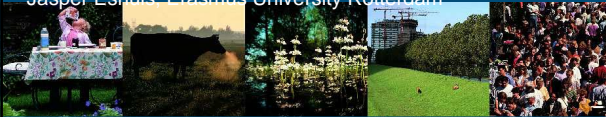


## Privatization of public space: Community formation in housing estates in late-modern society

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### The cases:

- The Amsterdam Do-it-yourself Community (ADM), about 45 acres of land in the western harbour area of Amsterdam, squatted and populated by about 150 artists and craftsmen who collectively organize the design and use of the place
- The Golfresidence Dronten, about 86 acres of land to the south of Dronten village in the Netherlands, populated by about 450 households, each owning a house and, in addition, collectively owning the residence, including the golf courses



### Research question

In what way and to what extent do inhabitants of the ADM and the Golfresidence organize the boundaries of their living place?

### Research method

- Literature study
- Five explorative conversations with 'experts'
- Twenty semi-structured interviews with inhabitants (10 in each community)
- Thirty informal conversations with inhabitants (15 in each community)
- Participatory conversation

## Communities in the network-society

- Castells (2004): communities arise as a protest against the expansion of the network-society
- Bauman (1997): people search for certainty in our post-modern society that is characterized by uncertainty
- Delantey (2003: 163-164): *"The age of globalisation is also the age of community. The search for community is a reaction against (...) the breakup of stable social institutions and the continuity of the life world".*

## Dimensions of closure

- Social closure
- Cognitive closure
- Spatial closure

## Motivations for community formation

- Feeling of belonging
- Development of identities
- Pursuing interests

## Feeling of belonging

The Golfresidence:

*"It is this old-fashioned feeling of togetherness. It is not about drinking coffee together everyday, but if something happens you organize mutual help. But we do not have to. And there is also another side to it: everybody talks about each other: did you hear about so and so?"*

*"if something happens we help each other. The motivation is not getting flowers, the motivation is this pleasant feeling".*

## Feeling of belonging

The ADM:

*"It is just like a village. In a village you also have a number of old families that actually form the core of the village. Here there is the group from the Silo that forms a sort of core. There is also a specific group that belongs to the Robodock festival. For that festival a few people from the Silo theatre work together, but there are also a few others involved.*

*"We correct each other, yes we do. But we do accuse each other nor disapprove".*

## Development of identity

The Golfresidence:

*"It is like 'together in our park'. Our park is what we say. It is moreless isolated from Dronten. Our park".*

*"Man is a herd animal. You feel at your best when in your own herd. That is pleasurable. Now and then there may be some biting in the herd, and isn't that claustrophobic behaviour? No, it's just pleasurable living".*

## Development of identity

The ADM:

*"This place is an industrial scrapyards with beautiful visual characteristics. Nature has developed here. The place has a unique character. From dockyard to a very special ecological environment".*

*"We fought for this place. For the availability of water, of electricity. This is all arranged by a few people here. In case some person just blows in, makes use of the facilities and then leaves the place with mess – batteries, oil – the ADM people always clean the place".*

## Pursuing interests

The Golfresidence:

*"We own the place together, therefore everybody cares for it. Because everybody is owner of the place it is much cleaner here than in other places. Also the gardens are very well cared for. Look, we should not discuss taste and preference, but the gardens are very well cared for, compared to other neighbourhoods".*

## Pursuing interests

The ADM:

*"This freedom. This freedom to explore things. To experiment. When I stopped hiring my former house I gained financial freedom. That is not so interesting, but then I gained time-freedom. And this is completely different from the big well-known outside-the-gate economy".*

## Mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion

- Organizing boundaries (social, cognitive, spatial)
- Group processes (we versus them) reinforce closedness





## Group processes reinforcing closedness

The Golfresidence:

*"Concerning the local living tax we have been litigating against the municipality for years. The issue was whether the value of the real estate includes or excludes 1/450 part of the golf course. This has been a court case and now we have reached an arrangement".*

*"Look, when you walk through the village, people look at you with suspicion. My neighbour was excluded from her colleagues, because she lives here. At the soccer club people assume my husband to be a rich guy. The image exists that people are rich".*

*"I think that people have the feeling that we have something special. That we are special. The inhabitants of Dronten think that as well. They think we are different. The border is the road over there".*

## Group processes reinforcing closedness

The ADM:

*"They (= governments) want power. So the gate is challenging them".*

*"We fight for the maintenance of the place. If we do that well we can stay here for a long time. If we fail, we cannot stay long".*

## Conclusions

- Squatters and golfers have more similarities than one would expect.
- In both communities selforganization results in clear boundaries from the 'outside' world. In both cases the boundaries are socially, cognitively and spatially construed.
- In the Golfresidence selforganization is conscious, formal and explicit. At ADM selforganization is less orchestrated, nevertheless patterns and informal rules have arisen.
- In both communities a sort of mayor represents the community in the 'outside' world.
- Remarkable difference: at ADM conflicts are internally managed whereas at the Golfresidence the court is involved.





## Discussion

- Motivation to live with 'our kind of people' is connected to macro-developments (globalization, individualization)
- Consequence: decrease of public space
- What does this mean for:
  - the social cohesion within society?
  - the acceptance of people with different backgrounds?