Performing Identities on a Dutch River Dike

Kees Terlouw

Representation of space and place programme
Urban and Regional research centre
Department of Human Geography and Planning
Utrecht University
The Netherlands

terlouw@geo.uu.nl
Thinking of Holland
I see wide-flowing rivers
slowly traversing
infinite plains

(Marsman)

Elected in 2000 as poem of the century
Appeldijk and Dutch national identity

• The *Linge* and Dutch national identity
  – From opposition to Dutch modernity
  – To authentic medieval rural landscape

• Blossoming apple trees in spring
  – Resistance song
    • national renewal and blossoming trees
  – Modernisation of fruit plantations
  – *Appeldijk* ‘last’ or most authentic Dutch river dike

• Linked to national holidays in spring
Amsterdam
De bloesemtocht vindt plaats op 16 april 2011.

Goede doel | Sponsors | Links | Contact
Lifestyle groups

• Consumption
  – From prices of necessities (survival households)
  – To image and incorporated values
  – From products to leisure
• Normative lifestyles
  – Product and behaviour incorporate shared beliefs and values
• Changeable
  – Practices and values of lifestyles
  – Individual choice for lifestyles (individualisation)
    • Identity construction as individual project
    • Multiple membership
    • Not ascribed roles and collectively shared national identity
• More fluid associations than distinct groups
Lifestyle groups

• Consumption
  – From prices of necessities (survival households)
  – To image and incorporated values
  – From products to leisure
• Normative lifestyles
  – Product and behaviour incorporate shared beliefs and values
• Changeable
  – Practices and values of lifestyles
  – Individual choice for lifestyles (individualisation)
• Identity construction as individual project
• Multiple membership
• Not ascribed roles and collectively shared national identity
• More fluid associations than distinct groups

On internet published travel accounts, blogs, travel and tour guides
“I hate cyclists anyway. I drove last summer my motorbike on the Appeldijk and was blocked by 5 cyclists. I quietly closed up on them until one turned around in fright and cursed my presence as a motor driver on this dike. They did not let me through, so I fell back to about 100 meters and then drove at them at full throttle in first gear hooting constantly. Then they made room and cursed me while I passed. This road is open to all traffic, but cyclists believe that in summer these country roads belong to them. Everybody must understand that the road belongs to all and that one has to give way to others, but this ecological bullshit thinking of some make them think that they are in control.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lifestyle</th>
<th>Values attached to use of <em>Appeldijk</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walkers</td>
<td>Traditional landscape, ecology, quit, relaxation, national, <em>(female)</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cycling sightseers</td>
<td>Picturesque Landscape, attractions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training for fitness</td>
<td>Healthy environment, individual health, exercise, individual body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classic car drivers</td>
<td>Scenic landscape, leisurely tour, nostalgic, authentic, mechanical skills, showing off</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorcyclists</td>
<td>Landscape of curvy dikes, showing handling skills, away from everyday life, international,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>relaxing in pubs, individual freedom, <em>(male)</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparing the values attached to the Appeldijk by different lifestyles
Comparing the values attached to the Appeldijk by different lifestyles.
Comparing the values attached to the Appeldijk by different lifestyles.
Local measures against irritant behaviour and noise
Space of dependence and spaces of engagement

• Space of dependence
  – Where the conflicts erupts (*Appeldijk*)

• Spaces of engagement
  – Where conflicts are contested
    • Appeldijk? (Manor Marienwaerdt, district water board, 1990s)
    • Municipality? (Geldermalsen, 2000s + current spring plans)
    • National level (The Council of State)
      – From general closures, to local and temporal solutions for specific problems
Road closures: **upscaling** arena from local dikes to accessibility and freedom of motorcyclist **downscaling** to individual bad behaviour
Conclusion: the role of the nation?

• Diverging lifestyles
  – Based in part on national identity: reduced to iconic landscape
  – Shared iconic element transformed in conflicting lifestyles

• Convergence of different lifestyle performances on same iconic location

• Old national homogeneity generates current conflicts over access rights

• Mediated by national state level
  – From general rules to customisation
  – Separation in time and place to balance incompatible lifestyles

• From **collective** uniform to **societal** procedural identity? (from nation state back to law states?)