Performing identities on a Dutch river dike: National identity and diverging lifestyles

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Introduction

National identity is performed in many ways. These range from the staging of a uniform national identity on a central stage, to the locally dispersed everyday practices of individuals. The former are based on mass participation and communicate a single identity to the whole nation, while the latter consists of a wide variety of individual actions only indirectly linked to national identity. In an increasingly individualising society the central staging of a uniform national identity loses ground to the dispersed and fragmented performances of ever more distinct individual identities and lifestyles. This paper explores how these individual performed identities are linked to a national identity through the use of the same spatial stage.

The main part of this paper is an analysis of the use of a dike along the river Linge, a part of the Rhine estuary, which lined with apple trees cuts through an iconic Dutch river landscape with polders, old villages and meadows with quietly grazing cattle. Especially in the weekends it is a stage crowded by walkers, cyclists and motorists. These belong to different lifestyle groups, ranging from orthodox Christians participating in church organised cycle tours, to members of the Dutch Ferrari club. This paper analyses why these widely different groups use the same stage to perform their different identities. We study the role of this dike in the discourses of these different lifestyle groups and how this use of the same space by different lifestyle groups is related to Dutch national identity.

Lifestyle groups and national identity

It has become widely accepted that the ideal of a uniform national identity shared by all citizens is challenged by individualisation. Individuals have more freedom to choose between different identities. Rigid social roles based on territory, occupation and gender have become less important. Spatial mobility has undermined the traditional and self-evident relation with national identities. Social mobility and the changes in employment during one’s life-time have diminished the importance of occupation for individual identities. The increasing volatility of individual identities is also related to the increasing importance of consumption in Western societies. Shopping and recreation have become central to our daily life and land use. The growing importance of consumption is linked in our Western world with the increasing necessity to choose between different products and leisure opportunities. What one consumes used to be largely predetermined by the basic necessities of life. The increased wealth gives individuals more opportunities to choose between different types of products and leisure opportunities. Image and not price increasingly determine these decisions. Consumer choices are increasingly based on the values individual attach to specific products and leisure opportunities. These values are in contrast to prices incommensurable and linked to the norms of different groups with which an individual chooses to
identify. The increasing importance of these more fluid identities creates new challenges for the more traditional forms of local and national identity (Giddens 1991; Chaney 1996; Bauman 2001; 2004; Keating 1998; Terlouw 2009).

Lifestyle choices are increasingly important in the constitution of individual identity and the selection and performance of daily activities (Chaney 1996: 85; Giddens 1991). Whereas nations become institutionalised and homogenised over time, lifestyle groups are much more fluid and diverse. The adoption of a specific lifestyle is based on individual choice but which takes place within the framework of existing lifestyles and the selective adoption of specific elements from more widely shared beliefs and values which still can be linked to the nation. This creates more or less distinct and coherent lifestyle groups. Individuals can, unlike traditional collectives like social class, belong to different lifestyle groups. Lifestyle groups are much more linked to specific occasions and places than the more traditional thick collectives like nations. Lifestyle groups themselves are also much more fluid than nations. They are more fluid associations than distinct groups. Not only is their membership unclear, but they also constantly change in character. It is thus not possible to divide the population over distinct lifestyle groups (Chaney 1996). Lifestyle groups create a new form of social differentiation which is no longer based on a fixed vertical stratification between classes, but on a fluid horizontal differentiation between lifestyles (DiMaggio 1994). Lifestyles are not so much structures like class structure or status groups; they are more “practices of everyday life are that: a) meaning is not fixed but is mobile and ever-changing (although with different rates of change between institutional sectors); b) meaning is inherently political because it is contested; and c) meaning is inscribed in our uses of objects, activities and places.” (Chaney 1996: 74). Lifestyles are about individual choices made at a specific time and place based on specific values. This is different from more traditional ways of life which are rooted in stable communities with shared norms and rituals (Chaney 1996: 92).

Despite their differences the traditional collective national identities and these newer forms of lifestyle based identities are still linked. The lifestyle narratives selectively use elements and images from longer existing identity discourses. Their selection and transformation of specific aspects of national identities also transforms them. Lifestyles are creative projects based on enactments in the public sphere. These performances of lifestyle identities are linked to the spatial stage on which these enactments take place. The places where these lifestyles are performed have frequently a specific meaning for these lifestyles. Their meaning is linked to the repetitive performances on this stage which embody the norms of these lifestyles (Berger & Luckmann 1966; Chaney 1996:92-94, 120, 135; Dewsbury 2000; Giddens 1991; Thrift, Dewsbury 2000).

We now turn to the analysis of the use of the Appeldijk by different lifestyles. This apple tree lined river dike is an interesting place to study, not only because it is used by many different and hostile lifestyle groups ranging from wanders to motorcyclists, but also because it is linked to different discourses on Dutch national identity. After introducing this stage in the next section, the different and sometimes conflicting use of this dike by different lifestyle groups are subsequently discussed. This paper ends with a discussion of how the state regulates these conflicts.

**Setting the stage: the changing role of the Appeldijk in the Netherlands**

This section discusses the construction of the river dike along the Linge and its relation with Dutch national identity. The Linge is part of the Rhine estuary. In the flatlands of the Netherlands, the Rhine branches into several arms before flowing into the North Sea. The slow flowing river water gradually silts up these arms, forcing the river to find a new river bed in the adjacent lower countryside. The Linge probably became after Roman times one of the main arms of the Rhine. Its riverbanks attracted population, while it protected them against flooding and its light soil of clay mixed with sand facilitated agricultural cultivation. Around the year 1000 this area had the highest population density in the Netherlands. Better drainage and flood protection of the lower lying areas enabled the expansion of the cultivated area. This was increasingly subject to flooding. The water level in the river
increased due to the silting up of the riverbed and the rainier climate in that period. The river dike
were made higher, which further raised the water level and increased the damage caused by flood
disasters. In 1304, after one particularly bad flood, the Linge was dammed from the Rhine in Tiel,
transforming the Waal in the South into the main Rhine arm. Especially since the 19th century the
Rhine was increasingly controlled; its riverbed was straightened and its dikes strengthened. The
regulation of the Waal became part of the Dutch national identity of the heroic fight against water
and the successful domination of man over nature. This was further stimulated when the Waal
became at the end of the 19th century one of the busiest inland shipping routes of the world
connecting the harbour of Rotterdam with its European hinterland. The Linge never underwent such
a drastic modernisation as the Waal and retained its medieval character. The shipping on this shallow
river was reduced to local traffic. The Linge became the mirror image to the modernity and economic
importance of the Waal (Heezik 2007; Waterschap 2009; de Pater 2011; Kaika 2006; Bijl 2001).

During the 19th and early 20th century the Linge no longer had the capacity to drain its
surrounding region which as a result became waterlogged in winter. High water levels in the Rhine
during winter created problems turning about 60% of the western part of the area along the Linge
into wetland (Linge-commissie 1927: 53). In addition the water levels in the Linge were sometimes so
high that the dikes burst and large areas were flooded and destroyed. This gave the Linge a negative
image. Its meandering riverbed used to be compared to a cat’s intestine (‘kattendarm’) which
expresses a negative comparison to the large modern Dutch rivers like the Waal with their straight
and strong dikes controlling and dominating nature. Its insignificance and poor water quality as a
slow flowing open sewer was also stressed by mythical stories which located its source under a dung
heap near Nijmegen. The Linge thus became during the 19th century a symbol for the failure of men
to control nature and thus contradicted the Dutch national identity based on the epic struggle of the
Dutch against water, which was seen as a domestic enemy threatening the nation (de Pater 2011;
Kaika 2006). The Linge became the symbol for the problems in this waterlogged agricultural area.
Poverty, low education and out-migration made the area around the Linge a backward region lagging
behind the modernising Dutch nation and the industrialisation of the Dutch economy. The Dutch
state tried to correct these deviations by improving the Linge between the 1920s and the 1950s. By
building a huge modern pumping station at the mouth of the river and by constructing barrages to
regulate the water levels in the east, the dikes along the Linge, such as the Appeldijk, became
unimportant for protecting the region against flooding. The deepening and widening of the riverbed
not only improved draining, but also improved the accessibility for shipping in order to stimulate
industrialisation (Linge-commissie 1927). In addition new inland roads were built which reduced the
importance of the dikes along the Linge for providing new all-weather road connections between
neighbouring villages.

This negative image of the Linge as the deviation from Dutch modernity was dominant, but
not unchallenged in Dutch public opinion. This future oriented modern conceptualisation of Dutch
national identity was opposed by a counter-image treasuring what were claimed to be old authentic
Dutch landscapes (De Pater 2011; Knippenberg 1997). Since the 1960s the growing opposition to the
up till then dominant modernist perspective gave a new impetus to this more romantic view on the
Dutch landscape. In the 1990s it became the basis for a new national policy focussing on protecting
traditional Dutch landscapes. A crucial policy document (Belvedere 1999) explicitly links the
conservation of traditional landscapes with the growing need to protect Dutch national identity
against the threat of globalisation. The Linge is an important part of the landscapes selected for
protection. During the 20th century this more romantic and environmental perspective gradually
came to dominate the perception of the Linge. Its deep riverbed and reinforced banks, which were
constructed to improve shipping and stimulate industrialisation, are now levelled to create a better
environment for wildlife. Even these new hydraulic engineering plans now identify the Linge as a
quiet, meandering river in an almost original medieval rural landscape which is greatly valued while it
deviates from the daily life of most Dutch, who live in highly urbanised areas. This new positive idyllic
identity of the Linge is now so strong that the drainage canals in the East are now reconstructed to
conform to the idyllic image of the Linge (Heezik 2007; Waterschap 2009; Bijl 2001). The election in
2000 of ‘Memories of Holland’ as the poem of the century signifies the current dominance of this
romantic view on Dutch riverscape for Dutch national identity. The first lines of this poem, written in 1936 by the romantic poet Hendrik Marsman, who died in 1940 fleeing from German occupation, are the best known lines of poetry in the Netherlands:

Thinking of Holland
I see wide-flowing rivers
slowly traversing
infinite plains

The blossoming apple trees along the Appeldijk have a special significance for Dutch national identity. During the German occupation of the Netherlands during the Second World War the blossoming trees became part of the discourse calling for a national revival after the destructions and deprivations of the war. The blossoming fruit trees in the area around the Linge was the metaphor used in a popular resistance song on national renewal. The remembrance culture of the Second World War is very important for the creation of a Dutch national identity which had been relatively weak until then (van Ginkel 2004; Lijphart 1968). The celebration of Dutch national identity peaks in spring with the celebration of the Queen’s birthday on April 30th and the national day remembering the end of German occupation on May 5th. These public holidays coincide with the blossoming of the apple trees in the area along the Linge. Visiting the blossoming trees in spring was thus linked to the myth of national renewal. Although this link with national identity loosened over time, the blossoming fruit plantations continue to attract many day-trippers in spring. The traditional small-scale and labour intensive fruit plantations with large trees have however almost all been sawn down. This made the Appeldijk with its old large apple trees into a unique location where the traditional landscape dominated by large fruit trees is still undisturbed by modernisation. Combined with the meandering dike in a medieval green landscape the Appeldijk became popular with all kinds of day trippers. Especially on sunny Sunday afternoons in spring the Appeldijk is crowded with walkers, cyclists, runners, cars and motorcyclists.

Measuring the perception of the Appeldijk for different lifestyles

Sharing the same road does not mean that all users attach the same meaning to the Appeldijk. This section discusses the use of travel accounts and blogs on the internet for studying personal identities. This is the basis for studying the different values attached to the Appeldijk in the next section.

Publications have always been important to communicate the norms and values of a distinct lifestyle (Giddens 1991). The internet and especially blogs have become important media for the expression of personal identities. Blogs are websites displaying in reverse chronological order postings of mostly individuals. Contrary to social network sites like Facebook and Hyves, which provide more personal background information and used to manage social contacts, blogs are more narratives which express opinions (Papacharissi 2011: 210). Blogs are mostly personal journals describing and reflecting on the experiences in everyday life. It enables individuals to present a more or less coherent story of their life to the outside world. Blogs are very selective and subjective in their reporting. This subjectivity makes them very suitable to study the different meanings and values individuals attach to the places they visit in their everyday life. These self-narratives give, like traditional diary research, more natural and valid data on their personal identity and their values than for instance interviews (Hevern 2004; Hookway 2008; Huffaker, Calvert 2005; Taricani 2007; Thelwall 2007; Thelwall, Wouters 2005).

The growing importance of blogs and other new social media are linked to the fragmentation of the national public sphere into many separate cliques. Whereas the traditional mass media still address a national audience, this assumption of a single national public sphere is undermined by the explosion of individual producers of information and opinions. The national public debate is drowned by a cacophony of individual opinions. Paradoxically the overwhelming number of different opinions
expressed on the internet stimulates and enables people to communicate only with likeminded persons, creating new virtual communities of likeminded persons. This reaffirms their values and strengthens their distinct identities. This self-reinforcing feedback of communicated opinions makes these internet based expressions of identity very useful material for studying the fragmentation of national society into different lifestyles (Bruns et al. 2011; Heveren 2004; Hookway 2008; MacDougall 2007; Moe 2011; Taricani 2007).

Search engines are one of the most common tools used to select relevant websites to study (van Selm 2010: 64-65; Thelwall 2007: 280; Weare, Lin 2000). A search for the blogs which referred to the “Appeldijk” resulted in 121 hits in February 2011 using Google blog. On closer examination 41 of those were relevant travelogues which reported on visits to the Appeldijk. For a majority of these bloggers it was possible to find, on their blogs and through internet searches using for instance their name and place of residence, background information over them (See appendix). This study into the backgrounds of the bloggers on the Appeldijk showed that there are slightly more males (18) than females (12) who blog on the Appeldijk. The average age, frequently estimated using the pictures of bloggers, is 48 years (n=19), which is different from the reported overrepresentation of young bloggers in other research. The frequently mentioned elite bias is clearly present in our bloggers. More than half (8 of 15 known occupations) are professionals. In addition 4 work in publishing and there is only 1 shop assistant. The place of residence could be determined for more than two thirds (29 of 42) of the bloggers. Only 4 live in the vicinity of the Appeldijk. On average the bloggers had to travel 48 minutes to the Appeldijk (calculated for travel by car using Google maps). They predominantly come from the larger cities in the urbanised core of the Netherlands. Many of our bloggers (10) live in the Amsterdam area, which is about one hour drive from the Appeldijk. For more than three quarters of the blogs (32) it was possible to determine the date when they were written. Figure 1 shows that more than half of the blogs are written in early spring. The blossoming apple trees in spring are mentioned in two thirds of the blogs and their pictures dominate many blogs. This additional background information on our bloggers diminishes the widely mentioned problem of generalizability of blog data (Huffaker, Calvert 2005; Keren 2006; 2010; McMillan 2000; Papacharissi 2011; van Selm 2010; Taricani 2007; Thelwall 2007: 282; Weare, Lin 2000).

The next sections analyse how different road users value the Appeldijk. This analysis is based on blogs and augmented with other internet sources on the use of the Appeldijk by different road users (See appendix). After discussing the general backgrounds of the use of the Appeldijk by different road users, we study in more detail the values attached to the Appeldijk. By quoting from blogs and reviewing how the Appeldijk is described in these blogs, we determine the extent to which road users attach the same values to their use of the Appeldijk. The exploratory character of this study and the sometimes small number of blogs for specific types of road users make it impracticable to use a quantitative form of content analysis. The differences in values attached to the use of the Appeldijk are however clear enough to construct a typology of different lifestyles.
Road users and lifestyle performances on the Appeldijk

Walkers

Walkers have always been attracted to the Appeldijk. It is located between two railway stations with good connections to the major cities in the Netherlands. The Appeldijk is part of many routes which are well documented (42, 43, 44). It is for instance part of several long distance trails which transect the Dutch territory. The names of these trails are frequently linked to Dutch history (44). This traditional link to the nation is very strong in the Nationale Bloesemtocht which is the second largest walking event in the Netherlands. The Dutch Red Cross organises this tour around the Appeldijk. It attracts walkers from all over the Netherlands (31,700 paying participants in 2011). The profits are used for national social projects (45). The national character is further stressed by the involvement of the Dutch military in building temporary bridges across the Linge and by providing military police to regulate traffic. Two kinds of walkers use the Appeldijk on other days. There are couples who walk up and down the Appeldijk. They mostly do this on sunny Sunday afternoons and park their car nearby. There are also small groups of (walking) friends who equipped with walking shoes and backpacks walk longer distances. These tend to avoid the busy weekends. Many of these groups consist exclusively of women. Individual walkers are only rarely seen on the Appeldijk.

Walkers describe in their blogs the blossoming apple trees on the Appeldijk as part of a “healthy” “natural environment” with “wildlife” and a “magnificent landscape” (1, 3, 5, 9, 13, 15). “It turns out to be a magnificent environment where one can have delightful walks. Especially the Appeldijk presents a magnificent view on trees in splendid full blossom.” (13). “Pink and white wave the flower leaves in the lowlands along the Linge. (...) On the centuries old Appeldijk the blossom is still wrapped: adorable soft green buds with pink dots cover the old branches.” (9). The Appeldijk is represented as part of an idyllic and quiet landscape dominated by (blossoming) apple trees, singing birds, the picturesque Linge and the country estate Marienwaard. Walkers value the Appeldijk as the apex of a quiet healthy idyll. They are strongly opposed to cars and especially noisy motorcyclist which intrude into this arcadia (5, 14, 20). “It is in any case unadvisable to walk on Sundays when the weather is nice. Packs of motorcyclists then spoil everything.” (14). Walking along the Appeldijk gives people a relaxing break from stressed urban life and busy traffic. Walkers value the Appeldijk not only for its contrast to their stressful daily life, but are also attracted by the clean country air, a green natural environment and wildlife. These elements are also stressed in many guides for walkers (42, 43, 44).

Cycling Sightseers and Training for Fitness

Cyclists also use the Appeldijk in large numbers. Some of them travel at high speeds on racing bikes, while others cycle more leisurely. There are many and well documented routes for cycling sightseers in which the Appeldijk has a prominent place (46, 47, 48). Almost all non-local cycling sightseers use their car to bring their bikes to this area. They also greatly value the Appeldijk for much the same reasons as walkers, but they focus less on nature and wildlife and more on the landscape in general with its heritage sites, picturesque villages, pubs and other attractions (2, 4, 11, 21, 22, 29, 38, 40). “It is irresistible for cyclists. (...) Overlooking the Linge from the dike you think naturally of the famous poem of Hendrik Marsman ‘Memories of Holland’” (38, see above for the text of the poem). Cyclist also frequently mention and regret the congestions and traffic on the Appeldijk (8, 11, 33, 37), but they do not attach such a negative value to the presence of other motorised road users than walkers. “It is obvious that no cars and motorcycles should be allowed on that dike, but I won’t let this disturb my lovely trip.” (37).
Cyclists which travel at high speed focus more on their athletic achievement and frequently post pictures and descriptions of their special bikes on their blogs (8, 33, 37, 40). 'We showed 2 not too bad race cyclist how much better it is to cycle in a Strada (a type of recumbent bicycle, KT). After 120 km cycling we race past them at 47 km/h and keep that speed until we don’t see them anymore in our mirrors.' (8). Especially on Sunday mornings the Appeldijk is used by groups of speed cyclist. Clean air and the relaxation of cycling through a green rural landscape are of only secondary importance for this lifestyle. They avoid the Appeldijk on sunny Sunday afternoons when it is clogged by other users. These racers make large tours of well over 100 kilometres around their home towns. The Appeldijk is only a minor topic in their discussions and travel accounts. When they mention it, they value especially the views on the rural landscape. Contrary to the cycling sightseers and especially the walkers, the reasons why they attach a positive value to the landscape are hardly developed. The values they express focus on training and how to behave in a cycling group (50).

The Appeldijk is also used by Nordic walkers. Their lifestyle focuses like the speed cyclist on fitness. They give much attention to master the technique to maximise health (5, 51, 52). Some joggers also use the Appeldijk. They are even more oriented on their body, individual fitness, training schedules and injury protection than the other sub-groups of this fitness oriented lifestyle. (53, 54). Those training for fitness value to exercise in a healthy environment, but the location where they exercise is of only secondary importance. A fitness coach for instance attracts customers with a large picture of sporty cyclists on the Appeldijk. He makes no reference to the Appeldijk, but writes below the picture: “Exercise is very important for humans. Some train to loose excess weight, others to release the stress from work, or for their health. Whatever the reasons for training, exercise is healthy!” (51).

**Classic car drivers**

Many walkers and cycling sightseers come by car and also drive along the Appeldijk on their way to and from their parking space. However, in their blogs they only discuss their walking or cycling along the Appeldijk. Driving along the dike in their cars is apparently just a means and not an end, unlike their walking or cycling along the dike. Most walkers and cyclists don’t mention their car drive at all. Only in some cases they indirectly mention their car use (2, 12, 20, 32). In contrast, drivers of classic cars and convertibles purposefully drive along the Appeldijk. “The start is in the centre of Geldermalsen, making it a public event, with a paddock and a podium for the start. Seeing and been seen is our credo. A magnificent tour takes the participants through the blossoming Betuwe, including of course the famous Appeldijk along the river Linge.” (55). There a many more of these organised classic car tours which drive along the Appeldijk. These tend to be groups of similar types of classic cars, ranging from Ferrari’s to ZC’v’s and auto rickshaws.

Dikes like the Appeldijk are especially valued for the panoramic views they offer. The Appeldijk is visited for partly the same aesthetic reasons as wanderers. The experience of the Appeldijk is however reduced to the visual aspects. Clean air and silence are especially for the old vintage cars running on leaded petrol not an issue. Some of these groups are so large that they create smelly traffic jams on the Appeldijk. The values of especially these groups of vintage car drivers are linked to their distant happy youth experiences. They are attracted to traditional Dutch landscapes like the Appeldijk. The mechanical skills needed to keep these old cars on the road and the efforts to preserve the authentic appearance of these cars are also highly valued and rewarded with prizes for the most beautiful cars and outfits worn by the drivers. Participants of vintage car tours frequently wear outfits dating back to when their car was constructed. The authentic rural landscape epitomised by the Appeldijk turns this into a perfect stage for the performance of this lifestyle. They are more attracted than deterred by a crowded Appeldijk. Proudly presenting these classic cars to the public is an explicit goal of these organised tours. Conspicuous consumption is thus an essential aspect of this lifestyle (55, 56, 57, 64).
Motorcyclists

Motorcyclists also use the Appeldijk in large numbers for partly the same reasons as classic car drivers. They also value the landscape but this is less important for them. Performing their bike handling skills is the most important reason why motorcyclists travel along this and other curvy river dikes. Driving at high speeds is frequently an additional thrill. The need to control one’s bike in difficult curves and the possibility to demonstrate one’s bike handling skills attracts many motorcyclists to the Appeldijk. Their travel accounts focus on touring on curvy dikes, travelling through a rural landscape, the extensive use of outdoor cafés and driving through unnamed villages (7, 26, 30, 58). Although less numerous than cars, their presence is much more noticed by other road users. Especially the loud engine noise and the large groups of motorcyclists occupying the road are resented by many other road users (5, 8, 11, 14, 20, 33, 37, 41). Motorcyclists cherish their freedom to go anywhere on their bikes. Many are keen to protect their rights to perform their individualist lifestyle, which they feel threatened by others. “The road belongs to everybody, it is very selfish to think that only cyclist and wanders are allowed to use it. As a fanatic motor cyclist myself, I love it to drive on a curvy dike to enjoy the scenery. Cyclists riding in the middle of the road blocking my way disturb me, but ‘so what?’ Anyway, I am very considerate towards other road users, especially unstable ones like cyclists. So don’t drive fast when overtaking cyclists in case they suddenly swerve. But a motorway is BORING to drive, riding through curves is the purpose! I would advise nature lovers to smoke a joint and not to complain, do relaxed. The must take a ride on a motorcycle to the experience the feeling ;) In short, give each other room :)” (26). Individualism and defiance of established society are frequently linked the lifestyle of the motorcyclists in general (Austin 2009; Halnon& Cohen 2006).

Comparing Lifestyles and Conflicts between Lifestyles

This section tries to systemise and compare the differences between the different lifestyles discussed above. Table 1 summarises the different values different lifestyles attach to the Appeldijk based on a content analysis of the above discussed blogs and internet sites.

Table 1 Lifestyle and values attached to the Appeldijk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lifestyle</th>
<th>Values related to performance on Appeldijk</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Walkers</td>
<td>Traditional landscape, ecology, quiet, relaxation, female, national</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>leisurely tour, scenic landscape, nostalgic, authentic, mechanical skills, showing off of their beautiful cars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorcyclists</td>
<td>Landscape of curvy dikes, handling skills, away from everyday life, international, relaxing in pubs, individual freedom, masculine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All groups value the Appeldijk and the landscape around it, but they differ in the aspects of the landscape they value. Walkers value its clean ecological and natural character, while other groups focus more on the visual aspects of this scenic landscape. Some link their performance to a nostalgic view on the Dutch nation; others focus more on individual performances and freedom. These are sometimes linked to improving one’s health, but are for other groups rooted in the enjoyments of consumption; for instance by showing one’s beautifully restored car. In Figure 2 these different underlying values are positioned based on their similarities and difference. These can be linked to
two even more fundamental dimensions ranging from ecological to hedonistic values and from collective to individual values. These types of value dimensions are widely used in lifestyle marketing research (Motivaction 2009; Hansen 1998: 60). Figure 2 also indicates the position of the different lifestyles towards these different values. This reduction of the values attached to the Appeldijk by different lifestyles to just two dimensions does not do justice to all aspects of the more nuanced valuation of the Appeldijk by the different lifestyles discussed in the previous section. It however helps to compare the fundamental differences these lifestyles attach to the Appeldijk which are at the basis of the conflicts on the use and access of the Appeldijk and which are discussed below.

Figure 2 suggests that the most fundamental differences in values are between the individualistic and hedonistic motorcyclists and the walkers and cycling sightseers with a stronger orientation to ecological and collective values. The differences between these groups also coincide with other differences. The biggest speed differences are between strolling walkers and speeding bikers. The predominantly male motorcyclist also contrasts with the groups of female walkers. These lifestyles have a negative image of each other. Motorcyclists are especially negative to groups of cycling sightseers, which not only hinder their motor trips, but are also seen as incorporating different values and as the pressure group behind attempts to restrict the access of motorcycles to the dikes (26). “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.” (30)
Motorcyclists are also the subject of negative representations. Especially walkers regard them as the enemy spoiling the quiet atmosphere of the Appeldijk with their loud engines. The lifestyle norms of these walkers are not only based on the positive values attached to walking in this clean quiet Arcadian landscape along the Appeldijk, but are also formed in opposition to other lifestyle groups using this dike. Many guides warn walkers for the invaders who disturb the relaxing walk over the Appeldijk. Wanderers are especially warned for groups of motorcyclists on sunny Sunday afternoons (61, 36). The underlying values of the wanderers focus on landscape and its preservation which they experience through strolling. This is threatened by urbanisation, pollution and particularly through traffic noise. Especially the noises deliberately made by groups of motorcyclists make this lifestyle group the arch-enemies of the wanderers. This is only partly linked to ‘objective’ competition for space on the Appeldijk. Cars are much more numerous and their size makes them more physically dangerous. The social distance between wanderers and car drivers is however small, while most wanderers on the Appeldijk travel by car to the area. Motorcyclists are much noisier and when they travel in groups they are perceived as threatening intruders.

Although walkers are most explicit in their views, the negative image of the motorcyclists is widely shared. Many thus want to restrict the access of motorcycles to the dikes in general and the Appeldijk in particular. The Nationale Bloesemtocht with its tens of thousands of walkers is only possible by the temporary blocking of the Appeldijk for all traffic by the military police. There have been several attempts to deny motorcyclists and other motorists access to the Appeldijk. In the 1980s the owners of the Estate Marienwaard started to change the focus of their enterprise from agriculture to recreation. The owner, a prominent politician, used his political influence on the water board to block the Appeldijk for all motorised traffic. This decision was successfully opposed by local entrepreneurs on the access road to the Appeldijk who feared they would lose customers. In 1993 the Council of State, the highest appeal authority in the Netherlands, decided that the water board had no entitlement to close off a road, but that only the local municipality of Geldermalsen has the authority to regulate traffic on this local road. The municipality of Geldermalsen tried in the following decades several times to regulate traffic on the Appeldijk. But these attempts have been blocked by a combination a diffuse local opposition and a very well organised opposition from motorcyclists. The struggle for access to the Appeldijk is part of a much wider debate on access to the river dikes in this area. Road safety, noise pollution and the threatening behaviour of groups of motorcyclists are the normative justification used by many municipalities to limit dike access. These regulations of the municipalities are challenged by a special organisation sponsored by the national motorcycle organisations and a pro-car organisation. Through their legal expertise they are a formidable opponent for the small rural municipalities. Their dominant norm is that roads should be open for all traffic (62, 63, 58).

The municipality of Geldermalsen decided in the summer of 2011 to reduce the accessibility of the Appeldijk for motorised traffic by transforming it partially into a cycle path. This is part of a national policy to stimulate cycling and to develop a national grid of cycle paths. Without the financial help of the provincial administration of Gelderland to stimulate the infrastructure of cyclists, the financially weak municipality of Geldermalsen would have had difficulty in financing the resurfacing of the worn out road surface of the Appeldijk.

Conclusion

The Linge in general and the Appeldijk in particular have always been linked to national and other identities. This linkage has changed over time and has been contested between groups. Initially the differences in the valuation of the Appeldijk focussed on different conceptualisations of Dutch national identity. In the 19th and early 20th century the dominant view on Dutch national identity linked the Appeldijk and the Linge to the struggle of the Dutch against water. The entire Dutch territory and population had to be protected against the risk of flooding. Water was seen as the natural enemy within, which had to be subjugation by man’s intervention. This modernist negative
image of the Appeldijk was contested by a more romantic perspective on Dutch national identity which became dominant during the 20th century. The blossoming apple trees along the Appeldijk became an iconic image for this national identity based on the imagined historic roots of this authentic traditional rural landscape along river banks in the Dutch lowlands.

The growing importance of lifestyles has undermined the dominance of the traditionally collective Dutch national identity. Individuals increasingly identify more with a lifestyle of their choice than with a shared collective national identity. Despite the decline in the importance of the collective Dutch national identity, different lifestyles still value the Appeldijk based on its association with the now dominant romantic view on landscapes and Dutch national identity. All lifestyles discussed above are attracted to the Appeldijk based on picturesque qualities which they all link to what the regards as an authentic Dutch landscape. Despite this shared attraction to the same dike, our analysis showed some marked differences in the values attached to the Appeldijk by different lifestyles. Its visual qualities are the main reason why lifestyles which focus on individual and hedonistic values appreciate the Appeldijk. Other lifestyles value the Appeldijk for more reasons. Especially walkers regard the Appeldijk as a place where the traditional, quiet, and clean Dutch landscape can still be experienced. This contrasts sharply with the motorcyclists whose value the Appeldijk for providing them with an opportunity to experience their individual freedom of riding on winding dikes in a picturesque landscape. Despite the shared attraction to the Appeldijk based on quite similar views on national identity, the divergence between lifestyles in the values attached to the Appeldijk result in conflicts over who has the right to use the Appeldijk.

The different lifestyle groups all focus on the state to balance different interest and resolve their conflicts. This role of the state as mutually accepted mediator between the different interests creates a more limited kind of national identity. It is not a traditional collective national identity of shared beliefs and norms, but a societal identity of established norms to resolve conflicts between different interests (Delanty & Rumford 2005; Delanty & O’Mahony 2002). The different use of the Appeldijk by different lifestyle groups indicates the decline of a thick collective national identity with shared values and a uniform representation of places. Perhaps the mediation of the conflicts these diverging use of the Appeldijk by different lifestyle groups is linked to a much thinner form of national identity, which is limited to the mutual acceptance of the role of the state as the arbitrator of these different interest. The role of the nation state would than change from organising society based on a collective identity, to regulating and separating the expression of incompatible lifestyles, without creating a new shared meaning of the Appeldijk and a new Dutch national identity.

LITERATURE


### APPENDIX

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In addition the 905 newspaper articles reporting on the Appeldijk in the Dutch newspapers over the last ten years using LexisNexis were used to provide additional information on the use and conflicts over the Appeldijk. I also use my own local knowledge based on living for more than 15 years within view of the day trippers on their way to the Appeldijk and travelling several times a week over the Appeldijk, resulting in informal observations, small talk with and overheard conversations between the visitors of the Appeldijk on the dike and in pubs along the Appeldijk. The absence of day trippers when I wrote this article (see also Figure 1) limited my research possibilities.