to reconsider the notion that the whole city was ‘free of value judgements’.

¹⁰² DUO, *Alles over Studiefinanciering. Voor Studenten En Afgestudeerden* (Groningen: Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs, 2009).

¹⁰³ As argued by Ailon, among others, the problem with Hofstede’s theories is that they are still taught at schools and universities as an irrevocable truth, as if they have never been contested. See: Galit Ailon, ‘Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: "Culture’s Consequences" in a Value Test of Its Own Design’, *Academy of Management Review*, 33 (2008), 885–904.

¹⁰⁴ ‘[...]’, it must be pointed out that prejudices and stereotypes of national identity are such fundamental human patterns that they cannot be easily removed by ideological criticism; at best they can be deciphered and comprehended with the methods of anthropology, ethnology and rhetorical discourse analysis.’ In: Beller and Leerssen, p. 430.

¹⁰⁵ On Berlage and Amsterdamse School architecture in chapter ‘The Egalitarian City’: Deben, Heinemeyer and van der Vaart, p. 63.

Therefore, in this last chapter dealing with primary source data, and meant to offer a complementary inter-tribal view, it was important to determine not only 'whether' group distinctions existed but also and above all 'what kind' of group distinctions they might be. What kind of differences emerge in daily practices and conversations among young people in Amsterdam? and, What locations and 'looks' are commonly used as references in marking those differences?

One of the first general group distinctions worth mentioning in this conclusion is that university students do not see students of vocational education as 'real students'. The process of distinction starts at the secondary-school level. As we have seen during the analyses of the material, VWO teenagers consider themselves to be better developed in comparison with MBO youth, whom they often described as fat, half-criminals, ugly, '*allochtoon*', and having a low IQ. An interesting consequence of this highly patent differentiation is that it also appears to correlate clearly with specific districts and areas of Amsterdam, revealing that some specific areas, such as the New West, stand in opposition to other districts, such as the Old South. The distinctions point to robust images of social class differentiation among different areas in the city.

Similar processes of differentiation can be identified in the way that students inform each other about the best areas to live or find a place to live, giving clear instructions to avoid '*allochtoon*' streets, and preferably also '*oersaai woonwijken*' (deadly dull neighbourhoods). In this way, they recommend this or that specific part of an area that they consider to be more in accordance with the sort of Amsterdam that they have in mind as a nice place for a student to live; for example, the Jordaan or the Pijp, or otherwise some gentrified places in the East or Bos en Lommer. At the same time, the forums revealed that young people thinking about what to study or about going to a new school or university are especially interested in the kind of atmosphere and the sort of people that they can expect to find in each place. The posts of experienced students show that the University of Amsterdam has a reputation for having a 'laid-back atmosphere' and that this reputation can be seen as also applying to its students. Thus, if someone wants a more 'school-like experience' it might be better to enrol at VU Amsterdam University.

Focusing on the area of the Old South as a starting point enabled me to trace strong distinguishing images. As we have seen, the area is rich in educational facilities, with a concentration of pre-university secondary schools. While the area is also well known for its cultural institutions and its large residences, its reputation as a luxury biotope is more recent. One could say that even when the city was still governed by social democratic mayors, the area was evolving more or less independently during the late 1980s and the 1990s, making room for an economic elite that previously would have left the city to establish themselves in areas such as Het Gooi. Now that

making money and being elitist¹⁰⁶ have become more acceptable, the attractiveness of the Old South seems to have increased among young people sympathetic to those values. The revitalization of the area, with the emergence of designer label shops (which notably are still not used by tourists but predominately by the inhabitants themselves), beauty spas and stately restaurants and cafés responds to the needs of its inhabitants.

The clip *Boven gemiddeld*, recorded in the Old South by a group of preppy students, shows that students like them view their unfavourable reputation as snobs as being something positive, singing with humour (but also earnestly) about the virtues of money and elitism. At the same time, the influx of the 'nouveau riche', such as television celebrities, models and footballers, has accentuated the visibility of the place. Partly for that reason, the area is especially interesting, because it has its 'eyes on the street'.¹⁰⁷ The material collected shows, for example, that the combination of dark skin and expensive artefacts arouses suspicions in PC Hoofstraat. As we have discussed, one of the videos posted on YouTube shows how the Moroccan boxer Badr Hari is questioned by the police while driving past the Valentino store in a Lamborghini. This video is not only interesting insofar as it reveals the current prejudices against Moroccans driving expensive cars, it also shows that the area has become a 'place to be', a reference for richness.

However, territorial demarcations based on race are not limited to the 'white reserve' of the Old South. Every group has a habit of tracking down what appears to them as strange or unusual combinations in outward appearance. The material posted on the Marokko Community Forum shows clear prejudices against blacks and Indonesian people, for example. Such prejudices recall Robert Vuijsje's witty description of the crisscrossing of thoughts and stereotypes in the 'multicultural society of Amsterdam'.¹⁰⁸

Undoubtedly, the emergence of forums such as FOK on the internet and the popularity of commercial broadcasters such as PowNed have increased the visibility and acceptance of what the Dutch call 'het beestje bij de naam noemen' ('calling a spade a spade'). In the case of some of the student forums analysed, this sort of provocative language also points to what some might call a kind of Nietzschean arrogance among the youth, who represent a moment in life at which everything is still seems possible and when compassion is for losers. This sort of language stands in contrast to what has been understood as politically correct in social-democratic circles. It might also refer to

¹⁰⁶ Including the adoption of activist terms, such as in Milton Friedman, *Capitalism and Freedom*, 40th Anniv (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002).

¹⁰⁷ Jane Jacobs, 'The Use of Sidewalks', in *The death and Life of the Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1961). *Metropolis Centre and Symbol of Our Times*, ed. by Philip Kasinitz (Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), pp. 111–129.

¹⁰⁸ Vuijsje, *Alleen Maar Nette Mensen*, pp. 8–10.

older, pre-industrial, clan-based values,¹⁰⁹ as well as to recent neoliberal conceptions that question the existence of ‘societies’ as such. Recalling the words of former UK Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, this would mean that solidarity among social classes and races is unnecessary, because ‘there is no such thing as society ... There are individual men and women and there are families’.¹¹⁰

The provocative use of language to describe groups of people and the laissez-faire attitude this represents can be contrasted with the concept of the ‘tolerant city’, which is certainly not free of ideology either, and which not surprisingly, can also arouse aversion. This leads us to the important conclusion that today’s Amsterdam shows strong signs of the tension between both tendencies. On the one hand, the city has increased its density and its functions, enhancing its capacity to absorb differences. On the other hand, it has divided its space into areas such that specific locations and places-to-be are related to specific types of people.

One could argue that differences between different areas are inherent to urban life and that it is only because of the easy access to real-world material that we can apprehend processes of aversion and strong dislike. However, that would probably be only part of the explanation. Having contrasted the material studied with developments in the city over the last two decades, we can conclude that the changes in the ‘look’ of Amsterdam have clearly attracted new characters to the city. The young economists, bankers, lawyers or recruiters who work at the South Axis and find their biotope in the districts of the South and the Pijp are examples of a relative recent change in demographics.¹¹¹ The research corpus shows the aversion that their presence now arouses in areas such as the Pijp or in cafés such as the Bloemenbar in the city centre, in which they are obviously not seen as belonging to ‘a place like this’. The stereotyped description of their appearance enables others to recognize them and act, for example by denying them entry into a specific location or expressing contempt via public blogs.

Although this is probably not the place to extensively analyse the nature of stereotypes and their relation to tolerance and the tolerant city, it is relevant to note that the acceptance of tolerance means the acceptance of its basic principles. Conyers maintained that the pursuit of a ‘Tolerant Society’ is in fact a Christian notion based on the idea that all humans are equal because they are all God’s creatures.¹¹² However, this belief was also articulated in the hippy dream of ‘Peace and Love’

¹⁰⁹ Maffesoli.

¹¹⁰ Stuart Hall, ‘THE NEO-LIBERAL REVOLUTION’, *Cultural Studies*, 25 (2011), 37–41. And Douglas Keay, ‘Interview for Woman’s Own (“no Such Thing as Society”)', *margareththatcher.org*, 1987, p. 1 <<http://www.margareththatcher.org/document/106689>>.

¹¹¹ While the World Trade Center was built in 1985, most of the iconic South Axis buildings, such as the ING Bank and the ABN-AMRO, were built around 1998.

¹¹² Analysed and quoted by Gerson Moreno Riaño, ‘Roots of Tolerance’, *The Review of Politics*, 65, 111–29.

in places such as Amsterdam and in the politics of inclusion and emancipation developed in cities throughout the Western world. The idea that cities should aim to achieve equality for all citizens is in fact clearly visible in the leitmotif of civil initiatives such as that started by a young Moroccan social worker in the Diamantbuurt of Amsterdam. In his kick-boxing school he teaches children that expensive brands are not important because ‘without clothes on, everybody is the same’. At the same time, and probably contradicting the goals of such initiatives, the presence of social workers in ‘*allochtoon*’ areas such as the Diamantbuurt may further emphasize the image of the district as a ‘second-class neighbourhood’.¹¹³

Other examples of the familiar social-democratic tradition mentioned above are noticeable throughout Amsterdam. Among them, some groups of young intellectuals are keeping alive the ideas of the ‘*Provos*’ while emphasizing their differences as well. As we have seen, they can be found in Amsterdam in their alternative, young-writers’ get-togethers, online magazines and the cabaret scene. In their writings and other forms of creative expression they defend an aesthetic of slow-motion journalism and craftsmanship, but in contrast to the old hippies they want to keep themselves in shape and dress eclectically. In addition to this distinction from the old hippies, these young adults also distinguish themselves from the ‘preppies’. Rather than valuing ‘preppy brands’ because of their expensiveness, they value the emotional element that objects can acquire through use and habit. Therefore, they also ‘go vintage’ not only because it is original but also because it is anti-preppy and affordable. They insist on the fact that they have to work for their money – rather than getting it from their parents – and that they are not ‘woolly’:¹¹⁴ ‘we might have our heads in the clouds but our feet are on the ground’.¹¹⁵

In the meantime, the way of life of the latest has gone global as an urban lifestyle. Since Hollywood actress Julia Roberts¹¹⁶ showed that it was possible to combine commercial brands with vintage a decade ago, the vintage route has become increasingly mainstream, seducing all sorts of people who are in search of bargains and adventure.¹¹⁷ Website forums and blogs made by young fashionistas tell others where to buy the best items and achieve the best results in Amsterdam.¹¹⁸ They direct young

¹¹³ A similar phenomenon could be seen in the appellation ‘the Vogelaar list’, a list of 40 Dutch ‘problem districts’ published by Minister Ella Vogelaar in 2007. Vogelaar herself called the districts ‘*Krachtwijken*’, ‘power-districts’, but a more usual term is ‘*aandachtswijken*’ (‘districts needing attention’) <<‘De 40 Wijken van Vogelaar’, *Wikipedia* <http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_40_wijken_van_Vogelaar>.

¹¹⁴ ‘Wolly’ and ‘geitenwollenzokken’ have become pejorative terms characterizing the progressive Dutch, referring among other things to their lack of pragmatism.

¹¹⁵ Redactie Hard/hoofd. ‘Moderne Hippies.’

¹¹⁶ Cameron Siver and Sarah Mower, *DECADES: A Century of Fashion* (Bloomsbury Institute, 2012).

¹¹⁷ Guiot and Roux.

¹¹⁸ See for example Amsterdam’s Femke van Veen, ‘Week 28’, *blogspot.nl*, 2012 <<http://femkevanveen.blogspot.nl>>. Also starting fashionistas from outside Amsterdam like to cover a ‘Day in Amsterdam’ on their blog: Chloë, ‘Outfitpost: Let’s Get Ready for Winter’, *Fashionista Choë*, 2012 <Material in archive>.

and hesitant audiences to the Noordermarkt, to the *Negen Straatjes*, the IJ-Hallen or to clothing swaps in different locations. In addition, they also teach others how to foster a specific look, how to dress for a party or how to knot a tie.

In contraposition to ‘feelings of aversion’ that we have seen in more ideologically based comments, this cross global material is explicitly free of real provocation. The combination of vintage and commercial brands by Julia Roberts expresses a dominant trend that could also be observed in the material analysed in the paragraph ‘Cross global references’. The combination provides a formula that neutralizes contradictions, something that in marketing is known as the ‘paradessence’ of a brand, that is to say, the paradox contained in its essence.¹¹⁹ The combining of two apparently opposite dimensions into one style has proven to be a seductive way of introducing unexpected products to broad audiences. The name Books & Bubbles, for example (the new bookshop discussed above), combines the archetypes of the intellectual and the *bon vivant*. The image is recreated in the review of the shop with phrases such as ‘Oxford meets Versailles’ and ‘real party girl opens a bookstore in Amsterdam’.¹²⁰ Similar combinations appear in countless messages about events and new services, such as those relating to men’s care for the body or established commercial brands being linked to craftsmanship.¹²¹ In addition, and following the example of renowned fashion publications such as *Vogue* and *Elle*, current bloggers reuse, adjust and adapt rich allegories. Words such as fashion ‘victim’ or ‘revolution’ enable young fashionistas to shape their stories, to find catchy headings for their posts and to connect their messages to stories, characters and places from a wide range of novels, films, song lyrics, etc.¹²²

The overwhelming number of blogs and videos and the volume of comments reveal another dimension of today’s Amsterdam: the online room that can be seen as the space of an ‘imagined community’,¹²³ a community that does not require specific offline attendance but that shares interests in clothes, in staying up to date, and in finding a way to adjust to each situation; in other words, finding the right look for each location. In the enmeshment of the medium it becomes difficult to determine what amounts to altruistic sharing and what to commerce, a disconcerting

¹¹⁹ ‘The job of a marketer is to cultivate this schismatic core, this broken soul, at the centre of every product’. ‘Shakar suggests that this paradoxical essence, or “paradessence” is the crux of consumer motivation’. Shakar quoted in: Brown, Kozinets and Sherry Jr.

¹²⁰ Opening Books & Bubbles by a pure breed party girl: ‘Het Books & Bubbles Logo!’

¹²¹ There is no fixed formula for success, but the case of Apple is iconic because of the combination of archetypes, as explained by Wertime: ‘prior to the launch of the Macintosh, computers were generally positioned as being something very rational ... Apple connected its brand with the creator archetype’. In: Kent Wertime, *Building Brands & Believers. How to Connect with Consumers Using Archetypes* (Singapore: John Wiley & Sons (Asa), 2002), p. 215.

¹²² Those kind of dynamics are described and analysed in among others: Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool. Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998).

¹²³ Anderson.; Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

feeling that Naomi Klein discussed more than ten years ago in her book *No logo*.¹²⁴ This is, in fact, in line with the contradiction pointed out in consumer research, which Holt called 'the oxymoron' of postmodern consumption, in which corporate sponsorship supports counterculture projects, for example.¹²⁵

Some older fashion designers who experienced the exuberant side of Amsterdam at parties at Club RoXY think that Amsterdam has become boring and that nobody dares to stand out anymore.

Fashion designer Aziz thinks that the internet might actually be blocking creativity.¹²⁶ That might be partly true, insofar as the material studied here does suggest that visually exuberant types are now confined to 'costume parties' and that retro seems to have become 'retro mania'.¹²⁷ Additionally, one can also conclude that exuberance is not necessarily synonymous with creativity (and that also such an image of the RoXY would be a stereotype). The adoption of retro practices is surely something done at all times – and should not necessarily be seen as a sign of a lack of creativity.

The current city of Amsterdam, indeed, seems to comprise a complex array of multi-references embracing the dilemmas experienced in all highly developed and commercialized cities. In this chapter, we have seen that young people in Amsterdam today use social class, ethnic and place references to describe themselves and others. This would mean that classifications according to social class, ethnic and place references are less outdated than one would expect in a contemporary and tolerant society. In fact, sociologists such as Paul de Beer have pointed out that in today's Amsterdam these apparently 'outdated' social classifications are more alive than one would suspect; although, he does add that he does not yet have a satisfactory sociological explanation for this.¹²⁸ At the same time, the material studied here also shows that young people share ideas and take part in general urban conversations in which physical appearance is seen as something malleable and in which references to race and social class do not seem that significant. This would suggest that these adopted looks and behaviour might be also seen as valuable tools that are used to shape one's own identity while escaping traditional social constrictions.

¹²⁴ Klein.

¹²⁵ I referred to this concept in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

¹²⁶ Goslinga and Kamerman.

¹²⁷ On how YouTube might have paralysed creativity, see Reynolds.

¹²⁸ de Beer.

9. Capturing the Imaginary: Images, Youth and self-representation in Amsterdam

‘When I try new things I want to go back to the beginning again and again, that very moment at which I felt I was Nobody, but thought I could become Somebody’.

According to Ali B. at ‘Ali B. responds’¹

‘We Are All Made of Stars’

From Moby. 18. (2002)

In the introductory chapter of this thesis I proposed a study intended to capture the imaginaries of young people in Amsterdam. The idea was that since images and imaginaries are not a homogenous fixed whole, a contrasting study of different images of Amsterdam held by these young adults would lead to a better visualization of the various constellations of imaginaries. Consequently, those different imaginaries would lead to specific sets of images expressing distinctive tribal self-representations and their accompanying sense of place and belonging.

Ultimately, the aim was to contrast those images with specific images of youth found in the communication and promotional material produced by Amsterdam city itself and its educational institutions. As elaborated in the introductory chapter of this thesis, this *official imaginary* emphasizes an image of students as talented people, and the image of Amsterdam as a hospitable melting pot which will easily accommodate incoming talent and diversity. Acquiring the talent then becomes the challenge faced in the global competition in which cities ‘such as Amsterdam’ are currently and ‘necessarily’ engaged. In contrasting all of these images I wanted to: a) see if there were patterns of expectations and coincidences and divergences among them; and b) through this contrast, problematize the coherence of the official image of Amsterdam as an irrevocably tolerant melting pot *per se* and the need to redirect practices in order to better match the tolerant *ideal* that the official image aspires to.

In addition to the contrasting process described, the intention of the research was also to propose and test an approach and methodology that could help to better capture all those images and ideas that seem to revolve around us, relating and interacting with us, but which because of their volatility or banality have often been seen as too vague to be seriously considered as material for science. Nevertheless, the need to ‘capture imaginaries’ is anything but superfluous and, in fact, it seems to

¹ Paraphrased from the last minutes of Ali B.’s performance: ‘Ali B. Geeft Antwoord.’

be increasingly urgent. Above all, the urgency lies in the fact that there does not appear to be any official awareness of the complexity of images and stereotypes and their very critical influence on real life. There also does not appear to be an awareness at the official level that irrational ideas about what constitutes a good or a bad place will not disappear simply by being ignored.

The previous chapters have repeatedly illustrated how the images and reputations of places and people can influence and relate to the lives of young students (and other tribes) in Amsterdam. These images would be like 'objects of the world-3',² a reality that is not the pictorial reflection of something that physically exists, such as a picture of the Eiffel Tower, but a collection of all the different attributions that such a 'picture' may arouse in our discursive interpretation of reality. The Eiffel Tower, considered as a discursive image, can be, for example, a symbol of Paris, an illustration of the genius of an epoch, a representation of the optimism of engineering and progress, but also a tourist attraction associated with a romantic weekend in 'the city of love'. All of these representations are the product of an interrelated meaning-giving process in which different perspectives are actualized, whether by rejection, renegotiation, mixing or re-appropriation. In this specific setting, the most interesting thing for us is that such images always encompass a judgement. When a promotional tourist campaign promises a tour of the 'real Paris' beyond the Eiffel Tower, it implies that the Eiffel Tower is only part of a 'Paris for Beginners'. Thus, it targets a specific audience, distinguishing them from the 'beginners'.

The importance of this 'world-3' reality is, in short, much more relevant than one would suspect at first sight. Places both acquire meaning from and provide the contexts in which people attribute meanings. In ordinary life that could mean that, as a newcomer, the first period of living in a new city seems perfectly fine – until you notice that others have a poor impression of your new neighbourhood. Very probably you might start to think about moving to another area. If you can, you will choose a specific place to live, an occupation and specific places to go out that match a certain shared and positive sense of place.

In order to provide a succinct overview of these contrasting images of Amsterdam, I will begin Section 9.1 below with a sketch which places some of the characters from the different tribes we examined in a specific place in Amsterdam on a specific typical day, 'reconstructing' a couple of hours that they might have spent in the area. Subsequently, I will reflect on the choice of this specific Amsterdam location as an area of convergence for different tribes. In Section 9.2, I will proceed by

² I referred to the ontological status of the image in the first chapters. See Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History*.

detailing in greater depth the respective shared feelings of belonging which I consider demonstrate the specific nature of the attachment of each of these tribes to Amsterdam.

In Section 9.3, I will further elaborate on a number of elements related to the ‘credibility’ of understanding images and shared feelings of belonging as essential elements of the guidelines people create for life in a place. In paragraph 9.3.b. I will reflect on what I call ‘sentient data’, i.e. data which are agents of conscious self-reflection and not merely the passive ingredients of statistical trends, and on the suitability of the research approach as proposed in this thesis and applied during the entire research process. Section 9.4. will discuss and contrast the findings of this thesis with the conceptual background of contemporary and globalized cities, as discussed in the introductory chapters. The discussion in these sections will lead me to a final reflection in Sections 9.5. Here, I will attempt to sketch an alternative ‘horizon’ to aspire to when it comes to defining images of Amsterdam and its educational ambitions. In the afterthoughts I will then additionally elaborate on the nature of research on imaginaries and the need to adjust research methodologies to accord with this nature. I will conclude by reflecting upon imagining and its performative role in the elaboration of a sense of place and feelings of belonging.

9. 1. Imagine a typical day in the Red Light District

a. Excursion

Let me start then with a scenario which is focused on a specific part of Amsterdam, in which the paths of all of the main characters from the different tribes of my corpus could have crossed. We can begin with a scene from *James Worthy*, one of the novels that was part of the corpus of the ‘creative class’. We are in a karaoke bar in Zeedijk, in which the protagonist gets so drunk that he provokes a fight. It is the beginning of the end of his coming of age. He still feels miserable. He cannot forget Polly, ‘the nicest girl he ever had’, who has left him for someone else. After this, the young writer leaves the city, accompanied by his publisher. On the motorway heading to Paris they pick up Aafke, a girl also on her way to Paris. After some ‘tests’, James realizes that Aafke is perhaps the only girl who has made him forget his lovesickness. The scene in Zeedijk represents the lowest he could fall. A couple of months later, James will be almost completely cured. He returns to Amsterdam as a new and successful writer, and becomes a well-known face on popular TV programmes. Girls want to have sex with him ‘without a condom’ but in fact he is aware that he has found the True One. Thus, he goes to pick up Aafke, who is studying at the Theatre School in Jodenbreestraat and carries her on his back towards Waterlooplein, as in *Turks fruit*, but ‘without the bicycle’, recalling one of the best-

known Dutch movie scenes of the twentieth century.³ In this way, the Amsterdam that had threatened to become a boring and empty place – always the same people – has been transcended. James achieves a different status in his life, becoming a writer and someone who is truly loved.



In the movie *Turkish Delight* (1973) Olga and Eric leave the city council on a bicycle after getting married, she sitting on the back and he pedalling with a youthful carefree nonchalance, dodging cars and pedestrians and finally stopping at an off-licence to buy champagne. Based on the novel by Jan Wolkers, directed by Paul Verhoeven. The second picture on the left is a mise-en-scène of *James Worthy* in front of the Theatre School in Jodenbreestaat (with thanks to Ben and Paula).



On 21 June 2013, James Worthy was in the Red Light District in real life to attend the opening of the café Quartier Putain by the hip hop label TopNotch. Worthy is well connected with the ‘hip hop’ scene. His novel was published by Lewbowsky at TopNotch. Admirably, the combination of hip hop and James Worthy made people who normally never read a book buy this one. Quartier Putain is located on the square around Sint Nicholas Church, close to Zeedijk. At the same party we also see rapper Faberyayo,⁴ this time performing in his poet modus, very probably under his pseudonym ‘Lafergé’. He reads his work from his iPad and the small crowd around him listen attentively. Among the performers we also see rapper Ome Omar who created the music for Kees van Nieuwkerk’s movie *Sterke Verhalen*.⁵ Ome Omar is also a columnist for *State Magazine*. Rapper Sef is also in the audience. He is the one who made ‘De Leven’, one of the hits of the summer of 2012, and the soundtrack for the film *Rabat* by Habbekrats. As well as having common links to the hip hop scene, they all perform as multifaceted artists. Lately, when one reads or listens to their texts, a common topic emerges: the interaction between fame and the search for real love. The whole scene at

³ For a further contextualization, see Chapter 3 on the ‘Creative Imaginary’.

⁴ Faberyayo from De Jeugd van Tegenwoordig, discussed in Chapter 6 on Hip hop. The following names can also be found in Chapter 6.

⁵ Included in the Creative Class corpus.

Quartier Putain is rather ‘soft-looking’, as someone writes in the comments under the short film of the presentation on YouTube: “WTF is this? HAS THE RAP SCENE CHANGED INTO A STUDENT PARTY OR SOMETHING? I see a bunch of frat boys, numbskulls and studenty types?”⁶

Very nearby, just a 5 minute walk, it is more than probable that the students with the real ‘bal haren’ – the *Corps ASC/AVSV* – are having their weekly ‘dispute’, their debating meeting, while eating from the menu of the day and drinking beer in the association club house on Warmoesstraat. It is also highly likely that later in the evening they will go to the karaoke bar, which is also frequented by a mix of locals and tourists, the same karaoke bar in which James Worthy got drunk and involved in a fight some time ago on the night before leaving for Paris. While *corps* students will not readily be seen at a TopNotch event, they do like making films for their *Almanak*,⁷ using music by hip hopper Kraantje Pappie.

The biggest differences at this moment are that while those meeting at TopNotch perform as an organic and spontaneous assemblage, the students at ASC/AVSV will be following very specific rules: they are happy with their hierarchy, literally ‘the good old order’. As to the prostitution in the area, they will have an aristocratic view, based on traditional social class distinctions. It is good to mix here and there with the proletarian folk and prostitution is part of that. Shops owners in the area do not really like them. Most of them find *corps* students annoying because of their *corps*’ habits, such as ragging ceremonies or delaying closing times in shops on purpose. Nevertheless, on special occasions *corps* students will develop good relationships with the neighbours. At Christmas they will organize a charity dinner and bingo for the older people in the neighbourhood. They will also open their doors for events in which they are interested: the recording of the television programme *College Tour*, a debate about Robert Vuijsje’s novel, *Alleen maar nette mensen*, and even for an interview with a journalist from the university magazine *Folia*, who is clearly not a *corps* girl. As the president notes: ‘You are always welcome, but next time, please, don’t wear sneakers [that is to say put real shoes on]’.⁸

Returning to Quartier Putain café, we can see TopNotch has a link with the Bijlmer, the district in Amsterdam South-East.⁹ TopNotch has produced some work by rapper Nina, the only female rapper with a contract in professional hip hop. Also, the publisher Lebowsky, connected to TopNotch, has launched van Stapele’s novel, *White Panthers*, which is set in the Bijlmer. However, the concerns of

⁶ In: Registration Opening: *Feestelijke Opening Quartier Putain*.

⁷ The ‘Almanak’ accounting all activities of the year. It is made among other things as a gesture for the association benefactors. See chapter *Corps*.

⁸ You can find all those references in the chapter concerning *Corps* Students.

⁹ See especially chapter Hip hop.

'Bijlmer Style' collective Gikkels will not easily be aired at Quartier Putain. For TopNotch, the location in the Red Light District is taken as symbolic of a relationship to a romantic-erotic tradition – of seduction and danger – a tradition that we have also linked to the new boutiques and shops in the area. In contrast, following the logical consequence of the interests of rapper Gikkels, one can imagine that if he had to say something about the Red Light District it would be to point out the exploitation of women and men in the area by the sex industry. Something that indeed has been proven to occur. Thus, Gikkels would probably approach this part of the city centre from a different perspective. In an interview with 'Hiphopleeft' he explains the reasons for his involvement with politics and social justice, adding: 'I don't know why I'm like this. I guess we have always discussed politics, wars and social injustice at home in the Bijlmer with my mother and my sisters'.¹⁰



Robert Coblijn and Gikkels. Pictures taken by 'Hiphopleeft'

On a day like this, conspicuous Ajax fans might be found nearby fighting with the fans of other teams. They will drink beer and sing about prostitution, but their relationship to this world is less refined than the more respectful associations with eroticism on show at Quartier Putain. The traditional Ajax fans will come precisely to exploit the Amsterdam of the canals, the women, the sex and the alcohol. Many of those who come to the Red Light District by train live in Almere and Purmerend, and are the descendants of what some call the only real Amsterdammers, the working class that in the 1960s and the 1970s left their houses in the Jordaan and the Pijp districts to live in new housing in those cities. They avoided moving to the new high-rise flats in the Bijlmer and generally also avoided the New West, places that because of the persistently higher vacancy rates increasingly became the destination of new immigrants. During the match, as supporters, they will join every other Amsterdammer: all against the rivals, locals and immigrants, high and low class.

¹⁰ Paraphrased from Job Hulsman.

On such a day, new Erasmus students might also have their introduction to Amsterdam. They are at the beginning of a new experience abroad, far from normal daily life in their country of origin, and entering a period that in the end they will call the most intense experience in their life. During their first days they will visit the area with other students, independently or in an organized tour by the faculty. Some of them might just walk on by, wondering what they are supposed to think about it. They feel uneasy about looking directly at the ladies in the windows, though many will see the area as an example of the civilized nature of Dutch social organization. In the information about Amsterdam that they have read – in the case of our Erasmuses, mostly in English, Spanish or Catalan – prostitution in the area is said to be legal and well controlled in terms of earnings and working conditions. They learn that prostitutes are free agents and have social insurance policies, and they admire the tolerance they assume lies behind such social organization in which even prostitutes can have a decent life.



Sculpture on Prostitution on the cobblestones of Oudekerksplein near the entrance to Sint Nicholas Church
Source: <http://www.hornstra.com/archive/2007-m04>

After a while they will stop visiting such ‘touristic’ places, or at least only go when relatives or friends from Spain or from other Erasmus cities come to visit. Most will not change the ideas they already have about the Netherlands as a social, progressive, just kind of place. Of the Erasmus students, only Laura in Delft, with her somewhat atypical gaze, will write in her blog that she has observed some clear class and race differences in Dutch society, as in the suburb in which she lives she only sees foreigners, who obviously do not have much money to spend.¹¹ Going back to their perception of the Red Light District, probably year after year, all of them will see that the area has progressively become a cooler hipster area.

Nearby at Waterlooplein two trainees from a vocational education programme in journalism from Almere are attempting to portray the eccentric sights of the city.¹² They are doing their internship with the website ‘Jonginalmere.nl’. To their regret, no one in Amsterdam seems to have time for a

¹¹ See chapter 7 on Erasmus students.

¹² They are the trainees accounted on chapter 8, under paragraph ‘Aestheticization. Cross global references’.

short interview, nor are they allowed to take pictures of certain vintage shops. Thus, the conclusion of their column will be: 'It was a nice day but we did not see much fashion'. It is a pity that they have not met the *Elle* forum girls who would have been having their first vintage experience in the same area, shopping at the well-known second-hand shop, Episode. Most probably the girls would have told them that becoming acquainted with vintage clothing was a crucial stage in their development as cosmopolitan fashionistas, although sometimes it was hard to overcome a feeling of disgust: 'The clothes could have been worn by anyone'. The fresh young fashionista girls would have especially pointed to the stands along Waterlooplein and the 'scruffy vendors'¹³ who, in off-line life – to some of them at least – look less hippy-glamorous than they appear on the fashion webpages that recommend an unforgettable visit to the area.

b. The Red Light District as ectopia and microcosm

These vignettes, reconstructed according to the internal logic of the various shared stories, were designed to argue, that sojourns in specific places are likely to be thought of as part of a shared travel guide, a mental 'city map', with each one having its own peculiar references. This leads us to some important conclusions about the specificity of this area in Amsterdam.

Most importantly the Red Light District of Amsterdam is the only area in the city that appears as a common reference in all of the material gathered from the different tribes examined. While this aspect of Amsterdam is a part consistently elided, or referred to obliquely at best, as a formative constituent of the city's urban experience, it is an emphatic presence in everyone's peripheral vision; a part of the frame (if not of the picture). A place set apart from normal rules, a 'zone beyond normalcy', an 'ectopia' as imagologists call it, and while it is thus excluded from the rest of the city, it is also typical of the characteristics attributed to the Amsterdam-at-large imaginary.¹⁴ Speaking in Lynch's terms, we can conclude that this says a lot about the capacity of this physical area 'to evocate a strong image in any given observer', it says a lot, in sum, about its 'imageability'.¹⁵ The Red Light District – Amsterdam's Wallen – is evoked by all these groups of youths in all its notoriety as an area which defines Amsterdam's unique atmosphere. Such an area may be considered an example of convergence and as including urban diversity. In this sense it is highly significant that practically all of the references to the Red Light District are used to emphasize the diverse and cosmopolitan nature of Amsterdam in contrast to other places. As we have seen, even *corps* students emphasize that

¹³ See them in chapter 8.

¹⁴ See Joep Leerssen, 'Exoticism', in Beller and Leerssen, pp. 325–326.

¹⁵ Kevin A. Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1960); Revised and commented by Gert-Jan Hospers, 'Lynch's The Image of the City after 50 Years: City Marketing Lessons from an Urban Planning Classic', *European Planning Studies*, 18 (2010), 2073–81 (p. 2) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2010.525369>>.

being in Amsterdam makes them edgier and different to *corps* students in other cities. According to them, its specific diverse and cosmopolitan character justifies *corps* students in Amsterdam having different habits from co-fraternity students in other – in their eyes – provincial cities.¹⁶ Similarly, the choice made by hip hop label TopNotch in establishing its head office there in the café Quartier Putain obviously distinguishes Amsterdam from other Dutch cities, linking the Red Light District to a mythical, erotic imagery of Bordeaux-red brothels in Paris. This leads us to the important conclusion that the references to the Red Light District are generally and strongly used to emphasize the free, uninhibited and diverse nature of Amsterdam – and consequently the free, uninhibited and diverse nature of all those engaging in the area.

The reconstruction of a day in the Red Light District also demonstrates that the convergence of the different tribes in a specific public space in the city does not imply a shared interpretation of concepts such as freedom, diversity or uninhibitedness. The well-known specific aspect of prostitution in the area is clearly interpreted in multiple ways, depending on the eye of the beholder. Each tribe will judge prostitution in Amsterdam according to its own meaning-giving tradition. The Erasmus students mainly find it a token of a tolerant city; the *corps* students evoke a tradition of service during initiation rites and ceremonies; the Ajax fandom find a token of Amsterdam's capacity to meet and provide relief to 'real male' needs; the protest hip hoppers possibly see a token of the exploitation of the less fortunate (while the entrepreneurial hip hoppers are reminded of an erotic and seductive tradition) and the young Elle girls probably see something musty and strange. As we have seen in the different chapters, these kinds of judgements are anchored in a complex net of arguments and beliefs conforming to different tribal, shared imaginaries of Amsterdam.

What the reconstruction of these different moments of tribal life narrative in the Red Light District also shows is that static and abstract distinctions such as 'inhabitants' and 'visitors' made by city marketing groups will always necessarily fail to grasp the complexity and dynamism of place perception and image formation. The differences in perceptions of real-world people present in a place cannot be explained by the hyper-real abstraction of static conditions such as being a visitor, or being a student. They should be understood in terms of a process in which aggregations of people join with or distinguish themselves from each other precisely because of ongoing practices of assimilation and differentiation. Thus, although in some cases the abstract distinctions frequently used in city-marketing practices may coincide with tribal ones, their substantiation as representations of actual image-forming groups remains highly problematic. In summary, the

¹⁶ See reference to the *corps* in Chapter 4 when *corps* students discuss the reputation of Amsterdam's *corps* as a 'coke sniffing' fraternity.

different narratives we have seen show that to be meaningful, research on a city's image will require relating images to specific, ongoing and dynamic traditions of various image holders.¹⁷

What is also very interesting to see is that the Red Light District, starting at Warmoesstraat, is precisely the oldest part of the city, a part that, symbolically speaking, has been considered an example of organic growth, adjusting its physical features to the diverse needs of an increasingly prosperous population from the Late Medieval period until today. The echoes of its streets haunt the imaginary of the area, hospitable to and hosting diverse groups, enabling different social classes to mingle with each other, sharing the same cobblestones. We have also seen that journalists still describe the area as encompassing a miscellany of humanity: drunkards and prostitutes mingle with neat urbanites, tourists, *corps* students, etc. If this is interesting, it is because it is in this enmeshment that urban researchers have identified the essence of the livability of inner cities. Such places reflect the complex structure of human-urban interaction and show that city livability cannot be merely predetermined by urban planners.¹⁸ Liveable cities are the so-called 'natural cities', in which different systems have grown gradually and in which current physical units still show residues of older overlaps. This means that diverse and paradigmatic urban spaces which are still liveable today are in great part the consequence of organic development and an extensive overlapping net of relationships. In such urban spaces, a multitude of singular life narratives take place simultaneously, linked to each other through the sharing of specific elements – the same shop window, the same karaoke café, etc.

It is also in such a natural city that Sassen identifies echoes of the Late Medieval city envisaged by Weber as the enclave of civilization. If, for Weber, this city was the natural space for the establishment of practices that could 'implement immunity against despots of all sorts', today's Weberian city would be one in which different actors produce and vindicate their presence.¹⁹ Thus, in spite of considerations about the legitimacy of seeing the Red Light District as a place of tolerance and diverse mingling, the reality is that it is the only place in relation to which the young people of the collected corpus have not hesitated to assert their rights and the legitimacy of their presence. Speaking in Alexander's terms, this would imply that the residues of practice in the area are echoed

¹⁷ As mentioned in the introductory chapters of this thesis, the need to develop new methodologies for the research on city's 'brands' has lately been recognized in the appointment of city marketing/brand researchers. See among others: Braun, Kavaratzis and Zenker.

¹⁸ As Alexander showed with his emblematic 'A City is not a Tree', actual lively structures cannot be planned because our human mind (including the mind of urban planners) is always restricted by a need to classify and organize. The result is that urban planners design cities as if cities were a tree. This has led to the planning of suburbs in which units are mutually segregated, each having their own school, commercial area, etc. Christopher Alexander, 'A City is not a tree' (1965), in Michael Larice and Elisabeth Macdonald (eds.), *The Urban Design Reader*, Urban Reader Series, (Routledge, 2013), p. 156.

¹⁹ Sassen, p. 10.

in each of the imaginaries of the different tribes we have seen and that these echoes legitimate their current presence in this city space.

With this specific point of view, it will be easier to grasp that those different imaginaries exist precisely because of their contrast with others. This means that others are a necessary precondition to defining a performative identity in a place such as Amsterdam. This also means that one's identity is measured in terms of the extent to which one identifies with and contrasts oneself to others. It is in such a city that Sassen sees the possibility of the rehabilitation of urban space. Instead of the homogeneous, harmonious and peaceful suburb, symbolizing the ideals of the Fordist era, the city can become once more a paradigm of contemporary life, a place in which being civic implies taking part in a diverse and contested urban reality.

At this point it is appropriate to take a further step towards the conception of Amsterdam as an identity-forming space, in which young adults pursue different models of beings-in-becoming. Therefore, inspired by Maffesoli's ideas about the role that projections of 'better beings' have in current tribe formation,²⁰ in the following section I will proceed to detail the core values held by the different Amsterdam tribes I have discussed in this thesis. In doing so, I will not only list the salient place 'images', but also the kinds of 'better beings', or archetypes, to which they aspire. For further clarity, I will begin each discussion with the key words associated with each of the tribes.

9.2. Images, characters and the tribes. Liminal spaces: rites of passage

a. Creative in Amsterdam. Sharing images of projection

The study of the creative imaginary on the basis of a fictional literary corpus highlighted the importance of seeing a place as a site of becoming. In their searching and the process of coming of age, the different characters in the novels we analysed found that Amsterdam was the place where they could achieve an important step in their development, matching what Anholt calls 'the what's in it for me?' attraction of places. For many of this tribe, the city of Amsterdam is a place in which personal dreams can come true. Such personal dreams involve a mix of intimate and professional achievements. The young adults were on their way to becoming 'creative': writers, film directors, actors, graphic designers, web developers and journalists. The truth is that they seem to share similar

²⁰ Understood as the archetypes, the projections of a 'better being': Maffesoli in: Cova, Kozinets and Shankar; Jeffrey.

imaginaries about the indissolubility of professional and personal life. Inspired by a tradition of ‘true love’ stories, they invoke images of the well-known Amsterdam love story, *Wolkers’ Turks fruit*.

According to this story, the artist fortuitously stumbles upon ‘The Girl’, the person who will be able to touch his soul and relieve him of his indifference. (In the various hip hop lyrics that we have reviewed, the need for real love, authentic feelings and unadulterated encounters is also a recurrent topic that connects all of the creative and artistic young people to a common imaginary.) The scenic background of such an encounter remains bohemian, inspired by informal spaces such as studios, as well as works of art and books, with references only to the necessary technical aspects when describing the music, the writing and the graphic work. In addition to the references to specific places in Amsterdam presented in the chapter on the creative class, a further and interesting discussion would link these ideas with recent studies on the aesthetics of ‘imperfection’ in contemporary life. In this regard, the appeal of imperfection would lie in its ‘authenticity’, contrasting with the ‘perfection’ of impersonal (cold) high-tech products.²¹

Such spaces, and as we have seen the city itself, provides the backdrop to casual meetings with like-minded people, relocating not only Dutch stories of friendship such as Nescio’s *Titaantjes* but also more contemporary popular TV series such as *Friends* and the more recent *Girls*, in which new friends found in the city become a kind of surrogate family. The Amsterdam of this tribe exhibits the attractiveness of the ‘je ne sais quoi’, which attaches them to very specific places in the city, such as those expressing a raw industrial aesthetic and the old blue-collar worker districts. In its quotidian actualization, we saw that characters such as Bobby and Otto sincerely combine, without any irony, allusions to flowers, beards and hippy bohemians with other allusions to perfume and deodorant bought in mainstream shops. Also without irony are the accounts of the struggles of Kees or of the narrator of *Ego Faber*, both of whom are searching for their own identity, oscillating between antagonistic models and ways of becoming a ‘better being’. Although the style and personality of the narrators is different, they coincide in projecting their ideal life into creative and what they consider cool characters, such as the rock and roll star, the bohemian writer, the creative entrepreneur, or the hip hop master of ceremonies.

b. Corps students. Sharing images of traditionalism

Hopefully, the study of the student *corps* in Amsterdam shed sufficient light on the way in which students joining such associations access and share a specific existing imaginary of the city. It is an

²¹ Ellen Rutte sees in this tendency a need to counterbalance the pressure of automatism and high-tech. In: Ellen Rutte, ‘Vintage_Russia: Wat Imperfectie Sexy Maakt’ (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 2013).

imaginary anchored in a well-defined tradition, in which hierarchy and brotherhood are essential aspects of the game. *Corps* students are very easily typified as one 'sort of people'. Their preppy manner and their way of speaking as though they are rich, have various effects on others. For some, the fact that they have control over the nicest places in the city and presumably have rich parents makes them immediately not worth talking to. For others, the fact that such organizations have influence and power makes them especially attractive. From the *corps'* point of view, the fact that the internal rules of the association are not written down in their entirety is an important strength. It relieves them from appearing bureaucratic, which is something as antagonistic to them as the lefty '*knorren*' and other 'proletarian'.²²

Perhaps these distinctions are most visible in the way that the *corps* student house has been maintained over the years. A student is not supposed to be concerned with their own affairs, clothing, etc. Therefore, it is understandable that those working at specific companies in Zuidas or in Zuid relate their ethos to the mentality acquired during their studies: doing the job when it has to be done, contributing to the *corps* or to the corporation where they later work, but not being overly concerned about their own physical appearance or health. Therefore, the luxurious tendencies of certain members who care excessively about superfluous ornaments should not be seen as belonging to the real *corps* mentality. This makes the archetype a kind of mix between a Spartan nobility with large imposing houses and sober tastes, along with demanding sports such as rowing and hockey, and the luxurious comfort associated with a bourgeois upper class of bankers, economists and lawyers.

c. Ajax fandom. Sharing images of a man's world

Despite the fact that there is an increasing trend in Amsterdam for women to play football, it is still something for men: it is in fact a man's world. This is because, in the eyes of such men, women do not have the right nature for football: they are distracted by irrelevant things, they are not competitive enough and say things like 'it is only a game'. In general, women are not considered to have a good eye for the game, thus, women who join a group of football fans are considered to do so to be with their boyfriends, to enjoy a celebration or to admire the players' bodies. Football wives, for example, are seen as tokens of the other side of the life of a football player: they are needed as a source of care and intimacy, and are often seen as evidence of male virility.

In recent decades, such women have even been seen as gold diggers. The name 'football wife' is frequently used in Amsterdam to allude to the somehow vulgar nouveau riche blondes with Botox

²² See '*Knorren*' and 'proletarian' in Chapter 4 on the *corps* students.

lips who like shopping on PC Hoofstraat or having a drink at Jimmy Woo, the Harbour Club or Palazzo on Leidseplein, for example. In contrast, the fandom men's world is solely preoccupied with the match and the competition. The most 'heated' supporters, that is to say, in Van Giullineti's terms, those who see football as an intrinsic rather than a commercial way of life, play their own games with the rivals and still plan fights and clashes. For the broader fandom of Ajax, their own hooligans are not dangerous. The implicit pact of honour is that hooligans only fight with other hooligans, they would never hurt women or children. Nevertheless, they are often seen by other 'lighter' fans as responsible for screwing up the scene, because the restrictive policies, especially directed at them, affect the whole fan group. For example, they are now forced to celebrate division victories in an area of Amsterdam South-East instead of the more traditional and beloved Leidseplein.

However, a common attitude visible from the material, concerning fandom in general, is that they all despise the bureaucratic and restrictive mentality of authorities with regard to football. Even soft fans say that the humiliation of rivals in chants and the like has to be seen in the context of the heat of the battle. There is no reason to take it as seriously as the authorities do. In addition to such general ideas concerning football, the specificity of Ajax is related to the character of the city. In this respect, everybody can become a member of the club or a member of the fandom, irrespective of ethnicity or place of origin, as long as they adopt the Ajax mentality: fast, cunning, resourceful, technically brilliant and a little arrogant, as fits with being the Dutch capital's team. This means that 'stupid' fans, stereotyped as talking slowly and with a low IQ, should not be seen as typical of Ajax fandom. Ajax fans are '*Godenzonen*', Children of God, like the mythological Ajax himself.

d. Avant-garde Hip hop. Sharing images of cooperation

As a variation of the casual nature of the encounter with soul mates, the study of the performance of hip hop is very interesting. Traditionally, the organization of the typical hip hop gang, widely disseminated by music channels such as MTV, involved a sort of recreation of the Godfather and his family. The head rapper is thought to be responsible for his crew, including the girls in high heels with deep cleavages. As the Godfather, he not only has control over his crew, he also needs to make sure that the crew is safe and protected from others in a specific territory. However, as we have seen, the reality of hip hop in Amsterdam has taken other forms, far from the stereotyped gangs seen on MTV. On this basis we can make a number of interesting observations.

Most current hip hop formations do not have a lead rapper, rather they combine their writings and perform each piece together. They are often inspired by films such as *Scarface* or the Bond movies, with their video clips appearing as pastiches based on the aesthetics of such movies. Moreover, they see hip hop as a way of performing and exploring different dimensions of their personality. They use

the networks of others and often cooperate with people outside their group. The list of collaborations and changing sets is vertiginous. They justify this willingness to work with others as a need to experience and search for new approaches and combinations. In following this logic, they adhere to the working methods of jazz musicians and the credo of free choice.

In terms of images and places, those who achieve this kind of networking status seem to overcome the specific locality of 'the hood'. In the videos, you see them in transit from one place to another, floating in the air or driving a taxi, sharing studios and material, and crossing over to other genres and using new skills, all with the help of sponsors that are thought to understand the clues given in the music and to provide intelligent feedback. In this sense, hip hop label bosses such as Kees de Koning are respected by the artists because of their expertise and broad intellectual interests. They are in a sense the professors of hip hop, in a tradition, I suggest, that can be associated with the medieval belief in owning and making one's own music.

e. A space for transients and arrivals. Sharing the immigrant condition

In Amsterdam, as we have seen, there are various areas that are specifically marked as *allochtone wijken*. In recent years, television channels such as PowNed have been especially eager to portray such neighbourhoods as 'cultural pathological' enclaves.²³ Children and youth are often filmed from cameras situated behind the bars of school playgrounds. These shots clearly seek to evoke a ghetto, supported by the story of the day: problems with young teen mothers, lover boys and drug criminals. Rapper gangs such as the Green Gang in Amsterdam South-East have also contributed to strengthening this image, especially when they were interviewed on television boasting that not only 'what they wore was stolen but also much more'.²⁴ Of course, the story reinforces the image that people in the South-East are 'primitive and not very smart'.

In contrast, rappers Gikkels and Nina use their tracks to denounce the stigmatization of Amsterdam South-East. They argue that if people in their 'hood' have problems, it is precisely because of an image that has been 'carefully nurtured' by media and politicians. In the main, the adults are not unemployed but only have poorly paid jobs; and when young people study they have great difficulties finding work placements and thus have difficulties finishing their studies. On the other side of the coin is their exaltation of and pride in their origins. Rapper Dret thinks he is fortunate to live in the Bijlmer, which is a safe place for black people like him, and definitely better than any of

²³ An overview of the concept of cultural pathological argument can be found in: Annette Hastings, 'Stigma and Social Housing Estates: Beyond Pathological Explanations', *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 19 (2004), 233–54 (p. 4) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10901-004-0723-y>>.

²⁴ See Chapter 7 on Hip hop.

those ‘racist farmers’ villages’. In their contact with rappers from abroad they insist on referring to the Bijlmer, instead of Amsterdam, as their ‘place’. In this way the Bijlmer becomes a symbol linking hip hop artists living in peripheral areas of other cities in the Netherlands or abroad, and stands for the universal ‘hood’, a place of solidarity between different ethnicities and of equality among young and old, a ‘relaxed’ place in which everybody is welcome.

Above all, the archetype of such children of immigrants seems to be someone who transcends the condition of being what Rancière calls a *‘sans-part’*, a ‘part who has no part’. It is clear that in this process of empowerment their goal is to have a stake in Amsterdam. To achieve this goal, they put different strategies into play, including challenging and insulting others, caring for other ‘partners in distress’, excelling in their work, and trying to emulate those who have become representatives of the fight for rights and emancipation.

f. Erasmus students. Sharing the *moratorium* and the European ideal of democracy, openness and freedom

The football references to World and European Cups that we saw in the video made by two recently arrived Spanish and German students illustrated very well the initial impasse that is commonly acknowledged as expanding into the ‘Erasmus bubble’. The video provides a brief summary of all the clichés about and clashes between the students’ cultures of origin, such as different times for eating, football victories and defeats, or other historical events. However, one also sees an immediate common decision to put all of the negative implications aside and face the differences positively; for example, by cooking for each other and sharing each other’s national dishes. It is also especially significant to see how these strategies of acceptance play out. Laura offers a good example: she explains that in the beginning she thought that the Scandinavian girls were ‘kind of prissy’, and they all looked like the Queen of Sweden, but after a night out she realized that they could drink like Vikings. In this way, Laura manages to replace one of the stereotyped images she had by another she likes more.

In terms of Dutch or Amsterdam culture, these students have less opportunity to reconsider preconceptions, because being in the ‘Erasmus bubble’ means above all sharing experiences with other ‘partners in destiny’,²⁵ other exchange students, also living the Erasmus experience. Seen from the point of view of the Spanish students, who are generally already convinced about the value of being part of Europe, Amsterdam is found to prove it: being synonymous with democracy, freedom and tolerance. It is clear that they will strive to keep this ideal alive and it also seems clear that they

²⁵ I will elaborate on the concept *‘lotgenoot’*= ‘partner in distress’ in Section 9.3.

all have reasons to enjoy a city which is so beautiful. In this sense, the material provides enough examples of the manifest feelings of belonging to Amsterdam. Many of them, for example, feel excited and involved when they manage to ride a bike around the city like a local (that is, with the right bicycle, at the time a traditional black one). Moreover, what these students need to do above all is to reaffirm that they have made a good choice. What might be considered a bad experience is thus understood as being part of a necessary period of growing-up as an international student and, in principle, they will count on enough support from other exchange students around them to provide comfort and understanding when things get difficult. An Erasmus stay might bring them all closer to a Europe in which, in the words of the Catalan poet Salvador Espriu, ‘where it is said that people are clean | and noble, cultured, rich, free | awake and happy!’²⁶

9.3. Why ‘imagining’ is also real

In this section I would like to elaborate further on the idea of the authenticity of all those self-representations and senses of places and belonging. In this regard the main questions to be answered are: how do the specific ‘imaginaries’ outlined in the previous pages engage with a place? When does a specific link with the city become an authentic expression of belonging?

a. Set of answers

The first set of answers to those questions relates to the notions of ‘niche’ and ‘moratorium’ as coined by Erikson. According to these notions, recurrent moments in every human life are felt as special even if they are the same for everybody. The notion of the authenticity of feelings of belonging is especially relevant in relation to activities that could be seen as mere supplements, things that one likes to do when one has time, parallel to the real substance of life, and which outsiders might especially tend to consider to be superfluous. However, apparently trivial things, such as being a fan of a football club in a highly commercialized society such as ours, are not *per se* inauthentic. Spaaij points very convincingly to this fact, supported by Erickson’s idea of the ‘moratorium’.²⁷ The plots in a cemetery, like the seats of club members, are all the same, but nevertheless every person, and every new football club supporter, may feel like their specific seat is especially made for them. Actually, the same ‘niche effect’ could also be applied to other constellations of imaginaries. The *corps* students with their suits and ties, the new bohemians with their beards, the girls with topknots, the tattoos on the hooligan’s arms and bodies, the hip hoppers

²⁶ I have already quoted this poem in chapter 7 on Erasmus Students.

²⁷ See chapter 5 on Ajax Fandom. Erikson quoted by Spaaij.

with their raps, the Erasmus students on their exceptional year abroad, and even myself reproducing all the rites of writing a PhD thesis and honestly thinking that it is one of most unique experiences in life.

The second set of answers has to do with the notion of 'Joining in a Story', as referred to in prior chapters of this thesis.²⁸ It appears that engaging with life and making plans for the future in a specific place means engaging with an already existing meta story that provides a sort of overall meaning to daily routines during specific phases in life. In this sense, joining a 'student life story in Amsterdam' can be understood as the performance of one's own life in a specific role. What one should do at a specific moment is something that one may already know before it happens: in the end, for many, the script is already familiar. Sometimes, however, something goes wrong and our real-life characters realize that they have not performed a role properly. These are the moments when we think: 'How stupid that I didn't say that at the time, or that I didn't do that specific thing!'.

The literary characters and the stories by writers who had seen a move to Amsterdam as the necessary step to pursue and make their dreams come true were clear examples of the enormous appeal that pre-existing stories of Amsterdam as a creative place can have and still does have for young people. They also show that love and the fulfilment of professional dreams are above all stories in which we perform with others. Moreover, as stated by Sternberg, the success of a love affair or a professional story is not only a matter of performing a role well but of choosing the story one wants to be part of or is suited to. Therefore, the diversity of possibilities envisaged in a city seem to also promise that on many occasions life can be 'redressed' or 'redirected' simply by changing the script of one's own life and engaging in another story.

If changing the script is plausible, it is also because humans are not homogenous and fixed entities but rather heterogeneous and changing beings. Above all, a coming of age period is generally understood as an identity-forming phase of life, a moment at which possibilities are still open and hesitation is still socially legitimate as appropriate to one's age. In this regard, the question 'What's in it for me?', as postulated by Simon Anholt, hints at why the prospective benefits of a place for one's life are critical stimulants when deciding to leave home and start an education or life somewhere else. In this way, the story of a place becomes involved in and actualized through its merging with the subject and the personal performance of a life story. As we have seen, Latour's elaboration of the meaning of place also sees as a central relationship with the subject. Places exist for us in the moment at which we become involved in them and vice versa.²⁹

²⁸ See Chapter 3 on the creative imaginary, Sternberg.

²⁹ Notions discussed in the first chapters with reference to Latour's definition of 'places' as: 'places that haunt us'.

Finally, and similarly to the 'niche' effect that we discussed above, dealing with a story, the script of which is already known, does not mean that an experience is not felt to be authentic. We have seen that the prospect of engaging in a life in Amsterdam was an important stimulant to enrolling to study in the city. For those young people coming from outside Amsterdam and having aspirations to become writers or journalists, the departure from their birthplaces is also the start of what Madison called an 'existential migration'. In such cases, the 'immigrant' is in search of fulfilment, 'pushed out by deep questions that cannot be answered at home'.³⁰ Madison explains that in such cases the authenticity of fulfilling a dream is felt in the adrenaline associated with expectations, disorientation, and the lack of sleep that is customary when coming to a new place. To Madison, 'really' convinced existential migrants leave their homelands; but in the Amsterdam of today we can find similar 'mini existential' experiences of locals, which vary in intensity but are all transformational: groups of indigenous young Dutch adults leaving their Dutch home towns to establish themselves in Amsterdam, attending gatherings and festivals often involving drugs; fraternity students involved in ragging ceremonies; 'fashionistas' working industriously on the new 'look of the day' and sharing and negotiating their findings with others, to name a few.

The third set of answers has to do with the notions of 'persona', 'character' and 'real people'. These notions are especially important when doing research in our mediamatic contemporary life because they challenge principles of verification and authentication. Consumer research, for example, rightly states that reconstruction data generated by surveys must access verifiable flesh and blood respondents. However, the problem with and limitations of such surveys is that they ignore the rich reservoir of images animating people's responses. It seems obvious that contemporary consumer research has to contemplate a broader spectrum and criteria beyond the flesh and blood explanation of reality. Therefore, it is important to reflect on some basic questions: How does a fictional character, or the lyric of a rap, or even the comments of posters on the internet relate to 'real people'? This question has been mainly addressed in the chapter on the creative imaginary. Fictional characters such as those I have studied, condense, reproduce and actualize existing life narratives. Perhaps the factual details of the story are not literally true, but they will be convincing in their own fictional context because, as stated by Bruner, fictional narratives 'reflect the prevailing theories about "possible lives" that are part of one's culture'.³¹ In this respect, the Argentinean novelist Borges, a master in elucidating the nature of fiction, would state that good fictional stories are also

³⁰ Madison.

³¹ Bruner, p. 16.

believable because they are ‘substantially true’ in their expression of eternal human feelings; that circumstances, time or proper names are false is irrelevant.³²

On this basis, comments on the internet posted by flesh and blood people may raise an even more difficult question about their ‘realness’. Are posters real people or are they performing a role? However, the question of the flesh and blood reality of performed identities on the internet has become less and less relevant to this current study. For the purpose of this research, the actual important revelation has been that ideas, to be believable, do not need to be vindicated by actual people with a first and last name. I would like to go even further and argue that it is precisely because of the relative anonymity of posters in forums and other internet gatherings that ideas can be expressed, shared and disputed – because there is a certain degree of intimacy permitted by anonymity (that is to say, because of a lack of real-life consequences to oneself).

Indeed, it was because of the intimacy permitted by relative anonymity that students looking for a place to live in Amsterdam substituted politically correct terms such as ‘multicultural’ for the more problematic ‘*allochtoon*’, making it synonymous with a bad and undesirable area to live. Also of great importance in relation to authenticity is that, in the end, what counts is not the individual post but the way in which individual fragments become a constructed discourse, interrelated with other fragments and with the multiple references and traces involved. Therefore, it is possible that an internet poster contributes to building a point of view that perhaps his/her flesh and blood version would not agree with. Think, for example, of a face-to-face discussion during a course at university led by a lecturer and in the presence of *allochtone* co-students in which with all probability the term multicultural would prevail. That is why what counts is that the text remains real, it exists as a real, albeit constructed, discourse and as a current narrative in today’s Amsterdam.

Perhaps this last statement can assist us in understanding why the contradictions between the life story of a novelist and the life story of his/her fictionalized alter ego do not make of the novelist a liar. In fact, in my corpus there are enough examples of these contradictions. For the readers, it might be difficult to reconcile the fact that the authors of *Ego Faber* and *Galerie onvolmaakt* were themselves members of the ASC, while their characters (and alter egos) explicitly state that they would never join the *corps*.³³ In this sense, it is interesting to recall here some aspects concerning the

³² See the end of *Emma Zunz*, with a concise, paradigmatic explanation of the meaning of fiction. It takes place after the trial of the crime of which the main character Emma Zunz has presumably been victim. The story she tells, says the narrator, is incredible (unbelievable), but nevertheless Emma Zunz is heard and believed because her story was ‘substantially’ true: ‘only the circumstance were false, the time and one or two proper names’. *Emma Zunz* first reprinted version 1949, later in *The Aleph*. Here I use the English version in: Jorge Luis Borges, *Labyrinths. Selected Stories & Other Writings*, ed. by Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1964), p. 128 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5195/reviberoamer.1961.2016>>.

³³ See Chapter 3 on the Creative Imaginary.

way writers may have experienced the contradiction between what they recount in their works and what they 'had been themselves'. Remember for example, the words of writer Seleký who said: 'I was 19 when I came to Amsterdam. I wanted to come here because every good writer has lived in Amsterdam but I also went immediately to the student association ASC'. He explains that, at the time, he thought it was important to experience different environments and meet different kinds of people. However, he also notes that these are mere details and that real people are less concerned than one would expect. Preppy *corps* girls, he reveals, can be found incognito as bohemians in the Pijp area, for example.³⁴

This suggests that youth is above all a confusing time when it is hard to find a personality that suits. What his story transmits, and what I believe is clear in his novel, is a general feeling of longing among the current generation of twenty-somethings: 'I can also say that our generation has a sort of melancholy. We have everything, but also very often come from a broken family: a mother who becomes a lesbian and a father who goes off with a young chick'.³⁵ With this he puts his finger on the pulse of the argument made by various authors concerning the uncertainty of contemporary life, in which 'everything seems to conspire against long-term plans ... lifelong projects, permanent bonds, eternal alliances, immutable identities'.³⁶

The fourth set of answers would be based on Cova's notion that '[t]he link is more important than the thing'. This notion means – and we have seen it confirmed – that when it comes to images and reputations, judgements are not objective. Young adults do not consider a place cool merely because of a specific design but because it is frequented by cool people: 'the link', that is to say, the shared meaning given to a place, is more important than 'the thing', the place *per se*. This means that there are no objective guidelines we can rely on to determine when something will be seen as cool, because the coolness of a place is determined by a story that is in continuous construction. In this way, and as I realized at a very early stage, the coolness of artefacts and places fluctuates. It also seems difficult to foresee which activities will be permanent. Emergent young creative enterprises such as the bookstore Bubbles & Books, which opened with much publicity, announced its closure only a year later.³⁷

³⁴ See Chapter 8 'What is someone like you...' on looks, people and places.

³⁵ Paraphrased and translated from interview with Maurice Seleký in *Folia Jansen*, "'Mijn Generatie Schippert Enorm".'

³⁶ The quotation is from Bauman, included in Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim joint chapter with Scott Lash: 'Individualization and Precarious Freedom' in Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and Its Social and Political Consequences* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2002), p. 3 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446218693>>.

³⁷ See the announcement of the opening in Chapter 8.

The material also shows that the passage of time might be particularly visible when doing research on youth. Young people grow up and stop being young. We can see this irrefutable fact reflected in an array of paradigmatic blogs and websites, from ‘Hiphopleeft’ to ‘The Year We Were All Erasmus in Amsterdam’. Some of their online platforms are still online, but the last page is a farewell letter, marking the closing of an era in which they invested much effort and time.³⁸ Some of them also note that they are perhaps already taking on a melancholic tone (which is something that some of them would not like to have). As Philip Huff put it: ‘I always hated older people talking about their study period as the best period of their life but maybe I’m already doing the same now’.³⁹

A fifth set of answers deals with the notion of ‘partnership in distress and destiny’. In this regard, one of my very crucial ‘discoveries’ has been the identification of a sense of engagement, felt as a result of ‘*lotgenootschap*’ or ‘partnership in distress’.⁴⁰ Indeed, the concept of partners in destiny – in Dutch literally expressed in the word ‘*lotgenoot*’ – is especially illustrative in understanding the different levels of liaison that bring people together in a city. As a place of destiny, for many, Amsterdam is a place they are yet to conquer. In this regard, the material shows the search mechanisms employed by those who have just arrived. Starting from the most clichéd places, they will engage in a process of gradual acquaintance, locating possible partners in destiny. Seen from this point of view, the process of negotiation and adjustment is especially visible in the coming-of-age novels analysed, although its mechanisms seem to apply to most of the meaning-giving negotiations in my corpus. In all of the stories, people who find others who act as ‘introducers’ will proceed to a decoding mechanism, trying to understand or gain insight into things such as ‘being cool’ in Amsterdam. Newcomers will adopt the role of ‘followers’, while at the same time they become translators, mediating between the experienced cool person they admire on the one hand and the co-followers and new newcomers on the other.

However, the sense of ‘*lotgenootschap*’ is even more important than this. It also explains the floating meaning of strange words such as ‘*allochtoon*’ and ‘*autochtoon*’ or ‘*zwarte*’ and ‘*witte*’ schools. As opposites/antonyms, these words ineluctably refer to a difference in destiny, those who belong versus those who are linked by their not belonging (but in this sense are connected to each other). The posters on the forums and YouTube pages, for example, offer a good illustration of these processes: it is apparent how the different posters gradually relate their posts to each other, usually

³⁸ I am referring to paradigmatic websites such as Nalden and Hiphopleeft, discussed in Chapter 6 on Hip hop as well as to the common references to the Nostalgia after an Erasmus stay as recounted in Chapter 7.

³⁹ Paraphrased from interview with Kristien Hemmerechts, Philip Huff and Kashmere Hakim, by *Abdelkader Benali/Literature Late Night* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2012) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cO9EniO1nW8>>.

⁴⁰ A notion that I could add to the distinctive signs of kinship as stipulated by Nuñez and O’Guinn that I have been taking into account as a general sense of kinship. See introductory chapters and analyses in the different chapters.

first marking the general 'we' and 'others' positions and then proceeding to the further giving of sense to form a party of '*lotgenootschap*'.

A sixth set of answers deals with the evidence found in the collected data that young people are themselves thinking and reflecting about themselves and their self-representation. In this respect, the collected data also shows that not a few of those young people are concerned about researchers and journalists misrepresenting them for their own purposes. Graffiti artists, for example, argued that the graffiti film made by Fastcap is the only one that should be seen as representative, since other graffiti films have been made by older directors who have nothing to do with their world. Similarly, the writers at *Hard/hoofd* praise the series *Girls*, which is written and produced by a twenty-something like themselves, while they despise the work of older screen writers, journalists and researchers trying to portray or describe this current generation. We have also seen that one of the most common arguments in clashes between groups has been: 'You cannot understand because you are not one of us'.

Besides a very legitimate vindication of the self-thinking, those remarks and objections might reflect a particular interpretation of the postmodern exaltation of difference that, when brought to its utmost conclusion, would mean that because it is impossible to know the 'other' it is thus pointless trying. However, postmodern thinking does not argue this at all. On the contrary, notions such as 'hospitality', understood as the openness to the other in the light of this impossibility, have had the profuse attention of Lévinas, Derrida and subsequently many others.⁴¹ We will retake this topic in paragraph 9.4.b on 'Fetishizing differences'.

b. Reflections on sentient data

In summary, all these sets of answers point to the urgency to keep developing adequate research approaches with a philosophical perspective on matters such as authenticity, self-identity or the relationship between Self and Other. In my case, I believe I can talk about a certain 'adequateness', in the sense of having combined approaches from imagology and tribal marketing that match the goals of my research on images and their relatedness. I discussed this compatibility in the introduction to this dissertation; at this point, I would like to refer to some concrete examples of how this compatibility played out.

⁴¹ See especially: Emmanuel Lévinas, *Altérité et Transcendance* (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 2006); Emmanuel Lévinas, *Difficile Liberté. Essais Sur Le Judaïsme* (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1983); Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Lévinas* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1999).

The way I conducted this research gave me the advantage and the chance to listen to and read material created first-hand by people from 'tribes' which, in all honesty, I probably would never have come into contact with if I had a priori limited my list of 'relevant actors'. Thanks to this research, I found myself listening to and trying to understand hip hop and rap, for example. Later on, it was through the link 'hip hop and rap' that I began to understand that I would need to review work by people such as Ali B. who, a priori, I would have put in the category of '*knuffel-Marokkaan*'.⁴² Indeed, Ali B. has often been called the 'Moroccan teddy bear' because of his success on Dutch television, a 'sweet immigrant' suitable for petting and who, as such, I would have not included in my research corpus because I would have considered him not sufficiently authentic or representative.

In this sense, the possibilities provided by the internet have also been decisive. As I have already mentioned, the study of discursive material by young people themselves and already available on the internet was likely to be very suitable first-hand material for researching imaginaries. However, I think I can conclude that the results have exceeded expectations. Gaining access to this kind of material has broadened our view on the thoughts and images held by others that would only otherwise be visible in a gathering of like-minded people, where prejudices can be freely expressed.

In this process, the additional opportunities that the internet provides for research cannot be emphasized enough. In addition to this very valuable means of collecting material from public forums, YouTube and weblogs, I am also referring to the fact that I could also monitor specific discussions and follow them in different contexts. A reference to the first performance of Public Enemy in Amsterdam on Thursday, 13 October 1988 can be checked and watched on YouTube, and the lyrics compiled, for example.⁴³ Also, a crucial football moment can be recalled, speeches by politicians found and their words checked, and the events around a just-published novel collected with relative ease. With the right password one can check quality articles and look into books, and with a relatively humble bankcard one can gain access to those books on the internet. Clearly, the research conducted here was not possible before the internet era, at least not in the time span of four or five years.

What has also been especially interesting is that these possibilities offered by the internet especially suit a multidisciplinary approach and the contrasting tools of imagology. This is of crucial importance

⁴² See the references to this particular work in the chapter concerning hip hop. With regard to the term '*Knuffel-Marokkaan*' Wikipedia provides an overview on its connotations which is also an evidence of its use as a commonplace in contemporary Dutch. See: "*Knuffelallochtoon*", "*Knuffel-Marokkaan*", *Wikipedia* <<http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knuffelallochtoon>>.

⁴³ *Public Enemy Live Dutch TV 1988 Part 1* (The Netherlands: Waaghals Records Video Dump/YouTube, 1988) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-kLgoVMnj8>>; *Public Enemy & Run DMC - Live Dutch TV 1988 Part 2* (The Netherlands: Waaghals Records Video Dump/YouTube, 1988) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPw9y5_3T0k>.

because images carry multidisciplinary baggage: when studying a discursive repertoire one cannot simply decide that history or economics or literature or physics are not relevant because they are not one's specialty. Of course, one cannot be specialized in everything, but the attitude of an imagologist seems above all to aspire to an encyclopaedic and cartographic view, which requires taking an interest in the various components associated with a place and judgements about it.

Furthermore, it is also crucial to recall that such a contrasting methodology shows that images – to be visible and susceptible to being captured – first need to be shared. A capturable image is necessarily visibly performed. The analyses in the various chapters of this dissertation help us gain some insight into the various ways that performed images come to the surface. In this respect, it is clear that in terms of collecting material it is most important to recognize at the start that different and contrasting images will be expressed by different means. Each tribe prefers a specific way of expressing itself. Lyrics, novels, internet forums, blogs, sharing points, football chants and banners, or references to unwritten fraternity rules: if one wants to actually get a grip on diversity and contrasting imaginaries, a heterogeneous body of material proves to be indispensable.

These analyses have also enabled us to see that such a study could only be considered as the tip of the iceberg, a small contribution to the mapping of a city that, by its very nature, cannot be other than infinite. Nevertheless, as I believe I have shown, taking those images as constructed, performed discourses provides a valuable kind of 'fabric' suitable for interpretation in the framework of a specific constellation of traditions and actualizations. In this respect, we can conclude that although the research could have included many more of Amsterdam's tribes, it offers sufficient signposts and explanations to draw substantive conclusions.

In the following section I will link the different topics discussed in the introductory chapters of this thesis with the discussion in the chapters that make up the body of the text, interconnecting them not only in terms of the primary data but also with the secondary literature. In this way, I would like to develop a mapping of topical results that have surfaced through the contrasting of the different tribes and other city imaginaries, as well as taking into account the specific historical conjunctures in which these young adults became acquainted with Amsterdam.

9.4. Choices and lifestyles: How Amsterdam accommodates what people want to become

a. The call for talented people and the postmodern politics of difference. Spatial distribution, participation and separation

The way the different senses of belonging emerged during the course of this research shows that Amsterdam has some of the imaginary traits that characterize both the 'informational city' as described by Castells and the 'globalized city' as portrayed by Sassen. It also demonstrates the transformation from old city renewal ('stadsvernieuwing') to urban renewal ('stedelijke vernieuwing'), as described by Duyvendak and Uitermark.⁴⁴ As you will remember, the city as described by Castells and Sassen, among others, exhibits the distinctive trait of a struggle over different spaces, some of them being of special interest to specific groups because of their potential in the re-scaling processes associated with globalization.⁴⁵ Such struggles relate to the performance of different 'actors', such as the corporations attempting to appropriate the grand, older parts of the city, the gentrification of the inner city, with professionals wanting to be near important city services and various institutions, the ghettos for immigrants tolerated at the peripheries of the city, and the development of areas of localism and xenophobia, mostly in the suburbs.

With respect to urban renewal, the current vision would see renewal as a necessity to cope with the wants and needs of new and desired target groups, in which the middle and upper classes are seen as the 'rescuers of the city'.⁴⁶ Seen from this perspective, it is easier to identify the patterns of 'appropriation' and use of the city. The creative class, as heirs to the writers and intellectuals of the past, feel a sort of natural right to inhabit the old working class areas, those areas which had already become the natural habitats of students and young professionals in the 1970s, when the locals, mostly blue-collar workers, started to leave the neglected dwellings of the Jordaan and the Pijp. At the same time, the wealthy but contentious area of the Old South has become a place for new luxury, retaining not only the original, predominantly wealthy, population but also attracting the nouveau riche and members of the business class who work in Zuidas or in the legal offices in the area. Remarks about the taste of the 'nouveau riche' show that the arrival of newcomers to the area is not always considered desirable by older inhabitants.

⁴⁴ Duyvendak and Uitermark.

⁴⁵ Castells, 'European Cities, the Informational Society, and the Global Economy'; See for a further elaboration of the topic of re-scaling Uitermark's remarks: 'Thus with every instance of re-scaling, we can investigate not only who wins and who loses but also what consequences there are for the regulation of capitalism'. In: Uitermark, 'Re-Scaling, "Scale Fragmentation" and the Regulation of Antagonistic Relationships'.

⁴⁶ Duyvendak and Uitermark, p. 10.

Simultaneously, new projects to increase housing density within the city to cater for various desired target groups reveal the switch in policy pointed to by Duyvendak and Uitermark. The corpus also confirmed that young lower class adults, identified by most of the internet posters as poorly educated, are seen as different kinds of people to students, with these two groups not readily coming together. Poorly educated people, mostly disadvantaged whites and coloured immigrants, will be distributed into different neighbourhoods, if not separate areas of specific neighbourhoods. Doubtlessly, they will have difficulties in throwing off the image attributed to them by others, such as having a low IQ, being unreliable, confronting, aggressive and criminal. This means that those areas are especially marked by the presence of police, social workers and others who try to assist those who are less well off.

In terms of ethnic and social class demarcation it seems crucial to recognize that Amsterdam might have become too accustomed to the fact that different ethnicities are seen as belonging to specific, sometimes no-go areas for others. As already mentioned, in the Netherlands, a professor of minority policy, Hans Werdmölder, has even presented a theory that the high level of criminality among Moroccans and Antilleans in Amsterdam is caused by their culture and nature, based especially in inherited traits such as narcissism, duplicity, racism, territoriality and machismo.⁴⁷ With respect to delinquent Moroccan youths he proposes temporary exile to their 'homeland' as a solution, with the option of this becoming a definitive deportation. Werdmölder's theories have been contested in the academic world, but the material in my corpus shows that as a representative of a specific discourse he makes sense to some. Within the discursive construction concerning 'cultural pathologies', immigrants such as those in question are considered to not belong in the Netherlands because they hold values which are antithetical to Dutch values. According to this imaginary, their maladjustment to Dutch society is in fact endemic and partly based on anti-white resentment, hence the only possible solution is to keep them on a short leash with a firm hand and tolerate only those who demonstrate they are happily integrated into Dutch society.

The opportunities for children of immigrants to leave their assigned domain as immigrants in a foreign city and gain entrance to more privileged milieus seem most viable through an artistic form of expression that allows the individual to adopt an appearance other than that of the stereotype which may bridge the racial divide. Thus, for example, instead of very short hair and a coat with a fur collar, associated with Moroccan boys, Sef wears a purple foulard and Ali B. neat long curly hair – a 'look' more reminiscent of the area around the University Library, a place in which differences in colour or style are celebrated as beautiful, as we recall from the Facebook pages on which students

⁴⁷ Werdmölder.

write dating texts. Recall also the Erasmus students, who found each other immediately attractive precisely because of their exotic and different appearance.

The city, as we have seen, is also understood as a place of encounter, but with these specific tribes and imaginaries one can deduce that the opportunities for encounters and dialogues are limited to those moments that allow mixing (a football match for example) or when the 'persona' is adjusted for the occasion, either in terms of looks, behaviour or conditions. At other moments, each personae – the immigrant, the creative, the preppy, the *corps* and the Erasmus – will operate separately, taking different paths. In Amsterdam today the internet helps them to increase their level of involvement with their own crowd, gathering soul mates around specific topics and therefore also separating out different sorts of people. These results confirm the findings of Valentine, who, in his study on territoriality in contemporary life, concluded that the use of technologies related to the internet have increased the impermeability we show towards non-soul mates in off-line encounters.⁴⁸ Even a light, fortuitous conversation with a stranger while waiting for the tram, or asking someone face to face to recommend a good restaurant, is improbable because our attention is mostly concentrated on our mobile phones, listening to music, chatting or simply looking for information coming from 'people like us' on our mobiles.

b. Fetishizing differences

From this perspective, the results also show that a city such as Amsterdam does not necessarily facilitate the encountering and reconciling of differences. Rather, it demonstrates what could be described as the performance of 'post-cities', in which people increasingly coexist only with their own kind. In this respect, some authors state that postmodern attitudes have had an influence, in terms of what has become called the 'aporia' of the human condition, reinforcing the capitalist need to make differences among people. In this way, although there is a postmodern acknowledgment of difference and the validity of perspectives which may have an empowering effect, it also encourages the common assumption that people of different kinds are essentially different and therefore, in a sense, irreconcilable.

Indeed, as I have already suggested, the celebration of difference has a negative consequence insofar as it denies the possibility of knowing the other. According to Malik and Said (among others), the insistence on the differences between people has led to the undesirable common belief that only insiders or those who share a specific condition can really know or provide insight into this condition, for example, a woman could only be really understood by another woman, a black person by another

⁴⁸ Valentine, 'Living with Difference: Reflections on Geographies of Encounter.'

black person.⁴⁹ Such processes are of importance when considering the boundaries between the young tribes in Amsterdam, because, although the dynamics of disparaging the other in favour of the self are inherent to the nature of auto-images, there is the danger that those differences are truly seen as evidence that communication between tribes is impossible.

In the studies of urban tribes a similar pitfall could be avoided by stimulating and increasing hospitality between disciplines so that they can 'give space and take time' for each other and address the need to respond to the 'demand for politics' in current urban environments.⁵⁰ This is because, as we have seen, the imaginary mapping of Amsterdam that has arisen from the research data shows that there is a clear process of attributing specific places to specific people, and that this process is not always free of important negative implications in real life.

The concepts of 'hybridization' and 'cyborgization' discussed by Swyngedouw,⁵¹ for example, offer an interesting way to relate the humanities to the sciences. They show that the distribution and appropriation of infrastructure, technology and places in a city are not free of evaluation. Consequently, research on policies related to distribution and appropriation should also relate technology to politics, for example. In this way, openness among disciplines and across scales could help to realize a 'return to the polis, the public space for the encounter and negotiation of disagreement, where those who have no place and are not counted or named, can acquire or, better still, appropriate [a] voice and become part of the polis'.⁵²

c. Youth, generation 'clash', melancholy and the shrugging of shoulders

A third interesting point is that the idealization of youth as synonymous with talent and future prosperity also has a clear counterpart. Daring, challenging and risk behaviour is based on states of mind commonly attributed to youth, symbolized through mythological characters such as Icarus. At the same time, however, one should not forget that youth is thus also a vulnerable period of life. As well as day to day life, there are also sociohistorical changes with which youth has to deal in terms of

⁴⁹ In a short article after having given a presentation at a 'historically renowned American university' Said talks about the incomprehension of a black professor who reproached him for not mentioning any black author in the 40 first pages of his book about European Imperialism. Edward Said, 'The Politics of Knowledge', in *Race, Identity, and Representation in Education*, ed. by Cameron McCarthy and others (London-New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 453–60; See also further: Kenan Malik, *The Meaning of Race. Race History and Culture in Western Society* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), p. 236.

⁵⁰ I paraphrase the expression from the title of the volume: *Extending Hospitality: Giving Space, Taking Time*, ed. by Mustafa Dikeç, Nigel Clark, and Clive Barnett (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), xxxii <<http://dx.doi.org/10.3366/E0264833409000376>> See also p. 3 on the 'demand for politics'.

⁵¹ Erik Swyngedouw, 'Circulations and Metabolisms: (Hybrid) Natures and (Cyborg) Cities', *Science as Culture*, 15 (2006), 105–21 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09505430600707970>>.

⁵² Erik Swyngedouw, 'The Antinomies of the Postpolitical City: In Search of a Democratic Politics of Environmental Production', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 33 (2009), 601–20 (p. 615) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2009.00859.x>>. Following quotation on p. 613.

decades and epochs. In terms of the idealization of youth, the research corpus shows that the urge and the drive to do something unique when one is young is accompanied by a tendency to despise all those who are over 30 and have adapted to a regular life. For many young people, this urge translates into excess – nights without sleep, excessive drinking, taking drugs, lots of sex. The narrator of *Ego Faber* vividly reflects on these moments of excess, realizing that the feeling of togetherness he has with his friends is intrinsically linked to youth.

However, at the same time, this momentum is also understood as brief and volatile. In fact, one can conclude that at this stage of life the power of youth is encompassed in the promising notion of something ‘yet to come’. Melancholy arises when they realize that, as they get older, the chance of being a ‘young but already accomplished talent’ is slipping away. In the end, and despite the choices we generally have, the requirement to remain in our ‘pampering society’ is revealed to be quite banal.⁵³ It also seems that being young in this way involves more competition than ever before. Not only do these young people need to fight for their spot against the older ‘creatives’ – the eternally young 50 year olds in Amsterdam, with sneakers and iPads, who have occupied the whole city centre and host the most well-known programmes on television – they also need to compete with the overwhelming auras of consecrated – and even dead – artists and intellectuals whose youth is magically brought back to life through YouTube videos and the other modern forms of representation.

Contemporary life is sometimes experienced as sad and melancholy. The founder and director of the Hiphopleeft website Thomas Heerma van Voss discerns in the catchy beats of the Belgian artist, Stromae, a constant sadness. According to him, Stromae’s work reflects the feeling of ‘concerned twenty-somethings’ in Amsterdam very well, those who, like him, ‘grew up in luxury and are suddenly faced with economic uncertainties and dark prospects’. Stromae, in fact, repeatedly points to the negative effects of core concepts in Western society in which ‘those who have money talk’.⁵⁴

Despite these concrete references to the social concerns of twenty-somethings, the material also exhibits a banality that explicitly resists ‘transcending’ – to address meta-political discourses, for example. In general, and because of its absence, one can deduce that political participation, in the traditional sense of the word, has lost its value among youth in Amsterdam. All in all, it seems more than plausible to conclude that the melancholy feeling mentioned seems to be a result of what

⁵³ Coinciding with the reflections of Sloterdijk on the convergence of freedom and banality in what he calls the ‘pampering space.’ In: Sloterdijk and Reguera (translator), *En El Mundo Interior Del Capital. Para Una Teoría Filosófica de La Globalización*, p. 253; Originally: Sloterdijk, *Im Weltinnenraum Des Kapitals. Für Eine Philosophische Theorie Der Globalisierung*.

⁵⁴ Op. cit. in chapter Hip hop: Voss.

Swyngedouw calls 'the temporal and spatial segmentation' of post-political cities. In this process, specific longings are no longer linked to general political or philosophical ideologies. Student political actions focus on concrete goals, such as better or sufficient housing and the maintenance of grants, for example, but in this context they are not critical of the system as such, on the basis of its imperialism or racism, for example.⁵⁵ For the mainstream, as seen in the corpus, politics have become synonymous with bureaucracy and inefficiency. Patent examples of this can be seen in the way football is embraced as the ultimate game, free from political correctness. For the more devoted football fans, in their own clan, this is the only place they can be who they really are, escaping the civilized varnish of everyday life.

d. The 'attending to the world' references

A fourth interesting discovery is the visible 'glocalization' of Amsterdam, with many signs revealing its involvement in the world. Of course, capital cities have historically emulated each other, offering, for example, the same kinds of services and institutions, but as national centres they above all catered to their more immediate environment. Current cities, however, have been typified as 'nodes', each being a link in a chain. As mentioned, the signs of connectivity are now widespread. The new high-rise buildings that have been appearing around the city centre – a novelty in Amsterdam – are tokens of a belief that it is necessary to join a world of cities that have such a physical appearance. Amsterdam has also undergone a rehabilitation process in the inner city. In the inner-city neighbourhoods of the Pijp and the Jordaan, a gentrification process has been accompanied by the introduction of relatively affordable but personalized new services that reflect the needs of the inhabitants: small retail shops, alternative beauty centres, retro unisex hairdressers. They are the local version of similar areas in other contemporary cities, the must-see areas in tourist guides, as representing the core of the local bohemian and laid back atmosphere. As a consequence of this almost immediate relational feedback, one easily identifies the cross border extension of these imaginaries. This also allows us to easily identify the booming new places dreamt of by specific groups of people, as has clearly been the case with Berlin over the last decade.

In general, and as Nijman among others has noticed, this process has also led to a visible commodification of local values.⁵⁶ On the various Amsterdam city marketing and communication sites, for example, the tolerant nature of the city and its inhabitants has been made visible through

⁵⁵ Justus Uitermark and Walter Nicholls, 'From Politicization to Policing: The Rise and Decline of New Social Movements in Amsterdam and Paris', *Antipode*, 2013, 1–22 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/anti.12025>>; Walter Nicholls and Justus Uitermark, 'Post-Multicultural Cities: A Comparison of Minority Politics in Amsterdam and Los Angeles, 1970–2010', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 39 (2013), 1555–75 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2013.833686>>.

⁵⁶ Jan Nijman, 'Cultural Globalization and the Identity of Place: The Reconstruction of Amsterdam', *Ecumene*, 6 (1999), 146–64 (p. 146) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1191/096746099701556141>>.

tangible items such as bars with a bohemian and relaxed style, gay-friendly ambiance and vintage and other counter or alternative commercial initiatives. Also, independent and creative artists and entrepreneurs, now established in regenerated industrial areas, have been used as illustrations of those values. One can say that these are tokens of a general transformation in the way we communicate about cities, in which local uniqueness is linked to a kind of broader commonplace related to an official understanding of certain values in Western societies and the sort of representatives that embody those values.

e. Acquired views provide a better understanding of the ‘Floating Significance’ of categories such as social class or race

A fifth point is that this research enables us to apprehend the persistence of ‘vague’ concepts such as ‘race’, ‘social class’ and ‘nationality’. In this regard, it has been particularly interesting to gain a better insight into the ways these concepts are put into play, revealing that they do not always matter in the same way. While Erasmus students celebrated their differences as almost the essence of their being the same, for example, poorly educated and coloured immigrants are clearly assigned to particular places on the city map. Their presence in places to which they are not assigned arouses suspicion. Accordingly, the mapping that surfaces is one of segregation, which has not been particularly well studied in the Netherlands. Therefore, the works on similar dynamics of segregation abroad, by authors such as Stuart Hall, Yousman or Duffett,⁵⁷ should not be seen as only relevant to places outside the Netherlands, but as an illustration of the persistence of stereotypes of race, social class and nationality even in contemporary Amsterdam. As a consequence, it is also very interesting to see that negative race attributions also endure in a process of subtle and unintended racism. It is a very harsh paradox that means that some groups may be seen as belonging or not belonging to a place because of the simple fact that, according to an interplay of a constellation of attributed images, they are ‘Others’. In this way, boundaries are established: binary oppositions such as ‘[i]nside/outside; cultured/uncivilized; barbarous and cultivated; and so on’.⁵⁸

Similarly, and as we have seen, specific looks combined with specific artefacts make someone suspicious when seen in some locations, while in other locations they seem to have been made

⁵⁷ The ‘floating signifier’ concept is related to criteria about ‘belonging’ and ‘matters out of place’. As explained by Hall, those criteria help us to decide what belongs to a place and what does not. In his words, ‘It is a quite simple matter: in general we do not worry with dirt in the garden but the moment we see dirt in the bedroom we need to do something about that “because it doesn’t symbolically belong there”’. In: Hall, ‘Race: The Floating Signifier’, p. 3. See also: Duffett; Yousman.

⁵⁸ Rancière refers to those notions of allocation and division as the ‘Partage du sensible’: ‘Ce système d’évidences sensibles qui donne à voir en même temps l’existence d’un commun et les découpages qui y définissent les places et les parts respectives.’ In : Jacques Rancière, *Le Partage Du Sensible. Esthétique et Politique* (Paris: La fabrique éditions, 2000), p. 12. More elaborations on the topic also by authors such as Mustafa Dikeç, ‘Space, Politics and the Political’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 23 (2005), 171–88 (p. 174) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1068/d364t>>.

especially for the place. The wealthy student from Amsterdam South goes to Ikea in Amsterdam South-East to watch the ‘teen mothers with their *halfbloodjes*’ as if he was in a zoo; *corps* students are expelled from bohemian bars because of their clothes and the way they behave; the creative entrepreneur searches for a specific kind of diversity and ‘je ne sais quoi’ that agrees with the aesthetic of the Jordaan district, that is, a bit imperfect, cosy and tailored to the human dimension; taxi drivers do not take people to the Bijlmer as it is a no-go area; while the paths of whites and blacks in the same neighbourhood are strictly divided between the business and living areas for the simple reason that the whites work in the business area while the blacks live there. The same kind of logic means that the presence of social workers becomes a sign of a deprived neighbourhood instead of a needed impetus for improvement. In this way, even with the best intentions, racism survives even when a society in all honesty does not consider itself to be racist.⁵⁹

f. The heritage of tradition: students as revolutionaries and critical masses

A sixth point is that although students are frequently praised for their youth, critical stance and talent, current students have often faced accusations by older generations that they are spoiled and have never had to deal with the ‘real hardships in life’. They are not ‘the older generation that has fought in the war’, nor the generation of *provos* and intellectuals who ‘really fought for student rights’.⁶⁰ However, only by contrasting all of those imaginaries is it possible to visualize and identify the intersections of traditions, and probably also the misunderstandings about matters such as ‘the traditional revolutionary character of students in Amsterdam’.

In fact, it can be concluded that the Wolkers’ tradition to which some of the writers of the novels analysed in Chapter 3 refer, is not anchored in the memories of the revolutionary, political workers’ movements in Paris at the end of the nineteenth century, for example, but more in the romantic, bohemian and antibourgeois attitude to life associated with such movements. At the same time, the student tradition of the *corps*, as we have seen, is strongly anchored in an aristocratic mentality and way of life and obviously has not the least intention of changing this tradition. Moreover, in the years that followed the 1960s, and despite the University of Amsterdam remaining clearly left-oriented, involvement in political thinking has gradually decreased. The collected material also shows that the kind of projections and dreams shared by those young people do not refer to specific political

⁵⁹ Hughey identifies the same racist mechanisms in both declared racist and anti-racist movements: Matthew W. Hughey, ‘Backstage Discourse and the Reproduction of White Masculinities’, *The Sociological Quarterly*, 52 (2011), 132–53 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.2010.01196.x>>.

⁶⁰ General argument put forward in (student/youth) debates in Amsterdam such as at ‘De Balie’ (Amsterdam) <www.debalie.nl/home/>; or at ‘Spui 25. Academisch-Cultureel Centrum’ (Amsterdam) <<http://www.spui25.nl/>>. See also the series published in the magazine *De Groene Amsterdammer* and compiled in: Daan Heerma van Voss and Daniël van der Meer, *De Kloof. Tweegesprekken over Een Verdeeld Nederland* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Balans, 2010).

ideologies and that comments such as *'linkse knorr'* and *'rechtse bal'* are especially limited to the antagonism between *corps* and non-*corps* students.

If we take into consideration the analysis of football fandom, of Erasmus students and of those following fashion, not to mention all the bloggers, we can see that they are also not generally politically involved. Ajax fandom, for example, does not traditionally have a specific right or left tendency or a political commitment – contrary to other European fans such as those from Madrid or Barcelona. Erasmus students, although clearly sympathizers with ideals of tolerance and democracy, do not directly refer to specific political tendencies, but appeal instead to a general 'European way of being'. The same can be said of the different bloggers we saw in Chapter 8, some of them clearly adopting an environmental position in relation to sustainability, but not linking this with a specific political party or ideology.⁶¹ In fact, the only clear political statements in terms of egalitarian vindications of social, political and economic justice that I could trace in the material were linked to rappers such as Gikkels.

g. The post-political city and the accommodating city

Related to previous conclusions, another is that the above-mentioned apolitical attitude coincides with what authors such as Swyngedouw call the post-political city. In this city, local governments have gradually adopted management strategies, resulting in a post-political organization characterized by the avoidance of political unrest and conflict. The city that results is a place especially suitable to specific types of characters. The creative class, for example, has increasingly been seen as beneficial because it is thought to contribute to the liveliness and attractiveness of the city. Hand in hand with them, corporate life, legal firms and banking have also clearly increased their presence. The increasing popularity of traditional student associations and the restoration of aristocratic enclaves in the older city centre catering to members of this 'tribe' ensure the visibility of a certain financial and juridical power. In addition, of course, in the material collected, Amsterdam is shown to be a space of consumption, catering for and reflecting the necessities of different ways of 'becoming a better being'. Indeed, the large number of fashion and lifestyle blogs, for example, shows the lively interest with which young adults attempt to become acquainted with the different codes and registers that enable them to fit into a diversity of urban scenes.

However, we can also conclude that in this Amsterdam not every young person has the necessary appearance to cross tribal boundaries and accommodate him or herself to welcoming 'spaces'.

⁶¹ An exception is the case of the main character of *Dingen die niet kunnen*, who has a part time job in The Hague for the Groen Links party, as does the flesh and blood author. But even in her story, political engagement is only deducible from her activities as typifying a specific 'sort of person' as we have seen in the chapter on the creative class.

According to Malik, this is because choices in life are less open than they seem. For example, black people cannot decide to 'put away' their colour, and as we have seen, very often *allochtonen* in Amsterdam are not able (or do not manage) to enter research universities. In fact, consumer research experts on tribal marketing⁶² have already pointed out that although young people have been shown to be socially mobile, especially during the 1980s, there were also clear economic boundaries at the time that limited their choice of becoming the sort of people they wanted to become – of taking part in a specific life story.

h. A place for new opportunities. Becoming a better version of oneself

Finally, the research has shown that, as Sassen has pointed out,⁶³ these renewed cities, full of contradictions, might also be the place in which there is still space for new stories, spaces in which the 'noises' of the 'sans-part'⁶⁴ would become intelligible 'voices'.⁶⁵ This city is then a 'Triumphant City', as envisaged by Glaeser.⁶⁶ This city is malleable and subjective, as described by Jonathan Raban in *Soft City*.⁶⁷ This city would have 'holes' as well, free spaces of intersection in which new 'reticulations' – and I am referring to Sloterdijk's metaphor of 'foaming' – can still take place. To achieve this, however, cities should be generous organs and able to love. Sloterdijk's philosophical notions of 'uterus' and 'placenta' are in fact examples of organs that enable us to store enough love to grow and continue the rch for new 'connections'. The collected research corpus shows clear examples of this.

Watching the recorded performances of Ali B. as a stand-up comedian one can apprehend a certain transcendence of these notions. The fact is that in his performance Ali B. actualizes classic topics such as the regenerative power of love, which influences his wish to become a better version of himself. In 'Ali B. responds', he shows how at critical moments as an adolescent when he 'was succumbing to problems of "his sort" with drugs and gambling', his mother, a poorly educated immigrant Moroccan, spoke the magic words: 'If you have a problem, you only need to tell me. I can help you'. The power of love, which is this time expressed in the discovery of support, understanding and the unexpected

⁶² Douglas B Holt.

⁶³ Sassen.

⁶⁴ 'Les sans-part' is a term coined in French by Rancière. Oliver Davis explains it this way: 'Aristotle describes the members of the *demos* as those who "had no part [share] in anything" [...]. The members of the *demos* are those the community tries to say have "no share" in the process of government: as Rancière puts it in French, they are *les sans-part* (literally those "without a share" in the community)'. In: Oliver Davis, *Key Contemporary Thinkers: Jacques Rancière* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010), p. 80.

⁶⁵ Mustafa Dikeç, 'Voices into Noises: Ideological Determination of Unarticulated Justice Movements', *Space and Polity*, 8 (2004), 191–208 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1356257042000273959>>.

⁶⁶ Glaeser.

⁶⁷ Jonathan Raban, *Soft City* (The Harvill Press, 1974).

talent of a mother, is that it is able to liberate mother and son from the stereotypes that they had become, even for each other.

Thus, we can conclude that the previous scenes sketched by Ali B. are a good illustration of the moments at which Nobodies humanize and recognize each other as Somebody. In my view, the topic of love is a bridge to interesting approaches to finding a better definition of what the contemporary city might be: a ‘metropolis’ in its literal Greek etymological meaning of ‘mother city’, here understood as a loving, cherishing and nourishing ‘placenta’. Therefore, having reached this point, in the following section I will first attempt to contribute to the delineation of an alternative horizon to which we might aspire when it comes to the management of the image of Amsterdam and its educational institutions. Subsequently, I will draw on a meta-interpretation of my research, reflecting on the need to keep developing and adjusting research methodologies on images in contemporary urban life. Those methodologies should enable us to achieve a greater understanding of all these very volatile and fluid – but at the same very robust and influential – images and reputations concerning place that are intertwined with our life stories.

9.5. Re-directing Amsterdam’s city-image aspirations: Competition and inclusion

One of the main topics introduced at the outset of this thesis began with the observation that a ‘great divide’ had occurred in relation to education and research on city management.⁶⁸ While the postmodern tradition had clearly influenced research on a diversity of humanities disciplines, management research and education had maintained a parallel trajectory focused on the development of ‘management tools’. The problem with this was that when these management tools started to be applied as tools to explore what was being managed – whether Amsterdam, its educational institutions, or the student body – they started to exhibit serious shortcomings. An additional problem with this was that such management tools were always meant to be practically applied. This meant that while postmodern insights had taught us to develop our understanding on matters such as sense of place, language, identity and referentiality, to name a few, management tools followed a parallel reality, characterized by processing, summarizing and implementing rules.

The more one thinks about this, the clearer it becomes that the whole situation is somewhat schizophrenic. On the one hand, of course, one could say that this division of thought has to do with

⁶⁸ Understanding it as a similar great divide as the divide between humanities and sciences, or between modernity and post-modernity as adduced by among others Andreas Huyssen in *After the Great Divide*, pp. 216–221.

the Divide that separates the 'numbers' from the 'letters', the 'doers' from the 'thinkers'.⁶⁹ This would mean that we could in fact talk about two tribes, those who run the business and those who write the books, each one of them having their own audience. On the other hand, obviously, such a division makes no sense, not only because it does not fit with the reality, but above all because it works as an annoying impediment to gaining an understanding of things that matter and acting in accordance.

However, postmodern insights and management tools should not be seen as separate and monolithic realms either. In fact research, and practices, on urban and city management have already often shown that such divisions among disciplines are not helping to improve our understanding of the matter and of the practices in the field.⁷⁰ If we see them in this compartmentalized way then, it is because we have a stereotyped image of them. Thus, what I have increasingly realized is that there is a great likelihood that the whole actualization of management discourse applied as a tool to increase the competitiveness of cities and their institutions is only based on a monolithic projection of what management is. It seems that in the end, and despite all the concern we have, all those clichés and great divides have impeded us in squarely facing real matters.⁷¹

From this perspective, one can also better understand why the promotional language that cities and educational institutions increasingly use to attract and retain certain people may feel as uncomfortable as it sometimes does. According to Anholt, for example, when it comes to place branding, such an uncomfortable feeling would lie in the fact that it is extremely difficult to retain the balance between attractive but substantive communication on the one hand, and propaganda on the other. That is why certain qualities and one's reputation should not be merely stated, but communicated and demonstrated by means of symbolic actions with real substance.⁷²

Another matter that we also do not feel comfortable about is that the promotional strategies of cities are generally justified by the urgent need to engage in a struggle for attention on a global scale. Such goals, in turn, justify the use of promotional keywords expressing local values. In this way, a large array of cities in the Western world have marketed themselves as spaces of freedom and tolerance. In Amsterdam this has especially been translated into the 'melting pot' metaphor.

⁶⁹ Hart, pp. 140–142.

⁷⁰ As remarked in chapter 2, referring among others to the work of Van Winden; Braun, Kavaratzis and Zenker; Hospers, 'Place Marketing in Europe The Branding of the Oresund Region.'

⁷¹ In general, as already pointed out in 1959 by Charles Percy Snow in his renowned lecture on the 'Two Cultures': 'THE REDE LECTURE, 1959. The Two Cultures' (Cambridge University Press, 1959) <<http://s-f-walker.org.uk/pubsebooks/2cultures/Rede-lecture-2-cultures.pdf>>. Op. cit. Chapter 2.

⁷² Anholt, *Places, Identity, Image and Reputation*, p. 5.

However, the problem with this is that this idea of spaces of total equality does not seem to be in accord with the latest developments in many 'late capitalist' Western cities.

Does the 'melting pot effect' in Amsterdam fit with the images that have emerged from this research corpus? As we have seen, the boundaries, paths and points of encounter between the different imaginaries reflect well delimited and separate habitats. Thus, even if there are always worse cases in the Western world, the fact is that if one can talk about a melting pot effect it would not be a deep mixing machine between races and social classes, but rather a mosaic with distinct gray borders between the pieces.

In the long term, the issue of hospitality may also be a matter of friction. In the demand for talent, for example, cities and educational institutions are appealing to young people from abroad, promising hospitality, while internally justifying this call in terms of capturing income and revenue. Thus, rather than consistent and substantiated mutual hospitality with regard to students, universities and cities – which is more than worthwhile – a discourse arises in which 'hospitality' is merely an insubstantial ideal. One problem that arises is that the goal of the commercialization of education is reduced to the implementation of technocratic strategies. This may lead us to a process of dehumanization of the Other, which is typical of strategies going under names such as 'business as war', a process in which 'the end' – capturing enough revenue to survive and win the fight – justifies the means – tricking and misleading the 'enemy'.⁷³

The 'business as war' perspective has been enormously popular over recent decades and has entered multiple business and management activities – including the promotion and management of cities.⁷⁴ Remarkably, the antagonistic and competition-based strategic 'business as war' is fundamentally at odds with the tribal imaginary of Amsterdam which we have captured in the course of our research. Amsterdam is seen by its constituents tribes as a city, not necessarily of concord or harmony but certainly as an accommodating space for different identities and developing lifelines existing side by side.

Indeed, the image of Amsterdam as a place in which 'one can become and be what one wants to be and meet people like oneself' is still alive. As we have seen in many of the stories of young people,

⁷³ The message of 'business as war' is often supported by quotations and insights from military strategists, including Miyamoto Musashi, Attila the Hun, Machiavelli and General Patton. In: Fred Hansen and Michele Smith, 'The Ethics of Business Strategy', *Handbook of Business Strategy*, 7 (2006), 201–6 (pp. 201–206) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/10775730610618828>>.

⁷⁴ According to strategic management scholars such as Ghosal, Barlett and Moran, the predominance of 'business as war' strategies has to do with the incredible popularity of Porter and Williamson's theories in American Business education, theories that, together with Kotler's Strategic Management, as I can confirm, are still fully in use as prescribed literature in Business Schools in Amsterdam as well. Ghosal Sumantra, Christopher A. Barlett and Peter Moran, 'A New Manifesto for Management', *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 40 (1999), 9–20 (p. 11).

freedom and tolerance are often related to concrete moments in which the city seems to melt into one's own life. In such cases, Amsterdam becomes a carrier of essential themes expressed in major cities: independence, adventure, fraternity, long days and nights, friendship, beauty, professional perspectives, love. In such moments many of the different 'characters' in Amsterdam's life seem to also experience a transcendental sense of belonging. These are experiences that scholars studying hospitality have captured as the moments in which one feels in communion with life, realizing that life has a history which was developing before one was born. At such moments, involvement with a place may be a sort of revelation of how life works.⁷⁵

To me, and also according to others,⁷⁶ this also means that 'ordinary' things in life such as studying, finding a job and having your own means of subsistence become not merely practical matters but components of life and a way of partaking in the whole that can provide a deep sense of plenitude – certainly when this happens for the first time. Amsterdam also grounds its reputation for hospitality and tolerance on its practical role in history as a welcoming city, providing a home to immigrants and refugees from across the world. In this sense, the fact that Spinoza, one of most important philosophers in the Western world, recognized by figures such as Goethe and Hegel as the founder of modern philosophy, lived and worked in Amsterdam, also allows us to believe that in Amsterdam tolerance and hospitality are inherent values.

But, and there is always a 'but', the problem with such inherent philosophical values is that they need to be kept alive – not just lived off – by re-reading, discussing and actualizing them through new forms of performance. Philosophical texts often need to be translated into the vernacular by experts. Often one needs to be initiated into these texts as well.⁷⁷ Thus, trusting that values inherited from past thinking will be transmitted to us in depth as if by magic is not realistic. As I argue, names such as 'Spinoza' can also become 'floating signifiers' used to represent values such as 'hospitality' and 'tolerance' but remaining in fact multi-applicable and rather empty in terms of real implications for the present.

What in any case is quite evident is that Spinoza's ideas about society have not been generally applied to Amsterdam's policies, at least over the last two decades. According to Uitermark, and as mentioned in the previous chapter, Amsterdam has undergone a visible transition from a 'political

⁷⁵ I refer here again to Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Lévinas*; Lévinas, *Altérité et Transcendance*; Dikeç, Clark and Barnett, xxxii.

⁷⁶ Valentine, 'Living with Difference: Reflections on Geographies of Encounter.'

⁷⁷ See the recently published Henri Krop, *Spinoza Een Paradoxe Icoon van Nederland* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Prometheus Bert Bakker, 2014).

city' to a 'policing city'.⁷⁸ This transition has been enforced by the development of integration policies by which ethnic minorities have become regarded as something to be controlled, while their leaders have come to be seen as directly responsible for the behaviour of their people. It is not surprising that Amsterdam-Slotervaart's alderman, the Muslim Marcouch was called the 'sheriff of Amsterdam-Slotervaart'.

To me, in relation to the goal of achieving a hospitable and tolerant city, such policies represent the wrong 'story'. They simply do not suit the script of a story of the achievement of hospitality, tolerance and innovation. The policies have also stimulated the emergence and increasing predominance of a 'cultural pathologies' discourse, in which politicians on all sides refer to foreigners and immigrants in terms of their endemic limiting cultural patterns.⁷⁹ In fact, in the same constellation of imaginaries one can also find those mechanisms of control and submission related to the pessimistic views of society held by Porter and Williamson, mentioned above. At the same time, the combination with cross-cultural theories such as that of Hofstede makes of the world a place of hierarchical differences in which the strongest cultures manage the rest and take everything before the other.

Of course, a combative spirit is not always completely wrong. It can even be said that the city of Amsterdam of 30 years ago needed some warlike decisiveness to awaken its sleeping beauty. The words of alderman Jan Schaefer, 'You cannot live in bullshit', referring to the pitiable state of inner-city housing, have rightly become paradigmatic of the start of a process of rejuvenation. Also, the physical regeneration of districts such as the South-East can be seen as a good example of a combative 'diplomacy of deeds'. In addition, the argument that the politics of the Third Way was inspirational in helping us face the changes needed in institutions of higher learning is convincing. However, in the meantime we have had the chance to see that Porter's model does not work as one with which to improve knowledge, criticism, creativity and humanity. Our students even seem to believe that the goal of study is merely the reward of being granted a certificate.⁸⁰ As we have seen in the analyses of the different tribes, their industriousness in relation to activities outside school and university is often overwhelming – while the little value given to studying is rather worrying. Perhaps

⁷⁸ Uitermark and Nicholls.

⁷⁹ Remember especially Chapter 6 on Hip hop and Chapter 8 on places and looks attributions in today's Amsterdam'.

⁸⁰ The book by Kohn contains many convincing arguments and practical examples of the negative effects of incentivized learning and work for extrinsic award. He also makes useful distinctions such as: 'There is nothing wrong in making money. the wrong thing is being driven by money'. In: Alfie Kohn, *Punished by Rewards: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A's, Praise, and Other Bribes* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1993), p. 260.

what is even more worrying is that practically none of the students we have seen seemed to have chosen Amsterdam because of the quality of its education.

Perhaps the most interesting finding of this study of youth imaginaries is that students (and other youth) are looking for ways to form their own stories in Amsterdam in a way that is felt to be authentic – and that commerce and consumption do not necessary have to be seen as contradicting this search for authenticity. In terms of the so-called ‘reservoirs of hope’, perhaps the most overarching and hopeful perspective on city life in Amsterdam is precisely that expressed in the lyrics of some hip hop works which advocate that we love life as it is, with all its imperfections. These views, which in fact recall the lessons of Spinoza, also resound in some of the latest works by post-postmodern authors such as Rancière. In these later works, authors and thinkers from different disciplines attempt to draw new perspectives on some of the most persistent *aporia* in contemporary life, in the context of a persistent debate concerning the notion of the impossibility of still believing in a modernist utopia and the impossibility of overcoming post-modernist subjectivities, differences and fragmentations.

According to Scott, this *aporia* could be addressed by a change in the nature of our master narratives. Combative war stories and utopian stories of redemption are powerful because they are ‘romance stories’: they draw a horizon of a better future after the battle, or the overcoming of oppression. The disadvantages of this horizon, however, are that the ‘better future’ is restricted to the victors, one’s own people or own ethnicity.⁸¹ Therefore, Scott proposes that we abandon these kinds of romance stories as much as possible and replace them with the parameters of ‘tragedy’. By this is not meant a tragedy in its popular interpretation of a ‘vale of tears’, but tragedy as a script that embraces everything in life as its horizon. A sense of tragedy would imply that one’s own city, own people or own tribe will need to face the fact that contradictions, banality and ugliness are not only attributes of others but an inherent part of one’s own life as well as of the earth and nature.

On this basis, my proposal would be to readjust our stories of Amsterdam to a more tragic and, therefore, more optimistic and realistic imaginary of the city. It may be a matter of finding the right script for this moment, a script that will need to have some of the following ingredients: less Kotler and Porter and more Spinoza; less managerial fear and more hospitality towards our students and within disciplines; more hospitality towards our youth; more cooperation between cities for the sake of love; more industriousness; fewer debates and more Socratic discussions; fewer awards and

⁸¹ With this he also coincides with Said’s later works. David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity. The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Duke: Duke University Press. Durham & London, 2004).

'battles' and more compositional knowledge; fewer boundaries between the humanities and the natural sciences, between doers and thinkers, between fundamental and applied research.

Afterthoughts: on the primary, the reflected and the insignificant

Studies such as that undertaken in this thesis can provide a modest, but hopefully revealing, contribution at the level of the meta-development of knowledge about this fascinating 'world-3' of images and their role in contemporary, daily human life. This is firstly because the way I carried out this research, avoiding direct interviews with any of the youth groups I investigated, made it possible to capture the meaning emerging from the interplay of references. In fact, it has clearly been a concrete attempt to follow and capture some of those multiple and volatile Derridean differences and traces that are thought to be the most important constituents in the construction of meaning.

As I mentioned above, such an approach is especially valuable because it led to the 'discovery' of imaginaries and feelings of belonging that, although clearly extended and part of the daily reality of many, might have remained outside the focus of academic research simply because the researcher may not include them in their initial frame of reference. What one does not know cannot easily come to mind. Such an approach allows a higher level of serendipity, which can also be better acknowledged as such because the researcher is familiar with the idea that the reconstruction of meanings will be unstable and susceptible to unexpected changes. The researcher will also be accustomed to the idea that much of this interplay of references will always remain veiled, for the simple reason that no single study can master each and every language that might carry references to Amsterdam. Data has to be legible and interpretable – not to mention the basic necessity of finding those data in a language one understands.

What I have not yet mentioned is that this approach seems to demonstrate something that we all intuitively already know. Even the most basic and elementary cultural performances – the way we have a drink at a specific bar, what we drink, the way we ride a bike, the way we talk, the way we move in public spaces or when we are in company – are already part of a reflective way of performing in daily contemporary city life. The 'What is Someone Like You Doing in a Place Like This?' scenario encompasses a whole repertoire of bias, of existing images, that makes such a question as evocative as it is, without it being necessary to go into detail. Thus, in fact, not only is 'race' a floating signifier, but at different levels every reflective discursive performance seems to be a floating

signifier. Each expression is the empty container constituting the receptacle of multi-interpretable images, vaguely expressed with the phrase 'Someone Like You' in a 'Place Like This'.

When it comes to a performed identity in a particular place, the significance of which is established by – at least – all those meaning-giving processes that we have been examining, quotidian performance seems to be less primary and elementary than one would think. What my study shows then is that quotidian performance in specific places does not occur without reflection. Perhaps such performances do not directly lead to master narratives or ideologies, but they show that the process of aggregation and separation is actually conscious and reflective. Thus, although the possibilities for a certain primary performance may be infinite – as the chaos and combination of places and persons in dreams also shows – the actual performance is not.

The different tribes show that their members are aware that they have to acquire and put into play skills if they are to perform, negotiate and adapt to specific systems as well as join in and contribute to the flow of specific constellations. They also know how to distinguish themselves from others or how to camouflage themselves. The Ajax fan who does not want a tattoo on his neck because he wants to keep his job in an office is an example of the malleability of most people in contemporary city life. In this way, while the traditional Ajax hooligan tattoos his shaved head, the liquid, mimic and chameleon individual adjusts their own performance to the circumstances. He is not the only one: we have seen in Chapter 8 that there is a broader extensive practice of mutually advising one another about how to become a varied and multi-faceted being.

The application of the conceptual framework of imagology, in which auto-images, hetero-images and meta-images were the signs used to demarcate the different constellation of imaginaries, has been able to capture these reflections. With this, I also believe that the results go a step further than the tribal marketing practices that I have taken as a reference and as inspiration. It is due to the multiple contrasts observed that the differences have become visible and meaningful to the whole. Through this process, then, I could reproduce or simulate a highly realistic mimesis of the practice of image-forming – and image understanding and interpretation – as it works in real life. I also believe that I have definitively shown that this approach could be applied to the exploration of cities other than Amsterdam, and that in the end it would also be a valuable way of tracking and mapping tribal links between cities.

In addition, what this study also shows is that imaginaries are as robust as they are because they do not need to be proved using a scientific methodology which can demonstrate accuracy and

falsification. For an imaginary, it is basically enough to have a set of robust notions that hold together and can be contrasted with others, whether to assimilate or separate. For this reason, auto-images, hetero-images and meta-images can remain valuable for a very long time, at times in a lethargic mode, because they are already an integral part of the tradition of imaginaries. They advance, develop and are modified through a process of association of ideas, a process in fact that is very similar to what Caillois and Shepley call the principle of magic: '*things that have once been in contact remain united*' – it corresponds to association by contiguity'.⁸²

An imaginary is based on beliefs, and believers will not be converted by rational argument. No actual Ajax supporter will be convinced by the argument that football is 'only a game' and no Erasmus student enjoying a stay in Amsterdam would be willing to change their conviction that the general use of a bicycle or the flowers in the parks are evidence of the inherent respect that the Dutch have for nature. In an imaginary, such convictions are essential because they are part of a tradition that touches the soul and animates their reflective performance in each one of their roles. In 'real life' though, those images are only a small facet of reality, mingling or conniving with many other images, facts and alternative beliefs: the nuances, the commercialization of sport, the traffic jams on the Dutch motorways, etc.

Linked to this quasi-religious nature, the descriptions of the different imaginaries we have seen show that although isolated images can be confusing, contradictory and vague, they tend to arrange themselves as an archetypical story. In this way, pre-existing paradigmatic narratives such as biblical stories, classical mythology and romantic revolutions, are put into play in order to articulate the discourses of the different imaginaries. It does not matter, for example, that the biblical details of the Flood are not well known by everybody, or that few will know the story of Ajax in Greek mythology.⁸³ Similarly to the archetypes aspired to that distinguish the dreams of the different tribes, what matters here is that those references serve as skeletons for new associations in which plots are reproduced and enemies are put in the role of classical negative characters.

All these thoughts, in turn, lead to the possibility that a further development of knowledge concerning image forming can provide a better understanding of contemporary life in general. While until now, practices of imagology have mainly been applied to the study of national stereotypes,

⁸² The complete sentence is: 'One point, however, needs to be made, the correspondence, fortunately brought to light by these authors [they refer to Tylor, Hubert and Mauss, and Frazer], between the principles of magic –*things that have been once in contact remain united*–corresponds association by contiguity, just as association by resemblance corresponds quite precisely to the *attractio similitum* of magic: like produces like'. In: Roger Caillois and John Shepley, 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia', *October*, 31 (1984), 16–32 (p. 25) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/778354>>.

⁸³ The 'flood myth' was an association made by the narrator of *Ego Faber* on the day of Theo van Gogh's murder. See Chapter 3.

their consistent application to the topics examined here are more than likely to offer a further contribution to what Caillois would call 'the logic of the imagination'. This 'logic' would imply that imaginaries are at the same time receptacles for compression, articulated in the form of a rather coherent narrative and material for dispersion. This also means that imaginaries can be understood as the articulation of chaos, distilled into an understandable compound that serves as an umbrella: the big picture, the archetype to become, the stereotype, the interpretation of dreams.⁸⁴ The immense number of small, ephemeral and quotidian gestures provide continuous fodder for the re-actualization of new stories. It was, in fact, in terms of this 'nourishing' process that Maffesoli understood the insignificant everyday as the real perdurable substance. It is not an important historical moment, or a specific great figure that remains, but the insignificant and ephemeral fabric of the quotidian, made up of an extraordinary amalgam of futilities.

Furthermore, the fact that national and cultural stereotypes and images studied by imagology are often articulated through psychologisms related to foreground physical characteristics has also been highly revealing. When applied to current urban societies it shows that image forming and stereotyping rely on the same mechanisms. Thus, even in an urban context such as Amsterdam, in which the accessibility of consumer goods and the presumed absence of national or international master narratives could have implied an erasure of images and stereotypes, the current contrasting study of imaginaries shows their great relevance. Images and stereotypes that are associated with a certain physical appearance – including what people consume and how they dress, and the sorts of accessories and possessions they have – are crucial when defining places and people, and when mapping a city. In this light, it is not difficult to deduce that our contemporary understanding of places as sites that are mainly shaped by bodies⁸⁵ – and the imaginaries related to them – would be deepened by contrastive imagological approaches such as those used in this thesis. In fact, the thesis in general points to the conclusion that it is precisely in the 'liquidity' of highly developed societies, in which traditional religious, ideological or political signs and symbols do not automatically express their literal meanings, that the study of the referential process of meaning-giving to places and people has become indispensable.

At this point it will be opportune to recall additional critical notions that, against the background of my findings, can facilitate a greater understanding of the way places in the city are distributed among or occupied by the different tribes – almost as if those tribes were living in separate worlds. The first

⁸⁴ I have also referred to Heidegger's notion of language in Chapter 2, when referring to language as a material to domesticate the world: 'man dwells in the home of language'.

⁸⁵ With this, I am referring to Casey's conception of places mentioned in Chapter 2. The following quotation is relevant: 'Just as there is no place without body – without the physical or psychical traces of body – so *there is no body without place*'. In: Edward Casey, p. 104.

would be Latour's conception of places as sets of relations that 'fold and pleat' and that 'draw things together by gathering diverse places and times within common frames'. This refers to his Actor Network Theory, which would explain why, on a given day in the Red Light District, all those young people belonging to different tribes would not share the same sense of place, despite being literally in the same place: they will all occupy different folds and pleats. The second would be Sloterdijk's notion of 'Provincial Globalism', which explains that although learning to live means learning to be in places,⁸⁶ this does not imply that we can learn or apprehend everything. This evidence especially applies to the era of provincial globalism, which is beyond master narratives and history, meaning that no one can fully 'understand' or 'comprehend the whole'. Being somewhere in the world is 'being without completely being', like being in a capsule. Sloterdijk's hyperboles and metaphors of spheres, cocoons and immune systems of intimacy and comfort may be a good way to visualize the role that imaginaries might have in all those dynamics. Imaginaries, then, might be the 'magic' and complex glue between our cosmological needs and everyday life, the fabric that gives meaning to our being in a place.

Put this way, it is not difficult to suggest that ultimately such conceptual models linking the everyday with the big picture look very much like scientific models in physics, the new master narratives we have learned to understand over the last two centuries. Models such as the First and Second Laws of Thermodynamics have taught us that physical reality is not as static as it was once thought to have been. In the meantime, we have all learned that energy is not destroyed but only transformed, or that in an isolated system it can only increase the entropy. The omnipresence of such a paradigm of our physical world has been decisive and its influence has also been important in linguistics, literature and philosophy, among other fields. Existentialist thinking about people 'obtaining' their 'essence' through existing would not have been possible without the conceptual hold of principles such as entropy.⁸⁷

Derrida's notion of difference and other postmodernist proposals to conceptualize the dynamism and fugacity of interpreting and understanding have been fascinating elaborations of similar dynamics in the field of philosophy and discourse analysis. It seems clear that if concepts such as 'polysystems', 'liquidity', 'foam' and 'reticulation' are as useful as they are, it is because they plastically capture notions of the nature of life that we have become accustomed to understanding.

⁸⁶ Sloterdijk and Reguera (translator), *En El Mundo Interior Del Capital. Para Una Teoría Filosófica de La Globalización*, p. 308.

⁸⁷ Munné refers to the mutual influence of the Arts and Sciences and their importance in the work of Primo Levi or Manuel de Pedrolo. This linking of different disciplines and point of views was felt to be the tool needed for exploration of the meaning of human life, especially after these novelists' experiences of civil and world war. In: Antoni Munné-Jordà, *Pedrolo / El Temps Obert* (Barcelona, 1997), p. 116.

All of them share the idea of a general perennial whole in which individual constituents are transformed and extinguished, becoming something different: energy is not destroyed, it is only transformed, and entropy can only increase.



Moby wearing a space helmet, but notice, however, that he shares his being with others in his number 'We Are All Made of Stars'.⁸⁸

Narratives in physics have even led to current poetic and egalitarian visions of life and humanity expressed in lyrics such as Moby's 'We Are All Made of Stars'. Popular quotations from scientists claim that instead of being the children of a god, 'we would be children of a star that died for us'.⁸⁹ Current actualizations of Nietzschean ideas such as 'becoming what one is' also seem to be associated with all those dynamic conceptualizations of life as an ongoing process of identity formation.

On this basis, it is very interesting to note that all of the young people we have seen in this thesis not only have specific attributes, but also use those attributes, rearrange and adapt them, acquire skills and are prepared to invest time and effort in bringing together or pulling apart specific aggregates. There is no guarantee that they will always manage to become what they want to be, or to know what they want to become. The parameters of life are much more complicated. However, the idea that it is possible to re-start one's life trajectory has undoubtedly become credible in the imaginary of city life. When Ali B. finishes his stand-up performance by telling us that his leitmotif is to re-start the learning process, moving from Nobody to Somebody, he is capturing some of those current latent

⁸⁸ Source: 'We Are All Made of Stars'. *Official Audio. Moby 18* (United States: YouTube, 2002) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1rFAaAKpVc>>.

⁸⁹ See Krauss' frequently quoted: 'So forget Jesus. The stars died so that you could be here today'. See elaboration of the topic in Lawrence M. Krauss, *A Universe from Nothing: Why There Is Something Rather Than Nothing* (Simon & Schuster, 2013).

visions of identity forming as a fluid remodelling process inherent to living a life in a place such as Amsterdam.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ With thanks to Ali B.

Bibliography

- [SC] WO Rechten #154 Rohde Nielsen/De Donge. P. 5', *forum.fok.nl*, 2012
<<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/1908073/2/39>>
- '¿Dónde Me Voy de Erasmus? Amsterdam, Cracovia O Manchester', *forocoches*, 2011
<<http://www.forocoches.com/foro/showthread.php?t=2522463>>
- '10 Jaar Nederhoplabel TopNotch', *3voor12 VPRO*, 2005
<<http://3voor12.vpro.nl/nieuws/2005/oktober/10-jaar-nederhoplabel-topnotch.html>>
- 10 Jaar VAK410 Promo (versie 1)*, *Vak410* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2011)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TuFUB6a0y_A>
- '70 Ajax-Fans Opgepakt Door Politie', *AjaxShowTime.com*, 2012
<<http://www.ajaxshowtime.com/hoofdnieuws/59521/70-ajax-fans-opgepakt-door-politie.html>>
- 'A.S.C./A.V.S.V.' <<http://www.asc-avsv.nl/>>
- — —, 'Doe Normaal. Je Bent Toch Lid.', *Facebook*, 2012
<<https://www.facebook.com/ascavsv/posts/504844652871829>>
- — —, 'Intro van Radioniaweek 2 T/m 5 Februari van 16:00 - 20:00. Live Streaming Op www.Niaweek.nl' (Amsterdam: Radio Niaweek/YouTube, 2010)
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4reKwJYORCA>>
- 'Aanvaller AZ-Doelman Zou Almeerder Zijn', *omroep flevoland* (Almere, 22 December 2011)
<<http://www.omroepflevoland.nl/Nieuws/86939/aanvaller-az-doelman-zou-almeerder-zijn>>
- Abdelkader Benali/Literature Late Night* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2012)
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cO9EniO1nW8>>
- Aboutaleb, Yasmina, 'Geen Blingbling Maar Betrokkenheid', *Z&Z, Nrc Handelsblad* (Amsterdam, 25 May 2013)
- AFCA YOU NEVER WALK ALONE. Films* (The Netherlands: Richard Haring/YouTube, 2012)
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvDiFXviexc&index=2&list=PLAC9CF1838364EEE0>>
- Agathakubalski, 'Around the Way Girl', *agathakubalski.com*, 2011
<<http://agathakubalski.com/2011/05/18/around-the-way-girl/>>
- Ailon, Galit, 'Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: "Culture's Consequences" in a Value Test of Its Own Design', *Academy of Management Review*, 33 (2008), 885–904
- Ajax Uit Mokum!!!!* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2006)
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7SkC1nsC0Vw>>

- 'Ajax Youth Academy', *Wikipedia* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ajax_Youth_Academy>
- Aleix, 'Erasmus', *Universitat de Barcelona. Xarxa de Dinamització Lingüística. UB.Edu*, 2012 <<http://www.ub.edu/xdl/premis/erasmus.html>>
- 'Algemene Senaten Vergadering', *Wikipedia* <http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algemene_Senaten_Vergadering>
- 'Ali B Op Volle Toeren' (The Netherlands: TROS, 2011) <<http://www.uitzendinggemist.nl/afleveringen/1118542>>
- 'Ali B Vertelt Het Leven van de Straat' (The Netherlands: BNN, 2007) <http://www.npo.nl/ali-b-vertelt-het-leven-van-de-sstraat/POMS_S_BNN_097274>
- 'Ali B. Geeft Antwoord' (The Netherlands: NPO, 2013) <www.uitzendinggemist.nl/afleveringen/1334357>
- Almanak A.S.C./A.V.S.V. Bekendmaking 2013* (Amsterdam: A.S.C./A.V.S.V./YouTube, 2013) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gu-cfG5wQ8A>>
- Alvarito, 'Volver a España: "Depresión Post-Erasmus": Los Psicólogos Detectan Un Nuevo Síndrome Entre Los Universitarios Que Regresan Tras Una Estancia En E', *Spaniards*, 2009 <<http://www.spaniards.es/foros/volver-a-espana/depresion-post-erasmus-los-psicologos-detectan-un-nuevo-sindrome-entre-los-universitarios-que-regresan>>
- 'Amsterdam Economic Board', 2013 <<http://www.iamsterdam.com/nl-NL/Business/Amsterdam-Economic-Board>>
- — —, *Kennis & Innovatieagenda* (Amsterdam, 2011)
- 'AMSTERDAM HOOLIGANS' (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2008) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FjWU0YswozE>>
- Amsterdam Partners, *The Making of ... the City Marketing of Amsterdam. Het Ontstaan van de City Marketing van Amsterdam*, ed. by City of Amsterdam Gemeente Amsterdam (Amsterdam, 2004)
- Amsterdam Subway Graffiti Documentary from VPRO: Onrust* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2009) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oG983Sc3NIw>>
- Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006)
- Anholt, Simon, 'Keynote Speech' (Amersfoort: Nuffic, 2008)
- — —, *Places, Identity, Image and Reputation* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010)
- 'Anna Martínez, Estudiant de Comunicació Audiovisual a Holanda. Testimonis de Mataronins Que Viuen a L'estranger' (Mataró: capgros.com, 2012), pp. 3–5 <Material in archive>

- ANP Community, 'Amsterdam, 8 September 1979. Hippies in Het Vondelpark', *ANP Foundation* <<http://www.anp-archieff.nl/page/2180280/nl>>
- Antonsich, Marco, 'Searching for Belonging - An Analytical Framework', *Geography Compass*, 4 (2010), 644–59 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-8198.2009.00317.x>>
- Appadurai, Arjun, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996)
- Arbouw, Marco, 'Welkom in de Republiek Amsterdam', *Amsterdam Centraal* (Amsterdam, 10 December 2008) <<http://www.amsterdamcentraal.nl/archief/2008/12/10/welkom-in-de-republiek-amsterdam>>
- 'ASC/AVSV', *Wikipedia*, 2010 <<http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/ASC/AVSV>>
- ASVA Student Union, 'Wonen in de Ideale Studentenstad', *Congres over studentenhuysvesting* (Amsterdam: Pakhuis De Zwijger, 2013)
- 'ASVA Studentenunie' <<https://www.asva.nl/association/type/4>>
- Attwood, Feona, *Mainstreaming Sex: The Sexualisation of Western Culture* (London, New York: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2009)
- Aurigemma, Luigi, *Perspectives Jungiennes* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1992)
- 'Back to School', *shirleyschrijft* <<http://www.shirleyschrijft.nl/>>
- Badr Hari Lamborghini Aventador 2013* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2013)
- Badr Hari Met de Nieuwe Lamborghini* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2012) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b7cpbXe8cdY>>
- 'Barcelonactiva' <<http://www.barcelonactiva.cat/barcelonactiva/cat/>>
- Baritz, Loren, *The Good Life: The Meaning of Success for the American Middle Class* (New York: Knopf, 1989)
- Baudet, Thierry, and Bastiaan Rijpkema, 'Fuck de Context? Fuck de Koolhaas!', *Academia.edu* (Leiden, 2011) <http://www.academia.edu/1933767/Fuck_de_context_Fuck_de_Koolhaas_>
- Baudrillard, Jean, *Le Système Des Objets* (France: Tel Editions Gallimard, 2008)
- Bauman, Zygmunt, 'Homo Consumens. Lo Sciame Inquieto Dei Consumatori E La Miseria Degli Esclusi' (Gardolo: Erickson, 2007) <http://archivio.eddyburg.it/filemanager/download/1647/ZB_Homo_consumens.pdf>
- , *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000)
- , *Postmodern Ethics* (Malden, Oxford, Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 1993)

- Beaverstock, Jonathan V., Marcus A. Doel, Phil J. Hubbard, and P. J. Taylor, 'Attending to the World: Competition, Cooperation and Connectivity in the World City Network', *Global Networks*, 2 (2002), 111–32 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1471-0374.00031>>
- Bech, Henning, *When Men Meet: Homosexuality and Modernity* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997)
- Beck, U., 'The Cosmopolitan Society and Its Enemies', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 19 (2002), 17–44 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/026327640201900101>>
- Beck, Ulrich, and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim, *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and Its Social and Political Consequences* (London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2002) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446218693>>
- Beck, Ulrich, Anthony Giddens, and Scott Lash, *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Traditions and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994)
- Beck, Ulrich, and Natan Sznaider, 'Unpacking Cosmopolitanism for the Social Sciences: A Research Agenda', *The British journal of sociology*, 57 (2006), 1–23 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.2006.00091.x>>
- 'Bedrijfseconomie Fraijlemaborg of Leeuwenburg HvA?', *Marokko Community Forum*, 2011 <<http://forums.marokko.nl/archive/index.php/t-3677054.html>>
- De Beer, Paul, 'Individualisering Zit Tussen de Oren', in *Kiezen voor de kudde*, ed. by Jan Willem Duyvendak and M. Hurenkamp (Amsterdam: Van Genneep, 2004), pp. 18–36
- Beller, Manfred, and Joep Leerssen, eds., *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters: A Critical Survey* (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 2007)
- Berkljon, Sara, 'Willie Wartaal', *de Volkskrant Magazine* (Amsterdam, 19 March 2011)
- 'Bij Ons in de PC' (The Netherlands: KRO, 2011) <<http://www.uitzendinggemist.nl/afleveringen/1108188>>
- 'Blanke Vrouwen Die Perse Een Marokkan Willen!!!', *partyflock*, 2012 <<http://partyflock.nl/topic/1130494/PAGE/A.html#pgcncntrl>>
- 'Bloemenbar Is Korpsballen Zat', *AT5*, 2012 <<http://www.at5.nl/artikelen/78678/bloemenbar-is-korpsballen-zat>>
- Boelhouwer, Emma, 'Welkom in de Wereld', *Het Parool, PS van de Week* (Amsterdam, 19 March 2011)
- Bohlmeijer, Lex, 'Podcast: Voor Typhoon Is Rap Een Spons Waarmee Je Het Leven Opzuigt' (Amsterdam: De Correspondent, 2014) <<https://decorrespondent.nl/966/Podcast-Voor-Typhoon-is-rap-een-spons-waarmee-je-het-leven-opzuigt/40042051434-fac2b1e2>>
- Borges, Jorge Luis, *Labyrinths. Selected Stories & Other Writings*, ed. by Donald A. Yates and James E. Irby (New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1964) <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5195/reviberoamer.1961.2016>>

- Bosch, William, and Michael Leenderste, 'Feuten' (The Netherlands: BNN, 2010)
<<http://programma.bnn.nl/12/feuten/home>>
- Boschma, Jeroen, and Inez Groen, *Generatie Einstein 3.2: Slimmer, Socialer En ... Volwassener!* (Amsterdam: A.W. Bruna Lev, 2010)
- — —, *Generatie Einstein, Slimmer Sneller En Socialer: Communiceren Met Jongeren van de 21ste Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Pearson Education Benelux, 2006)
- Bourdieu, Pierre, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1977)
- Boven Gemiddeld: Oud Zuid* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2008)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S9lQfuBJ1ag&lc=ZJYSgTInsg4OXf2Py_VP32sBPi2j5SCV1uu8NVrf3jc>
- Bowles, Samuel, and Herbert Gintis, 'The Revenge of Homo Economicus: Contested Exchange and the Revival of Political Economy', *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 7 (1993), 83–102
- Bradley, Arthur, *Derrida's Of Grammatology: An Edimburgh Philosophical Guide* (Edinburgh: Edimburgh University Press Ltd., 2008)
- 'Brainpower Luncht Met Prinses Maxima En Prins Willem Alexander', *hiphopinjesmoel*, 2009
<<http://www.hiphopinjesmoel.com/magazine/nieuws/brainpower-luncht-met-prinses-maxima-en-prins-willem-alexander>>
- Braun, Erik, Mihalis Kavaratzis, and Sebastian Zenker, 'My City – My Brand: The Different Roles of Residents in Place Branding', *Journal of Place Management and Development*, 6 (2013), 18–28
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/17538331311306087>>
- Breij, Bart, '22Tracks Meteen Bestverkochte iPhone-App Na Tv-Optreden', *iculture*, 7 April 2011 <Bart Breijh<http://www.iphoneclub.nl/110318/22tracks-meteen-bestverkochte-iphone-app-na-tv-optreden/>>
- Brian, 'Amsterdam Bicycles. 82 Pictures of Bicycles Taken during 73 Minutes on 9/12/06 in Amsterdam, Netherlands', *Weblog*, 2006 <http://www.ski-epic.com/amsterdam_bicycles/>
- Bridge, Gary, and Robyn Dowling, 'Microgeographies of Retailing and Gentrification', *Australian Geographer*, 32 (2001), 93–107 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00049180020036259>>
- Brimson, Dougie, *Eurotrashed: The Rise and Rise of Europe's Football Hooligans* (London: Headline, 2003)
- Brinke, W.B., and others., 'De Vernieuwing in Overtoomse Veld', in *De Geo. Lesboek 2 VWO* (Amersfoort: Thieme Meulenhoff, 2009)
- Broeder Rutger Op Bezoek Bij Bijlmer Style* (The Netherlands: Geenstijl/YouTube, 2009)
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vSYAt9M3lh4>>
- Brown, Stephen, Robert V Kozinets, and John F Sherry Jr., 'Teaching Old Brands New Tricks: Retro Branding and the Revival of Brand Meaning', *Journal of Marketing*, 67 (2003), 19–33

- Brown, Stephen, and D. Turley, eds., *Consumer Research: Postcard from the Edge* (London: Routledge, 1997)
- Brummelen, Peter van, 'Politiechef Welten Krijgt Een Rap Terug', *Het Parool* (Amsterdam, 4 September 2009)
<<http://www.parool.nl/parool/nl/4/AMSTERDAM/article/detail/260885/2009/09/04/Politiechef-Welten-krijgt-een-rap-terug.dhtml>>
- Bruner, Jerome, 'Life as Narrative', *Social Research*, 54 (1987), 11–32
- Buchan, James, *Frozen Desire: An Inquiry Into The Meaning of Money* (London: Picador, 1998)
- 'Bureau Keesie' <<http://www.keesie.nl>>
- Van der Burg, Daisy, Dorian Kreetz, and Anna van der Schors, 'Nibud Studentenonderzoek 2011-2012. Een Onderzoek Naar Het Financieel Gedrag van Studenten in Het Hoger Onderwijs', *NIBUD Nationaal Instituut voor Budgetvoorlichting* (Utrecht, 2012), pp. 1–72
- Butler, Judith, *Gender Trouble. Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, London: Routledge Press, 1999)
- Buyts, André, and Marlien Oderkerk, *Studeren in de Topstad. Visiedocument Op Studentenhuisvesting 2010-2014* (Amsterdam, 2010)
- Cabello, Laura, and Sara Cerrada, *Documental 'Esto Es ERASMUS: Mitos Y Realidades' (Parte 1)* (Spain: YouTube, 2010) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t5G8zchfBFs&feature=relmfu>>
- , *Documental 'Esto Es ERASMUS: Mitos Y Realidades' (Parte 2)* (Spain: YouTube, 2010)
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xcu2RtnE9Lk&feature=related>>
- 'Cafe Brecht', *cafebrecht* <<http://www.cafebrecht.nl/>>
- Caillois, Roger, *Pierres: Suivi D'autres Textes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1971)
- Caillois, Roger, and John Shepley, 'Mimicry and Legendary Psychasthenia', *October*, 31 (1984), 16–32
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/778354>>
- Calkoen, Godert Theodoor Allard, 'Onder Studenten. Leidse aanstaande medici en de metamorfose van de geneeskunde in de negentiende eeuw (1838-1888)' (Leiden: Uitgeverij Gingko, 2012)
<<https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/20129>>
- Carmelo, Blog, 'Carmelo Se va de Erasmus. De Lidar Con La Fama de Otros', *Erasmoo.com*, 2011, pp. 1–5 <Material in archive>
- Carretero Pasín, Ángel Enrique, 'Imaginario Y Sociedad. Un Acercamiento a La Sociología de Lo Imaginario En La Tradición Francesa', *Revista Internacional de Sociología*, 3 (2005), 137–61
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.3989/ris.2005.i41.217>>
- Casey, Edward, *Getting Back into Place* (United States of America: Indiana University Press, 1993)

- Casey, Edward S., 'On Habitus and Place: Responding to My Critics', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 91 (2001), 716–23 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/0004-5608.00270>>
- Castells, Manuel, 'European Cities, the Informational Society, and the Global Economy', in *Understanding Amsterdam*, ed. by Léon Deben, Willem Heinemeyer, and Dick van der Vaart (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 2007), pp. 1–18
- , *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996)
- Castenmiller, Kim, *Generatie Y: Aan Het Werk* (Zoetemeer: Free Musketeers, 2009)
- De Certeau, Michel, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984)
- Chang, Jeff, *Can't Stop Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (Great Britain: Ebury Publishing. The Random House Groep Limited, 2007)
- Las chicas de La mar de noches, 'La Llamada. Me Voy de Orgasmus' (Spain: La mar de noches, 2010) <<http://blogs.los40.com/lamardenoches/2010/11/>>
- Chloë, 'Outfitpost: Let's Get Ready for Winter', *Fashionista Choë*, 2012 <Material in archive>
- Claval, Paul, 'The Cultural Dimension in Restructuring Metropolises: The Amsterdam Example', in *Understanding Amsterdam*, ed. by Léon Deben, Willem Heinemeyer, and Dick van der Vaart (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 2007), pp. 59–92
- Cohen, Yehuda, *The Spanish Shadows Of Embarrassment. Heritage, Society and National Identity in the European Union* (Eastbourne, Oregon, Ontario: Sussex Academic Press, 2011)
- Colomé, Gabriel, 'Conflictos E Identidades En Cataluña', in *Fútbol y pasiones políticas*, ed. by Santiago Segurola (Madrid: Temas de debate, 1999), pp. 169–74
- 'Comentaris Del "Movers EUETIB"', *Escola Universitària d'Enginyeria Tècnica Industrial de Barcelona* <<http://www.euetib.upc.edu/comunitat-universitaria/mobilitat-destudiants/vols-marxar/comentaris-dels-movers-euetib>>
- 'Como Elegir Nuestro Destino de Erasmus', *Blog oficial de Erasmoos* <<http://es.erasmoos.com/blogs/erasmoos-blog/como-elegir-nuestro-destino-de-erasmus.html>>
- Cornut-Gentille d' Arcy, Chantal, 'Laughing across Frontiers. L'Auberge Espagnole (Klapisch, 2002) as Cultural Mediator of / for a Borderless Europe', *World and Text, A Journal of Literary Studies and Linguistics*, 2012, 212–23
- 'Corps.nl' <<http://www.corps.nl/>>
- 'Corpsballen' (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2009) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1nY8YD5ltFQ&feature=related>>
- Corpsknapen Opgepakt, Chicks Ontgroenen Gewoon* (The Netherlands: Campus Television, 2009)
- Cova, Bernard, 'Community and Consumption', *European Journal of Marketing*, 31 (2006), 297–316

- , 'From Marketing to Societing: When the Link Is More Important than the Thing', in *Rethinking Marketing: Towards Critical Marketing Accounting*, ed. by D.M. Brownlie, S.R. Wensley, and R. Wittington (London: Sage, 1999), pp. 64–83
- , 'Relationship Marketing: A View from the South', in *New and Emerging Paradigms*, ed. by T. Meenaghan (Dublin: University College Dublin, 1997), pp. 657–72
- , 'The Postmodern Explained To Managers: Implications for Marketing', *Business Horizons*, 39 (1996), 15–23
- Cova, Bernard, and Véronique Cova, 'Tribal Marketing: The Tribalisation of Society and Its Impact on the Conduct of Marketing', *European Journal of Marketing*, 36 (2002), 595–620
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/03090560210423023>>
- Cova, Bernard, Robert Kozinets, and Avi Shankar, *Consumer Tribes* (Oxford: Elsevier, 2007)
- Cova, Bernard, and Stefano Pace, 'Brand Community of Convenience Products: New Forms of Customer Empowerment – the Case "my Nutella The Community"', *European Journal of Marketing*, 40 (2006), 1087–1105 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/03090560610681023>>
- "'Cruifff Heeft de Meeste Invloed Op Mij Gehad'", *voetbalzone.nl*, 2011
<<http://m.voetbalzone.nl/doc.asp?uid=154292>>
- Cuenca Carrión, Encarna, 'Erasmus 25 Años Cambiando Vidas, Un Antes Y Un Después', *OAPEE* (Madrid, 2012) <<http://scholar.google.com/scholar?hl=en&btnG=Search&q=intitle:No+Title#0>>
- D., Paul, 'Bloemenbar', *tupalo*, 2012 <<http://tupalo.com/nl/amsterdam/bloemenbar>>
- D'Andrea, Anthony, 'The Spiritual Economy of Nightclubs and Raves: Osho Sannyasins As Party Promoters in Ibiza and Pune/goa', *Culture and Religion: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 7 (2006), 61–75 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01438300600625457>>
- D'Ors, Eugeni, 'Urbanitat. (1906)', in *Glosari* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1982)
- Daalder, Hans, 'The Dutch Universities between the "New Democracy" and the "New Management"', *Minerva*, 12 (1974), 221–57 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/BF01553179>>
- Davis, Oliver, *Key Contemporary Thinkers: Jacques Rancière* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010)
- 'De 40 Wijken van Vogelaar', *Wikipedia* <http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_40_wijken_van_Vogelaar>
- 'De Balie' (Amsterdam) <ww.debalie.nl/home/>
- 'De Erasmus En Amsterdam, María Abadía', *Escuela Politécnica Superior, Alicante*, 2012 <Material in archive>
- 'De Groene Meisjes', *degroenemeisjes.blog* <<http://www.degroenemeisjes.nl/tag/spanje>>
- De Jeugd van Tegenwoordig - Deze Donkere Jongen Komt Zo Hard* (The Netherlands: TopNotchNL/YouTube, 2009) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_N2Rp7IQYI>

- De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig - Sterrenstof* (The Netherlands: TopNotchNL/YouTube, 2010)
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNMXSKfWfLQ>>
- De Jeugd Van Tegenwoordig - Watskeburt?!* (The Netherlands: TopNotchNL/YouTube, 2008)
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rjER3EX948w>>
- De Jeugd van Tegenwoordig - 'Zo Volwassen, Zo Beleefd', #1 De Lachende Derde* (The Netherlands: TopNotchNL/YouTube, 2010) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=teY5BBSFzG4>>
- 'De Jeugd van Tegenwoordig Zet Paradiso Op Z'n Kop', *Festival Junks* (Amsterdam, 2011)
- 'De Rebellen van Het Corps', *de Volkskrant*, 28 December 2010
<<http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/2844/Archief/archief/article/detail/1308424/2010/12/28/De-rebellen-van-het-corps.dhtml>>
- 'De Wereld Draait Door. Interview with Vincent Reinders "Venz"' (The Netherlands: VARA, 2011)
- Deben, Léon, Willem Heinemeyer, and Dick van der Vaart, eds., *Understanding Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 2007)
- Deira, Shari, 'Alleen Vrouwen En Kinderen Bij Bekerduel Ajax-AZ', *Elsevier*, 2012
<<http://www.elsevier.nl/Sport/nieuws/2012/1/Alleen-vrouwen-en-kinderen-bij-bekerduel-Ajax-AZ-ELSEVIER326934W/>>
- Dekker, Paul, Joep de Hart, Paul de Beer, and Christa Hubers, *De Moraal in de Publieke Opinie. En Verkenning van 'Normen En Waarden' in Bevolkingsenqêtes* (Den Haag, 2004)
- 'Delft, Amsterdam Y Den Haag', *ABC.COM*, 2007 <Material in archive>
- 'Den Haag, Amsterdam of Rotterdam', *Marokko Community*, 2011
<<http://forums.marokko.nl/archive/index.php/t-4507878-amsterdam-den-haag-of-rotterdam.html>>
- 'Den Haag, Rotterdam, Amsterdam En Utrecht', *Marokko Community*, 2011
<<http://forums.marokko.nl/showthread.php?t=4069093&s=c447a2f1788fb1416cc4092e536c51be>>
- Denaci, Mark C., 'Amsterdam And/as New Babylon: Urban Modernity's Contested Trajectories', in *Imagining Global Amsterdam: History, Culture, and Geography in a World City*, ed. by Marco de Waard (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), pp. 201–17
- Derrida, Jacques, *Adieu to Emmanuel Lévinas* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1999)
- , *La Voix et Le Phénomène* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967)
- Derrida, Jacques, and Alan Bass (translator), *Writing and Difference* (Chicago, London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978)
- Destino Europa: Amsterdam (2/5)* (Spain: Acca Media/YouTube, 2009)

- 'Destinos Erasmus', *mediavida*, 2011 <<http://www.mediavida.com/foro/106/destinos-erasmus-306250/25>>
- DHHVA Afl 9 2011 R.I.P., *De Hoge Heren van Amsterdam* (The Netherlands: Vimeo, 2011) <<http://vimeo.com/24056392>>
- Diacounu, Madalina, 'Urban Drifting as a Work Method of the Creative Class', *Society*, 2 (2010), 100–112
- Diaz, Meritxell, 'El Erasmus, Un Programa de Movilidad Europea', *buscarempleo*, 2007 <<http://www.liceo.com/sistema-educativo/el-erasmus-un-programa-de-movilidad-europea.html>>
- Dichter Abdelaziz Ajaarouj: Mijn Wereld in Amsterdam* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2009) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A1LifW1goBY>>
- Díez Medrano, Juan, *Framing Europe: Attitudes to European Integration in Germany, Spain and the United Kingdom* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003)
- Dikeç, Mustafa, 'Space, Politics and the Political', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 23 (2005), 171–88 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1068/d364t>>
- , 'Voices into Noises: Ideological Determination of Unarticulated Justice Movements', *Space and Polity*, 8 (2004), 191–208 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1356257042000273959>>
- Dikeç, Mustafa, Nigel Clark, and Clive Barnett, eds., *Extending Hospitality: Giving Space, Taking Time* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), xxxii <<http://dx.doi.org/10.3366/E0264833409000376>>
- Dixon, Kevin, 'A "third Way" for Football Fandom Research: Anthony Giddens and Structuration Theory', *Soccer & Society*, 12 (2011), 279–98 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14660970.2011.548363>>
- 'DOSSIER Ajax En Johan Crujff', *De Telegraaf Telesport*, 2012 <http://www.telegraaf.nl/telesport/voetbal/ajax/10941086/___DOSSIER_Alles_over_Ajax_.html?p=1,1>
- Driever, Stefanie, *In Memoriam* (Amsterdam, 2013) <http://www.nereus.nl/nieuws/artikel/1620/in_memoriam/>
- Duchesne, Sophie, 'Waiting for a European Identity... Reflections on the Process of Identification with Europe', *Perspectives on European Politics and Society*, 9 (2008), 397–410 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15705850802416796>>
- Duchesne, Sophie, and André-Paul Frogner, 'National and European Identifications: A Dual Relationship', *Comparative European Politics*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, 143–68 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.cep.6110128>>
- Duffett, Mark, 'Fear Nothing: Self-Fashioning and Social Mobility in 50 Cent's The 50th Law', *Popular Music and Society*, 34 (2011), 683–92 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03007766.2010.537902>>

- Duneier, Mitchell, and Les Back, 'Voices from the Sidewalk: Ethnography and Writing Race', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 29 (2006), 543–65 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01419870600598113>>
- Dunning, Eric, Patrick Murphy, Ivan Waddington, and Antonios E. Astrinakis, eds., *Fighting Fans: Football Hooliganism as a World Phenomenon* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2002)
- DUO, *Alles over Studiefinanciering. Voor Studenten En Afgestudeerden* (Groningen: Dienst Uitvoering Onderwijs, 2009)
- Durand, Gilbert, and Michel Maffesoli, eds., *Autour Du Roger Caillois* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1992)
- Duyvendak, Jan Willem, and M. Hurenkamp, eds., *Kiezen Voor de Kudde* (Amsterdam: Van Genneep, 2004)
- Duyvendak, Jan Willem, and Justus Uitermark, 'De Opbouwwerker Als Architect van de Publieke Sfeer', *B en M - Beleid en Maatschappij*, 32 (2005), 76–89 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1347/benm.32.2.76.66288>>
- Dyserinck, Hugo, 'Imagology and the Problem of Ethnic Identity', *Intercultural Studies*, 2003 <<http://www.intercultural-studies.org/ICS1/Dyserinck.shtml>>
- Earls, Mark, *Herd: How to Change Mass Behaviour by Harnessing Our True Nature* (John Wiley & Sons, 2009)
- Ebbinghe, Jan-Willem, and Piebe Teeboom, *Wij Amsterdamsche Studiosi: 150 Jaar ASC/AVSV* (Amsterdam: ASC/AVSV, 2002)
- 'Education in The Netherlands', *Wikipedia*, 2015 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_in_the_Netherlands#Mbo>
- Elia: 'Kanker Marokkaan Filmpje'. *WK 2010 Zuid Afrika* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2010) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSViE_abzCM>
- 'ELLE Girltalk', 2011 <<<http://www.ellegirltalk.nl/showthread.php?646911-A-s-c-a-v-s-v-2011/page2>>>
- 'Eminem - Encore', *dutchcharts*, 2004 <<http://www.dutchcharts.nl/showitem.asp?interpret=Eminem&titel=Encore&cat=a>>
- 'Entrevistamos a Olga, Futura Estudiante Erasmus En Ámsterdam', *Erasmooos. La comunidad de los estudiantes internacionales*, 2010 <<http://es.erasmoos.com/blogs/entrevistas-erasmus/entrevistamos-a-olga->>
- Entwistle, Joanne, *The Fashioned Body, Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2004)
- Erasmus, 'On et Vas Allotjar?' (Informació Erasmus, 2009) <Material in archive>
- 'Erasmus in Amsterdam', *thestudentroom*, 2010 <<http://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/showthread.php?t=1214848>>

- Erikson, Erik H, 'Fidelity and Diversity', *Daedalus*, 117 (2013), 1–24
- , *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1968)
- Escobar, Arturo, 'Culture Sits in Places: Reflections on Globalism and Subaltern Strategies of Localization', *Political Geography*, 20 (2001), 139–74 <[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298\(00\)00064-0](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0962-6298(00)00064-0)>
- Eskildsen, Jacob K., Jens J. Dahlgaard, and Anders Norgaard, 'The Impact of Creativity and Learning on Business Excellence', *Total Quality Management*, 10 (1999), 523–30 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0954412997488>>
- Esling, Isabelle, 'Eminem: A Major Influence in Hip Hop History', *theeminemblog*, 2004 <<http://www.theeminemblog.com/2004/07/14/eminem-a-major-influence-in-hip-hop-history/>>
- ESN INHolland Diemen, 'ESN Pub Crawl' (Amsterdam, 2013) <<http://galaxy.esn.org/content/esn-pub-crawl-1>>
- Espriu, Salvador, 'Assaig de Cantic En El Temple' 1954- Performed by Ovidi Montllor (Països Catalans: YouTube, 2012) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhAVbYAV4Ps>>
- 'Esteban Alvarado', *Wikipedia* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Esteban_Alvarado>
- 'Estudiar En El Extranjero: Estudiar En Holanda', *spaniards*, 2012 <<http://www.spaniards.es/foros/2012/02/22/estudiar-en-holanda>>
- European Commission, 'Lifelong Learning Programmes', *Education and Training* <http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/llp_en.htm>
- Even-Zohar, Itamar, 'Factors and Dependencies in Culture: A Revised Outline for Polysystem Culture Research', *Canadian Review Of Comparative Literature*, XXIV (1997), 15–34
- , 'Polysystem Theory', *Poetics and Comparative Literature*, 1 (1979), 287–310
- Faber, Johan, *Het Mysterie Marco. Van Basten, Ajax & Oranje* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Thomas Rap, 2004)
- Fatcap Express HD Official Movie HD* (The Netherlands: Check me Produccies/YouTube, 2013) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30ZctJbcej8>>
- Favell, Adrian, 'Europe's Identity Problem', *West European Politics*, 28 (2005), 1109–16 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01402380500311863>>
- , *Eurostars and Eurocities. Free Movement and Mobility in an Integrative Europe* (Malden, Oxford, Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 2008)
- Feestelijke Opening Quartier Putain* (The Netherlands: TopNotchNL/YouTube, 2013) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8XY-ruiNfUI>>
- 'Feuten #2', *forum.fok.nl*, 2010 <<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/1564517>>

- 'Fietsen', *ASVA Studentenunie* <<http://www.asva.nl/fietsen>>
- Firat, A.Fuat, and Alladi Venkatesh, 'Postmodernity: The Age of Marketing', *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 1993, 227–49
- Florida, Richard, 'The Rise of the Creative Class', *Washington Monthly*, 2002
- , *The Rise of the Creative Class And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002)
- , 'The World Is Spiky. Globalization Has Changed the Economic Playing Field, but Hasn't Leveled It', *Atlantic Monthly*, 2005, pp. 48–51
- Foros. Guardería, 'Año Erasmus. Año "Orgasmus"' (Burbuja. Foro de Economía, 2009) <Material in archive>
- Fortuin, Arjen, 'Een Nieuwe Schrijfgeneratie: Op Welke Auteurs Onder de 30 Moeten We Letten?', *NRC* (Amsterdam, 2013) <<http://www.nrc.nl/boeken/2013/10/25/een-nieuwe-schrijfgeneratie-op-welke-auteurs-onder-de-30-moeten-we-letten/>>
- , 'Gezellig Zooien', *NRC boeken* (Amsterdam, 24 August 2002)
- Forum, *Amsterdam Hooligans* (The Netherlands: YouTube) <Material in archive>
- , *forocoches*, 2005 <www.forocoches.com/foro/show/head.php?t-1479377#>
- , 'Rap over van Gogh (+Fortuyn) [Archief]', *Scholieren.com forum*, 2004, pp. 2–11 <<http://forum.scholieren.com/archive/index.php/t-1001814.html>>
- 'Forum. Onderwerp: Vak 410/F-Side', *ajaxfans.net*, 2010 <Material in archive.>
- Frank, Thomas, *The Conquest of Cool. Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998)
- Freixa, Carles, *De Jóvenes, Bandas Y Tribus. Antropología de La Juventud* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1998) <<http://www.scribd.com/doc/8753074/Carles-Feixa-De-Jovenes-Bandas-y-Tribus>>
- Fretz, Johan, 'The Opposites: Eenheid van Tegenpolen', *Het Parool* (Amsterdam, 11 October 2013)
- Friedman, Milton, *Capitalism and Freedom*, 40th Anniv (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002)
- , 'Greed. Where Are These Angels?' (martinkronicle.com, 2010)
- Friedman, Thomas, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000)
- Fromm, Erich, *Escape from Freedom* (United Kingdom: Farrar and Rinehart, 1941)
- Van Gageldonk, Paul, *Hand in Hand. Op Stap Met de Hooligans van Feyenoord* (Singel Pockets, 1996)

- Gayán, Belén, *Momentum Futbol* (Spain: Nike/YouTube, 2007)
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQAen-Dg2no>>
- Gazzah, Miriam, *Rhythms and Rhymes of Life. Music and Identification Processes of Dutch-Moroccan Youth* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008)
- Geerdink, J., 'Neergeschoten Man Blijkt Ajax-Prominent', *Spits* (Amsterdam, 2011)
<<http://www.spitsnieuws.nl/crime/2011/08/neergeschoten-man-blijkt-ajax-prominent>>
- 'Gespot: HvA', *Facebook*, 2012 <https://www.facebook.com/GespotHva/timeline?ref=page_internal>
- 'Gespot: UB UVA', *Facebook*, 2012 <<https://www.facebook.com/GespotUBUVA>
<<https://www.facebook.com/GespotVU>>
- 'Gespot: VU', *Facebook*, 2012 <<https://www.facebook.com/GespotVU>>
- Ghéhenno, Jean-Marie, *La Fin de La Démocratie* (Paris: Flammarion, 1992)
- Giddens, Anthony, *Modernity and Self-Identity. Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990)
- , *The Consequences of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998)
- Gikkels - Doofpot* (The Netherlands: Teemong/YouTube, 2009)
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XNvWVj6Bk44>>
- Gil de Gómez Rubio, Josefa, Maria Teresa Diaz Allué, and Etienne Mullet, 'Studying, Working, and Living in Another EU Country: Spanish Youth's Point of View', *Journal of European Integration*, 24 (2002), 53–67 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07036330290014660>>
- Giulianotti, Richard, *Football: A Sociology of the Global Game* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999)
- , 'Supporters, Followers, Fans, and Flaneurs', *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 2002, 26–46
- Giulianotti, Richard, Norman Bonney, and Mike Hepworth, eds., *Football, Violence and Social Identity* (London: Routledge, 1994)
- Gladwell, Malcolm, 'The Coolhunt', *The New Yorker* (New York, 1997)
- , *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (Boston: Back Bay Books, 2002)
- Glaeser, Edward, *Triumph of the City. How Urban Spaces Makes Us Human* (Basingstok and Oxford: Pan Books, 2012)
- Goedegebuure, Jaap, 'De Slag Om de Blauwbrug', *Lexicon van literaire werken*, 1989
<http://media.scholieren.net/public/download/bijlage/1349212165_DeslagomdeBlauwbrugLEXICON.pdf>
- , *Nederlandse Literatuur 1960-1988* (Amsterdam: De Arbeiderspers, 1989)

- Gommans, Britt, and Loek Zanders, 'Het Studentenleven Van... Alexander Pechtold', *Nultweevier.nl*, 2012 <<http://www.nultweevier.nl>>
- Gooijer, Patricia, 'Studenten Euhh Mboers Krijgen Studiepunten Voor Bijwonen Lachessie', *The Post Online* (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Campus Televisie, 16 January 2012) <<http://dejaapcampus.thepostonline.nl/campustv/studenten-euhh-mboers-krijgen-studiepunten-voor-bijwonen-lachessie/>>
- Goslinga, Ringel, and Sheila Kamerman, "'In Marokko Voelde Ik Me Vrijer'", *NRC* (Amsterdam, 10 November 2012)
- Groenland, Marnix, 'Welkom in Het Witte Reservaat', *CorporatieNL*, 2012 <<http://www.corporatienl.nl/welkom-in-het-witte-reservaat/>>
- Grosz, Elisabeth A., *Space, Time and Perversion* (New York: Routledge, 1995)
- Von Grunebaum, Gustave E., and Roger Caillois, eds., *The Dream and Human Societies* (Berkeley and Los Angeles California: University of California Press, 1966)
- 'Guardiola Evenaart Crujff in El Clasico', *powned.tv*, 2012 <http://www.powned.tv/nieuws/sport/2012/01/guardiola_evenaart_crujff_in.html>
- Guiot, Denis, and Dominique Roux, 'A Second-Hand Shoppers' Motivation Scale: Antecedents, Consequences, and Implications for Retailers', *Journal of Retailing*, 86 (2010), 383–99 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2010.08.002>>
- 'H.E.B.E.: De Ontstaansgeschiedenis van Een Perpetuum Stabile', *H.E.B.E. Letterkundig Dispuutgezelschap* <<http://hebe.nl/pages/view/geschiedenis/>>
- Habbekrats, *Rabat, Het Boek van de Film* (Amsterdam: Lebowsky Achievers, Lebowsky Publishers & Habbekrats, 2011)
- 'Habéis Follado En Vuestro Destino Erasmus?', *Erasmus World*, 2010 <Material in archive>
- Hagendijk, Rob, *Het Studentenleven. Opkomst En Verval van de Traditionele Studentenkultuur* (Amsterdam: SUA, 1980)
- Hall, Stuart, 'Race: The Floating Signifier', *Media education foundation film*, 1996, 1–17
- — —, 'THE NEO-LIBERAL REVOLUTION', *Cultural Studies*, 25 (2011), 37–41
- Hamel, Ernst-Jan, 'Niemand Praat of Twittert over de Ontgroening' (Utrecht, 2011) <<http://www.dub.uu.nl/artikel/niemand-praat-twittert-ontgroening.html>>
- Hansen, Fred, and Michele Smith, 'The Ethics of Business Strategy', *Handbook of Business Strategy*, 7 (2006), 201–6 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/10775730610618828>>
- Hargrave, Russell, 'Football Fans and Football History: A Review Essay', *Soccer & Society*, 8 (2007), 240–49 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14660970701224459>>

- Hart, Keith, 'The Persuasive Power of Money', in *Economic Persuasions*, ed. by Stephen Gudeman (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), pp. 136–59
- Hastings, Annette, 'Stigma and Social Housing Estates: Beyond Pathological Explanations', *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, 19 (2004), 233–54 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10901-004-0723-y>>
- Haverkamp, Annemarie, 'Voordat de Dood Ons Scheidt', *NRC* (Amsterdam, 2013) <<http://www.annemariehaverkamp.nl/vandaag-in-nrc-voordat-de-dood-ons-scheidt/>>
- Hector, '(Almost) Ending 2007 "back to reality"(BCN) and Welcoming 2008 in AMS', *blog.hector*, 2008 <Material in archive>
- , 'Homo Erasmus', *blog.hector*, 2008 <Material in archive>
- Heerma van Voss, Daan, and Daniël van der Meer, *De Kloof. Tweegesprekken over Een Verdeeld Nederland* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Balans, 2010)
- , 'Salah Edin vs. Halleh Ghorashi', *hiphopleeft* (Amsterdam, 2010) <<http://hiphopleeft.nl/salah-edin-vs-halleh-ghorashi/>>
- Heerma van Voss, Thomas, 'Het Verhaal Van... Farid Benmbarek', *hiphopleeft*, 2012 <<http://hiphopleeft.nl/het-verhaal-van-farid-benmbarek/>>
- , 'Hoe de Nederlandse Hip Hop Volwassen Werd', *State Magazine* (Hilversum, 2 December 2013)
- Van der Heijden, A.F.TH., *De Slag Om de Blauwbrug* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 1983)
- Heitmeijer, Tessa, 'Top 10 Uit de Hand Gelopen Ontgroeningen', *Studenten.net*, 2011 <http://www.studenten.net/lifestyle/lifestyle/18193/top_10_uit_de_hand_gelopen_ontgroeningen>
- Helleman, Gerben, and Frank Wassenberg, 'The Renewal of What Was Tomorrow's Idealistic City. Amsterdam's Bijlmermeer High-Rise', *Cities*, 21 (2004), 3–17 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2003.10.011>>
- Hepburn, James, 'Paul Krugman Did Not Win a Nobel Prize in Economics', *Daily Kos*, 14 April 2013 <<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2013/04/14/1167782/-Paul-Krugman-Did-Not-Win-a-Nobel-Prize-in-Economics#>>
- Heshmat Manesh, Sharog, 'Book Presentation: Mijn Wereld in Amsterdam' (Amsterdam: Hogeschool van Amsterdam, 2009)
- 'Het Books & Bubbles Logo!', *books-bubbles*, 2012 <<http://books-bubbles.com/2012/10/16/het-books-bubbles-logo/>>
- 'Het Corps' (ForumFok.nl, 2005) <<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/738521/1/999#29578184>>
- 'Het de Pijp-Gevoel?', *thelognessmonster.wordpress*, 2012 <<http://thelognessmonster.wordpress.com/2012/01/15/12/>>

Het Zijn Maar Kut Kakkerlakken [HQ]. Met Tekst (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2010)
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwlrDtGjp10>>

Hilkens, Myrthe, *McSex. De Pornoficatie van Onze Samenleving* (Amsterdam: Atlas Contact, 2008)

'History of the ERASMUS Programme'
<http://web.archive.org/web/20130404063516/http://ec.europa.eu/education/erasmus/history_en.htm>

'History Tour' <<http://www.ajax.nl/De-Club/Historie/History-Tour.htm>>

Hobbes, Thomas, *Leviathan* (United States of America: Barnes & Noble Publishing, Inc., 2004)

'Hoe Één "Supporter" AZ Uit de Beker Wipt. Doelman van AZ Is Misschien Een Beetje Fout, Maar de Supporter Mag Natuurlijk Nooit Meer in Een Stadion Verschijnen!', *We houden van Oranje*, 2011 <<http://wehoudenvanoranje.blogspot.com/2011/12/hoe-een-supporter-az-uit-de-beker-wipt.html?showComment=1324507645007#c4338068073275370747>>

Hoffer, Eric, *Reflections on the Human Condition* (New York: Haper & Row, 1973)

'Hoger -Lageropgeleiden' (The Netherlands: PowNews/YouTube, 2011)
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LK1QISAQVzg>>

Holt, Douglas B, 'Why Do Brands Cause Trouble? A Dialectal Theory of Consumer Culture and Branding', *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 29 (2002), 70–90

Holt, Douglas B., 'Does Cultural Capital Structure American Consumption?', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 25 (1998), 1–25

'Hoofddoekjes En Holleeder', *maroc*, 2008 <<http://www.maroc.nl/forums/wie-schrijft-blijft/251758-hoofddoekjes-holleeder-3.html>>

'Hoofddoekjes Hebben de Show Gestolen in Amsterdam', *Marokko Community*, 2012
<<http://forums.marokko.nl/archive/index.php/t-4281820-hoofddoekjes-hebben-de-show-gestolen-vandaag-in-amsterdam-p-9.html>>

Hoofddredacteur, 'Het Gein-Gen van de Mokumer', *Cultuur HPDETIJD* (Amsterdam, 20 August 2010)
<<http://www.eijsbouts.eu/index.php?/meninkjes/amsterdamse-humor/>>

Hospers, Gert-Jan, 'Lynch's The Image of the City after 50 Years: City Marketing Lessons from an Urban Planning Classic', *European Planning Studies*, 18 (2010), 2073–81
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2010.525369>>

— — —, 'Place Marketing in Europe The Branding of the Oresund Region', *Intereconomics: Review of European Economic Policy*, 39 (2004), 271–79

'How Many Eggs Are in a Dozen' (RT(5)/YouTube, 2008)
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JjKxXOcEqbs&lc=a3NYQfkNAOvt6ZHSpf92T0A-ErhorNxBWUuWutisGFs>>

- Hubbard, Phil, 'Geographies of Studentification and Purpose-Built Student Accommodation: Leading Separate Lives?', *Environment and Planning A*, 41 (2009), 1903–23
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1068/a4149>>
- Ver Huell, Alexander, 'Sporstudenten Zijn van Aller Tijden', *Mare Leids Universiteit* (Leiden, 15 November 2012)
- Huff, Philip, *Niemand in de Stad* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2012)
- Hughey, Matthew W., 'Backstage Discourse and the Reproduction of White Masculinities', *The Sociological Quarterly*, 52 (2011), 132–53 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.2010.01196.x>>
- Hulsman, Bernard, "Yo, Ouders, Denk Eens Na!", *NRC* (Rotterdam, 22 November 2008)
<<http://vorige.nrc.nl/achtergrond/article2069909.ece>>
- Hulsman, Job, 'Robert Coblijn En Gikkels: Mannen Met Een Missie', *hiphopleeft*, 2011
<<http://hiphopleeft.nl/robert-coblijn-en-gikkels-mannen-met-een-missie/>>
- Huys, Twan, 'NOVA College Tour. Jan Peter Balkenende' (The Netherlands: VARA, 2010)
<<http://tvblik.nl/nova-college-tour/jan-peter-balkenende>>
- Huysen, Andreas, *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1986)
- Hymowitz, Kay S., 'The New Girl Order', *City Journal* (New York, 2007), pp. 1–8 <http://www.city-journal.org/html/17_4_new_girl_order.html>
- 'I Am Not a Tourist. Post-Erasmus Depression', *Babelblogs*, 2010 <Material in archive>
- I amsterdam. I am local, 'Osdorp' (Amsterdam), pp. 2–3
<<http://www.iamsterdam.com/en/local/official-matters/amsterdam-city-districts/stadsdeel-nieuw-west/osdorp>>
- , 'Oud Zuid', 2–3 <<http://www.iamsterdam.com/en/local/official-matters/amsterdam-city-districts/stadsdeel-zuid/oud-zuid-neighbourhood>>
- 'I'm Not the Same after My Erasmus. Because I'm Better', *Facebook*, 2009
<https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=195990557154&id=184617826148>
- Inger, Kuin, 'Opmars van de Elitescholen', *Nieuw Adam Peil. USG VOX* (Amsterdam), pp. 14–16
<http://www.usgvox.nl/html/nieuw_adam_peil_051028.html>
- Intervista a Robert Kozinets' Serie Etnografia Digitale 1* (Italy: Netnografia/YouTube, 2012)
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JcGIURnDeDE>>
- Iser, Wolfgang, *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology* (London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993)
- Jacob, Margaret C., *Living the Enlightenment: Freemasonry and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991)

- Jacobs, Jane, 'The Use of Sidewalks', in *The death and Life of the Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, Inc., 1961)
- Jacqueline, and Valentina, 'Amsterdam! De Stad van Sex, Drugs En... Fashion', *Jongin.nl* (Almere, 2011)
- Jaffe, Rivke, 'Naakt in Het Water? Cultureel Kapitaal', *Mare* (Leiden, 16 April 2009) <<http://www.mareonline.nl/artikel/0809/28/0101/>>
- 'James Worthy Biography' <<http://james-worthy.tumblr.com/bio>>
- Jansen, Jim, "'Mijn Generatie Schippert Enorm'", *Folia* (Amsterdam, 2010), pp. 10–11
- , 'Reporting the City of Amsterdam' (Amsterdam: City Marketing in Europe, Hogeschool van Amsterdam, 2012)
- Janssen, Roel, 'Fatcap Express', *State Magazine*, 18 February 2008
- Jeffrey, Denis, *Jouissance Du Sacre: Religion et Postmodernité* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1998)
- De Jeugd van Tegenwoordig, 'Sterrenstof' <<http://genius.com/De-jeugd-van-tegenwoordig-sterrenstof-lyrics/>>
- Jimenez Ortega, Raul, *Erasmus En Amsterdam* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2008) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23QSxRWe4ag>>
- 'Jo Ritzen', *Wikipedia* <http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jo_Ritzen>
- Jongkind, Kees, and Rimko Haamstra, *De Sneijder Tapes* (The Netherlands: NOS Studio Sport, 2012)
- Joost, Nine, Wouter, Nienke, Marnix, Noor, and others, *Doe Normaal* (Amsterdam) <<http://www.almanakaward.nl/profile/view/1065#/5>>
- Joosten, Jos, 'Waarin Gelooft Kluun? Bourdieus "Croyance" En Komt Een Vrouw Bij de Dokter', *Neerlandistiek*, 07 (2007)
- Juanmafi, *11 Video Final Assigment Visual Journalism* (The Netherlands: Juanmafi/YouTube, 2011) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hax3HxGYs7E&feature=relmfu>>
- , *Different but the Same - Amsterdam Erasmus Experience* (The Netherlands: Juanmafi/YouTube, 2012) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RKGNIq5zTUY>>
- , *Feliz Cumpleaños Eloy* (Erasmus Amsterdam: Juanmafi/YouTube, 2011)
- , *My Experience in Amsterdam* (The Netherlands: Juanmafi/YouTube, 2011) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MXjWpV6Npog&feature=relmfu>>
- , *Review IDFA.wmv* (The Netherlands: Juanmafi/YouTube, 2011) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tu7WI5Nyv_I>

- — —, *The Largest Flea Market in Netherlands: IJ HALLEN* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2011)
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCvBMXQ-VYI&feature=relmfu>>
- Juárez, Mar, 'Erasmus a Utrecht, Países Baixos' (Utrecht: Erasmus World, 2011)
- JvdH, 'Kankerlijer. Vreemdgaan Was Nooit Zo Gemakkelijk', *Propia Cures* (Amsterdam, 13 November 2003)
- Kamran, 'Studentikoze Vliegtuigslopers Hebben Spijt', *The Post Online* (Amsterdam, 8 September 2008) <<http://cult.thepostonline.nl/campustv/asc-feuten-slopen-madurodam-vliegtuig/>>
- Kasinitz, Philip, ed., *Metropolis Centre and Symbol of Our Times* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1995)
- Kastanakis, Minas N., and George Balabanis, 'Between the Mass and the Class: Antecedents of the "Bandwagon" Luxury Consumption Behavior', *Journal of Business Research*, 65 (2012), 1399–1407 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.10.005>>
- Keay, Douglas, 'Interview for Woman's Own ("no Such Thing as Society")', *margareththatcher.org*, 1987, p. 1 <<http://www.margareththatcher.org/document/106689>>
- Kellner, Douglas, 'Popular Culture and the Construction of Post-Modern Identities', in *Modernity & Identity*, ed. by Scott Lash and Jonathan Friedman (Oxford U.K.: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 141–77
- Kemper, Anouk, 'Een Lange Traditie in Stand Houden', *Folia Magazine* (Amsterdam, December 2010), pp. 18–19
- Kennedy, James C, and Simone Kennedy-Doornbos, *Nieuw Babylon in Aanbouw Nederland in de Jaren Zestig* (Amsterdam, Meppel: Boom, 1995)
- King, Russell, and Enric Ruiz-Gelices, 'International Student Migration and the European "Year Abroad": Effects on European Identity and Subsequent Migration Behaviour', *International Journal of Population Geography*, 9 (2003), 229–52 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ijpg.280>>
- Klein, Naomi, *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies* (Knopf Canada, Picador, 1999)
- Kleinpaste, Thijs, *Nederland Als Vervlogen Droom* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2013)
- Kleinstra, Anne, 'Studenten Omgekomen Bij Ongeluk Op A2', *RTVNH*, 2012
<<http://www.rtvnh.nl/nieuws/81325/Studenten+omgekomen+bij+ongeluk+op+A2>>
- Kloppenbergh, James T., 'Pragmatism: An Old Name for Some New Ways of Thinking?', *The Journal of American History*, 83 (1996), 100–138
- Kluun, *Komt Een Vrouw Bij de Dokter* (Amsterdam: Podium, 2003)
- — —, *Memoires van Een Marketingsoldaat* (Hertog Jan, 2008)
- Kneale, Pauline, 'Getting the Best from an International Year', *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 32 (2008), 337–45 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03098260801966000>>

- Knooihuizen, Klaas, 'Volentekriebels | Club Trouw', *sargasso*, 2013
<<http://sargasso.nl/volentekriebels-club-trouw/>>
- Knopp, Larry, 'Ontologies of Place, Placelessness, and Movement: Queer Quests for Identity and Their Impacts on Contemporary Geographic Thought', *Gender, Place and Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography*, 11 (2004), 121–34 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0966369042000188585>>
- “Knuffelallochtoon”, “Knuffel-Marokkaan”, *Wikipedia*
<<http://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knuffelallochtoon>>
- Koefnoen, *Koefnoen - Dispuutstrutjes Terras* (The Netherlands: Koefnoenkanaal/YouTube, 2010)
<<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLYPFFHuzawXdku1UQDmzLPndZjo3XVJMY>>
- — —, *Koefnoen - Dispuutstrutjes Ziekenhuis* (The Netherlands: Koefnoenkanaal/YouTube, 2013)
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kp9I77zagkU>>
- Koelman, Jos B.J., 'The Funding of Universities in the Netherlands: Developments and Trends', *Higher Education*, 35 (1998), 127–41
- Kohn, Alfie, *Punished by Rewards: The Trouble with Gold Stars, Incentive Plans, A's, Praise, and Other Bribes* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1993)
- De Koning, Martijn, 'Het Land van Salah Edin', *International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM)* (Leiden, 24 May 2007) <<http://www.kennislink.nl/publicaties/het-land-van-salah-edin>>
- Kooijman, Jaap, *Fabricating the Absolute Fake. America in Contemporary Pop Culture* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008)
- Koren, Timo, 'Het Verhaal Van... Saul van Stapele', *hiphopleeft*, 2012 <<http://hiphopleeft.nl/het-verhaal-van-saul-van-stapele/>>
- Kozinets, Robert, 'The Field behind the Screen: Using Netnography for Marketing Research in Online Communities', *Journal of Marketing*, 39 (2002), 61–72
- Kozinets, Robert V., 'On Netnography: Initial Reflections on Consumer Research Investigations of Cyberculture', *NA - Advances in Consumer Research*, 25 (1998), 366–71
<<http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/display.asp?id=8180>>
- Krauss, Lawrence M., *A Universe from Nothing: Why There Is Something Rather Than Nothing* (Simon & Schuster, 2013)
- Kreukels, Katja, 'Hiphoptempel Versterkt de Identiteit van Jonge Rappers', *Het Parool* (Amsterdam, July 2003)
- — —, 'Katja Kreukels' <www.katjakreukels.nl>
- Krims, Adam, 'Rap, Race, the Local,' and Urban Geography in Amsterdam', *Critical Studies*, 2002, pp. 165–79
- Kristeva, Julia, *Crisis of the European Subject* (New York: Other Press LLC, 2000)

- Krop, Henri, *Spinoza Een Paradoxale Icoon van Nederland* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Prometheus Bert Bakker, 2014)
- Kuper, Simon, *Ajax, The Dutch, The War: Football in Europe During the Second World War* (London: Orion Publishing Groups Ltd., 2003)
- Kytteman - Sorry (Live @ Lowlands 2009) (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2009)
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F3xr4bJtxhg>>
- Kytteman's Hiphop Orkest - City Is Burning (The Netherlands: Colin Benders/YouTube, 2009)
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duyw6asVi50>>
- 'L.A.N.X. Studenten Corps Aan de Vrije Universiteit' <<http://www.lanx.nl/societeit/>>
- Lammers, Cornelis J., 'Student Unionism in the Netherlands: An Application of a Social Class Model', *American Sociological Review*, 36 (1971), 250–63 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2094042>>
- Lamont, Michele, 'How to Become a Dominant French Philosopher: The Case of Jacques Derrida', *American Journal of Sociology*, 93 (1987), 584–622 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/228790>>
- Lampi, Ville, 'How Am I Supposed to Nof Feel like a Tourist' (Amsterdam: IES Abroad. Inside Student Blogs, 2011) <<http://blogs.iesabroad.org/author/ville-lampi/>>
- Landry, Charles, and Franco Bianchini, *The Creative City* (London: Demos, 1995)
- Lange Frans, and Baas B., 'Het Land van Lange Frans En Baas B.' (Amsterdam: Walboomers, 2005)
- Lash, Scott, 'Individualisation in a Non-Linear Mode', in *Individualisation: Institutionalized Individualism And Its Social And Political Consequences* (London, California, New Delhi: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2001), pp. Vii – xiii
- Lash, Scott, and John Urry, *The End of Organized Capitalism* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1987)
- Latour, Bruno, 'On Actor-Network Theory. A Few Clarifications plus More than a Few Complications', *Soziale Welt*, 25 (1996), 1–16 (369–81)
- — —, *The Pasteurization of France* (London: Harvard University Press, 1988)
- Laura, 'Erasmus En El Pais de La Lluvia', *lauradeerasmusendelft.blogspot*, 2008
<<http://lauradeerasmusendelft.blogspot.com/search?updated-min=2009-01-01T00:00:00%2B01:00&updated-max=2010-01-01T00:00:00%2B01:00&max-results=50>>
- Law, John, ed., *Power, Action and Belief: A New Sociology of Knowledge* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986)
- Lebesque, Sabine, and others, *Along Amsterdam's Waterfront. Exploring the Architecture of Amsterdam's Southern Ij Bank* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2006)
- Leerssen, Joep, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006)

- , *Spiegelpaleis Europa. Europese Cultuur Als Mythe En Beeldvorming* (Nijmegen: Uitgeverij Vantilt, 2011)
- , 'The Downward Pull of Cultural Essentialism', in *Image Into Identity: Constructing and Assigning Identity in a Culture of Modernity*, ed. by Michael Wintle (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 2006)
- Lemm, Rutger, 'Verwend En Verward', *Hard/hoofd* (Amsterdam, 2012)
<<http://hardhoofd.com/2012/06/08/verwend-en-verward/>>
- 'Leren Excelleren Instellingsplan 2007-2010' (Amsterdam: UvA, Bureau Communicatie, 2007)
- Leticia, '1.-Y Por Fin Aquí Estoy!!!', *leticiyamsterdam.blogspot*, 2006
<<http://leticiyamsterdam.blogspot.nl/2006/09/1-y-por-fin-aqu-estoy.html>>
- , 'Un Año de Erasmus En Amsterdam', *leticiyamsterdam.blogspot*, 2006
<<http://leticiyamsterdam.blogspot.nl/2006/09/3-cada-da-ms-liada.html>>
- Lévinas, Emmanuel, *Altérité et Transcendance* (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 2006)
- , *Difficile Liberté. Essais Sur Le Judaïsme* (Paris: Editions Albin Michel, 1983)
- Van Lienden, Sywert, 'Veel Werklozen, Weinig Protest. 6 Redenen Waarom de Crisis Niet Tot Onrust Leidt. Mijn Idee Erover in NRC', *Twitter* (Amsterdam, 2013)
<<https://twitter.com/Sywert/status/334662291062657028>>
- 'Literatuur van de Toekomst in CREA', *Folia.nl Magazine* (Amsterdam, December 2010)
<<http://www.folia.nl/nieuws/literatuur-van-de-toekomst-in-crea-1612.html>>;>
- Lock, Krijn, 'JOVD Nieuws: Kraarverbod.... Het Werd Tijd', *JOVD* (Den Haag, November 2007)
<<http://www.vorigejovd.nl/nieuws/153/Kraakverbod.....het-werd-tijd.htm>>
- Looijestein, Elja, 'Kijk Terug: De Jeugd van Tegenwoordig-Documentaire', *3voor12 VPRO*, 2013
<<http://3voor12.vpro.nl/nieuws/2013/november/Preview--De-Jeugd-van-Tegenwoordig-docu.html>>
- Lorenz, Chris, 'Higher Education Policies in the European Union, the "Knowledge Economy" and Neo-Liberalism', *SpacesTemps.net/Tavaux*, 2010 <<http://www.espacestemp.net/articles/higher-education-policies-in-the-european-union-the-Isquoknowledge-economyrsquo-and-neo-liberalism>>
- , 'The European Integration? Higher Education Policies in the EU and in the Netherlands before and after the Bologna Declaration', *Sociologia Internationalis*, 2006
- Luis van Haarlem, 'God Bless ESN Haarlem', *es.erasmoos.com*, 2011, pp. 1–5 <Material in archive>
- Lustrum ASC/AVSV, kiescorps.nl*, 2012 <<http://www.kiescorps.nl/media.php>>
- Luyendijk, Joris, *Je Hebt Het Niet van Mij, Maar...: Een Maand Aan Het Binnenhof* (Amsterdam: Podium, 2010)

- Luyt, A. J, *Klikspaans Studentenschetsen* (Leiden: Sijthoff, 1919)
- Lynch, Kevin A., *The Image of the City* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1960)
- Madison, Greg A., 'The End of Belonging. Untold Stories of Leaving Home and the Psychology of Global Relocation' (London: Unpublished version, 2009), pp. 1–44
- Maffesoli, Michel, *The Time of the Tribes: The Decline of Individualism in Mass Society* (Thousand Oaks: CA Sage, 1996)
- Making Of van VAK410's Grootste Spandoek van Europa* (The Netherlands: Ondergrond.Tv/YouTube, 2008) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NvhD3AhMa4c&feature=related>>
- Malik, Kenan, *The Meaning of Race. Race History and Culture in Western Society* (New York: New York University Press, 1996)
- De Man, Paul, 'The Resistance to Theory', *Philosophy and Literature*, 63 (1987), 3–20 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/phl.2007.0000>>
- Mananan, 'Derrida and Company', 2010 <<http://ageofsilver.blogspot.nl/2010/08/derrida-and-company.html> (2010).>
- Marcotica, 'Mannen Houden van Voetbal; Vrouwen Houden van Mannen', *ajax.netwerk.to*, 2005 <<http://ajax.netwerk.to/forums/HTML/forum23/562.php>>
- Marjolein, 'Je Bent Zelf Een Genre', *Hard/hoofd* (Amsterdam, September 2009) <<http://hardhoofd.com/2009/09/08/je-bent-zelf-een-genre/>>
- Marlous Blogger, 'Goedkoop Wonen in Een Dispuutshuis', 2013 <<https://marlousblokker.wordpress.com/2013/01/12/153/#more-153>>
- 'Marokkaanse Jeugd Draagt Dure Kleding', *Fok.nl*, 2003 <<http://frontpage.fok.nl/nieuws/168559/1/1/50/marokkaanse-jeugd-draagt-dure-kleding.html>>
- 'Marokkaanse Jeugd Kleedt Zich Duur', *Marokko Community*, 2004 <<http://forums.marokko.nl/archive/index.php/t-318428-marokkaanse-jeugd-kleedt-zich-duur.html>>
- — —, *scholieren.com*, 2003, pp. 1–11 <<http://forum.scholieren.com/showthread.php?t=671867>>
- 'Marokko Community', *Forums.Marokko.nl* <www.forums.marokko.nl>
- Martijn, Maurits, 'Nalden: "Mijn Leven Is Hilarisch"', *Vrij Nederland*, December 2009 <<http://www.vn.nl/Archief/Media/Artikel-Media/Nalden-Mijn-leven-is-hilarisch.htm>>
- Marx, Karl, *Das Kapital, Kritik Der Politischen Ökonomie*, 1867
- Mason, Henry L, 'Reflections of the Politicized University: II. Triparity and Tripolarity in the Netherlands', *AAUP Bulletin*, 60 (1974), 383–400

- 'Massale Vechtpartij Tussen Studenten', *AT5* (Amsterdam, 22 April 2009)
<www.at5.nl/atikelen/15591/massale-vechtpartij-tussen-studente>
- Mathon, Jull, 'De Evolutie van de Hipster in de Amsterdamse Uitgaansscene', *blog.youngworks*, 2012
<<http://blog.youngworks.nl/blog/de-evolutie-van-de-hipster-in-de-amsterdamse-uitgaansscene>>
- 'Max Somojino', *Facebook*
<https://www.facebook.com/r.php?profile_id=100000884733373&next=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.facebook.com%2Fmax.somjiono&friend_or_subscriber=friend>
- McLuhan, Marshall, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Berkeley: Routledge Classics, 2001)
- McLuhan, Marshall, and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium Is the Massage. An Inventory of Effects* (Penguin Books Ltd, 1967)
- 'ME in Actie Bij de ArenA' (The Netherlands: AT5, 2011)
- Mecano, "'Un Año Más" Descanso Dominical' (Madrid: BMG, 1988)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jl-a_j0Y7GY>
- 'MeetingMoreMinds' <<http://www.meetingmoreminds.com/>>
- Mellink, Bram, *Worden Zoals Wij: Onderwijs En de Opkomst van de Geïndividualiseerde Samenleving Sinds 1945* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Wereldbibliotheek, 2013)
- 'Memorial HIGH - SVEN C.B.S.' (The Netherlands: AFCAnl/YouTube, 2011)
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d7lIGMYFBt4>>
- Mensink, Dennis, 'Blijven Boeien. Binden Door Uit Te Dagen', *Reed Business* (Amsterdam, 2007)
- Miller, Patrick B., 'The Anatomy of Scientific Racism: Racist Responses to Black Athletic Achievement', *Journal of Sport History*, 1998, 119–51
<<http://www.aaflo.org/SportsLibrary/JSH/JSH1998/JSH2501/jsh2501g.pdf>>
- Milstil, 'Nerdy Boyfriend', *nerdboyfriend.tumblr* <nerdboyfriend.tumblr.com>
- 'Moderne Hippies', *modernehippies* <Modernehippies.nl>
- Monique, 'De Geblondeerde Golddigger Rukt Op', *BeautyJournal*, December 2009
<<http://www.beautyjournaal.nl/2009/12/02/de-geblondeerde-golddigger-rukt-op/>>
- 'Montessori Education', *Wikipedia* <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Montessori_education>
- Moreno Luzón, Javier, 'Memoria de La Nación Liberal: El Primer Centenario de Las Cortes de Cádiz', *Ayer*, 52 (2013), 2017–2235
- Moreno Luzón, Javier, and Xosé M. Núñez Seixas, eds., *Ser Españoles. Imaginarios Nacionalistas En El Siglo XX* (Barcelona: RBA, 2013)

Moreno Riaño, Gerson, 'Roots of Tolerance', *The Review of Politics*, 65, 111–29

MTK-GYM Sadik Kaynak (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2010)

<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0u0Uw4cEII&lc=oV0zUhq1v0nNPDoqujGZh7PaqC4-RSrZXI7HovkK9Hg>>

Müller, Floris, L. van Zoonen, and L. de Roode, 'Accidental Racists: Experiences and Contradictions of Racism in Local Amsterdam Soccer Fan Culture', *Soccer & Society*, 8 (2007), 335–50

<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14660970701224608>>

Muniz Jr., Albert M., and Thomas C. O'Guinn, 'Brand Community', *Journal of consumer research*, 27 (2001), 412–32

Munné-Jordà, Antoni, *Pedrolo I El Temps Obert* (Barcelona, 1997)

Murdoch, Jonathan, 'The Spaces of Actor-Network Theory', *Geoforum*, 29 (1998), 357–74

<[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0016-7185\(98\)00011-6](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0016-7185(98)00011-6)>

'Nalden', *Weblog* <<https://www.nalden.net/#/newsitem/2827/>>

Nancarrow, Clive, and Pamela Nancarrow, 'Hunting for Cool Tribes', in *Consumer tribes*, 2007

Nauta, Hans, "'Ik Haat Amsterdam" Schreef Gerard Reve over Zijn Geboorte Stad. Een Wandeling Aan de Hand van "De Avonden"', *Trouw*, 11 February 2006

<<http://www.trouw.nl/tr/nl/4324/Nieuws/archief/article/detail/1692508/2006/02/11/ik-haat-Amsterdam-schreef-Gerard-Reve-over-zijn-geboortestad-Een-wandeling-aan-de-hand-van-De-Avonden.dhtml>>

Netnography, Interview with Professor Robert Kozinets (Canada: HYVE/YouTube, 2008)

<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=21etoaddZLs>>

Nicholls, Walter, and Justus Uitermark, 'Post-Multicultural Cities: A Comparison of Minority Politics in Amsterdam and Los Angeles, 1970–2010', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 39 (2013), 1555–75

<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2013.833686>>

Nicita, Antonio, 'Erasmus in Un Appartamento Spagnolo: E Se Fossero Già Nati Gli Europei?', *Meridiana*, 46 (2003), 241–44

Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Also Sprach Zarathustra: Ein Buch Für Alle Und Keinen (1883-85)*., 1885

Van Nieuwkerk, Kees, *Het Is Weer Raak Met Kees En Sjaak* (Amsterdam: Moon, 2010)

Van Nieuwkerk, Kees, and Teddy Cherim, *Sterke Verhalen* (The Netherlands, 2010)

'Nieuwsarchief', *Vak410*, 2011 <<http://www.vak410.nl/archive/all/2011>>

'Nightwriters.nl' <http://www.nightwriters.nl/Auteurs/writer/3/Saskia_Noort>

Nijman, Jan, 'Cultural Globalization and the Identity of Place: The Reconstruction of Amsterdam', *Ecumene*, 6 (1999), 146–64 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1191/096746099701556141>>

- 'Nina - Female MC - de Lastigste', *Extince Fans*, 2007 <<http://www.extincefans.nl/featured-artists/nina-de-lastigste/>>
- Nina - Straattaal* (The Netherlands: NinaVEVO/YouTube, 2009) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2u-nQmKqO0>>
- Novum, 'Laat Ook Homo's Toe Bij Ajax - AZ', *Nu.nl* (Amsterdam, 6 January 2012) <<http://www.nu.nl/opmerkelijk/2708950/laat-homos-toe-bij-ajax---az.html>>
- 'Number of Erasmus Students Tops 3 Million' <europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-657_en.htm>
- O'Guinn, Thomas C., and L. J. Shrum, 'The Role of Television in the Construction of Consumer Reality', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 23 (1997), 278 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/209483>>
- 'Off Topic: Habéis Follado En Vuestro Destino Erasmus?', *Erasmus World* (Spain, 2011) <Material in archive>
- 'Oh, Oh, Cherso. Reality Show' (The Netherlands: RTL.NL, 2010)
- Van Ojen, P., A. Pleizier, and P. van Trigt, eds., *Geef Mij Maar Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Buijten & Schipperheijn Motief, 2008)
- Van Omme, Jeanet, Annemarie Aalders, and Vilan van de Loo, *Rebels Binnen de Regels. Het Vrouwendispuut Arktos, 1917-1997* (Hilversum: Verloren b.v., 1997)
- 'Onderwerp: Rapper Samir B. Krijgt 9 Maanden Cel Voor Bedreigen van Dewinter' (Maroc.nl, 2010) <<http://www.maroc.nl/forums/nieuws-de-dag/296902-rapper-samir-b-krijgt-9-maanden-cel-voor-bedreigen-dewinter.html>>
- 'Onderzoek & advies | Motivaction International' <<http://www.motivaction.nl>>
- Ontgroening Amsterdamsch Studenten Corps in Amsterdam* (The Netherlands: Campustelevisie/YouTube, 2007) <http://www.youtube.com/all_comments?v=18jr-FmdhdY>
- 'Ook Werkende Jongere Moet Wonen', *Het Parool* (Amsterdam, 6 September 2013)
- Oosterling, Henk, 'Interest and Excess of Modern Man's Radical Mediocrity: Rescaling Sloterdijk's Grandiose Aesthetic Strategy', *Cultural Politics*, 3 (2007), 357–80
- Oostindie, Gert, 'Caribbean Migration to the Netherlands: A Journey to Disappointment?', in *Lost Illusions: Caribbean Minorities in Britain and The Netherlands*, ed. by I. M. Coss and H. Entzinger (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 54–72
- 'Opening Jubileumjaar IGC' (Amsterdam: Industriële Grote Club, 2013) <<<http://www.igc.nl/>>>
- 'Ophef Rond Scholier Bij Ons in de PC, Joris Lam. Onzin Voor Je Leven!', *forum.fok.nl*, 2010, pp. 1–3 <<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/1532824/1/25#86709485>>
- Osdorp Posse, 'Een Doogewone Boerenlul' (Amsterdam, 1995)

- , 'Songteksten Afslag Osdorp' (Amsterdam, 1995)
<<http://www.songteksten.nl/songteksten/25450/osdorp-posse/afslag-osdorp.htm>>
- , *Vlijmscherp. 1993* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2010)
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n5A3bkd0AcE>>
- 'Paarden Kracht', *pkfashion* <Worldofpaardenkracht.nl>
- Pareja Eastaway, Montserrat, Joaquín Turmo Garuz, Marc Pradel i Miquel, Lídia García Fernando, and Montserrat Simó Solsona, *The City of Marvels? Multiple Endeavours towards Competitiveness in Barcelona, Pathways to Creative and Knowledge-Based Regions* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam Institute for Metropolitan and International Development Studies (AMIDSt), University of Amsterdam, 2007)
- Parks, Tim, *A Season with Verona. Travels Around Italy in Search of Illusions, National Character and Goals* (London: Vintage Books, 2003)
- Patrick, Ruben, and Bart, 'Rap', *scholieren.com*, 2004 <<http://www.scholieren.com/werkstuk/16720>>
- Paulle, Bowen, 'On Comparing a "Black" and a "Zwarte" School: Towards Relevant Concepts and Illuminating Questions', *Intercultural Education*, 13 (2002), 7–19
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14675980120112904>>
- Pavlovskis, Zoja, 'Aristotle, Horace, and the Ironic Man', *Classical Philology*, 63 (1968), 22–41
- 'PcHooftstraat.nl' <<http://www.pchooftstraat.nl/node/35>>
- De Pers, 'JOVD Opent Blijf van Mijn Huis-Huis', *www.depers.nl* (Amsterdam, 20 July 2008)
<<http://www.nuijij.nl/algemeen/jovd-opent-blijf-van-mijn-huis-huis.3326767.lynkx>>
- Philip Huff, 'Abercromby & Fitch', *Het Parool* (Amsterdam, December 2012)
- Pieloor, Ronald, M. Bakker, and B. van de Meer, *F-Side Is Niet Makkelijk! Een Kwarteeuw F-Side over Vriendschap, Geweld, Humor, Amsterdam En Ajax* (Amsterdam: Het Spectrum, 2003)
- Pile, Steve, *Real Cities: Modernity, Space and the Phantasmagorias of City Life* (London, California, New Delhi: Sage Publishers, 2005)
- Pinkster, Jeff, 'Vak410. Sfeermakers van de Arena', *Havana*, 2011
<http://www.havanaweb.nl/archief/jaargang_16/havana20_16.pdf>
- Polan, Dana, *Pulp Fiction* (London: BFI Modern Classics, 2000)
- Porat, Amir Ben, 'Football Fandom: A Bounded Identification', *Soccer & Society*, 11 (2010), 277–90
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14660971003619594>>
- Porta, Miquel, *Del Franquisme Als Jocs Olímpics (1975-1992)* (Barcelona: Editorial Barcanova, 1995)
- Portabella, Jordi, 'Barcelona: Identity and Cosmopolitanism', *Paradigmes*, 2010, pp. 115–23

- 'Post-Erasmus Syndrome: Sos Distress', *cafebabel*, 2007
<<http://www.cafebabel.co.uk/society/article/post-erasmus-syndrome-sos-distress.html#login>>
- Pountain, Dick, and David Robins, *Cool Rules: Anatomy of an Attitude* (London: Foci, 2000)
- Prahalad, Coimbatore Krishnarao, *The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid. Eradicating Poverty Through Profits* (New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc., 2010)
- Price, Gordon, 'Why Is Vancouver Number 1?' (Amsterdam: MRA Congress EYE on the Future, February 2013)
- 'Pro's En Contra's VU En UvA', *Marokko Community Forum*, 2007
<<http://forums.marokko.nl/showthread.php?t=1357620&s=d3749c5b7eba151afbae0b05511614a7>>
- 'Prominent Figuur Harde Kern Neergeschoten', *forum.fok.nl*, 2011
<<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/1695936/1/999>>
- Public Enemy & Run DMC - Live Dutch TV 1988 Part 2* (The Netherlands: Waaghals Records Video Dump/YouTube, 1988) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPw9y5_3T0k>
- Public Enemy Live Dutch TV 1988 Part 1* (The Netherlands: Waaghals Records Video Dump/YouTube, 1988) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-kLgoVMnj8>>
- 'Publications by "Centraal Bureau van Statistiek"', 2013 <<http://www.cbs.nl/en-GB/menu/publicaties/publicaties-per-thema/default.htm>>
- Raban, Jonathan, *Soft City* (The Harvill Press, 1974)
- 'Rabat', *filmtotaal*, 2011 <<http://www.filmtotaal.nl/recensie.php?id=22063>>
- Radio televisión de Castilla y León, '¿Hay Vida Después Del Erasmus?', *rtvcyl*, 2014
<<http://www.rtvcyl.es/Noticia/AC807F1E-96F1-8344-0163634991707E8B/20140807/hay/vida/despues/erasmus/>>
- Rancière, Jacques, *Le Partage Du Sensible. Esthétique et Politique* (Paris: La fabrique éditions, 2000)
- Rapp, Tobias, 'Lost and Sound: Berlin, Techno and the Easyjet Set', *Innervisions*, 2010
- Redactie, 'Cruiff Had Bij Barcelona Nooit Een Rol Zoals Nu Bij Ajax', *Algemeen Dagblad* (Rotterdam, 30 March 2011)
<<http://www.ad.nl/ad/nl/1441/Ajax/article/detail/1896720/2011/03/30/Cruiff-had-bij-Barcelona-nooit-een-rol-zoals-nu-bij-Ajax.dhtml>>
- — —, 'Feyenoordfans Waarschuwen Jan Vertonghen', *Algemeen Dagblad* (Rotterdam, 18 September 2010)
<<http://www.ad.nl/ad/nl/1441/Ajax/article/detail/1939558/2010/09/18/Feyenoordfans-waarschuwen-Jan-Vertonghen.dhtml>>

- , “Kan Me Voorstellen Dat Mensen Zich Aan Ajax Ergeren”, *Algemeen Dagblad* (Rotterdam, 27 April 2011) <<http://www.ad.nl/ad/nl/1441/Ajax/article/detail/2424479/2011/04/27/Kan-me-voorstellen-dat-mensen-zich-aan-Ajax-ergeren.dhtml?redirected.>>
- , “Volgens de Media Kan Ik Er Niks van En Pas Ik Niet Bij Ajax”, *Het Parool* (Amsterdam, 5 March 2012) <<http://www.parool.nl/parool/nl/13/AJAX/article/detail/3218141/2012/03/05/Volgens-de-media-kan-ik-er-niks-van-en-pas-ik-niet-bij-Ajax.dhtml>>
- Redactie Hard/hoofd, ‘Wat Is Hard//hoofd?’, *Hard/hoofd. Online tijdschrift voor kunst en journalistiek* (Amsterdam, 31 August 2009) <<http://hardhoofd.com/wat-is-hardhoofd/>>
- Redden, G., ‘Religion, Cultural Studies and New Age Sacralization of Everyday Life’, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 14 (2011), 649–63 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1367549411419977>>
- Reep, Eyal van der, ‘Twintig Jaar Osdorp Posse: Afschijt’, *3voor12 VPRO*, 2009 <<http://3voor12.vpro.nl/artikelen/artikel/42569516>>
- Regteren Altena, I.Q. Thiel, van P.J.J., *De Portret-Galerij van de Universiteit van Amsterdam En Haar Stichter Gerard van Papenbroeck. 1673-1743* (Amsterdam: Swets en Zeitlinger, 1964)
- Reinert, Erik S, ‘Economics and the Public Sphere’, *Working Papers in Technology Governance and Economic Dynamics*, 40 (2012)
- ‘Rembrandt Award Voor New Kids: Turbo!’, *Omroep Brabant*, 2011 <<http://www.omroepbrabant.nl/?video/68439912/Rembrandt+Award+voor+New+Kids+Turbo!.aspx>>
- Rennett, Michael, ‘Quentin Tarantino and the Director as DJ’, *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 45 (2012), 391–409
- Rensman, Eva, ‘De Jaren Tachtig van Joost Zwagerman. “Rechts Zijn Was Camp”’, *Historisch Nieuwsblad*, 2002 <<http://www.historischnieuwsblad.nl/nl/artikel/5874/de-jaren-tachtig-van-joost-zwagerman.html>>
- Reynolds, Simon, *Retromania: Pop Culture’s Addiction to Its Own Past* (New York: Faber and Faber, Inc., 2011)
- Richters, Eric, Eric Beerkens, and Rosa Becker, *Mapping Mobility 2010* (The Hague: Nuffic, 2010)
- RiskeDeRat Ik Maak Al Genoeg Mee* (The Netherlands: DownLowProductions/YouTube, 2008) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AOejxpW2JA0&feature=related>>
- Ritzen, Jo, ‘Can the University Save Europe? Taken for a Ride or Taking the Bull by the Horns’ (Maastricht: Maastricht University, 2012), pp. 1–24
- , *Hoger Onderwijs En Onderzoek Plan 1992 (HOOP)* (Den Haag, 1991)
- Ritzer, George, *The McDonaldization of Society* (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC: Sage publications Inc., 2012)

- Robertson, Roland, *Globalization, Social Theory and Global Culture* (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage Publication Ltd., 1992)
- Robertson, Thomas S., and Harold H. Kassarian, *Handbook of Consumer Behavior* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall College Div, 1990)
- 'ROC van Amsterdam: Het Podium Voor Jouw Talent!' <
<http://www.roc.nl/default.php?fr=inst&inst=37>>
- Roda, Agnese, 'Dret En Krulle Bijlmer Style a Story of Amsterdam Rappers', *HOOP DOOP magazine* (Amsterdam, 2014) <<http://issuu.com/hoopdoop/docs/hoopdoop4/35?e=0>>
- 'Rood Witte Olifant', *roodwitteolifant.nl*, 2011 <<http://www.roodwitteolifant.nl/>>
- Rosenthal, Sandra B., Carl R. Hausman, and Douglas R. Anderson, *Classical American Pragmatism: Its Contemporary Vitality* (Illinois: Board of Trustees of The University of Illinois, 1999)
- Van Royen, Kasper, 'Geen Supporter', *Hard/hoofd*, 2010 <<http://hardhoofd.com/2010/06/21/geen-supporter/>>
- Rutte, Ellen, 'Vintage_Russia: Wat Imperfectie Sexy Maakt' (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 2013)
- Rutte, Mark, *Beleidsreactie 'De Helft van Nederland Hoogopgeleid'* (Den Haag: Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2006)
- Said, Edward, 'The Politics of Knowledge', in *Race, Identity, and Representation in Education*, ed. by Cameron McCarthy, Warren Crichlow, Greg Dimitradis, and Nadine Dolby (London-New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 453–60
- Salaam, Mtume ya, 'The Aesthetics of Rap', *African American Review*, 29 (2012), 303–15
- Salah Edin - Het Land Van...* (The Netherlands: TopNotch/YouTube, 2007)
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1o-2K6vUaYM>>
- Salah Edin P&W INTERVIEW* (The Netherlands: Salah Edin/YouTube, 2011)
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qm-Co3OZOa8>>
- 'Salah Edin. Nederlands Grootste Nachtmerrie' (Amsterdam: TopNotch, 2007)
<<https://tnfeeds.wordpress.com/2012/01/10/salah-edin-nederlands-grootste-nachtmerrie/>>
- Salm, Sophie van der, 'Amsterdam Museum Toont Tapijt Met 179 Nationaliteiten', *Het Parool* (Amsterdam, 26 June 2012)
<<http://www.parool.nl/parool/nl/12/CULTUUR/article/detail/3277279/2012/06/26/Amsterdam-Museum-toont-tapijt-met-179-nationaliteiten.dhtml>>
- Sassen, Saskia, 'The City: Its Return as a Lens for Social Theory', *City, Culture and Society*, 1 (2010), 3–11 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ccs.2010.04.003>>
- Saunders, Peter, 'Why Capitalism Is Good for the Soul', *The Insider*, 2008

- Scheme015 Ft. Flex, N.A.G, DoGy, Skitzo, Nektar - Wilders Diss* (The Netherlands: YouTube, 2008)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NpV-_MX88ww>
- Schnabel, Paul, and others, *Jaarverslag 2012* (Den Haag, 2013)
- Schohaus, Birte, and Marijke de Vries, *De Wereld Aan Je Voeten En Andere Illusies Uit Het Leven van Twintigers* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2013)
- Schouten, John W, 'Selves in Transition: Rites of Symbolic Passage and Consumption Personal Identity Reconstruction', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17 (1991), 412–25
- Schouten, John W, and James H McAlexander, 'Subcultures of Consumption: An Ethnography of the New Bikers', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22 (1995), 43–61
- Schumacher, G., *Wie Is de HvA Student? Een Onderzoek Naar de Behoeftte Aan ASVA Diensten Op de HvA* (Amsterdam, 2006) <<https://www.asva.nl/node/254>>
- Scott, David, *Conscripts of Modernity. The Tragedy of Colonial Enlightenment* (Duke: Duke University Press. Durham & London, 2004)
- Sef, 'De Leven', 2011 <http://www.puna.nl/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/00-sef-de_leventje_ep-cover-800px-72dpi2222.jpg>
- Segers, Arjen, 'Kies de Lekkerste', *DUB* (Utrecht: DUB, 2010), pp. 13–14 <<http://www.dub.uu.nl>>
- Seleky, Maurice, *Ego Faber* (Amsterdam: Anthos, 2010)
- 'SES Studentenverenigingen', *forum.fok.nl*, 2010
<<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/1452523/2/25#81273671>>
- Shakur, Tupac, *The Rose That Grew from Concrete* (Amaru Interscope, 2000)
- Sharf, Barbara F., 'Beyond Netiquette: The Ethics of Doing Naturalistic Research on the Internet', in *Doing Internet Research: Critical Issues and Methods for Examining the Net*, ed. by Steve Jones (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd, 1999), pp. 243–56
- Sickodelic, 'No Men Land. Tierra de Nadie. El Albergue Español', *blogspot.nl*, 2008, pp. 1–4
<<http://sickodelic.blogspot.nl/2008/01/q.html>>
- Sigalas, Emmanuel, 'Cross-Border Mobility and European Identity: The Effectiveness of Intergroup Contact during the ERASMUS Year Abroad', *European Union Politics*, 11 (2010), 241–65
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1465116510363656>>
- Simmel, Georg, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', in *Metropolis Centre and Symbol of our Times*, ed. by Philip Kasinitz, Reprinted (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), pp. 30–45
- Siver, Cameron, and Sarah Mower, *DECADES: A Century of Fashion* (Bloomsbury Institute, 2012)
- Sloterdijk, Peter, 'Foam City', *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory*, 9 (2008), 47–59
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1600910X.2008.9672955>>

- , *Im Weltinnenraum Des Kapitals. Für Eine Philosophische Theorie Der Globalisierung* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2005)
- , *In Medias Res*, ed. by W. Schinkel and L. Noordegraaf-Eelens (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2011)
- Sloterdijk, Peter, and Isidoro Reguera (translator), *En El Mundo Interior Del Capital. Para Una Teoría Filosófica de La Globalización* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Ensayo Siruela, 2007)
- , *Esferas Vol. III: Espumas* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Ensayo Siruela, 2006)
- Smits, Henk Willem, 'Reality-Soap over "Luxe Leven in Amsterdam-Zuid"', *Quote* (Amsterdam, 14 August 2012) <<http://www.quotenet.nl/Nieuws/Reality-soap-over-luxe-leven-in-Amsterdam-Zuid-18013>>
- Snow, Charles Percy, 'THE REDE LECTURE, 1959. The Two Cultures' (Cambridge University Press, 1959) <<http://s-f-walker.org.uk/pubsebooks/2cultures/Rede-lecture-2-cultures.pdf>>
- 'Sociëteit ASC Drie Ur Vroeger Dicht', *soggen.nl*, 2010 <<http://www.soggen.nl/?p=1225>>
- Sollie, Anne, 'Hip Hop Holland. Een Talige Karakterisering van Nederlandstalige Rapteksten Als Genre' (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 2012)
- Southgate, Nick, 'Coolhunting with Aristotle', *International Journal of Market Research*, 4 (2003), 167–90
- Spaaij, Ramón, *Understanding Football Hooliganism. A Comparison of Six Western European Clubs* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006)
- Spann, Randall, 'In Het Land Der Platenlabels Is Kees de Koning', *hiphopleeft*, 2011 <<http://hiphopleeft.nl/in-het-land-der-platenlabels-is-kees-de-koning/>>
- 'Sprookjes Bestaan', *PS van de Week, Het Parool* (Amsterdam, 2 February 2013)
- 'Spui 25. Academisch-Cultureel Centrum' (Amsterdam) <<http://www.spui25.nl/>>
- 'Spui Lezing: "Jong, Excellent En Zonder Werk" 11 June 2013', *Spui 25* (Amsterdam, 2013) <<http://www.spui25.nl/programma/item/11.06.13--groene-amsterdammer.html>>
- 'Ssra (Amsterdam) - Een Vereniging Met Humor', *Studenten.net* (Amsterdam, 2000) <http://www.studenten.net/studieleven/verenigingen/447/ssra_amsterdam_-_een_vereniging_met_humor>
- 'Stadion De Meer', *ajaxinside.nl* <<http://www.ajaxinside.nl/pagina/demeer>>
- 'Stadsdelen Gemeente Amsterdam' <<http://www.amsterdam.nl/gemeente/stadsdelen/>>
- Van Stapele, Saul, 'Kleurenziend', *Current Affairs, Lebowski Publishers* (Amsterdam, 26 March 2014) <<https://medium.com/nonfictie-current-affairs/saul-van-stapele-a0d8a3c3184e>>

- , *Van Brooklyn Naar Breukelen. 20 Jaar Hiphop in Nederland* (Amsterdam: Nationaal Pop Instituut, 2002)
- 'Steps for Getting an Erasmus', *es.erasmoos.com*, 2010
<<http://es.erasmoos.com/blogs/StepsforgettinganErasmus/?p=3>>
- Sternberg, Robert J., *Love Is a Story: A New Theory of Relationships* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998)
- Stokvis, Ruud, 'Ajax Isn't Ajax Anymore: On Power, Rhetoric and Identity', *Soccer & Society*, 9 (2008), 497–508 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14660970802257564>>
- Stolker, Danny, *Smoelwerk - De Ontwikkeling van Hiphop in Nederland 1999-2009* (The Netherlands: Holland Doc, 2009) <<http://www.documentaire.net.nl/review/smoelwerk-de-ontwikkeling-van-hiphop-in-nederland-1999-2009/>>
- Stolker, Danny 'Kas', *Fatcap Express* (The Netherlands, 2008)
<<http://www.molotow.com/magazine/blog/blog/2012/02/29/fatcap-express/>>
- Stone, Chris, 'The Role of Football in Everyday Life', *Soccer & Society*, 8 (2007), 169–84
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14660970701224319>>
- 'Stories by Ebele Wybenga', *wybenga.contently* <<https://wybenga.contently.com/>>
- Storm, A., 'Kluuniaanse Aanstellerij', *Het Parool* (Amsterdam, 2003)
- Streitwieser, Bernhard, 'Erasmus Mobility and Students' Conceptions of National, Regional and Global Citizenship Identity', in *Internationalisation revisited; New dimensions in the internationalisation of higher education*, ed. by Jos Beelen and Hans de Wit (Amsterdam: CAREM, 2012), pp. 135–50
- Strubell, Toni, *Les Penyes Barcelonistes*, Editorial (Barcelona, 1998)
- 'Studenten Woorden Die Beginnen Met de Letter: D' <<http://studenten-woordenboek.nl/d/>>
- Studentenprotest 1991, Minister Ritzen Zwakt Plannen Af* (The Netherlands: Studentenbeweging/YouTube, 2008) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-hXx-rOQtU>>
- 'Studententaal' <http://npcwin.home.xs4all.nl/specials/cursist/page_studententaal.htm>
- 'Studententaal (Deel 1: A T/m K)', 2007 <<http://mens-en-samenleving.infonu.nl/communicatie/7507-studententaal-deel-i-a-tm-k.html>>
- 'Studentenvereniging', *forum.fok.nl*, 2010 <<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/1452523/1/50#81238645>>
- Style City Amsterdam* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2007)
- 'Successupporters', *forum.fok.nl*, 2011 <<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/1664405/1/999>>
- Sumantra, Ghosal, Christopher A. Barlett, and Peter Moran, 'A New Manifesto for Management', *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 40 (1999), 9–20

'SVEN HIGH CBS', *Afca*, 2014 <<http://www.afca.nl/remember-2/sven/>>

Swyngedouw, Erik, 'Circulations and Metabolisms: (Hybrid) Natures and (Cyborg) Cities', *Science as Culture*, 15 (2006), 105–21 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09505430600707970>>

— — —, 'The Antinomies of the Postpolitical City: In Search of a Democratic Politics of Environmental Production', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 33 (2009), 601–20 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2009.00859.x>>

Taihuttu, Jim, *WOLKEN #2* (The Netherlands: TopNotchNL/YouTube, 2009) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7WXi9pYeSJA>>

Tapscott, Don, *Grown up Digital. How the Net Generation Is Changing the World* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2009)

Terhorst, Pieter, Jacques van de Ven, and Leon Dében, 'Amsterdam: It's All in the Mix', in *Cities and visitors. Regulating People, Markets and City Space*, ed. by Lily M. Hoffman, Susan Fainstein, and Dennis R. Judd (Blackwell Publishing, 2007)

'The Best Pants in Life Are Free', *rassionmagazine*, 2008 <<http://rassionmagazine.wordpress.com/2008/08/11/the-best-pants-in-life-are-free/>>

The Opposites, 'Fok Jou' (Amsterdam, 2005)

The Opposites - Broodje Bakpao Ft. Sef, Gers Pardoel. 2009 (The Netherlands: TheOppositesVEVO/YouTube, 2012) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WDFuVWSX9N8>>

The Opposites - Sukkel Voor De Liefde Ft. Mr. Probz (The Netherlands: TheOppositesVEVO/YouTube, 2013) <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CnNU-EwYjaQ&feature=kp>>

'The UK Bunch', *fadtony.blogspot*, 2009 <<http://www.fadtony.blogspot.nl/>>

Thiemo, 'Fatcap: De Eerste Echte Nederlandse Hiphop Film', *Leipeshit*, 25 February 2008 <<http://www.leipeshit.nl/forums/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=16207&start=0>>

Thompson, Craig J, 'Interpreting Consumers: A Hermeneutical Framework for Deriving Consumers Insights from the Texts of Consumers' Consumption Stories', *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34 (1997), 438–55

Thompson, John B., *Studies in the Theory of Ideology* (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984)

Thrift, Nigel, 'Steps to an Ecology of Place', in *Human Geography Today*, ed. by Doreen Massey, John Allen, and Phil Sarre (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), pp. 295–321

Tim, 'DVD: Sterke Verhalen', *Film info. Fok.nl* (Amsterdam, 10 January 2011) <<http://frontpage.fok.nl/review/423926/1/1/50/dvd-sterke-verhalen.html>>

Titaantjes (KRO, 1983)

- Top 10: *Mounir El Hamdaoui* (The Netherlands: AFC Ajax/YouTube, 2010)
<http://www.youtube.com/all_comments?v=EyKmJNnMI9E&page=1>
- 'Top 5: Waar Wonen de Meeste Miljonairs?', *Quote* (Amsterdam, 2 August 2011), pp. 4–6
- 'Topic: Ajax Kijken in Amsterdam Op 15 Mei', *forum.headliner.nl*, 2011
<<http://forum.headliner.nl/topic-21480/p2/>>
- Uitermark, Justus, 'An in Memoriam for the Just City of Amsterdam', *City*, 13 (2009), 347–61
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13604810902982813>>
- , 'Re-Scaling, "Scale Fragmentation" and the Regulation of Antagonistic Relationships',
Progress in Human Geography, 26 (2002), 743–65
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1191/0309132502ph401oa>>
- Uitermark, Justus, and Walter Nicholls, 'From Politicization to Policing: The Rise and Decline of New Social Movements in Amsterdam and Paris', *Antipode*, 2013, 1–22
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/anti.12025>>
- Ultrasliberi, *No One Like Us, We Don't Care* (Hungary: HUNGARY ULTRASLIBERI/YouTube, 2012)
<<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=coUd-AaLkjQ>>
- Van Ulzen, Patricia, *Imagine a Metropolis. Rotterdam's Creative Class, 1970-2000* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2007)
- 'UvA FEB, Marketing, International Programmes', *University of Amsterdam*, 2009
<http://issuu.com/uvafebmc/docs/09301_uva_mb_algemeen_eng_proef7>
- Vaihinger, Hans, *De Filosofie van Het Alsof* (Utrecht: Ijzer, 2014)
- Valentine, Gill, 'Living with Difference: Reflections on Geographies of Encounter', *Progress in Human Geography*, 32 (2008), 323–37 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0309133308089372>>
- , 'Prejudice: Rethinking Geographies of Oppression', *Social & Cultural Geography*, 11 (2010), 519–37 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2010.497849>>
- , "'Sticks and Stones May Break My Bones": A Personal Geography of Harassment', *Antipode*, 30 (1998), 305–32 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1467-8330.00082>>
- Valkering, Sjoerd, 'Ajax Onderzoekt Vrouwenvoetbal', *AjaxShowTime.com*, 2011
<<http://www.ajaxshowtime.com/hoofdnieuws/58087/ajax-onderzoekt-vrouwenvoetbal.html>>
- Vanderheijden, Dave, ed., *Smoelwerk. The Ontwikkeling van Hip Hop in Nederland 1999-2009*. (De Boekfabriek)
- Vázquez Montalbán, Manuel, *El Fútbol: Una Religión En Busca de Un Dios* (Madrid: Debate, 2005)
- Van Veen, Evelien, 'Wie Zegt Me Wat Ik Aan Moet', *Volkskrant Magazine Mode* (Amsterdam, 2013)
- Van Veen, Femke, 'Week 28', *blogspot.nl*, 2012 <<http://femkevanveen.blogspot.nl>>

- Venkatesh, Alladi, and A. Fuat Firat, 'Liberatory Postmodernism and Consumption the Reenchantment of Consumption', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22 (1995), 239–67
- Venz & Jiggy, 'Conversation with Ome Omar', *Wat Anders Lijn 5* (Amsterdam, 15 May 2011)
- — —, 'Conversation with Sef', *Wat Anders Lijn 5* (Amsterdam, 7 June 2011)
<<http://www.funxhiphop.nl/radio/watanders/3121-lijn5-wat-anders-sef>>
- Vermeulen, Floris, Jean Tillie, and Robert van de Walle, 'Different Effects of Ethnic Diversity on Social Capital: Density of Foundations and Leisure Associations in Amsterdam Neighbourhoods', *Urban Studies*, 49 (2012), 337–52 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0042098011403016>>
- 'Verschil UvA En VU', *forum.fok.nl*, 2009 <<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/1342715>>
- 'Verschil UvA En VU?', *forum.fok.nl*, 2013 <<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/1902108/1/50>>
- 'Verschil UvA En Vu?', *forum.fok.nl*, 2012 <<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/1902108/1/999#119918358>>
- 'Vertonghen Thuis in Amsterdam' (The Netherlands: AFC Ajax/YouTube, 2011)
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTTxxfMHLIs>>
- 'Voetbalfans. Ajax' (The Netherlands: RTL7, 2012)
<<http://www.uitzendinggemist.net/aflevering/117665/Voetbalfans.html>>
- 'Voetbalfans. Even Op de Jongens Wachten' (RTL7, 2011)
<<http://www.uitzendinggemist.net/aflevering/32059/Voetbalfans.html>>
- 'Voor FC Utrecht Supporters Is 6 December D-Day', *Blog.nl*, 5 December 2009 <Material in archive>
- Vorbereitung, Inleiding, 'Viering Landskampioenschap Ajax 2011', 2011, 1–31
- Voss, Daan Heerma van, and Daniël van der Meer, 'Pepijn Lanen vs. Herman Pleij', *hiphopleeft*, 2010
<<http://hiphopleeft.nl/interview-pepijn-lanen/>>
- Voss, Thomas Heerma van, 'Formidable: Het Verhaal van Stromae', *Vrij Nederland* (Amsterdam, December 2013) <<http://www.vn.nl/Archief/Media/Artikel-Media/Formidable-het-verhaal-van-Stromae.htm>>
- Vrankrijker, A C J De, *Vier Eeuwen Nederlandsch Studentenleven*, 2008 dbnl (Voorburg, 1936)
- Vugts, Paul, 'Badr Hari Werd "Zwaar Beledigd" Tijdens Sensation White', *Het Parool*, August 2012
<<http://www.parool.nl/parool/nl/4/AMSTERDAM/article/detail/3305303/2012/08/23/Badr-Hari-werd-zwaar-beledigd-tijdens-Sensation-White.dhtml>>
- Vuijsje, Robert, *Alleen Maar Nette Mensen* (Amsterdam: Nijgh & Van Ditmar, 2008)
- — —, 'Corps', *Het Parool* (Amsterdam, 29 May 2009)
- 'Vurrukkuluk Was Die Tijd', *Geschiedenis 24- Andere Tijden* (VPRO, NTR, 2011)

- De Waard, Marco, 'Amsterdam and Its Global Imaginary', in *Imagining Global Amsterdam: History, Culture, and Geography in a World City*, ed. by Marco de Waard (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012)
- Van der Wal, Laura, 'Hopi-Boys in Bijlmer Inmiddels Stukje Ouder En Wijzer', *NAP, Nieuw Amsterdams Peil* (Amsterdam, 9 October 2009) <<http://www.napnieuws.nl/2009/10/09/hopi-boys-in-bijlmer-inmiddels-stukje-ouder-en-wijzer/>>
- Walsum, Sander van, 'Bravoure in de Verdrukking', *de Volkskrant* (Amsterdam, 11 July 2002) <<http://www.volkskrant.nl/dossier-archief/bravoure-in-de-verdrukking~a626975/>>
- Wassenberg, Frank, 'Demolition in the Bijlmermeer: Lessons from Transforming a Large Housing Estate', *Building Research & Information*, 39 (2011), 363–79 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09613218.2011.585104>>
- 'Wat Vinden Meisjes van Broek Laag Dragen???' , *Bijlmerenzo* (Amsterdam Zuidoost, 2012)
- 'Waterlooplein', *ellegirltalk*, 2005 <<http://forum.ellegirl.nl/showthread.php?53430-Waterlooplein>>
- 'We All Lived In Erasmus Amsterdam', *amsterdam08.blogspot*, 2009 <<http://amsterdam08.blogspot.nl/>>
- 'We Are All Made of Stars'. *Official Audio. Moby 18* (United States: YouTube, 2002) <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x1rFAaAKpVc>>
- 'Website Erasmusworld', *Erasmusworld*, 2012 <http://www.erasmusworld.com/portal/modules/newbb/print.php?form=1&topic_id=55082&forum=93>
- Weinstock Netanel, Neil, 'Copyright and a Democratic Civil Society', *Yale Law Journal*, 106 (1996), 283–387
- 'Weltevreden Op 10' (The Netherlands: NTVF, 2004)
- Van der Wende, Marijk, 'Internationalization of Higher Education in the OECD Countries: Challenges and Opportunities for the Coming Decade', *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11 (2007), 274–89 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1028315307303543>>
- , 'The International Dimension in National Higher Education Policies: What Has Changed in Europe in the Last Five Years?', *European Journal of Education*, 36 (2001), 431–41
- Werdmolder, Hans, 'Marokkaanse Macho's Accepteren Geen Autoriteit van "Vreemden"', *de Volkskrant* (Amsterdam, 7 December 2012) <<http://www.volkskrant.nl/vk/nl/3184/opinie/article/detail/3359417/2012/12/07/Marokkaanse-macho-s-accepteren-geen-autoriteit-van-vreemden.dhtml>>
- Wertime, Kent, *Building Brands & Believers. How to Connect with Consumers Using Archetypes* (Singapore: John Wiley & Sons (Asa), 2002)
- Westerveld, Floor, *Dingen Die Niet Kunnen* (Uitgeverij Perziek, 2009)

- 'Which University in Netherlands Do You Recommend?', *erasmus-exchange*, 2012
<<http://www.erasmus-exchange.info/viewtopic.php?f=25&t=561>>
- 'Wijken in Amsterdam.. Waar Wil Je Wel/niet Wonen [part Deux]', *forum.fok.nl*, 2010, pp. 1–8
<<http://forum.fok.nl/topic/1481547/3/25#83276237>>
- Wilt, Kate, 'Married to the MOB: Sexually Empowering Women across the Globe through Brand Image', *K Wilt - services.library.drexel.edu*, 2011, pp. 1–7
<[www.library.drexel.edu/publications/dsmr/Wilt Final.pdf](http://www.library.drexel.edu/publications/dsmr/Wilt%20Final.pdf)>
- Wimsatt, William Upsi, *Bomb the Suburbs* (Berkeley: Publishers Group West, 2008)
- Van Winden, Willem, 'Knowledge and the European City', *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 101 (2010), 100–106 <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9663.2009.00591.x>>
- Van Winden, Willem, Leo Van Den Berg, and Peter Pol, 'European Cities in the Knowledge Economy: Towards a Typology', *Urban Studies*, 44 (2007), 525–49
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00420980601131886>>
- Wirth-Nesher, Hana, *City Codes: Reading the Modern Urban Novel* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996)
- De Wit, Hans, 'Erasmus at 25: What Is the Future for International Student Mobility?', *The Guardian* (London, 21 May 2012) <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/higher-education-network/blog/2012/may/21/erasmus-programme-and-student-mobility>>
- De Wit, Hans, Pawan Agarwal, Mohsen Elmahdy Said, and Muhammad Sirozi, eds., *The Dynamics of International Student Circulation in a Global Context* (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2008)
- Witteman, Jonathan, 'Hoe Goed Is Nederland. Hoe Goed Is... de Ondernemer? Interview Met Rattan Chadha', *de Volkskrant* (Amsterdam, 5 February 2013)
- 'Workshop "De Ideale Studiedag van Een Student in 2025". Presentation and Discussion Led by Michiel Stapper, Chair ASVA Student Union', *HvA Onderwijsconferentie 2013* (Amsterdam, 2013) <<http://www.hva.nl/onderwijsconferentie/masterclassesworkshops/>>
- Worthy, James, *James Worthy* (Amsterdam: Lebowsky Achievers, 2011)
- Wybenga, Ebele, *Galerie Onvolmaakt* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2007)
- — —, 'Verslavend Plakboek', *NRC*, 16 February 2013
<<http://www.nrc.nl/handelsblad/van/2013/februari/16/verslavend-plakboek-12618110>>
- 'Yo Fui Erasmus La Cultura de Segunda Mano En Finlandia (Kirpputoris)', *Erasmooos.com*, 2009, pp. 37–40 <Material in archive>
- Yousman, Bill, 'Blackophilia and Blackophobia: White Youth, the Consumption of Rap Music, and White Supremacy', *Communication Theory*, 13 (2003), 366–91
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/ct/13.4.366>>

Zaltman, Gerald, *How Customers Think: Essential Insights into the Mind of the Market* (Harvard Business School Press, 2003)

De Zoza's, *Zo Zuidas. Overwerk & Achterklap in de Amsterdamse Kantoorjungle* (Amsterdam: Pearson Education, 2010)

Zozuidas, 'Floris & Fatima', 2011 <<http://www.zozuidas.nl/2011/11/floris-fatima.html>>

Nederlandse Samenvatting

BELEVING (BE)GRIJPEN: Studenten en andere Amsterdamse «tribes»

Voor steden als Amsterdam zijn studenten gedurende de laatste decennia een doelgroep geworden. Ze worden gezien als het getalenteerde potentieel dat steden nodig hebben om de groeiende mondiale concurrentie tegemoet te treden, en als de groep waar steden hun dynamische uitstraling aan te danken hebben. In dit (thans overheersende) discours in de institutionele communicatie binnen de stad en het onderwijs, worden studenten beschouwd als instrument om inkomsten te verwerven, als ‘klanten’ van tertiair onderwijs, of als de ‘eindproducten’ die afgeleverd moeten worden aan het bedrijfsleven en de markt. Meer genuanceerd of subtiel onderzoek naar stedelijk beheer, stadsmarketing, plaatsen, beeldvorming, reputatie, identiteit en gevoelens van verbondenheid onder jongvolwassenen wordt vaak overstemd door deze trend, en blijft beperkt tot de grenzen van de academische onderzoeksliteratuur zonder een directe praktische toepassing te krijgen.

Dit proefschrift beoogt een bijdrage te leveren aan de operationalisering van inzichten in studentidentiteiten, stedelijke beeldvorming en de communicatie rond marketing en beheer van de stad en haar onderwijsinstellingen. In plaats van vast te blijven houden aan het discours van het managen en verhogen van het positieve imago van Amsterdam, heeft dit proefschrift tot doel op een meer realistische manier, gebaseerd op informatie uit de eerste hand, inzicht te geven in de huidige beeldvorming over Amsterdam zoals die bestaat in cohorten van jongvolwassenen. Om die reden bestaan de primaire bronnen voor dit onderzoek uit een compilatie van heterogeen, bestaand (‘real-life’) materiaal, geproduceerd door jongvolwassenen als onderdeel van hun culturele communicatie, in plaats van speciaal voor dit onderzoek materiaal te genereren. De selectie van cohorten bepaalde ook deels de keuze van het medium voor het documenteren van hun zelfbeeld, hun beeld van de stad en de manier waarop zij zichzelf daarin positioneren. Dit cohortonderzoek opent met een hoofdstuk (H3) dat grotendeels gebaseerd is op hedendaagse, autobiografische coming-of-age romans, gesitueerd in Amsterdam en gecentreerd rond protagonisten die streven naar een toekomst in de creatieve sector als schrijver, journalist, regisseur, ontwerper, enz. De data in de daaropvolgende hoofdstukken zijn ontleend aan min of meer informele gedrukte of sociale media, en betreffen het zelfbeeld en het beeld van de stad zoals dat bestaat bij: corpsstudenten, meer in het bijzonder die van het Amsterdamse studentcorps ASC/AVSV (H4); Ajaxsupporters (H5); jongvolwassenen die actief zijn binnen de hiphop-scene, als performer of als consument (H6); en

internationale studenten die in Amsterdam of omgeving verblijven in het kader van het Europese uitwisselingsprogramma Erasmus. Deze groepen die gelijktijdig in Amsterdam verblijven, worden in hoofdstuk 7 ook in theoretisch opzicht in een onderling verband geplaatst.

Deze hoofdstukken 3 tot en met 7 waarin de data-analyse plaatsvindt, vormen het middendeel van dit proefschrift. Dit wordt voorafgegaan door twee inleidende hoofdstukken waarin de onderzoeksvraag, de theoretische achtergronden en de methodologie uiteengezet worden, en gevolgd door twee synthetische en afsluitende hoofdstukken. Hoofdstuk 8 bevat een aanvullende analyse van de gegevens, en heeft als doel de beeldvorming en reputaties van Amsterdam heel algemeen in kaart te brengen. Deze analyse is vooral gericht op de specifieke relatie tussen uiterlijk, mensen en plaatsen, en het schetsen van een algemeen beeld over de vraag wie verondersteld wordt waarbij te horen. In hoofdstuk 9 ten slotte worden de contrasterende denkbeelden die in de voorgaande hoofdstukken 3 tot en met 8 naar voren kwamen, in een onderlinge samenhang geplaatst. Tevens wordt hun relatie besproken met de algemene achtergronden die in hoofdstuk 1 en 2 werden toegelicht, en worden de conclusies gepresenteerd.

De analyse van dit materiaal is methodologisch gebaseerd op twee benaderingen: consumentonderzoek gebaseerd op tribal marketing, en de studie van culturele representaties (imagologie). De resultaten laten zien dat studenten (en andere jongvolwassenen) hun gevoelens van verbondenheid ontwikkelen op basis van een mix van elementen, waarbij sprake is van een combinatie van lifestylekeuzes en overgeërfde (of zelfs stereotiepe) vooroordelen ('denkbeelden') over plaatsen en mensen. Bij de lifestylekeuzes gaat het om een gedeeld, dynamisch en veranderlijk repertoire van alledaags gedrag: hoe gedraag je je, welke kleding draag je en waar ga je naartoe. (De notie 'tribal' staat voor de veranderlijkheid en intra-maatschappelijke veelvormigheid van identiteiten die het resultaat zijn van deze lifestylekeuzes.) De gedeelde 'denkbeelden' en oordelen over plaatsen en mensen zijn minder scherp omljnd, maar wel bestendiger, en houden vaak lang stand, soms zelfs gedurende verschillende generaties; mensen 'engageren zich' in deze denkbeelden. De combinatie van het maken van lifestylekeuzes en het engageren in denkbeelden is een proces (althans, dat is wat in dit proefschrift op basis van het uitgevoerde onderzoek wordt beargumenteerd) dat samengaat met het proces van persoonlijke identiteitsvorming van al die jongvolwassenen in Amsterdam: coming-of-age is verstrengd met hun onderlinge interactie en hun geleidelijke ontdekking van de stad zoals ze die ervaren en identificeren. Uit de denkbeelden en attitudes die uit de primaire gegevens naar voren komen, blijkt dat de denkbeeldige stadskarta van Amsterdam geenszins louter een smeltkroes of emporium is, maar een aantal duidelijk afgebakende grenzen heeft in termen van wie waarbij hoort. Uiteindelijk, en op basis van deze bevindingen, kan dit proefschrift een leidraad zijn voor de ontwikkeling van een meer bestendige en onderbouwde

positionering van Amsterdam en haar onderwijsinstellingen als de gastvrije en tolerante stad, waarin jongvolwassenen daadwerkelijk de mogelijkheid hebben om een betere versie van zichzelf te worden.

English Summary

Capturing the Imaginary: Students and Other Tribes in Amsterdam

During the last decades students have become a target group for cities like Amsterdam. They are addressed as the talented forces that cities need in order to face increasing global competitiveness, a force which itself is represented as giving cities their dynamic edge. This (now predominant) discourse in institutional city and educational communication instrumentalizes students as revenue sources, as 'clients' of tertiary education or the 'end products' to be delivered to business life and the market place. More nuanced or subtle research on urban management, city marketing, places, images, reputation, identity and feelings of belonging among young adults have often been drowned out by this trend, and remain in the realm of academic research literature without direct practical application.

This thesis wants to contribute to operationalize insights into student identities, urban images and city/educational marketing and management communication. Instead of harping on the discourse of managing and increasing the positive image of Amsterdam, this thesis aims to give insight into a more realistic and first-hand way of capturing current images of Amsterdam as shared by cohorts of young adults. Accordingly, its primary sources consist of a compilation of heterogeneous, existing ('real-life') material, produced by young adults as a part of their cultural communication rather than being especially generated for this research. The selection of cohorts also partly dictated the choice of medium through which to document their self-image, the image of the city and of their self-positioning in it. This cohort survey opens with a chapter (ch. 3) drawn largely from contemporary coming-of-age novels and prose fiction, autobiographically set in Amsterdam, and centred on protagonists aiming for a future in the creative sector as writers, journalists, film directors, designers etc. The other chapters draw their data from more or less informal printed or social media involving the self- and city-representations of *corps* (fraternity) students, more particularly those involved Amsterdam's *corps* fraternity ASC/AVSV (ch. 4); the Ajax fandom, supporters of the Amsterdam's Football Club Ajax (ch. 5); those actively involved in the Hip Hop scene, be it as performer or as consumer (ch. 6); and international students on a sojourn in or near Amsterdam as part of their participation in the European exchange programme Erasmus. The spatial co-presence of these groups in Amsterdam is synthetically brought together in chapter 7.

These data-analytical chapters 3 through 7 are sandwiched preceded by two introductory chapters setting forth the research question and theoretical background and the methodology, and two

synthetic and concluding chapters. Chapter 8 presents a complementary analysis of data and has as its aim to draft a general mapping of images and reputations of Amsterdam, focusing the analysis on the specific relation between looks, people and places and sketching a general impression over who is thought to belong where. Finally chapter 9 links the contrasting imaginaries that have been appearing in the preceding chapters 3 to 8, discusses their relation with the general background as presented in chapter 1 and 2 and presents conclusions.

The analysis of this material has been methodologically informed by two approaches: tribal marketing consumer research and the study of cultural representations ('imagology'). The results show that students (and other young adults) develop their feelings of belonging on the basis of a mix of elements, combining lifestyle choices and inherited (even stereotypical) preconceptions ('images') on places and people. The lifestyle choices involve a shared, dynamic and changeable repertoire of everyday performances: how to act, what to wear and where to go. (The notion of the 'tribal' reflects the changeability and the intra-societal multiplicity of the identities resulting from these lifestyle choices.) The shared 'images' and judgements on places and people are vaguer but more durable, and very often have a long, even transgenerational persistence; people 'buy into' them. The combination of making lifestyle choices and buying into images is a process (or so this thesis argues on the basis of the research conducted here) which occurs in tandem with the process of personal identity-formation of all those young adults in Amsterdam: coming of age meshes with their mutual interaction and their progressive discovery of the city as they experience it and identify it. The images and attitudes captured from the primary data reveal that the imaginary city map of Amsterdam is by no means a mere melting pot or emporium, but has some well-delimited boundaries in terms of who belongs where. Eventually, and on the basis of the findings, this thesis provides insights into how to develop a more sustainable and substantiated positioning of Amsterdam and its educational institutions as the hospitable and tolerant city, in which young adults can actually have the possibility of becoming a better version of themselves.